

What is God?

By Dr. Kuldip S. Gangar

Introduction

Once a heathen poet was asked by a king, “What is God?” The poet asked for a day to think it over, and when the day ended he asked for two. He kept doubling the days and finally the king asked him the reason for his delay. He answered, “*The more I think of God, He is still the more unknown to me.*”¹ What would you answer if you were asked that question? Some would draw a complete blank because they have no place for God in their thoughts. Others picture Him as a vast ocean into which we as drops of water return at death. Others picture Him as an indulgent father in the sky. Yet still others, as a spirit that indwells all things. How can we know the truth about God?

Before we proceed any further, let us call on God to help us that we may know Him as He is. “Lord, we come before You as One who has created all thing and who sustains all things in being, to aid us in our understanding of your holy Being. We are creatures of dust and easily led astray by our unaided reason. Help us to reason aright according to Your own revelation of Yourself in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. We thank You that You have revealed Yourself not only through Your inspired Word, but also through the incarnation of Your beloved Son. We pray that You would grant wisdom by your Holy Spirit to lead us to a right knowledge of Yourself, that we may be led rightly to believe unto salvation, and to render to You true worship which is Your due. Keep us, Lord, from foolish speculation. Help us to submit to Your

¹ John Whitecross, *The Shorter Catechism Illustrated* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 15 illustration 2.

self-revelation and not to set up our minds as the final arbiters of truth. We bring our prayer before You in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”.

If a man wants to know about rocks he can do various experiments and obtain much knowledge about rocks. If he wants to know about rabbits he can do likewise, though it will require more effort to catch one first. If we want to know about man it will be necessary to have his cooperation, since mere analysis of his bodily functions will not be sufficient. If we wish to know about a king or president it will be harder, for we need an introduction before we may even approach them. To know God, by our own research is *impossible*, for He is invisible and far beyond our reach. The higher you go in the scale of being, from inanimate objects to plants and animals and men, the more difficult it is to know them. How then can we know God who is infinitely above us? The answer is, only if God wills to reveal Himself to us. Job in the Old Testament wrote:

^{KJV} **Job 11:7** Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

We are thankful that God has revealed Himself both in His Word and in His Incarnate Son, the Word become flesh!

My purpose in these booklets is to explain Christian truths, that through them we may come to have a living knowledge of God and His Son, and so be saved from our sins and have everlasting life, through the Holy Spirit working faith in us. This first booklet on the Trinity is crucial if we are to be right with God and worship Him as He is. I once read these words on a cover of a book, “*It is impossible to honour God as we ought, unless we know Him as He is.*”² Many today think they worship God, but it is a god of their own imagination, and such worship is not acceptable to God. It is idolatry.

² Donald Macleod, *Behold Your God* (Geanies, Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1995 revised and expanded version), quote appears on the cover.

The doctrine of the Trinity stated

Let me state what the doctrine of the trinity is, in three propositions:

1. There is one living and true God.
2. This one living and true God exists in three persons who share completely the same divine nature.
3. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal in power and glory. There is no inferiority of one to another.

The Trinity does not consist of God the Father, Mary, and Jesus, as some Muslims teach. There is no thought whatsoever that God had physical relations with a woman. Jesus Christ was already the Son of God before He was born of a virgin. Before looking at the Biblical evidence, let me answer one objection that often arises in relation to this doctrine. Some object that the term “trinity” is not found in Scripture. It is true the term “trinity” does not occur, but if the truth of what the doctrine teaches is found in Scripture it is irrelevant whether the term is found there or not. It is but shorthand for those truths. As the Scottish theologian John Dick put it, “A little attention will convince you, that the principle, admitted in its full extent, would set aside all human explanations of Scripture; and that the real objection is, not to the terms which have been invented to express certain doctrines clearly and concisely, but to the doctrines themselves.”³

Does the Old Testament teach that God is Triune?

The emphasis in the Old Testament is on the unity of God - that there is only one God.

^{KJV} **Deuteronomy 6:4** Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD:

³ John Dick, *Lectures on Theology* (Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2006 reprint), 44.

The Jews were to keep themselves free of idolatry. The nations around them worshipped many gods, but the people of God were not to go after them. This truth however, did not rule out that the one God exists in three Persons. The doctrine is found in the Old Testament in seed form, and it is progressively revealed until it reaches its height in the New Testament in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. But already in the Old Testament there are clues that God exists in more than one person.

^{KJV} **Genesis 1:26** And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

God is speaking, and note the plural pronoun “us” is used in the phrase “let us make man in our image.” Some have tried to explain this by saying it is the plural of majesty, just as a king may say “let us” do such and such. However the expression was not used in those days. Others have tried to say God is including the angels, but nowhere does Scripture teach that we are made in the image of God and angels. It is true that this reference does not prove the Trinity, but only a plurality in the Godhead, but it *makes sense* only in the light of the Trinity.

After man rebelled against God we read these words:

^{KJV} **Genesis 3:22** And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Here it is clear the only Person speaking is the LORD God and yet He says “Behold, the man is become as one of us” which once again implies plurality in the one God. In Genesis 11 when men seek to build a tower to heaven we read of God saying:

^{KJV} **Genesis 11:7** Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

Here we have God speaking and yet the plural pronoun “us” is used. There are many more incidents in which an angel of the Lord appears, but He speaks as God and is so recognized

by the people. Let me give you just a few examples. The angel of the LORD appeared to Hagar in Genesis 16 and note what Hagar says in verses 13-14:

^{KJV} **Genesis 16:13** And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? ¹⁴ Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.

We see God manifesting Himself in human form to Joshua before he is about to go in to conquer the land. Note how Joshua falls down to worship Him, and the place is said to be holy because God has appeared:

^{KJV} **Joshua 5:13** And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, *Art* thou for us, or for our adversaries? ¹⁴ And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? ¹⁵ And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy. And Joshua did so.

Such language would be highly dangerous unless it reflected the truth that God exists in more than one person. There is more evidence which points to the trinity of Persons in the one God. God appears to Isaiah the prophet and we read how the angels cry out “Holy, holy, holy” which intimates three Persons in the Godhead. It is clarified for us, when God speaks:

^{KJV} **Isaiah 6:1** In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

^{KJV} **Isaiah 6:8** Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

Notice here we have God saying, “Whom shall I send?” in the singular, and then we further read, “and who will go for *us*?” The reason both singular and plural can be used, is because God is One and exists in three Persons. The Aaronic blessing testifies to the Trinity of Persons in the one God:

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^{KJV} **Numbers 6:24** The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: ²⁵ The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: ²⁶ The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

There are other references where the Trinity of Persons is made clear. Consider the following:

^{KJV} **Isaiah 48:16** Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

Here the speaker is divine as the context makes clear, yet there are three mentioned - the Lord God, and the Spirit which send Him.

^{KJV} **Isaiah 61:1** The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound;

This passage is applied by our Lord to Himself in Luke 4:16-21 at the synagogue in Nazareth.

Here we have mention of the Spirit, the Lord God, and the One who is sent, namely God's Son.

This is made clear when we read the words given in Isaiah 9:

^{KJV} **Isaiah 9:6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Note carefully the language "a child is born," and "a son is given". These two are not saying the same thing, but speak first of God taking our nature, while the second part speaks of His eternal pre-existence as the Son of God who is given. It is only as we understand this that we can appreciate the titles given to Him, of "Wonderful counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

^{KJV} **Isaiah 63:9** In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. ¹⁰ But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them.

In this passage we have the angel of God who redeems Israel out of Egyptian bondage, and leads them to the promised land. The people are said to vex His Holy Spirit. Once again we have two other divine Persons mentioned besides God.

Now why is it that with all this evidence, the Jews did not believe, and to this day deny the doctrine of the Trinity? It is no argument against the truth of this doctrine, for they also denied that Jesus was the Messiah despite all the prophecies being fulfilled in Him to the very letter. Paul, who was a mighty rabbi, did not believe until his eyes were opened and he certainly had no problem with acknowledging Jesus as Lord and God in the flesh (Philippians 2:6-11).

B.B. Warfield an American theologian of the 20th Century wrote:

The OT may be may be likened to a chamber richly but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before, but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the OT; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the OT revelation, and here and there comes into view. Thus the OT revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged.⁴

It is not true to say no Jews believed in the Trinity, for the early followers of Jesus were Jews who had been taught from early childhood that there was only one God, yet faced with God incarnate, acknowledged Jesus as God and worshipped Him. If man had been writing the Scriptures and was monotheistic as the Jews were, he certainly would have avoided all allusions to any plurality in God, but because the Scriptures are given by God these truths are there despite the unbelief of the Jews to this day. All the sacrifices in the Old Testament pointed to the work of Christ on the cross, which is obvious to us today, while the Jews deny it. Saul of Tarsus would have gone on denying it, had it not been for Christ opening his blind eyes. It is by faith that we believe and not by arriving at these truths through our own reason.

⁴ "Trinity" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, p. 3014b.

The New Testament evidence for the full deity of Jesus Christ

There is no question about God the Father being God. Many reject the deity of the Son and reject the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit. They imagine the Spirit to be some energy or power. In this section we shall see that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. Once the deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is established and their full equality with God, the doctrine itself is established.

There are passages in the Old Testament which speak of the Messiah in divine terms, and those prophecies are applied to Jesus in the New Testament.

^{KJV} **Isaiah 7:14** Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The above passage is applied to the birth of Jesus Christ. He is called Immanuel, not because He was given this name, but because it was true *of* Him, for He was God in the flesh.

Matthew writes:

^{KJV} **Matthew 1:21** And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.²² Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,²³ 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.

We have already quoted Isaiah 9:6 which speaks of a child to be born and a son to be given. This speaks to His divine and human nature since He was born of the virgin Mary.

In Isaiah 6 God appears to Isaiah the prophet, yet we are told by John the apostle that it was Jesus that Isaiah saw.

^{KJV} **John 12:41** These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.⁴² Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

Here John is giving us an inspired interpretation of Isaiah 6 and he tells us it is the Son who appeared to him.

In Isaiah 40 we are told about the coming of Yahweh, yet in the New Testament this is applied to the coming of Jesus Christ. Compare the following:

^{KJV} **Isaiah 40:1** Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. ² Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. ³ The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

^{KJV} **Mark 1:1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; ² As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. ³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

In Isaiah the preparation is for Yahweh (translated as LORD) and in Mark it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ the Son of God. This can only be done if Jesus Christ is One in essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Let us turn to the New Testament and see how it describes Jesus. We have seen already how Matthew views Jesus as "God with us." In Mark's gospel, John the Baptist is said to prepare the way of the LORD, the name God had given as His covenant name, in Exodus 3:14 at the burning bush. In Luke we read that the child to be born of Mary will be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). When Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth who is pregnant with John the Baptist the baby leaps within her as Mary comes to visit, and Elizabeth calls the child within Mary, her Lord (Luke 1:43). John who takes us behind the scene opens with these majestic words about Jesus Christ:

^{KJV} **John 1:1** 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.

John is speaking of Jesus Christ and describes Him as the Word, for it was by Him that all things were, and the Word was in wonderful communion with the Father, and the Word was God. He

does not say, as some today teach, that he was “a god,” for Christianity knows of only one God. The Son is fully God as the Father is God.

Later on John describes Jesus as the Only Begotten Son of God (John 1:18). Many fall into error thinking that if Jesus is the Son of God, then God was first and later came the Son, so Jesus cannot be eternal in the same way as the Father. It is important to understand that there was never a time when the Son did not exist, for John tells us He was with the Father from the beginning (that is from eternity, before anything was created). The word “begotten” emphasizes that the Son is of the same nature as the Father. C.S. Lewis, a famous English writer, explains:

Christ is begotten, not created. What does it mean?

We don't use the words *begetting* or *begotten* much in modern English, but everyone still knows what they mean. To beget is to become the father of: to create is to make. And the difference is this. When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, a man makes a wireless set—or he may make something more like himself than a wireless set: say a statue. If he is a clever enough carver he may make a statue which is very like a man indeed. But, of course, it is not a real man; it only looks like one. It cannot breathe or think. It is not alive.

Now that is the first thing to get clear. What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man. What God creates is not God; just as what man makes is not man. That is why men are not sons of God in the sense that Christ is. They may be like God in certain ways, but they are not things of the same kind. They are more like statues or pictures of God.⁵

It is true in earthly relations that a son comes after the father in time, but this cannot be applied to the Son of God. He always existed with the Father. Without the Son, God the Father would have no meaning. In fact, Jesus is called the “everlasting Father” as well as the “Almighty God” in Isaiah 9:6. His is the perfect relationship of a Son to a Father for there was never a time when He did not know His Father. Among human relationships there are things which a son can never

⁵ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1952), 122.

share for there was a time when he did not exist. It is because Jesus the Son of God always existed, that He can perfectly know the Father.

There are many places where Jesus is said to be God:

^{KJV} **John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

^{KJV} **John 20:28** And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

^{KJV} **Romans 9:5** Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

^{KJV} **Philippians 2:6** Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

^{KJV} **Titus 2:13** Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

^{KJV} **1 John 5:20** And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

He is given divine attributes which are true only of God and of His divine nature. He is said to be **omnipresent** which can be true of God alone and never of any creature, however powerful.

^{KJV} **Matthew 18:20** For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

^{KJV} **Matthew 28:20** 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.

^{KJV} **John 3:13** And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven.

Note in John 3:13 Jesus uses the present tense “which is” for while on earth He was present in heaven for He is God. We are not able to comprehend this but it is true, because He is God.

Jesus is **omniscient** (knows all things) with respect to His divine nature. The following Scriptures bear this out:

^{KJV} **John 2:24** But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*,²⁵ And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

^{KJV} **John 21:17** He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

^{KJV} **Revelation 2:23** And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

The reason why these are only true of His divine nature is that the human nature our Lord took to Himself was not deified, for then God would have undergone a change. Scripture makes it quite plain that God is unchangeable. Just as the human body of Jesus is presently in heaven, His divine nature is everywhere present since He is God. It is on account of this that such Scripture makes sense:

^{KJV} **Mark 13:32** But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Here Jesus does not know the time of the end. It is only a reference to His human nature.

Jesus is also **omnipotent** (all powerful) as to His divine nature. The following Scriptures bear this out:

^{KJV} **Isaiah 9:6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

^{KJV} **Philippians 3:21** Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

^{KJV} **Revelation 1:8** I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Jesus in terms of His divine nature is **eternal**. We have already considered the opening words of John's gospel where He is said to be in the beginning with God, before anything was created. In John 8 we read of a discussion Jesus had with the Jews in which He said that Abraham saw His day. Then we read:

^{KJV} **John 8:57** Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?
⁵⁸ Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Jesus is not merely asserting His pre-existence, but claiming the divine name that God revealed to Moses at the burning bush. He is saying I AM, which in Hebrew is Yahweh, the eternal I AM.

Jesus with respect to His divine nature, is said to be **immutable** (unchangeable). As to His human nature we read:

^{KJV} **Luke 2:52** And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

His divine nature is unchangeable, as the following passages show:

^{KJV} **Hebrews 1:10** And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: ¹¹ They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; ¹² And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

^{KJV} **Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

I do not mean to suggest that Jesus is two persons. No, He has two natures in one Person. What can be said of one nature can be applied to the whole Person. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, even though it is true only of the divine nature. Every perfection that belongs to God is His:

^{KJV} **Colossians 2:9** For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Jesus is also the **Creator** of all things.

^{KJV} **John 1:3** All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

^{KJV} **Colossians 1:16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

^{KJV} **Hebrews 1:2** Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Jesus is the One who sustains the world.

^{KJV} **John 3:35** The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

^{KJV} **John 17:2** As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

^{KJV} **Ephesians 1:22** And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

Jesus has the prerogative to forgive sins. Sin is ultimately against God whose law man breaks. Only God, therefore, can forgive sins (see Isaiah 43:25 and 44:22). We have the following account:

^{KJV} **Mark 2:3** And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. ⁴ And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. ⁶ But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? ⁸ And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? ⁹ Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? ¹⁰ But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) ¹¹ I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. ¹² And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Notice how the Jews accused Jesus of speaking blasphemies; because He said to the sick man, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (v. 5). The Jews said “who can forgive sin but God only?” (v. 7). Jesus did not apologize for His language, or explain that He did not mean what He said, as though He was merely praying that God would forgive him. No, He went on to demonstrate that He has the prerogative to forgive sins, by healing the sick man. Of course anyone can utter words, but if the man had not been healed no one would have believed Jesus’ words. Our Lord went on to demonstrate by doing the lesser thing, namely healing, to show that the man’s sins had been forgiven. No prophet had ever uttered such words except to bring a message from God, as Nathan did to David, after David’s sin with Bathsheba.

Jesus Christ claims that at the last day He will raise the dead and will sit in judgment upon all mankind - another prerogative of God alone. No mere man can judge the motives and intents of the heart, except God. Look at the following Scriptures:

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^{KJV} **Matthew 7:21** Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

^{KJV} **Matthew 25:31** When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³² And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats:

^{KJV} **Acts 10:42** And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead.

^{KJV} **Acts 17:31** Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

^{KJV} **2 Timothy 4:1** I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

It is Jesus who will usher in the new world and the final state.

^{KJV} **Hebrews 1:10** And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: ¹¹ They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; ¹² And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

^{KJV} **Philippians 3:21** Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

^{KJV} **Revelation 21:5** And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

Jesus is not the adopted Son of God as if a man was given the status of a lesser god, which some heretics taught in the early church. He is the Only Begotten Son of God who has existed face to face with the Father from all eternity. He is not derived from God the Father as a son is derived from a human father. His is a perfect Father-Son relationship in which they have co-existed in one nature from all eternity. On this basis, the following passages make perfect sense:

^{KJV} **John 8:19** Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

^{KJV} **John 14:7** If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

^{KJV} **John 14:9** Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father?

^{KJV} **John 12:44** Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. ⁴⁵ And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

^{KJV} **Mark 9:37** Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

^{KJV} **John 5:23** That all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Note that in the last passage, men are to honor the Son “as they honor the Father” and not in some subordinate way. It is because the Son shares in the same numerical nature as the Father that this can be so, for God will not share His glory with another.

Let’s consider three other passages on the deity of Jesus Christ. He is not a lesser god, which would amount to idolatry. Rather, He is equal with the Father. Jesus has just healed a man on the Sabbath and the Jews are upset. Our Lord responds:

^{KJV} **John 5:17** But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. ¹⁸ Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Jesus does not explain His words, nor retract them but asserts that He is indeed equal with God. Jesus could simply have responded to the Jews that it was right to do good on the Sabbath, as a sheep or an ox could be pulled out of a ditch on the Sabbath. Jesus shows instead that like God the Father, who sustains all things until now and continues to work, so the Son also works. It is for this reason that the Jews accused Him of making Himself equal with God the Father. The Jews recognized no lesser gods. Their creed was, there is but one true God.

This equality with God the Father is further asserted in two passages:

^{KJV} **John 10:30** I and *my* Father are one.

^{KJV} **John 10:33** The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. ³⁴ Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? ³⁵ If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture

cannot be broken;³⁶ Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

In John 10:30 we have a clear assertion that the Father and the Son are One in nature. In the last passage, note that Jesus does not say, “I am like the judges in Psalm 82:6,” for then the Jews would have been less disturbed. Instead they understood Jesus to be claiming equality with God and they said that He committed blasphemy, for you, “being a man, makest thyself God” (v. 33). Jesus’ response shows that if human beings could be given the title “gods” because of the authority invested in them, how much more, One who is set apart by the Father and sent into the world. It was the Jews who committed blasphemy by denying the claims of Jesus. Jesus is the natural Only Begotten Son, who supremely is entitled to be called God, for He is such in actual fact.

The deity of Jesus Christ is not something that the disciples bestowed on a man, but it is something they had to reckon with, as they spent time with Jesus and saw both His mighty works and heard His wonderful words. It is because Jesus is God that He has control over disease, demons, death, and all the forces of nature (see Mark 4-5).

Jesus is God as well as man. There were some who denied His humanity, but the Scriptures make it clear He was fully man. He grew in stature. He was hungry. He was so tired, that He could sleep in the middle of a storm. He had all the sinless infirmities. He did not know certain things, like the end of time. He learned as any other boy would learn, for it says he grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52). He was no phantom, but shared fully in human nature, except for sin. This truth is a great comfort to sinners. He is able to be a Mediator because He is God and represents man to God being fully man, except for sin.

Many religions of the world like Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism will honor Jesus Christ as a teacher, or a prophet, or one of many incarnations of God (Hinduism), but do not accord Him

status as God Himself. If Jesus is not God, as He Himself claimed, then He was a deceiver of mankind, and as such deserves not respect, but contempt. On the other hand, if what Jesus said is true, then it is blasphemy to make Him a mere prophet, or teacher, however good. C.S. Lewis wrote:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.⁶

The New Testament evidence for the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit

Many think of the Holy Spirit as mere energy or power, but not as a Person. This is an error. The New Testament clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is personal and fully God. All the characteristics of a person are ascribed to Him. Intelligence is ascribed to Him in the following passages:

^{KJV} **John 14:26** 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.

^{KJV} **John 15:26** 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:

^{KJV} **Romans 8:16** The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Note in John 14:26 and 15:26 the three Persons of the Trinity are distinguished. He is called the Comforter, and the Spirit of truth which can surely not be said of mere energy or power.

Will is ascribed to the Holy Spirit which would not be true of mere power, in the following Scriptures:

⁶ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 40-41.

^{KJV} **Acts 16:7** After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 12:11** But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Many other functions are ascribed to Him such as creating, searching, speaking, testifying, commanding, revealing and making intercession and even raising the dead, which are only true of a Person, as the following passages show:

^{KJV} **Genesis 1:2** And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 2:10** But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

^{KJV} **John 14:26** 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.

^{KJV} **Acts 8:29** Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

^{KJV} **John 15:26** 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:

It is quite clear from the teaching of our Lord in John 14 to 16 that the Holy Spirit is a Person. The third person pronoun is used, even though the Greek word for “Spirit” is in the neuter gender.

Like Jesus, divine perfections are given to the Holy Spirit. He is **omnipresent** as we see in Psalm 139:

^{KJV} **Psalm 139:7** Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰ Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

The Holy Spirit is said to be **omniscient** in the following Scriptures:

^{KJV} **Isaiah 40:13** Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or *being* his counsellor hath taught him? ¹⁴ With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 2:10** But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit is **omnipotent** as these passages teach:

^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 12:11** But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

^{KJV} **Romans 15:19** Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

The Holy Spirit, like the Son, is said to create, preserve, renovate, and raise the dead.

^{KJV} **Job 26:13** By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.

^{KJV} **Job 33:4** The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

^{KJV} **Psalms 104:30** Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

^{KJV} **Romans 8:11** But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

The deity of the Holy Spirit is seen particularly in the incident recorded in Acts 5, where many in the early church sold their property and gave to the church voluntarily to help others.

Ananias and Sapphira sold their property and gave only a portion, but made it appear that they had given all. Peter the apostle confronts Ananias in these words:

^{KJV} **Acts 5:3** 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? ⁴ 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.

Note in verse 3 Ananias is said to have lied to the Holy Spirit, but in verse 4 the lie is to God.

This passage teaches therefore, that the Holy Spirit is God.

The Holy Spirit is one of the Persons in whose name a believer is to be baptized. Let us examine this passage:

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

Notice the word “name” is in the singular, for there is only one God, yet there are three Persons mentioned all sharing in that one name. It would be mighty strange to baptize a person in the name of God as well as two other persons who are not God. That would be blasphemy.

The divine blessing is pronounced in the name of the three Persons of the Trinity:

^{KJV} **2 Corinthians 13:14** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen. <The second *epistle* to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas.>

This passage is remarkable not only that it mentions all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, but that Jesus is put first. This teaches that the Persons are equal and that’s why the order can vary.

Much more can be said, but sufficient has been given to indicate that the Holy Spirit is a Person and He is God as are the Son and the Father. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost brought the revelation of the Triune God to its completion.

How can three Persons be called God and yet there be only one God?

People are confused when we speak of three Persons who are called God, and yet maintain there is only one God. Is this not a clear contradiction? Many think so, and have abandoned the doctrine as illogical. But is this really so? It cannot be a contradiction since the New Testament recognizes both the deity of Jesus Christ as well as stating there is only one God.

^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 8:3** But if any man love God, the same is known of him. ⁴ 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.

The apostle Paul clearly states there is “none other God but one” (v.5), but in verse 6 he mentions not only the Father but also the Lord Jesus Christ, and applies to Him similar language as he does to God the Father. To rank Him with God and apply such language would be

blasphemy if Jesus were a mere creature, no matter how exalted. Our Lord too acknowledges there is but one God yet has no hesitation in accepting worship offered to Himself. Look at the following Scriptures:

^{KJV} **Matthew 19:16** And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? ¹⁷ And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God:* but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

^{KJV} **John 20:28** And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

In the last passage Jesus does not rebuke Thomas for calling Him “my God” because He *is* God.

In order to dispel some confusion we need to understand how the word “person” is used of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. We must not take this term to mean there are three separate beings who are God. Then it would be true that there are three Gods.

First the word “person” is meant to teach us that there is a distinction among them, just as one person is distinguished from another, but with this difference, that in the Trinity there is no separation as among men. We see in many places where the three are mentioned.

^{KJV} **Luke 1:35** 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.

^{KJV} **Matthew 28:19** 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 the first passage three are mentioned, and in the second they are said to be one, since the *name* is in the singular.

Furthermore, the word “person” speaks of agency. It is the Father who sends the Son. It is the Son who dies on the cross, and it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies believers. There is mystery in that all the external works of God can be said to be the works of the Triune God, yet one Person is distinguished as accomplishing one particular work. It is not the Father who begets

Himself. He begets the Son. It is the Son who dies on the cross, and not the Father, and it is the Spirit who is sent by the Father. The Spirit does not send the Father.

Third, the word “person” means that each has His own distinguishing property, even though we may not be able to explain exactly what it means. The Son is begotten, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and the Father is neither begotten nor proceeding.⁷

So when we speak of three Persons we must not imagine three separate beings as among men, who share a common nature, namely human nature. The persons of the Trinity share one numerical nature and so there is only one God. Charles Dickens in *The Tale of Two Cities* began his book with these words, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” which may have the appearance of a contradiction, but is not. It was the best of times for those who lived in the time of the industrial revolution and became rich overnight. It was the worst of times for others who lost their jobs. We must think of the Trinity in this way. From one perspective, there are three Persons who share the one numerical nature of Godhead, and so each can be called God. On the other hand, there is only one Being who is God, since the Persons are never separated.

Muslims regard it as blasphemy to have any partner with God. They see Jesus as a separate being who is also called God. This is to completely misunderstand the Biblical teaching, for Jesus is not another being but God Himself. He shares completely the nature of Godhead.

^{KJV} **Colossians 2:9** For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Erroneous illustrations used to explain the doctrine of the Trinity

1. *Speaker, the word spoken, and the breath by which it is spoken.* This leads to Subordinationism, the idea that one is above the other, as the speaker is higher than the word and the breath.

⁷ Macleod, *Behold Your God*, see pages 193-198.

2. *Spring, bubbling stream, river.* This leads to Subordinationism. There could be no bubbling stream or river without the spring. It would make God the Father the source of deity for the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son and the Spirit are equally God in themselves. The Son and the Spirit did not derive their essence from the Father.
3. *King, prince, chief of staff.* Again, this is Subordinationism.
4. *Father, mother, and child.* There is a subordinate relationship here. The child derives his being from the other two. In addition, there are three separate Beings in the Trinity. The Persons are never separated.
5. *Three members of a corporation.* This is not good, for it separates the Persons. It would be Tritheism. Though the persons are distinct, they cannot be separated.
6. *Spirit, soul, and body.* This denies the distinct Persons since here there is only one person.
7. *Sun, rays, and heat, or light, heat, and motion.* Such an analogy denies three distinct Persons in the one Godhead and leads to a Monist view of God - that there is only one person in the Godhead.
8. *Three balloons, yellow, red, and blue, but filled with the same air.* This denies that they are one in substance, since the air that is in one balloon is not in the other, though of the same nature. In the Trinity each Person possesses the whole nature of Godhead (Col. 2:9).
9. *Water, ice and steam.* This leads to Modalism, that is, the same being appearing in different roles, as an actor performing. The comparison breaks down since all three cannot appear at the same time, as they do in Scripture at the baptism of Jesus, or the Father and Son at the transfiguration.
10. *Father, son, and husband.* Once again, different names are given to the same person in different relationships, but there is only one person, whereas in Scripture there are three distinct Persons. This is Modalism.
11. *Ingredients of a cake - flour, egg, and water.* This denies full deity to any of the persons, since they are not complete without the other. God is seen as being made up of parts. There is no personality.
12. *Three parts of a cloverleaf.* God is not compounded of three separate sides. Each Person of the Godhead is the whole leaf. Once again there is no personality.
13. *Time - past, present, and future.* This does illustrate the aspect of threeness but it is abstract. No personality is involved.
14. *Lover, loved, and love.* There are only two persons, and love is an abstraction.
15. *Length, breadth, height.* Once again, there is no idea of personality.

People have come up with many more illustrations. These are given to caution us that no illustration will ever do justice to explaining God. He is unique. If anything, trying to illustrate often leads to heresy. Remember, God is in a class of One and therefore nothing in the universe can be used to explain Him. He has explained Himself to us, not only by the revelation He has given us in His Word, but also in sending His Son to live among us. Let us avoid using

illustrations to explain a mystery. Who can comprehend God, but God Himself? God shuts us off from going in this direction, when we read these words:

^{KJV} **Job 38:2** Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

^{KJV} **Isaiah 40:25** To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. ²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; not one faileth.

Some objections to the doctrine of the Trinity

I want to deal with a few objections that are often raised. First, it is stated that no one can comprehend the doctrine, and therefore it is meaningless to hold something we cannot understand. If this logic were consistently applied, we may not believe many things, simply because we do not comprehend them. I do not understand how a plane flies, but it does not hinder me from flying to see my loved one. A man living in a three dimensional world may not be able to comprehend what a four dimensional universe would look like, but he cannot say it does not exist because he cannot grasp it. This would make man the measure of all things. We expect, because God is unique and infinite, that there will be things about Him which we can never fully grasp. But God has revealed certain things to us and to our children (Deuteronomy 29:29), and the things He has revealed is so that we may know Him, though not comprehensibly. Let us be thankful that God has spoken and told us things about Himself and treasure these truths, even if much of it is still mysterious. Besides, a God who is totally comprehended by us is a god of our own invention and not worthy of adoration and worship.

Second, a particular statement Jesus made causes some to deny that Jesus is equal to the Father, namely the statement in John 14:28 where He says, “my Father is greater than I.” This statement must be understood in the context of Jesus speaking of His office as Mediator sent by the Father. In this relationship He is the Father’s Servant (Isaiah 42:1). This statement must be

read in the context of the rest of John's gospel, where John has made it abundantly clear that Jesus is God, equal with the Father (John 1:1-3; 3:13; 5:17-18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:6-9; 17:1-2; 20:28).

A third objection is that Jesus died and God is immortal, so how can Jesus be God? This is a good question. If man was going to be saved from his sin, a substitute had to be found who could bear the penalty that his sins deserved, which was to suffer the wrath of God whom he had offended. The only person who could save man was God, since no mere creature could bear the penalty. But God is immortal and so cannot die. Man was not able to bear the penalty. It had to be Someone who was both God (so the penalty could be borne), and man (so that He could die). Therefore, God the Son became incarnate to purchase men from their sins. The objection has led us to see the glorious truth about the Son of God, who took our flesh to redeem us. Let us not use His dying to argue against His deity. His sacrifice for our sins was accepted by God for He was raised from the dead and is exalted to the right hand of God.

The significance of the doctrine of the Trinity

This doctrine alone makes sense of all the Biblical data, in which Jesus is addressed as God and the Holy Spirit is called another Comforter, who replaces Jesus in His bodily absence from His disciples. How could anyone replace the presence of the Son of God unless He too was God?

Many people speak of God and having a relationship with God, but without Jesus in the picture. According to Scripture, this is impossible. Jesus said no one can come to the Father but by Him. Outside of Jesus Christ, God is a consuming fire, for man is a sinner who brings forth God's wrath against him. Eternal life is described in these words by our Lord:

^{KJV} **John 17:3** And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Dear reader, there is no coming to God unless we come by His Son and honor Him as we honor the Father (John 5:22-23). The apostle Paul pronounces a curse on all those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, because not to love Him is not to love God, for He is God. Friend, if you have been ridiculing and despising this precious truth then realize a curse rests upon you. Turn from your folly and bow to the Son and ask His forgiveness while it is still the day of grace, and come and join the angels in singing His praises for what He has done to save a sinner like you.

Without the work of the three Persons of the Trinity, no sinner can be saved. The Father loved us from eternity and chose us unto salvation, and gave us as a gift to His Son. It was the Father who gave His beloved Son to die for us on the cross, to purchase us from sin. It was the Son who was the Beloved of the Father and delighted to do His will and came to glorify His Father and be obedient unto death. His perfect obedience to the Law and sufferings of death provided salvation for sinners. He rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of God. It is the special work of the Holy Spirit to apply the work of Jesus Christ to the hearts of men, for by nature they are dead. He does this by giving them spiritual birth and creating faith in them so they believe in the Son of God and are saved. He sanctifies them and makes them conform to the image of Christ. What a debt of gratitude we owe to the Triune God for this wonderful salvation, which involved such sacrifice. (Ephesians 1:1-11; Romans 8:28-29; John 3:16; John 17:1-5; Philippians 2:6-11; Romans 6; Ephesians 2:1-4).

Only this doctrine of the Trinity helps us rightly to think of God. If we do not think of Him as Triune, our concept of God will be a phantom of our own minds. Listen to what two famous theologians, John Calvin and Herman Witsius, wrote long ago:

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God...designates himself by another special mark to distinguish himself more precisely from idols. For he so proclaims himself the sole God as to offer himself to be contemplated in three persons. *Unless we grasp these, only the bare and empty name of God flits about in our brain to the exclusion of the true God.*⁸

...it is necessary above all things, for the perfection of the human understanding, to be well acquainted with what it ought to know and believe concerning its God. And it may justly be doubted, whether he does not worship a god entirely unknown, nay, whether he at all worships the true God, who does not know and worship him, as subsisting in three persons. Whoever represents God to himself in any other light, represents not God, but an empty phantom, and an idol of his own brain.⁹

What ought to be our response to this wonderful doctrine of the Trinity?

First, we are to believe there is one God who exists in three Persons, though distinguished yet not separate.¹⁰ Unity and Trinity are equally ultimate. This truth can only be known by faith, for no man by searching can find out God. This doctrine should lead us to worship of the Triune God and not to idle speculation.

Second, when we speak of the first, second and the third Person of the Trinity we are not referring to rank. This is a logical order and not a temporal one. We cannot think of the Son before God the Father, nor of the Holy Spirit before we have the concept of Father and Son from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds. There is an order in the Godhead, but they are all equal in power and glory. This means we must give equal honor and worship to each person of the Holy Trinity. We are to adore the unity in Trinity.

^{KJV} **John 5:23** That all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Third, we owe obedience to all three Persons of the Trinity since they are all God. Jesus Christ Himself as man obeyed God the Father, and how much more should we.

⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.2, emphasis supplied.

⁹ Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man*, translated by William Crookshank (Reprint: den Dulk Foundation, 1990; distributed by the Presbyterian and Reformed), I:52.

¹⁰ Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 112-113.

^{KJV} **John 4:34** Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

^{KJV} **Deuteronomy 27:10** Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

We are to obey God the Son, because He will judge us and His laws are not grievous, but for our benefit. The angels do His good pleasure night and day. Should not we, who have experienced His salvation, purchased at such great cost to Himself?

^{KJV} **Psalms 2:12** Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

^{KJV} **Revelation 4:10** The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

We are to obey the Holy Spirit for it is His breath that has created us. He is the one who gives us new birth and creates faith and repentance in us by which we are united to Jesus Christ. He is the one who sanctifies us until we are brought to perfection in glory. We are told not to grieve the Spirit, and to blaspheme against Him is a grievous sin. Any good fruit in the life of the believer is the work of the Holy Spirit in him. Lay to heart these Scriptures:

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

^{KJV} **Job 33:4** The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

^{KJV} **John 3:5** Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

^{KJV} **2 Thessalonians 2:13** But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

^{KJV} **Matthew 12:31** Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. ³² And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

Let us worship and adore this Triune God now and forever. Amen