

What Does the Bible Reveal About the Trinity? – Part 1

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When we speak of the Trinity, we must do so with caution and modesty, for, as St. Augustine saith, “Nowhere else are more dangerous errors made, or is research more difficult, or discovery more fruitful.” —St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologies*, ia q. xxi, 1272

All we ask you to understand is that Trinitarian theology was not derived from pagan sources. It was derived from biblical passages where honest, godly men said, “Hey, 2 Peter says there is a Person called the Father, and he’s God. And Acts 5 says there is a Person called the Spirit, and he’s God. And John 1 says there’s a Person called the Word and he’s God.” You’ve got Three Persons, and Deuteronomy 6 says, “There is only one God.” Logical conclusion: the Three Persons, somehow, are the One God. That’s how Trinitarian theology started. Not with the pagans. —Dr. Walter Martin, responding to Dr. Robert Sabin, President of the Apostolic Bible Institute of St. Paul, Minnesota, on “The John Ankerberg Show”

The biblical doctrine of the Trinity is vital to understand because it concerns *who* God is, that is, a proper realization of the nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To understand the Trinity is to understand God as He has revealed Himself to be.

Why is this important? Because if we are to worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), as Jesus commanded, we must know and worship the one true God as He really is. To fail to do this is to fail to know and worship God—and this cannot bring Him glory. Thus, those who reject the Trinity by definition deny the true nature of God.

Consider several examples of professedly Christian religions that forcefully reject what the Bible teaches. By denying the biblical teaching on the Trinity, Jehovah’s Witnesses make Jesus merely a creation of Jehovah and the Holy Spirit merely Jehovah’s impersonal force. Thus, Jesus “was actually a creature of God” who earned his own salvation and immortality [1] and the Holy Spirit “is not a person at all but is God’s invisible active force by means of which God carries out his holy will and work.”[2]

In rejecting the Trinity, Jehovah's Witnesses founder C. T. Russell blasphemously stated that the God of Christianity "is plainly not Jehovah but the ancient deity, hoary with the iniquity of the ages—Baal, the Devil Himself."^[3] Second Watchtower president Judge Rutherford declared in a similar fashion, "The doctrine of the Trinity is a false doctrine and is promulgated by Satan for the purpose of defaming Jehovah's name" and for keeping others from "learning the truth of Jehovah and his Son, Jesus Christ." Indeed, "God-fearing persons find it a bit difficult to love and worship a complicated, freakish-looking three-headed God."^[4] Surely teachings that caricature God in this manner do not bring to Him honor and glory.

In a similar fashion, Mormons maintain that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not immortal, but were individual spirit-men created by the sexual union of their parent deities, each of whom then later evolved into Godhood.^[5] Mormonism thus rejects the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by teaching tritheism, or a belief in three separate Gods.

Indeed, Mormons are ultimately *polytheists* who reject the concept of one true God. As a standard text of Mormon doctrine declares:

As pertaining to this universe, there are three Gods: the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. To us, speaking in the proper finite sense, these three are the only Gods we worship. But in addition there is an infinite number of holy personages, drawn from worlds without number, who have passed on to exaltation [that is, Godhood] and are thus gods.^[6]

Mary Baker Eddy was the founder of Christian Science, another group that claims to be truly Christian. Yet in her *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, the bible of Christian Science, she writes:

The theory of three persons in one God (that is, a personal Trinity or Tri-unity) suggests polytheism, rather than the one ever-present I Am. The name Elohim is in the plural, but this plurality of Spirit does not imply more than one God, nor does it imply three persons in one.^[7]

Victor Paul Wierwille, founder of The Way International, reveals additional common consequences of rejection of the Trinity: a denial not only of the person of Jesus Christ but also of His atoning Work on the cross. Wierwille argues as follows:

Through the years, the more and more I carefully researched God's Word for knowledge, the less and less I found to substantiate a trinity. Even though I had always accepted the idea of a three-in-one-God, I continually found evidence in the Word of God which undermined a Christian trinity. [Further] If Jesus Christ is God we have not yet been redeemed. Our very redemption is dependent on Jesus Christ's being a man and not God. So how then did a trinitarian doctrine come about? It gradually evolved and gained momentum in late 1st, 2nd, and 3rd centuries as pagans, who had converted to Christianity, brought to Christianity some of their pagan beliefs and practices. Trinitarianism then was confirmed at Nicaea in 325 by Church bishops out of political expediency.^[8]

In essence, the reason the Trinity is important to understand according to its biblical and theological formulation is that failure to do so can lead to heretical views about who God is. This in turn can lead to rejection of the one true God and worship

of a false god. But if the Bible is clear on anything, it is clear that faith in and worship of a false god is powerless to save people from their sins. Jesus Himself emphasized the importance of having an accurate knowledge of God when He said, “And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

God warned Israel through the prophet Hosea, “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge” and “You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me” (Hosea 4:6; 13:4). As their history so amply demonstrates, the Israelites were spiritually ruined because they had rejected the true knowledge of God and had turned to false gods and idols. Unfortunately, in a similar manner, those who deliberately reject the Trinity, knowing in advance what the Bible teaches about it, only reveal their own lack of salvation (1 Cor. 2:14). In other words, no one can consistently dishonor what the Holy Spirit has revealed in Scripture as to the true nature of God and logically claim to be a Christian.

Notes

- 1 Q.v., “Jesus Christ,” Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Aid to Bible Understanding* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1971), pp. 437, 918; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 295 citing *Let God Be True* (1952), p. 74.
- 2 Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1965), p. 269.
- 3 C. T. Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures— Vol. 7: The Finished Mystery*, p. 410 cited by Wilton M. Nelson and Richard K. Smith, “Jehovah’s Witnesses” in David J. Hesselgrave, ed., *Dynamic Religious Movements: Case Studies of Rapidly Growing Religious Movements Around the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), p. 181.
- 4 Cited by Charles S. Braden, *These Also Believe: A Study of Modern American Cults and Minority Religious Movements* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 371 quoting Judge Rutherford’s *Uncovered* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1937), pp. 48-49; *Let God Be True* (1946), pp. 82-83, 93.
- 5 See John Ankerberg, John Weldon, *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1996), chap. 10.
- 6 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977), pp. 270, 576-577.
- 7 Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston, MA: The First Church of Christ, Scientist 1971), pp. 256, 515.
- 8 Victor Paul Wierwille, *Jesus Christ Is Not God* (New Knoxville, OH: American Christian Press, 1975), pp. 2-3, 6-7, 25.