

THE HOLY TRINITY, THE ETERNAL SON, JEHOVAH AND TRITHEISM

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The subject of the Trinity was debated for the first seven centuries of Christianity. How could God die on the cross? How could Jesus Christ be both human and Divine? How could God be Three in One? How could the One God be three persons? The Old Testament speaks of there being one God so how could He be three?

The word Trinity does not appear in the Bible but that does not mean it does not exist. It comes from two basic words TRI meaning three (hence words like triangle and tripod) and UNITY meaning in complete unspoiled harmony. Hence trinity. It must also be remembered that in Hebrew a plural is three, not two.

The Bible speaks of the Godhead (Matthew 28. 19, John 14.26, 2 Corinthians 13.14, 1 Peter 1.2 etc.)

There are those who have expressed the Trinity like this: God is One but expresses Himself in three ways, Father, Son and Spirit and compares it to a man who is triune in his being a man, a husband and a father. Some say that God is One but expresses Himself three ways but is one God. This explanation is unsatisfactory and could be taken as Sabellianism or Modalism.

Sabellian was a third century priest and theologian. His teaching was a non-Trinitarian doctrine which stated that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are different modes or aspects of the One God rather than three distinct members.

Some of you may not like this following thought but it is true: the trinity is a human conception; it is an invented word but that does not mean that the trinity is an invention. The Lord Jesus prayed to the Father to send the Holy Spirit. He did not pray to Himself to send Himself. The Trinity is three and, although they are distinct from each other, they constitute the one God.

In other words, God was said to have three faces or masks and this is where the word person/persona originates.

A person is a human being with their own individual body. The plural of person is people. If God is three persons then technically we should call them Divine People.

In ancient Rome, the word was persona which was used to describe masks used by actors on the stage. These masks had a resonating quality and amplified the sound for the audience. Persona was eventually used to describe the role portrayed by an actor and, of course, the actor was portraying a character and not himself, and therefore was portraying a fictional character.

Consequently a persona or person was a character in a play or novel being the mask or facade to satisfy the play or a situation by not representing their own personality. Persona/person meant a mask or character contrary to the character of the actor himself.

Christian doctrine has defined the Trinity as three persons who are distinct yet co-existent in unity, being co-equal and co-eternal and consubstantial and, therefore, constituting One God.

While I completely endorse this Trinitarian position, the idea of God as three persons presents problems to many. A person has an individual human body. Furthermore, the origin of the word person or persona means a mask, a facade, an actor performing a role and therefore not being their real self and this etymology must be considered.

Brethren are very fussy about words and their true meanings but they use the word person wrongly.

I accept that many brethren, who are well-versed in the Scriptures, use the word persons to describe the Trinity and they do not believe in tritheism.

Bearing in mind the real meaning of the word persona/person, I wish to state that the Lord Jesus is not an actor, a mask or a facade for that would make Him a fraud. And He was not a fictional character. These may be more reasons to avoid the use of words like person and persona

God the Father of all the faithful is a Spirit which means that He does not have a body, that He is invisible. The Holy Spirit is the same. The Eternal Word became flesh, had a body prepared for Him and therefore was a person having His own individual human body.

By this I do not say that the Lord Jesus did not exist before the Incarnation. He did as the Eternal Word. All members of the Trinity are eternal and divine.

The apostle John says that there remain three that bear record in Heaven namely the Father, the Word and the Spirit.

The Lord Jesus told His disciples to baptise in the Name, singular, of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which is three and therefore plural.

The Three that make up the Trinity are God who is the Father of all the faithful, eternal, sovereign and majestic. The Son is the Eternal Word, the Saviour, the Mediator, the great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us. The Spirit draws attention to Christ and is the executor of Divine Will.

The names of God are interesting. Elohim is a plural word indicating three, Genesis 1.26, 11.7 etc. Jehovah means the anointed One, the One who was, is and ever shall be. The word Jehovah is translated I AM and there are many references to Christ saying of Himself I AM. Christ is the anointed One.

We read of Christ being the anointed One. The word Yahweh is a replacement or alternative name for Jehovah, a more familiar name.

The work of the Godhead is as follows:

God the Father is judge, the Father of Israel and who dwells in Heaven; He is an Eternal Spirit Being—Psalm 68. 5, Matthew 7. 11, 1 Peter 1. 17. He is the Giver of good things and He judges fairly.

God the Son is the Eternal Word of God who was made flesh, becoming a person having a human body. He came to seek and to save those who are lost. He is the Saviour, the only way to Heaven and Eternal Life —Luke 19.10, John 3.17, 1 Timothy 1 15, Hebrews 2. 9, 1 Peter 2.24 etc.

God the Holy Spirit is to draw attention to Christ, and not to Himself and reproves the world of sin, righteousness and judgement and to guide us into all truth and to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts John 16. 7-11 and 13, Romans 5.5, Romans 8.14 etc.

Of interest are the appearances of God. God the Father is invisible John 1. 18. Colossians 1.15. He is Spirit. He does not have a body so he is not a person since a person has an individual human body.

So say all the dictionaries and many of the Bible dictionaries although modern dictionaries do call those in the Trinity persons.

The Eternal Word became flesh, became a person having an individual human body. He took on a physical form yet remaining Divine.

The Father and the Spirit have never human bodies but are and remain spirit beings. Christ was born of a Virgin and was visible having a human body John 1.18, John 3.8, Colossians 1 etc.

So who was the God that appeared to Abraham, Moses and others and was sometimes called the Angel of the Lord?

There are those who call these appearances the Christophanies, the pre-incarnate appearances of Christ in the Old Testament or after His ascension. This argument falls down because He did not appear as Christ but as Jehovah in Old Testament times.

Christophanies are non-physical appearances and manifestations of Christ referring to visions of Him after His Ascension. The term Christophany means Christ Anointed and, therefore, a Christophany is an appearance of the Anointed Christ whereas Theophany means an appearance of God.

God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are invisible. It was Jehovah who are the appearances of God in Old Testament times. The Bible says so.

It was in front of Moses that this identification was given. Jehovah said He was I AM, the meaning of the word Jehovah.

The hymn writer confuses the issue when he writes, God in three persons, blessed trinity.

The Father and the Spirit are not persons. They are Divine Spirits without a body. A person is someone who has an individual body. It was the Eternal Word that became flesh and a person.

The teaching of God being three persons, or being in three persons, has given rise to the heresy of tritheism, a very dangerous and divisive doctrine in which it is said that God is three persons which would mean there are three Gods all of which have their own individual human bodies. And there are Christians who use the word persons. It is technically wrong and has called division and the damnable heresy of tritheism which many Christians do not seem to know anything about.

Tritheism is the belief in three distinct powerful gods who form a triad. It means that each have their own body. They are three persons said to be divine since they are gods. If we, as Christians, say that God is three persons then we are advocating tritheism although probably in ignorance.

A child at school hearing that God was three persons asked the question, "Which of the three has blue eyes?" and another asked, "Who is the tallest of the three?"

Hindus practise tritheism as do some Muslims as well as Unitarians. Incidentally, Unitarians states that Jesus was a great man but not divine .They reject the trinity as do the Jehovah Witnesses,

There are those who believe that there is a hierarchy in the Trinity. The Son obeyed His Father and the Holy Spirit draws attention to Christ and not to Himself.

There are conflicting reports about the Eternal Sonship. One group says that the Lord has always been the Eternal Son in eternity past, at creation and in the times of Adam, Abraham, Joseph, David and the rest.

The doctrine of Eternal Sonship states that the second member of the Trinity eternally existed as the Son. Christ is and has always been the Son of God.

There are those who disagree with this and say that the Lord began His existence at Bethlehem. This is not true because before His Incarnation He was the Eternal Word of God and the opening chapter of John's Gospel states that.

Was He called the Son in Heaven in eternity past?

There is no record of this and God said Thou art my Beloved son; today have I begotten thee. What day was that? Someone is begotten or beget at birth.

Before Adam, was He known as Jesus Christ? the name Jesus was given at His incarnation and as he was given that name it follows that He did not have that name previously. Did He have a human body in Heaven before Bethlehem?

We read that at His Birth He was given the name of Jesus name. Obviously, He did not have it before. He had a body prepared for Him which more than suggests he did not have a body before. He was made man.

God sent His Son to save sinners is, of course, correct. It was as God's only begotten Son that He died on the Cross. We cannot ignore verses like God saying, this is my beloved Son. This day have I begotten Thee.

Begotten means to produce a child, to cause or create, the act of becoming a father. The Father begets the Son but the Son existed before as the Eternal Word.

The Bible talks about the Eternal Word but not the Eternal Son. The Bible records that there are three that bear record in Heaven The Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit (1 John 5.7).

When the Lord comes again, He bears the name the Word of God (Revelation 19.13) as well as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

You must see that the emphasis is on the Word.

When the Lord said to the Jews, 'Before Abraham was, I am'. He was referring to His existence as the Eternal Word. When He said that the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world and, bearing in mind that God was the Father of all the faithful, does this refer to the Father's love for the Eternal Word?

Early in Church history, grave controversies arose about the Person of Christ and the Trinity. This came to a head in the fourth century and Emperor Constantine called a council at Nicea. Athanasius came forward to defend the Deity of Christ. His opponent was Arius who denied the Deity of Christ and therefore Arianism was founded which is a blasphemy. And throughout church history, many sects are Arianist because they deny the Deity of Christ which is opposed to orthodoxy.

The main sect that is Arian is the Jehovah Witnesses.

The most serious problem, after the Deity of Christ issue, was the teaching that the Trinity was three Persons or God in three Persons. If this was the case, then there were three Gods and this gave rise to the dreadful heresy of tritheism. God the Father and the Holy Spirit are Spirit Beings and, therefore, not Persons. A person has their own physical human body. Both the Father and the Spirit are invisible since they are spirits. It is wrong to call the Trinity as three persons, or God in three persons.

Tritheism teaches that there are three separate powerful gods since God is three persons. And so we repeat that it is wrong to call the members of the Trinity persons. Totally wrong. And in very many

other cases, brethren are so particular about words and their correct meanings.

The hymn which has the line 'God in three persons, Blessed Trinity' is seriously misleading.

If we refer to the Authorised Version of the Bible, it must be noted that when the Hebrew word Yaweh or Jehovah is used it was often in capital letters. These two words are rendered Lord. Therefore, when we read Lord, we know that the original word was Jehovah which means essential existence and self-existing. The Hebrew word Elohim is usually rendered God and means supreme power as in creation.

If we read Isaiah 43 verses 10 to 12, it states:

"Ye are my witnesses says the Lord Jehovah and my servant whom I have chosen that ye may know and believe me and understand that I am He; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me, I, even I, am the Lord Jehovah and besides Me there is no Saviour. I have declared and saved and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you; therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I am God".

In Isaiah 44. 6, we read:

"Thus saith the Lord Jehovah the King of Israel and His Redeemer the Lord Jehovah of hosts 'I am the first and I am the last and besides me there is no God'". The Lord Jesus that He was the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega. There are so many references to this such as Isaiah 41. 4, 44. 6, 48. 12 and in Revelation 1. 8, 1.17, 2. 8, 3.14, 21.16, 22. 13.

He is also called the King of Israel which is the same as the Kings of the Jews. See Matthew 2. 2, chapter 21 verses 11, 29 and 37, Mark 15 verses 2, 9, 12,18, 26 and Luke 23 verses 37 and 38 etc.

John the Baptist referred to Jesus as Jehovah. In Matthew 3, the Baptist says, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord Jehovah... make straight in the desert a highway for our God... and the glory of the Lord Jehovah shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it. For the mouth of the Lord Jehovah hath spoken it'".

Jesus-Jehovah is also presented as the shepherd. Psalm 23 begins, "The Lord Jehovah is my shepherd, I shall not want" and ends with, "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Jehovah for ever".

In John 10 11-16, the Lord Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd and know my sheep and am known of mine... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand".

The anonymous writer to the Hebrews in 13.20 says, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant...".

Jeremiah 31.10 states, "Hear the word of the Lord Jehovah, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He that scattereth Israel with gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock'".

In Ezekiel 34, from verse 30 we read, "The Lord Jehovah (says), 'And ye (are) my flock, the flock of my pasture and I am your God'".

There is the matter of Jesus-Jehovah of the Sabbath. In Exodus 16. 23 and 29, we read, "And he said unto them, 'This is that which the Lord Jehovah hath said', Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath

unto the Lord Jehovah, see for the Lord Jehovah hath given you the Sabbath". This is endorsed in Leviticus 19. 3 and Leviticus 23. 3. In Matthew 12 verse 2 to 8, the Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees, 'The Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath day'. The Lord Jehovah inaugurated the Sabbath and He is sometimes called the Son of Man and the Lord of the Sabbath day.

Jesus-Jehovah knows the heart. In Job 42, from verse one, we read, "Then Job answered the Lord Jehovah and said, 'I know that Thou canst do every thing and that no thought can be withheld from Thee'". In Luke 5. 22 and 6.8, we read that Jesus both perceived and knew men's thoughts. Psalm 94.11 states the Lord Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of man. Further evidence is given in 1 Chronicles 28.9 and Isaiah 66 verses 16 to 18.

The response of Nathaniel to the call of Christ in John 1. 47- 49 contains his statement, 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the king of Israel'.

One could pursue further proof in, for example, the Lord controlling the elements. Compare Psalm 89 verse 8 and 9 with Psalm 93.4 with Matthew 14, from verse 25, and Mark 4 from verse 37 and there are many other titles confirming Jesus is Jehovah.

What is compelling is that the Lord Jesus is I AM. I AM is the name of Yaweh, and the name for Jehovah in its completeness is I AM THAT I AM, the name given to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3. 14). Throughout John's Gospel the Lord is referred to as I AM

I am the Messiah 4.26 I am the Bread of Life 6.35 I am from above 8.22 I am the Eternal One 8.58 I am the Light of the World 9. 5 I am the door 10.7 I am the Good Shepherd 10. 11 I am the Son of God 10.36 I am the resurrection and the life 11.25 I am the Lord and Master 13. 13 I am the way, the truth and the life 14.6 I am the true vine 13.1 I AM Is the name of the Lord Jehovah and Jehovah is another name for Yaweh and the Lord identified Himself as I AM.

You will remember that on one occasion when the Lord Jesus used the expression, I AM people complained saying that he was saying that He was God. When God appeared to Abraham and to Moses and to others it could not be God the Father of all the faithful, as He is invisible (Colossians 1. 15, 1 Timothy 6.16). The Holy Spirit is also a Spirit Being and is invisible (John 3.7)

But it is vital to be absolutely accurate in our terminology. It is important to remember what we have already discovered.

God is not three persons. If that is believed or taught then we could be teaching tritheism. Tritheism teaches that there are three Gods and its extended beliefs state the all three have an individual physical body. It is a damnable heresy just as is the denial of the Deity of Christ. In the beginning was the Word... and the Word became flesh (John 1)

A person is someone with a human body. The Lord Jesus had a body prepared for Him (Hebrews 10.5, Philippians 2. 7). We do not read that about God the Father or the Holy Spirit. They are not and did not become persons.

The Lord Jesus is eternal but He was known as the Eternal Word in times past. At His birth, He was given the name of Jesus and the name of Christ. He was the long expected Messiah born to set His people free. There was a day when God beget His Son (Hebrews 1. 5,), but He existed before as the Eternal Word.

We must remember that the Eternal Word became flesh, took a body and became a person, having been given a human body. All members of the Godhead are eternal and Divine. The Trinity is eternal and Divine.

They are united but separate. The Lord Jesus prayed to the Father to send the Holy Spirit.

I completely believe in the Trinity. It is a mystery and hard to understand and it calls for faith. It is not for us to strive and argue but accept it as part of God's infallible Word.

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