

## **Doctrine of the Trinity: The Controversy**

1. The Doctrine of the Trinity declares that God is one in essence and three in persons.

### *Special Note.*

The Law of Non Contradiction declares that A cannot be A and non A in the same relationship. The church declares that God is one in A (essence) and three in persons (subsistence). The Church does not say God is one in essence and three in essence, that would be a contradiction. If the church said that God was one in person and three in person that would be a contradiction.

2. The church began to teach the Doctrine of the Trinity because the Scriptures present progressive revelation. As time goes by God reveals more and more of His redemptive plan.
3. Progressive revelation is not corrective revelation but an unfolding of the Divine narrative. There are hints of the Trinity in the Old Testament but the teaching is more fully developed in the New Testament.
4. Before the Doctrine of the Trinity can be explored the Doctrine of Unity must be understood for “trinity” denotes “tri-unity” (three in oneness).
5. Behind the “unity” of the Eternal One is the concept of monotheism (mono, one; theism, God). Monotheism is declared in The Great Shema.
  - *Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:*
6. The affirmation of monotheism was in itself a startling declaration and a great manifestation of faith in a culture of polytheism which surrounded the Hebrew faith.
7. The belief by the Hebrews in one God frustrated modern day philosophers, such as Hegel (1770-1831), who insisted that monotheism was a later historical evolutionary development of society, and yet the Bible takes the reader back to creation to assert that “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1).
8. The Religious Historical School was wrong. Monotheism was not a late development in societal evolutionary thought but was part of man’s consciousness and understanding from the beginning.
9. According to the Religious Historical School of thought as men evolved in society they embraced animism, a theory of religion that finds life in rocks, plants, animals, and inanimate objects. This belief was based on contemporize primitive religions still in existence.

<b>Critics Examples</b>	
<b>Animism</b>	<b>Henotheism</b>
Eve speaking to a serpent	God of Israel fighting gods of other nations
Abraham speaking beside the oak trees	God not allowing other gods before Him
Balaam speaking to a donkey	

10. From animism man developed a more sophisticated belief in polytheism or a multitude of gods.

11. The next stage of religious development was called henotheism, which is the worship of one god among many. Henotheism was a transition between polytheism and monotheism. Each person could have their own god who reigned sovereignly over a geographical area.

- Ra                    Egyptians
- Dagon              Philistines
- Baal                Canaanites
- Yahweh            Hebrews

12. However, animism, henotheism, and polytheism only reflected devolution of human progress. Romans 1 explains.

- *Romans 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

13. Many battles in the Old Testament reflected the Battle of the Gods.

- *1 Samuel 5:2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. 3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. 4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. 5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.*

14. Monotheism is the highest of religious thought for it alone exalts the Lord God.

***Special Note.***

Critics of Judaism insisted that monotheism, even in Judaism, did not begin with Abraham or even Moses but developed with the 8<sup>th</sup> century prophets.

15. Biblical history is the answer to the critics for the Scriptures reveal that “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1).

16. What is firmly established in the history of Israel is the Doctrine of Monotheism.

17. What the New Testament Church has contributed to the Doctrine of Monotheism is the Tri-Unity within the Godhead.

***Special Note.***

The new is in the old concealed while the old is in the new revealed (Augustine).

The New Testament is in the Old Testament contained while the Old Testament is in the New Testament explained.

18. What the New Testament affirms is that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Yet, there is an essential oneness in the essence of each though there is a subsistent of each.

## Doctrine of the Trinity

### The Connection Between the Old Testament and the New Testament

1. One the earliest reference to the Trinity may be in cryptic form in the name of Elohim which is plural in number.

***Special Note.***

While not conclusive, the term Elohim is compatible with the Doctrine of the Trinity. The word itself does not demand a Trinity for it could be simply a plural of intensity to speak of the One in whom resides all the elements of deity and majesty. Elohim might also be a term of respect, or it could be merely a literary term much like the editorial, “we” used today.

2. What is certain is that Jewish thought embraced monotheism.

***Special Note.***

In Ancient Greek philosophy one of the problems trying to be resolved was the “One and the many.”

Question: *“How do we make sense of so many diverse things which are part of our experience?”*

Question. *“Do we live in a universe that is ultimately coherent?”, or, “Do we live in a universe that is ultimately chaotic?”*

The assumption of science is that in order for there to be knowledge there has to be coherency. The Universe as a whole shouts out for an Intelligent Designer. The cosmos is not chaos. In the Christian world view, all diversity finds unity in God. God is active in creation. He brought unity out of the diversity of creation.

3. The Stranger of Genesis 18 is an example of the Trinity being manifested in the Old Testament.
  - *Genesis 18:1 And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, 3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: 4 Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: 5 And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.*

7 And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. 8 And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat. 9 And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. 10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? 13 And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? 14 Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. 15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh. 16 And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.

4. The Servant of the Lord is an example of the Trinity being manifested in the Old Testament.

- *Isaiah 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. 4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.*

5. The Angel of the Lord is an example of the Trinity being manifested in the Old Testament.

- *Judges 6:21 Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. 22 And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! For because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. 23 And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. 24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.*

6. The most quoted psalm in the New Testament reflects the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament. God is having a conversation with David's Lord.

- *Psalms 110:1 A Psalm of David. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

### ***Special Note.***

In Psalm 110:1 the special name of God, "Yahweh" (Jehovah) is united with His chief supreme title, "Adonai"

7. The New Testament does not repudiate the monotheism of the Old Testament. Indeed, monotheism is embraced and repeated.
- *Acts 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 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.*
  - *1 Corinthians 8:4 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.*

***Special Note.***

Even though Paul ascribes divinity to Christ he reaffirms the essential unity of God.

8. Why does the New Testament speak of one God and yet affirms the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit? The simple answer is because the Bible teaches this.
9. The deity of Christ is manifested.
- *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. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

***Special Note.***

The Logos with God, face to face, from the beginning is distinguished from God, and yet was God. The Logos was not a creature nor was He created for He is the Creator, “*All things were made by him.*” Divine characteristics and attributes are ascribed to the Logos, to Christ.

- *John 8:58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

*Exodus 3:13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? 14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*

- *John 20:25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. 26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. 28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. 29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

10. Neither men nor angels are ever to accept worship.

- Men are not to be worshipped. *Acts 14:11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. 14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, 15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: 16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. 18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.*
- Angels are not to be worshipped. *Revelation 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

- Jesus accepted the worship allowed only of God. *John 20:28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

11. The Trinity is reflected in the triune formula for baptism and benediction.

- Baptism. *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:*
- Benediction. *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.*

12. The most pregnant mystery of the Trinity is found in John 1:1. The Word must be distinguished from God, but the Word must also be identified face to face with God.

- *John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*



### **Doctrine of the Trinity: The Heresies**

1. The Doctrine of the Trinity did spawn erroneous teachings about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
2. Extremely erroneous teaching is rightly called heresy.
3. Heresy may be defined as any provocative belief or theory that is strongly at variance with established beliefs or customs. A heretic is a proponent of such claims or beliefs.
4. The term “heresy” comes from the Greek, αἵρεσις (airesis) originally meant "choice" or "thing chosen", but it came to mean the "party or school of a man's choice
5. Heresy is distinct from both apostasy, which is the explicit renunciation of one's religion, principles or cause, and blasphemy, which is irreverence toward religion.
6. According to Titus 3:10 a divisive person should be warned two times before separating from him. The Greek for the phrase "divisive person" became a technical term in the early Church for a type of "heretic" who promoted dissension.
  - *Titus 3:10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;*
7. In contrast to heretical teaching, correct teaching is called sound not only because it builds up in the faith, but because it protects against the corrupting influence of false teachers.
8. One of the values of heresy is that it forces the church to discover the truth.
9. One of the earliest heretical teachings concerning the Trinity was Sabellianism.

#### ***Special Note.***

In the second century, the church was confronted by the Gnostics. Sabellianism, also known as modalism, modalistic Monarchianism (one ruler), or modal monarchism, is the non-Trinitarian or anti-Trinitarian belief that the Heavenly Father, Resurrected Son, and Holy Spirit are three different modes or aspects of one monadic God, as perceived by the believer, rather than three distinct persons within the Godhead. Sabellianism postulates that there are no real or substantial differences between the three, such that there is no substantial identity for the Spirit or the Son. The term Sabellianism comes from Sabellius (c. AD 215), who was a theologian and priest from the 3rd century. Sabellianism was condemned at the Church Council in Antioch, AD 341.

The One gives out emanations or concentric circles of Father – Son – Holy Spirit which in turn gives expression to materialism, water, sky, universe, rocks – all of which finds unity in the One. The illustration Sabellius was that of the sun and its rays. We make a distinction between the sun and sun beams. The rays partake of the nature or essence of the sun, only further removed from the core of the sun. So Christ is like a sun beam, He is a lower level of the Father but farther away from the Father. He used the term *homoousios* (to be; being). The

same being. But the church said no, "God is one in essence but three in persons. Christ is not a mode of God but very God of very God."

Sebellius and thus Modalism was condemned at Antioch in 267 AD. The church chose the term *homoousios* (the same) to reflect the relationship between members of the Trinity. In the Nicene Creed, the prefix changed from *homoiousios* (similar) to *homoousios* (same). The Nicene Creed affirmation is that Jesus and God the Father are *homoousios*, "of the same substance."

***Special Note.***

Monarchianism was an attempt to protect the unity of God.

10. Another major attack on the Trinity came from Arius (c. AD 250-336) who denied the full deity of Christ. "There was a time when the Son was not", he said. Arianism was condemned by the Council of Nicene, AD 325. His view is was that of Dynamic Monotheism or Adoptionism theology. Arius said that Jesus was the First Begotten of God, the Logos, but He is not God. He is not eternal. He is less than God but greater than man. It is the Logos who was incarnate. He was one with the Father and so was adopted by the Father as His Son. He became the Son of God dynamically. To defend his view, Arius turned to the Word *homoiousios* - He is like God. He is begotten. He happened. He had a beginning.

The Nicene Council said that Christ was of God, not made. He was the first begotten, not in a biological sense of firstborn, but as in the sense of having the preeminence.

***Special Note.***

The Council of Nicene (AD 325) effectively silenced the heresy of Arianism and another heresy as well, that of Adoptionism which was the belief that Jesus was adopted as God's Son either at His baptism, His resurrection, or His ascension. According to Epiphanius's account of the Ebionites, the group believed that Jesus was chosen because of his sinless devotion to the will of God. Adoptionism was declared heresy at the end of the 2nd century and was rejected by the Synods of Antioch and the First Council of Nicaea, which defined the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and identified the man Jesus with the eternally begotten Son or Word of God. The Council of Chalcedon (AC 451 AD) also defended the Trinity.



Francesco Albani's *The Baptism of Christ*,  
when Jesus became one with God according to Adoptionism

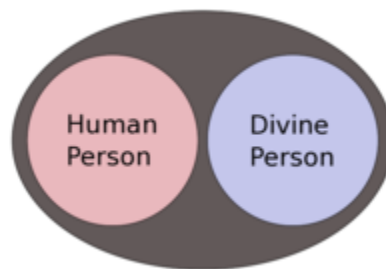
11. The assault on the Trinity has been most vicious in the fourth century, the fifth century, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century.
12. In the fifteenth century the church had to fight on two fronts.
  - The church had to fight Monophysitism (Greek, *μόνος monos*, "only, single" and *φύσις physis*, "nature"), is the Christological position that, after the union of the divine and the human in the historical Incarnation, Jesus Christ, as the incarnation of the eternal Son or Word (Logos) of God, had only a single "nature" which was either divine or a synthesis of divine and human.

***Special Note.***

The formula the church has used for centuries is to say that God is one in essence (being; nature) but three in persons. Just the opposite is used of the church's confession of Christ. The person of Christ is confessed to be one person but with two natures, one nature that is divine and one nature that is human. The Monophysite heresy taught that Jesus did not have two natures but one nature. One person, one nature.

The problem with the single nature of Christ is that Jesus is said to have a theanthropic (Greek, *theanthropos*, God-man) nature. In Christ there is a humanly-divine nature. But this concept of Christ makes Him neither God nor man. He is more than man, but less than God. The distinction between humanist and deity is obscured in this concept. What is going on with this thinking is that the two natures of Jesus are being mixed together or confused. The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 condemned Monophysitism.

- The church had to fight Nestorianism, a doctrine of Christ advanced by Nestorius (AD 386 – 450). In the East, the church was being influenced by the Nestorius who was the patriarch of Constantinople from AD 428-431. Nestorius taught that the divine Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, consisted of two persons because if you have two natures you have to have two persons. So, Nestorius taught people to believe in the man Jesus Christ and the divine Logos, which dwelt in Jesus Christ. Jesus was viewed as a Divine person and a human person co-existing. What this meant is that the Nestorians were teaching the opposite of Monophysitism. The two natures of Christ were not merely distinguished, they were separated. The Nestorian believed Christ existed as two persons.



There is a difference between something that is a distinction and something that is separated.

Man, for example is made up of body and soul, and yet a person is one person. To distinguish the body from the soul is to do no harm. But if the body is separated from the soul, there will be death.

Jesus said there were things He did not know. He spoke from His humanity. His human nature did not know everything. But then Jesus spoke of things that only someone with omniscience could know. At that point He spoke from His divine nature.

The Nestorians also rejected the term *Theotokos* (Giver of birth to God) for the Virgin Mary, using instead the term *Christotokos* (giver of birth to Christ) or *Anthropotokos* (giver of birth to a man).

The Council of Chalcedon met to reject these two heresies in AD 451. The Council declared that Jesus Christ is *vere deus, vere homo*, that is “Truly man and truly God,” having two natures in one person.

***Special Note.***

It is wrong to say that Jesus was fully God and fully Man. That is a contradiction. If a person is fully God, then you have a person with one nature. One person cannot be completely divine and completely human at the same time.

It is proper to say that Jesus had two natures. The divine nature was “fully divine” and the human nature was “fully human.” Here is where the subtlety of language is helpful. The divine nature of Christ possesses all of the attributes of God. The human nature of Christ possessed all of the attributes of humanity, but without sin.

13. While combating the two major Trinitarian heresies at Chalcedon in AD 451, the Four Negatives were introduced. The divine and human nature of Christ were united but in such a way to be without mixture, without confusion, without division, and without separation.

	<b>Rejection of the Monophysite Heresy</b>
• without mixture	
• without confusion	
	<b>Rejection of the Monophysite Heresy</b>
• without division	
• or separation	

The two natures are perfectly united, you can distinguish between them, but you cannot divide between them, you cannot separate them.

After the Four Negatives, the final clause says: “Each nature retaining its attributes.”

### **Doctrine of the Trinity: A Contradiction or A Mystery?**

1. God is one in essence but three in persons. While this is a great mystery it is not a contradiction for the law of contradiction does not apply.
2. There is a reason why people continue to accuse Christianity of being irrational or contradictory in regard to the Doctrine of the Trinity.
3. Three closely related words which are distinct in meaning needs to be understood.
  - Contradiction. A contradiction is inherently incomprehensible. Not even God can understand a contradiction. Nonsense and chaos does not reside in the mind of God. In God there are no contradictions but there are mysteries.

#### *Special Note.*

A seminary professor once declared to his class, "God is absolutely immutable in His essence." And then the professor went on to say, "God is absolutely mutable in His essence." The class was impressed and there was a collective sigh. All the students were thinking that what the professor said was deep. All the students were impressed except one, who realized that what the professor just said was nutty. Men and women of intelligence and authority can say outrageous things (Story by R. C. Sproul).

- Paradox (Greek, *para*, alongside of; *dox*, to seem, to appear). A paradox may sound contradictory, but upon closer scrutiny the tension is resolved. For example, Jesus said to be free we have to be a servant.

### **Seven Biblical Paradoxes**

- ❖ To be humble is to be exalted. *James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*
- ❖ To be weak is to be strong. *2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*
- ❖ It is more blessed to give than to receive. *Acts 20:35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*
- ❖ Freedom comes through servitude. *Romans 6:18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*
- ❖ Gain is found through losing. *Philippians 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,*

- ❖ Living is through dying. *John 12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*
- ❖ Finding is through losing. *Matthew 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*
- Mystery. As used in modern society, a “mystery” refers to something that we do not yet know. In the Bible a mystery was something that was known but it was only known to those who were initiated, much like the Masons have mysteries, but these mysteries are known to those who are Masons.

### **Seven Biblical Mysteries**

- ❖ The Mystery of Iniquity. *2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*
- ❖ The Mystery of the Kingdom of God. *Mark 4:11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:*
- ❖ The Mystery of Boundless Love. *Ephesians 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*
- ❖ The Mystery of the Seven Stars. *Revelation 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*
- ❖ The Mystery of the Gospel which is The Mystery of the Faith.

*Ephesians 6:19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,*

*Romans 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*

*1 Timothy 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*

- ❖ The Mystery of Immortality. *1 Corinthians 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

- ❖ The Mystery of Babylon the Great. *Revelation 17:5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

***Special Note.***

There are some mysteries that we hold to in the sense that we know something to be true even though we do not fully understand it. We know gravity to be true even though gravity is not fully understood in light of motion. Biblical Christianity has its share of mysteries. We do not know how God can be infinite in His being and yet that is how He is revealed to be.

4. Because individuals do not always understand a paradox or a mystery, there is often a rush to judgment and the declaration is made that something is irrational. But that is not always the case.
5. A linguistic argument against the Trinity is that the Bible never uses the term Trinity. It is argued that the term “Trinity” is imposed on the Scripture.

***Special Note.***

In many modern translations of the Bible the text of 1 John 5:7 is either omitted or relegated to a footnote because the words are not found in many of the earliest manuscripts.

- *1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*
6. It is not necessary for the term “Trinity” to be found in Scripture if the concept is taught in the Bible. There is abundant evidence that all the attributes of the Eternal One is ascribe to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

***Special Note.***

The various terms that arose in church history came into existence because of the commitment of the church to precision. John Calvin warned about the “slippery snakes” that come into the church to try to destroy the Scripture by heresy reflected in the teaching of Arius. Arius argued that Jesus was a creature though he used the language of the church. A favorite trick of the heretic is studied ambiguity.

***Special Note.***

A studied ambiguity is when a word is used to intentionally leave the concept ambiguous. Politicians employ this device often.

Adolf Hitler built a large portion of his political ideology on *Lebensraum* (living space). The Russian President Vladimir Putin, in September, 2014, used a frightening word for the pro-Russian rebels fighting in the southeastern Ukraine. Putin praised the soldiers for their major success inside Ukraine and appealed to the militia of “Novorossyia,” or “New Russia.”



In American politics it is not unusual to hear a person talk about others paying their “fair share.” These words leave concepts which are deliberately ambiguous in order to massage and manipulate their meaning at will.

Theologically, in the sixteenth century the great debate was over the ground of justification. Is justification based on an inherit righteousness, or is the ground of justification an alien righteousness that is imputed to those who believe? Is our righteousness from within a person or from without? Is the righteousness of Christ infused into the soul of a believer who then unites his good works with the work of Christ or, is the righteousness of Christ imputed or credited to the unworthy unbeliever?

The whole controversy centered on the word “imputation.” In order to resolve the issue, it was suggested that both Catholics and Protestant say together, “We are justified by Christ.” Ah, but to a Catholic “justification” meant one thing and to a Protestant, “justification” meant something quite different.

7. Precise theological terms act as a shibboleth to protect God’s people from error.

***Special Note.***

A “shibboleth” (Heb. flood, stream) is a word, or pronunciation, that distinguishes people of one group or class from those of another. The origin of the Hebrew word being used as a watchword of protection comes from an encounter between the inhabitants of Gilead and the tribe of Ephraim. The people of Gilead inflicted a military defeat upon the tribe of Ephraim.

The surviving Ephraimites tried to re-cross the Jordan River back into their home territory. The Gileadites secured the fords of the river to stop them. In order to identify and kill these refugees, the Gileadites put each refugee to a simple test knowing the Ephraimites could not pronounce the “sh” sound.

*KJV. Judges 12:4 Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. 5 And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; 6 Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.*

*NJB. Judges 12:5-6 Gilead then cut Ephraim off from the fords of the Jordan, and whenever Ephraimite fugitives said, 'Let me cross,' the men of Gilead would ask, 'Are you an Ephraimite?' If he said, 'No,' they then said, 'Very well, say "Shibboleth" (שבולת).' If anyone said, "Sibboleth" (סבולת), because he could not pronounce it, then they would seize him and kill him by the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed on this occasion.*

8. Because it is important if a person is orthodox a shibboleth can easily discern if they truly are.
  - Ask a person if they believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, not if they believe in its inspiration.
  - Ask a person if they believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, not if they believe in the resurrection.

## Doctrine of the Trinity: The Final Formula

1. The final formula for the Trinity established by the church is that God is one in essence but three in persons.

### The Christology of Christ

- *Hebrews 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 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; 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

#### *Special Note.*

The Son of God is referred to as “the brightness of His [God the Father’s] glory and He is “the expressed image of His [God the Son’s person]. The Father’s person is distinct from the Son’s person.

2. The term “person” was originally used in a different manner by the early church than how the term “person” is used today. Language tends to be dynamic. If you called a girl “cute” during the Middle Ages in England you insulted her, for “cute” meant “bowlegged.” Today, the word means she is charming and pretty.
3. It was the church father, Tertullian, who had a background in law and theology. He introduced the word “persona” in an attempt to express the Logos Christology at the time.
4. In Latin, in legal terms, a person’s estate or ownings were part of the *persona* of the individual.
5. In Latin, taking a concept from Greek drama whereby the actors on a stage had more than one part to play and so, when changing their role would put on a mask; the *persona* changed.
6. As the church developed the concept of the “person”, the meaning of the term became more specific. The Greek word, “hypostasis” or “hypostatic” was used.

#### *Special Note.*

- Essence (Greek, οὐσία, *ousios*, being). This word is often translated into English as “substance” and “essence.” The Greeks were looking for that “stuff” which did not change. Plato made a distinction between “being” and “becoming.”

- ❖ Parmenides, a Presocrates philosopher made a famous statement that, “Whatever is, is.” For anything to be real, it has to ultimately be in a state of being. If it changes it is not “being.” There has to be a real “essence” or “substance” to it otherwise it might be a figment of the imagination.
- ❖ Heraclitus was the counterpart of Parmenides, and the father of modern existentialism, declared that, “Whatever is, is changing.” Everything is constantly changing. The only thing that is constant is change. After all, you cannot step into the same river twice. The moment you withdraw your foot the water passes on and even if you step in the exact same spot the water has moved. And you have changed by being a few seconds older. So, everything is in a process of change. Everything is in the process of becoming.
- Existence (*ex*, out of; *stare*, to stand). If we want to talk about “becoming” in philosophical terms, “existence” is used for it speaks of “potential” since it is in a state of changing. The term “existence” is describing a position or a posture.
  - ❖ R. C. Sproul once said in a public lecture, “God does not exist and if He did I would not believe in Him.” What Dr. Sproul meant is that God is not in a state of “becoming.” God is in a state of pure being.
  - ❖ For Plato there were three concepts:
    - Being. Only God is “being.”
    - Becoming. Human existence is somewhere between “being” and “non-being.”
    - Non-being. This is a synonym for “nothing.” Jonathan Edwards defined “nothingness” as “what sleeping rocks dream of.”
- Subsistence. When the church spoke about the Trinity, they did not talk in terms of “existence” but used the term “subsistence.” This Latin term is equivalent to the Greek, “hypostasis” which means the same. The prefix “sub” means below or under.”

People who live a subsistent life are those who live in poverty. They stand below a certain economic line.