

EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE
Bethel Baptist Church
Galesburg, IL 61401
“THE TRIUNE NATURE OF GOD”
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February 3rd, 2009

Today I embark upon a study that intrigues me because it is about the greatest mystery of God. I almost wrote this is the greatest mystery of the godhead but that presupposes something even before I begin that I probably should not presuppose. As I do this I am guided by what C.S. Lewis had Mr. Beaver respond to Lucy’s question if Aslan (Christ) was “safe?” "Safe? Who said anything about safe? Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."¹ So I approach this with a degree of fear and trepidation lest I should misrepresent GOD! And I do realize that some have rejected the Christian faith because they say they are unable to understand how there can be one God but three persons. I hope this study will help someone to understand enough that they may accept by faith that this is what the Bible teaches about our very good (but not safe) God.

I am guided by St. Augustine who wrote something to the effect that a Christian ought to accept the doctrines of the Church by faith and then spend the rest of his life proving why they are true. He wrote, “Who can understand the omnipotent Trinity? We all speak of it, though we may not speak of it as it truly is, for rarely does a soul know what it is saying when it speaks of the Trinity.”² So my goal in doing this study is to accept by faith the truth of the Trinity even as I am still trying my best to understand more.

Think about this. The science of quantum physics has discovered an interesting phenomenon about atoms (and the particles which make up the atom) called the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle which says, “The more precisely the position is determined, the less precisely the momentum is known in this instant, and vice versa. In other words, it claims that by observing and measuring these tiny units their kinematic properties are altered and changed.”³ Since I’m a math and science layman I don’t understand the principle but I accept that it is likely correct (and according to my son, Blake, whom I have quoted here, it is correct).

I wonder if the same is not true about the study of God. The more we try to define and understand Him the less we are really talking about GOD. When we make our definitions and put Him in our box, even if we try to make it a very large box, we cease to be talking about the eternal GOD of the universe. So I suspect that the study is doomed to failure before it begins as it must lessen God even to try to describe Him. I approach this topic knowing that human thought processes and human language are as incapable of nailing down God as we are of nailing a piece of Jell-O to the wall.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, p. 80.

² Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Book XIII, p. 318.

³ Blake Everett Johnson, personal e-mail.

Nevertheless we can attempt to understand what God has revealed of Himself. So, while we need to humbly approach the study with the understanding that we are not going to quantify GOD, and probably that we are going to somehow even change Him in trying to comprehend Him, Christians do believe that He has revealed true truth about Himself. We can and should wrestle with these matters just because He has given us minds that are curious about our Creator.

An illustration I've used to teach children goes like this. Picture a man sitting in front of a fire reading a book. At his feet lies his dog. They have been outside all day tramping through the woods and now they are home. As the man reads, the dog lies there, his belly full of food that came from the hand of his master, his mind perhaps going over the events of the day, and he is looking at the man in wonder at what he is doing with that thing in his hand. Actually he has been in wonder most of the day over just about everything the man has done. And it has to remain a wonder for the dog because the dog has only a dog brain and cannot comprehend the man and his ways. In order for him to fully know the man it would require a human brain. So it is with us. We sit in wonder at GOD. We can talk about Him, and think about Him, and try to understand Him. But in the end we really need to know that we are to worship Him because to understand God we would have to have a God-sized brain. In the same sense John Wesley is reported to have said it like this, "Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God."⁴

A theological definition of the Trinity reads like this. "The three Persons are the same in substance, i.e., in essence or in their essential nature, but distinct in subsistence which describes God's mode or quality of existence in three Persons. By mode of existence we do not mean one God acting in three different ways, but one Divine Being existing in three distinct Persons within one Divine Substance or Essence. Again, this is not exactly three individuals as we think of three personal individuals, but one Divine Being who acts and thinks as one within a three-fold personality. This is incomprehensible to our finite and limited minds, but it is the teaching of the Scripture. 'In the Being of God there are not three individuals, but only three personal self distinctions within the one Divine Essence.'"⁵

Webster's Dictionary gives the following definition of Trinity: "The union of three divine persons (or hypostases), the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in one divinity, so that all the three are one God as to substance, but three Persons (or hypostases as to individuality)." Synonyms sometimes used are triunity, trine, triality. The term "trinity" is formed from "tri," three, and "nity," unity. Triunity is a better term than "trinity" because it better expresses the idea of three in one. God is three in one. Hypostases is the plural of *hypostasis* which means "the substance, the underlying reality, or essence."

⁴ Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations

⁵ R. A. Finlayson, "Trinity," *The New Bible Dictionary*, Eerdmans, p. 1300.

Though it might seem unfortunate to those of us who believe in the Triune God, the word Trinity does not appear in the Bible. Furthermore, it was not used in the Nicene Creed! It would be so much easier if Jesus had delivered this word to the Apostles and if the Holy Spirit had in turn directed the writers of Holy Scripture to use the word. However, just because the word itself doesn't occur in the Bible does not mean that the teaching is not clearly there. This brings me to the point where we now need to see the official Christian definition. So let me insert here the Nicene Creed, produced by the Council of Nicea in AD 325.

Nicene Creed

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, that is of the substance (*ousias*) of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance [*homoousion*] with the Father, through whom all things came to be, those things that are in heaven and those things that are on earth, who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and was made man, suffered, rose the third day, ascended into the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe also in one Holy Spirit.”⁶

The key phrase undoubtedly is, “being of one substance (*ousias*) of the Father,” which means there are three persons but one being. As succinctly as I can say it, we Christians believe in One God, but three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. “The union of the Father and Son and Holy Ghost in one Godhead.”⁷

Since the Council of Nicea didn't do their work until the fourth century AD some have charged that this doctrine was not taught by the Apostles. However, as even the most elementary book on church history will explain, the council of Nicea was called precisely because there were serious theological problems facing the church in the early fourth century about the nature of God. “Probably no doctrine was the subject of more controversy in the early church than that of the Trinity. Certainly the teaching of ‘one God in three Persons’ was accepted in the early church, but only as this teaching was challenged did a systematic doctrine of the Trinity emerge.”⁸ So the truth of the matter is that the formulation of this doctrine as a component of systematic theology was brought about by the rise of heretical groups or teachers who either denied the deity of Jesus or who taught that the Holy Spirit was separate from God. Because things were being taught that did not square up with what many Christians believed had been passed down from the Apostles, the church was forced to formally crystallize what the Bible does teach about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. We now know this as the doctrine of the Trinity and we understand that the Council of Nicea did not invent a new belief.

In fact, the use of the word Trinity to speak about God did precede the Council of Nicea. “This word is derived from the Greek word *trias*, first used by Theophilus (AD 168-183),

⁶ LaTourette, p. 155.

⁷ wordnetweb.princeton.edu

⁸ www.bible.org

or from the Latin *trinitas*, first used by Tertullian (AD 220), to express this doctrine.”⁹ So it is a perfectly good word and its usage over a century before Nicea makes it ludicrous to charge that the church didn’t believe this until the fourth century AD. Those who claim otherwise must ignore both history and what the Bible teaches about God.

The historical chronology is that Constantine was Emperor at this time and had made Christianity a legal religion at the beginning of his reign, AD 313 when he issued the Edict of Milan.¹⁰ This peaceful phase of church history facilitated a peaceful gathering where the Bishops could wrestle with the difficult question; though Constantine called the gathering he did not impose any beliefs upon the church as is falsely charged by some. The Council of Nicea met to determine what the biblical teaching about God was and the Nicene Creed has ever since defined what Christians consider being Orthodox.

Enough of philosophy and history, the issue at hand for us is to study what the Bible says about how God has revealed Himself to mankind. So this really is a study of the Word of God rather than the study of God; it is a study of what the Bible reveals of God who is the author of the sacred Scriptures. That focuses our task upon the Bible and what it says.

I have said for years that one of the things that inexorably led me to the conclusion that the Bible is a book from God comes from the fact that things like the Tri-unity of God is exactly what one would expect to be revealed by a being greater than ourselves should he choose to communicate something of himself to us. If what the Bible said about God were to be fully comprehensible to humans then I would suspect that the book had merely human origins. However, if the Bible is from the Creator of this awesome universe then I expect that what it says about the Creator Himself is going to be even more awesome than any part of His creation; the Creator must be greater than what he creates. So something like the doctrine of the Trinity is exactly what I would expect to find in principle, though in its details I continue to be amazed.

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD.

The first thing I want to emphasize is that the Bible strongly declares there is only one God. This is known as monotheism. It is important for Christians to understand and to declare to everyone that God is One. There is a tendency for those who believe in the Trinity to slip into the heretical belief that we really have three Gods. Not so, the Bible clearly declares that there is but one God as the following verses show.

“⁶⁰so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other.” **I Kings 8:60** (NIV)¹¹

⁹ WebBiblical Encyclopedia; www.christiananswers.net/dictionary

¹⁰ LaTourette, p. 92

¹¹ Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

⁶"This is what the LORD says— Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God." **Isaiah 44:6** (NIV)

²⁸One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

³²"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. **Mark 12:28-32** (NIV)

And by the way, even those religions which claim to be polytheistic almost always single out one god as chief god, or their god who is ruler of the other gods. For the Romans it was Jupiter, for the Greeks it was Zeus, and for the Norse perhaps Thor. The point is that by the very definition of God we are talking about the highest being, the being above all others. So if a polytheistic religion claims to have a highest god then they technically become monotheistic by that action.

I also need to stress that the oneness of God also declares the perfect equality of each member of the Trinity. Though Jesus submitted to the Father in all things (e.g., John 18:11), and though the Spirit brings glory to Jesus (e.g., John 16:14), neither Jesus nor the Spirit can be less than the Father since they all fully bear God's essential being (*ousias*). Thus submission does not mean subordination of one Person of the deity with respect to either of the other two; it cannot mean that any one Person is more God or less God than are the others. "Turretin once said, 'The mind of the worshiper will not be distracted by the consideration that there are three Divine persons, if he remembers that the whole Divine essence is in each of the persons, so that if he worships one he worships all.'"¹² Note how Jesus expresses His equality with the Father in giving and receiving glory to each other in the opening verses of what is known as the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus.

¹After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ²For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. **John 17:1-5** (NIV)

GOD HAS HIDDEN CERTAIN THINGS FROM MANKIND.

¹² www.ondocctrine.com/2jwhite.htm

In a Bible study of God the serious student runs into several roadblocks. Probably the most daunting is the simple truth that people cannot comprehend God. This is seen nowhere more clearly than in the Trinity. But another roadblock comes from the fact that the Scriptures tell us God has intentionally hidden some things from our race. I'm certain God has perfectly good reasons for this but it does make it more difficult. Fortunately, though this doctrine is somewhat hidden from us, it is not forbidden to study as the following verses imply.

²It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.
Proverbs 25:2 (NIV)

²¹On that same occasion Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your gracious will. **Luke 10:21** (NIV)

²⁹The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law. **Deuteronomy 29:29** (NIV)

All three of these verses make the claim that God intentionally hides things from mankind. And all three verses at the very least imply that God gave us a desire to delve into those hidden things. In the physical world we call it the study of science; in the spiritual realm this is what theology is about. Finding out and clearly stating those hidden matters is what Christians have done for the past two thousand years.

OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES WHICH HINT AT THE TRINITY:

The Bible begins with a clue that the Creator of all things is at best mysterious in His unity. The very first verse of the Bible introduces us to God, *Elohim*, which is the plural form of *El*. Though it is usually used with singular verb forms, and with both adjectives and pronouns in the singular, nevertheless it is a plural noun. Then in the second verse of the Bible we are told that the "Spirit of God" was hovering over the waters – so we already have God, plural sort of, along with the Spirit of God. Though these verses tell us nothing specific about God beyond the fact that He created all things we can see the idea that God may not be singular. The following verses all suggest that the one and only God is more complex than we at first might imagine in the plural references to Him.

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. **Genesis 1:1-2** (NIV)

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." **Genesis 1:26** (NIV)

²²And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." **Genesis 3:22** (NIV)

⁷Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each Other." **Genesis 11:7** (NIV)

¹The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." **Psalm 110:1** (NIV)

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" **Isaiah 6:8** (NIV)

In each passage the plural unity of God is pretty clearly noted. While it is possible that this is referring to God along with angelic beings that is almost more of a stretch than to say this is about the Tri-unity of God. Specifically when the creation of the human race as declared in Genesis 1:26 is said to be done in the image of God, and it is not "in my image," singular, but "in our image," plural, to say that this is about angels ruins the point that we humans bear God's image. And by the way, humans are a trinity of sorts in the sense that we are also three in one: body, soul, and spirit.

One of the most interesting verses in the Old Testament is known as the Shema, the Jewish declaration in Deuteronomy 6:4 that God is one. The NIV translates it this way: "⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." Though there is disagreement even among Jewish people concerning the full meaning of this verse, most everyone does agree that the emphasis is on the indivisible unity and oneness of God in contrast to the polytheistic idol worshippers who lived in the neighborhood.

However, the interesting thing is that there are two separate names for God used in the verse, and one of them is repeated. So we have God named three times, twice by using the Tetragrammaton – YHWH – and once using Elohim, which we have already seen is the plural form of El.

The emphasis is on the Lord's indivisibility which is clear even in our English translations. However, this confession clearly prepares the way for the later revelation of the Trinity, but how? "God" (*Elohim*) is one (the Hebrew, *echad*) referring to one in a collective sense. The word is used of the married union of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:24) to describe that two persons become one flesh. Further, it is used in the sense of one loaded cluster of grapes in Numbers 13:23 when the spies brought these back from their foray into the land. So the Shema expresses the indivisibility of God but it does so in a way that implies one thing made up of more than one. Matthew Henry in his commentary on this verse says, "Some have thought there is here a plain intimation of the trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; for here is the name of God three times, and yet all

declared to be one. Happy they that have this one Lord for their God; for they have but one master to please, but one benefactor to seek to.”¹³

To sum it up, the great declaration of Israel in the Shema describes the Trinity about as well as it can be put into words. There is but One God, indivisible, and yet He is Three in One. Quite frankly there is hardly a clearer expression of the Christian teaching of the Trinity than is found in this important verse.

OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES WHICH SAY MESSIAH IS GOD:

There are several passages in the Hebrew Bible which Christians point to as direct evidence that Messiah would be divine. These are powerful and to the point. So while we usually use these passages in ways to emphasize the Deity of Jesus they are equally as important in our study of what the Bible says about the Tri-Unity of God.

⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. **Isaiah 9:6-7** (NIV)

That this passage is speaking about Messiah is pretty well undisputed from verse 7. That it declares that Messiah will be called both “Mighty God” and the “Everlasting Father” makes it hard to get around the fact that God must become a man. This is a potent verse in our case that the Old Testament really does teach the Tri-Unity of the godhead.

¹² "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. ¹³My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together. ¹⁴"Come together, all of you, and listen: Which of the idols has foretold these things? The LORD's chosen ally will carry out his purpose against Babylon; his arm will be against the Babylonians. ¹⁵I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him. I will bring him, and he will succeed in his Mission. ¹⁶"Come near me and listen to this: "From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there." And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with his Spirit. **Isaiah 48:12-16** (NIV)

In verse 12 it is clear that eternal God is speaking to His people Israel. In verse 13 we are told it is the Creator of both the earth and the heavens who now speaks. Verses 14 and 15 express the sovereignty of God even over Babylon. But verse 16 is the important one to our study where we see what certainly must be understood as the Triune God: the Sovereign Lord, sent Messiah, and the Spirit. This fits perfectly with what we learn from the New Testament that the Father sent the Son to be Savior of the world, and that Jesus came in obedience with the Holy Spirit to empower Him. ¹³We know that we live in him

¹³ Matthew Henry's Commentary, Vol. 1, p. 586.

and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. **I John 4:13-14** (NIV)

⁵"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness. **Jeremiah 23:5-6** (NIV)

In this the final Old Testament passage which I will note we turn to the prophet Jeremiah who shares his unique insight about Messiah. In verse five we hear the LORD speaking. In verse six we are told Messiah will be called by exactly the same name, LORD, but added to it will be the qualifier Our Righteousness. So again we have the clear indication that the one God will become Messiah which leads directly to why we Christian teach that God is Triune.

GOSPEL PASSAGES WHICH EMPHASIZE THE TRINITY:

Now we turn our attention to the New Testament where we find those numerous passages which lead us ever deeper into this incredible and wonderful doctrine. We will begin with the teaching of Jesus when asked if he was Messiah – which enabled him to give an answer which continues to surprise and enlighten Christians to this very day about the unity and diversity of God. **John 10:22-33** (NIV)

²²Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

The first three verses of the text set the scene. While teaching on temple mount Jesus was asked the direct question which led him to declare who he was, are you Messiah of Israel?

²⁵Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one."

The answer Jesus gave goes far beyond their narrow comprehension of who Messiah would be as Jesus compared himself to God. First, he claimed to be a miracle worker which he said they did not accept simply because they refused to believe that he came from God. Second, he claimed for himself the power to grant eternal life, something only God could do. Third, he compared his hand to be as capable as the hand of God the Father. And finally, he made the humanly ridiculous claim that he was one with God the Father! That by these words he claimed to be equal with God the Father, and therefore

God incarnate, is best seen as much in the response of the Jews to whom he spoke these words as by the words themselves. The next three verses clearly demonstrate that these Jews knew Jesus had just claimed to be God.

³¹Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, ³²but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

³³"We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

Whether the claim was false or true is ultimately dependant upon whether or not Jesus physically rose from the dead. If so, Jesus is God and the Tri-unity of God is a claim which Jesus certainly both made and taught. On an earlier occasion in the Gospel of John a similar response was evoked from the Jews because of what Jesus had taught. ¹⁸For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. **John 5:18** (NIV) Both of these attempts on Jesus' life were made merely because of what he said. They are clear demonstrations that he personally claimed deity. Another, and one of his most direct claims, is found in what Christians today know as the Great Commission.

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Matthew 28:19** (NIV)

This baptismal formula given by the Lord Jesus clearly shows the importance of the Trinity of God in the salvation process. The following two verses help us to understand better what Jesus taught about how the three persons of the godhead work together to bring about human salvation.

²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. **John 14:26** (NIV)

²⁶"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. **John 15:26** (NIV)

Christians understand that God the Father wills salvation, God the Son provides salvation, and God the Holy Spirit applies salvation. That Jesus taught Christians to baptize new believers in all three names shows that all three persons make up the one God. In addition, the words "the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father," help us understand that the three persons are eternally our One God.

OTHER NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES WHICH REVEAL THE TRINITY:

Notice in each passage that the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are mentioned in such a way that we see their equality. For example, in Ephesians 1:17 Paul is praying to God the Father that the Spirit would reveal Jesus so we can know Him better. While each

passage does not necessarily mention all three persons distinctly they are all there. The effect of these verses and others like them is that we see the One God in all three persons.

¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. **Ephesians 1:17** (NIV)

⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. **Ephesians 4:4-6** (NIV)

⁴So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. ⁵For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), ⁶yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. **I Corinthians 8:4-6** (NIV)

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. **I Corinthians 12:4-6** (NIV)

¹⁴May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **II Corinthians 13:14** (NIV)

In order to see that the Trinity was not just taught by the Apostle Paul please read what the Apostle Peter wrote as well and note the Trinitarian formula in the prologue to his letters. The New Testament is very clear that all of the Apostles were taught by Jesus, and that they, in turn, taught what he delivered to them (see I Corinthians 4:1).

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ²who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. **I Peter 1:1-2** (NIV)

¹Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: ²Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. **II Peter 1:1-3** (NIV)

In the passage from II Peter it is interesting to notice that he directly said that Jesus possesses divine power. That this power is sufficient to give us all we need is a pretty clear indication that Jesus is one member of the Triune God.

CONCLUSION:

So what does it all matter to us anyway? I suppose the most important thing is that the better we can understand truth about God the better we will worship Him and then we will live better lives. ³¹"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" **John 8:31-32**. (NIV) If we believe lies about God then every part of how we live is going to be twisted in some wrong way. On the other hand, one promise of the Bible is that someday we are going to know a whole lot more than we know today so then we will worship Him perfectly. ¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. **I Corinthians 13:12** (NIV)

The Bible says that there are certain things we can learn about God by studying God's Creation, (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-20). So as the various religions of the world develop their concept of god there are some limited truths about God which perhaps all of them teach. However, in the end only Bible based people can end up talking about a being that could have created and run this whole universe. All other belief systems end up with a deity who is really only a very big man, and usually one who is lustful and capricious. And this is true of the cults of Christianity as well such as both Mormonism and The Watchtower Society, both of which depart from orthodoxy in what they teach about the Tri-unity of God.

By way of contrast the God of the Bible has revealed Himself to mankind through his written word (Psalm 19:7-14) and we herein meet a being who is other than us, which is the meaning of the word Holy; God is not like us, He is not just an overgrown man. We maintain that perhaps the greatest distinctive mark of Christianity, setting it apart from all other world religions, is precisely this doctrine of the Trinity. Any religion based on human reason or natural philosophy is doomed to create a god which must ultimately be spelled in the lower case. I will conclude with one Old Testament passage from the Prophet Isaiah, and one New Testament passage from the Apostle Paul which says more than I can add about our Triune God.

⁸"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. ⁹"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. **Isaiah 55:8-9** (NIV)

³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" ³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. **Romans 11:33-36** (NIV)

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