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Trinity

This is our Basics class and last week the basic doctrine we dealt with was Scripture. This week we move to the Trinity. This is the traditional sequence followed in works of Systematic Theology and exemplified in William G. T. Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology* and Louis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology*. However, sometimes the order is reversed as in Calvin's *Institutes* and Ryrie's *Basic Theology*, both start with Trinity and then move to Scripture. But the traditional way of doing this, and the way our doctrinal statement does it is to start with Scripture and move to the Trinity.

I point this out not to make a big hairy deal out of it but because I want you to realize that the doctrinal statement isn't something a few guys sat down and put together over a cup of tea. There's a lengthy doctrinal heritage that you can tell has been drawn from in putting it together. We see that first of all in the specific order in which the points are put down. We find it secondly in many of the clauses and expressions found in our doctrinal statement because the exact clauses and expressions are found in earlier documents in church history. These are adopted from prior writings because they are such excellent articulations of what the Bible teaches. These ideas have been thought about and mulled over by many, many centuries of godly Christians. So it pays dividends to realize there is a deep heritage here and it would do any Christian good to go over this statement very slowly and thoughtfully. That's one of the things we really have to discipline ourselves toward in our century, to read content rich material slowly and thoughtfully. These aren't sound bites, these aren't images, these are words that have been carefully written to capture truth succinctly and simultaneously negate error. So again, while the doctrinal statement is not of equal authority with the Scripture, it is a very careful articulation of the Scripture, though subject to

revising and updating periodically depending on new attacks that Satan may bring against the Church.

Now in our age many Christians spurn doctrinal statements, why can't we just say we believe the Bible. Well, because everyone says that. That doesn't clarify anything. So we have to put forth an accurate articulation of the truth. Today we come to the issue of the Trinity. This is uniquely a Christian doctrine. JW's reject it, Mormon's reject it, Judaism rejects it, Islam rejects it. This is fantastically unique to Christianity and anyone who rejects it has to reject what? The deity of Jesus Christ, because once you affirm the deity of Christ then you already have a multiplicity in the godhead. It's a very short step from there to the deity of the Spirit and the doctrine of Trinity. So all these groups reject the deity of Christ, he's less than God, he's a creature of God and that's a very serious rejection because once you've changed the person of Christ then you by necessity change the work of Christ and now you're affecting the gospel. So the Trinity is a very important doctrine and to discard it is to discard the gospel. Don't fool yourself into thinking this is a side issue. No, the Trinity is central to the Christian faith.

Now the deity of Christ was believed by every early Christian. The problem was, after two or three centuries of saying that, it came to the surface that not everyone believed the same thing. Athanasius said Christ is God and Arius said Christ is God but they meant something different by Christ is God. As Shelley says in his church history, "To Arius, when Christians called Christ God, they did not mean that he was deity except in a sort of approximate sense." He's sort of like God but different, different essence. Arius said when I say Christ was God I mean "He was a lesser being or half-God, not the eternal and changeless Creator. He was a created Being—the first created Being and the greatest, but nevertheless himself created."ⁱ This was in the 4th century and who today in the 21st century says basically the same thing? The JW's. So this isn't new, this has been around for more than 1500 years. But what it shows is you have to clarify what you mean because people have all kinds of ideas in their head and you don't know what they mean by what they say until they articulate it. I mean this, I do not mean that. The Southern Baptists right now are arguing over the plan of salvation and it's a series of affirmations and denials, we affirm this, we deny this. I don't like the way the debate is going, it's drifting to Pelagianism, but at least they're clarifying.

So we come to Trinity today. If you're going to study theology the way to do it is to start with the Trinitarian God and then deal with the Father, then the Son and finally the Spirit. That's the traditional order of studying the Trinity. Now the word *trinity* is not in the Bible but was used by Christians as early as the 2nd century to encapsulate the Scriptural data of three in one. I like tri-unity, the three persons are one God. So we're going to use the term Trinity. As Dr James Orr says, "The doctrine of the trinity is not a result of mere speculation, not a theory or hypothesis spun by theologians out of their own fancies, still less, as some eminent writers would maintain, the result of the important of Greek metaphysics into Christian theology. It is, in the first instance, the result of a simple process of induction from the facts of the Christian revelation."ⁱⁱ The doctrine of the Trinity was arrived at by careful study of Scriptures and what it asserts is the best harmonization of all the Scriptural data. So let's look at our statement of the Trinity;

2. We believe in one (1) God, eternally existing in three (3) persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the same in substance, equal in power and glory (Isa 61:1; Matt 28:19).

That's an excellent statement, it talks about God is one in substance or essence, it talks about three distinct persons, each equally God, and some verses to support it, a short list. It's interesting because I said earlier that some of these phrases are lifted from earlier documents. Notice the last portion; "the same in substance, equal in power and glory." That is found word for word in the Westminster Confession (Q.9), AD1648. And notice the words, "the same in substance." That comes directly from Augustine in the 4th century. So portions of this are coming from documents that date as far back as the 4th century AD.

Now we could do a lot with the Trinity but this is a basics class so we're just going to try to do things simply, start with some definitions and then go to some of the evidences in the OT and the NT. This will in no way be exhaustive; it can't be because there's so much data and so little time in a basics class.

Let's look at some definitions of the Trinity that have been put forth. What this will do is help you get a handle on what the doctrine of the Trinity is

saying and what it is not saying and it will help you appreciate the fact there are other Christians out there who think deeply about matters and that God the Holy Spirit evidently taught them. John Dick says, "While there is only one divine nature, there are three subsistences, or persons, called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who possess, not a similar, but the same numerical essence, and the distinction between them is not merely nominal, but real." When you see that term *subsistences*, and you'll see it commonly in the older writings, what that basically means is a real being or person. So don't let the terminology confuse you. It just means a real person and not just a mask; that's what they're writing against, the idea that God the Father changed masks and became the Son and then changes masks again and becomes the Spirit, but he's not all three at the same time. That's the error of modalism they're writing against, it overemphasizes the oneness of God. And they're also writing against the equally wrong error that overemphasizes the threeness of God, which is tritheism, three gods, that's wrong too. Here's another definition from Augustus Strong, "The doctrine of the Trinity does not on the one hand assert that three persons are united in one person, or three beings in one being, or three Gods in one God (tritheism); nor on the other hand that God merely manifests himself in three different ways (modal trinity, or trinity of manifestations); but rather that there are three eternal distinctions in the substance of God." Very good. Here's another one, substance of God, by substance they mean essence, the essence of God. Pye Smith says, "Instead of Persons the term subsistence is by many preferred. These three Divine Subsistences are not separate Essences (this notion would be Tritheism). Nor mere names, or properties, or modes of action (Modalism or Sabellianism); but this unity of Subsistences is an essential, necessary, and unchangeable property of the Divine Essence." And probably the greatest statement I have read to date and considered by many to be the best statement of the Trinity ever formulated, the Athanasian Creed, "...we venerate one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the Persons nor separating the substance. The Person of the Father is one, of the Son another, of the Holy Spirit another. But the Divinity of Father, Son, and Spirit is one, their glory equal, coeternal their majesty...The Father is neither made, nor created, nor begotten: The Son is from the Father alone, not made, nor created but begotten: The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. Therefore there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in this Trinity there is nothing prior or posterior,

nothing greater or less; but all the three Persons are coeternal and coequal, so that in all things both a Trinity in unity and a unity in Trinity is to be worshipped.” That’s an excellent, excellent statement that cuts out any attempt to deny either the one God or the three distinct persons. So when we sing the words of the hymn, “God in three persons, blessed Trinity,” maybe you’ll think more deeply about what you’re singing.

Let’s look at the evidence, starting with the OT. The OT sets you up for the development of the Trinity in the NT. As Chafer says, “Certain godly Jews did...sense the plural aspect of the divine existence....but little is on record as assurance that they came to any clear understanding of a triune mode of existence of the one God whom they worshiped...Even if the plural aspect of Deity were divinely apprehended by some, more than by others, the full-orbed disclosure awaited the fullness of the time.” Which he means - the NT.

So, looking at the evidences we’ll see in the OT, while it may seem crystal clear to you, if you had been a Jew living then it might not have been so clear. Understand you come to this with a great deal more revelation than they had. The first thing we want to do is assert what the Jew defended first and foremost, that there is only One God, God is One. This is usually taken for granted but let’s take a look at it in Exod 20:3, the first of the Ten Commandments. Actually the first commandment begins with verse 2 with the statement about what God did for the Israelites, and He’s giving the motive for obedience. I have done this for you, now verse 3, “You shall have no other gods before Me. 4You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.” That’s prohibiting what? Idolatry. And what’s idolatry? Worshipping any created thing as God. So there can’t be more than one God, you either worship God or you worship an idol, the Creator or the creation. Verse 5, “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,” how many I’s can there be? Only one. I, the LORD your God. So there is only one God, this is monotheism. And Christians are just as monotheistic as Jews or Muslims. As Chafer says, “To acknowledge the triune mode of existence, does not impair, diminish, or complicate the doctrine of *one God*, or lessen the obligation to uphold it.” We hold that there is only one God, not three gods or three parts of one God, and we defend the Scriptural teaching that there is but one God.

Let's look at Deut 6:4, this is one of the key verses of modern Judaism. It's called the *Shema*, which is the Hebrew for the verb "to hear" and the modern orthodox Jew repeats this verse three times each day. "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!"

This one is interesting because the Hebrew language has two words for "one," *echad* and *yachid*. The word *yachid* refers to an absolute one, the word *echad* refers to a one with multiplicity. Guess which word is used in the famous *Shema* of Deut 6:4? "The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" It uses the Hebrew *echad*. This means one, but it allows for multiplicity in the oneness. So are we saying Trinity is taught here? No, what's taught here is that there is but one God and Israel should worship that one God. But it is interesting that the door is left open as to a multiplicity in this one God because he used the word *echad* instead of *yachid*, which is absolute one. But it should be clear enough and most of us don't have a problem with the fact there is only one God.

So let's move to the plurality of God, God is More than One, by which we mean there's diversity within the one God. Turn to Gen 1. And the first thing we'll look at is Plural Names/Pronouns Used of God. For example Gen 1:1, "In the beginning *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth." Now is *elohim* singular or plural in the Hebrew? When you hear the suffix *-im* you're talking about a Hebrew plural. And here we have a Hebrew plural used of God; right in the very first verse of the Bible, "in the beginning God's created the heavens and the earth." But the verb "created" is in the singular. So we have a plural God with a unity of action. Hmm, why is it written that way? Usually your verb agrees in number with the subject. We're not saying this proves the Trinity. We're just saying, isn't it interesting that a plural is used of God who does a singular action?

For the second one drop down to Gen 1:26. Who is it in Gen 1 that creates man? "Let Us make man in Our image." What is the explanation for these first person plurals? Why does God, a monotheistic God, say "Us" instead of "Me?" Don't you find it interesting that He uses the plurals? Some people try to say these are just plurals of majesty. You often hear an important person say well we believe this and we believe that, and they're using the we kind of for themselves. So people have said that's a plural of majesty and that's what God meant. However, why should there have arisen in human language a plurality of majesty if it wasn't due to the prior truth of the plurality of God?

Alright, so God is One, God is more than One? It's there, it's in the text, and you've got to explain it. It doesn't prove the Trinity; it sets you up for the Trinity.

Finally turn to Ecclesiastes 12:1 and this one is interesting. We just came from Genesis 1, creation, so I thought this might interest you, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble..." except it doesn't say "Remember your Creator" in the original, it says "Remember your Creators," plural. Now why would the author choose the plural and not the singular? Again, this opens the door for a multiplicity in God.

So we've said God is One, we've said God is More than One. Now we want to show God is Depicted in Triads. There are a number of Triads in the OT, I'll just take you to one of the favorite passages, Numbers 6:24. Again, these aren't proving the Trinity, but they are setting you up for it, but you wouldn't want to use these as formal proofs of the Trinity. This is the Levitical blessing as they inducted a priest into the priesthood, verse 24, "The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; ²⁶the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." What's the triad? The LORD do this...the LORD do this...the Lord do this. Why three? Why not just say, the LORD bless you and keep you and make his face shine on you and be gracious to you and turn his face to you and give you peace? Why repeat LORD three times? As J. Pye Smith says, "The first member of the formula expresses the benevolent 'love of God;' the father of mercies and fountain of all good: the second comports well with the redeeming and reconciling 'grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and the last is appropriate to the purity, consolation, and joy, which are received from the 'communion of the Holy Spirit'." There are others, Isaiah 6:3, the famous holy, holy, holy triad. I just point these out, why is it always a triad and not a quadrad? It's just food for thought.

Let's get more specific because we want to show that within this One God there are distinct Persons or Subsistences. This is the angel of YHWH theme. Turn to Judges 13:9. Somehow this angel of YHWH is distinct from YHWH but is also YHWH, just like the logos in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the logos and the logos was with God and the logos was God." This is the same kind of thing in the OT. This is the story of Manoah and his wife. Manoah

has been praying, let's pick up with God's answer in verse 9, "God heard Manoah, and the angel of God" so here we have God and the angel of God, there's a distinction there, "the angel of God came again to the woman while she was out in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her. ¹⁰The woman hurried to tell her husband, "He's here! The man who appeared to me the other day!" Whoever this angel of God is he appears as a man. And you think, well, maybe he's just an ordinary angel. But let's read on. "¹¹Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, "Are you the man who talked to my wife?" "I am," he said. ¹²So Manoah asked him, "When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule that governs the boy's life and work?" ¹³The angel of the LORD answered, "Your wife must do all that I have told her. ¹⁴She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her." ¹⁵Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "We would like you to stay until we prepare a young goat for you." ¹⁶The angel of the LORD replied, "Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD." (Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the LORD.) ¹⁷Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?" ¹⁸He replied, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding." Now I ask you, what creature's name is beyond understanding? By definition whatever is created is comprehensible. So whoever this angel is it's not your ordinary angel. Verse 19, "Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: ²⁰As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. ²¹When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD. ²²"We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "We have seen God!" The point is what do you do with this? The angel of the LORD is distinct from God because he's the answer to their prayer to God in verse 9, but by the end of the dialogue the angel of the LORD is God. The question is, who did they see? It says they saw God. Did they see the pre-incarnate Christ? That's what it sounds like looking in retrospect. He's distinct from YHWH and He is YHWH, just like the logos in John 1:1. So there is one God and the point here is a distinction of Person in God. Notice, the angel of YHWH isn't an it, He's a person, He talks to Manoah, He does things, it's don't say things, it's don't do

things, it's are things. So this is a very important evidence showing distinction of Person in the One God.

Alright, let's go on to another category of evidences and these are the Explicit OT References. I've shown you some of these on other occasions so I'm going to show you a few others. Let's go to Isa 63:7-10, some of the others are 2 Sam 23:2-3, Isa 48:16 and Isa 60:22-61:1. But today Isa 63. Verse 7, "I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us— yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. ⁸He said," so here we have a report and what does the report contain? What YHWH has done for Israel. "Surely they are my people, children who will be true to me"; and so he became their Savior." YHWH is a savior. But who did He save by? Verse 9, "In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them." So here we have the angel of the Lord, we already know who that is, that's the pre-incarnate Christ, "In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. ¹⁰Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit." That clearly is the Holy Spirit, "So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them." You almost feel like your reading the NT here. It's remarkable how the angel of YHWH and the Holy Spirit are both identified with YHWH here, yet distinct from each another, accomplishing different things for the nation Israel. And the idea of grieving of the Holy Spirit. You thought that was a NT idea. It's right here in Isaiah 700 years before the NT that you could do that to the Holy Spirit. So that's what I mean there are explicit references to three distinct Persons in God in the OT.

So evident are these passages that David L. Cooper said, "From all the facts which we have learned thus far, we see that Moses and the Prophets were Trinitarians, and the great leaders of Israel in pre-Christian times were likewise Trinitarians." I think you've got to be careful going that far. That's probably pushing it. That there's a plurality inside the One God, that you can say, that's a humbler approach. "In view of these facts, then, we can assert with all confidence that Christians who worship the Holy Trinity...are simply worshipping the same God who revealed Himself to Abraham." We would agree fully with that sentence.

That's the OT evidence, references to the Unity of God, very clear, the Great Shema, Plural names and pronouns used of God showing the Plurality of God, that's the *elohim* and Let us create man, Distinctions of Person within the One God, those are the angel of YHWH passages and finally the Explicit References. These are all setting you up for the fuller revelation of God in the NT with the incarnation, in fact you can go back to Isa 9:6, the Immanuel theme, and that's part of the set up for the Trinity in the NT because what does Immanuel mean? "God with us." So clearly there is predicted in the OT God coming in the flesh to dwell among men and that's what culminates in the birth of the Christ in the NT. So there's a lot pointing to the Trinity in the OT; I don't want to downplay the OT, the OT is very powerful in setting you up for the Trinity. Don't think it's all in the NT.

But for now let's turn to the NT evidences where it gets much more explicit. John 17:3. First of all, the NT affirms everything the OT affirmed but gives us more. So again, the NT teaches that God is One, John 17:3, "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." This verse very plainly asserts that God is One and the early Christians all believed that there is but one God. But take note of the fact that Jesus Christ is mentioned in this very strong monotheistic verse because in a moment we'll come back to ask, if there is but One God, how does Jesus Christ relate to this One God?

Hold your place here and turn to 1 Cor 8:6. "yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him." So according to this verse how many God's are there? There is but one God. So then how does Jesus Christ relate to this one God? He's mentioned in the same verse where it says there is but one God, so does that make Jesus Christ less than God?

Now go back to John 17:3 because the early Christians noticed that in the very passages that affirm monotheism Jesus is mentioned. This raised questions as to the identity of Jesus in relation to the one God. So this time let's look more closely at 17:3, "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." What is eternal life? It's knowing who? Just knowing the only true God? Or knowing the true God *and* Jesus Christ? According to the verse eternal life is knowing both the

true God and Jesus Christ. So then to know only the true God would not be eternal life just as knowing only Jesus Christ would not be eternal life. You must know both to have eternal life. What are we to make of this? The only true God and Jesus Christ are equal. But the verse does something else; it also shows they are distinct. One seems to be the source of eternal life, the Father, the other seems to be eternal life itself, the Son. So they are both united and yet distinct.

Now go back to 1 Cor 8:6. What did we see here but a very similar thing, an affirmation of monotheism but Jesus Christ mentioned in some connection? “Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we exist through Him.” Notice the similarities and the differences. Similarly there is one God just as there is one Lord Jesus Christ, that shows clearly a distinction, the one Father cannot be the one Jesus Christ, they are distinct Persons. Another similarity, of the Father it says, “from whom are all things,” it attributes to the Father the entire creation, of the Son it says, “by whom are all things,” attributing to the Son the instrumentality in creation. Now which is it, is the Father the Creator or is the Son the Creator? The answer according to this verse is they both are. But I thought only God could create. Anyone who is not God is created. So then both Father and Son are the Creator. As Bruce Ware says, “Yet since the two are spoken of separately, we must affirm also a proper distinction between the Father and the Son. The one God is identified as both Father and Son, while Father and Son are distinguished from each other.”

This unity yet diversity is seen over and over in the NT. Turn to John 1:1. This one is commonly known, the JW's even know this one and even though they try desperately to get around it they can't. It clearly states Jesus is God but Jesus is distinct from God. Notice the word in verse 1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Who is the Word? What's the identity of the Word? Look briefly at verse 14, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Clearly the incarnate Christ is the Word. So when we look at verse 1, “In the beginning was the Word we know that's Jesus Christ,” and clearly what passage does John have in mind by starting “in the beginning?” Gen 1:1, creation. So is Jesus Christ in the beginning? Absolutely. JW's say Jesus is the first creation

but does verse 3 permit that? “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” If that’s the case then can Jesus Christ be a creation? No, Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things and He didn’t create Himself ex-nihilo because He wouldn’t be there to create. So Jesus Christ in the beginning there in verse 1 is pointing to Jesus Christ as present at creation, not as a creature but as Creator. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” And this is interesting because notice the Word is both with God and God. Now usually if you are with someone you are not them. But in this case the Word is both with God and is God. So clearly we have both a distinction, “with God” and a identity, “is God.”

What these authors are doing under the superintendence of God the Holy Spirit is stating a unity of essence; there is but one God, but there is a diversity of person, there is the Father and the Son. Further, we might say with respect to the fact that Jesus Christ is the creator of everything, that if He is not the creator of everything then he must be a creature and if we are to worship only the Creator then we should not worship Jesus Christ. To worship Him would be to worship the creation and would be the height of idolatry. yet we are to worship Him and if we do not know Him we do not have eternal life since to know the Father and the Son is to have eternal life.

Hebrews 1:3. There are so many verses here, I’m just spilling out the data and saying, look, Christians looked at this for centuries, they thought about it, they concluded in no uncertain terms there is One God and there are Three Persons. We haven’t dealt with the Holy Spirit yet, just the Son, but we’re getting there. Heb 1:1, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ²in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,” speaking of the incarnation, “whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” There we have the creation again and both the Father and the Son were involved in Creation. But verse 3 is where we’re going, “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact imprint of His nature,” Translate that “imprint,” the exact imprint of who’s nature? Of God’s nature. So what does that mean? If it’s exact it has to be exact, it can’t be less than exact or it wouldn’t be exact. So does Jesus Christ have the same nature or essence as the Father? Absolutely. Not only that but what does Jesus Christ do? “upholds all things by the word of His power.” What do you have to have in order to uphold every particle in the

universe? The attributes of God. You can't do this with attributes of a mere creature. What creature could uphold every particle in the universe? Only God can do that. So Jesus Christ must be God. He has the exact nature of God, He does things only God can do.

And we don't have time to do everything but verse 6 says all the angels worship who? Jesus Christ. Now if the incarnate Jesus Christ is less than God then this would be telling the angels to worship a creation of God, which would be what? Idolatry. This should shock you, even if you already believe in the deity of the Son and I'm sure you do, but we could go on verse after verse after verse. After studying intensively for 15 years and teaching for 8, I have concluded that most chapters in the NT teach the deity of Christ. It's not a verse here or a verse there, it's all over the NT. And if Jesus is God, but distinct from the Father who is also God, and yet there is only one God, then I know of no better way to explain that than the Trinity.

In other words tritheism doesn't explain this. What's tritheism? Three gods, a Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are three different gods, three different essences, they each have different attributes. Tritheism is saying the Father has one essence, the Son has a different essence and the Spirit has a still different essence, so they do not have the same essence in tritheism. But the Scriptures clearly say that Jesus Christ is the exact imprint of God, not a different imprint. So there are not three gods but one God in three persons. You say, well, that's hard to understand? Yeah, I know, this is more complex than nuclear physics. But it still is a proposition to believe. As Louis Sperry Chafer said, "The doctrine as presented in the Scriptures is...believable if not explicable." That is, it's not totally penetrable by the human mind. We can't understand Trinity exhaustively, however, it is believable, he goes on to explain how it can be believable yet not understandable exhaustively, "To understand a proposition is one thing; to understand the truth or fact asserted in that proposition is quite another thing." I think that is as well said as it could be said. You can understand the proposition God is one in essence and three in person but to penetrate all the truth or fact asserted in that proposition is quite another thing.

Alright, lastly we want to take a look at a few passages concerning the Holy Spirit. Acts 5:3-4. We have two more weeks on the Son and the Spirit so we don't have to do everything today. This is just basics. The Holy Spirit is also

God, the NT explicitly declares it. This is when Ananias and Sapphira, that husband and wife pair held back funds when they said they gave all the funds to the Church, verse 3, “But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?” So who did he lie too? The Holy Spirit. Now, first of all, does that make the Holy Spirit a person? Some people say the Holy Spirit is a force, an “it”. Well, would someone please explain to me how you can lie to an it? You don’t lie to it’s you lie to persons. The Holy Spirit is a person. Verse 4. “While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” And there you have it, the Greek word for God, *theos*, applied to the Holy Spirit. They lied to the Holy Spirit; they lied to God, therefore what do we conclude? The Holy Spirit is God.

Let’s go to Rev 1, I’ve always thought this one was pretty neat. I showed you triads in the OT, holy, holy, holy, that type of thing, it’s never a quadra-ad or a penta-ad, always a triad, in the salutation here, John says, “Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” Now did you see a triad of persons in that salutation? First you have “Him who is and who was and who is to come,” referring to whom? The Father, “and” copulative *kai* so we’re moving to someone distinct but connected, “and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,” or the sevenfold-Spirit, “and” another copulative *kai*, “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness” and so forth. Clearly a triad of persons, some people say the seven Spirits before the throne are angels, angels are spirits so this refers to angels. What’s the problem with that? They’re sandwiched in between the Father and the Son. Isn’t that interesting? Now why would you sandwich angels in between the Father and the Son when the Father and the Son are of the same essence? Why would you put angels who are of a lesser essence in between the Father and the Son? You wouldn’t. So what’s the implication, because usually you see the Spirit third in the chain, last, but here He’s in the middle. The implication is the Father, Spirit and Son are all of the same essence, they’re all God.

That’s all we have time for. Un conclusion, our statement says, We believe in one (1) God, eternally existing in three (3) persons, the Father, the Son and

the Holy Spirit, the same in substance, equal in power and glory (Isa 61:1; Matt 28:19). Very well stated and a fundamental belief.

Nor do we say that, in the same analogy of the pie, that the Father is 1/3 God and the Son is 1/3 God and the Spirit is 1/3 God, and that we put the three Persons together we get God. That's not God because if you do that the Father is less than God, the Son is less than God, the Spirit is less than God because you'd have to have all three to have God, which means you're doing addition with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that God is a composite being of Father, Son and Spirit. That's not right, the Father is all God, the Son is all God, the Spirit is all God.

ⁱ Shelley, B. L. (1995). *Church History in Plain Language* (Updated 2nd ed.) (100). Dallas, Tex.: Word Pub.

ⁱⁱ Quoted by Louis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 1, p 286.

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