

LEARNING FOR LIFE

FATHOMING THE TRINITY

(1) In the Scriptures

Introduction

- We cannot 'explain' God fully, but He does reveal all we need in order to know Him (Deut. 29:29). Need for humility.
- Not an embarrassment/problem, but a joy and delight
- Not to satisfy curiosity but to grow up into maturity.

A: The Biblical Foundations

1) There is only one true and living God

- A rational and righteous Spirit, infinite in His attributes
- Trinity not tritheism - Deut.6:4 Isa.44:6 Ephes. 4:5-6

2) This God is revealed as three persons

- One who exists eternally in three persons, as one substance, perfect in unity of thought and purpose
- The Father 1Cor 8:6
- The Son Rom 9:5 , Tit 2:13 , Jn. 1:1,14
- The Spirit Rom 8: 9
- Trinitarian formula in baptism (Matt 28 : 19)

benediction (2Cor. 13:14)

The 'persons' are indicative of roles, but are the same in substance (essence), equal in power and glory.

3) The three persons are objective to each other (not modes or relations assumed by God)

- Need to distinguish being from role – subordination of function does not mean subordination of essence. See 1 Cor. 11:3, 15 : 24-28
- They speak of each other independently – Matt. 3:17, Jn.5: 19-20, 14:16. Yet see also Jn. 14: 11, 14, and 18.
- The Father loves the Son and the Son the Father – Jn. 15:9
- The Spirit glorifies the Son - Jn. 12:14
- The Son prays to the Father - Jn. 17:1ff
- The Father sends the Son and the Father and Son send the Spirit – Jn. 14:16, 23, 20:21

B: O.T. Indications of the Trinity

(1) Plurality - Elohim (plural)with singular verb

- Gen.1:26, 3:22, 11:7, Isa. 6:8

(2) Agents of God who are separate from God, yet at the same time being God e.g. the Spirit (Gen 1:2 , Neh.9: 20, 30) the Angel of the Lord (Gen. 16:7-14, 18:9-14, 22: 11-12, 15-18, 31:11-13, Josh. 5:13-6:3)

(3) Hints of complexity Ps. 110:1 applied by Christ to Himself (Mk 12:35-37), Ps. 2:3, 6-7, 12 applied in Acts 13:33, Ps. 45:6 refers to Christ in Heb. 1:8

(4) Messianic prophecies e.g. Isa. 9:6-7, 11:1-5, 42:1 etc.

C: N.T. Evidences of the Trinity

(1) The humanity of Jesus Christ

Lk. 2:11, Jn1:14, 20:28-29

Compare Rev. 19:10 with Rev. 1:17-18 and see 1:8

(2) The deity of Jesus Christ

- Divine attributes
 - holiness (Jn. 6:69, Heb. 7:26)
 - eternity (Jn. 8:58)
 - life-giver (Jn. 11:25)
 - omnipotence (Matt. 28:18)
 - creator (Jn. 1:3)
 - providence (Col. 1:16-17)
 - judgement (Jn. 5:27-29)

Other clear references to deity – Mk. 1:9-11, 2:1-12, Acts 7:59, Rom. 9:5, Col. 1:15-19, 2:9, Tit. 2:13, Heb. 1:8-10, Rev. 5:12

(3) The deity of the Holy Spirit

- Clear references - Jn.15:26, Rom. 8:9-11, 1Cor. 6:19, 2Cor. 3:17

(4) The LORD (Yahweh) is God and God is the LORD (Yahweh)

- Many N.T. applications to Jesus
e.g. Rom. 10:13 – Joel 2:32
Phil. 2:9-11 - Isa. 45:23b
Heb. 1:10-12 – Ps. 102:25-27
Eph. 4:8 – Ps. 68:18

We do not need to feel embarrassed or be apologetic about this doctrine which is so clearly taught. Our understanding may be limited and our analogies weak, but the doctrine is not. It is firmly established in the warp and weft of Scripture.