

## ***TRINITY REFERENCES***

### **1. *The Trinity Doctrine is Crucial for Christians***

- a. The Trinity is necessary and unique to the Christian Faith. It is one of the features distinguishing Christianity from all other world religions.
- b. No other form of monotheism permits a plurality of Persons in the Godhead. Therefore, all others reject the Trinity.

### **2. *“Trinity” as a Theological Term***

- a. The word “Trinity” is not a biblical term. However, this does not mean the doctrine of the Trinity of God is unbiblical. The word simply represents a scriptural concept.
- b. Another example of a non-scriptural term that represents a biblical concept is the word “theocracy.” This non-biblical word describes Israel’s biblical form of government.

### **3. *The Ontological & Economic Trinity***

- a. The Ontological Trinity: This approach examines Being of God, that is, what God is.
- b. The Economic Trinity: This approach examines the manner of working of the three Persons of the Godhead.

### **4. *Common Objections to the Doctrine of the Trinity***

- a. The Trinity Doctrine was invented by Satan.
- b. The Trinity Doctrine is the result of pagan influences on the church.
- c. The Trinity Doctrine is the result of unbiblical, neo-platonic influences on the church.
- d. The Trinity Doctrine was “invented” at the Council of Nicea.
- e. The Trinity Doctrine is incoherent or illogical.
- f. The word “Trinity” is unbiblical.

## B.

## THE TRINITY IN SCRIPTURE

### 1. *Introduction*

- a. All of the biblical facts for the doctrine of the Trinity are found in Scripture. The final form of the doctrine of the Trinity is not a theological problem—it is a solution to a theological problem!
  
- b. *The Three Scriptural Classes of Trinitarian Texts*
  - (1)The first is the class of Scriptures that demonstrate the *essential oneness of God*.
  
  - (2)The second is the class of Scriptures that demonstrate the *full deity of the distinct Persons of the Godhead*—for example, the deity of the Son, Jesus Christ.
  
  - (3)The third is the class of Scriptures that demonstrate the *simultaneous distinction of the three Persons of the Godhead*.

- c. *The Relevance of the Classes and Categories*

- (1)To have a complete and coherent doctrine of God, one must account for all the relevant biblical data.
  
  - (2)Thus all three categories must be included in a discussion of God.

### 2. *Biblical & Theological Arguments for the Three Classes of Trinitarian Texts*

#### a. **Class #1: The Essential Oneness or Unity of God**

##### (1)*Definition of Unity & Related Issues*

(a) **Unity:** *Unity* means God is one in an absolute sense because there is no other God and the one God is incapable of real or essential division. Unity, therefore, indicates there is no *genus* God and the one and only God is simple. Thus, some theologians distinguish between a *unity of singularity*, or numerical oneness of the divine essence, and a *unity of simplicity*, the noncompositeness of the divine essence.

(b) **Simplicity:** *Simplicity* (more precisely, ontological simplicity) means God has an uncompounded or noncomposite nature. God is not the sum of the divine attributes. If He were, God would necessarily be a result and in some sense contingent. Consider the following argument for divine simplicity.

- i. *The Argument from the Independence of God as a Ground of Simplicity*
  - (i) God is absolutely independent. He is not dependent on anything for His existence or essence.
  
  - (ii) Multiple things, essentially distinguished, can become one only by aggregation. If a thing is a composite thing, it is necessarily composed by another, since nothing can compose itself.

- (iii) If God's attributes are essentially distinct from His essence or from each other, the divine essence would be made perfect by something essentially distinct from itself.
- (iv) And since there is nothing prior to God to compose or aggregate the parts, God must be a non-composite Being.
- ii. Simplicity, Immutability & Divine Perfections
  - (i) The concept of God as a composite Being is opposed to the concept of God being a Being of absolute perfection.
  - (ii) Composition implies imperfection inasmuch as it implies passive power, mutability, and dependence. God is whatever He can be and cannot be other than what He is.
  - (iii) If the divine essence is perfected by another, God is not the Most Perfect Being.
  - (iv) It follows that if God were an aggregate of really distinguished attributes or properties, He is not immutable in any meaningful way since He would have in Himself passive potency, which is the root of mutability.
- (c) **Aseity:** *Aseity* means God exists *a se*, from Himself. The term is used synonymously with *autotheos*, of Himself God. See the section, *infra*, on the works of God for additional notes on Aseity as they relate to Trinitarian issues.
- (d) **Infinity:** *Infinity* refers to the limitlessness of the divine essence.
  - i. Negatively considered, infinity is defined by the absence of limit.
  - ii. Positively considered, it is an infinite superiority over all things.
  - iii. Moreover, *infinity* is not as an isolated attribute, but a property of the divine essence that extends to each of the divine attributes. For example, when infinity extends to divine knowledge, it is *omniscience*; to divine power, it is *omnipotence*; to divine existence and continuance, it is *eternity*; and to the divine essence, it is *immensity*.

## (2) Selected Biblical References for the Unity of God

- (a) *Old Testament* – Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4; I Kings 8:60; Isaiah 43:10; 44:6; 45:5.
- (b) *New Testament* – Mark 12:29; John 17:3; I Corinthians 8:4-6; I Timothy 2:5.

### (3) Old Testament Concepts of Unity

#### (a) *Echad* (אֶחָד)

The word translated “one” in Deuteronomy 6:4 is the Hebrew word *echad*, which commonly indicates a compound unity. Here, compound unity does not necessarily indicate a composite unity—where “parts” are essentially distinguished. It may refer to a single thing within which essential distinctions may be made or a thing within which non-essential distinctions—for example, formal or modal (See distinctions, *infra*)—may be made. Examples of compound unity are demonstrated in the following texts:

- i. Genesis 1:5: “And there was evening and there was morning, one (*echad*) day.”  
Here there are two distinct parts within the one day.
- ii. Genesis 2:24: “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one (*echad*) flesh.” The two individuals constitute a unity.
- iii. Deut. 6:4: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is (*echad*) One!”

#### (b) *Yachid* (אחד)

This Hebrew term is used to indicate absolute oneness and is generally translated as “only begotten,” “beloved” or “only one.” It is usually used in the sense of an only child. Consider these scriptural uses of the term.

- i. Judges 11:34: “. . . Now she was his *one and only* (*yachid*) child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter.”
- ii. The term in this passage indicates the absolute sense of oneness applied to Jephthah’s daughter. It means “only one” or “unique,” not “one among many.”
- iii. This term appears eleven times in the Old Testament. (See, e.g., Gen. 22:2, 12, 16) The Septuagint (LXX) translates it seven times with *agapetos* “beloved” and four times with *monogenes* “only begotten.”
- iv. It is important that *yachid* is *not* used to describe the oneness of the divine nature or unity of the Godhead because it would appear to exclude the plurality of Persons in the Trinity.

## b. Class #2: The Full Deity of the Distinct Persons of the Godhead

### (1) *The Father* (II Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:2)

- (a) “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- (b) Note that the full deity of the Father is generally not a debated issue.

(2) ***The Son*** (Is. 9:6; John 1:1-3; 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Rev. 1:8 cf. 22:12-13, 16, 20).

(a) Note that the Deity of Christ is fully addressed in the Christology portion of ECD.

(b) *The Alpha-Omega Proof for the Deity of Christ*

One of the clearest affirmations of the deity of Christ is found in the Book of Revelation.

This is known as the Alpha-Omega Proof. The argument can be stated in the following manner.

- i. “Alpha and Omega” is a title for Almighty God (Rev. 1:8).
- ii. Almighty God, the Alpha and Omega, is also declared to be the “First and the Last” (Rev. 21:5-7).
- iii. The Alpha and Omega, First and the Last, who is Almighty God, declares “I am coming quickly” (Rev. 22:12-13).
- iv. Then, the speaker, using the first person singular, “I,” declares: “*I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches*” (Rev. 22:16). Thus, Jesus identifies Himself as the AW and the One who is coming quickly.
- v. The author of the Revelation, John, affirms the identity of the AW by saying.  
“*...Yes, I am coming quickly. Amen, come Lord Jesus*” (Rev. 22:20).
- vi. See Also Revelation 1:17-18; Is. 44:6; 48:12-16
- vii. Conclusion: Jesus is Almighty God, Jehovah (*hwwhy*), the Alpha & Omega, the First & the Last.

(3) ***The Holy Spirit*** (Ps. 139:7-8; Jn. 3:5-7 cf. I Jn. 3:9; Acts 5:3-4; 13:2; I Cor. 2:10-11; II Cor 3:17, 18)

(a) The Holy Spirit is identified as God and does the work of God.

(b) “*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? . . . You have not lied to men, but to God’*” (Acts 5:3-4).

### c. Class #3: The Divine Persons Simultaneously Distinguished

(1) *The Three Persons Simultaneously Distinguished*

(a) The Baptism of Christ (Matt. 3:16, 17)

- i. The Father (1<sup>st</sup> Person) from heaven says, “This is my beloved Son” (2nd Person) while the Spirit of God (3<sup>rd</sup> Person) descends on Him in the form of a dove.
- ii. Do not overstate the meaning of the passage. It does not necessarily demonstrate the deity of Christ or the personality of the Holy Spirit. This passage demonstrates the simultaneous distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- (b) The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20)
  - i. “... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
  - ii. Here the three Persons are represented as equal in dignity and authority. It is significant that the word “name” is in the singular followed by a plurality of Persons.
  
- (c) The Upper Room Discourse of Christ (John 14-16)
  - i. John 14:16, 17: “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth . . .”
  - ii. John 14:26: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, . . .”
  - iii. John 15:26: “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me.”
  - iv. These texts not only mention three Persons in the same passage, but also make a clear distinction between the Persons.
  - v. This category of text is important because it eliminates the possibility of Sabellianism or Modalistic Monarchianism (i.e., that God is one Person in three successive modes of operation or roles).

*(2)Two Divine Persons Simultaneously Distinguished*

- (a) In these texts, Jesus is affirmed by the Father when Jesus prays to the Father (Matt. 17; John 17)
- (b) In these texts the Son of God or Logos is distinguished from the Father (John1:1-3; Col. 1:9-23)