

WHY WE SAY "TRINITY"

2 Cor 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, ^{spirit} be with you all."

INTRODUCTION

"The Trinity is the very center of our faith. Karl Barth said "the Trinity is a description of God's three ways of being God"

It refers to the coexistence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead.

I. WE SAY "TRINITY" BECAUSE THIS IS THE BEST WORD WE HAVE FOUND TO DESCRIBE WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH ABOUT GOD.

A. In the N.T. it is obvious that the Father is recognized as God, e.g. Jn 6:27; 1 Pet 1:2; ^{Chosen & destined by God the Father}

B. Jesus Christ is recognized as God

Jn 1:1 "the Word was God"

Jn 1:18 "the only begotten God"

Jn 20:28 "My Lord & my God"

^{The Redeemer}

C. The Holy Spirit is recognized as God

He is spoken of as God.

The attributes of God are ascribed to him, such as life, truth, love, holiness, eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence

He does the works of God, such as creation, regeneration, resurrection, and ^{sanctification}

He receives honor due only to God

He is associated with God on a basis of equality both in the formula of baptism and in the apostolic benediction.

D. These are described as three distinct persons, yet they are one in essence.

The 3 persons of the Godhead have the same nature or essence. The undivided essence of the Godhead belongs equally to each of the persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each possesses all the substance and all the attributes of Deity.

One man used to sum up his Christian faith in these words:
"There is a Father in heaven who loves us,
a Brother-Savior who died for us,
a Spirit who helps us in all our needs,
and a home where we shall all meet at last."

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It is said that on one of the Canadian rivers, which flows through a great chasm, which stand confronting one another two mighty crags, whose pinnacles tower hundreds of feet into the heavens, and whose roots lay hold upon the foundations of the earth. They have been named "Trinity" and "Eternity."

So in Christian revelation, confronting one another and inseparable from any true thought of God, there stand these two doctrines of the Christian God-- his eternity, the successionless and timeless existence of the everlasting I am, and his trinity, his threefold expression of himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Both of these ideas baffle human comprehension. When we try to grasp either one of them, the words of Job come to our lips: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (11:7). The question answers itself. When we try to behold the triune God, we feel like a man who gazes upon the midday sun.

II. WE SAY "TRINITY" BECAUSE WE CAN'T SAY ALL WE OUGHT TO SAY ABOUT GOD UNLESS WE TALK OF HIM AS A TRINITY.

A. To speak only of God as Father and Creator, and to say nothing of God as we see him in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, or as we know him in the Holy Spirit, would be to fail completely to describe God.

1. It is essential to any real revelation.

If there be no Trinity, Christ is not God, and cannot perfectly know or reveal God.

Then Christianity is no longer the one, all-inclusive, and final revelation, but only one of many conflicting and competing systems, each of which has its portion of truth, but also its portion of error.

So too with the Holy Spirit.

"As God can be revealed only through God, so also can he be appropriated only through God.

If the Holy Spirit be not God, then the love and self-communication of God to the human soul are not a reality."

In other words, without the doctrine of the trinity we go back to mere natural religion and the far-off God of deism and ultimately to Pantheism.

2. It is essential to any real redemption.

If God is absolutely and simply one, there can be no mediation or atonement, since between God and the most exalted creature the gulf is infinite.

Christ cannot bring us nearer to God than he is himself.

Only one who IS God can reconcile us to God.

So, too, only one who IS God can PURIFY our souls.

A God who is only and absolutely Unity, but in whom there is no plurality or trinity, may be our Judge, but, so far as we can see, cannot be our Savior or our Sanctifier.

Never minimize the importance of doctrine in Xty. Prof. J. Gresham Machen says, "Christianity is not only a life, but also a doctrine, and logically the doctrine comes first."

The doctrine of the Trinity is not so much contrary to reason as it is ABOVE reason. Nothing can be contrary to reason except what lies within its boundary.

The mysterious doctrine of the Trinity is far ABOVE the boundary of human reason.

We can know clearly only as much of God as he reveals.

He has not chosen to reveal everything about His full nature to us at this time, probably because we are not able or not prepared to understand it anyway.

We are in many ways mysterious to ourselves.

And there is much in nature which we cannot understand.

Certainly many of God's works are mysteries to us.

It should not be considered very surprising that we do not fully understand everything about God's unique and mysterious nature.

Some things we must accept on faith.

By faith we believe that each person of the Trinity co-operates in our redemption:

The Father planning, The Son performing, and the Spirit applying the work of redeeming love.

How much they reject who reject this gospel!

A whole Trinity of grace, and love, and power!

And what rich blessings they secure who embrace this essential part of the Gospel message!

What a Father, Savior, and Sanctifier!

B. Wherever men have Met Jesus Christ and found themselves set free from sin, found themselves to be new creatures, delivered from the bondage of fear, they have been sure that they were meeting God almighty

C. We still haven't said all we mean by God until we say "God the Holy Spirit."

You may believe in the Father -- God immortal, invisible, eternal, and transcendent, beyond the bounds of time and history.

You may believe in the Son -- God manifest in the flesh, dramatically breaking through into the temporal and historic.

But what you need to bring all this home to you yourself, to make it valid and effective and personal in daily living, is not only God in the eternities or God in history --

it is God in you,

making your heart his dwelling place.

Jn. 14:16, 26 -- The Comforter -- the H.S.

This is what makes it all relevant to us.

God present with us and in us.

"Spirit of God, descend upon my heart."

Acts 9:31, "The comfort of the Holy Ghost"

III. WE SAY "TRINITY" BECAUSE IT HELPS TO EXPLAIN OUR CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

A. The GRACE of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Grace that is greater than all our sin."

B. The LOVE of God the Father

Phil. 2:1, "If there be any comfort of love... fulfill ye my joy."

C. The COMMUNION, FELLOWSHIP, SHARING OF THE H.S.

Phil. 2:1, "if any fellowship of the spirit"

D. This is the Way God meets us in our prayers.

E. This is the way he comes to unite us in the mystery of common worship.

F. This is the way he sends us out as ambassadors of his reconciling love.

HYMN TO THE TRINITY

Father, we know not what may be tomorrow--

We care not when thy love is with us still;

Faith can sing on through days of joy or sorrow,

Trusting the wisdom of thy gracious will.

Jesus, thy light shines on the path before us;

With thee to guide, we sing as on we go;

O may our joy be like a mighty chorus,

Bringing men cheer in place of fear and woe.

Spirit, we need thy faithful witness

For grace to do the work thy love designed;

May we through prayer be kept in daily fitness

To follow thee in serving all mankind.

--H. Victor Kane

C.S. Lewis wrote in Mere Christianity:

If you want to get warm you must stand near the fire;
if you want to get wet you must get into the water.
If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life you must get close to, or even into the thing that has them.
They are not a sort of prize which God could, if he chose, just hand out to anyone. They are a great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very center of reality. If you are close to it the spray will wet you; if you are not, you will remain dry. There is no other way to happiness. Once a man is united to God how could he not live forever? Once a man is separated from God, what can he do but wither and die?"

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