

Chapter 8

The Trinity

A very strong case can be made from Scripture for both the Unitarian and the Trinitarian views. I won't bore you with the details. You can easily learn about the arguments on both sides from other sources. What I will attempt to do is reconcile the two based on simple logic. Many of my comments in this essay are speculative in nature. At the same time, I have tried to remain true to the Scriptures.

Let's begin with the assumption that the writers of the Bible were inspired and have communicated to us the basic truths of the matter. Most of the Scriptures in support of each view appear to be quite unambiguous and for the most part clearly stated. So I would have to assume that both the Unitarian and Trinitarian views are true and compatible with one another, hence we are dealing with a paradox, not necessarily a contradiction.

It is clear from many statements of Christ himself that He and the Father are not one and the same, and that God the Father is greater than the Son (John 14:28). Jesus prayed to the Father (Mark 1:35). He gave God the Father credit for the performance of His miracles (John 14:10). He was not omniscient (Matthew 24:36), and He had to learn about God much in the same way that we do (Luke 2:52). He had to grow in wisdom and favor with both God and Man. He was definitely separated from the Father and wouldn't return to the Father until after His death, burial and resurrection (John 20:17). He even said He was not good and that only the Father in Heaven is good (Luke 18:19). He prayed in Gethsemane for God to remove the "*cup*" of suffering that He was facing, and God turned Him down (Luke 22:42). He referred to Himself as the Son of Man, not the Son of God (Matthew 18:11), and never once directly and unambiguously claimed to be God Himself. He made statements about the oneness He experienced with the Father, but then went on to explain how all of us could experience the same (John 17:21).

On the other hand, He was given the name "*Emmanuel*," which means "*God with us*" (Matt. 1:23). He did describe Himself with the term "*I AM*," a designation which refers to God Himself, and that He pre-existed Abraham (Jn. 8:58). He is referred to by the writers of the New Testament as the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:16), and as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev. 22:13), which implies that He existed at the beginning of time and also at the end of time. In other words, He, like God the Father, is co-eternal. He did say, "*I and the Father are one*" (Jn10:27). He allowed Himself to be worshipped by His followers after His resurrection. When Thomas called Him "*my Lord and My God*," Jesus did not reprimand him (Jn. 20:28). He was worshipped by His followers (Matt. 14:33; 28:9) and at the end of the ages every knee will bow to Him and worship Him (Phil. 2:9-11). His "*equality*" with the Father prior to His incarnation is described in Phil. 2:6.

So how could both of the above descriptions of Christ be true? We won't find a detailed discussion of this issue in the Bible. As a matter of fact, the deity of Christ did not become

codified and clearly spelled out in the form of official creeds until centuries after the Bible was written. So, let's get one thing straight from the beginning. Your eternal destiny doesn't depend on which view you take regarding this controversy. If it were that important, I'm sure that the writers of the Bible would have spelled it out much more clearly and talked about it a whole lot more than they did. What they did believe was that Jesus was unique and one of a kind, the "*only begotten*" Son of God (Jn. 3:16), and that He made atonement for the sins of the world on the cross of Calvary (1 Jn. 2:2). He is *the "way, the truth, and the life,"* and all roads to the Father go through Him (Jn. 14:6). There is no other way to the Father except through Jesus Christ. He is the "*door*" through whom we must pass in order to be reconciled to God (Jn. 10:7). The uniqueness of Christ is affirmed not only by Trinitarians but also by many Unitarians. The difference between the two views relates to the question of whether there is only one triune God who exists in three persons, or is there only one God, period, and one or two other spiritual entities (Jesus and the Holy Spirit) who are less than God. In my view, the line of demarcation between these two views is very fine and is mostly semantic in nature.

Now it's time to apply a bit of common sense logic to this question. Let's start by taking everything out of the picture but God Himself. Let's assume that Christ and the Holy Spirit do not yet exist. Let's also assume that the universe in which we live had not yet been created. So we start with God, and no other persons or things. All that exists is God. God is literally "*all-in-all.*"

For God Himself to meaningfully exist there would have to be some context in which events and interactions, including divine thoughts, could occur in sequential order. In other words, some sort of time must exist in the mind of God. For this reason I would postulate that God is not a timeless being. He is an infinite being, but not timeless or limited in any way by the forward or reverse direction of time. He is able to experience all past, present and future events simultaneously. From God's point of view everything that ever will happen has already happened. He is able to view His creation(s) from all possible points of reference. God experiences time both sequentially and simultaneously.

I would further speculate that if God is love and loving by nature, as the Bible attests, then for any kind of loving interactions to occur there would need to be at least two or more persons or entities participating in those interactions. It would seem logical to me that God's first act in time would be the creation of one or more persons or entities with whom He could interact. According to the Bible, Christ was the first (Col. 1:15). So Christ did have a beginning in time.

Based on my knowledge of quantum mechanics and the conservation of energy (God Himself being made up of pure energy) I do not believe that Christ was created out of nothing. He was created out of or from God's own essence (pure energy). He came from God in the sense that a human baby is made from the body parts of the mother and father. Jesus was "*begotten*" from God in the same sense that human parents beget their children. Jesus was divine in the sense that everything that comes out of God is part of God Himself. He was fashioned from God's DNA, so to speak. He also had a separate and distinct personality with whom God the Father could interact.

I believe there is another reason for Christ's existence. He is the personification of a God who otherwise would be invisible, impersonal, and unknowable. *"No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."* (John 1:18) In other words, Christ exists for the benefit of all humanity, that we might have a way to know and connect with God, the Father.

That brings us to a discussion of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. In the Bible God is described as being a spirit. *"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."* The same is true of Christ. He exists in Heaven today in spiritual form, in a spiritual body, not made of flesh and blood. According to 1 Cor. 15:50, *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."*

In addition to being in spirit form, both God the Father and the Son have a spirit. Christians are said to be indwelt by both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, and the two are used pretty much interchangeably. *"You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ."* (1 Cor. 3:16-18).

For me the conclusion of the matter is this. Both God the Father and Jesus Christ are different manifestations on a single divine Godhead. The term "Spirit" simply refers to "what they are made of." As God's only begotten son Christ is made up of "God parts," ie. spirit. Both the Father and Son share the same spirit, but also exist as separate entities. A very literal translation of John 1:1 expresses this connection: *"In the beginning was the Word (ie. the Christ), and what God was, the Word was."* Because both the Father and the Son exist in spirit form they can divide themselves into an infinite number of smaller pieces and focus their attention in many different places at once. Each piece is intimately connected with the whole and knows what all the other pieces are up to. The spirit of God can listen to millions of different prayers at the same time. God is omnipresent. His Spirit and the Spirit of Christ are everywhere. All creation is infused with the Spirit of God and of Christ. Christ is the image of the invisible God and in Christ all things hold together. *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."*

If you are confused by all this you are not alone. Rather than trying to figure this all out, it might be best to just go with the flow and use biblical descriptions and don't be too bothered by the ambiguities. The deeper things of God are sometimes beyond human comprehension, and may be experienced without being fully understood.

So how do we human beings fit into all this? Are you a spiritual being with a physical body, or are you a physical body that possesses a human spirit, or are you only a physical being with no spirit? According to Romans 8:16, *"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God."* Human beings do have a spirit. Another word for the human spirit is the "soul." This is indicated in the parallelism in Luke 1:46-47, *"And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior.'" In this passage, the words "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably. There is a sense in which the spirit or soul refers to our real or whole*

self, as opposed to just the material self. In Genesis 2:7, man is described as becoming a “*living soul*” after God breathes into him the breath of life.

Two other sources of truth also confirm the idea that man is a spiritual being, the testimony of science and the testimony of millions of people who have had near death experiences (NDE’s).

As I mentioned earlier in this book many scientists, especially theoretical physicists, are coming to realize that we don’t actually live in a physical, material world, but a “supernatural” world instead. Their belief in a natural world subject only to the natural laws of Newtonian physics has given way to the idea that the world we observe and experience consists solely of immaterial waves of energy that do not collapse into reality unless observed by conscious observers who themselves do not actually reside within this universe, and are in a manner of speaking spiritual rather than physical beings.

The evidence for the reality and genuineness of the out-of-body near death experience (NDE) is in my view irrefutable. The testimony of millions of people who have had near death experiences, most of whom were clinically dead at the time, confirms the fact that the spirit or soul of man exists quite independently of the physical body and survives after death.

According to the Bible our entire universe, including all the people in it, was created through Christ. Christ is the intermediary through whom God created us. But we were not created out of nothing. Life was breathed into us by the Spirit of God. So you could say that we all share a divine connection with God. Because we were created by Christ we are basically made up of “Christ parts,” or spirit. We were created in the image of God, who is spirit. It is also apparent, however, that most of us are not consciously aware of this and feel isolated from God. Most of us view God as a divine being who lives up in Heaven somewhere in a separate place. Of course God Has not separated Himself from us. Instead God has literally breathed Himself into all of us and given to all of us a portion of His Spirit. The difference between those who are saved and those who are not has to do with our awareness and experience of this connection.

When Jesus actually entered into the space-time universe which He created, it was for the purpose of identifying with and communicating with His created beings, who during their time on Earth are incapable of directly communicating with God the Father or with Christ Himself, or the Holy Spirit, for that matter. The immaterial and the material have no way of making direct visible or auditory contact. They exist in two entirely separate planes of existence. We can’t see, hear, or touch God with our physical senses.

When Christ took human form it was necessary for Him, in order to become fully human, to divest himself of many of His divine attributes. As an actual physical human being, He like the rest of us did not have the ability to see, touch and feel God in the way that He could before His incarnation. He started out from scratch, as it were, and had to learn who He really was and subject Himself to the limitations that all rest of us face. He was no longer omniscient because His mind was no longer connected to God in the way that it once was. He was no longer divine and He was fully human in every respect. When He said that God was greater than He, He was being truthful. He was totally dependent upon God for everything that He accomplished on Earth. He needed to pray for God’s help just like the rest of us. He experienced all the human passions and temptations that the rest of us feel. When He came to Earth He literally “*emptied*”

Himself of His Godhood and became a servant of God, and demonstrated God's love for us by dying on the cross of Calvary for the sins of the world (See Philippians 2:6-11). After the resurrection everything He gave up in order to fulfill His mission on Earth was restored to Him., and He was given a name that would be above all names. Every knee will eventually bow to Him and He will be worshipped as Lord by everyone. Once everyone has learned their life lessons and been formed into the likeness of Christ, they will be presented by Christ to God, faultless before God's throne (see Jude 1:24).

So is there only one God? Yes. Is Jesus God? Yes. I would say that He is a part of God and has all the attributes of God, but at the same time He has a personality that is separate and distinct from God. He is both the object of God's love and the vehicle through whom God expresses His love towards untold billions of His created beings. When on Earth was Jesus fully human? Yes. He came from God, but in His actual conscious awareness He was not God and did not, at least in the beginning, have direct knowledge of who He really was. Like the rest of us, He had to grow in wisdom and stature and favor with both God and man.

To summarize, everything that comes from God or is created by God is technically part of God. God is by nature multi-dimensional in that respect. From our point of view within the confines of the physical bodies in which we temporarily reside we are separated from God. Our personal experiences play out over time, but from God's perspective, they have already occurred and there was never a time that they did not yet occur. Christ was begotten of God, but from God's perspective there was never a time in which Christ did not exist. The Holy Spirit is just another name for God Himself and also of Christ. The Spirit of God is the same as the Spirit of Christ. It is that part of God that connects directly with our human spirit, our real self. One day Christ will gather all of us up in Himself, completely perfected, and present us to the Father, and we will experience complete oneness with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and God will finally be "all in all." (See 1 Cor. 15:22-28 and Jude 1:24-25).