

A teaching the doctrine of Trinity

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Sunday 7 June 2020, 2 pm CAT

Facebook live broadcast

Talking points

The doctrine of trinity is a Christian doctrine that has been on the debate table for a very long time stretching from the early years of Christianity to date. The reason for these arguments and difference of opinion are based on the assertion I am about to make. **Trinity as a term/word does not appear in the Bible. However Trinity is implicit in the Bible as a concept.** this discussion will thrive to engage the subject but not exhaustively. Horvat (2011) writes about St Augustine and says

The great Doctor of the Church St. Augustine of Hippo spent over 30 years working on his treatise *De Trinitate* [about the Holy Trinity], endeavoring to conceive an intelligible explanation for the mystery of the Trinity. He was walking by the seashore one day contemplating and trying to understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity when he saw a small boy running back and forth from the water to a spot on the seashore. The boy was using a sea shell to carry the water from the ocean and place it into a small hole in the sand. The Bishop of Hippo approached him and asked, “My boy, what are doing?” “I am trying to bring all the sea into this hole,” the boy replied with a sweet smile. “But that is impossible, my dear child, the hole cannot contain all that water” said Augustine. The boy paused in his work, stood up, looked into the eyes of the Saint, and replied, “It is no more impossible than what you are trying to do – comprehend the immensity of the mystery of the Holy Trinity with your small intelligence.”

The thought of God being *three in one* is really confusing to many but I hope this conversation will be able to shed light for us.

The word trinity as previously alluded to is not a biblical term, however etymologically it comes from the Latin word *trinitus/trinus* which means threefold. This term has been attached to the doctrine that explains the nature of God which suggest that God is three persons in one nature but this not ‘three persons, and only one person’ as it may point to three deities.

AFFIRMATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY

The doctrine of trinity affirms three things which are critical in this discourse.

1. God is one God (Monotheism)
2. There are three coeternal, consubstantial persons (hypostases)
3. They are of the same nature and substance/essence (homoousious)

Monotheism

Firstly our take of point is that Christianity is a **monotheistic** religion. This means that there is only one God in Christianity, this is based on the biblical stand point of the **Shema Yisrael** (*Hear oh Israel*), in deuteronomy 6:4 which say “The Lord your God is **one** God. God is made known to our cognitive understanding through a plethora of names, which differ based on language and experience BUT God remains ONE. This is unlike trinitheistic religions such as the Egyptian religion which had Horus, Osiris and Isis or Hinduism though it has a plethora of other religions has Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu as chief Gods. Please note that in trinitheistic religions the god/deities exists as separate ‘persons’.

Coeternity

In Genesis 1:1, the Bible, the word of God states that, **B'rëshiyt Bärä élohiym** “In the beginning God...”. Let me draw your attention to the word that is translated God, which is **Elohiym** in Hebrew. The word has a suffix –iym/-im which implies that it is plural. This, right at the opening of the bible affirms that God is eternal in God’s nature of the trinity. In the next verse we are told that **rûach**/ the Spirit of the Lord was present right from the beginning. John 4:24 also tells us that God is Spirit. In this regard there is not much debate that the Spirit is coeternal with the Father. However it took up to ecclesiastical councils to confirm the coeternal status of Christ.

John 1, bears witness that in the beginning was the word, ‘who’ is the creator and it further testifies that the word became incarnate (Jesus). This means that the Bible gives witness of the coeternity of Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Consubstantial

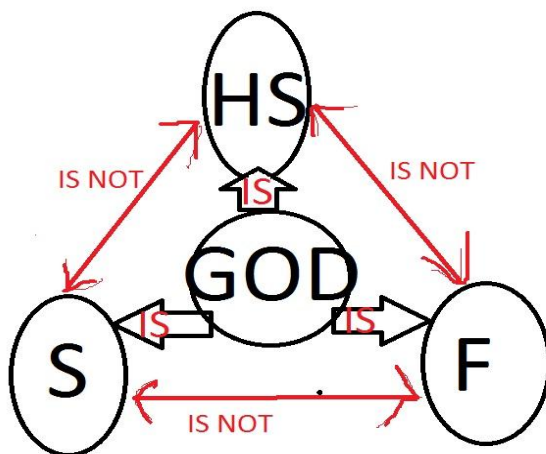
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of the same substance. I need to point out that **Yeshua**, the man is not of the same nature with God and yet the God who made God’s self to incarnate in Yeshua,

the man is of the same substance with God. This is on the basis of the Christological doctrine which points out that Jesus was fully human and fully God. The Nicaean creed makes a strong affirmation that Jesus is of the same nature with the father (homoousious). As Lutherans we hold dearly the Athanasian symbol/creed which also known as *Quicumque Vult* which clearly and explicitly states that The father, the son and the Holy spirit are of the same nature, and that nature is God. It is imperative at this point to state that if the three are personalities of the same nature then there is no nature that is greater than the other. Let me give you an example

When I was serving in Gokwe, Zimbabwe for the last five years 2015-2019, I assumed three roles

- i. Pastor of the church and community, where I was ministering unto
- ii. Lecturer at Restoration Bible School, where I was teaching biblical studies and theology
- iii. Father and husband in my family as we had just had our first son at that time.

Those three roles demanded different personalities but which all make up one person. Three personalities one nature. This is the same with the doctrine of trinity where we find God showing three persons/personalities which all being one nature. This means that the Holy Spirit is neither the father nor the Son but it is God, while the father is also neither the son nor the Holy Spirit but being God and the Son is neither the holy spirit nor the father AS SHOWN IN THE DIAGRAM BELOW



REV RONNIE

Biblical evidences for trinity

Use of the word “us” in reference to God

Genesis 1:26, let us..., 3:22 and the Lord said man is become one of us, 11:7 let us go down, Isaiah 6:8 who will go for us

Trinitarian formula

Mat 28:19 baptizing them in the name ...

2 cor 13:13 grace of...love of ...fellowship of...

Eph 4:4-6 one faith, one baptism, one Lord

1 pet 1:2 God planned...spirit works....blood sacrifice which is Jesus