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The Infinity of the Trinity

By Tal Davis

Quiz: Which of the following illustrations or analogies accurately describe the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity?

- A. A man can be a father, a son, and a husband.
 - B. Matter exists in three forms: solid, liquid, and gas.
 - C. All matter exists in three dimensions: height, length, and depth.
 - D. $1+1+1=3$
 - E. $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$
 - F. An equilateral triangle has three equal sides and three equal angles that make one shape.
 - G. An egg has a shell, a white, and a yoke.
 - H. A person consists of mind, body, and soul,
 - I. Triplets have identical DNA but are three different persons.
 - J. A person can describe himself or herself as me, myself, and I.
 - K. All of the above
 - L. None of the above
- (correct answer below)

Many times I have interacted with non-Trinitarian theists such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Muslims, Oneness Pentecostals, Way Internationalists, Armstrongists, Unitarians, Jews, and others. Obviously, the aforementioned movements deny that the Bible teaches the Trinitarian concept of the Godhead (if they even believe the Bible). For two thousand years, however, Christian Bible scholars have produced innumerable excellent books, papers, and lectures affirming the Trinity. They have searched exhaustively and done detailed exegesis in the Old and New Testament Scriptures for evidence supporting the doctrine.

Thus, we can say confidently that the Trinity is taught in the Bible. Now, please understand, this article is not a Biblical defense of the doctrine. We do have to keep in mind, though, that the Trinity is a revealed doctrine. The church did not arrive at it by philosophical speculation or mathematical formulas. I will list many references to key passages from God's Word that are often used to prove the biblical foundation of the Trinity. I invite you to read them if you wish, just be sure to use a credible modern translation (egs.: The New American Standard Bible; The New International Version; The Christian Standard Bible). Avoid biased anti-Trinitarian translations (eg.: The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures [Jehovah's Witnesses]).

That being said, this article addresses one of the primary objections to the Trinity doctrine often presented by anti-Trinitarians. Most of them contend that it is irrational and logically incoherent. So before we answer the above quiz, in this article I want to present what I consider to be a reasonable and coherent explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

I will do so by stating five basic Trinitarian propositions (all based on Scriptural teachings). Then I will present a way that I believe reconciles the five different points into a reasonable and coherent harmony. I want to be clear, though, I am definitely dogmatic about the historic Trinity doctrine. However, I am not asserting this explanation of it as a dogmatic position. In fact, I would appreciate any and all feedback (especially from Trinitarian Christians, but also from non-Trinitarians) as to how you assess this perspective. If, after considering the responses, I become convinced I am wrong, I will gladly retract or alter my perspective (not about the Trinity, just about this treatise). So, let's begin.

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Proposition One: There is only One True God who is infinite and eternal. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, perfectly holy, transcendent, etc. He created everything that exists except Himself. He is not limited by anything in the created order of time, space, matter, and energy. (Deut. 4:35; 39; 32:39; 2 Sam. 22:32; Isa. 37:20; 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5; 14; 21-22; 46:9; John 5:44; Rom. 3:30; 16:27; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25)

Proposition Two: The Father is God and is infinite and eternal. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, perfectly holy, transcendent, etc. He created everything that exists except Himself. He is not limited by anything in the created order of time, space, matter, and energy. (Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3, 15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.)

Proposition Three: The Son is God and is infinite and eternal. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, perfectly holy, transcendent, etc. He created everything that exists except Himself. He is not limited by anything in the created order of time, space, matter, and energy. (Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16, 27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6, 19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18, 29; 10:30, 38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16, 28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20, 28;

Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5, 20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3, 34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8, 24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15, 24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.)

Proposition Four: The Holy Spirit is God and is infinite and eternal. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, perfectly holy, transcendent, etc. He created everything that exists except Himself. He is not limited by anything in the created order of time, space, matter, and energy. (Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10, 12; Luke 1:35; 4:1, 18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17, 39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11, 14-16, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11, 13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8, 14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.)

Proposition Five: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three separate Persons but are the One True God (the Trinity). The One God in Three Persons is infinite and eternal. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, perfectly holy, transcendent, etc. He created everything that exists except Himself. He is not limited by anything in the created order of time, space, matter, and energy. (Matt. 28:19; Luke 1:35; 3:21-22; 4:1-12; John 4:10-25; 7:37-39; 14:16; 20:21-22; Acts 1:4-8; 2:33, 38-39; 5:3-4, 9, 30-32; 7:55-56;

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321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312

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info@marketfaith.org

Phone: 850-383-9756 (Tallahassee, Florida)

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10:36-38, 44-48; 11:15-18; 15:8-11; 20:38; 28:25-31; Rom. 1:1-4; 5:5-10; 8:2-4, 9-11, 14-17; 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:4-6, 11-12, 18; 2 Cor. 1:19-22; 3:6-8, 14-18; 13:14; Gal. 3:8-14; 4:4-7; Eph. 1:3-17; 2:18, 21-22; 3:14-19; 4:4-6, 29-32; 5:18-20; Phil. 3:3; 1 Thess. 1:3-6; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Tit. 3:4-6; Heb. 2:3-4; 9:14; 10:28-31; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 John 3:21-24; 4:13-14; Jude 20-21; Rev. 2:18, 27-29.)

Those are the five propositions that establish the historic doctrine of the Holy Trinity. (Again, all are based on extensive biblical evidence.) Given those statements, then how can we, or can we, give a reasonable illustration or explanation of the Trinity? I do not expect that any anti-Trinitarians will be convinced by this treatise to change their minds, but who knows.

First, let's answer the quiz. The correct answer is L. None of the illustrations listed accurately describe the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Granted, many of them are used by sincere preachers and popular writers to illustrate the Trinity to their listeners and readers. However, they are misguided in doing so. I don't have space in this column to explain why each of them fails to provide a true analogy or illustration of that foundational historic Christian doctrine. Just take my word, that nearly all orthodox Christian scholars would agree with my evaluations. They all represent one heretical view or another – including modalism (e.g.: Oneness Pentecostalism), Arianism (e.g.: Jehovah's Witnesses and historic Unitarians), tri-theism (e.g.: Mormonism), Adoptionism (e.g.: Armstrongists), and others. So if none of those listed above work to explain the Trinity how can we even speak about it?

We must start with two essential facts about God touched on above: He is eternal and He is infinite. Acknowledging that, we need to recognize that

there can only exist one eternity and one infinity. Now we know that the universe of time, space, matter, and energy is not eternal. It had a beginning, as was indisputably confirmed by physics and science in the 20th century. Before the creation event, absolutely nothing existed. It is what I call NOTHING nothing. So, if something exists eternally, then it, or He, had no beginning and must exist transcendent of the temporal universe (not before time, since time did not exist before the creation). This, we say, is true only of God.

Likewise, we know the universe is spatially finite. That is to say, there is point at the edge of the universe (which inexplicably is expanding) beyond which absolutely nothing exists (no time, no space, no matter, and no energy). It is also what I call NOTHING nothing. That, too, was confirmed by physics, astronomy, and scientific research in last century. So if something is infinite, then it, or He, must exist transcendent of space (not outside of space since space did not exist before the creation). Therefore, it, or He, is, not limited by any dimensionality or the immensity of the finite universe. This, we say, is true only of God.

So, how does this relate to the Trinity? I propose that we can signify the infinity and eternality of God by the common symbol for infinity: ∞ . Remember, there is only one, and can only be one, infinity. An infinite being fills all of infinity and would have to be infinite from all eternity. Nothing finite can ever become infinite by definition. Likewise, there is only one, and can only be one, eternity. An eternal being fills all eternality – no beginning, no end. In fact, time, as we understand it as the progression of events, is irrelevant.

So, if you add, subtract, multiply, or divide these two values, they will always equal infinity and eternity.

$$\infty + \infty + \infty = \infty$$

$$\infty - \infty - \infty = \infty \text{ (yes, that is correct since you could never take away enough to reduce infinity)}$$

$$\infty \times \infty \times \infty = \infty$$

$$\infty \div \infty \div \infty = \infty$$

Thus, if we apply all of the attributes of God to each of the separate Three Persons of the Trinity then we would say that they are all infinite and eternal. But, since there can only be one infinite and one eternal being, then they are all infinitely and eternally One. This is described this way: The Infinite and Eternal Father + the infinite and Eternal Son + the Infinite and Eternal Holy Spirit = the One Infinite and Eternal Godhead. This is symbolized thus: The ∞ Father + the ∞ Son + the ∞ Holy Spirit = the One ∞ Godhead. This is important because it makes possible the simultaneous existence of three coexistent and separate seats of consciousness (or Persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit) in One Transcendent Divine Being. It also makes possible the incarnation of Christ since He emptied Himself of His Deity (Phil. 2:6-7) and became finite and temporal Man (though He retained His divine nature). Yet it did not reduce in any way the eternality and infinity of the Godhead (∞ Father + ∞ Son + ∞ Holy Spirit - ∞ Son [who leaves heaven to become Man] = ∞ Godhead). After His resurrection and ascension, the Son (Jesus Christ) again resumed the eternal and infinite nature of Deity.

This also makes possible that the Holy Spirit can dwell in believers without diminishing His Deity, or that of the whole Godhead.

In conclusion, in my mind, this thesis provides a reasonable explanation for how the Trinity – One God in Three Persons – can and does exist. It also answers the objection that the doctrine is irrational and incoherent. As I said, however, I am open to constructive criticism of my thesis. If you believe there are theological or philosophical holes in the concepts I have proposed, please let me know. I doubt seriously that this explanation will change anyone's mind who is already a non-Trinitarian or an anti-Trinitarian. Perhaps it will, at least, challenge them to radically expand their understanding of who God is. In any case, it may stimulate their thinking to not reject the Trinity doctrine out of hand, or at least to open a dialog. I await your comments.

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