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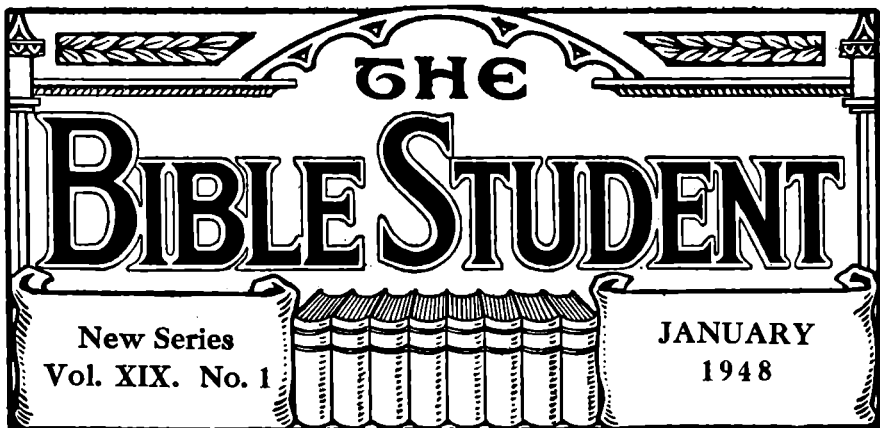
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A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

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*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
LET THE BIBLE SPEAK!	1
THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS	6
THE NECESSITY OF BALANCED EMPHASIS	13
THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY	18
PETER'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS	22
NOTES ON HEBREWS	29
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH	34
ALFRED EDERSHEIM	40
EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS	42

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*Editor:* A. McDONALD REDWOOD

# THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

ROWLAND H. C. HILL

The Bible doctrine of the Triune God is acknowledged to be most difficult. In many departments of human endeavor, difficulties constitute a challenge to courageous spirits. Take mountain climbing. The very inaccessibility of a peak proves an irresistible challenge to mountain climbers. For this reason men of high spirit and character have made frequent assaults on Mount Everest. It still rears its majestic head in mystery and undisturbed silence, but much has been learned through their efforts to attain its highest height.

May not the doctrine of the Triune God be considered as the Everest of Scripture Doctrine? None has ever been able to say, I have reached a point from which I can comprehend the whole, yet, all who set themselves to attain its upper levels are amply repaid by the nobler and grander views of the God of the everlasting hills, gained from whatever height they may attain through careful and patient study. With the Bible our sole guide book and depending on the Holy Spirit as our Guide, let us approach this sublime height. Yet not altogether in the spirit of the mountaineer shall we approach it but in the devout endeavour to get to deeper thought and broader vision of what to many in times past has been a matter of life and death.

May we begin on a note of thankfulness that our God is not a simple conception, readily explained and without mystery? To many millions, Mohammedans for instance, there is nothing answering to "the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ" that they are exhorted to acknowledge. Instead, human nature as it is has been projected out to infinity and called God. "What has really happened is that, without realizing it, Islam has transferred a typical, irresponsible Eastern potentate to the heavens, endowed him with irresistible power and called him God." (Soper). Would we exchange such a conception of a Unit God for the difficulties inherent in the Christian doctrine of God? Nay, for as has been said, the doctrine of the Deity of Christ does not cancel the Unity of God, "but Trinitarianism in the mind of

all the Churches, is the only true, if enigmatic form of Monotheism." But let us remember that it is not an abstract doctrine—a mere theological discussion—it is a necessity. Denial of it is blasphemy. In order that salvation be effective the very nature of God makes the doctrine essential. Not only so, it has been shown by a scholar competent both in Science and Philosophy while yet a devout student of the Bible, that for a right understanding of God and His universe the doctrine is a logical necessity. (*The Secret of the Universe*, Dr. Nathan Wood).

Let us turn then to the Holy Scriptures for their testimony to this profoundest of mysteries. Let us confidently expect to find a consistent revelation, not explanation, throughout their pages that will be clear and believable.

For the Triunity of God we might turn to the first page of the Bible, but in order first to consider the Unity of the Godhead let us turn to Deut. 6:4. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."

Does this unequivocal declaration of the Unity of God rule out the possibility of a plurality of Persons, thereby making the Christian's faith other than the Jewish? On the contrary the word for "one" we are told by Hebraists, requires the doctrine that God subsists in more than one personality. *Echod*, the Hebrew for "one" indicates a compound unity, one made up of others. In Adam and Eve the one was made up of two. "They two shall be one flesh", Gen. 2:24. Translating "one" as, "a unity", makes this clear. In Gen. 1:5 again the unity is of one in two, evening and morning one day. In 2:10 the river is one in four, etc. The Hebrew had another word for one that means "single" or "only one" (*Yachid*). Hence we find the declaration that Jehovah our God is Jehovah a Unity. What thus was implicit in this declaration is explicit in the teaching of Christ on the Trinity and His is teaching not contrary thereto.

Here we may refer to a definition of the laws of unity that may be helpful. It is a summarization by Cuvier quoted in another connection by Dr. W. Graham Scroggie:

- (a) Each and every part is essential to the whole.
- (b) That each part is related to, and corresponds with, all the other parts, as in the human body, hand corresponds with hand and eye with eye.

- (c) That all the parts to such an organism must be pervaded by the spirit of life.

While there is no unity in any manner like unto the Unity of the Godhead, the first and second of these principles may be applied to the consideration of this Unity which transcends anything in the impersonal physical world.

“Each and every part of a Unity is essential to the whole.” The oneness of the personal Beings in the Trinity means more than that each is essential to the whole. Each one *is* the whole. Each is God. Since there are three personal Beings in the Unity which is God, each of the three is God. The Threeness is described in the Bible so as to exclude the possibility of more than three or less than three; so each is essential to the whole, according to the Scriptures.

While we have no warrant for saying Moses taught the Trinity in Unity, his great declaration contains the germ of the doctrine if found nowhere else in the Old Testament. In fact, all the prophets described the Deity in terms which even more clearly imply this Threefoldness in Oneness. So much is this true that careful scrutiny is sometimes required to ascertain which of the Divine Personalities is referred to in statements by the prophets. One instance may suffice to indicate this.

To quote from a discussion on the name Jehovah by the present writer, and referring to Zech. 2:8, 9. “Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts; After the glory hath He sent Me unto the nations which spoiled you.” There the Speaker, who is the sent one, calls Himself Jehovah of Hosts. Then, referring to the “He” who sent Him, He says “ye shall know that Jehovah of Hosts hath sent Me.” Further evidence is given in the next verse where the Son says: “For, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith Jehovah.” This was fulfilled when the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Also the prophecy was fulfilled (5:11) that many nations would be joined unto the Lord in that day “and thou shalt know that Jehovah of Hosts hath sent Me.” Claiming to be the Sent One of the Father, the Son said, in the days of His flesh: “When ye shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself” (John 8:28).

This One Who says He is sent (Zech. 2:8) is the Jehovah of Deuteronomy 32:10 who referred to Israel as the apple of His eye. We are informed by the *Companion Bible* that the verse in Zechariah read, "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of Mine eye", and that the *Sopherim* admitted to altering this to "his", regarding it as derogatory to Jehovah to read aloud such pronounced anthropomorphic expressions.

Reason and Revelation alike reject the suggestion that there are two Jehovahs or that the Angel of Jehovah is a third. That which is revealed of the mystery of God seems to warrant these distinctions: Jehovah in the Old Testament is the Son, as He is known in the New Testament. In the few instances where Jehovah is the speaker and Another is in view, also called Jehovah, the Speaker is God as He was known to the Hebrews. He assumes the name and titles of the Redeemer to show His identification with the Sent One, Who is viewed as on earth. Thus Christ and the Father are one (John 10:30). They are one in *essence* and in *purpose* but not in *Person*. The Angel of Jehovah is the Son in those Old Testament instances where there is a *visible form* usually mentioned.

We know so little of created things that we may despair of full knowledge of the INFINITE. "God only knows Himself: and if, in the records of His communications of truth to mankind, such a combination of distinction with unity be affirmed—every reasonable and upright mind will admit that the fact ought to be regarded as satisfactorily established; however beyond the reach of our knowledge, and perhaps of our faculties, the mode of that fact may be."

(To be continued)

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Communion with God gives beauty and ornament to the whole character. It brings the true refining and perfecting of the soul. No doubt many Christians, as we see them, are but poor specimens of this effect of godliness; still, it is an effect produced in proportion to the depth and continuity of their communion. We might dwell on the effect on will, affections, understanding, produced by dwelling in God. It is simple fact that, the highest conceivable type of beauty is only reached through communion with God.

—Dr. Alexander Maclaren.