

## On the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is one of the two most central teachings of Orthodox Christianity, the other being the Person of Jesus Christ. It is often a source of great confusion and misunderstanding. The witness to this can be found in the many controversies which surrounded the establishment of the doctrine in the Early Church.

The main problem people have with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is simply in trying to “understand” how God could be at once one and three. This seems to fly in the face of common sense.

In this, I am reminded of the arguments surrounding the scientific theories of quantum mechanics. How, we ask, can light be both a particle and a wave? It doesn't make sense. Nevertheless, to explain all of the experimental data, it must be so. A wonderful quote from I. I. Rabi, a one of the early pioneers of quantum mechanics may be of help. A graduate student told Dr. Rabi, “I have a terrible admission, Dr. Rabi. I have been studying quantum mechanics for four years, and I don't really understand it.” Dr. Rabi smiled and said, “That's okay, young man, no one understands quantum mechanics, you just kind of get used to it after a while.”

In the same fashion, the doctrine of the Trinity, that God is one God in three Persons, must be accepted to account for the Biblical data on the existence of God. As Dr. Rabi told his student, no one really understands it, but we can and do “get used to it after a while.”

In this paper I propose to set forward the Biblical data, in hopes of showing that the doctrine of the Trinity accounts for the Biblical data. I do not propose to “explain” the doctrine in the sense of making it amenable to our intuitive understanding. The “explanations” of the doctrine mostly consist of using analogies which are always inadequate and often lead to erroneous and even heretical ideas. Rather, by showing that the doctrine is consistent with divine Revelation, I hope to demonstrate that it does account for the data and is therefore sound.

We must begin by defining our terms. The most important of these is “Person.” When we use that term, we generally think of it as being synonymous with “human

being.” A somewhat broader definition must be adopted if we are to apply this term to God. A person can be defined as “a self-conscious or rational being.” Clearly this definition includes human beings, but it also includes angels, demons, and most pertinently, God and the Divine Persons who comprise God.

The second term we must define is “divine.” We are using the term exactly as our intuitive understanding would suggest, “godlike; characteristic of or befitting a deity.” Thus, when we speak of the Persons of the Trinity as “divine” we are saying that they possess the characteristics of God. The characteristics can be spoken of as comprising the “nature” of the Divine Persons. By “nature” we mean “the particular combination of qualities belonging to a person, animal, thing, or class by birth, origin, or constitution; native or inherent character.” The nature of something is that which distinguishes it from other things. A human being has a human nature, a rock has the nature of a rock, and a divine person has the nature of God.

The Doctrine of the Trinity can be briefly stated as follows:

- There is one and only one God.
- The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.
- The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, the Father is not the Spirit.
- God exists as three distinct Persons.

To establish this doctrine from Scripture, we must demonstrate scriptural support for each of these points.

There is one and only one God.

This is the first and most obvious point in the doctrine. It would be agreed to by all by the adherents of all monotheistic religions, most relevantly, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. It is easily demonstrated from Scripture. I will not even attempt to present all of the data, but the following should suffice.

Deut.6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

