

# THE GODHEAD

(Three Gods?)

**A PICTURE OF GOD**



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**Charles R. Williams**

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Be sure to read, “The Da Vinci Code Verses Biblical and Historical Truth” by Charles R. Williams. You can find it at [biblestudyplus.info](http://biblestudyplus.info).

## THE GODHEAD

## Introduction:

1. The question about the meaning of what is called the “Godhead” or “Trinity” has generated much controversy, even division, in the religious world.
2. The question of Christ’s nature threatened to split the church in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century.
3. When the Roman Emperor Constantine defeated Emperor Licinius on September 18, 324 A.D., he ended the persecutions against the Christian church.
4. Shortly afterwards, Christians faced divisive problems from within: the **Arian** controversy Began, and it threatened to divide the church.
  - a. The problem began in Alexandria, Egypt.
  - b. It started as a debate between two presbyters; **Alexander** and **Arius**.
  - c. Arius proposed that if the Father begat the Son, the latter must have had a beginning, that there was a time when he was not, and that his substance was from nothing like the rest of creation.
5. To settle the problem, the Roman Emperor Constantine called for a meeting of bishops from many congregations in the town of Nicaea in 325 A.D.
  - a. This became known as The Council of Nicaea, and resulted in the creed known as the Nicene Creed.
  - b. Constantine, earlier converted to Christianity, was concerned about a division in the church and thus further division in his empire.
6. There were some three hundred bishops gathered at the Council of Nicaea from all around the world. It should be remembered that many of those present had, because of the recent persecutions suffered and faced threats of death for their faith.
  - a. These were not wishy-washy men.
  - b. It might also be remarked, that they were extremely sensitive to details of doctrine.
7. Originally, seventeen of the three hundred bishops gathered at the council were unwilling to sign the Creed penned by the Council, and all but three of these were convinced to sign by the end.
  - a. Initially there was some resistance to the Nicene Creed, not because of what it said but because of how it said it.
  - b. Many objected to the use of the word "homoousias" in an official document because it was not used in Scripture, despite their agreement with the meaning it conveyed.

- c. They defined the word as meaning that the Son was "one in being with the Father," of the same nature, essence, or substance; co-substantial, of one substance.
7. The Council interrogated Arius (He didn't believe that Jesus was God in the flesh.) using Scripture, only to find that he had a new way of interpreting every verse they brought before him.
- a. Finally, they used the argument that Arius' view had to be wrong because it was new.
  - b. Athanasius, one of the 300, argued against Arius and his doctrine that Christ is of a distinct substance from the Father.
    - 1) Describing the Council's decision regarding the nature of Jesus the Christ he wrote, 'But concerning matters of faith, they did not write: It has been decided. And thereupon confessed how they believed. This they did to show that their judgment was not of more recent origin, but was in fact of Apostolic times...' (Volume 1, Faith of the Early Fathers, p338).
    - 2) In this regard also, Athanasius asked rhetorically, "... how many fathers [in other words, the writings of the early Christians] can you cite for your phrases?" (Ibid, p. 325); He could quote none.
8. It must be concluded that the great majority held the belief that the doctrine, Jesus was God in the flesh, expressed by the Nicene Creed, was ancient and apostolic.
9. **The most recent stir regarding this was brought about by Dan Brown's fictional novel, *The Da Vinci Code*.**
- a. He begins the novel with the claim that its content is based on well documented historical facts.
 

**“FACT:** The Priory of Sion---a European secret society founded in 1099---is a real organization.” ‘In 1975, parchments were discovered in the National Library of France in Paris, which identifies numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, and Leonardo Da Vinci’ (Introductory pages: *The Da Vinci Code*, Anchor Books; New York, 2003).

**NOTE:** The **resources** for the following material can be found at the end of this outline. The **footnotes and resources** can be found at the end of the separate material entitled “The Da Vinci Code Verses Biblical Truth” by Charles R. Williams. You can obtain a copy of this at [biblestudyplus.info](http://biblestudyplus.info).

- b. In the book, written as a novel, Brown declares that his well documented evidence demonstrates that the New Testament we have today is the result of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who was converted to Christianity, along with ruling bishops of the Roman Catholic Church rejecting any books and letters which demonstrated that Jesus was merely a man and definitely not God in the flesh.

- c. He also claims in the book that when Constantine called together the church leaders for a meeting in Nicaea in A.D. 325 for the purpose of deciding whether Jesus was divine, God in flesh, the belief that Jesus was merely a man, failed by one vote (151 said Jesus was divine and 149 said that He wasn't).

**NOTE:** The facts of history tell us that only three of the 300 who met at Nicaea refused to accept the wording of the creed. Two of them changed their mind at the signing, and one abstained, not because he did not believe that Jesus was God in the flesh, but because of the wording of the creed how God dwelt in flesh (See notes 5 – 8 on pages 3 and 4 of this paper; See also the notes in “The Da Vinci Code Verses Biblical Truth” by Charles R. Williams).

- d. Other claims in the book were that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, they had a child, and descendents of Jesus still live in Europe today.
- 1) The Da Vinci code, according to Brown, is that the Last Supper, which Leonardo Da Vinci painted, consisted not only of the twelve apostles, but if one looked closely, one can see Mary Magdalene, the wife of Jesus.
  - 2) He also portrays Jesus as having descendents who eventually came to Europe, and who kept the secret about Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

e. **WHAT ARE THE FACTS?**

- 1) The so-called parchments found in the National Library of France were forgeries produced by an office clerk by the name of Pierre Plantard, son of a butler and clerk who wanted fame and fortune. He founded the Priory of Sion in 1956. Bit by bit, like pieces of cheese in front of a mouse, he sent questions about the mysterious ‘Priory of Sion’ to Henry Lincoln, a British Broadcasting Company documentary maker who took the bait along with two friends who wrote a book based on these false papers called *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*.
- 2) Dr. Bill Putnum, an archeologist, and others who examined the documents declared them a hoax, a total fabrication. Plantard confessed his scam in an open court in France in 1993, but the momentum of the hoax became unstoppable. Why tell the public the truth and sidetrack the gravy train. By this time Brown’s book was already in the works, and he wrote it as truth.

f. **WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?**

- 1) Dr. Paul Maier, a Harvard graduate, Fulbright scholar, author of 15 books, and professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University said the following, “There is not one ranking scholar in the entire world who supports what Dan Brown has done with history. As a professor of ancient history, I can’t stand known, accepted facts from the past lied about. If my students did something like that, I’d flunk them.”
- 2) Sandra Miesel, coauthor of *The Da Vinci Hoax*, one of about 15 books published to answer Dan Brown’s mega bestseller, said, “Everything in *The Da Vinci Code* is

wrong, except Paris is in France; London is in England and Leonardo da Vinci painted pictures. All else is fabrication.”

- 3) Over 40 million copies have been sold worldwide. A National Geographic poll in 2005 found that **one-third of Canadians** who have read the book believe Dan Brown’s theories and think that descendants of Jesus are alive. Other surveys were made on college campuses across the nation. Thousands said their minds were changed about what they previously thought about Jesus. He was simply a good man, but not the Son of God.
- 4) Conspiracy theories are big business today. To place further doubt about the credibility of the New Testament, Brown in his book, states that there were more than 80 gospels considered for the New Testament, but Constantine, around A.D. 350, for his own political purposes, deleted these other accounts and chose the four we have in order to upgrade Jesus to deity. **TRUTH:** The canon for the New Testament was decided before the close of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century.

g. **WHAT ARE THE RELIGIOUS CONSEQUENCES?**

- 1) Most people have not bothered to investigate nor do they understand the significance of whether Jesus is divine, the Son of God.
- 2) It has caused doubt in many believers.
- 3) It has caused those who were on the fence of belief and non-belief to settle for a lesser Jesus who is really just equal to all others who claimed to be prophets of God.
- 4) **HOWEVER,** it also resulted in many of the faithful re-examining their belief in the truth and the validity of the written word and the Word of the Godhead.
- 5) **The trend of our culture today is to limit the influence of Christianity, even if it takes rewriting history.**

h. **WHAT ARE THE ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES?**

- 1) John referred to those who did not believe that Jesus was in the flesh and that He was the Son of God as “antichrists.”

**1 John 2:18---**Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

**1 John 2:23---**Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

**1 John 4:3---**and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

**2 John v. 7**---For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and antichrist.

- 2) To reject Jesus is the Christ, that He is the Son of God, and that He is God in the flesh is to be rejected by God

I John 4:14-16---And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

10. **WHAT ABOUT THE TRINITY?** We often hear the terms “Godhead” and “Trinity,” but what do they mean, and what significance do they have for us today?

- a. The term “Godhead” is found three times in the King James Version of the Bible:

**God--Acts 17:29**---Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the **Godhead** is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

**God--Romans 1:20**---For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and **Godhead**; so that they are without excuse:

**Christ--Colossians 2:9**---For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the **Godhead** bodily.

- b. Their meanings and definitions are as follows:

- 1) In Acts 17:29 the Greek term is *theion*, signifying “divinity” or “the Deity” (with the definite article) – a perfect way to express the concept of the true God as opposed to the conflicting gods of Greek paganism.

- 2) In Romans 1:20 there is the kindred word, *theiotes*, which refers to the Creator’s “Divine nature.” God’s “divine essence,” e.g., His limitless power and infinite wisdom, are demonstrated to perceptive humanity by means of the marvelous works of His creation – and such has been evident since the dawn of time.

- 3) In Colossians 2:9 the Greek *theotes* carries the meaning of “Deity” or “Divinity” and is applied to Christ.

- a) This text affirms that the fullness of the Divine nature is manifest in the person of Jesus Christ.

- b) Jesus was divine when He was the “Word” before His birth; Jesus was divine during His life on earth; and Jesus is divine as He sits on the throne of God.

- c. In a more popular sense, the English term “Godhead” has come to represent the idea that the “Divine” essence is shared by three distinct Personalities.

- d. These are delineated clearly in the New Testament as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (see:

Matthew 28:19--- Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:4-6---There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

2 Corinthians 13:14---The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.

Ephesians 4:4-6---*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

1 Peter 1:2---elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:

Revelation 1:4-5---Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood

11. The term “trinity” is not found in the Scriptures *per se*, but the idea certainly is there.

- a. The word derives from the Latin, *trinus*, which means “three-fold.”
- b. In the Christian vocabulary, the idea is that of “three” divine Persons who function as an absolute unity.
- c. This is not related to polytheism (many gods), as with the divergent, antagonistic “gods” of ancient paganism.
- d. Rather the concept is that of three distinct personalities, each fully share the identical Divine nature (i.e., the sum of those distinguishing, essential, and permanent traits by which a Being may be defined as Deity).

12. In the Scriptures the three sacred Persons are, in a *certain sense*, represented as “one” (Dt. 6:4; Jn. 10:30; Gal. 3:20; Jas. 2:19).

- a. They are one in nature; each shares the essence of deity. The Father is God (Eph. 1:3); Christ, the Son, is God (Jn. 1:1, 14; Heb. 1:8), and the Holy Spirit likewise is Deity (Acts 5:3-4).
- b. Any person who subscribes to the notion that neither the Son nor the Spirit is “Deity” in nature is seriously mistaken.

13. On the other hand, there is *another sense* in which these entities are “three,” that is, they are distinct personalities.
- a. The Father is not the Son (Mk. 13:32), the Son is not the Spirit (Jn. 14:16), and the Spirit is not the Father (Gal. 4:6).
  - b. Those who allege that “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” are but three “manifestations” of a solitary Divine Person, are deeply in error.
14. The terms “Godhead” and “Trinity” are respectable words, each representing concepts that are taught in the Holy Scriptures.

## **DISCUSSION:**

**NOTE:** The following is an **expanded and edited outline** of an article written by Wayne Jackson. The article appeared earlier in print in the *Christian Courier* and can be found on their web site at the following web address: <http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1488-the-biblical-doctrine-of-the-godhead>

### **I. What Is the Background Regarding the Nature of the Godhead?**

- A. Since the late second century A.D., controversy has existed concerning the nature of the Godhead.
  1. Is God a solitary person--simply manifested in three forms? Or do three separate personalities exist, each of whom possesses the nature of deity? Is the popular doctrine of the Trinity true or false?
  2. Though the word “Trinity” is not explicitly found in the Bible, the teaching that there are three individual personalities of divine nature (known in the New Testament as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is thoroughly scriptural, and has been generally acknowledged by the writers of “Christendom” since the apostolic age.
- B. The English words used by more recent translations to express the Greek words *theion* (Acts 17:29, *theiotes* (Romans 1:20), and *theotes* (Col. 2:9) are “Divine Nature.”
  1. The King James Version uses the word “Godhead,” and the New King James Version uses the words “Divine Nature.”
  2. The divine nature, i.e., the nature or quality which identifies one as deity (as opposed, for example, to the angelic or human natures) is shared by three distinct personalities, and these personalities are characterized in the New Testament as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19:20---Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them

to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.

3. Each of the three personalities of the Godhead is eternal and equal in essence, though they may assume individual roles in their respective work, which may involve subordination:

Philippians 2:5-11---Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,<sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## II. The Oneness of God Is Taught in Scripture.

- A. Monotheism is the belief in one God, in contrast to polytheism, the notion that numerous gods exist.
  1. Unquestionably, the Bible affirms the concept of monotheism.
    - a. In the first commandment of the Decalogue, Jehovah charges, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Again, “Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah” (Deuteronomy 6:4). Or, “Jehovah, he is God; there is none else besides him” (Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 1 Kings 8:60; 1 Chronicles 17:20; Isaiah 43:11; Zechariah 14:9).
    - b. In the New Testament, Paul says that “God is one” (Galatians 3:20), while James notes: “You believe that God is one; you do well: the demons also believe, and shudder” (James 2:19).
  2. Clearly, therefore, the oneness of God, in some sense, is a biblical truth; however, what does Scripture mean by one God?
    - a. In the Old Testament, the words *el*, *eloah*, and *elohim*, from related roots, are generic designations of God.
    - b. The New Testament term is *theos*.
  3. These appellations, when used of the true God, simply suggest the nature or quality of being divine—deity.
  4. The word “God” is not the name of a personality; it is the name of a nature, a quality of being.

- a. When it is said, therefore, that there is but one God, the meaning is: there is but one divine nature.
- b. There is a unified set of traits or characteristics that distinguish a personality as God.

B. Scriptures teaches that God is one, but do they also teach that there are three in One?

### III. The Divine Three Is Also Taught in Scripture.

A. It is very clear that the Scriptures teach that there is a personal distinction between those individuals identified in the New Testament as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these persons are in some sense three; that is to say, the persons of the divine Godhead are distinguished:

**Matthew 3:16-17**---When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. <sup>17</sup> And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

**Matthew 28:19**---Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

**Luke 1:35**---And the angel answered and said to her, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*”

**John 14:26**---But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

**John 15:26**---“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

**2 Corinthians 13:14**---The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.

**Ephesians 2:18**---For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

**Ephesians 4:4-6**---*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

**1 Peter 1:2**---elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

**Jude 20-21**---But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, <sup>21</sup> keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

**Revelation 1:4-5**---John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

- B. It is obvious that these inspired verses reveal three separate persons.
- C. Furthermore, additional biblical data reveal that each of these three persons is God—i.e., each possesses the quality or nature of deity.
  - 1. The Father is deity (Ephesians 1:3), as is the Son (Hebrews 1:8), and so also the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4).

Ephesians 1:3--- Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

Hebrews 1:8--- But to the Son *He said*, “*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.*”

Acts 5:3-4--- But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? <sup>4</sup> While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

- 2. Any elementary student of logic knows perfectly well that the Godhead cannot be both one and three without a logical contradiction being involved—if the adjectives “one” and “three” are employed in the identical sense.
  - a. But the fact of the matter is, they are not used in the same sense.
  - b. There is but one divine nature, but there are three distinct personalities possessing that unified set of infinite qualities.
  - c. Thus, there is no contradiction at all.
- D. Without a recognition of the above principle, some Bible passages would be difficult to harmonize. For example:
  - 1. In **Isaiah 44:24** Jehovah affirms that he “stretches forth the heavens **alone**; that spreads abroad the earth (who is with me?).”

2. Yet in **John 8:29** Christ said, “And he [the Father] that sent me is with me; he has **not left me alone.**”
3. **The question is:** how can God be both alone and not alone?
  - a. In Isaiah’s passage, God (the one divine nature) was being contrasted with the false gods of paganism; the personalities of the Godhead were not a consideration there.
  - b. In John 8:29, the relationship of two divine personalities (Father and Son) was in view.
  - c. What we have are different subjects, but no discrepancy.
  - d. Similarly, when a certain scribe affirmed that “he [God] is one; and there is none other but he” (Mark 12:32), he was correct.
    - 1) He was declaring monotheism, as suggested above.
    - 2) In another setting though, Christ, revealing a distinction between himself and the Father, said: “It is another that bears witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesses of me is true” (John 5:32).

#### **IV. There is Old Testament Evidence of Divine Plurality.**

- A. The biblical doctrine of the Godhead is progressive.
  1. This means that the concept was unfolded, being gradually illuminated from the Old Testament to the New Testament.
  2. The following statement applies: “The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.”
  3. Nevertheless, the multiple personalities of the holy Godhead clearly are distinguished in the Old Testament.
- B. This is seen by some in Genesis 1:1.
 

“In the beginning God [elohim—plural] created [bara—singular]” (Genesis 1:1).

  1. In the plural form elohim, many scholars see a “foreshadowing of the plurality of persons in the Divine Trinity” (Smith 1959, 11).
  2. Adam Clarke declared that the term “has long been supposed, by the most eminently learned and pious men, to imply a plurality of Persons in the Divine nature” (n.d., 28).

3. Richard Watson wrote that elohim "seems to be the general appellation by which the Triune Godhead is collectively distinguished in Scripture" (1881, 1024).
4. Though some scholars call this plural form a "plural of majesty" (i.e., a suggestion of multiple majestic traits), Nathan Stone observed that the plural of majesty "was not known then" (1944, 12).
5. Professor Harold Stigers noted: "A multiplicity of personalities in the Godhead, implied in the creative process in the use of the titles 'God' (1:1) and 'Spirit of God' (1:2), is involved in the creative and redemptive work of God" (1976, 47).

C. Multiple divine personalities are alluded to in such passages as follows:

Genesis 1:26---And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"  
 (Note: this cannot refer to angels, as is often claimed, for angels are themselves created (Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 148:2, 5), not creators; and the context limits the creating to God [v. 27].)

Genesis 3:22---The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.

Genesis 11:7---Come, let us go down, and there confound their language."  
 (Incidentally, "come" in the Hebrew text is plural, so that the divine spokesman must be addressing and acting in union with at least two others [Thiessen 1949, 126].)

Isaiah---And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?).

Ecclesiastes 12:1---Remember also thy Creator [Hebrew plural] in the days of thy youth."

D. Numerous other passages reveal a distinction of personalities within the Godhead:

- a. In Genesis 18:21, Jehovah, temporarily assuming the form of a man, visits Sodom. Surveying the evil of that area, this "Jehovah" then "rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven" (19:24). Two persons are clearly denominated "Jehovah" or "LORD."
- b. "Thus says Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of Hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). (Note: the language of this verse is applied to Christ in Revelation 1:17.)
- c. In Zechariah 11:12, 13, Christ prophetically says: "And I said unto them, if ye think good, give me my hire; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver. And Jehovah said unto me . . ."
- d. "Jehovah [the first person] said unto my Lord [the second person], Sit thou at my right hand" (Psalm 110:1).
- e. "Jehovah [the Father] laid on him [Christ] the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

- f. “The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against Jehovah, [the Father] and against his anointed [the Son] saying, Let us break their bonds asunder, And cast away their cords from us” (Psalm 2:2, 3).
- E. This is but a fractional sampling of a vast amount of Old Testament evidence for the plural personalities of deity.

## V. There Is New Testament Evidence of Divine Plurality.

- A. There are many obvious indications of distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the New Testament. For instance, there is the clear case of the baptismal scene of Christ, where Jesus is in the water, the Father is speaking from heaven, and the Spirit is descending as a dove (Matthew 3:16-17).
- B. Then there is Matthew’s record of the “great commission” where baptism is “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).
  - 1. The term “name” (Greek: *onoma*) stands for becoming the possession of, and under the protection of, the one into whose name an individual is immersed (Arndt and Gingrich 1967, 575), and its singular form here likely stresses the unity of the holy Three.
  - 2. The multiple use of the article “the” before the words Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, however, according to a well-known rule of Greek grammar (Dana and Mantey 1955, 147), plainly demonstrates that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are separate persons, and not merely three manifestations of one person (Warfield 1952, 42).
- C. There are other New Testament evidences revealing a distinction between the divine persons of the holy Godhead:
  - 1. Christ is said to be a “mediator” between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5).
    - a. The word “mediator” translates the Greek *mesites* (from *mesos*, “middle,” and *eimi*, “to go”), and so literally, a go-between.
    - b. Arndt and Gingrich note that the term is used of “one who mediates between two parties to remove a disagreement or reach a common goal. Of Christ with the genitive of persons between whom he mediates . . .” (508).
    - c. Clearly, Christ cannot be a mediator between God and man if he is the totality of the holy Godhead.
  - 2. In John 8:16-17, the Lord cited the Old Testament principle of multiple witnesses for legal documentation.
    - a. He is countering the Pharisaic allegation that his witness is not true (v. 13).

- b. He reasons, therefore, that just as the law requires at least two witnesses to establish credibility, so the Lord is “not alone”; he bears witness of himself, and the Father bears witness of him.
    - c. If Jesus is the same person as the Father, his argument makes no sense!
- 3. Christ once taught: “I am the vine, and my Father is the husbandman” (John 15:1).
  - a. In the same allegory he identified the disciples as “branches.”
  - b. The narrative thus has three principal features: husbandman (the Father), vine (the Son), and branches (disciples).
  - c. It is not difficult to see that there is as much distinction between the husbandman and the vine as there is between the vine and the branches.
- 4. “But of that day nor that hour knows no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32).
  - a. While Jesus was upon the earth, he knew not the time of the judgment day.
  - b. The Father, however, did know! Thus, clearly the Father and the Son were not the same person.
  - c. Similarly, “And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him” (Matthew 12:32).
    - 1) The contrast here between the Son and the Holy Spirit plainly shows that they are not identical in personality.
    - 2) These two arguments make it certain that Christ was neither the Father nor the Spirit.
- 5. In speaking of Christ’s subordination to God, Paul says: “[The head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3).
  - a. Edward Robinson noted the use of “head” (Greek: *kephale*): “Trop. of persons, i.e., the head, the chief, one to whom others are subordinate” (1855, 398).
  - b. Would it make any sense to speak of one being head of himself?
- 6. Jesus is said to be “the very image” of the Father’s substance (Hebrews 1:3). Of the word “image” (Greek: *charakter*), W. E. Vine observed:
  - a. In the New Testament it is used metaphorically in Heb. 1:3, of the Son of God as ‘the very image (marg. – the impress) of His substance,’ RV.

- b. The phrase expresses the fact that the Son is both personally distinct from, and yet literally equal to Him of whose essence He is the adequate imprint (1940, 247).
7. The following passages contain contrasts which reveal a distinction between the Father and the Son:
- a. Christ did not seek his own will, but the will of his Father (John 5:30).
  - b. His teaching was not his, but the Father's (John 7:16).
  - c. He came not of himself, but was sent of the Father (John 7:28; 8:42).
  - d. He glorified him (John 8:54).
  - e. The Father does not judge, but has given judgment unto the Son (John 5:22).
8. The Jews had neither heard the Father's voice, nor seen his form at any time (John 5:37; cf. 1:18). But they had both seen and heard Christ. Hence, he was not the same person as the Father.
9. There are many **grammatical forms** which show the distinction between the persons of the Godhead.
- a. In addition to plural pronouns (e.g., "our," "we," "us" [John 14:23; 17:11, 21]), **prepositions** frequently function in this capacity.
    - 1) The Spirit is sent **from** the Father (John 15:26).
    - 2) In the beginning Christ was **with** (Greek *pros*) God (John 1:1).
    - 3) He spoke the things which he had seen **with** (Greek: *para*) him (John 8:38).
    - 4) He came forth **from** the Father (John 16:27).
    - 5) All created things are of the Father, and **through** Christ (1 Corinthians 8:6).
    - 6) **Through** Christ we have access in the Spirit unto the Father (Ephesians 2:18).
  - b. Conjunctions can also indicate a distinction.
    - 1) He that abides in the teaching of Christ has both the Father **and** the Son (2 John 9).
    - 2) Jesus rebuked the Jews: "Ye know neither me, nor my Father: if ye knew me, ye would know my Father also [Greek: *kai*, as an adverb]" (John 8:19).

- 3) Comparative terms reveal distinction. Though Christ did not hold onto his equality with God (Philippians 2:6)—in terms of the independent exercise of divine privileges—nonetheless, in essence he was equal with God (John 5:18).
- 4) In Christ’s subordinate position, though, the Father was greater than he (John 14:28).

10. Many verbal forms indicate that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are separate in personality.

- a. The Father sent the Son (John 7:29), and the Son sent the Spirit (John 15:26).
- b. The Father loves the Son (John 3:35) and abides in him (John 14:10).
- c. The Father gave the Son (John 3:16), exalted him (Philippians 2:9), and delivered all things unto him (Matthew 11:27).
- d. Jesus commended his spirit into the Father’s hands (Luke 23:46) and ascended unto him (John 20:17).
- e. The Bible contains many such expressions which are meaningless if the Father, Son, and Spirit are the same person.

## VI. Those Who Wrote During the Post-apostolic Age, Were Virtually One in Their Views Regarding the Godhead.

- A. They were one in their view that the Godhead consists of three separate, divine persons.
- B. A. C. Cox wrote the following: “Evidences, therefore, are abundant and archaic indeed, to prove that the Ante-Nicene Fathers, with those of the Nicene and the Post-Nicene periods, were of one mind, and virtually of one voice” (1855, 49).

### RECOMMENDATION:

#### A PICTURE OF GOD



While browsing through a book store in Atlanta, Georgia in 1975, I ran across a book entitled *A Picture of God: 3 in 1* written for young children. It is very good and is still in print: Written by Joanne Marxhausen; Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 1973. I agree with most of the material within. There are **three parts** to an apple: skin, flesh, and the core with the seeds; YET, there is only **one apple**.

God is **three persons**; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; YET, there is only **one God**. Each is a distinct being, yet they are one and of the same Divine Nature. God, the Word, became “flesh,” John 1:1, 14. He received the Father’s knowledge and gave it to the Holy Spirit who in turn guided the apostles and holy prophets into all of the truth (John 14:14:24-25; 16:12-15; Eph. 3:1-5). TODAY, persons, can become “children” of God when the seed of God’s word is “sown” into their hearts, and they are “begotten of God” to become like Him (1 Peter 1:22-25).

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