What the Bible says about the Trinity

The Godhead - Father, Son and Holy Spirit

God exists in three Persons -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is called the doctrine of the Trinity. Although the word *Trinity* is not in the Bible, it expresses a scriptural truth; in fact, it was coined by one of the early Latin Christian writers to set forth the truth that God is a *Tri-unity* of Persons.

The term *Godhead* (Godhood) refers to God's essence or divine Being; and is a proper statement of truth to say that there are three Persons in the Godhead.

The Old Testament emphasizes the unity of God; that is, it asserts that there is but one God, in contrast to the many false gods of the heathen; nevertheless, there are intimations in the Old Testament of the fact that God exists in a plurality or Trinity of Persons. For example, the Spirit of God is mentioned in Genesis 1:2; the Son is mentioned in Psalm 2:7, 12; and there are plural expressions in a number of places which show that God is a Trinity.

"And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).   The New Testament, while fully recognizing the unity of God, emphasizes the fact of the three Persons.

Three Persons -- One God

The Bible presents to us a Father who is God (John 3:16), a Son who is God (Philippians 2:5-8; John 1:1), and a Holy Spirit who is God (Acts 5:3, 4); yet these are not three Gods, but one and the same God.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to explain what the word *Person* means as applied to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We are accustomed to think of persons as individual human begins, and we know that three persons cannot be one being. The Persons of the Godhead are clearly distinguished from one another in many passages of Scripture; yet they cannot be separated. This truth is beyond complete understanding by our finite minds.

No illustration of the Trinity will suffice to explain this relationship, but we can perhaps get some help by trying to express the relationship mathematically. Men would ordinarily say of the Persons: one *plus* one *plus* one equals *three*. But it would be more accurate to say: one *times* one *times* one equals *one*, for each of the Persons is fully God in the absolute sense, and the three together are the one self-same God.

It is not possible for me to explain this truth fully, but it is necessary to know and to state clearly what the Bible actually says.

Throughout the Scriptures the Gospel message is plain: God the Father sent His Son to redeem fallen man; The Son willingly came to die for the sins of the world; and the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, regenerates the heart by the Word of God which He inspired, takes the things of Christ, and shows them unto us who love Him (see John 16:12-15).

Colossians 2:9 speaks very plainly: "In him [Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Further Bible proof of the Trinity

I have already alluded to some Bible proofs of the Trinity. One of these is the use of the plural in reference to God. In creating man, God said, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). If there were only one Person in the Godhead, does it not seem unlikely that God would use the words "us" and "our" in this instance? Would He not have been more likely to say, "I will make man in my image"? (see also Genesis 3:22). Again, in Isaiah 6:8 God refers to Himself as "I" and "us", indicating both unity and plurality in the same Being.

Another Bible proof of the Trinity which has already been mentioned is the fact that each of the Persons is individually called God.

Some further proofs may be listed this way:

1. Comparison of Scripture with Scripture
The passage in Isaiah 6 mentioned previously is still more interesting and presents a stronger proof of the Trinity when compared with John 12:35-41 and Acts 28:25-27.

In John 12:35, 35, Christ is speaking about Himself. Verse 37 tells us that the people to whom He spoke did not believe in Him, even through He had performed many miracles before them. Then in verses 38-40 John quotes Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 (written about 700 years before Christ was born), stating that Isaiah had foretold that some people would not believe in Him. And John says plainly that the God whom Isaiah saw was the Lord Jesus: "Esaias . . . Saw his glory" (v. 41).

In Acts 28:23 Paul was speaking to the people about Christ, but some of them did not believe in Him. In verses 25-27 Isaiah 6:8-10 is again referred to -- this time as the voice of the Holy Spirit (v. 25).

So we see how this one passage from Isaiah, when compared with these two New Testament references, brings out the truth that there are three Persons in one God.

2. The Manifestation of the Trinity at the Baptism of Jesus
Let us turn now to Matthew 3:16, 17. Here we have a beautiful picture painted for us, as well as a proof text given. through we may forget every other Scripture evidence of the Trinity, it will not be easy to forget this if it is once imprinted upon our minds. There is the blessed Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, standing in the water, having been baptized by John. And now, behold, the heavens open, and the Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity, descends like a dove upon Jesus. But hearken! A voice is heard from heaven, the voice of the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, saying, "This is my beloved Son!" What clearer and better proof can we have than this that in the Godhead there are three Persons -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

3. Christ's Declaration regarding the Trinity in His Great Commission to His Disciples
"Go . . . teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" (Matthew 28:19).

If these three were not God, it would not seem right to give each the same dignity and honor. And if they were more than one God, would not Jesus have been likely to say "in the names" instead of only "in the name?"

4. Paul's Statement in the Apostolic Benediction
"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all Amen" (II Corinthians 13:14).

   If these three Persons here mentioned were not equally God it would not seem right to give each of them the same importance. Indeed, would it not be an insult to the true God to do this?

   There are many other similar passages, but these are sufficient for my purpose here.

Faith believes what the human intellect cannot explain

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

   Perhaps after reading and thinking about these statements of the Scripture regarding the Trinity you are ready to exclaim, "This is a great mystery; I cannot understand it!" That is what everyone else says. And we are not required to understand it. He asks us only to believe it on the testimony of His own Word. There are a great many things in the Bible, and out of it, which we believe, but we do not understand. For example, we believe that God created the earth and everything in it, but we do not understand how He did it. Neither do we understand why a little brown see planted in the black soil pushes a little green shoot up through the ground and brings forth a red flower -- yet we believe it.

   Then again, let me ask the question: Can you put the whole of the Atlantic Ocean in a teacup? No more can you expect to put the whole of the idea of God into a human brain.

   "Canst thou by searching finding out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea" (Job 11:7-9).

   "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33)