

“Is It Possible to Comprehend the Trinity?”

by Daryl E. Witmer

Christians are *monotheistic* - we believe in one God. But we are also *Trinitarian* - we believe in a God who is revealed in three Persons. Each Person of the Godhead is fully Divine, yet distinct from one another.

The word “Trinity” does not appear in the Bible *per Se*, but the concept of a Triune God has always been a key mark of historic, orthodox Christianity. As a matter of fact, the doctrine of the Trinity is one tenet that often separates aberrant teaching from the sound and established position of the Church down through the ages. When any member of the Godhead is made out to be less than fully God, a charge of heresy is substantiated.

But how is one to understand the doctrine of the Trinity? Can the Trinity be explained? The answer is “not exactly - not fully.” A.W. Tozer wrote in his book *The Knowledge of the Holy* that “our sincerest effort to grasp the incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity must remain forever futile, and only by deepest reverence can it be saved from actual presumption.”

Nevertheless, it *is* possible to gain some insight into this mystery. The diagram above, for instance, is helpful in demonstrating the Biblical position on the inter-relationship between the members of the Godhead. And there are five illustrations that I have come by over the years that have aided me in my own effort to grasp, at least in measure, that which While these various properties and characteristics

may be mutually exclusive, in order to give proper weight to all relevant data, the subatomic entity itself is known as, and referred to as, PWh.

The Ocean A nuclear scientist by the name of Robert W. Faid published a book in 1993 entitled *A Scientific Approach to Biblical Mysteries*. He says that one day while standing by the shore of the sea he was struck by the analogy it afforded re: the Trinity. If the sea itself is compared to God, we might then think of a wave as representing God the Son. A wave has an identity of its own, and it comes from and returns to the sea. Yet it is never separate from the sea. Further, we might think of the salt air as the Holy Spirit. It invigorates and penetrates and even draws one to

the Scripture clearly affirms. As is true with any analogy, however, flaws and limitations remain. What follows is, at best, an *attempt* to translate the language of the infinite into the idiom of the finite.

H₂O Water, ice, and steam. All three share common attributes but exhibit themselves in distinct form/roles.

- **An Egg** The **white**, the **shell**, the **yolk**. If I hold up any one component and ask you what it is, you will say, “It’s an egg, of course.” Yet there is a most definite distinction between each of the three components.
- **Mr. Witmer** People address my father as ‘Mr. Witmer’. But I, too, am ‘Mr. Witmer’. And so is my son - as a matter of fact, all three sons are ‘Mr. Witmer’! If someone walked into a room where we all happened to be present and said, “Now, would the *real* Mr. Witmer please raise their hand”, we would all raise our hands. We all share many attributes, we are all ‘Mr. Witmer’, and to some extent we all have a common identity. Yet we are also certainly three distinct persons.
- **PWh** Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, in his book *How Do We Know There Is a God?*, says that theoretical physicists might identify an electron as PWh, where P = particle properties, W = wave properties, and h = quantum properties.

the sea. It signals that the sea is near. It even has a separate existence. Yet it still *is* the sea.

In Genesis 1:26 God says, “Let Us make man in Our image...” But who are the ‘Us’ and the ‘Our’ if they’re not references to the three members of the Trinity? Certainly not the angels or the cherubim. Throughout Scripture the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit are all repeatedly recognized as being fully God. The testimony is unequivocal. There certainly remains the mystery of that which man can never wholly know about God, but *without* disengaging the mind, and *with* what Tozer calls “reverent reason”, it becomes incumbent on us at this point to bow low before the totality of the truth of God’s revelation regarding Himself as the great Three-in-One.