

Chapter Twenty-One

THE TRINITY AND THE FAITH

The Trinity is the central mystery to our most holy faith (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:33; Rom. 15:30; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2, cf. Col. 1:3-6; Tit. 1:4; Jd. 1:3, 20). The Father, Son, Holy Spirit each remains a distinct member of the Trinity but of the same essence (*homoousios*) in a unique mutual indwelling of the interrelationship (mutual indwelling and fellowship) of the three Persons in the triune Godhead is referred to by theologians as *perichoresis* beginning with the Cappadocian fathers. In the Trinity, we see the triune God as the Father who communicates and relates through the Son as the Lamb or Word of God by His Spirit to the Church (Rev. 1:4-6; 19:10-13).

In the Trinity, we see God as “One but also Three in One”; who we can represent as: *God above us, God among us, God within us*. So, Jesus, the Son came to the earth to reveal the Father to us (Lk. 10:21, 22; Jn. 14:6-11, 23) and to declare plainly the triune Godhead, the Trinity to us (Matt. 3:16, 17; 28:19; Jn. 14; 15; 16).

The Holy Spirit was sent to both dwell in repentant sinners and fill willing, seeking believers to bring us God and the resources of the Godhead (Jn. 7:37-39; 14:15-26; 16:7-15). This is the good reason why Jesus had to return to the Father after His earthly ministry (Jn. 16:7-15; Acts 1:1-11). In His Person as the third Person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit has come since the day of Pentecost to be the final witness of the triune God to the salvation of believers in Christ (Acts 2:1-4, 16-21, 32-39 v. 33; 10:1-3, 33-44; 15:6-11; 1 Pet. 1:1-5, 7-12).

The Holy Spirit now on behalf of the Godhead brings us New Birth through the gospel (Jn. 3:3-6; 16:7-11; Acts 2:38) and the fullness of God with all divine repositories (Jn. 16:7, 12-15; Acts 2:38, 39; Eph. 1:3-19 v. 13, 14). And all these kingdom repositories are given thereafter; that is after breaking sin in our nature and planting life in the heart (Rom. 8:1-16 vv. 2-4), exalting us to joint-heirs with Him in glory (Rom. 8:17-25), pleading in prayer through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27), trusting in God’s Sovereignty and providence (Rom. 8:28), enjoying the full benefits of the gospel to be in conformity with Christ (Rom. 8:29-30), exalting Jesus as Lord and Saviour in His High Priestly Office (Rom. 8:31-34) and glued to God’s unfailing love in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39). In the revelation of the mystery of God, as Triune Godhead for salvation, while we see the Father in majesty, the Son in suffering and pleading even though now in majesty but as Mediator, we see the Holy Spirit as striving (1 Tim. 2:5-7; Heb. 9:14-16; 12:24; 13:20, 21).

God though He gave hints, did not make clear the truth of the Trinity in the Old Testament; and yet He did not leave it as something to be deduced in the New Testament. Right in Genesis, God is introduced to humanity as the Triune God, Elohim (Gen. 1:13, 26-28) or Elohim Jehovah (Gen. 2:4-24; 3:8-22). However, God stressed on His Oneness to Abraham and his descendants to keep them from idolatry as a peculiar covenant people (Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 6:4-6; Acts 7:2-4). The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 50:24; Ex. 3:6, 13-16; Deut. 9:5; Matt. 22:32; Acts 7:32) became known as the keeping God of Israel (Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 7:9; Rom. 9:4, 5) the same true and living God of the Bible known in the mystery of godliness (Jer. 9:23, 24; 10:10; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 1:9, 13-16).

In the wisdom of God, the knowledge of **His essential Threeness** could not be grasped without first laying deep in their minds (the minds of Old Testament saints) a piercing conviction of **His Oneness**. Besides, without the full agency of the redemptive plan, the Holy Spirit could not reveal such truths (Jn. 14:12; 16:12-15; 17:21, 22; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27). The Bible begins in monotheism (belief in one God as the triune Godhead), but soon after the Fall comes polytheism (belief in many gods) - which god is the real God. Not until belief in one God was laid deep in human consciousness through Judaism (as part of the drama of His eternal plan in our redemptive process) was God ready to reveal more clearly to mankind the sublime truth of the Trinity in the New Testament. Even then, to explain the mystery of the Trinity is not the province or capacity of any finite beings; ours is simply to conserve the mystery. So, those who call themselves Christians but yet do not hold tenaciously to the doctrine of the Trinity as mystery revealed through grace and faith will soon latch onto some other error. It is not a strange thing to observe it as a fact of the Christian life that when this Trinitarian truth is modified or pushed aside, it is as if the door is opened to the inrush of all kinds of absurd doctrines, teachings, ideas, bizarre theories, and half-truths.

Thus, it is necessary to understand that, any erroneous views about Trinity may subvert genuine Christian faith. Therefore, we declare basically that Trinity is "God is One but with three distinct Persons as centres of consciousness". This explains Trinity in classic Trinitarian-ism, "God is One God, yet God is Three Persons".

Trinitarians hold the view of:

- a) God as One (Godhead) and never three separate gods,
- b) Equality of the three divine Persons having distinctive Personalities and never regard them as being different in rank,
- c) God is triune Godhead not unipersonal where the other two Persons in the Trinity are simply manifestations of the Being of the one God.

Within the one God (Deut. 6:4-6; Rom. 2:30; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; Gal. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:5) or Godhead (Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9) or Trinity (Matt. 28:19; Jn. 14:15-26; Acts

2:33; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:14-19; 1 Pet. 1:2), the Father is not the Son; but neither is the Son the Holy Spirit; nor the Father the Holy Spirit. In their divinity, they are co-equal and exist both inseparably together and separately as God; hence the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God. Thus, to believe and know the Son is to believe and know the Father also (Matt. 11:25-27; Jn. 14:5-11); and this is eternal life (Jn. 17:1-3; 20:30, 31; Acts 16:30, 31; 1 Jn. 2:23-25; 2 Jn. 1:9). Yet no one can truly know the Father and the Son without the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:15-26; 16:7-15; 2 Tim. 3:14; 1 Jn. 2:20-27; 3:23, 24; 4:12-16).

The Church today has incidentally not grasped the mystery of Trinity as revealed in the Scriptures (Col. 2:2, 3 see Gen. 1:1-3, 26-28; 2:7, 15-24; 3:15-22; 9:1-7, 18-29; Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:33; 17:26-29; 2 Cor. 13:14). We often compartmentalize the three Persons in the One Godhead with the human finite, imperfect, darkened and corrupted mind and a dysfunctional conscience towards God (Gen. 3:20-22; Eph. 4:17-22 v. 18; Tit. 1:15). This is so more when we humanly make assumptions to accommodate this mystery of God without the knowledge of Christ by the gospel or the Scriptures (Matt. 3:16, 17; 22:29; Mk. 1:1; Lk. 24:44-47; Jn. 5:39; Acts 17:11, 24-31; Rom. 1:16-23; 10:1-17; 1 Cor. 1:18-24 v. 21; 15:3, 4; Eph. 3:1-19 v. 6). God is the infinite Supreme Spirit Being in heaven who has chosen to localize Himself through the Son to represent both His transcendence and immanence in the Universe (Gen. 1:1-31; Eccl. 5:3; Is. 66:1; Dan. 2:28; Matt. 6:1, 10; Jn. 1:1-5, 14-18; 8:29; 14:1-3, 24; Heb. 9:24; Rev. 21:3).

God is defined by the presence of the Father (Gen. 1:1-3, 26-28; Jn. 1:1-5, 14-18, 31-34); thus, wherever the Father is, God is fully there. Wherever Jesus Christ the Son is, the Father is also there with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11; Col. 2:9; 1 Jn. 1:1-3; 2:23-25). Wherever the Holy Spirit is the Father is also there with the Son (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 1 Jn. 4:12-16). The Son is the Logos (Jn. 1:1-3; Rev. 19:11-13), the Holy Spirit is the Spirit sent forth or poured out of God (Acts 2:16; Rev. 1:4-6. The Incarnation of the Son did not diminish God in heaven and in His Being (Matt. 1:18-23; 3:16, 17; Lk. 1:31-35; Acts 10:38); and Pentecost did not diminish God either (Acts 2:1-4, 16-21, 33). Again Pentecost, did not redefine the duties of the Father and the Son, it clarified the saving power of the gospel by the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:12; 5:29-32; 1 Cor. 15:45; 1 Pet. 1:12 see Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Thess. 1:1-5; 1 Pet. 1:2).

God is One; yet because the Son and the Holy Spirit are of and from God, they are God. When you receive Christ, you receive the indwelling Father and the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11, 14-16; 1 Cor. 6:17, 19-20). Equally when you receive the Holy Spirit, you receive the coming upon of the Father and Christ (Jn. 14:15-23; Acts 8:16-18; 2 Cor. 1:20, 21; Eph. 1:13, 14). The Father as infinite Spirit and Supreme Being does not seem to move out of His dwelling in heaven maybe until after creation of the New Earth and New Heavens (Rev. 21:3). He works through the Son and the Spirit as

Personal extensions of the same divine essence of Himself (1 Cor. 1:4-10; 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Thess. 5:17-24; 1 Pet. 1:1-12 v. 2; 1 Jn. 3:1-3, 23, 24; 4:12-16). He does that in a sense of love and unity in the Godhead (Eph. 3:14-19).

Wherever and whenever, the truth of the doctrine of God, the mystery of the Trinity as the **mystery of God** for salvation is not well grasped everything else about the Christian faith falls apart (Col. 2:1-7 vv. 2, 3). It is the mystery of the Trinity as most needed or important mystery revealed that holds all other mysteries of God declared in the Bible (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). From it, the message of the gospel, as the message of first importance that undergirds understanding of all other mysteries of God (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:18-20) is preached and believed according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-11 v. 3, 4).

Through the gospel and the mystery of God that together explains the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:2-4) sound doctrine and/or good theology can also be well guarded and tailored such that (Acts 2:42; Rom. 6:17, 18; 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:6; 6:3; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1; Heb. 6:1, 2; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27; 2 Jn. 1:9):

- a) The core eternally unchanging message of the gospel is always Jesus and Him crucified - His proven death, burial and resurrection; the message of the cross of Jesus (Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-3; 2:22-36; 4:1, 2; Rom. 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:17-31; 2:1-7; 15:1-19),
- b) The message of the gospel is the preaching of the kingdom and teaching about the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:1-3; 8:5-11; 28:30, 31), especially doctrine in His Name as the crucified, risen, ascended and living One (Acts 2:21, 38; 3:6, 15-16; 4:7-12, 17-20, 23-31; 5:20-25, 28-32, 40-42; 8:12; 9:14, 15, 21, 27, 29; 10:43; 15:17; 19:17; 21:13; 22:16),
- c) The message is that which brings or grants and generates repentance (Lk. 24:44-47; Acts 5:30, 31; 11:18; 13:38, 39) from dead works towards (serving the true and living) God and faith towards the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:20, 21; 1 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 6:1, 2),
- d) The message that reveals the light of God in the knowledge of Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light (Acts 8:26-38; 1 Cor. 4:15-17; 2 Cor. 4:4-7; 2 Tim. 1:8-11; 1 Jn. 5:1-5),
- e) The message of life, peace, hope and salvation in Jesus and which is the incorruptible seed of the Word, both the *Logos* and *Rhema* as power of God for saving souls if preached and believed through agency of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:6; 17:20; Acts 3:12-16; 4:8-12; 5:20; 10: 36-44; Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:6-10, 16, 17; Js. 1:18-25; 1 Pet. 1:23-25),
- f) The message which activates the life of Jesus that is in His blood (Lev. 17:11) and Name (Acts 3:15) for forgiveness of sins and our redemption (Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:2, 18, 19); towards our being washed, sanctified and justified together

with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:2, 18-25); and the blotting of all handwritten codes (Col. 2:14, 15),

- g) The truth that saves is the eternally accredited gospel of the kingdom as the only unstoppable message for every generation until the end (Matt. 24:14; Jn. 3:16; 14:6; Rom. 1:16, 17; Rev. 14:6),
- h) The only message of reconciliation for the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Eph. 2:11-18),
- i) The message is that which provides an intermarriage between grace and faith for the Christian faith (Acts 15:7-11; 18:23; Rom. 1:5; 3:21-25; 4:16; 5:2; Eph. 2:8-10; 4:7; Col. 2:6, 7; 1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:4; 2:11-15; Heb. 4:16; 11:6),
- j) The message that makes available both grace and mercy at the throne of grace set up by King Jesus as Apostle and High Priest of our faith for divine exchange at the cross through the gospel (Heb. 4:14-16),
- k) The gospel is the message from which all the teachings or doctrines of the Bible as the whole counsel of God derive (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-3; 2:22-42; 9:15-22; 22:14-16; 20:27; 28:30, 31; Rom. 1:1-17; 16:25-27; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 6:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Jd. 1:3-14).
- l) The gospel of Jesus Christ as the message of eternal Salvation, eternal life for all humanity (Matt. 1:21; 28:18-20; Jn. 1:1-5; 3:16; 5:24-29; 10:10; 14:6; 17:3; 1 Jn. 20-26; 5:20; 2 Jn. 1:1-11 v. 9), to know and believe in Jesus as the Son of God (1 Cor. 15:1-28 vv. 3, 4; 1 Jn. 5:1-21 vv. 1-5, 18-20) is to truly know and serve eternally the true and living God, Trinity (1 Thess. 1:1-10 v. 9; 1 Jn. 2:8, 23-25; 2 Jn. 1:9). Thus, to know the Son as the embodiment of Truth of the salvific mysteries of God (Jn. 18:36-40 v. 38) is first and foremost to know the Father (Jn. 17:3; 20:17) as our adoptive heavenly Father (Matt. 6:9; Jn. 1:12, 13; 14:1-26; 15:1-17; 17:1-23; Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14 v. 5) and then to bear witness to Truth of salvation with the third Person of Trinity, the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:1-26 vv. 20-26; 15:26, 23; Acts 1:8; 5:30-32; Eph. 1:13, 14; Phil. 1:5-18; Rev. 22:6, 7, 17).

This is why it is always imperative to employ the three basic systems of human perception, rightly in all matters of spiritual reality. Hence believers must be circumspect in the use of:

- (1) *Rationalism* (perception through reason);
- (2) *Empiricism* (perception of reality through what you see, hear, smell, touch and taste and by scientific experimentation);
- (3) *Faith* – perception of reality through the acceptance of established truth or criterion.

To this end the Apostle Paul writes; *“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the*

princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:" (1 Cor. 2:4-7) ... "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen." (1 Cor. 2:10-13). ... "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." (1 Tim. 6:3-5) ... "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen." (1 Tim. 6:20-21).