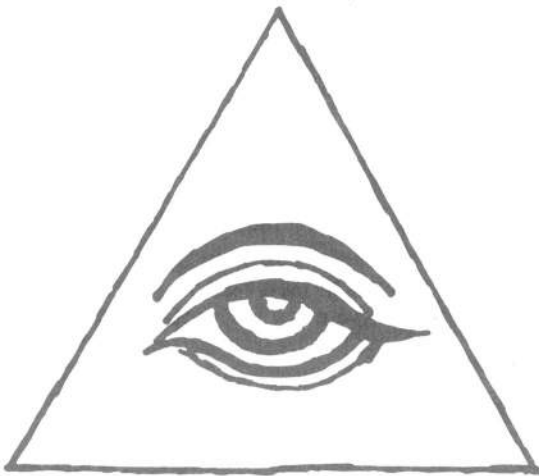


God's love is always present, even in a disaster, natural or manmade.

Two scripture verses which are appropriate to this discussion are, Romans 8:38-39 (Nothing can separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord) and Romans 8:28 (In everything God works for good...).

Cover the bulletin board with light blue or white butcher paper. Use pastels, chalk, or crayon to draw the rainbow. Write the caption above the rainbow in felt pen. Cut raindrops from wax paper and pin at random around the board. Place pictures of various disasters under the rainbow. Encourage the children to bring in newspaper clippings and discuss how we can bring God's love to each particular situation.



CHRISTIANS ARE TRINITARIANS

Is the doctrine of the Trinity "pagan" and "a false, un-Biblical doctrine?" Because the term is not Scriptural, some object to it. Others deny the doctrine altogether.

Judaism and Jehovah's Witnesses see this Christian doctrine as tritheistic: three gods, each with some independence of the others. We must always remember,

however, that God is Triune, not triplex. "His nature is not a mathematical contradiction, it is merely outside the realm of mathematical application (not $1+1+1=3$ or $1+1+1=1$ but $1\times 1\times 1=1$)," is the way Walter Martin explains it.

Though each has a different function, no member of the Godhead ever acts independently or in opposition to the others. Actions indicate *perfect harmony* and *complete unity*, as One.

The natural man, however, finds it impossible to understand the Trinity of God as a unity.

God is indivisible, yet manifests Himself in the lives of His creatures a Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are so entirely one in *aim* and *purpose* and *will* that it cannot be that there are three Gods: the three are One!

A.H. Strong's definition says, "In the nature of the one God there are three eternal distinctions which are represented to us under the figure of persons, and these three are equal."

God is eternally existent in three Persons. The Father is God (Jn. 6:27, I Pet. 1:1-2, I Cor. 8:6), the Son is God (Acts 5:3-4). Not three separate Gods (a Triad), but one single God.

The word "Trinity" comes from the Latin, *trinitas*, meaning three-fold—the 3-fold manifestation of God (tri-unity or 3-oneness). In 317 A.D. the term was placed in Christian writings. Since then "creeds" have included it. One example, Athanasian Creed: "Three in one, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance."

"Holy . . . Holy . . . Holy! Merciful and Mighty! God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity!"

Apostles and prophets would have left out the Trinity if they had not been God-inspired. If for no other reason than the inclusion of the Trinity, we know the Bible is God's Word. Because the Trinity is so hard to understand, if man had written the Bible, he would have left it out. All we Christians can do is to accept it by faith and stand on the Word. Just because we cannot understand all about something is no sign that it is not true.

Unless a person believes Jesus is God, there is no way he can be saved. A person who does not believe in the Trinity cannot be a true Christian.

The truth of the Trinity is declared unequivocally from Genesis through Revelation. The problem is not in finding scriptures to support the doctrine, but determining which ones to exclude in a sermon.

Three Biblical Teachings on the Trinity

The Bible teaches three main facts about this doctrine. First, God is one in nature or essence (Deut. 6:4). The Bible always refers to Him as "One" and the same in character or makeup. Each member of the Godhead possesses the same attributes (such as love, holiness, eternity, omniscience, omnipresence, truth, etc.) Second, each member of the Trinity is spoken of and designated, God. Several references were given earlier. More could be added. Third, each member of the Trinity is a distinct Person, each possessing self-consciousness and self-determination—three in personality and functioning in three different roles.

Christianity refers to the first Person as the Father, the second Person is the Son, and the third Person is the Holy Spirit (not "Ghost"—the Greek language has no word for "ghost"). This is not a time order—first, second and third—but the order of necessary relationships.

Four Indications in the Old Testament

Some say the Trinity is only implied in the Old Testament. Monotheism versus polytheism is stressed, but the Trinity within the unity of the Godhead is suggested in a four-fold way:

First, in plural names of the Deity: *Elohim* (a compound unity used 2,750 times). This Hebrew noun means three Persons had a part in creation (Gen. 1:1): the Father planned it, the Son executed it, and the Holy Spirit restored it.

Second, personal pronouns used of the Deity. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . ." (Gen. 1:26). This speaks of plural majesty and a proper translation would be "we will make." "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him . . ." (Gen. 1:27). Genesis 3:22 is another example.

Third, the Theophanies like "Angel of the Lord" (Gen. 16 and 18), a reference to Jesus Christ. Compare Judges 13:14 with Isaiah 9:6. Both refer to Christ.

Fourth, the work of the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:2, Judg. 6:34).

In addition to those intimations, how can you explain God anointing God (Ps. 45:6-7) if God is not a Trinity? What about the triple expressions (Num. 6:24-26)? In Isaiah 6:1-3, why did angelic beings repeat "holy" three times? This praise was addressed to the Trinity. Note, they did not say, "Holy, holy, holy are the Lords of hosts." Our God is three Persons in One essence! Holy to the Father, Holy to the Son and Holy to the Holy Spirit!

Five Declarations in the New Testament

Observe the Trinity in the New Testament. If it is merely intimated in the Old Testament, it is explicitly declared in the New Testament. It is often true that Old Testament truths, only partially understood, are illuminated in the New.

Observe five declarations: First, the baptism of Christ (Mt. 3:13-17). Our Father speaks from heaven; Jesus the Son is baptized; the Spirit descends in dove form. This is a great proof of the Trinity.

Second, the baptismal formula (Mt. 28:19): "Baptizing them in the name (singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Not "in the 'names of.'" One in three; one name, but three Persons.

Third, the Apostolic Benediction (II Cor. 13:14): "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . love of God . . . communion of the Holy Spirit."

Fourth, Christ teaches it in John 14:16: "I will pray the Father . . . He will give you another Comforter."

Fifth, we see: A Father who is God (Rom. 1:7); a Son who is God (Heb. 1:8); a Holy Spirit who is God (Acts 5:3-4).

The Father is not God as such, for God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Son is not God as such, for God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is

not God as such, for God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three are equal. There is one God and He is the one and only God (undivided and indivisible). God is not three and one, but three in One.

Boardman sums up the whole: "The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead invisible (Jn. 1:18); the Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested (Jn. 1:14-18), the Spirit is all the fullness of the Godhead acting immediately upon the creature (I Cor. 2:9-10).

I do not attempt to explain away or deny this doctrine's mystery. I assure you, however, it is not self-contradictory.

We often learn by comparing, but there is nothing to compare the Trinity with. It is a pure revelation from God and must be accepted by faith.

In *The Ways of God Defy Definition*, Moishe Rosen says most Christians want a formula to explain and illustrate unexplainable doctrines. An example is explaining the Trinity. One popular formula is to look at it as water. At times, it is liquid; lower the temperature and it becomes ice; or raise the temperature and it becomes steam—three essential forms of the same substance, taking on three different essences.

He states that the formula might sound great to a novice, but it is hardly accurate. God's *substance* and God's *essence* are *co-equal* and *co-eternal*. Water is never solid ice or vaporous steam at the same time that it is a liquid. The formula is nice, but misleading.

The best illustration is man—body, soul, and spirit. We are not three persons, but a three-in-one person.

The bottom line is there are no analogies to the Trinity in our finite experience. It is almost like trying to explain something to a blind man by telling him one thing is like another, when he has never seen either.

Hard to comprehend? Indeed! That does not keep Christians from believing it. Why? Because the Scriptures teach this doctrine. If you study the 20,000 plus references about God you will see many proofs of a Divine Trinity.

In the Divine Plan, the Father is the Architect; the Son is the Executor; and Holy Spirit is the Revealer.

As Trinitarians we see in salvation the Trinity at work: The Father gave; the Son died; the Holy Spirit pleads.

A Compliment Withheld Is Criticism

I once read a sign that said: "Give yourself away once in a while. It feels good!" And I guess there is a lot of truth in that. Jesus said something very similar when he told us to do unto others as we desired them to do unto us (Matt. 7:12).

When we see something being done well by someone else, we need to acknowledge it. When others are excelling in certain areas, we need to let them know that we are excited about their abilities and skills. A lot of people are afraid to build others up for fear of making themselves look smaller. The reverse is true. When we esteem others and encourage them in their interests we are helping to build a better image of ourselves.