

The Trinity and Deity in Early History

The Jehovah Witnesses distribute a booklet 'Should You Believe In The Trinity?' which refutes the orthodox teaching of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ. The book is full of misquotes and quotes from heretics. Some of the quotes by the Church Fathers have been *changed* and others are so out of context that they defy any sense of honesty.

The teaching of the Trinity is clearly taught in Scripture even from Genesis 1:1 where the Word for God 'Elohim' is plural as further proven in vs.26 with the words 'us' and 'our'. Throughout the Bible the same personal characteristics and actions are attributed to all three members of the Godhead. All are taught as God, (Ps.87:26; 1Tim.1:16,17; Acts 5:3,4); or creator, (Is.44:24; Col.1:16; Jn.1:3; Job.33:4).

Scripture is all we need and sufficient to convince us of the Trinity. This **'faith once delivered to the saints'** (Jude 3) will also be evidenced in the writings of the early Church Fathers and in orthodox history. One of the most blatant lies taught by cult groups is that the doctrine of the Trinity was invented in the 3rd-4th Centuries. Yet the Trinity and the deity of Christ had *already* been taught *before* these centuries.

Let the reader examine the history of the faith once delivered. Here are a few of the quotes from the early church:

50 AD: 'She poured it [perfume] over His [Jesus] hair...when the disciples saw it, they were indignant...God, aware of this, said to them: ...She has done [a beautiful thing for me] [Matt.26:7-15]' (Huleatt Fragments, 1-3).

74 AD: '...the Lord [Jesus]...He being the Lord of all the world, to whom God said at the foundation of the world, 'Let us make man after our image...' (Letter of Barnabas 5).

110 AD: '[Jesus]...He is Himself in His own right, beyond all men who ever lived, God, and Lord, and King Eternal, and the Incarnate Word, proclaimed by all the prophets, the apostles, and by the Spirit Himself...Now, the Scriptures would not have testified these things of Him, if, like others, He had been a mere man'. (Irenaeus Against Heresies, Ch.XIX.2)

110 AD: 'There is one God and Father, and not two or three; One who is; and there is no other besides Him, the only true [God]...And there is also one Son, God the Word...And there is also one Paraclete...' one Spirit, '...one Father, and one Son, and one Paraclete...the Lord...commanded them to 'baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, '...three possessed of equal honour.' (Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to Philadelphians 2).

'Abstain from the Poison of Heretics...They suppose Christ to be unbegotten; and as to the Spirit, they do not admit that He exists. Some of them say that the Son is a mere man, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are but the same person, and that the creation is the work of God, not by Christ...' (The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians, Ch.VI)

'Jesus Christ...was with the Father before the beginning of time...There is one God, who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son...His Eternal Word...' (Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to Magnesians 6-8).

'Our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary in accord with God's plan: of the seed of David, it is true, but also of the Holy Spirit.' (Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to Ephesians, 18:2. Ignatius of Antioch [AD30-107] calls Jesus 'God' 14 times in his discourses; similarly Polycarp (AD65-105), Justin Martyr (AD110-165) and Irenaeus (AD120-202),).

140 AD: '[Christians]...acknowledge God, the creator

and maker of all things, in the only-begotten Son and in the Holy Spirit.' (Aristides, Apology 16).

150 AD: 'But if you knew, Trypho', continued I, 'who He is that is called at one time Christ and God to be worshipped...you would not have blasphemed Him who has now come, and been born, and suffered, and ascended to heaven...For if you had understood what has been written by the prophets, you would not have denied that He was God...' (Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, Ch. CXXXVI [See also Ch.XXXVI; XLVIII; LVI; LIX; LXI; C; CV; CXXV; CXXVIII; First Apology of Justin, Ch.XIII; XXII; LXIII)

'...the Son of the true God Himself, that He holds a second place, and the Spirit of prophecy a third. For this they accuse us of madness, saying that we attribute to a crucified man a place second to the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of all things; but they are ignorant of the Mystery which lies therein.' (Justin Martyr, First Apology 13:5-6).

160 AD: '[The Father] sent the Word...This is He who was from the beginning, who appeared as if new, and was found old...This is He who, being from everlasting, is today called the Son.' (Mathetes, Letter to Diognetus 11).

170 AD: '...we report that God was born in the form of a man.' (Tatian the Syrian, address to the Greeks 21).

177 AD: 'The activities of Christ after His baptism, and especially His miracles, gave...assurance to the world of the deity hidden in His flesh. Being God and likewise perfect man...He was the true God existing before the ages.' (Melito of Sardis, Fragment, Anastasius of Sinai's *The Guide* 13).

189 AD: '...one God, Father Almighty, the creator of heaven and Earth...one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became flesh for our salvation; and the Holy Spirit, who announced through the prophets...Jesus Christ our Lord and God and Saviour and King'. (Irenaeus against Heresies 1:10:1).

'It was not angels, therefore, who made us nor who formed us, neither had angels power to make an image of God...For with Him [the Father] were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, free and spontaneously, He made all things, to whom also He speaks, saying, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness' Gen. 1:26' (Irenaeus against Heresies 4:20:1).

190 AD: '...Christ...He alone is both God and man...' (Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Greeks 1:7:1).

215 AD: 'God alone is without sin. The only man who is without sin is Christ; for Christ is also God.' (Tertullian, The Soul, 41:3. Theophilus (AD115-181) and Tertullian (AD145-200) were the first to use the term 'Trinity' for Godhead)

'The origins of both His substances display Him as man and as God: from the one, born, and from the other, not born' (Tertullian, The Flesh of Christ, 5:6-7).

'We do indeed believe that there is only one God, but...there is also a Son of this one only God, His Word, who proceeded from Him and through whom all things were made and without whom nothing was made...We believe He was sent down by the Father, in accord with His own promise, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father and the Son, and in the Holy Spirit...this rule of faith has been present since the beginning of the Gospel, before even the earlier heretics...And at the same time the mystery of...the unity is distributed in a Trinity. Placed in order, the Three are the Father, Son, and Spirit. They are three...He is one God...in the name of the

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' (Tertullian, Against Praxeas 2).

'That there are two Gods and two Lords, however, is a statement which we will never allow to issue from our mouth; not as if the Father and the Son were not God, nor the Spirit God, and each of them God; but formerly two were spoken of as Gods and two as Lords, so that when Christ would come, He might both be acknowledged as God and be called Lord, because He is the Son of Him who is both God and Lord.' (Tertullian, Against Praxeas 13:6).

'Thus the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete, produces three coherent Persons, who are yet distinct One from Another...' (Tertullian, Against Praxeas, 25).

216 AD:

'...[A] trinity of one divinity, Father, Son and a Holy Spirit.' (De Prax.21); 'but that both the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God...' (Tertullian, Against Praxeas 13).

225 AD: 'The specific points which are clearly handed down through the apostolic preaching..Although He was God, He took flesh; and having been made man He remained what He was, God.' (Origen, Fundamental Doctrines 1:0:4).

'For we do not hold that which the heretics imagine: that some part of the Being of God was converted into the Son, or that the Son was procreated by the Father from nonexistent substances, that is, from a Being outside Himself, so that there were a time when He [the Son] did not exist...No...whatever is said of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is to be understood as transcending all time...For it is the Trinity alone which exceeds every sense in which not only temporal but even eternal may be understood....' (Origen, Fundamental Doctrines 4:4:1).

'While we have been sketching the proof of the divinity of Jesus, we have made use of the prophetic statements concerning Him...' (Origen, The Fundamental Doctrines, 4:1:6).

'...says He, 'My Father is in Me, and I in Him.' And if any should from these words be afraid of our going over to the side of those who deny that the Father and the Son are two persons, let him weigh that passage, 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul,'...We worship one God, the Father and the Son, therefore, as we have explained; and our argument against the worship of other gods still continues valid...we believe Himself when He says, 'Before Abraham was, I am.'...We worship, therefore, the Father of truth, and the Son, who is the truth; and these, while they are two, considered as persons or subsistences, are one in unity of thought, in harmony and in identity of will. So entirely are they one, that he who has seen the Son, 'who is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person,' has seen in Him who is the image, of God, God Himself.' (Origen, Against Celsus, Book 8, Ch.12)

'There are really three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...Moreover nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less.' (Origen, 1.3.7)

228 AD: '...this sole and universal God...first brought forth the Word - not a word as in speech...The Word was the cause of those things which came into existence, carrying out in Himself the will of Him by whom He was begotten...Only [God's] Word is from Himself and is therefore also God, becoming the substance of God...For Christ is the God over all...' (Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies, 10:33,34).

235 AD: 'For Scripture as much announces Christ as also

God, as it announces God Himself as man. It has as much described Jesus Christ to be man, as moreover it has also described Christ the Lord to be God. Because it does not set forth Him to be the Son of God only, but also the Son of man...So that being of both, He is both, lest if He should be one only, He could not be the other. For as nature itself has prescribed that He must be believed to be a man who is of man, so the same nature prescribes also that He must be believed to be God who is of God...Let them, therefore, who read that Jesus Christ the Son of man is man, read also that this same Jesus is called also God and the Son of God.'

(Novatian, Treatise on the Trinity 11).

'But although it is not possible to maintain that one who is Himself mortal can make another immortal, yet this Word of Christ not only sets forth, but affords immortality: certainly He is not man only who gives immortality, which if He were only man He could not give; but by giving divinity by immortality, He proves Himself to be God by offering divinity, which if He were not God He could not give. If Christ was only man, how did He say, 'Before Abraham was, I Am'? For no man can be before Him from whom He himself is; nor can it be that any one should have been prior to Him of whom He Himself has taken His origin. And yet Christ, although He is born of Abraham, says that He is before Abraham. Either, therefore, He says what is not true, and deceives, if He was not before Abraham, seeing that He was of Abraham; or He does not deceive, if He is also God, and was before Abraham. And if this were not so, it follows that, being of Abraham, He could not be before Abraham. If Christ was only man, how does He say, 'And I know them, and my sheep follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish'? And yet, since every man is bound by the laws of mortality, and therefore is unable to keep himself for ever, much more will he be unable to keep another forever. But Christ promises to give salvation for ever, which if He does not give, He is a deceiver; if He gives, He is God. (Novatian, Concerning the Trinity, Chapter XV.)

253 AD: 'One who denies that Christ is God cannot become His temple [of the Holy Spirit]...' (Cyprian of Carthage, Letters 73:12)

262 AD: 'Therefore, the divine Trinity must be gathered up and brought together in one, a summit, as it were, I mean the omnipotent God of the universe...It is blasphemy...to say that the Son is in any way a handiwork [creature]...But if the Son came into being [was created], there was a time when these attributes did not exist; and, consequently, there was a time when God was without them, which is utterly absurd.'

(Dionysius of Alexandria, 1-2)

262 AD: 'But some treat the Holy Trinity in an awful manner, when they confidently assert that there are not three persons...we clear ourselves of Sabellius, who says that the Father and the Son are the same [Person]...we believe that three persons - namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - are declared to possess the one Godhead: for the one divinity showing itself forth according to nature in the Trinity establishes the oneness of the nature.' (Gregory, A Sectional Confession of Faith 8).

'But if they say, 'How can there be three Persons, and how but one Divinity?' we shall make this reply: That there are indeed three persons...one person of God the Father, and one of the Lord the Son, and one of the Holy Spirit; and yet that there is but one divinity...one substance in the Trinity.'

(Gregory, Ibid 14). Terry Arnold

TA Ministries, PO Box 1499, Hervey Bay, 4655 Australia