

# THE TRINITY OF GOD: BIBLICAL EVIDENCES

Reymand M. Hutabarat

## Abstrak

Bukti Alkitabiah tentang Ketritunggalan Allah ada di dalam Alkitab. Perjanjian Lama dan Perjanjian Baru dengan jelas membuktikan adanya oknum tritunggal, yaitu Allah Bapa, Anak atau Yesus, dan Roh Kudus. Bukti pertama ialah penggunaan istilah Kita dan Kami di dalam Perjanjian Lama. Bukti kedua ialah adanya kerja sama di antara Allah Bapa dan Roh Kudus dalam pengutusan Yesus sebagai Penebus ke dunia ini (Yes. 46:16b). Bukti ketiga ialah, bahwa Yesus sendiri mengaku bahwa Roh Kuduslah yang mengutus-Nya ke dunia ini, katanya: "Roh Tuhan ada pada-Ku ... dan Ia telah mengutus Aku" (Luk. 4:18). Bukti keempat ialah adanya kerja sama di antara Allah Bapa dan Anak (Yesus) dalam pengutusan Roh Kudus ke dunia ini (Yoh. 14:16,26). Ketiga oknum KeAllahan hadir pada waktu Yesus dibaptiskan ibarat tiga serangkai yang tidak terpisahkan (Mat 3:15-17) sebagaimana ketiga oknum itu disatukan dalam rumus baptisan (Mat 28:19) dan dalam rumus doa berkat (II Kor 13:13). Ketiga oknum itu disatukan dalam salam yang ditujukan rasul Yohanes pewahyu kepada ketujuh jemaat yang terdapat di Asia Kecil (Why. 1:4,5).

**Keywords:** *Trinity, God Head, God Holy Sprit*

## Introduction

Both the Old and New Testament reveal God in three persons. The Godhead, even though separate in entity, is one in essence, nature, character, plan, and objective. The term "Trinity," first coined by *Tertullian* (155-222), a former church elder of Carthage, North Africa, assert the three personality of God, and signifies that they are coexisting, co-equal, and coeternal. The Godhead or Trinity of the Godhead, is triune in personality which means that God is three in one.

The Father is eternal (1 Tim. 1:17), the Son is eternal (Isa. 9:6); and the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit is also eternal (Heb. 9:14). The Father has the character of love (1 John 4:8), and both the Son and the Holy Spirit have the character of love also (John 15:8; Rom. 15:30). The Father and the Son are equal (Phil. 2:6). The Holy Spirit and God are also equal (Acts 5:3,4), because to lie to the Holy Spirit (v. 3) is the same as to lie to God (v. 4). And all members of the Godhead or the Trinity are spiritual in essence (Jn. 4:24; 2 Co. 3:17,18).

In carrying out the plan of redemption, Jesus was temporarily "*made a little lower than the angels,*" through the process of incarnation, to become human and to suffer or "*taste death for every man*" (Heb. 2:7, 9, *NKJV*). After accomplishing this mission here on earth, He has returned to heaven and occupied the same position He had before, sitting side by side with God the Father on their respective thrones (Rev. 22:1,3), and together with the Father receive the same adoration, honor, and glory from all the inhabitants of the whole universe (Rev. 5:13).

This paper will seek to establish the Trinity as comprising three distinct persons or individuals, and that man as a created being ought to accept it as revealed by God Himself.

### **Triune Nature of The Trinity Is A Mystery**

It is a fundamental truth that the triune nature of the divine Trinity, including the incarnation of the Son of God, is a mystery no human mind can comprehend to any meaningful extent, simply because it is impossible for the finite human mind to reach the infinite mind of God and to understand His essence and nature. The Bible says, “*Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perception? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than the hell, what canst thou know? The measure there is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*” (Job 11:7-9, *KJV*). Left to his own and without divine intervention, it is futile for man to reach and understand God, just as it is impossible for an animal, a pet, to understand the nature and characteristics of its master.

### **The Plurality of the Person of God**

*The creation of Man as a Collective Plan.* In the planning stage of the creation of man, one member of the Trinity who is also member of the Council of the Lord (Jer. 23:18,22, *NASB*), took the initiative and made that suggestion to the Council, saying, “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*” (Gen. 1:26, *KJV*). The word “us” is the objective case of “we” and the word “our” is the possessive case of “we”. Thus, the planning and the decision to create man was made by the Godhead which is plural in person. Being more than one person, yet they are one in planning and objective. This is called a collective unity.

The name of God mentioned in Genesis 1 verse 26 is *Elohim*, a plural noun. The English language uses two forms to denote numbers: *singular*, meaning one; and *plural* for two or more. The Hebrew language, however, recognizes three forms: *singular* meaning one; *dual* meaning or equaling two; and *plural* for three or more. *Elohim* is a plural noun for at least three or more.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the subject in the sentences of Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heaven and earth” and verse 26, “*Let us make man in our image*” refers to God the Creator who is plural in personalities.

### **God Who Is Plural in Personalities**

After the fall of man into sin, one member of the God *Elohim* commented about the drastic change in the nature of man because of sin, “*Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil*” (Gen. 3:22, *KJV*). All of them were concerned about the consequences that had now befallen the human race. The word “us” unambiguously refers to God in plural person.

To frustrate the evil project of Babylonian people is a collective plan of God who is plural in personalities. When the people of Babylon set out to build a city with a tower for themselves that reached unto heaven, it was against the will of the Lord. To halt the project, one member of the Godhead or the Council of the Lord, says, “*Come, let Us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech*” (Gen. 11:7, *KJV*). Again, the word “us” in “*Let*

*Us go down and confound their language*”, reveals the plurality of the persons of God. And, although they are more than one person, yet they are one in plan and objective. They are united or in unison when it comes to planning and objective.

The plight of the people of God while in Babylonian captivity also came to the attention of the members of the Trinity or the Godhead. They were so much touched by their suffering, that one of them expressed their concern, saying, “*We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace*” (Jer. 30:5). That means all members of the Trinity were involved in planning for the deliverance of the people of God from the Babylonian captivity (v. 3).

### **Old Testament Evidence of the Trinity**

The Redeemer testifies to the fact or confesses Himself to have been sent by the Lord God and His Spirit. He is quoted as saying, “*Now the Lord God, and His Spirit, hath sent me*” (Isa. 48:16). This means there was an accord between God the Father and the Holy Spirit send Jesus Christ as the Redeemer into this world (1 Jn. 4:14; Mt. 3:5-17; Heb. 9:14). By this text the personality and individuality of the three members of the Trinity are identified, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each has His own entity; one was sent, Jesus; by the two, the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is authentic Old Testament evidence corroborating the Trinity.

### **New Testament Evidence of the Trinity**

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, all three members of the Trinity were present. Matthew said, “*And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were open unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him and a voice from haven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am pleased*” (Mt. 3:16-17, *KJV*). The three members of the Trinity were involved during the baptism of Jesus: one was baptized, Jesus; one was descending and lighting on His head, the Holy Spirit; and one made a declaration of Jesus as His Son, the Father. Each of the three plays a different role, indicating that each has His own personality. Each has His own individuality, although they have the same nature, character, plan, and objective. Their oneness is a collective unity.

The second evidence of the Trinity in the New Testament is clearly revealed when Jesus charged His disciple with the great commission to “*go and preach the gospel into all the world*” (Mark 16:15), “*and baptize the people in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (Mt. 28:19, *KJV*). The baptismal formula established by Jesus includes the three names of the Godhead or the Trinity, again implying that they are one in goal or objective, which is to save sinners from the bondage of sin. Although they have separate entities, they are one in planning and goal. Here is also seen their collective unity.

In offering the apostolic benediction, Paul includes the three names of the person of the Trinity in the formula, saying, “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen*” (2 Cor. 13:14, *KJV*). This benediction formula which includes the three names of the Godhead or the Trinity signifies that any blessing bestowed upon the people of God should be with the approval of the three members of the Trinity.

John the Revelator says that the source of grace and peace granted the churches is none other than the Father on which was, and is, and is to come—the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ. *“Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven Spirits, which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, which is the faithful witness”* (Rev. 1:4,5, KJV). This greeting expression includes the three names of the members of the Godhead and assures us of their unity as revealed in the book of Revelation. Their unity is eternal in nature which nobody has the right or power to challenge or deny. What is man to have the right to challenge or reject it: If God has revealed Himself in three persons; nobody has the right to nullify. The best attitude and response is to accept it as has been revealed, for the unity is for the sake of saving the human race.

Just before His crucifixion Jesus promised His disciples that He would ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be with them as a Comforter after His ascension to heaven. In this promise He included the three names of the members of the Trinity. *“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.” Further He said, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance”* (Jn. 14:16,26, KJV). This saying of Jesus plainly proved that there was a cooperation between God the Father and Him to send the Holy Spirit into this world, just as there was a cooperation between God the Father and the Holy Spirit to send Jesus into this world (Isa. 48:16; Jn. 14:26). The fact that Jesus the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit were sent into this world one after the other leaves no doubt that Jesus has a separate and different identity from that of the Holy Spirit. And God the Father who sent them is yet another separate and distinct identity or person.

Paul the apostle explains that there is a distinction of function of functions among the three members of the Trinity. He says, *“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operation, but it is the same God which works all in all”* (1 Co. 12:4-6, NKJV). *“For the effectual accomplishment of the work of his church”*, said Ellen G. White, a prominent Seventh-day Adventist writer and pioneer, *“various gift, administrations, and operation ... proceed from one God, one Lord, one Spirit, that is, from the Father, Son, and the Holy spirit”*. It underscores the fact that through each of them has different functions, yet they have the same objective which is the accomplishment of the work of His church.

There are two more texts which lend support to the separate identity of the three members of the Trinity, namely, Genesis 1:1,2 and John 1:1,2. Genesis 1:1,2 reveals the identity of the two members of the Godhead, God and the spirits of God. It says, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void: and darkness was upon the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”* Here is the proclamation that both God and the Spirit have existed prior to the creation of heaven and earth. The individuality of God is different from that of the Spirit.

John 1:1 and 2 reveals the individuality of the Word (Jesus) as being different from the individuality of God. It says... *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. He was with God in the beginning.”* That means their entities are separated. The Word (Jesus) is revealed as separate from the individuality of God. Both of them have the same existence since the beginning or prior to the

creation of the heaven and the earth. Those texts reinforce the truth that the three members of the Trinity existed together prior to the creation of the entire universe.

Jesus declared Himself to be one with the Father, *“I and my Father are one”* (Jn. 10:30, KJV). He says further, *“I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Three, that they may all be one in Us, And that the glory which thou hast given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one”* (Jn. 17:20-22, NASB). This saying of Jesus asserts the oneness or unity of Jesus with the Father. At the same time, this shows the Godhead as dual, with the person of Jesus Christ being a separate individual from the Father.

### Conclusion

Both the Old Testament and New Testament affirm the existence of the three members of the Trinity—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, coexist, coequal and coeternal. The pronouns *Us* and *We* that God uses referring to the Godhead signifies the plurality of the person of God, while at the same time testifying to their unity in planning and objective.

There is a co-operation among the three members of the Trinity—In sending Jesus into this world as the Redeemer, God the Father and the Holy Spirit were in close accord. And in sending the Holy Spirit into this world, God the Father and Jesus Christ were in close co-operation (Isa. 48:16; Jn. 14:26). The three members of the Trinity were present at the time of the baptism of Jesus signifying that they are united. The baptismal formula (Mt. 28:19), the benediction expression (2 Co. 13:14), and the greeting phrase (Rev. 1:4,5), all affirm the authenticity of the concept of Trinity beyond doubt. Their oneness or collective unity consists of the individual members of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berkhof, Louis., *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941.
- \_\_\_\_\_., *The History of the Christian Doctrines*, Grand Rapids Michigan: Baker Book House, 1975.
- Camron, Mark C., *Bible Doctrines*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1970.
- Damsteegt, P. Gerard., *Seventh-day Adventist Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, Washington DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 1988.
- Nichol, Francis D., ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 6*, Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Association, 1956.
- Thiessem. Henry C., *Lecturers in Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949.
- Tozer, A.W., *The knowledge of the Holy*, Lucial, Nebraska: Back to the Bible, 1961.