



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Holy Spirit and the Trinity, part II”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we again turn to Thee with anticipation because we turn to Thy word and we pray that the one, whom we are studying, the Holy Spirit, the third member of the blessed and eternal Trinity, may do his opus work in our hearts as we ponder these great truths about him. We know, Lord, that it is the work of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. But thou hast given us much of Thy word concerning the third person of the Trinity. And so we pray as we study him that we may become more subject to him, more knowledgeable of him, and may the result be a deeper conformity to Thy will. And, we commit each one present to Thee and ask that all of the spiritual needs that exist in our hearts may be met through him.

For we ask it. In Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the second and final of our studies in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity. And then next Tuesday night, the Lord willing, we will study the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. And, the following study will be a study of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

But, we are studying the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity and for our Scripture reading tonight I want you to turn with me to Matthew, chapter 28, and let's read verses

19 and 20 because these verses are verses that bear on our subject, which we are to discuss tonight. Matthew, chapter 28, verse 19 and verse 20. And, we have in our English version these words.

“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

We affirmed in our last study the importance of theology and specifically the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. And, we said in our introduction that one of the reasons that the doctrine of the Trinity is so important is that it touches the nature of the god that we come to know through Jesus Christ, as he, himself, prayed in his prayer at the conclusion of his earthly ministry, his great, high priestly prayer he, in the midst of that prayer, spoke of “This is eternal life that they might know thee, the only genuine God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” And so what we are attempting to do as we study the Trinity is come to know something about this one whom Jesus called, “The only genuine God.”

Socinians, followers of Socinius, have affirmed that Jesus Christ was simply “a man.” He was God’s perfect prophet. Most of our contemporary theologians are Socinians. They do not believe that Jesus Christ is God. They do not really think that he was more than a man. He was, simply, the greatest man who ever lived; the man who within himself realized the consciousness and the experience of God as no other man did. And so most of our contemporary theologians are Socinians. Christ is a man; he is God’s perfect prophet.

The Arians were at least men who had a higher admiration for Jesus Christ than Socinians. And the Arians have believed that Jesus Christ was a kind of superman, for they did believe in his pre-existence, but not his full deity. They believed that Christ was

a superman, God’s plenipotentiary. That is, the one who, in a sense, had power of attorney for deity. What someone has called, “The most private secretary of his eternal praise.” Arians, then, do give Jesus Christ more glory than Socinians, but they do not accord him the rank of deity.

Now, Athanasians are those who agree that the decision that the Church made at Nicaea and Chalcedon, these decisions were true. Followers of Athanasius have believed that Jesus Christ was more than a man, that he was more than a superman, that he really was a heavenly man or the lord from heaven. They have accorded him full deity, and they have affirmed that in Jesus Christ there is God’s real presence.

Now, the reason I mention these things is because most of our views about Jesus Christ may be ranged in one way or another under these ancient headings. We are either Socinians, Arians, or Athanasians. And, believe it or not, there are some people in our churches in Dallas, Texas, who don’t know anything whatsoever about Arius but who are, nevertheless, followers of him.

I still remember a Deacon in one of the Baptist churches on this side of the city, and we were discussing together the doctrine of the Trinity. And I asked him what his doctrine of the Trinity was because he had brought up the subject. And he said, “Well, I believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.” I said, “Do you believe that he was God?”

He said, “No, I do not believe that he was God, I believe he was the Son of God.” I said, “In other words, you do not think that he really possesses the same nature that the Father possesses.” “No,” he said. I said, “Well then, you think that he was just a man like we are?” “No,” he said, “I really believe that he’s the Son of God.” And that’s as far as he would go. He would not acknowledge that he was God, and he did not want to say that he was simply man. He wanted, in effect, to be somewhere in between, and he was a modern Arian, though he didn’t have the slightest idea who Arius was.

So while we use these old terms for Arius and Athanasius who had their great conflict many hundreds of years ago and Socinius who came along later. Still, most of our modern ideas concerning Jesus Christ may be ranged under these headings.

Now, what I am trying to say is this, that if we talk about the worship of God and we do not believe in a God who subsists in three persons, who each possesses a complete deity, we are not worshipping the same god. Now, that man was not worshipping the same God that I worship. If he could say Jesus Christ was the Son of God, but not God, that is not the God that I worship. And so, when we talk about worshipping God, it is important that we ask the question, “What God do you worship?” And so, that is what we are trying to do.

One of the most common ideas among contemporary theologians also is that Jesus Christ is a stage in God’s revelation. This evolutionary idea is, in a sense, the denial of the absolute value and final place of Jesus Christ. I think it’s probably wrong for us to say that there is no room for an evolution within Christianity. I do not accept it myself, but it’s not right to say that a person cannot be a Christian if he believes in some form of evolution within Christianity. But, if he believes that evolution is the supreme idea of the dealings of the revelation of God, then, of course, he cannot be a Christian. And, there are many today who believe that Jesus Christ is simply a weigh station along the way to the ultimate and final revelation of God, which is still in the future. That is directly contrary to Christianity because when Jesus Christ’s finality is gone, Christianity is gone.

And so Christians believe that Jesus Christ was truly God and not a weigh station along the way, not a stage in God’s revelation. And, even though men may say the nicest things about Jesus Christ, as many do, if they do not affirm that he is God in their sweetness they may kiss his Godhead away and make him a different person from what he is.

P. T. Forsyth once said, “Can our souls find rest in a Christ who only says ‘come unto me and behold what you may be if you are true to your best self and true to a

divine humanity as I am?” Now, we could not commit our eternal destiny to a person who says that he is simply a man. We cannot commit our eternal destiny to someone who is a kind of superman. We can only commit our eternal destiny to God. And, consequently, Jesus Christ must be God or he cannot be our Savior. Forsyth also said, “God could not depute redemption. We could not take eternal pardon from a demigod or commit the soul to him forever as we do to Christ.”

So we are in the impossible task of trying to understand the Trinity. Now, that will take an eternity to even give an introduction to the Trinity, but that’s what we’re trying to do. This past week I read the story of a biologist who studied a beetle. And he took as his life’s work the study of the beetle. And, for years he studied the beetle and when he reached the end of his life, you might have thought that he knew everything possible to know about the beetle. And he said that he had finally discovered that he made a mistake in his earlier years. He should not have confined himself to the study of the beetle. He should have confined himself to the study of the wing of a beetle. [Laughter] So, if it is possible for a man to study the beetle for his entire lifetime and not know everything about it, then how can we ever understand the Trinity.

But, last time now, we tried to learn these things: First, we said something about the significance of the important terms and tried to define them, remember. And then, secondly, we gave a summary of the chief points of the doctrine. First, there is but one God and this God is one. Second, the whole indivisible divine essence exists eternally as Father, Son, and Spirit. Three, the distinction between the three is a personal one.

Four, the divine attributes are common to each person. That is, every one of the three persons of the Trinity possesses all of the divine attributes that belong to the essence of deity. Practically, that means that the Son is just as much God as the Father is God. The Spirit is just as much God as the Son and the Father are God. And then we said, fifth, the persons have a certain order of subsistence in operation and that it is proper to say God the Father is the first person of the Trinity. The Son is the second

person. And the Spirit is the third person. But, we’re warned against any kind of rigidity in this because there are times when these orders are reversed. But, the normal order is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

Then we said, all “ad extra,” that is, all works done by the Trinity outside of itself or themselves are works that belong to each of the Trinity. In other words, the work of creation done primarily by the Father is, nevertheless, the work of the Spirit and the work of the Son. Or, the work of regeneration done primarily by the Spirit is the work of the Father and is the work of the Son. But, then we said there was some “ad intra” or works within the Trinity which belong exclusively to one person or the other. For example, the Spirit does not know the work of filiations being a son. The Son is the one who knows the work of filiations, of being a son. The Spirit is not the son. The Father is not the son. The Son is son. The Spirit does not know the work of generation. It is the Father who generates the Son. And, the Father does not know the work of procession. It is the Spirit who experiences procession. So, there are certain things that belong to each person of the Trinity, exclusively. But, all things that the Trinity does outside of itself are things that belong to each of the persons of the Trinity.

And, then we began the study of the substantiation of the doctrine of the Trinity. By the way, I began last time by saying that opponents of the Trinity said that all we need to know to know that Christianity is not true is to know first grade arithmetic. Because, one plus one plus one does not equal one, and even a first grade student knows that. So when a Christian says there are three persons but one God, our opponents say, all you need to know is first grade arithmetic to know that Christianity is not true. And, I am grateful to a mathematician who came up afterwards and said, “You may be interested in a formula.” And I just love mathematical formulas, of course, this is what I study in my spare time. [Laughter] And so he said, “You may be interested to know that,” I’m not even sure I can write this formula down correctly. But he said, “You may be interested to know that: that plus this, plus this, equals this. [Laughter] And I said I was very glad to

know that. [More laughter] And, he informed me that this is the sign of infinity and infinity, plus infinity, plus infinity still equals infinity. So, maybe what you need to know, to know Christianity is true is the highest form of mathematics. I don’t know, but at least I think we can see that if our numbers are big enough, then it’s true. And when we say, “Father, Son, and Spirit, yet one God, we are talking about infinite beings.” And so, if your figures, then, are big enough, it’s true. And, we have persons who are big enough for this to be true.

Now, we tried to substantiate these things. Point one, God is one and there is but one God. And we turned to Deuteronomy, chapter 6 in verse 4 to prove that. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God” or one Lord. And then second, we tried to prove that Jesus of Nazareth, as to his divine nature, is truly God and yet a distinct person. He is distinguished from the Father, but he is a divine person and we sought to prove that from the direct teachings of the Bible. He is called God. We sought to prove it from the theophanies in which, in the Old Testament, the angel of Jehovah appeared among men, they recognized him as the angel of Jehovah but in those passages he then would be referred to as the “Lord, himself.” So that the angel of Jehovah, in the Old Testament, often was an appearance of God.

And, since it is the proper function of the Son of God to be incarnate among men, ultimately, most feel that it was the Son who appeared as God in these theophanies. And, whatever we say about that, the angel of Jehovah in those passages was God. By the way, the reason that we did have theophanies in the Old Testament is that Israel and others in the Old Testament might be prepared for the coming of God the Son in the manger of Bethlehem. It was God’s way of preparing Israel and the world for the incarnation of Jesus Christ. And so these theophanies of the Old Testament prepared men, so that they wouldn’t be surprised at the idea of God coming in human flesh. And then, we sought to prove the deity of Jesus Christ from his names. He is given names that belong, properly, to deity. We sought to prove his deity from his attributes. He

possesses the attributes of deity. And then, we sought to prove his deity from his works. He performs the works of God.

Now, someone came up to me afterwards and asked a very good question. And, it would be the proper thing for us to discuss this were we talking about theology proper and not about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, this fall. And that is, if we say that Jesus Christ is truly God, then how can we say that he was “ignorant” and, after all, the Bible does say that there are some things that he did not know. Now, ignorance has a very bad connotation among us now, but there were things that Jesus, himself, said that he did not know. He said, for example, he did not know the time of his second advent. But, I tried to point out that we said that Jesus of Nazareth as to his divine nature is truly God and yet a distinct person. We could say: Jesus of Nazareth, as to his human nature, is truly man and yet a distinct person. So, in his humanity, our Lord experienced the entrance into knowledge and he grew and advanced in wisdom and in stature among men and with God. But, in his divine nature, he knows the end from the beginning and, occasionally, he may speak out of his human nature or out of his divine nature; for he is one person who possesses two natures.

Now, we talked about that so we need not get into that anymore, now. So tonight we come to our third in our statements that we are trying to use to substantiate the doctrine of the Trinity.

Capitol C - The Holy Spirit is truly God and yet a distinct person. We just said, Jesus of Nazareth as to his divine nature is truly God. We do not have to say as to his divine nature in connection with the spirit for he does not have a human nature. He only has a divine nature. Jesus Christ is the only member of the Trinity who has two natures. He has a divine nature and a human nature; the latter he took to himself at his incarnation in Bethlehem.

Now, the Holy Spirit is truly God and yet a distinct person. And, that is what we want to try to prove now. Now, Arius taught that the Son was the first and greatest



creature of the Father, and the Spirit the first and greatest creature of the Son. And so, the Spirit to Arius was a creation of a created being. Macedonius, we referred to him, I know you’ve forgotten him, he wasn’t a lovely brother and so you can forget him. But, Macedonius, who was the Bishop of Constantinople, thought that the Spirit was simply a name for divine power and influence. And, as you can probably already sense, a great number of our contemporary theologians today are followers of Macedonius because they regard the Holy Spirit as simply an influence. To take a simple illustration of ones who are in the ranks of heresy, Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe in the Trinity. They do not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, they do not believe in the deity of the Holy Spirit, and they regard the Spirit as simply an influence or a power. But, don’t think that that kind of heresy exists, simply, in such radical groups as Jehovah’s Witnesses. It exists in our most solidly established and best known religious groups. Because, today, they believe essentially the same thing that the Spirit is only an influence or a power.

Now, this is what is taught in a great number, perhaps the majority, of our theological seminaries. Many of our seminaries and theological schools, which originally were founded as Trinitarian schools, are now almost completely Unitarian. To name a school like Yale Divinity School or Harvard Divinity School, schools like this. And, some of them that were founded to be missionary colleges like Dartmouth also fall into this general category.

Now, generally speaking, aside from the influence of heretics like Arius and Macedonius, the Church has firmly held to the Spirit’s personality, true personality, and to his deity.

Now, let’s try to prove that the Holy Spirit is truly God yet a distinct person. And, first of all, let’s try to deal with the Spirit’s personality and see what the Bible has to say about that. I think that we can say that the Spirit is a person, first, because he performs “personal” acts. And let’s think of one or two and then I’ll have you look up a passage or

two. For example, in the second verse of the first book of the Bible, we read these words concerning the Holy Spirit.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

There is an indication from that statement that the Spirit is active in the creating ministry of God. And so the fact that he does have an essential part in creation means that he performs a “personal” act; this is not the act of an influence or something that is simply an impersonal power. The Spirit is also active in the generation of Jesus Christ’s human nature. Let’s turn to Luke, chapter 1 in verse 35. Luke 1:35. Here in the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, Mary asks the question, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” By the way, Mary’s response was an act of faith. Zacharias when he was told about the birth of John, his response was an act of unbelief. When he was told what was to happen, he said, “Whereby shall I know this?” In other words, give me some assurance that it’s going to come to pass. Mary doesn’t say, “Whereby shall I know this?” She says, “How shall this be?” I recognize it’s going to come to pass, I just want to know the “manner.” But Zacharias wanted some assurance that it would come to pass. And that’s why Mary was not rebuked.

She said, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

And in Matthew, remember, Joseph is told that that which has been brought to pass in Mary is “of the Holy Ghost.” Twice it is said. So the Holy Spirit generates the human nature of Jesus Christ. That is a personal act not an impersonal act. The Spirit is also said to teach in John 14. He is said to intercede in Romans, chapter 8 in verse 27. We are told by Paul in that latter passage that the Holy Spirit, that dwells within us, prays constantly for us. And so, he intercedes. And “influence” does not intercede. A “power” does not intercede. A person prays. And so, the Spirit performs personal acts. We are told in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 and verse 11 that the Spirit has a will. Now, an influence does not have a will. A power does not have a will. We are told in John 3 in verse 6 that we must be “born of water and the spirit.” And then, in verse 8, in describing the new birth, Jesus says, “So is every one who that is born of the Spirit.” And so, it is the Spirit who brings men to new birth. That is a personal act. That does not come to pass by an influence. It does not come to pass by a power. So his personality is seen in his personal acts.

Secondly, his personality is seen in his personal feelings. The Spirit may be tempted. Remember, in Acts. Now, tempted is not temptation in the sense of tempted to evil, but tested in the sense that men may test by their disobedience. That is the meaning of the expression in Acts, chapter 5, when Peter says concerning Ananias and Sapphira, verse 9 of Acts 5.

“Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.”

And now, that is a “personal” kind of word. We are told in Ephesians, chapter 4 in verse 30 that the Spirit may be grieved. “Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.” Now, you cannot grieve an influence. You cannot grieve a power. But you can grieve a person.

And, by the way, grieve is a “love” word. You don’t grieve anyone who doesn’t love you. You may surprise them, you may anger them, you may disturb them, but people who love a person are grieved at the disobedience or mis-response of someone else. So, that’s really an expression of the love of the Holy Spirit for us. But, “grieve not the spirit,” a personal feeling. In the Old Testament, we are told that the Spirit may be vexed, which is very much the same kind of thing. That is from Isaiah, chapter 63, verse 10. So from the Spirit’s personal feelings, we reason that he is a personality.

Third, the Spirit is a personality because he is distinguished from the Father and from the Son. And in that distinction personal pronouns are used with regard to him.

Now, let’s turn over to John, chapter 14, first, and then we’ll read a few other passages, too, in this connection, John 14. And let’s read first, verse 16. Here we read and this is our Lord’s promise of the Spirit, in the upper room discourse.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter,” that’s not another blanket [Laughter] “another Comforter” this is an advocate “that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

Chapter 15 in verse 26.

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

Chapter 16 in verse 7.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

Verse 12.

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.”

So, you see, the Lord, Jesus, has said that he will pray the Father, and he will send us another person, referred to by personal pronouns distinct from himself and yet like him, for he is another Comforter, and so, from this we can reason that the Holy Spirit is a person because he is personally distinguished from the Father and personal pronouns are used in the description of him.

Now, I would like to say for any who know Greek that some of those passages that I have used from the standpoint of Greek, might not be justifiable or they might be. In other words, what I’m saying is that the case could not be proved, but there are a couple of the passages there that definitely show that the Lord went out of his way to use the personal pronoun because it would have been normal for him to use a neuter and he used a masculine. And so, I have lumped the passages together because I think they are justified by those exceptional usages which show that in his mind he referred to the Spirit as a person.

Now, I say, you’ll have to excuse the fact that I’m not going to spend a lot of time dealing with something which I’m sure would bore the great majority of you and maybe

would be over the heads of one or two of the children in the audience. Or, should I say, one or two of the adults. [Laughter]

Now, the Spirit is also a person because of the personal visible symbols that are used of him. For example, the dove is used to be a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Now, you would not have a symbol of an influence, but you have a symbol of a person because there are certain things about the dove that characterize the person. And so in the fact that the Spirit is symbolized by a dove and by a fire, we have evidence that he is a person. There are no attributes of an abstraction that we would like to portray by symbols. Such is really a contradiction within itself. And so these facts are evidence for the personality of the Trinity.

And, finally, the personal formula of baptism is a suggestion of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Listen: Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, a person; the Son, a person; and the Holy Spirit, an influence. Would that make sense? It surely would not be the parallel thing to expect. We would not expect an influence to be associated with two persons. And, if we think of the Holy Spirit as an influence, some of the texts of Scripture become ridiculous. Let me give you a couple. When Jesus Christ was tempted, the Scriptures say that he returned in the power of the Spirit. But then, let’s now just suppose that the Spirit is the reference to an influence or a power. And so we would translate this or expound this: Jesus Christ returned in the “power of the power.” Now, that wouldn’t make any sense. Or, Acts 1:8, “Ye shall receive power after that the holy power has come upon you.” Or, 1 Corinthians 2:4, “And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the ‘power’ and of power.” But, you see, if the Spirit is only a power that’s what we would be saying. “In demonstration of the ‘power’ and of power.” And so, it is obvious from these facts that the Spirit is a person.

Now, is the Spirit God? So Roman II - The Spirit’s deity. Now, his deity may be seen in these ways. First, the names of God are given to him. And so, his deity is seen in

the names that are given to him. And, I’m going to ask you to look with me at one illustration of something, which many feel occurs more than once in the Bible. Let’s turn back to Isaiah, chapter 6. Those of you who studied Isaiah with me about two years ago will remember that in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, I made the statement that in this great vision, which Isaiah gave or was given and which he has given to us, in which he heard the Seraphim and them crying one to another, ‘holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.’ You may remember that I pointed out, in this particular chapter, we are given a vision of the lord of hosts, but in the New Testament, this incident is referred to several times, and in one place, it is referred to Jesus Christ. In John, chapter 12, he said, this is what Isaiah said when he saw “him” and beheld his glory Jesus Christ. And, when Paul refers to this, as we shall see in just a moment. He refers this to the Holy Spirit. And, in another place, it is referred to the lord of hosts. And, the implication of this is, of course, that what Isaiah is given here is a vision, which ultimately touches the whole of the Trinity.

But now, let’s notice Isaiah chapter 6 in verse 9. After verse 8, “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Notice that ‘who will go for us?’ Why not ‘for me?’ Well, because there is plurality in the Godhead. ‘Who will go for us?’ Now, that does not prove trinity, it proves plurality. “Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go.” In other words, who’s speaking? Well, it’s the Lord. Verse 8, the Lord said, ‘who will go for us?’ Isaiah said, “send me and he said, the Lord, go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.” Now, in Isaiah, it is the Lord who speaks and says, “Go to this people.”

Let’s turn to Acts, chapter 28, now, in the New Testament, Acts, chapter 28 and the Apostle Paul is in Rome, remember, and he is preaching and some believe the things that were spoken by him and some did not believe. So, Paul knew what it was to be an unsuccessful preacher. Not everybody believed. But, being a good Calvinist, it didn’t disturb him. And so, we read in verse 25, in Acts, chapter 28.

“And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost.” Now notice. “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say.”

In other words, the Lord, who speaks in Isaiah, is identified by Paul as the Holy Ghost who speaks. Do you see that? In other words, the Holy Spirit is given the name of Jehovah, the Lord. So, we can call God the Father, Lord. We can call God the Son, Lord. We can call God the Holy Spirit, Lord. He has the names of deity.

Now, we referred to Acts, chapter 5, verses 3 and 4, I think, previously. We read it, I believe, as a Scripture reading in which Peter speaking to Ananias refers to the Holy Spirit here. It seems plainly, by implication, as God, for in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter and the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse, he says.

“Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

And so in verse 3, he says ‘you have lied to the Holy Ghost.’ In verse 4, he says ‘you have lied to God.’ And, there is no problem because the Holy Spirit is God.

Now, the Spirit is also God, not only because he has the names of God, but he has the attributes of God. And, to save time, I’ll give you three passages of Scripture and you can look them up. But, in these passages, we are taught that the Spirit has omnipresence: Psalm 139, verse 7. He has omniscience: 1 Corinthians 2, verses 10 and 11. And he is omnipotent: Luke 1:35. Only a God could conceive or beget the human nature of Jesus Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary. So, the Spirit has the attributes of omnipresence,



omniscience, omnipotence, and all of the attributes that make up deity he possesses. So the Spirit is God because of his attributes.

And, finally, he is God because of his works. Among his works are creation, Genesis 1:2; miracles, Matthew 12:28, 1 Corinthians 12:9-11; prophecy, it is the Spirit who speaks through prophecy, only God can prophesize. Others may try, like Jean Dixon, Maurice Woodruff and others, but they only try. They are great failures. I just read an article today that appeared in one of our magazines not long ago, ‘Can we predict the future?’ And it was a discussion of the failures of many of those who have attempted to predict the future. Only God can do that. But, prophecy is attributed to the Holy Spirit. “Men spake as they were moved, by the Holy Ghost,” Peter said, in 2 Peter, 1:21.

He is also responsible for the work of redemption, as we pointed out in John 3:6.

So, the Spirit is God because of his names, because of his attributes, and because of his works.

Now, we’ve then at this point, I hope, proved that the three persons of the Trinity are each God and yet distinct personalities. I hope we are clear about this, because, you see, it really does affect our understanding of God. A friend of mine, a preacher, had a young man who had been influenced by Russellites come to him and ask him a question about the Trinity. He had been told by the Russellites that the passage in 1 Timothy, chapter 6 in verse 16, which says that only God has immortality meant that Jesus Christ could not be God. And so, the young Christian asked my friend about that verse. And, my friend said to him, “Well now, I would like to begin by asking you to name the persons of the Trinity.” And the young man said, “Why the persons of the Trinity are God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.” And my friend said, “That’s wrong.” And my friend was right.

Now, why was he right? Yes, the Father instead of God. If you start with God then the persons of the Trinity are “God, God, and God.” And that was his problem.

And, a lot of people really think that way, you know. A lot of Christians, even Evangelicals, perhaps, someone in this audience. You’re a little awry in your thinking.

The Trinity is not God, the Holy Spirit, and the Son, better not reverse the order, God, the Son and the Spirit. The Trinity is God, God and God or Father, Son, and Spirit. So, let’s don’t think about God as being God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Let’s think about God as being God, God, and God, and subsisting in three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.

Now, Capitol D - The Scriptures directly teach a trinity of persons in one Godhead. The Scriptures directly teach a trinity of person in one Godhead. And, I think, we may indicate that by these points, first, from the Old Testament, and just to save time I’m going to turn to only one passage in the Old Testament. Now, I know that someone will say, ‘you don’t have any more than one.’ Because, let’s remember that in the Old Testament, the doctrine of the Trinity is not as fully revealed as it is in the New Testament. We should not be disturbed by that, by the way. Some people strain the Scriptures and actually lose their case by trying to find the Trinity in “Let us make man in our own image.” That’s not necessary, you know. The Trinity does not hinge on that verse in Genesis 1. After all, all that says at the most is that there is plurality in the Godhead. It doesn’t say there is a Trinity. It doesn’t say three. It says more than one.

And, we should expect as God, in his revelation, as it progresses, he should give us further details. And so, in the early stages of the word of God we have suggestion of plurality, but we are not told of the Trinity. But, finally, we come to understand that there is a Trinity. It is made ultimately and finally clear in the New Testament. But there are some suggestions of a Trinity, even in the Old Testament. Many have pointed to that passage in Isaiah, chapter 6 and have said the fact that the Seraphim said, “holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts,” is evidence of the fact that they recognize the Triune God. “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts.” And, I have a friend who even likes to see the Trinity in Jesus’ words on the Cross, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me.” Well, that is not necessary, of course, and it cannot be proved.

But, let’s look at Isaiah 48, 12 through 16. And here, I think we shall see that in this passage ‘three’ are referred to as God. Isaiah is writing, and he says, verse 12.

“Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he;” [Now, when we read, “I am he.” it means God is speaking.] “I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.” [You will recognize these as titles referred to Jesus by John, in the Book of Revelation.] Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The Lord hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.”

In other words, the Lord has been speaking and suddenly, here, he says, “The Lord God and his Spirit, hath sent me.” And so, we have the Lord God, and the Spirit, sending one who is the first and the last, who refers to himself as “I am he,” a term for deity. And so, in Isaiah, we have a suggestion of three divine persons, right here.

Now, let’s turn to the New Testament, where we have much clearer evidence, I think, from the New Testament. Let’s notice again our baptismal formula. Baptizing them in the name. By the way, have you noticed that it does not say names? Why singular? Because, the name is a term that refers to the essential character of a person “In the Name” singular, for it refers to the essence. “In the Name of the Father,” the person, “the Son,” the person, “the Holy Spirit,” the person: and so, here we have a unity and yet a trinity. And, that is what we believe: a trinity in unity or a triune God. “In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.” That, by the way, is a covenant relationship into

which we enter as we are baptized. It is a confession that we belong to this God who has covenanted to convey to us eternal salvation upon our faith in Jesus Christ. And, we are forever united to him by that great covenant act of baptism. That is our testimony.

Now, in 2 Corinthians, chapter 13 in verse 14, we have another text. 2 Corinthians, chapter 13 in verse 14. You know time just flies. I love to talk about things like this. 2 Corinthians 13:14. This is the greatest thing in the world. I can’t wait to get to heaven so I can study theology uninterrupted. [Laughter] I’ve got to study. I’m studying down here the wing of the beetle; but I want to get to know the whole beetle when I get to heaven. Now, here we have Paul concluding his Epistle, with the grace “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” Three persons, again, each communicating his distinct blessing. Now, you will notice that in this occurrence, we have the order reversed. We have the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. Yes, sir? [question inaudible] No, it doesn’t. It says “The Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.” You’re right, it does. And, I don’t think there is anything, necessarily, wrong about this providing we understand, of course. But, if we thought that this is the Trinity, and expressed it, I do believe that it may reflect an inadequacy. I don’t want to say that Paul was not straight on his theology. That would not be fair, would it?

And, we could say, finally, in Christ’s own baptism, remember, he was baptized and the voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And the Holy Spirit came upon him in the form of a dove.” And so, again, the Triune God, engaged in activities. To some of them, there is one God, eternally subsisting in a plurality of persons; three, no less and no more. Let me say it again. The doctrine of the Trinity is that there is one God eternally subsisting in a plurality of persons; three, no less and no more.

Now, finally, for a few moments, the necessity of the doctrine of the Trinity. And Capitol A - It is essential to any proper theism. Why is God a Trinity? Well, let me just reason. This is not stated in the Bible. This is simply theological reasoning; and, consequently, it is not infallible. If God is love, as the Bible does state, then we should expect relationships because, after all, to love there should be an object. Further, since God is eternal, we should have expected eternal relationships. And, since he is perfect, he can only realize himself as love through relationships within his own being because only within his own being is there perfection. And so his expression of love must be within himself, from eternity, and there must be an object or we should expect an object from eternity. And, therefore, these relationships must antedate any creation, creation of men or creation of angels. If there were only plurality, however, in other words, if there were only just two persons within the Trinity, we might say, well, that’s not true love because that love will obtain a response.

And so, it would seem to me like Jesus, you know, says in Luke, chapter 6, I think it is, in which our Lord comments upon these things. He says, “Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you.” And, in verse 32, he says, “For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them.” Well, we might say, the Father loves the other person in the trinity, the only other person because there is to be a response. And so, ideally, we should have a love in which there might be no response. That would need three persons. He should love one who in turn might love someone else, who in turn might love someone else. And so, it seems that from the character of theism itself, assuming God is love, and God is eternal, that we should expect a trinity. But, that is a kind of reasoning that we cannot call completely Scriptural because it is simply reasoning.

The necessity of the doctrine of the Trinity is much clearer seen in that it is essential to any proper revelation. Only God can reveal God. And, therefore, if there is to be a true revelation of God, in the form of a man, then there must be a person in the

Godhead who comes to reveal the God. So, we should expect from this that there should be another divine person who should reveal God.

But, finally, and I think most important, it is essential to any proper redemption. The nature of the offices of the second and third persons of the Trinity implies and demands a proper divinity. For example, Christ performs the work of redemption in three offices: prophet, priest and king. Only God can reveal God in the final analysis with the assurance that it is God who is revealing. No prophet can reveal God completely. If, for example, we were in the presence of Isaiah and he were to say to us, “God is this” and if he were to say to us, “now, God promises you salvation if you will believe in his messiah to come.” I think we should ultimately have this to say to him. “Well, Isaiah, it appears that the power of God is with you, but I cannot really know this unless I have it from God, himself, in the final analysis.” You see, even a prophet of God is insufficient in the final analysis. We must have it from the lips of God, himself. And that is why God must come in among men, as a man. And, one of the persons of the Trinity leaves the throne, limits himself in the exercise of his attributes for a time, comes among men and reveals God to us, and gives to us the infallible word about God. No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, “he hath revealed him.” John said.

Now, I want to read something here. By the way, only a divine being can perform his priestly work. And now, I want to read you something as I close. And this is by Robert Dabney. He says, “Had he been the noblest creature in heaven, his life and powers would have been the property of God, our offended judge, and our advocate could not have claimed, as he does, John 10:18, that he had power to lay down his life and to take it again. He would not have had that power if he were a creature. Then, unless above law, he could have no imputable act of obedience.” In other words, he could not really act for us and obey God for us, unless he were above law himself. “Third, unless sustained by inward omnipotence, he could never have endured the wrath of the almighty for the sins of the world. It would have sunk him into perdition if he

were only a man. Fourth, had there not been a divine nature to reflect an infinite dignity upon his person, his suffering the curse of sin for a few years, would not have been a satisfaction sufficient to propitiate God for the sins of the world.”

Now, I do not believe this statement, for a few years, because I think our Lord bore our sins on the Cross. But, that makes the reason even much more necessary.

“After the sacrifice comes intercession. His petitioners and their wants are so numerous that unless he were endowed with sleepless attention and omnipotence which never can tire and infinite understanding, omnipresence, and exhaustless kindness, he could not wisely and graciously attend to so many and multifarious calls. Here we see how worthless our popish intercessors, who are only creatures.” And that closes the quote.

And, I think to close, we can say this. The Holy Spirit must be God for he is also our guide. And if he is to guide us, by giving us an infallible revelation and guide us in our daily life, we who are so prone to sin, the person who guides us must have an infinite understanding. And so, by the very features of the work of redemption set forth in the word of God, it is necessary that each of those involved, Father, Son and Spirit, possess divine nature.

Dabney closes his discussion by saying; “There is no comfort in all these things of our salvation unless we have an infallible dependence.”

And so, we have a triune God and, reasonably, a triune God, a Father who is infinite in his omnipotence and who has planned a perfect program. The Son, who has in his omnipotence and omniscience come and offered a complete sacrifice for us. And, an omnipotent, omniscient Holy Spirit who guides us and directs us, so that we have infinite help through the work of God.

I’m so glad our God is a Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit. Complete provision in each of the persons who is himself, completely God.

Now, let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for our great God. And, Lord, we sense that we do not understand all of this. There are times when our minds seem to break down as we try to reason the things of the infinite Trinity, but we believe that Thou art Triune in Thy person, and yet, Thou art one in Thine essence. And we worship Thee, thy great Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In the name of the son who has redeemed us. Amen.