



# Fundamental Pillars

The Personality of God and Christ – part 2

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**Matthew 23:13–15 (KJV)** — 13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. 14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. 15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold

ὑποκριτής, (*hypokritēs*) . . . mostly in the sense ‘play-actor, role-player’; (BDAG)

an actor, a hypocrite (*New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition*)

an actor under an assumed character (stage-player) (*Strong's*)

one who pretends to be other than he really is (Louw Nida)

an actor, stage-player (*Thayer's*)

In the New Testament, Jesus used Father to bring us into a close and personal relationship with God (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 20).

# FRANK ANSWERS

I am a fledgling Christian and am mystified by the doctrine of the Trinity. To whom should I address my prayers?

The term *Trinity* is applied to the Christian doctrine of God. A simple dictionary definition is that the word denotes the union of three Persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) in one Godhead, so that all three are one God as to substance or essence, but three Persons as to individuality.

The Scriptures were designed by God for practical living and not for speculative theorizing. Hence, they contain no systematic exposition on the nature of the Godhead. The Christian statement regarding the Trinity is an attempt to state the Biblical paradox (which Scripture never attempts to resolve) that there is *one* God (Deuteronomy 6:4; James 2:19), yet existing in three Persons (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14). Although the Triune God is above human comprehension and explanation, the Bible gives us clear directives on how Christians are to relate to Him.



In this column Pastor Frank B. Holbrook answers questions about spiritual truth, ethical behavior, and Biblical understanding.

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## What Is the Trinity?

It may be inferred from the Scriptures that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past, They also took certain positions or roles to carry out the provisions of the plan. In God the Father we see displayed not only the love and mercy of the Deity but also divine justice and holiness.

God the Son agreed to step down from His exalted position to be man's Saviour by becoming incarnate. God the Son is truly God, but He became truly human, as well. He is the God-Man. By so doing He became a kind of "second" Adam (see Romans 5:14, last part), the representative head of the race. In this position He could rightfully bear the liabilities of humanity. And so at Calvary the iniquity of us all was laid upon Him as our Substitute, and in His death He fully paid the penalty for our sins (Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 2:24).

By reason of His incarnation God the Son also serves

in the plan as the Mediator between the Godhead and sinful man. In His humanity Christ can lay hold of us with one hand and He can also lay hold of the throne of Heaven. And because of the merits of His atoning sacrifice, He is able to draw penitent man into a reconciled union with the Deity.

God the Holy Spirit is the one who applies to the individual mind the redemption Christ worked out by His life and death. It is the Spirit who convicts us of sin (John 16:8); who implants sorrow and repentance in the heart and a love for God (Romans 2:4; 5:5). It is the Spirit who brings about a new birth, a transformed life (John 3:5-8); who illuminates the truths of the Bible to the mind (chap. 16:13). So each person of the Godhead is actively engaged

in the issues of salvation.

In the light of these facts, Jesus taught His followers (and us) to direct their prayers to God the Father (even as He, our Example, did; cf. Matthew 6:9; John 11:41, 42). He also taught us to pray to the Father *in His name* (John 14:13, 14; 16:24-26), because it is only by virtue of Christ's merits and our relationship to Him that we can have acceptance with God. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me," Christ declares (chap. 14:6; see also Hebrews 7:25).

You will observe that most prayers recorded in the Bible are addressed to God the Father. But prayers are acceptable to Him only because of the merits of the Saviour whether or not we utter the specific words "in the name of Jesus." It is "for Christ's sake"—that is, by virtue of His merits—that we are heard and forgiven, and become recipients of Heaven's blessings flowing back to us through Christ, our priestly Mediator. God the Son, the divine-human Christ, like Jacob's ladder, spans the void between heaven and earth, our only basis for a relationship with Deity (John 1:51).

Since the Trinity is active in behalf of man's redemption, it is really not out of place to address any member of the Deity in prayer. While it is the usual practice to pray to the Father (see Acts 4:24 ff.), Scripture records the martyr Stephen's brief prayer to Jesus (chap. 7:59, 60); some Christian hymns, such as Isaac Watts's "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove," are essentially prayers to the third person of the Godhead.

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The Father, the Son, the Spirit are not just three different modes of divine expression. They play different roles in Creation and salvation; yet they are, at the same time, one (Deut. 6:4). (Gerald A. Klingbeil, *Adventist Review*, July 2018, p. 28)

Hi, Family! I need some urgent help asap. Please, my Church in Accra has started explaining the Trinity doctrine to us after a lot of complaints from church members about the doctrine. The pastor leading the discussion explained why **the church believes the Sonship of Jesus Christ our Lord is a role playing, and not literal...** (Facebook post from Ghana, Africa)

**Matthew 3:17 (KJV)** — 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

**John 3:16–18 (KJV)** — 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

**Matthew 26:62-64 (KJV)** — 62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. 64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

**Mark 14:62 (KJV)** — 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 134.2

*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 23.3

*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 253.1

*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 109.3.

μονογενής (*monogenēs*)

μόνος (*monos*) + γένος (*genos*)

**John 1:18 (KJV)** — 18 No man hath seen God at any time;  
the **only begotten Son**, which is in the bosom of the  
Father, he hath declared him.

Textus Receptus: μονογενής υἱός;

Catholic: μονογενής θεός

No one has ever seen God; *the only God*, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. John 1:18 ESV

No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God,\* is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed  
God to us. John 1:19 NLT

\* 1:18 Some manuscripts read But the one and only Son.

**John 1:14 (KJV)** — 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

**Luke 7:12 (KJV)** — 12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son (*monogenes*) [“only-begotten,” Rothrham, translation] of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

**Luke 8:42 (KJV)** — 42 For he had one only  
(*monogenes*) [“only begotten”—Rothrham translation]  
daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying.  
But as he went the people thronged him.

**Luke 9:38 (KJV)** — 38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child (*monogenes*).

**The more scarce and needed  
something is, the more valuable it is.**

**But if anything can be declared  
unique and only one by fiat or decree,  
how really valuable is it?**

**Hebrews 11:17 (KJV)** — 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten (*monogenes*) son,

**Hebrews 11:17-18 (KJV)** — 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

**Proverbs 8:22–25 (KJV)** — 22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 23 I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. 24 When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. 25 Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:

Before the mountains were settled, and before all hills,  
he begets me. (Proverbs 8:25 LXX Translation)

**Micah 5:2 (KJV)** — 2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose **goings forth** have been from of old, from everlasting.

goings forth = מוֹצְאָה (*motsaah*) sense is origin

**1 John 4:9–10 (KJV)** — 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins

**1 John 4:16 (KJV)** — 16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.