

Five Major Problems with the Trinity

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1. **Jesus was a Jew:** a veritable revolution in Jesus scholarship in the last century occurred when scholars began taking seriously that Jesus and his earliest followers were Jewish, living in a particular socio-political *Sitz im Leben*, which is typically designated as second temple Judaism.
 - a. The case:
 - i. the radical monotheism of Deuteronomy (4.35, 39) and the Shema (Deut 6.4-5)
 - ii. if Jesus was a Jew then he should agree with Judaism's core creed? right?
 - iii. don't have to guess (Mark 12.28ff)
 - b. Rebuttal:
 - i. Jesus challenged the belief of how God is one (John 5.16-18; 8.57-58; 10.29-31)
 - ii. he plainly did not agree with Jewish monotheism
 - c. Response:
 - i. John 5.16-18
 1. terminating the quote here is deceptive, read v19
 - ii. John 8.57-58
 1. Jesus did not comment on how God was one here whatsoever and was not claiming to be Yahweh, if he did he would have called himself יהוה (cf. LXX of Ex. 3.14)
 - iii. John 10.29-31
 1. this text has nothing to do with ontology but function
 - iv. there is no place where Jesus redefined how God is one, but there are several texts in which Jesus clearly and explicitly agreed with the 1st c. Jewish doctrine of God's oneness.
2. **Where is the Trinity taught in Scripture?** Let's assume God really is a Trinity and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit really did reveal themselves as a Trinity in the New Testament. Where is it explained? Why is the doctrine so dependent on personal interpretation?
 - a. The case
 - i. what is the Trinity?
 1. one God in three persons
 2. co-eternal
 3. co-essential
 4. co-equal
 5. eternal generation
 6. dual natures of Christ in one person
 7. in their union each nature preserves its distinction in nature
 8. two wills in Christ, both divine and human that never conflict
 - ii. the Trinity is never explained in Scripture
 1. quote the chapter or verse that explains this?
 - iii. the Bible can be **used** to support the Trinity, just like it can be used to support brutal slavery or anti-semitism or any number of bad ideas

- iv. if we place the Trinitarian grid on top of Scripture it will line things up in a sort of way but without this *a priori* framework one does not read the Trinity **out** from Scripture (exegesis vs. eisegesis)...give a non-Christian a Bible to read and they will **not** come up with the Trinity
 - 1. its like an oral tradition that must be taught **alongside** Scripture
- b. the rebuttal
 - i. the Trinity is not taught in one place but throughout Scripture
 - ii. the post-biblical Christians developed the doctrine to correctly explain all the biblical data
 - iii. God led these Fathers of the Church to the truth
- c. response:
 - i. so you have granted our point? the Trinity is nowhere taught in Scripture, it is only superimposed upon Scripture from later Christian thinkers who were highly influenced by Greek philosophy
- 3. No controversy over the Trinity in the first century:** if Jews hear a new definition of God aren't at least some of them going to put up resistance? If someone confessed the *Shema* multiple times a day for his or her whole life and then suddenly someone preached that this needs to be replaced by a three-in-one confession, wouldn't that at least cause some questioning?
 - a. The case:
 - i. the NT is not shy about controversies
 - 1. speaking in tongues controversy in Corinth
 - 2. controversy over accepting Gentiles into Christianity
 - 3. controversy over whether or not justification comes through Torah observance
 - 4. controversy about women's role
 - ii. where's the controversy over the three-in-one God?
 - iii. three options
 - 1. the Trinity did not exist yet
 - 2. they believe it but thought it was not necessary so never taught it
 - 3. they taught the Trinity but everyone accepted it without question
 - a. to think it wouldn't cause controversy is totally naïve (conspiracy theory)
 - b. Rebuttal
 - i. the myth of Trinitarian primacy
 - 1. they all believed in it
 - 2. only once heretics came did were they forced to articulate it
 - c. response:
 - i. this assumes the Trinity to prove the Trinity (circular reasoning)
 - ii. look at history...observe all the councils and controversy
 - 1. 325: Nicea I (is the son eternal?)
 - 2. 381: Constantinople I (is the holy spirit the third person?)
 - 3. 431: Ephesus (was Mary the bearer of Christ's divine nature?)
 - 4. 451: Chalcedon (did Christ have one or two natures? how?)

5. 553: Constantinople II (how can we interpret the dual natures w/o dividing Christ into two)
 6. 681: Constantinople III (did Christ have one or two wills?)
 7. 787: Nicea II (can icons of Christ be worshiped? how?)
4. **All those singular pronouns:** if God is a “he” not a “they” then he is a singular person not multiple persons right?
- a. case:
 - i. God is always addressed in the 2nd person sg or spoken of in the 3rd person sg.
 - ii. When God speaks he always says I (except for the four times where he includes others in his action using “us” Gen. 1.26; 3.22; 11.7; Is. 6.8)
 - iii. tens of thousands of singular personal pronouns leave the read to think of God as a singular person
 - b. rebuttal:
 - i. sure God is one...the Trinity teaches this, but he is also three
 - c. response: but the biblical authors thought he was one person not three, who should we listen to?
5. **Jesus was not omniscient!** Jesus said he didn’t know the day or hour of his return though his Father did know it
- a. case:
 - i. Mark 13.32 “But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”
 - ii. Jesus didn’t know something => Jesus was not omniscient
 - iii. Omniscience is a necessary property of deity, so if Jesus was God he would have been omniscient, but according to him, he wasn’t!
 - b. rebuttal
 - i. in his human nature he was limited in knowledge but in his divine nature he really did know when he would return
 - c. response:
 - i. but I thought there was only one person subsisting in two natures!?
 - ii. he cannot have two minds, one that knew something and another that did not know something, unless we now want to make the absurd claim that mind and person are not correlated
 - iii. so if Jesus was God, he did know everything and lied about not knowing the day of his return...but if Jesus lied then he cannot be God, for God cannot lie (Titus 1.2)
 - iv. Jesus did not know everything because he wasn’t God
 - d. rebuttal 2
 - i. Jesus emptied himself of his divine qualities
 - ii. thus, he really didn’t know
 - e. response:
 - i. so are you saying Jesus stopped being God for thirty odd years?
 - ii. the kenosis theory has been rejected by orthodox Trinitarians and even if it wasn’t, it clearly shows how the Trinitarian must multiple explanations to cling to the theory when the Bible contradicts it (kind of like duct tape holding on the bumper of a car)