

Trinitarian Deviation from the Biblical Oneness of God

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The most prevalent theological deviation in modern times is pluralistic Trinitarianism. Contrary to what many contemporary Trinitarian apologists purport, Trinitarianism is not monolithic, and certain expressions of Trinitarianism are more biblical than others, especially Modalistic Trinitarianism, which is actually a form of Oneness. However, there is an expression of Trinitarian thought which dominates popular Trinitarian scholarship and apologetics, and its offensive opposition to Oneness theology, Societal Trinitarianism.

In Societal Trinitarianism, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in co-equality and in community for all eternity, sharing the one being which is called “God.” That is, God exists in society, both with himself and as a society of multiple “persons.” In Societal Trinitarianism, the term “God” is interpreted in a variety of ways. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each God, but none of these three are God in the same way as the entirety of the godhead, referred to as the Trinity, is God. There is an equivocation here on the word “God” that is employed solely for the purpose of maintaining their doctrine of distinct, “Divine Persons” in eternal community with one another. Most notably, this notion of an eternal divine plurality or community is entirely absent from the revelation of Holy Scripture.

In most contemporary expressions of Trinitarian thought, it is not the one God who accomplished our redemption by becoming incarnate and enduring the cross, but it was one of the ones who is God who did so. One of these three co-equal, distinct God-persons¹ functioned as the divine agent apart from two other God-persons, allegedly in alignment and collaboration with the other two. Trinitarians claim that this incarnate God-person is the “Second Divine Person” in the godhead, the Father is the “First Person,” and the Holy Spirit the “Third Person,” and by becoming incarnate in the human person of Jesus Christ, the “Second Person of the Trinity” represented both the Father and the entirety of the godhead during his terrestrial

¹ This term is derived from the Trinitarian phrase “divine persons,” and carries the exact same meaning.

sojourn and ministry. Here also, Trinitarianism's wrestling match with biblical revelation is noticeable because, in Scripture, the terms "God" and "the Father" are used synonymously to refer to the same entity, the one and only true God who is also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.²

The most foundational biblical problem with Trinitarianism is the most obvious one, which is its alleged existence of multiple "Divine Persons" within the one Being called God. Trinitarians think they have solved the contradictory nature of their doctrine in their formulation, "God is one in being and three in person."³ However, this supposed resolution is as imaginary as their idea of one multi-personal being. In reality, no such being exists that is multi-personal yet singular in being. Rather, a person, defined here as a rational, sentient entity, is a type of being, i.e. a personal being. Nowhere in all of Scripture is there any single explicit or implicit teaching that there exists a singular being that is also a plurality of persons. Rather, the one true God of Israel is presented as one singular Being, and this one singular Divine Being is personal. The most obvious demonstration of this is the consistent use of singular personal pronouns when referring to the one Being called God. In the beginning, "*bara elohim*,"⁴ which translated means, "God He created," not "gods" and not "they created."⁵

First and foremost, only Oneness is true because the only ultimate authority for doctrine is the Bible, and only Oneness is truly biblical. With respect to God's emanation and Incarnation, the Scriptures teach that the lone Creator was manifested in flesh, in true human form and mode of existence, the Man Christ Jesus. Jesus is the one God incarnate, and is said to be the Creator and divine agent of creation. Since the Father is the only God. God, who was already Father of creation, now became the true Father of the Man Christ Jesus. Yet, God the Father did not reproduce Himself but was Himself incarnated in the Man Christ Jesus.

² E.g. John 17:1-3

³ This is a common expression on both popular and scholarly levels. A single citation here would be difficult. See the Athanasian Creed of the fifth century A.D., commonly found online at: <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/athanasian.creed.html>

⁴ Genesis 1:1. Hebrew (right to left): בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים

⁵ See also Genesis 1:17 וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים trans. lit. "and [He] created God," more naturally "and God He created."

The Bible teaches that the Son of God is the visible emanation of the one Divine Being, the Autotheos, in another mode of existence in the following way. First, Jesus is the incarnate self-revelation of the one true God.⁶ Secondly, Jesus possesses two natures simultaneously. He is authentically human in every way except without sin, and although He is an Israelite according to the flesh, in a way that supersedes His bodily, human identity, Jesus is also the one God, who is above all, the source and giver of all life, and possessor of the very glory of God. “Son of God” does not mean that God reproduced another Being distinct from but like Himself, as humans and animals do, but it means “God in human form.”

Notice in John 1:18, “No one has seen God at any time, God the one and only (as in only child), who is in the bosom of the Father,⁷ he has made him known.”⁸ A logical question that arises from a Trinitarian understanding of the text of this verse is, who is the “God” whom no one has ever seen? Most would answer the Father, referring to John 5:37, but what about the co-equal, co-eternal God the Son? Has anyone ever seen him at any time? What about the third co-equal, co-eternal person, the Holy Spirit? Are these two divine persons not just as invisible? No, rather this passage says and means exactly what the Lord Jesus Himself said to Philip and the Apostles in the upper room discourse, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”⁹

Also, Oneness theology does not contradict biblical revelation and teaching on a single point. In fact, where Oneness theology, or representations of it, might have contradicted Scripture in the past, contemporary Oneness adherents have sought to conform and must continue to conform and submit to God’s Word, the Bible. Through its corrections and revisions, including the revision of departure from Trinitarianism, beginning in early twentieth century America, Oneness theology has remained intact at its most fundamental propositions, wherein it wholeheartedly endeavors to agree with Holy Scripture in both intent and in practice.

⁶ John 1:1-18; 1 Timothy 3:16

⁷ Jesus, the Son of God, was hidden within the bosom of the one God, the Father, at the time of the writing of John’s Gospel. See also John 14:10; Colossians 3:1-3; 1 Timothy 6:16.

⁸ From my translation and examination of the critical data concerning the variant readings of John 1:18. Parenthetical comment added.

⁹ John 14:9