

IS GOD A TRINITY?

“Variety’s the very spice of life,” said William Cowper. If Mr. Cowper was correct, then life is indeed very spicy. Consider religion. Of the six billion people on earth (give or take a few hundred million), 2 billion are Christians, 1.3 billion are Muslims, 900 million are Hindus, 350 million are Buddhists, and 14 million are Jews. Almost 900 million don’t believe in God (atheists) or don’t know what to believe (agnostics). And the list goes on.

I’m biased. I’m not a Muslim. I think reincarnation (Buddhism) is ridiculous. I’m not confused (agnosticism) and I’m not a fool (“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” Psalms 14:1). Instead, I’m a Christian who believes in God the Father and in His Son (and our Savior) Jesus Christ.

Yet to most Christians, I’m peculiar. Or perhaps I’m a heretic. For example, I don’t believe we go to heaven or hell when we die. I don’t believe the soul is immortal. I don’t believe Jesus was born on December 25th. I don’t celebrate Easter; instead I observe the Passover. And I don’t believe God is a mysterious trinity.

I’m glad I live in the 21st century, in the land of the free (America). I don’t fear persecution, torture or death for declaring that God is not a trinity. Michael Servetus wasn’t so lucky. Servetus, a Spanish physician living in 16th century Geneva, was burned at the stake. His crime? He did not believe in infant baptism. And he declared that God is not a trinity.

“The doctrine of the Trinity as such is not revealed in the either the Old Testament or the New Testament” (Encyclopedia of Catholicism, article on the Trinity). Despite the absence of scriptural evidence, the “Triune mystery of God is the central mystery of Christian faith and life....” (ibid).

Servetus and others were killed because they believed otherwise: God is not a mysterious trinity. They believed that God wants to be understood and known (I Timothy 2:4; Jeremiah 9:23). They believed in God the Father and His Son Jesus; that is, in the two (and only two) deities identified by the apostle Paul:

- “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time” (I Timothy 2:5-6);
- “yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live” (I Corinthians 8:6).

I don’t know God, at least not in the sense that I know my mother or father or supervisor. I don’t know what God looks or sounds like. I don’t know what He has been doing for all

eternity. I don't know what occurred before the first chapter of Genesis and what will happen after the last chapter of Revelation. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8-9). My understanding is therefore limited.

Despite the impossibility of knowing God intimately, I do know He has inspired more than thirty people to write sixty-six books (collectively known as the Bible) over a period of about 1,500 years. There are over 15,000 references to God in the Bible, some of which provide the answer to the perennial questions: Who is God? What is God?

In the Beginning

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'" (Genesis 1:1, 26). How confusing. Both Christianity and Judaism are monotheistic (the doctrine or belief that there is only one God). However, in the first chapter of Genesis, "God" is clearly talking to someone just like Himself ("Us," "Our image," "Our likeness"). Thus, at the very outset, the Bible introduces us to two deities, both of whom can be referred to as "God."

The Bible uses several names to describe God:

<u>Hebrew name of God</u>	<u>Meaning of the name</u>
Elohim (used 2,570 times)	God
El Elyon	Most High
El Shaddai	God of Mountains
El Olam	Everlasting God
Jehovah (most common name)	The One who is always present
Jehovah-nissi	The Lord is my Banner
Jehovah-shalom	The Lord is Peace
Jehovah-tsidkenu	The Lord God, our Righteousness
Adonai	Master, Lord

There are several more names and most of them signify an attribute of God. For instance, Jehovah implies that God is omnipresent and Adonai demonstrates our subservient relationship with Him.

In the first chapter of Genesis, Moses (its inspired author) uses the Hebrew word "Elohim" to describe God. Elohim is a masculine Hebrew noun that means "God." Throughout the first chapter Moses uses Elohim. He's obviously referring to more than one deity because (i) Elohim is a plural noun, and (ii) he includes a dialogue between the two deities in the 26th verse.

Who are these two deities? The first chapter of the book of John (the apostle of Jesus) provides the answer:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became 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. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

John’s first chapter sheds considerable light on Jesus’ preexistence:

- “He was in the beginning with God...” Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. He identified Himself as the Lord God who spoke to Moses: “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM’” (John 8:58). By stating “I AM,” Jesus identified Himself as the Lord God who spoke to Moses through the burning bush: “Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:13-14).
- “He was in the beginning with God.” The Godhead consists of God the Father and Jesus Christ: “yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him” (I Corinthians 8:6). Realizing that the Godhead consists of only God the Father and Jesus, we can thus identify “Us” in Genesis 1:26 - “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’”
- “The Word” is translated from the Greek word Logos, which means “speaking, a message, or words” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, volume II, pg. 271). In

other words, Jesus was the Spokesman for the Godhead. Jesus spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He identified Himself as “I AM” to Moses. He delivered the Ten Commandments.

- “The world was made through Him.” Jesus created the world. He said to God the Father, “Let Us make man in Our image,” and then proceeded to form Adam from the clay of the earth.

In the first chapter of Genesis, Moses used the name Elohim to describe two deities; hence the dialogue in the 26th verse. The first chapter of John identifies these two deities as God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Beginning in the second chapter of Genesis, Moses introduces us to a specific member of the God family: the “Lord God” or Jehovah Elohim: “This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:4-7).

Moses identifies Jehovah Elohim as the Creator (He “made the earth and the heavens...and formed man of the dust of the ground”). John, Paul (Colossians 1:16), and the author of Hebrews (Heb. 1:1-2) identify Jesus as the Creator God. Moreover, John describes Jesus as the Spokesman of the Godhead (or the God family: Elohim). He spoke and appeared to Abraham and Moses (John 8:58).

We can thus conclude the following: “God” (Elohim) is a family comprising two eternal spirit beings: God the Father and Jesus. And it’s apparent that they have different roles and responsibilities.

Jesus’ role is well defined. Jesus was the Lord God of the Old Testament (John 1:1), the second deity in the Godhead (I Corinthians 8:6; I Timothy 2:5-6), who became our sin offering (Romans 8:3). While here He taught a gospel about the future Kingdom of God on earth, and referred to our roles as kings and priests in it. He commissioned a Church (Greek: Ekklesia, an assembly of called-out people) to preach this gospel to the world. However, His disciples—then and now—won’t be able to convert the entire world before He returns; indeed, they will not “finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23). Jesus will return to establish His Kingdom. As kings and priests (Revelation 5:10), we’ll help enforce God’s laws, and the observance of His Holy days and Festivals (Zechariah 14:16).

Jesus magnified the Law of God (Matthew 5, 6 & 7; Isaiah 42:21). He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13), that is, death and eternal separation from God.

We know a lot about Jesus (relatively speaking, of course). Conversely, we hardly know God the Father: “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son

except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him (Matthew 11:27). “And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form” (John 5:37)

Apparently Jesus is subordinate to God the Father. The Father sent Jesus here with a mission (to die for us, establish the Church, etc.) and a message of salvation. “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” (John 5:30).

However, Jesus and God the Father are definitely on the same page: “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30). And, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20-21).

Notice that Jesus said “I and My Father,” and “You, Father, are in Me, and I in You.” I’ve already mentioned that Jesus identified Himself as the Lord God of the Old Testament (John 8:58), and John, Paul and the author of Hebrews affirm this in their books and epistles. Moreover, Paul claims that there are two deities in the God family (Elohim): God the Father, and Jesus (I Corinthians 8:6; I Timothy 2:5-6). Why, then, do most Christians believe in a triune God composed of three consubstantial spirit beings: God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?

It’s not rocket science

It’s so simple: As revealed in the quoted scriptures, the God family (Elohim) comprises only God the Father and Jesus Christ. According to this scriptural viewpoint, “God” is not mysterious. It’s easy to conceptualize or visualize two individual and distinct deities talking to each other, as God the Father and Jesus did in the first chapter of Genesis. However, it’s difficult to conceptualize or visualize a triune God as “one in three persons or hypostases” (The Creeds of Christendom, Philip Schaff, pg. 38).

“Because the Trinity is such an important part of later Christian doctrine, it is striking that the term does not appear in the New Testament. Likewise, the developed concept of three coequal partners in the Godhead found in later creedal formulations cannot be clearly detected within the confines of the canon” (The Oxford Companion to the Bible, article on the Trinity). Why did the early Christians create a doctrine unsupported by explicit biblical evidence? “Later believers systematized the diverse references to God, Jesus, and the Spirit found in the New Testament in order to fight against heretical tendencies of how the three are related. Elaboration on the concept of a Trinity also serves to defend the church against charges of di- or tritheism. Since the Christians have come to worship Jesus as a god...how can they claim to be continuing the monotheistic tradition of the God of Israel? Various answers are suggested, debated, and rejected as heretical, but the idea of a Trinity—one God subsisting in three persons and one substance—ultimately prevails” (ibid).

From the second through fifth centuries AD, the early church fathers created and later enforced a Trinitarian doctrine to address heresy about the nature and composition of God.

A man named Arius

From the Columbia Encyclopedia: “Arianism: Christian heresy founded by Arius in the 4th century. It was one of the most widespread and divisive heresies in the history of Christianity. As a priest in Alexandria, Arius taught (c.318) that God created, before all things, a Son who was the first creature, but who was neither equal to nor coeternal with the Father. According to Arius, Jesus was a supernatural creature not quite human and not quite divine. In these ideas Arius followed the school of Lucian of Antioch.”

The earliest centuries of Christianity included many philosophical and spiritual dogfights about the nature and composition of God. For example, Arius taught that “the Father alone is God; therefore he alone is unbegotten, eternal, wise, good, and unchangeable. He cannot create the world directly, but only through an agent, the Logos. The Son of God is preexistent, before all creatures, and above all creatures, a middle between God and the world, the creator of the world, the perfect image of the Father, and the executor of his thoughts, and thus capable of being in a metaphorical sense God, and Logos, and Wisdom. But on the other hand, he himself is a creature, that is to say, the first creation of God, through whom the Father called other creatures into existence; he was created out of nothing...by the will of the Father before all conceivable things; he is therefore not eternal, but had a beginning, and there was a time when he was not....Arius, after having once robbed the Son of divine essence, could not consistently allow him any divine attribute in the strict sense of the word; he limited his duration, his power, and his knowledge, and expressly asserted that the Son does not perfectly know the Father, and therefore cannot perfectly reveal him. The Son is essentially distinct from the Father...” (History of the Christian Church, Philip Schaff, vol. III, pg. 645-646). Arius disputed the divinity of Jesus, said that God the Father created Jesus, and claimed that Jesus was distinct from the Father.

Others like Athanasius said, Nonsense! Athanasius, who represented and articulated the orthodox view of God, said that in stressing the existence of two distinct gods, The Father and the Son, Arius had crossed the threshold into heathen polytheism. In other words, Arius threw monotheism (belief in one God) out the window.

The two viewpoints claimed many passionate adherents. In 325 AD, in Nicaea (in modern-day Turkey), the Roman Emperor Constantine convened the first ecumenical summit to solve this controversy. The Council eventually denounced Arianism and created its famous creed: “The central point of the Nicene doctrine in the contest with Arianism is the identity of essence or the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and is expressed in this article of the (original) Nicene Creed: [We believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; who is begotten, the only begotten of the Father; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, and Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father...” (ibid, pg. 654, emphasis mine).

In order to refute the polytheism (more than one God) inherent in Arianism, the Nicene Creed declared that God the Father and Jesus are of the same substance. No longer are they two distinct and individual deities. Somehow they are meshed into one spirit being called God. It's hard to understand and even harder to explain. It's impossible to conceptualize and visualize.

When the Holy Spirit was added to this mixture, the essence and image of God becomes unintelligible and indefinable. God has therefore become a mystery.

The Holy Spirit

“The decision of Nicaea related primarily only to the essential deity of Christ. But in the wider range of the Arian controversies the deity of the Holy Ghost, which stands and falls with the deity of the Son, was indirectly involved. The church always, indeed, connected faith in the Holy Spirit with faith in the Father and the Son, but considered the doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit as only an appendix to the doctrine concerning the Father and the Son, until the logical progress brought it to lay equal emphasis on the deity and personality of the Holy Ghost, and to place him with the Father and the Son as an element of equal claim in the Trinity” (ibid, pg. 663).

The Nicene Creed mentioned the Holy Spirit in passing. However, creeds formulated at succeeding Councils (at Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople, and Chalcedon) expanded the Trinitarian doctrine and emphasized the divinity of the Holy Spirit. For example, the Nicene Creed (325 AD) contains one reference to the Holy Spirit (“And in the Holy Spirit”). The Constantinopolitan Creed (381 AD) contains several references to the Holy Spirit, and the Athanasian Creed (373 AD, excerpted below) provides the most complete and orthodox expression of the Trinity:

“But this is the catholic faith: That we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons; nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father; another of the Son; another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one...The Father is uncreated; the Son is uncreated; the Holy Spirit is uncreated....And yet there are not three almighties; but one almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet there are not three Gods, but one God. So the Father is Lord; the Son is Lord; and the Holy Spirit Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.... So in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.”

According to this confusing formulation, God is composed of not one, not two, but three different deities stuffed into one indefinable body. No wonder that the Trinity is considered a “mystery” because no one can figure it out. Even the so-called church fathers living in the fourth and fifth centuries admitted their incomprehension:

- a) Gregory Nazianzen (c. 380 AD): “Of the wise among us, some consider the Holy Spirit an influence, others a creature, others God Himself, and again others know not which way to decide, from reverence, as they say, for the Holy Scriptures, which declares nothing exact in the case.”
- b) Athanasius (c. 358): “Man can perceive only the hem of the garment of the triune God...such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.”

- c) Augustine (5th cent.): “If we be asked to define the Trinity, we can only say, it is not this or that.”

Such bewilderment contrasts sharply with a God who wants to be understood and known:

- a) “Thus says the LORD, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23-24); and
- b) “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:3-4).

God wants us to learn the truth about Him and Jesus. God doesn’t want to appear as a mystery. God wants us to learn the truth about the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit revealed

“It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:4-8). Indeed, the power of the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to become multilingual on that first day of Pentecost. (They spoke Aramaic or Hebrew, but their words were miraculously translated into the several languages spoken by the pilgrims in Jerusalem, during the ancient Festival of Firstfruits, now known as Pentecost.) What, then, is the Holy Spirit?

Catholics and most Protestants (Methodists, Baptists, etc.) believe that the Holy Spirit is the third part of a mysterious triune God. “The doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning the Holy Ghost forms an integral part of her teaching on the mystery of the Holy Trinity, of which St. Augustine (De Trin., I, iii, 5), speaking with diffidence, says: ‘In no other subject is the danger of erring so great, or the progress so difficult, or the fruit of a careful study so appreciable.’ The essential points of the dogma may be resumed in the following propositions:

- a) The Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.
- b) Though really distinct, as a Person, from the Father and the Son, He is consubstantial with Them; being God like Them, He possesses with Them one and the same Divine Essence or Nature.
- c) He proceeds, not by way of generation, but by way of inspiration, from the Father and the Son together, as from a single principle.

Such is the belief the Catholic faith demands” (Catholic Encyclopedia, article on the Holy Spirit).

As stated and as admitted in the Catholic Encyclopedia (see reference above), belief in a mysterious triune God—comprising God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is not supported in the Bible. Paul said, “yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live” (I Corinthians 8:6). In this simple scripture, Paul states that the Godhead consists of two deities: God the Father and Jesus. Moreover, time and again, Paul opened his epistles by extending wishes of grace and peace to his readers from “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Colossians 1:2). He never extended the same wishes from something called the Holy Spirit.

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:18). If Jesus was born by the Holy Spirit, why, then, did Jesus continuously refer to God the Father as His Father?

The archangel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Luke, the inspired author of the book of Acts, uses similar language in relating Jesus’ last command to His apostles: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

Paul referred to the Godhead as comprising God the Father and Jesus. He also referred to God the Father and Jesus in his salutations, never to the Holy Spirit. Jesus always referred to God the Father as His Father, not the Holy Spirit. And Luke spoke of the Holy Spirit as “power.” We must therefore conclude that the Holy Spirit is not one part of a mysterious triune God. Rather, the Holy Spirit is the power of God; in Luke’s words: “the power of the Highest.” And it’s the method by which God is creating a family of firstfruits. We receive the “power of the Highest,” that is, the Holy Spirit, when hands are laid on us after baptism.

Receipt of the Holy Spirit is the third part of the three-part formula for salvation: repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we receive this Holy Spirit, we have thus discovered the meaning of life. (For a discussion of the meaning of life, please see our article entitled Pentecost and the Meaning of Life.)

In this sense, the Holy Spirit is analogous to muscle power. We use our muscles to perform all sorts of activities. I’m using my muscles to compose this sentence. God is using His Spirit to achieve all sorts of goals. The Lord God (Jesus) used His Spirit to create the universe and earth, and to create Adam and Eve. He used His Spirit to part the Red Sea and the Jordan River. God the Father used His Spirit to raise Jesus from the dead. And the Spirit is called Holy because it emanates from God the Father and Jesus, both of whom are holy.

Furthermore, God uses His Spirit to create a family. “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we

cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:15-17). God is creating children. His Spirit interacts with our spirit (the "spirit in man" – Job 32:8, I Corinthians 2:11) to create a new creature in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). We are thus begotten, or conceived, by God. This is analogous to human creation. When our fathers' sperm united with our mothers' egg, we were conceived and born nine months later. Likewise, God's Spirit unites with our spirit to create a new spiritual creature in Christ. We are spiritually conceived but not yet born. The nine months we spend in our mothers' womb is analogous to the lifetime we spend nurturing this new creature in Christ. We feed it through Bible study, prayer, fasting, and obedience to God. (Again, please see our article entitled Pentecost and the Meaning of Life.)

Some dissenters may point to the pronoun "Himself" or "Him" or "Comforter" and thus claim that the Holy Spirit is an individual deity. Otherwise, the Bible and Jesus Himself would have used "it" (instead of "he") when referring to the Holy Spirit. This is a fair point. However, we must remember that the Bible is rich in metaphor and other figures of speech. For example, Jesus is referred to as a Lamb; the dictator who fights Christ at His return as a beast; and Satan himself as a dragon and roaring lion: "your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). Jesus was not a literal lamb, and the dictator will not be an actual beast. Similarly, Herod was not a fox (Luke 13:32). And in the Book of Proverbs, Solomon describes Wisdom as a woman: "Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors...." (Proverbs 8:1-3). Later in the chapter, wisdom itself speaks in the first voice: "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge and discretion. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength. By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth. I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me" (Proverbs 8:12-17).

Therefore, it's not uncommon for inspired biblical authors to use metaphors to explain spiritual truth. There is nothing wrong in using "he" or "Comforter" to describe an "it" (the spirit or power of God). After all, the spirit emanates from God. So it's not the Holy Spirit working independently of God; rather, it is holy God using His Spirit (spiritual muscle) to perform a task. This is why it is called "Holy Spirit."

God is not a Trinity

The men who succeeded the Church leaders of the apostolic era (31 AD to the 90s AD) grew up in a world infused with paganism and Hellenism (Greek ideas): "The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business and pleasure, of public or private life; and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without, at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind" (The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. 1., pg. 460).

However, these men believed in the Lord God of the Old Testament, who once said, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4), and “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; ‘I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God’” (Isaiah 44:6). To these men, there is only one God.

Yet they were faced with a dilemma: they believed in two gods, God the Father and Jesus Christ. After all, the apostle John stated that the Word (Jesus) was with God (the Father), and was God. How could they profess monotheism while believing in the two deities (God the Father and Jesus) identified by Moses, Jesus, Paul, and the author of Hebrews? They were between a rock and a hard place. Therefore, with some struggle and employing vague words (e.g. “essence” and “substance”), they created a doctrine that combined two deities (God the Father and Jesus Christ) into one body. Later they added the “Holy Spirit” as the third and final part of a triune God. However, as was expected, they experienced a lot of difficulty in explaining this concept of God. Therefore they resorted to calling God a mystery. Contrary to sound biblical doctrine, their concept of God cannot be explained.

These men failed to understand that when the Lord God (Jehovah Elohim, or Jesus) referred to Himself as “One,” He was referring strictly to Himself. However, this is the same Lord God who inspired Moses to write about two deities in Genesis 1:26. This is the same Lord God who, centuries later, appeared as Jesus, the second deity in the Godhead (John 1:1, I Corinthians 8:6, I Timothy 2:5-6).

Despite the tradition of monotheism, the Bible clearly states the existence of two (and only two) distinct, individual deities: God the Father and Jesus. Together, they are known as Elohim or as the Godhead or God family. We are made in their image, not in the image of an indefinable combination of three consubstantial spirit beings known as the Trinity. And they use their Holy Spirit (spiritual muscle) to perform certain tasks.

Unfortunately, the Trinitarian doctrine portrays God as mysterious, which is contrary to His wishes (e.g. Jeremiah 9:23-24). Paul said, “God our Savior...wants all men...to come to a knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:3-4). In essence the doctrine of the Trinity says, “you can’t know the truth because God is a mystery.”

Why did several so-called church fathers during the second through fifth centuries create an incomprehensible doctrine that they themselves could not even understand? Indeed, that is a mystery. However, God is not!

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