

## **The Attributes of God**

### ***Attribute 27***

1. Triple-natured (Trinity) - concept of oneness frequently means a plural unity (Gen.2: 24; I Cor. 6:16). Plurality is understood in the term "God" (Elohim) - a Hebrew plural noun (Gen.1: 26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa.6: 3,8; refers to Himself as "us".)
  - A. In most instances the doctrine is stated by saying that God is One in His essential being, but that in His being there are three Persons, yet so as not to form separate and distinct individuals. They are three modes or forms in which the divine essence exists. 'Person' is, however, an imperfect expression of the truth inasmuch as the term denotes to us a separate rational and moral individual. But in the being of God there are not three individuals, but three personal self-distinctions within the one divine essence. Then again, personality in man implies independence of will, actions and feelings leading to behavior peculiar to the person. This cannot be thought of in connection with the Trinity. Each person is self-conscious and self-directing, yet never acting independently or in opposition. When we say that God is a Unity we mean that, though God is in Himself a threefold center of life, His life is not split into three. He is one in essence, in personality and in will. When we say that God is a Trinity in Unity, we mean that there is a unity in diversity, and that the diversity manifests itself in Persons, in characteristics and in operations.
  - B. Equality in dignity

There is perfect equality in nature, honor and dignity between the Persons. Fatherhood belongs to the very essence of the first Person and it was so from all eternity. It is a personal property of God 'from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named' (Eph. 3:15). The Son is called the 'only begotten' perhaps to suggest uniqueness rather than derivation. Christ always claimed for Himself a unique relationship to God as Father, and the Jews who listened to him apparently had no illusions about His claims. Indeed they sought to kill him because he 'called God His own Father, making himself equal with God' (John. 5:18). The Spirit is revealed as the One who alone knows the depths of God's nature: 'For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God . . . No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. 2:10). This is saying that the Spirit is 'just God Himself in the innermost essence of His being'. This puts the seal of NT teaching upon the doctrine of the equality of the three Persons.
  - C. Diversity in operation

In the functions ascribed to each of the Persons in the Godhead, especially in man's redemption, it is clear that a certain degree of subordination is involved (in relation, though not in nature); the Father first, the Son second, the Spirit third. The Father works through the Son by the Spirit. Thus Christ can say: 'My Father is greater than I.' As the Son is sent by the Father, so the Spirit is sent by the Son. As it was the Son's office to reveal the Father, so it is the Spirit's office to reveal the Son, as Christ testified: 'He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you' (John. 16:14). It has to be recognized that the doctrine arose as the spontaneous expression of the Christian experience. The early Christians knew themselves to be reconciled to God the Father, and that the reconciliation was secured for them by the atoning work of the Son, and that it was mediated to them as an experience by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Trinity was to them a fact before it became a doctrine, but in order to preserve it in the creedal faith of the church the doctrine had to be formulated.

2. Implications of the doctrine - The implications of the doctrine are vitally important not only for theology, but for Christian experience and life.

A. It means that God is revealable

Revelation is as natural for God as it is for the sun to shine. Before there had been any created being, there was self-revelation within the Trinity, the Father revealing to the Son, the Father and the Son revealing to the Spirit, and the Spirit communicating that revelation within the Being of God. When God willed to create a universe it implied no change in God's behavior; it meant letting His revelation shine outwards to His creation. And this he did by His revealing Spirit.

B. It means that God is communicable

As the sun shines it communicates its light and heat and energy. So if God is a fellowship within Himself he can let that fellowship go out to His creatures and communicate Himself to them according to their capacity to receive. This is what happened supremely when He came to redeem men: He let His fellowship bend down to reach outcast man and lift him up. And so because God is a Trinity he has something to share: it is His own life and communion.

C. It means that the Trinity is the basis of all true fellowship in the world.

Since God is within Himself a fellowship, it means that His moral creatures who are made in His image find fullness of life only within a fellowship. This is reflected in marriage, in the home, in society and above all in the church whose *koinonia* is built upon the

fellowship of the three Persons. Christian fellowship is, therefore, the most divine thing on earth, the earthly counterpart of the divine life, as Christ indeed prayed for His followers: 'That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us' (John. 17:21).

D. It gives variety to the life of the universe.

There is, as we have seen, diversity in the life of God. God the Father designs (ordains), God the Son creates (accomplishes), God the Spirit quickens (applies); a great diversity of life and operation and activity. For that reason we can realize that if the universe is a manifestation of God, we can expect a diversity of life within the whole of the created universe. We think that the so-called uniformity of nature is utterly untrue. All the wonders of creation, all the forms of life, all the movement in the universe, are a reflection, a mirroring, of the manifold life of God. There is no monotonous sameness; no large-scale uniformity of pattern, for nature reflects the many-sidedness of the nature and character of the living God.

E. The Triune nature expressed in the following verses:

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| 1. Isa.42: 1; 48:16 | 2. Matt.3: 16; 12:18; 28:19 |
| 3. Luke 3:22        | 4. John 3:34-35; 14:16-17   |
| 5. John 15:26       | 6. Acts 1:2, 4-5; 10:36-38  |
| 7. Romans 1:3-4     | 8. I Cor. 12:3-6            |
| 9. I John 5:6-7     |                             |

F. Each member of the Godhead is referred to as Lord.

1. FATHER: Matt.22: 37
2. SON: John 20:28
3. SPIRIT: 2 Cor. 3:17-18

G. Each member of the Godhead is referred to as GOD

1. FATHER: I Cor.8: 6
2. SON: Isa.9: 6; John 20:28; Titus 2:13; Heb.1: 8; 2 Peter 1:1
3. SPIRIT: Acts 5:3-4

3. General Biblical References to the Trinity

A. Doctrine of the Trinity proved from Scripture.

1. Mt 3:16,17; 28:19;
2. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:3-6; 2 Cor. 13:14
3. Eph 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 1:20,21; Rev. 1:4,5.

B. Divine titles applied to the three persons

1. Ex 20:2

2. John 20:28; Ac 5:3,4

C. Each person in the Trinity is described as:

1. Eternal - Rom. 16:26; Rev. 22:13; Heb. 9:14.
2. Holy - Rev. 4:8; 15:4; Ac 3:14; 1 John 2:20.
3. True - John 7:28; Rev. 3:7.
4. Omnipresent – Jer. 23:24; Eph 1:23; Psalm 139:7.
5. Omnipotent - Gen. 17:1; Rev. 1:8; Rom. 15:19; Jer. 32:17; Heb 1:3; Luke 1:35.
6. Omniscient - Acts 15:18; John 21:17; 1 Cor. 2:10,11.
7. Creator - Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16; Job 33:4; Psalm 148:5; John 1:3; Job 26:13.
8. Sanctifier - Jude 1:1; Heb. 2:11; 1 Peter 1:2.
9. Author of all spiritual operations - Heb 13:21; Col. 1:29; 1 Cor. 12:11.
10. Source of eternal life – Rom. 6:23; John 10:28; Gal. 6:8.
11. Teacher - Isaiah 54:13; Luke 21:15; John 14:26; Isaiah 48:17; Gal. 1:12; 1 John 2:20.
12. Raising Christ from the dead – 1 Cor. 6:14; John 2:19; 1 Peter 3:18.
13. Inspiring the prophets – Heb. 1:1; 2 Cor. 13:3; Mark 13:11.
14. Supplying ministers to the Church – Jer. 3:15; Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28; Jer. 26:5; Mat. 10:5; Acts 13:2.
15. Salvation the work of – 2 Thess. 2:13,14; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2.
16. Baptism administered in the name of the trinity– Matt. 28:19.
17. Benediction given in the name of the Trinity - 2Co 13:14