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Is the Trinity a Biblical Idea? An Introduction to a Central Christian Doctrine

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In 1981, the first issue of *The Quarterly Journal* (at that time called the *Personal Freedom Outreach Newsletter*) carried an article titled, “Is the Trinity a Pagan Idea?” This final issue of *The Journal* comes full circle to revisit this vital Christian doctrine.

The hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” written in the early 1800s by Anglican minister Reginald Heber contains the line, “God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!” The hymn reminds us that the doctrine of the Trinity is central to Christianity. The doctrine is not *sufficient* to define Christianity, but it is so important that anyone who denies it is a heretic.

While the three major branches of Christendom — Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism — have significant differences, all three teach that there is one God, and that this one God is three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All three branches also teach that each of the three persons is unique. The Father is not the Son or the Spirit, the Son is not

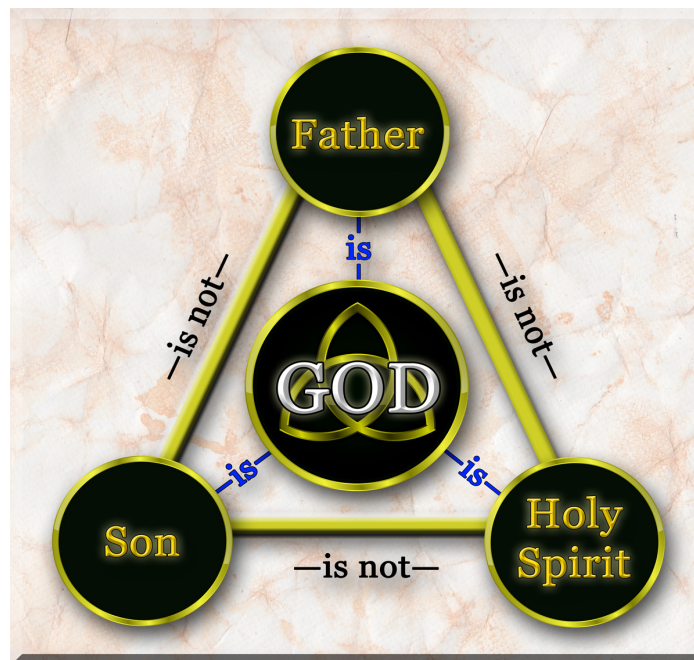
the Father or the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father or the Son. There is one God; but the one God is three

distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity is unique among religions and sects. No other religion has a doctrine of God as one and three, in the sense that the Christian faith does.¹

Christians should strive to understand the doctrine of the Trinity. First, because it is a biblical doctrine — God’s self-revelation of who He is within Himself — and because, as Christians, we should want to know who is the God we worship and serve. Second, we are called to love God with all our minds as well as with the rest of our being (Mark

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