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A Nobody Trying to Tell Everybody About Somebody,

Pastor Mark Driscoll

Trinity Research Brief
From Pastor Mark Driscoll
Prepared by a research team

1) A biblical summary of the word doctrine and how it is used as well as how it has been used by major Christian thinkers in church history.

Doctrine is "what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic… Doctrine is the result of doing systematic theology with regard to one particular topic" (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 25). The word "doctrine" is from a Latin word *doctrina* and denotes that which is taught. In church history the word "dogma" is often used synonymously for "doctrine." In the Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions, dogma refers to doctrines that have official endorsement of the church. The word usually translated for doctrine in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *leqach*, which means "what is received," or "that which is taught." *Leqach* is translated in various ways in the ESV ("teaching," Deut. 32:2; "instruction," Isa. 29:24; "learning," Prov. 1:5). This Hebrew word is used in Job 11:4 which says, "My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in God's eyes." In the New Testament, the words normally translated for "doctrine" are the Greek words *didaskalia* and *didache*. *Didaskalia* means both "the act of teaching" and "that which is taught" (BDAG, 240). It is used in Matt. 15:9; Mk. 7:7; Rom. 12:7; 15:4; Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Tim. 3:10, 16; 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1, 7, 10. *Didache* is usually translated "doctrine" or "teaching." It is used in Matt. 7:28; 16:12; 22:33; Mk. 1:22, 27; 4:2; 11:18; 12:38; Lk. 4:32; Jn. 7:16f; 18:19; Acts 2:42; 5:28; 13:12; 17:19; Rom. 6:17; 16:17; 1 Co. 14:6, 26; 2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:9; Heb. 6:2; 13:9; 2 Jn. 1:9f; Rev. 2:14f, 24.

One mark of a genuine believer is abiding in right doctrine, in the "teaching of Christ." "Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting." (2 John 1:9-10). It is important to note the frequency of the two terms in the Pastoral and General Epistles. The biblical writers repeatedly emphasize the importance of "sound" or "healthy doctrine" (1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1) and "good doctrine" (1 Tim 4:6). Paul exhorted Titus to hold fast to the Word so that he could instruct others in sound doctrine and rebuke false doctrine. "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9). This would seem to imply that a body of teaching had now emerged in the church which was generally accepted by believers, and which should serve as a standard of orthodoxy. These key doctrines of the faith had become a body of truth "once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). (See *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, entry 2754 "doctrine")

Five ways Christian thought is like language
In Jeffrey Stout's article "Hans Frei and Anselmian Theology," he describes five typologies of theology by using theories of translation. Below is the summary of his article, which will be an

addition attachment. Stout is asking: "What kind of translation exercise is theology within the language?"

       1. Esperanto—Translate biblical language into another language—one that is timeless and boundless and *the* language. Not worried about translating all from scripture but only the deeper/real meaning, leaving the particularity of scripture behind.
       2. Presentese—Translate Christianity into language of the day—*our* language so *we* can get it. Similar to Esperanto, just not looking for timeless language but still separating wheat from chaff
       3. Diaological—Dialogue between ordinary language and biblical language, but neither has privilege status. Goes back and forth between scripture and other languages hoping to bring both to a deeper and more meaningful conversation, but treating both as differing equals.
       4. Anselmian—"I believe in order to understand." Believers and unbelievers who want to understand occupy the same ground. Religious systems work like English by trying to absorb foreign terms, taking on anything helpful in an endeavor to understand from the outside world. But scripture has priority and determines boundaries of discussion. Other languages are not equal to scripture. This is an authority-dialogue conversation.
       5. Segregationist—Only members of community can see how language works (truly understand it). No need to even try to relate scripture to other languages.

Major theologians on "What is theology?"

    Thomas Aquinas- "Sacred doctrine (theology) is a unified science in which all things are treated under the aspect of God either because they are God himself, or because they refer to God." (*Summa*, I, 1, VII)

    William Ames- "The doctrine or teaching of living to God." (*Marrow of Theology*, p. 77)

    Charles Hodge- "The science of the facts of divine revelation so far as those facts concern the nature of God and our relation to him." (*Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, p. 21)

    John Frame- "The application of Scripture to life." (*Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, p. 81)

    Paul Tillich- "The methodological explanation of the contents of the Christian faith." (*Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, p. 28)

    Emil Brunner- "The study of the development of dogma." (*Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics*, vol. 1, p. 89)

2)   What is the history of the doctrine of the Trinity?

To study the doctrine of the Trinity is to tread on holy ground. Tozer writes: "To meditate on the three Persons of the Godhead is to walk in thought through the garden eastward in Eden and to tread on holy ground" (A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 17). Wayne Grudem defines the doctrine of the Trinity as follows: "God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God" (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 226). Ware provides another helpful definition of the doctrine: "The doctrine of the Trinity

affirms that God's whole and undivided essence belongs equally, eternally, simultaneously, and fully to each of the three distinct Persons of the Godhead." (Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, p. 41). Louis Berkhof explained the doctrine of the Trinity under these headings: "A) There is in the Divine Being but one indivisible essence. B) In this one Divine Being there are three Persons or individual subsistences: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. C) The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three persons. D) The subsistence and operation of the three persons in the divine Being is marked by a certain definite order. E) There are certain personal attributes by which the three persons are distinguished. F) The Church confesses the Trinity to be a mystery beyond the comprehension of man." (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 87-89). McGrath notes that although the word "trinity" (which means "tri-unity" or "three-in-oneness") is never found in the Bible, the idea represented by the word is taught throughout Scripture. "The doctrine of the Trinity can be regarded as the outcome of a process of sustained and critical reflection on the pattern of divine activity revealed in Scripture, and continued in Christian experience" (Alistair McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 321).

The foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity is the monotheism taught throughout the Old Testament. The biblical basis of belief in one God is found in several texts: Gen 1:1; Deut. 4:35; 6:4; 32:39; 2 Sam. 22:32; 1 Kings 8:59-60; Isa. 37:20; 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5-6; 46:9. Grudem points out that although the doctrine of the Trinity is not explicitly found in the Old Testament, several passages suggest or even imply that the one God exists as more than one person (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8; 48:16; 63:10; Psa. 45:6-7; 110:1). Several of these OT passages use a plural in reference to God, or speak of multiple persons in reference to God. Grudem also points out that the several OT passages about the "angel of the LORD" suggest a plurality of persons in God (See Gen. 16:13; Ex. 3:2-6; 23:20-22; Num. 22:35, 38; Judg. 2:1-2; 6:11, 14 and Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 229).

The earliest Christians were Jewish believers. As Jews, they believed that there is only one God, and this God is Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is important to note that the early Christians continued to affirm their belief in one God. The early church strongly affirmed that the God of the Old Testament was the same God as the God of the Christians. Despite living in a polytheistic Roman society (Acts 17:16ff), the early church never wavered in its monotheism. Monotheism is taught throughout the New Testament: John 5:44; Rom. 3:30; 16:27; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25. Robert Letham puts it best: "The church understood its worship of Jesus as within the boundaries of OT monotheism" (*The Holy Trinity*, p. 52).

The early Christian apologists, particularly Justin Martyr, promoted a Logos Christology that greatly influenced the patristic writers who followed them. The earliest Christian apologists were more concerned with defending the deity of Christ than with articulating a doctrine of the Trinity. The contributions of the Fathers to the doctrine of the Trinity are detailed below. More than any other church father, Tertullian gave the doctrine of the Trinity its distinctive vocabulary. Tertullian invented the word "Trinity" (Latin: *Trinitas*). He introduced another Latin term, "Persona," to translate the Greek word hypostasis. This word "persona" was eventually translated into English as "person." A third Latin term, "substantia," expressed the fundamental unity within the Godhead. Each person of the Trinity shares the same divine "substance." Tertullian wrote: "We believe in one only God, yet subject to this dispensation, which is our

word for economy, that the one only God has also a Son, His Word, Who has issued out of Himself… which Son then sent, according to His promise, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, out of the Father" (Quoted in Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, p. 473).

Irenaeus was influential in thinking of the Trinity and the "economy of the salvation." Economy (dispensatio) is not to be thought of in a monetary sense but rather as the way in which one's affairs are ordered. For Irenaeus, the economy of salvation meant the way in which the Triune God has ordered the salvation of humanity in history. At the time, Gnostic and Marcionite heresies taught that the creator God of the Old Testament was different from and inferior to the redeemer God of the New Testament. "Irenaeus insisted that the entire process of salvation, from the first moment of creation to the last moment of history, was the work of the one and the same God. There was a single economy of salvation, in which the one God—who was both creator and redeemer—was at work to redeem creation" (Alistair McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 323). Irenaeus describes the economy of salvation in this quote: "God the Father uncreated, who is uncontained, invisible, one God, creator of the universe; this is the first article of our faith… And the Word of God, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ… who, in the fullness of time, in order to gather all things to Himself, He became a human being amongst human beings, capable of being seen and touched, to destroy death, bring life, and restore fellowship between God and humanity. And the Holy Spirit… who, in the fullness of time, was poured out in a new way on our human nature in order to renew humanity throughout the entire world in the sight of God" (Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 6 [3.3]).

Athanasius was the one of the church's most ardent and eloquent defenders of the deity of Christ. He wrote several works, including *On the Incarnation* and *Contra Mundum*, for the purpose of promoting Nicene Christology over and against the heretical teachings of Arianism.

The Cappadocian Fathers were a group of theologians who wrote between the Council of Nicaea and the Council of Constantinople. The group included Basil of Caesarea (A.D. 330-379), Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 330-395), and Gregory of Nazianzus (A.D. 330-389). Letham summarizes the contribution of the three Cappadocian Fathers to the doctrine of the Trinity: "The three Cappadocians together brought about an open recognition of the deity of the Spirit, as well as of the Son, and thus cleared the decks for a definitive settlement of the Trinitarian crisis engendered by Arius. This they did by clarifying the real, eternal, personal distinctions of the three and setting these in the context of their relations to each other. God is one undivided being, yet three persons in communion and union. At the same time, while the Father is, in terms of the relations of the three, the principle, the fount, even the first cause, Gregory Nazianzen in particular took care to specify that this does not affect the being of God, and so all three persons are God in themselves. None is more and none is less God than the others" (*The Holy Trinity*, 164-65). The love of the Cappadocian Fathers for the doctrine of the Trinity is perhaps best seen in this quotation by Gregory Nazianzen from his *Oration on Holy Baptism*: "This I give you to share, and to defend all your life, the one Godhead and power, found in the three in unity, and comprising the three separately; not unequal, in substances or natures, neither increased nor diminished by superiorities or inferiorities; in every respect equal, in every respect the same; just as the beauty and the greatness of the heavens is one; the infinite conjunction of three infinite ones, each God when considered in himself; as the Father, so the Son; as the Son, so the Holy Spirit; the three one God when contemplated together; each God because consubstantial; one

God because of the monarchia (one source). No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendour of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of any of the three I think of him as the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that one so as to attribute a greater greatness to the rest. When I contemplate the three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light" (Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 40.41 PG 36:417).

The three major Church Ecumenical Councils are worth noting in order to trace the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the early church. These gatherings of church leaders discussed major theological issues for the purpose of recognizing what the church believed. These councils often were called in response to heretical teaching that needed to be confronted. For example, the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) met primarily to resolve the debate over Arianism (the doctrinal teaching that Christ was the highest created being) and concluded with the formulation of the anti-Arian Nicene Creed. With the deity of Christ officially recognized, the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) extended the discussion to the identification of the Holy Spirit within the Godhead, making the Creed fully Trinitarian. Constantinople expanded the Nicene Creed and officially condemned Arianism. It solidified the orthodox doctrine of the full humanity of Jesus Christ. The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) focused on the relationship of Christ's humanity to his divinity (i.e. hypostatic union) and issued the formula of Chalcedon, which became the orthodox statement on the person of Christ (see Stanly Grenz, "Councils," *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, p. 31).

The contribution of the councils to the doctrine of the Trinity can be summarized under four headings: 1. One Being, Three Persons. God is one being and has one essence. This one being of God consists eternally of three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The whole God is in each person, and each person is the whole God. Generally speaking, the Western Church's theological articulation of this idea went from the one being of God to the three persons, while the Eastern Church went from the three persons to the one being of God. Both approaches are equally valid (See Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 112-67). 2. Consubstantiality. One identical divine being is shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three persons are of on substance (i.e. consubstantial). There is only one essence or being of God, which all three persons share completely. 3. Perichoresis. This concept, also called circumincession, affirms the divine essence of the three persons of the Trinity in a manner that avoids blurring the distinctions among them. Any essential characteristic that belongs to the one of the three is shared by the others. Since all three persons are fully God and the whole God is in each of the three, it follows that the three mutually indwell or contain one another. The three persons are inseparable. 4. The Order of the Persons. There is a clear order (taxis) of the relations between the three persons: from the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit.

Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430) was one of the greatest theologians in church history. He greatly influenced Trinitarian theology, especially in the Western church. The collective Trinitarian wisdom of the church fathers culminated in the work of Augustine. He wrote his masterpiece *De Trinitate*, or *Treatise on the Trinity*, over the course of 19 years. (A.D. 400-419) This work has been one of the most influential books on the doctrine of the Trinity. Essentially, Augustine proposed that we understand the triune nature of God in such a way that we

distinguish the senses in which God is one and God is three, respectively. God is one in essence or nature, but God is three in person. God is one in essence, so the essence of God is possessed fully by each member of the Trinity. But He is three is person, so the Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit, the Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son. However, all three possess the identically same divine nature. Augustine made popular several analogies that are still used to explain the Trinity. These analogies have been ridiculed by later theologians. One of the most famous analogies of Augustine was the idea of love. There are three things in love—the lover, the one loved, and the love itself. (See Augustine, *Trinity* 8.10.14 PL 42:960). This analogy is problematic because it draws into question the personal status of the Holy Spirit. Love is a feeling, while the Holy Spirit is a person. Other famous triads from Augustine include mind, knowledge, and love; memory, understanding, and will. These analogies demonstrate the influence of Aristotelian categories on Augustine's theology. Nevertheless, Augustine himself understood the limits of trying to explain an idea as profound as the doctrine of the Trinity. His closing prayer in his *De Trinitate* shows his humble spirit: "O Lord the one God, God the Trinity, whatever I have said in these books that is of Thine, may they acknowledge who are Thine; if anything of my own, may it be pardoned both by Thee and by those who are Thine. Amen" (Augustine, *Trinity* 15.28.51).

Calvin and the other Protestant Reformers relied heavily on Augustine in their articulation of the Trinity. This indicates a settled consensus in the Western tradition of the church. One area that the Reformers distanced themselves from Augustine was in relation to his psychological analogies. The Reformers, particularly Calvin, viewed them unhelpful and misleading. This lead on theologian to write: "There are no analogies in the world around us that adequately convey the Christian doctrine of the Trinity." (Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 6).

Calvin arrives at his definition of faith in *Institutes*, III.2.vii: "Now we shall have a proper definition of faith if we say it is a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence toward us, which being founded upon the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ is both revealed to our minds and sealed in or hearts by the Holy Spirit." Calvin's definition of faith is concise and the content of the knowledge of faith is clear. In faith one comes to know the "Divine benevolence" and the "gratuitous promise in Christ." It is the gratuitous promise that constitutes the content of the knowledge of faith. Further, faith's certainty is not founded on an argument or proposition, but founded on the work of the Trinity—God's will to be benevolent toward us is revealed in the gratuitous promise because of Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit. The ground of certainty is God. There is no distinction between the immanent and economic trinity; God is in God's being how God is in God's action towards us.

Given the place of God's self-revelation in Christ and the testimony of the Spirit in Christian claims to speak of a transcendent God, it follows that a Christian understanding of God needs to be embodied in a Trinitarian reflection. William Placher writes: "We cannot give an account of God or of how we come to know God and then add the Trinity later, for the God we come to know is the God self-revealed in the Word and known through the Spirit." (William Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong*, p. 199.) It is through the narrative of the humanity of Christ and, as Calvin argues, God's already christological self-revelation in the history of Israel that we are given the way of talking about the God who

remains unknown to us. It is through the testimony of the Holy Spirit that we trust not only those narratives.

The doctrine of the Trinity is difficult to understand but J. I. Packer reminds believers that while difficult, the doctrine of the Trinity is nonetheless true! "The historic formulation of the Trinity seeks to circumscribe and safeguard this mystery (not explain it; that is beyond us), and it confronts us with perhaps the most difficult thought that the human mind has ever been asked to handle. It is not easy; but it is true" (J. I. Packer, "Trinity," *Concise Theology*, p. 40). Believers should study the doctrine of the Trinity because God has given the church a great blessing in truthfully revealing something so glorious about Himself: namely, He is triune. Bruce Ware provides a helpful illustration of why believers should study the doctrine of the Trinity. What would a husband think if his wife said to him, "You know, there's something about me that is very near and dear to my heart that you don't know, something that I've tried to tell you in the past but you just haven't gotten it; you haven't paid attention or listened when I've talked about it. And it really matters both to me and to our relationship that you understand this. But it isn't the easiest thing to understand. I'm asking you, 'Will you listen? Will you let me share with you something very, very important to understanding who I am, something that can make a big difference in the quality of our relationship with each other?'" Perhaps God would say something similar about his revelation of his triune nature. He might say, "There is something about me that I've told you, but it is something that you've just not been interested in understanding. To be sure, it isn't the easiest thing to understand, but it matters, and I really care that you see this. I am one God, but I am also three. I am one God only as I am Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and this makes a difference in how you see me and how we relate with one another. This matters in terms of how I do my work, who I am eternally, and how I have made you. I've told you about this in my Word, but you haven't yet seen the beauty and wonder of what I've said. So now, will you listen to something I care about very dearly and deeply, and will you take it to heart?" (Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, p. 13-14).

Studying the doctrine of the Trinity helps believers appreciate our great salvation which is frequently described in Paul's writings as the work of the Triune God: 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 1:4-7; 2:4-5; 6:11; 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Gal. 3:1-5; Rom. 8:3-4; 8:15-17; Col. 3:16; Eph. 1:17; 2:18; 2:20-22; Phil. 3:3 (Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 48, n. 39). Sinclair Ferguson keenly points out from John 13-17 that it is before Jesus goes to the cross that He has the most to say to His disciples about the blessed Trinity, about His relationship to the Father and to the Spirit (*A Heart for God*, pp. 18-37). Christ's final words to His disciples before going to the cross were to explain, although in part, the doctrine of the Trinity to His followers. It is the cross that enables believers to share the unity and love that exists eternally between the Father and the Son (John 17:11, 22-26). It is the cross, resurrection, and ascension of Christ that brings to us the full power and knowledge of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:13). Such are the blessings we learn of when we study the doctrine of the Trinity (Frame, *Doctrine of God*, p. 621). John Frame reminds us that the doctrine of the Trinity is central to the gospel: "Far from being an abstruse philosophical speculation, the doctrine of the Trinity attempts to describe and account for something biblically obvious and quite fundamental to the gospel. The fact is this: Scriptures testifies from beginning to end that God is one, but it also presents three persons who are God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit… There is no legitimate argument against the deity of these three persons. Their deity pervades Scripture and

assures us that our salvation is from beginning to end a divine salvation, the work of God himself. Nor can it be debated whether the biblical God is one. Indeed, his oneness is also important to our salvation. He is God alone; there is none besides him. So no one can prevent him from bringing eternal salvation to his people. So God is one, but somehow also three. This fact is difficult to understand, but it is quite unavoidable in Scripture and central to the gospel" (John Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, pp. 621-22).

3) What are the major heresies that have contradicted the doctrine of the Trinity?

The doctrine of the Trinity excludes heresies that have arisen throughout the history of the church. These heresies, at some point, deny the basic assertions of the doctrine of the Trinity which are these: 1. God is three persons 2. Each person is fully God 3. There is one God (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 231). The three main heresies that contradict the doctrine of the Trinity are modalism, Arianism, and tritheism. The term "modalism" was introduced by the German historian Adolf von Harnack to describe second and third century Trinitarian heresies. Modalism teaches that God is *successively* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; He is not *simultaneously* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Modalism is a heresy that does not view the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three particular persons in relation but merely as three modes or manifestations of the one divine person of God. Modalism is also called Sabellianism, which was an early-third century Trinitarian heresy named for Sabellius. Sabellius taught that the one God revealed himself successively in salvation history first as Father (Creator and Lawgiver), then as Son (Redeemer) and finally as Spirit (Sustainer, Giver of Grace). Hence for Sabellius there is only one divine person, not three as in orthodox Christian trinitarianism (Stanley Grenz, "Sabellianism," in *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, p. 104). So for a modalist, the God of the Old Testament is the Father. After the incarnation, God was manifested as the incarnate Son. Then, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, God came in the mode of the Holy Spirit. No church council was needed to convince Christians that this view was heretical. Considering the baptism of Jesus, or Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemene, shows that the Bible requires that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, must be simultaneously Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and not just one of these modes at one time. "Today most Western Christians are practical modalists. The usual way of referring to God is 'God' or, particularly at the popular level, 'The Lord.' It is worth contrasting this with Gregory Nazianzen, the great Cappadocian of the fourth century, who spoke of 'my Trinity,' saying, "When I say 'God,' I mean Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 6). Arianism was an early heretical teaching about the identity of Jesus Christ. Arianism was founded primarily on the teachings of Arius. The central characteristic of Arian thought was that because God is one, Jesus could not have also been truly God. In order to deal with the scriptural testimony to the exalted status of Christ, Arius and his followers proposed that Jesus was the highest created being of God. So although Christ was fully human, he was not fully God. Arius's teaching was condemned as heretical at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 (Stanley Grenz, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, p. 15). Tritheism teaches that the Trinity consists of three equal, independent, and autonomous beings, each of whom is divine. Tritheism stresses the plurality of the Godhead. Many human analogies for the Trinity actually convey tritheism instead.

4)   How does the doctrine of the Trinity differ from the teachings of major cults (e.g. Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnessism, Oneness or Modalism etc.)

Mormonism was founded by Joseph Smith after receiving a vision from God in 1820. Mormonism does not include belief in a Trinity. Instead, Mormons believe that the "Godhead" is made up of three distinct beings who are "one in purpose" but not one in being. These beings are God the Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost). Mormons do not believe in the deity of Christ. In Mormon theology, Jesus Christ is not the eternal Word of God. He is a created spirit and "son of God" before being given a physical body, just like all humans. In the Mormon text "Book of Moses," Satan and Jesus contend for the privilege of taking a body of flesh in order to become the redeemer, with Jesus winning the contest. The spirit of Jesus was then given a body through the Virgin Birth to Mary in Bethlehem. (*Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses* 4:1-4).

The Jehovah's Witnesses movement was founded in 1881 by Charles Taze Russell. This group teaches that there is no biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity. They teach that there is one solitary divine being from all eternity. This divine being is Jehovah God, the Creator and Preserver of the Universe and all things. Jehovah's Witnesses essentially believe what Arius taught in the third century: namely Christ is not God but rather God's first created creature. Jesus is the archangel Michael, who is mentioned in the Old Testament. The spirit is not divine either but rather more of a cosmic force of Jehovah.

The United Pentecostal Church is the largest Oneness group in America. The Oneness theology denies the doctrine of the Trinity. "The Bible does not teach the doctrine of the trinity, and trinitarianism actually contradicts the Bible. It does not add any positive benefit to the Christian message....the doctrine of the trinity does detract from the important biblical themes of the oneness of God and the absolute deity of Jesus Christ" (David Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, p.298). In other words, the Son of God is the manifestation of the Father in the flesh. The Son is not eternal, nor pre-existent. Jesus is the Father and the Son: Father in his divinity and Son in his humanity. Hence, the Trinity is said to be a misunderstanding of the Biblical teaching. "The basis of Oneness theology is a radical concept of monotheism. Simply stated, God is absolutely and indivisibly one. There are no essential distinctions or divisions in His eternal nature. All the names and titles of the Deity, such as Elohim, Yahweh, Adonai, Father, Word, and Holy Spirit refer to one and the same being, or, in trinitarian terminology, to one person. Any plurality associated with God is only a plurality of attributes, titles, roles, manifestations, modes of activity, or relationships to man." (David Bernard, *Essentials of Oneness Theology*, p. 8).

**5)	How does the doctrine of the Trinity differ from the teaching of the major religions (e.g. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Shintoism)?**

Judaism teaches a monotheistic belief in God but denies a plurality in the Godhead. Those who adhere to Judaism point to Deut. 6:4 as indicating that the Trinity violates Scripture, particularly the idea that God is one. Because Jews believe God is spirit, they deny the deity of Christ. God could not be a man and remain God because God is spirit. Because Rabbinical Judaism denies the deity of the Second Person of the Godhead, the doctrine of the Trinity is incompatible with the teachings of Rabbinical Judaism.

Islam teaches that there is no god but Allah—the God. Muslims deny the deity of Jesus Christ. He is embraced as a prophet equal to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses but below the importance of Mohammed. The Qur'an (or Koran), explicitly denies the doctrine of the Trinity. It appears to understand the Christian Trinity as being the Father, Son and Mary: "And (remember) when Allah will say (on the Day of Resurrection): 'O 'Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)! Did you say unto men: Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allah?' He will say: 'Glory be to you! It was not for me to say that which I had no right (to say)" (Qur'an 5:116-117). Though Islam teaches that God is one and there is only one God, its teaching is faulty in other ways. Allah is so far away and distant that he is really unknowable. Allah is all-powerful, but little is said about Allah being loving. So, Allah's power is a raw power, not power for the purpose of loving and saving. Muslims do not believe in the trinity and they incorrectly understand it. They believe the trinity teaches three separate Gods.

Hinduism teaches that Braham is a formless, abstract, eternal being without attributes. Hindus believe Braham can take form in a trinity as well as millions of lesser gods. Being polytheistic, Hinduism is contrary to Christian monotheism and the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Buddhism denies the existence of a personal God. "We do not believe that this world is created and ruled by a God" (Walpola Rahula, *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*, 137). Buddhism is contrary to Christian monotheism and the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Sikhism is founded on the teachings of Nanak and nine successive gurus in fifteenth century Northern India. Sikhism is the fifth-largest religion in the world. A key distinctive feature of Sikhism is a non-anthropomorphic concept of God, to the extent that one can interpret God as the Universe itself. This belief is contrary to Christian monotheism and the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Shintoism, a religion unique to Japan, identifies with the kami ("deities") of Japanese folk religion. The concept of kami (sometimes translated 'deities') is a complex notion lacking a full theological explanation of their existence or essence, but is probably best thought of as a sacred quality or numinous energy which any object, place or creature may possess, such as shrines, local spirits, deified ancestors or rulers. This belief in the kami is contrary to both Christian monotheism and the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

6)   How does the doctrine of the Trinity differ from the teaching of New Spirituality (e.g. also called the New Age) as purported by people such as Oprah, Deepak Chopra etc.?

The New Age movement fundamental beliefs are contrary to the doctrine of the Trinity. New Age beliefs encourage mediation that focuses on non-rational experience. Deepak Chopra describes his experience in meditation: "The higher self is in contact with the cosmos and pure being, beyond the boundaries of rational thought and all distinctions which originate in nothingness and return there" (quoted in Peter Jones, *Pagans in the Pews*, p. 203). Some New Age writers attempt to merge New Age spirituality with Christian spirituality. Philip St. Romain encourages his readers to "Surrender yourself into the care of Christ, Whose Spirit is capable of guiding your kundalini energies toward a wholesome integration. Trust that a Higher Guidance is at work in the process. Ask for this Guidance when confused." (Romain, *Kundalini Energy and Christian Spirituality*, p. 131).

New Age author Marianne Williamson is one of Oprah Winfrey's spiritual advisers. Her writings are representative of the New Age movement and its denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. Instead of pointing readers outside of themselves to a transcendent and Triune God, Williamson encourages her readers to seek salvation within. She writes: "There's actually no place where God stops and you start. 'There is only one begotten Son' doesn't mean that someone else was it, and we're not. It means we're all it…. 'Accepting Christ' is merely a shift in self-perception" (Williamson, *A Return to Love*, pp. 31-32). Williamson goes on to deny the deity of Christ: "Jesus is a personal symbol of the Holy Spirit. He was a thoroughly purified being." (Williamson, *A Return to Love*, p 46).

Abraham Kuyper once wrote, "Do not forget that the fundamental contrast has always been, is still, and always will be until the end: Christianity and Paganism, the idols or the living God."