

# DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

October 29 – November 4, 2007



October 29, 2007

## The Tri-Personal God

*“Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness...’”<sup>1</sup>*

Since humans are created in the image of God, we can possess some appreciation for the ‘personhood’ of God because we ourselves are ‘persons’. A ‘person’ may be defined as “a separate rational and moral individual, possess of self-consciousness and conscious of his/her identity amid all changes.”<sup>2</sup>

One significant difference is that while we are ‘uni-personal’, God is ‘tri-personal’. Three persons exist within the one reality of God.

In a way, it makes sense for a ‘personal’ God to be ‘tri-personal’ in nature. A person is aware of their own existence in contrast or comparison to other things or persons. Before anything was created, God could be ‘self-aware’ because the three persons of the trinity existed in relation to one another.

Similarly, if God is love<sup>3</sup>, there had to be a possibility of relationship, one to another. There must be a ‘subject’ and an ‘object’ of affection; an ‘I’ and a ‘Thou’. From eternity, the Father, Son and Spirit have existed in a perfect relationship of love and joy.

Genesis 1:26 reflects a relationship within God and the Hebrew word ‘Elohim’ (God) is in fact plural in form. These may be small ‘evidences’, but they nevertheless hint at a plurality within the reality of the one true God: a tri-personal God whom we, as persons, can love, trust and serve.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:26 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 87

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 4:16

October 30, 2007

## God as Male and Female

*“So God created human beings in his own image;  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.”<sup>1</sup>*

The creation account makes it quite plain that God is both male and female – or perhaps that God is ‘beyond gender’ in that the being of God perfectly unites both maleness and femaleness.

In separating the genders in human persons, God affirmed their equality and created a unique opportunity for oneness in relationship.

While all creation was ‘good’, it was ‘not good’ that the male was ‘alone’. Humanity could not be ‘in the image of God’ with only one gender.

So God created the female human to be an ‘ezer *cnegdo*<sup>2</sup> – a suitable helper – for the male human. Though translated ‘helper’, an ‘ezer’ is not subordinate or inferior. In fact, God himself is also our ‘ezer’ – “an ever present help in trouble.”<sup>3</sup> ‘Suitable’ means ‘exactly what is needed’.

One way to understand God’s intention is that men and women are called to use their complementary natures and gifts to enable one another to live out God’s unique plans for their lives. ‘Marriage’ is the obvious example, but it may also occur in other kinds of relationships.

Perhaps it could be ventured that, whenever men and women relate well and harmoniously, there is a ‘resonance’ with the nature of God?

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:27 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:18

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 46:1

October 31, 2007

## Trinitarian Cautions

*“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him.”<sup>1</sup>*

As with other aspects of God’s nature, human concepts and vocabulary fall short when it comes to grappling with the concept of the Trinity. Medieval scholars ended up coining new words to try to avoid misconceptions!

When we talk about God being ‘three persons’ we need to avoid thinking of God as being ‘partitioned’ or divided – like slices of a pie. God’s essence is not divided up between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. “The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three persons.”<sup>2</sup> All of God is found within the Father; all of God is found within the Son; all of God is found within the Holy Spirit. Tough to understand, but it simply asserts the completeness and the perfection of divinity in the persons of the Trinity.

It also cautions us again becoming a ‘fan’ of one member of the Trinity over against the others. If we see one Person as ‘more’ loving or approachable, or understanding or gracious or powerful or ‘whatever’ than the other two, it is not only inaccurate, but something of a slight to the other Persons.

The Persons of the Trinity have a definite ‘order’ and, in a manner of speaking, play different ‘roles’ in their interactions with Creation – but each possesses all of the nature and perfections of God.

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<sup>1</sup> John 5:22-23 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 89

November 1, 2007 **The First Person: Father**

*"...I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."<sup>1</sup>*

'Father' is used of God in various ways in the Bible. While Creation involved the work of each Person of the Trinity, it is most frequently ascribed to the 'Father'<sup>2</sup>.

'Father' also is used to describe God's relationship with Israel in the Old Testament. *"Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter. We are the work of your hand."<sup>3</sup>* As a theocracy, the ultimate 'patriarchal' ruler of the 'tribes' was God. 'Father' blends notions of family relationship and headship.

This idea is carried over in the New Testament and extended through Jesus Christ, to all God's spiritual children. *"...the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to 'sonship'. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."<sup>4</sup>*

In a very different way, the name 'Father' is applied to the relationship between the first and second Persons of the Trinity. *"No one has ever seen God, but God the only-begotten Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."<sup>5</sup>* Since God has no beginning, 'uniquely-begotten' alludes to some way in which the Son 'proceeds' from the Father. The verses noted allude to their symbiotic relationship in working out salvation and bringing glory to one another in their 'family-business' on planet Earth.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 3:14-15 (TNIV) Greek word for family: 'patria'

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 3:15; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 12:9; James 1:17

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 64:8

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:15-16 (TNIV)

<sup>5</sup> John 1:18 (NIV) See also John 1:14; 5:17-26; 8:54; 14:12-13

*“For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and through whom we live.”<sup>1</sup>*

All the works of God are works of the triune God. But in some the Father is evidently in the foreground.

First, the works of creation and providence are his, the former particularly in its ‘initial’ stages. Providentially, the Father guides and directs the course of our lives and provides us with all we need. *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”<sup>2</sup>*

The Father is also the ‘architect’ of the plan of salvation: *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”<sup>3</sup>*

And, the Father is the ‘CEO’ of that plan of redemption – directing the execution of the redemptive operation conceived in the counsels of the triune God before the foundation of the world. Jesus declared *“I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.”<sup>4</sup>* And on the eve of the crucifixion, he filed his ‘report’ with the Father: *“I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:6a (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> James 1:17 (TNIV)

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:3-4 (TNIV)

<sup>4</sup> John 6:38 (TNIV)

<sup>5</sup> John 17:4-5 (TNIV)