

In the image of god - Introductory notes

The manifestation of God is an important subject which forms one of the great themes of scripture. The timeless words 'I am who I am', whether written in the present tense or the future, express from the beginning to the end of God's purpose his intention of revealing himself in his creation, and in particular in man, made in his image. It is also at times a rather neglected subject, and one that needs to be presented in a balanced way.

We do not accept the doctrine of the trinity. It is the result of political infighting within the church which, over many years of acrimonious debate, reached its pinnacle in the machinations of Constantine and the confusion of the Athanasian creed. It is a doctrine which is little understood but vehemently held, and which is used as the touchstone to determine whether or not one is in the mainstream of the Christian faith. It teaches that there are three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - co-equal and co-eternal, none of which is greater than the other, none dependent on the other, none derived from the other. This is not what the scriptures teach, and we should be careful to make sure that our young people understand why it is unscriptural and why it matters.

We should not however be so keen to disprove the trinity that we neglect the fullness of the truth. The scriptures do not teach that the Lord Jesus Christ was a mere man, or even simply a perfect man filled with the holy spirit. He was, and is, the only begotten Son of God; Immanuel - God with us.

Brother Robert Roberts described the distinction between the teaching of the trinity and the truth of the Bible as follows:

But the individuality of his own existence as a man, does not exclude the fact that he was the flesh-embodiment of the Eternal Father by the Spirit. 'God was in Christ' (2 Cor. 5:19). 'The Father dwelleth in me' (John 14:10). 'A man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders, and signs which God did by him, in the midst of you' (Acts 2:22). These are New Testament definitions on the point. It may be difficult for us, as mere fleshborns, to realise this combination of the human and the divine in one person, but the fact of the combination is self-evident. Someone says, 'O, that is Trinitarianism!' Not at all; Trinitarianism teaches the incarnation of 'the Son'; the truth recognises the incarnation of the Father, resulting in a Son, which is a very different thing.

Article written in 'The Christadelphian' in 1869, reproduced in 'Remember the Days of Old', available from the Christadelphian Office.

If you can, you should read the appropriate section in Eureka (Volume 1, pages 87-111). Some extracts are printed below in case you are unable to read the full text.

Deity Manifested in Flesh

... Thus, “the Logos became flesh, and dwelt among us,” says John, “and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth;” for “the law was given through Moses; the grace and the truth came through Jesus Anointed” - John 1:14, 17. Now, “Theos was the Logos,” says John; that is, Deity was the Word; and this Word became flesh in the manner testified. Was the product, therefore, not Deity? Did the union of spirit with flesh annihilate that spirit, and leave only flesh? Was the holy thing born a mere son of Adam? or “the fellow” and “equal” of the Deity? - Zechariah 13:7; John 5:18; Philippians 2:2. The latter unquestionably. After this manner, then, the ETERNAL POWER, or Yahweh, became flesh; and commenced the initiation of his purpose, that He would be to Israel for Elohim. ...

Extracts taken from Eureka, Volume 1, Page 111

The teaching of scripture is not always easy for us to comprehend, and it is helpful if we can be clear about our position. It is not that most of Christendom believes in the doctrine of the trinity and we believe in an alternative which we have also evolved over the centuries. We have not developed a doctrine of our own that we have to defend. We have simply the scriptures in all their beauty and complexity, with passages which express different aspects of the wonder of God's truth. There are, as Peter wrote, 'some things hard to be understood', and it should come as no surprise if we find ourselves echoing his words when we think about this subject. So we should not feel defensive if there are a few verses which we do not fully comprehend. Would we really expect to?