

All Hail, Adored Trinity*John David Chambers (1805–1893)*

All hail, adored Trinity;
 All hail, eternal Unity;
 O God the Father, God the Son,
 And God the Spirit, ever One.

Behold to Thee, this festal day,
 We meekly pour our thankful lay;
 O let our work accepted be,
 That sweetest work of praising Thee.

Three Persons praise we evermore,
 One only God our hearts adore;
 In Thy sure mercy ever kind
 May we our true protection find.

O Trinity! O Unity!
 Be present as we worship Thee;
 And with the songs that angels sing
 Unite the hymns of praise we bring.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***Father and Son***Kevin T. Bauder*

Arians and Unitarians love the opening verses of John 17, a passage in which Jesus prays not only for His disciples but also for those who would believe through their word (v 20). Specifically, the first five verses make three sets of claims that are sometimes taken to contradict Trinitarianism. One is that the Father is the only true God (v 3). Another is that the Father has given authority to the Son (v 2), sent Him (v 3), and given Him a work to do (v 4). The third is that Jesus asks the Father to glorify Him (vv 1, 5). The supposed implications are that if the Father is the only true God, then the Son cannot be God. If the Son is given authority and sent by the Father to do a work, then He must be subordinate to the Father. If His glory comes from the Father, then He must be lesser than the Father.

These inferences, however, are neither necessary nor sound. Understood rightly, the three sets of claims are perfectly compatible with Jesus' deity as declared earlier in the Gospel (1:1; 8:58). Furthermore, they should provide a better understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Jesus says that the Father is the only true God, but that is not the same thing as saying that only the Father is the true God. The point is not to contrast the Father with the Son or the Holy Spirit, but to contrast the only true and living God with all false gods. In the Old Testament, such false gods included the likes of Baal, Ashera, Milcom, Chemosh, Dagon, Rimmon, Molech, and Marduk. In Greek culture, they would have included the pantheon that Paul encountered on Mars hill—Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Hades, Aeres, Athena, Aphrodite, and others. In Roman religion, these Greek gods were given Latin names, and to them were added the gods of the mystery religions such as Mithra and Cybele. Eventually these false gods would come to include the emperor.

Such gods are false in the sense that they are not gods at all. According to Deuteronomy 6:4, only Jehovah is the true and living God. Jesus clearly recognizes that the Father is Jehovah. Therefore, the Father is not a false god. He is the only true God.

Since there is only one true God, there is only one way of being God. The only way to be God is to possess the divine essence—the *entire* divine es-



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sence—for oneself. The only true God is self-existent. If the Father is God at all, then He possesses the divine essence for Himself. In other words, He is *autotheos*.

There is only one true God, so there is only one divine essence. Consequently, if the Son is also God (as John elsewhere affirms), then He, too, must possess the entire divine essence, and He must possess it for Himself. Viewed from the perspective of deity, the Son derives neither His being nor His “Godness” from the Father. Yet He is not a different god. He is the same God, the only true God, and He, too, is *autotheos*.

The same may be said of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit is God at all (as other Scriptures indicate), then He, too, must possess the entire divine essence. He does not derive either His being or His deity from the Father and the Son. He is God in Himself. He is *autotheos*.

The Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct Persons (more on that later) but they are not three Gods. They are all one God, the one and only true God. They are of one substance, one being, one divine nature—yet the essence, being, and nature do not exist separately from the Persons.

The Father is uncreated. The Son is uncreated. The Spirit is uncreated. The Father is eternal. The Son is eternal. The Spirit is eternal. The Father is almighty. The Son is almighty. The Spirit is almighty. The Father is the only true God. The Son is the only true God. The Spirit is the only true God. And yet these are not three gods, but the one and only true God.

There is only one true God. If the Father is really God, then He must be the only true God. There is no other God for Him to be. Likewise, if the Son is God, then He must be the only true God, for there is no other God for Him to be. Furthermore, if the Spirit is God, then He must be the only true God, for there is no other God for Him to be. And yet the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father.

To say that the Father is the only true God does not exclude either the Son or the Spirit from being the only true God. The biblical God is all three: Father, Son, and Spirit, and yet He is only one God. In no way does John 17:3 contradict this teaching.

But what about the Father giving authority to the Son, sending Him, and assigning Him a task? What about the Son’s request that the Father glorify Him? To these matters we must turn in subsequent discussions.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one

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