

## THEOLOGY 101 – FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

### The AFES Doctrinal Basis

The AFES upholds the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, including...

- \* **The unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.**

#### 2. The doctrine of the Trinity

- A. This doctrine involves a term not found in the Scriptures. This has scandalised some people over the years. Given the first fundamental truth that AFES upholds (concerning the Scriptures and their supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct) should it scandalise us? The doctrine is firmly grounded in Scripture and is a summation of the teaching of Scripture concerning the person and nature of God. It is a teaching “forced” on us by the affirmation of Scripture concerning Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and their relationship with God the Father.
  - The Spirit of God/the Lord in OT and NT not identical with God/the Lord
  - The teaching about Jesus Christ indicates that he had existence prior to time, and is more than human
- B. The matter of the Trinity cannot and should not be arrived at philosophically but biblically. The doctrine of the Trinity should not be approached as a mathematical conundrum. Attempts to talk about the Trinity by analogy or illustration run grave risks – such analogies only illustrate the idea of three-ness. (Inevitably all the illustrations lead us into one of the Trinitarian heresies of the first three centuries.) A little thought will show us that what has eternal and divine dimensions can scarcely be shown by temporal and created elements.
- C. God is love – not just loving in the actions of history, but personally and eternally love Himself, prior to any creation. Love makes no sense in isolation. The heart of the idea of the Trinity is relational. The Trinity is a unity of persons in relationship, and the relationships are essential to their persons. We are speaking of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Certainly it is impossible to speak of Father and Son in isolation from each other. The relationship of the Father and the Son are not known by human analogy (see Matt. 11:27) but can only be known by revelation. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings this revelation home to us – the Spirit of the Father (Matt. 10:20) and the Spirit of the Son (Gal. 4:6.)
- D. “...neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance ...” The doctrine of the Trinity trains us to listen carefully to the Scriptures and to hear precisely Who is said to be doing what in the actions of God in creation, redemption and final sanctification. So the Father and the Son and the Spirit have differing roles in the action of God. E.g. it is God the Father who loved the world so much that He gave His Son. We are also called by this doctrine to make sure that we do not isolate out any of the persons of the Godhead from any of the actions of God in creation, redemption and final sanctification. E.g. Jesus’ death on the cross was not “on his own” but accomplished “by the eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9:14) – the Spirit who was poured on him by the Father. There is differentiation in workings but not in substance – subordination of Son and Spirit to Father in workings but not in nature.