

The Bible starts with the Trinity



Big picture: The Bible starts with a God who is one and yet a plurality of persons, showing that the doctrine of the Trinity is not a later addition.

1. Muslims claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was added many years after Jesus

Muslims claim that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was a teaching that developed over a period of a few hundred years and that Jesus and the disciples would be shocked if they knew what Christians believed today. One view is that as time went by the doctrines of the deity of Christ and the Trinity developed, culminating in the council of Nicaea in AD325.



Even in the New Testament, Muslims argue, it is possible to see the progression of the doctrine of the Trinity from the earlier written books when compared with the later. Mark, they say, was one of the first Gospels to be written, and is silent on the subject, and it is only when you come to John's Gospel, which was written 60 years or so after Jesus, that the Trinity is more formulated.

2. In Genesis 1:1 the Bible uses “Elohim” for God, which is a proper noun in the plural form, yet is accompanied with verbs in their singular form

There is of course huge overlap with the topic of the Trinity and the topic of Christ's deity, which is dealt with elsewhere. Mark's Gospel is dripping with references to the fact that Jesus is God. However, it is important to recognise that the Bible clearly shows that God is one, and yet a plurality of persons even from the very first verse of the Bible.

The Bible begins with the statement “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” ([Genesis 1:1](#)). In English, however, we lose some important grammar that helps us see God's pluralistic nature. In Hebrew the word for God is “Elohim”. This word is a proper noun, but surprisingly in the plural form is literally ‘gods’. The verb of the sentence however, “created”, is in the singular form. We see the same form in [Genesis 1:26](#), where it says, “and God said let us create mankind in our image...”, with the verb “said” being in the singular form. This plurality plays out in [Genesis 1:2-3](#) where we see a plurality of beings, the Spirit “hovering over the surface of the deep” as well as the Word through whom God creates.

The “let us” of verse 26 shows us that God is a relationship of persons who share the status of creator. See below for a discussion of the royal “we” in the Hebrew scriptures for more on this.

3. The Bible uses other plural forms for God, “let us” ([Genesis 1:26](#)) and “creators” ([Ecclesiastes 12:1](#))

Throughout the Old Testament we see other examples of plural forms where God is being referred to directly. One example, which again is obscured in English translations, is [Ecclesiastes 12:1](#), “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth”. The word “Creator” is literally “creators” mirroring [Genesis 1](#)'s view that the three persons of the Trinity were involved in the work of creation.

4. God is explicitly declared to be one God, e.g., [Deuteronomy 6:4](#), [Isaiah 43:10-11](#)

While the use of “gods” and “creators” could suggest the Bible is promoting polytheism, the Bible is clear that God is

one. Along with the use of singular verbs with these plural proper nouns, the Bible is explicit that there is only one God. Two clear examples are Deuteronomy 6:4, which states, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (see below for a discussion on the different Hebrew words for "one"), and verses like Isaiah 43:10-11, where he states, "Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no saviour."

According then to the whole of Scripture, God is One yet a plurality of persons.

In response to the claim that the Trinity developed over time, it is important to recognise that the Trinity is revealed progressively throughout Scripture. Genesis does not provide us with a complete formulation of the Trinity, but rather sets out the foundation for our understanding of what God is like. The idea that God is one God yet three persons is a response to all that the Bible says about God, even though a neat formulation is not found.

If the Trinity is so clearly taught in the Old Testament, one valid objection is why then do Jews not recognise the plurality of God's nature? It is interesting to note however, that there are those who have wrestled with the pluralistic descriptions of God while holding onto a monotheistic view of God. Notable examples are Philo of Alexandria (d. 50AD) who saw God's word/logos as a divine person separate from the Father and Nachmanides¹ (d. 1270AD) who saw the "dwelling presence of the glory" of God as a divine person who is God yet distinct from God.

The fact that the Bible supports the Trinity shows something of the uniformity of the revelations that make up the Bible. This should give us greater confidence in Scripture that then goes on to reveal more about each divine person, especially when we get to the New Testament.

References

1. ¹ <http://fourquestionsofjudaism.com/5633049995771904>