

Reflecting the Trinity

By Jerry Bates

Most Christians are familiar with the concept of the Trinity. Likewise, most Christians are familiar with the need for the church to be united. However, I believe few really consider the relation of the two concepts. I submit that the Trinity is actually a model for how we are to relate to one another. We should strive to be like God; therefore, we must be united. Jesus said that we are to be one, just as He and the Father were one. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent me" (John 17:20- 21). Thus, an understanding of the unity and oneness of the Godhead is necessary to understand exactly how we as His disciples are to relate to each other.

Firstly, all Christians should be regarded as equal in value. While certainly each has different talents, abilities and functions, nevertheless, we are one in value and worth to God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27). Thus, any situation where one member dominates another or a person is regarded as somehow lesser in value is improper. Many problems have developed within the church where one person or group disregards the needs, situations or desires of others, and power struggles have developed. One cannot possibly conceive of a power struggle within the Godhead; consequently, such a situation should not develop in the church either.

Secondly, no person should be exalted over another. Obviously, some members such as the preacher or leaders of a congregation have a more conspicuous role than others. Some have greater talents or abilities, and their public contribution to the church may be seen to be greater. Due to greater economic achievements, some are able to give more than others. In such situations, there is a natural human tendency to value certain people more highly than others. However, such is not right in the sight of God. Two examples could be considered to illustrate this principle. The poor widow gave only two small coins, yet Jesus commended her and said that she gave more than anyone else. James in Chapter 2 condemns the showing of partiality or giving greater honor to the rich who might enter our assemblies. God regards all Christians as equal in value or worth, despite any external differences that might exist in our society, and so should we. There is no member of the Godhead that is more important than the others, and neither should any be considered more important in the church than other members.

The same principle can be seen in the relation between congregations. Many times, the work of one congregation is done without any thought to the effect it might have on other works or congregations. Churches are sometimes competitive with each

other, each trying to be the biggest. While there is nothing wrong with trying to grow in itself, we must always consider other congregations. Christianity is not competitive like businesses, in which small ones are put out of business by larger ones. Churches should use their resources to aid others rather than keeping them strictly for their own use. Never can we imagine a scenario in which one member of the Godhead does His own thing without consideration of the effect upon the other members. Therefore, when we reflect the Trinity, congregations will be concerned for the welfare of other congregations.

This sad situation is sometimes seen in the mission field. Churches will begin a work in some foreign mission field in which the church already exists. Rather than endeavoring to work with the existing congregations, they begin a completely new work, sometimes within a very short distance from another. This is not only counterproductive to the growth of the kingdom, but it is very discouraging to the work that has already begun. Never would one member of the Godhead do anything that might somehow harm or discourage the others, and the Lord's church should reflect that same characteristic.

This same principle can be seen even in our families. No member, even little children, are to be seen as unimportant or of lesser value to the family. Likewise, no person should be lazy and contribute little to the welfare of the home. No one member should be served by the other members of the family. In the Trinity all are united and work together for one goal; therefore, when we reflect God in our lives, then everyone in the home works together for the good of the family, rather than anyone selfishly seeking his own desires.

We have been discussing the difference that an understanding of the Trinity should make in our lives. God and Christ live in the lives of their servants. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:21, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..." If God and Christ are to live through us, then we must understand the nature of God. While we frequently discuss how we as Christians should relate to each other, we often forget or do not know exactly why. We usually simply say that love demands us to act in a certain way. That is true, but even that goes back to God, since God is love (1 John 4:8). How we are to act towards one another in every situation ultimately goes back to the unity and love exhibited in the Godhead. If we do not understand the Trinity, we remove the very foundation upon which we are to pattern our lives.