

# THE CORNERSTONE COMMUNICATOR

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## Sharing The Good News

by Pastor Roger Martin

Terri is 32. Married for 11 years, she is now divorced, the single parent of two young children. Terri worries a lot. Terri has a lot of fears. For example, she fears abandonment (and the divorce didn't help!). After the divorce, so many of "their" friends didn't want to have to choose sides so they avoided Terri and her ex. Terri is alone a lot. Terri is lonely, and she's afraid- afraid that she will be alone and lonely for the rest of her life. And what about the children? The divorce has made them feel so vulnerable and insecure. How will they deal with all of this? How can Terri afford braces and dresses, school, cars and college?

Terri needs help. Terri needs hope. Terri needs to hear about how much Jesus loves her. Terri needs to hear the Good News. But Terri has been a Christian for over fourteen years! Terri knows the Good News. Yeah, so? I know that my wife loves me too (most of the time). But I still need to hear it again and again. How many times does a person have to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ? How many times does a person have to be reminded of how much God really loves them? How many times does a person have to be told about the hope we have in Jesus? Just how many times does a person have to be reminded of God's forgiveness and acceptance? Seventy times seven?

Sharing the Good News is more than just sharing a tract or telling someone about Jesus in a ten minute encounter with a stranger. (Don't get me wrong, it includes that, but it is also much more than that.) Sharing the Good News is a life changing process, a continual process, a repetitive process, a lifelong ever-deepening process in which the people of God encourage the people of God by

reminding them over and over again about what Jesus has already done for them, how much God really does loves them, and how God will continue to watch over them and provide for them. This is all part of "sharing the Good News". MARCH 1998

## MORMON MATTERS (PART 2) The Logic of God In Three Persons

by Robert Sivulka

### Introduction

Dr. Walter Martin used to say, "You could be right on every area of doctrine, but if you're wrong on who God is, you are wrong enough to lose your soul for all eternity." Jesus Himself said, "Now this is eternal life; that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). If I were to tell you that I know Roger Martin, and he's a sweet little black girl, it should be quite evident to you that I really don't know Roger Martin... at least the one that we all know. Having said this, I'd like to look at what we as Christians believe about the Triune God and contrast this with what the Mormon church teaches. I will only be looking at the logic of the Trinity in this article. Next month I will try to actually defend this doctrine over the Mormon view from Scripture.

### The Trinity

The Bible teaches that there are three simultaneously *distinct* persons who are co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal. They have one divine nature and thus make up one being or thing.

Contrast this with something called *modalism* (an ancient heresy that is today taught

predominantly by the United Pentecostals). This teaching affirms that God is one person who only appears as different persons. Here the person of God has different titles that refer to Him. For example, I am presumably one person, but I appear different ways to different people. I may appear to be a husband, brother, son, employee, etc., but I am continually one person. This is exactly what Mormons think when you claim that Jesus is God, the Creator of everything from the beginning. They think that you, as a Trinitarian, think that Jesus is the Father, that the Holy Spirit is identical to the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is identical to Jesus. Mormons start saying stuff like, "Who was Jesus praying to when He prayed, if it wasn't another person? Or, who's voice was coming out of heaven when Jesus was being baptized? Was Jesus a master ventriloquist?"

The Mormons want to say that there are three separate Gods who are one in purpose. But a sharp Mormon could also say that there are three separate Gods who are also one in the nature they share, similar to the way other humans share their human nature in common (e.g., Roger, Rob, and Fred are three separate humans, who all share their human nature in common). They are all one in their nature. A nature is simply that which makes a thing what it is. It is a real property of something without which it can't be that thing. So without your humanness, you can't exist as a human. And I'm saying a sharp Mormon may say that with the nature of Godness, the Gods couldn't be Gods <sup>but</sup> (technically, there is no such nature as Godness in Mormonism; the term "God" is simply an office or a relation that those who share a human nature may enter into if they're worthy enough).

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the way the members of the Trinity share their nature is quite unlike the way three separate humans share their nature. Three separate humans share their nature in an external relationship. The members of the Godhead, on the other hand, share their nature in an internal relationship. So the members of the Godhead are not simply one in the nature they share, they are one in the *being* they share. To see this we need to clarify the differences between an external and an internal relation.

In an external relation, the parts are what they are indifferent to the whole relation. For example, the springs of a watch are what they are whether they are in the watch or not. Or, I am in an external relationship to this computer. I am *in front* of it. I or the computer can exist whether the other is or not. In an internal relation, the parts are what they are by virtue of the whole relation. For example, red is darker than pink. Red could not be what it is unless it is in a relation that is darker than pink. Or, the angles of a triangle are distinct from

their sides, but they are inseparable (i.e., trilaterality is what it is by virtue of it being inseparably connected with triangularity). Or, one radically connected Siamese twin is what it is by virtue of the relation it shares with the other twin.

This leads to an important distinction in metaphysics or theology, viz., the distinction between the term "distinction" and the term "separateness". Radically connected Siamese twins are *distinct* from one another (they have two different names), but they are *inseparable* from each other. In like manner, the members of the Godhead are *co-eternal*, *co-existent*, and *co-equal*. There never was a time when one of the members was not. They always "hook up" as it were, yet without a body. So our God is not only one in His nature, He is one thing or being which is comprised of three eternal persons.

While Mormons claim that God is only one in purpose, we claim that He is much more than this. He ("God") is not simply a term of purpose or function, which Mormons identify with the term "Godhead" (three Gods/persons who have one purpose). Christians believe the term "God" designates a *being* who is made up of three eternal persons, who of course are one in purpose. The Son always does the will of His Father, for example.

### Conclusion

So the Christian doctrine of the Trinity teaches that God is simultaneously three persons. Admittedly, our God is a very strange and different God. Whether we are able to fully comprehend the doctrine or not, our job is to be faithful to His revelation, which I will demonstrate next month, clearly teaches that there is *only* one being who is God and this God is referred to as the different persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. . . .

## A Letter

There is an old Christian book called *Your God is Too Small*. It addresses the misperceptions that people have about God. Through my years of learning about and experiencing our Lord, I have found that many of my wrong ideas about God stem from my inability to see things as He sees them. Recently, He has shown me that my God is too small partly because my world is too small.

Lately I have been blessed with meeting more people of other cultures from other countries than I ever have before. Our opportunity to get to know Albina and Monte (missionaries in Russia) a few weeks ago reopened my eyes to God's powerful call to his people to commit their lives to His service. This kind of commitment is beyond what many of us can comprehend. Monte was a missionary when he