

The Christian Trinity Doctrine Does Not Have Pagan Roots

The argument

Many argue that Christian teachings, including the foundational doctrine of the Trinity, have pagan roots. Those who hold this view argue that many stories in the Bible, as well as some Christian doctrines, find their foundation in the mythologies of other cultures. Indeed, the argument is that in some cases, key Jewish and Christian teachings are but thinly disguised plagiarisms from stories penned hundreds of years before by notables in Egyptian, Greek, Sumerian, and other cultures.

PURPORTED EVIDENCE THAT THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY DOCTRINE IS AN ADAPTATION OF VARIOUS ANCIENT MYTHOLOGIES.

The Trinity doctrine: Some important Christian doctrines were formalized hundreds of years *after* the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Trinity doctrine, for example, was formalized at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D, and refined at subsequent Councils through the eighth century. Christians argue that the apparent late formalization of the Trinity doctrine can be attributed to the fierce oppression the early New Testament Church experienced and does not indicate the teaching was not known and embraced immediately following Pentecost. Skeptics assert the Trinity doctrine has its foundation in Sumerian and Egyptian mythologies, and predates the Christian teaching by more than two thousand years.

The story of Jesus: Regarding the account of the ministry of Christ: Hundreds of years before the Gospel writers penned their accounts, the Greeks told of a story they saw written in the constellations of heaven. Their story noted that Orion, the son of a powerful god, loved humanity in general and the Pleiades (a cluster of seven stars depicted as women) in particular. Orion embarked on a great journey to help the Pleiades, during which he showed himself to be master of the elements by walking on water and having dominion over the lake of fire.

He was confronted by, and battled, an evil beast, who injured him, bruising him on the heel. In the end, however, the son of the great god prevailed, besting the beast via a mighty blow to his head. Many argue Orion's story strongly parallels the story of Jesus, the Son of God, who journeyed to earth to show His love for humanity, walked on water, showed His

authority over the elements, battled the beast (who, according to Genesis 3:15b, would “bruise His heel”), and overcame, via the resurrection (fulfillment of the Genesis 3:15a prophecy which foretold the Messiah would “bruise” his “head”).

The Flood story

Moses wrote the account of the Flood approximately 1450 years before the birth of Christ. However, hundreds of years before the birth of Moses, in ancient Mesopotamia, the Sumerians carved a flood story into clay tablets. Found in the late 1800s, the account has been called the Eridu Genesis. In that story, the god Enki is aware of an impending flood. He discusses the matter with other gods, who are not pleased with humanity and decide to not warn humans of the imminent danger.

Enki, however, had compassion on humanity and warned one man, Ziusudra (later known as Akkadian or Atrahasis) about the coming calamity. According to some accounts, Enki told Ziusudra to build an Ark to save humanity and the animals. The fierce storms brought torrential rains for 7 days and 7 nights. Some accounts have the boat coming to rest on a mountain, and other accounts have the boat floating down the Euphrates into what is now the Persian Gulf. In all accounts, the sun appears after the storm, flood waters abate, and Ziusudra exits the boat and sacrifices oxen and sheep to the gods.

It is not difficult to see the parallels between the Eridu Genesis flood story and Moses’ account of Noah, written hundreds of years later.

A GENERAL APPROACH TO RECONCILING THE ISSUE

Though some material in the Bible (and some Christian doctrines) may appear to have drawn inspiration from well-known epics from other cultures predating Old and New Testament writings, that *does not prove* that stories from other cultures impacted biblical writings or the development of Christian doctrines.

Notably, creation and flood stories are found in many ancient cultures. And many of these stories were written or shared via oral tradition at a time when these cultures had *no* contact with each other. The only explanation is that at one time, before the development of written language, there was one collection of oral stories concerning creation, the Flood, and the historical events noted in the book of Genesis. Evil corrupted the integrity of these stories

after the splintering of language and culture noted in the biblical story of the Tower of Babel.¹ Moses recaptured the truth in writing Genesis.

TRINITY BELIEFS IN ANCIENT CULTURES

Honest researchers are quick to acknowledge that many ancient cultures from across the globe developed trinity-themed stories. Stories of deities taking human form, heroic figures being the son of a god, the son of a god battling evil, the son of a god being resurrected, and god revealing himself in different forms can be found in ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Indian, and South African lore. A brief profile of a few notable trinity-themed stories in mythology follows:

Egypt (the story of Isis, Osiris, and Horus)

According to the Heliopolitan tradition (the Greek account of Egyptian mythology), [Osiris](#) became the ruler of Egypt over the objections of his elder brother [Set](#). Set seethed in anger and decided to kill Osiris after he announced he was leaving the kingdom for a time and would be leaving his wife Isis (rather than Set), in charge in his absence.

Set found an opportunity to move forward with his plan to kill his brother. One day, Set tricked Osiris into climbing into a wooden chest, then sealed the box, cut him into pieces, and threw the pieces into the Nile. Isis searched for Osiris and found the pieces of his dismembered body, which she carried back to Egypt.

Isis placed Osiris' body in the temple, and supernaturally, without a male, became pregnant and conceived [Heru-sa-aset](#) (Horus), whose destiny was to defeat [Set](#).

Isis then implored the god [Thoth](#) to resurrect [Osiris](#). Thoth and Isis conducted a "Ritual of Life" and set a plan in place to resurrect Osiris. However, Set discovered their plan and stole the pieces of Osiris' body and scattered them across the land of Egypt.

Isis and her sister [Nephthys](#) were able to retrieve all but one of the pieces of Osiris, and with the help of [Anubis](#) and [Ra](#), resurrected [Osiris](#), who became King of the underworld.

¹ Genesis 11

Isis gave birth to Horus and hid him in the marshes of the delta—and raised him in secret. When [Horus](#) came of age, he set out to avenge the death of his father. Horus bested Set in battle and was henceforth banished to the sky by Osiris and Ra.

Africa

Secular African American studies scholar Jennifer Williams [writes](#), that North Africa birthed the mythologies concerning the gods who manifested themselves as three persons. Williams contends that one of the first trinity stories comes from ancient Kemet, which asserted that three deities, Asar, Aset, and Heru were part of the same god—one of whom began life as a human. Scholars refer to this ancient trinity as the Asar-Aset-Heru trinity. Williams added that the roles and natures of the father and son (Asar and Heru) in the Asar-Aset-Heru trinity lay a foundation for the Christian Trinity doctrine—established many centuries later.

The Trinity and Hinduism

A triune deity dynamic is also present in Hinduism. The Sanskrit term Trimūrti, meaning, “three forms,” is assigned to the gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. These three aspects of god are said to be part of the same divine being.

Brahma is the aspect of god who creates. He is depicted as a bearded man with red skin and four faces—the Vedas—representing wisdom or knowledge. Vishnu is the aspect of god that maintains order and balance. Hindus believe that Vishnu has been incarnated nine times, and during the coming tenth incarnation, Vishnu will become Kalki, who, like the returning Christ in Revelation 19, will appear riding a white horse carrying a sword, ready to impart justice. Shiva, often depicted as a serpent, is known as a destroyer and thus brings cycles to an end. Together, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva comprise the supreme divine being.

Buddhism

The Buddhist trinity consists of the three bodies of the Buddha—the Dharmakaya (the body of essence—the supreme state of knowledge), the Sambhogakaya (the body of enjoyment—the spirit), and the Nirmanakaya (the body of transformation—the physical or human form). The three aspects of the divine—*wisdom, the human body, the spirit*—comprise the divine.

Assyrian mythology

The Assyrians believed in many gods and goddesses, most of whom watched over various aspects of the human world. Ashur and Ishtar were worshiped as supreme deities. Ashur was the male warrior and Ishtar was the female deity with a dual nature—a goddess of fertility draped with fine clothes and jewels and a goddess of war, dressed for battle. The dual nature of Ishtar carried over into the concept of the *apkallu*, which refers to seven demi-gods tasked to guide humanity. These beings were half-human and half-fish, their dual nature made them both divine and mortal. The dual (divine and mortal) nature of these beings are said to foreshadow the Christian teaching of the dual nature of Christ.

Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz

Many believe stories surrounding Nimrod (the individual noted in the Bible in Genesis 11), are the point of origin for false trinity teachings. Spoken of before the advent of written language, Nimrod, the sun god, his wife Semiramis, priestess of religion/prostitution, and their son Tammuz, reportedly comprise the first trinity.

According to lore, Semiramis married her son who became a god after the death of his father. Semiramis ascended to heaven as a dove to become a prominent deity, in heaven, sharing a throne with her husband, Nimrod.

The connection between Semiramis, Tammuz, and Nimrod is complex, but in triune fashion, they share characteristics and significantly influenced the development of mythologies across the ancient world. Semiramis is Ishtar in Babylon, Ashteroth (Baal's counterpart) to the Canaanites, Venus in Rome, Aphrodite in Greece, Isis in Egypt, and Diana/Artemis to the ancient Ephesians. She is also linked to the son/husband roles of Osiris in Egypt. Osiris is said to be the deified Nimrod. The story of Tammuz, the son of the god of the sun, who rules with power in the authority of his father has parallels to Christian theology.

TRINITY TEACHING IN CHRISTIANITY

The Trinity in Christianity is set apart from other teachings in that it hinges on the well-documented life of an actual historical figure (not a fabricated, exaggerated story of a figure like Nimrod). The resurrection of Jesus, which is the centerpiece of the Christian Trinity doctrine, is not just claimed in writings, it was affirmed by more than 500 eyewitnesses and

by thousands more who were willing to die for what they knew to be true in the decades following the crucifixion.

Multiple scriptures also substantiate the Christian Trinity teaching—and the integrity of Scripture can be empirically validated via an analysis of biblical prophecy. There are more than 1000 Bible prophecies in Scripture and more than 90% should have been fulfilled by this point in history. If just ONE of these prophecies can be proven false—the claimed inerrancy of the Bible, and the integrity of the Trinity doctrine, is undermined.

No Bible prophecies have been proven inaccurate, partially accurate, or outright in error. Bible prophecy has been scrutinized by skeptics and believers. Though not all agree on what this means, all agree that the accuracy rate of Bible prophecy, including prophecies regarding the crucifixion and resurrection, is 100%. The statistical probability of this happening, without divine, supernatural intervention, is zero. This sets the biblical narrative, and the Christian Trinity doctrine, apart from all other teachings.

That is not a spiritual statement, it is a mathematical statement. Josh McDowell wrote² that Jesus fulfilled more than 125 prophecies when he walked the Earth approximately 2000 years ago.

The statistical probability of Jesus fulfilling, **less than half** of those prophecies is one in 10 to the 129th power. That number is staggering—virtually unimaginable. It approximates the number of atoms, not in our solar system, not in our galaxy, but in the universe.

One in 10 to the 129th power is statistically zero. That is, the mathematical probability of Jesus fulfilling, **less than half** of the Messianic prophecies attributed to him is statistically zero.

Bible prophecy verifies the supernatural (or inspired) nature of Scripture—which in turn verifies the integrity of the Christian Trinity doctrine as the doctrine is based on Scripture.

Do some of the written mythologies noted in this chapter predate the formalization of the Christian Trinity doctrine? Yes. However, Old Testament writings serve as the foundation for Christian theology, and Christians believe the foundation for the Trinity doctrine is present in the Old Testament.

² McDowell, Josh. *Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, Nashville. 2017 Edition) 205-230

Christians note that Jesus said that He did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it.³ This means, the New Testament seamlessly builds upon, amplifies, and clarifies the Old Testament—it does not erase or contradict the inspired writings of Moses or the prophets.

Christians also believe that before the widespread use of written language, the truth of God (later to be captured in writing in what would become the Bible) was known by all and shared via oral tradition. *Before quickly discounting the accuracy of oral storytelling, Scientific America [reported](#)*⁴ *that linguists and geographers have studied 18 Aboriginal stories and determined they maintained an exceptional degree of integrity over 400 generations. And in 1985, a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [report](#)*⁵ *led the Canadian High Court to rule that Indigenous Oral Histories were accurate and admissible in Court.*

Scientists have verified that oral traditions can be as accurate as written histories. At first, spiritual oral traditions were carefully maintained and accurate, but in time the stories were corrupted with the spread of sin. They morphed into mythologies and anti-religions, fostered by Satan to discourage, deceive, and undermine God’s truth.

Nevertheless, Christians believe correct oral traditions concerning Creation, the Flood, and the nature of God precede all false religions and teachings. What is now viewed as the Old Testament presents the true record, as originally expressed and passed on via oral accounts.

Christians believe that although the word Trinity is not found in the Bible, Old Testament era Jews believed that God is “one” (see Deuteronomy 6:4) and yet at the same time, believed He is *more than one*. This is reflected in the Midrash, the Talmud, and in Old Testament references to God as being plural. A few examples follow:

- “Elohim” references God in Genesis 1:1. The term is plural
- “Us” references God in Isaiah 6:8. The term is plural.
- “Maker” references God in Isaiah 54:5. The term is plural.

The multi-dimensional nature of God was understood by Old Testament Jews. In New

³ Matthew 5:17

⁴ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/ancient-sea-rise-tale-told-accurately-for-10-000-years/>

⁵ https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorians/comments/9dtmk0/is_there_scientific_evidence_that_oral_tradition/

Testament times, through progressive revelation, God revealed His triune nature—expressed in human terms as *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*. The *Godhead*, the theological term for the nature of God, indicates that God is three, yet one—all aspects of God are more than one in purpose, they are one in essence.

Multiple Scriptures point to the Trinity. **The Bible notes:**

- There is only **one** uncreated, eternal, true God (Ex. 3:14; Deut. 6:4; John 17:3).
- There will **never be any other** uncreated, eternal, true God(s) (Isaiah 43:10; 44:6-8; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Gal. 4:8).

However, the Bible also notes:

- The “Father is God” (1 Cor. 8:4-6; 2 Peter 1:17)
- Jesus is God (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16).
- And the Holy Spirit is God (Job 33:4; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:11).

Further, Scripture presents the Son and the Holy Spirit as having uniquely divine attributes that link themselves to God. The following verses do not just associate Jesus and the Spirit *with* God; they affirm that Jesus and the Spirit *are* God:

Jesus is presented as God in that He is:

- **Creator** in John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col 1:16-17 Heb. 1:2; Rev. 3:14
- **Eternal** in John 1:1, 8:58, 17:5; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:2
- **Savior** in 1 John 4:4; Acts 5:31; Phil. 2:22, 3:20; Rom. 5:1
- **Omniscient** in John 16:30
- **Omnipresent** in Matt. 18:20, 28:20; John 3:13; Eph. 1:23, 4:10; Col. 3:11

Similarly, the Holy Spirit is presented as God as He is:

- **Eternal** in Heb. 9:14
- **Omniscient** in 1 Cor. 2:10-11
- **Omnipresent** in Psa. 139:7
- **Savior** in Rom. 8:1-27

The dual nature (divine and human) of Jesus Christ is called the Hypostatic Union (communicatio idiomatum, Latin for "communication of properties"). The Hypostatic Union

teaching notes that Jesus simultaneously manifested human and divine attributes. This means that the man Jesus could lay claim to the glory He had with the Father before the world was made (John 17:5), claim that He descended from heaven (John 3:13), claim omnipresence (Matt. 28:20), and claim He had the authority and power to lay down His life and raise it up again (a key point in the Trinity doctrine).

The divinity of Christ and the triune nature of God were noted in New Testament writings and affirmed by the early leaders of the New Testament Church before being formally constituted into a doctrine at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Some early references to the Trinity include:

- **Justin Martyr** (100–165): “And that Christ being Lord, and God the Son of God...He is called the begotten Word of God, is even God...He is God...”⁶
- **Irenaeus of Lyons** (d. c. 202): “It is proper, then, that I should begin with the first and most important head, that is, God the Creator, who made the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein . . . and to demonstrate that there is nothing either above Him or after Him; nor that, influenced by anyone, Lord, the only Creator, the only Father, alone containing all things, and Himself commanding all things into existence.”⁷
- **Tertullian**: “Thus Christ is Spirit of Spirit, and God of God, as light of light is kindled... That which has come forth out of God is at once God and the Son of God...He is Spirit of Spirit and God of God... This ray of God, then, as it was always foretold in ancient times, descending into a certain virgin, and made flesh in her womb, is in His birth God and man united.”⁸
 - **Tertullian**: “The Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and each is God...”⁹

The Trinity doctrine was formalized after much prayer and debate at the Council of Nicaea in the early fourth century. The Creed was established in response to attacks on the truth, and to note that the Christian Church believes what has been evident from the beginning of time. God is one, yet more.

⁶ Justin Martyr, First Apology, 63. ANF, I:184. / Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 126. ANF, I:263.

⁷ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 2.1.1. ANF, I:359.

⁸ Tertullian, Apology, 21. ANF, III:34–35.

⁹ Tertullian, Against Praxeas, 25. ANF, III:608

The truth has not changed but was revealed in more clarity in God's perfect way and time.
The early Creed read:

“We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten,
begotten of the Father before all ages.

Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made,
of one essence with the Father by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven,
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became man.

And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,
and suffered, and was buried.

And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;
and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father;
and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead;
whose Kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit

Church leaders at the Council of Nicaea did not invent the Trinity doctrine, or plagiarize the concept from various mythologies. They simply affirmed, clarified, and formalized teachings advanced by biblical writers, and the oral traditions that predate written language.

The Christian Trinity doctrine stands apart from lesser trinity concepts found in various mythologies because it is substantiated by Scripture (which has been validated by historians, archeologists, manuscript experts, and Bible prophecy scholars), and has as its centerpiece, Jesus, an actual historical figure whose life, crucifixion and resurrection are exceptionally well documented.