

The Holy Trinity

Rev. Chris Surber

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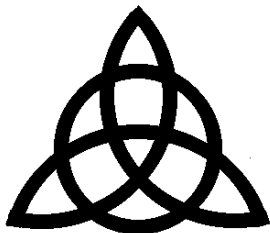
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Disclosure:

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Introduction

There is nothing more important for the Christian believer to consider than the nature of the God whom we serve. What is God like? What is He not like? What is His personality? How does this apply to my life? At the outset of this booklet it must be noted that volumes a thousand times as large are not able to contain or capture the fullness of the majesty of God's character, nature, and glory. John Wesley, the famed preacher and evangelist of the eighteenth century is said to have once remarked, "Show me a worm that can comprehend the mind of man and I will show you a man that can comprehend the mind of God." Indeed, it is but a mere glimpse of His majesty that is to be attained in this life. And yet, but a glimpse of the One True God is so overwhelming that it has the power to transform our lives, and a mere shadow of this vision is potent enough to transfix our hearts forever upon seeking to know God. In what follows, I will give a condensed treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity; the triune nature of almighty God, who exists eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

According to the Scriptures, these are divine realities of the eternally continual nature of God. He has not only chosen to reveal Himself as such, but He is unified, one, and yet diverse in expression and ontology. In other words, though our minds can barely comprehend the seeming difficulty of God being three and yet one, the Holy Scriptures, which God inspired, declare this to be so. Since God and not man's understanding is the measure of ultimate reality, in the following pages we will work from the presupposition that the Scriptures are accurate, that God is eternally existent in triunity, and that our understanding of God's makeup is far less important than our applying to our lives what God has shown to be true of Himself. Therefore, it will be application that will be of primary concern. May the triune God of eternity shower many blessings upon you as you grow in your *knowledge of* and your *connection with* Him!

Rev. Chris Surber

Transcendence: *The Magnitude of God*

God is eternally *self-existent*. That means that nothing made God, nor is His existence contingent upon anything that has been made. Whereas we were created by Him and require the water, air, and food of this creation to exist, God is self-existent and dependent upon nothing for continued existence. As such, He is completely “other” than that which He has made. The universe is not His body and He is contained by nothing. God, in His nature and by definition, is separate from His creation. He is the potter and we are the clay. He is the builder and we are they who dwell in what His hands have made. The universe is the fine painting of the most imaginative artist; creation bears the marks of the brushstrokes of majesty!

Because God is completely separate from His creation, it is possible that He may be known personally. Were God only a part of that which He had made, He would be indistinguishable from the natural or material world, as some far-eastern traditions have postulated. A God who is but the essence within the stuff of this world, the mud, the trees, even the animals, may possibly be experienced but can never be truly known. But God, in His transcendent nature, is knowable. He has broken the veil of separation between our nature and His. He spoke to Abraham and told him where to go, He spoke to Moses atop Mount Sinai as He instructed us with His law, and He broke into our experience in the person of Jesus Christ to reveal grace, truth, and mercy unto mankind.

God is “other” ontologically, that is, in His nature of being, His essence, or basic nature; but He is not a far off. He is, at the very same time, the God who *created* and the God who *emptied* Himself into His creation in Jesus Christ in order to redeem it! He is the God who, though being perfectly holy came unto us in the form of a man that Son (Jesus) might bear witness to the Father, and that by faith we might receive the promise of God’s presence within us (the Holy Spirit). God is worthy of adoration, praise, and worship because He alone is sovereign and glorious in the universe! “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Immanence: *The Immediacy of God*

God is *immediately available*. It is not that God exists everywhere at all times, as though He were merely an invisible, mystical force of nature. Remember, He is completely other than nature and all of His creation. The universe and all that God has created proceeds from Him; it does not contain Him, as though the universe were a necessary component of His being. In spite of the reality that God is separate or distinct from His creation, as a result of His great and immense love for His creation, He is always and immediately available to it. God is very much like the shepherd of a herd of sheep. He always keeps a careful eye on the flock and leads the sheep where He ultimately desires them to go.

God’s immanence teaches us that since He is directly concerned with His creation, He is not limited to the categories that we often create for Him. Though some discredit miracles, God can and does heal the sick. This may be through the hands of a doctor or it may be the result of the man or woman of God laying hands on the sick, anointing with oil, and praying in Jesus’ name. God is not limited to our imaginations.

He is far greater than we can conceive. It also teaches us that just as God is directly concerned for that which He has made; He is also as concerned for the future of unbelievers as He is for believers. The power of the gospel to save rests in the truth that God is always at work in the lives of people. The gospel indeed can repair the curse that sin has brought, namely, separation from God.

We rightly serve and worship God fervently because we can connect with Him. We rightly seek to make Him known to unbelievers because just as He is manifest in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, He can make Himself known to them. At times when we feel alone, at times when we actually are alone in this world, or at times when we feel like there is no one who knows us fully or cares for us deeply, all we must do is turn our hearts to the God of creation. He is immediately available to us if we will only call out to Him and turn our lives over to His sovereign provision in our hearts, souls, and lives!

Trinity Defined: *The Triunity of God*

The depths of the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity cannot possibly be plumbed in a booklet of this scope. Therefore, I will offer a rather succinct definition of the triune nature of God and then we will give the remainder of our attention to matters of practical application of this doctrine. We will look more at what it teaches us about how we relate to God and others, and how we worship and pray to God in light of this most basic of biblical truths. Nowhere in the Bible will you find the word "Trinity." The doctrine of the Trinitarian nature of God is nonetheless plainly revealed. God is referred to time and again in the Old Testament as being one or unified. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Rightly then, you ask, "How can it be that the Christian church defines God as three when in the Old Testament He is referred to as being one?" The doctrine of the Trinity is not at odds with the Old Testament by any means. Indeed, the triunity of God is alluded to in the very first pages of the Bible. In Genesis 1:27 the Bible declares, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." The Hebrew word that is here translated "God" is the Hebrew *אלהים* (Elohim). This is one of the names, or divine titles, for God found in the Old Testament. Elohim, which means the all-powerful one, is the *plural* form of El, which means the strong one. Both are titles for God and yet the author chose to describe God in creation using the plural form.

While this alone does not demand a Trinitarian interpretation, it certainly supports it in light of the overall revelation of Scripture. The plurality of the One True God is directly implied in the title Elohim, and through the progressive revelation of God to humanity over the impending centuries, we see that God is indeed one and yet three. The New Testament passages where Jesus describes Himself in terms of identification and unity with God are as important. In the prologue to the gospel of John, the author writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). A few verses later, he goes on to say, "And the Word became flesh and

dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The Greek word that has been translated "word" in these instances is *λόγος* (logos). John describes Jesus as the eternal logos of God. That is, John describes Jesus as the eternal word of God, which is the pre-existent communication of God. Jesus exists eternally as the word of God, through which God the Father spoke the universe into existence. Jesus said, "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him" (John 14:7). The Son proceeds from the Father co-equal in power, essence, and divine nature, submitted to the Father's will in perfect love. This is the divine mystery of the logos and the wonder of Immanuel—God with us.

It is difficult, impossible, for our minds to completely grasp the concept of God in the flesh. Jesus claimed to be one with God, allowed Himself to die in our place to satisfy the wrath of the Father for sin, and then rose again that He might live and reign as sovereign Lord. Thanks be to God that our trust in the words of Jesus is not dependent upon our ability to understand in fine detail the nature of His being, but in our willingness to place our faith completely in what He has done. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). If He had made that statement, been crucified, and then remained in the tomb as every other crucified man has ever done, His name would be lost to us as a matter of unimportant history.

There have been countless gurus who claimed great revelation from God. The difference with Jesus is that He proved His claim in rising from the dead after three days and appearing to, as the Bible records, more than 500 witnesses. His resurrection turned the disciples from a frightened band of men into those willing to suffer great persecution and death for their unwillingness to deny what they knew to be true. They had seen Him raised after they had seen Him die. Our faith is not based in our ability to understand the mind of God. I do not understand completely the workings of the human body and yet I go to the doctor when I am sick and am willing to take medicines that are prescribed to me! The great faith of the disciples was unshakable because it was built on the solid foundation of the truth spoken by the Roman centurion who stood as eyewitness to Jesus' last breath on the cross. Mark 15:39 tells us, "And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!' "

What of the Holy Spirit? Some have said that the Holy Spirit is merely the force of God in the world or even the presence of God in our lives. While these statements are both true, they are not complete. The Holy Spirit is the third divine reality of the triune God of creation. He is as much God as the Father and the Son. Perhaps the clearest passage of Scripture where the Holy Spirit is referred to as God, rather than merely as a force that proceeds from God, is found in 2 Corinthians 3:5–6, where the apostle Paul writes, "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

In the above passage of Scripture, the Holy Spirit is referred to as having personality, that is, cognitive distinction, independent thought, will, and intention. Paul says that they are empowered by God and then refers to the Spirit in parallel fashion. In other words, he says, “God empowers us” then later says, “The Spirit empowers us.” In this instance Paul is presumptive that the Spirit of which He speaks is God; he assumes the reality of the Spirit being God. He then ascribes divine personality to the Spirit as he asserts that it is the Spirit who gives life. Paul is ascribing the two chief components of unique personality within the triune Godhead—*independent will and divine action*. The Holy Spirit is not merely a feeling that God places within us. He is not even a great gift of God, at least not that alone. You and I, those who have responded favorably to the free offer of God’s grace in Jesus Christ, are filled with the very presence of the very God of the universe!

Application of Trinitarian Doctrine

For the remainder of this booklet we will focus our attention upon the very practical matters of applying the doctrine of the Trinity to our lives. It will be our goal to discover what the doctrine teaches us about our relationship with one another and God. Christianity does not exist in a vacuum of application. Our chief aim ought always to find ways to live out truth, not only ascend to it theoretically. While analogies of the Trinity abound, none are sufficient. God is not three candles that seem as one from afar but upon closer examination are proven to be three. God is not mist, liquid, and ice. Even the best analogy of the triune God is inadequate. It is in worshipping God that we discover His presence, and it is in making Him known in our life that we come into the fullness of knowledge of Him.

Discipleship

The doctrine of the Trinity has direct implications on the manner in which we grow as Jesus’ disciples. To follow Christ is to follow after the triune God. To engage in the Christian life is to engage in the life that has been revealed by the Father, in the life and work of the Son, in which we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Growth in the Christian life must be distinctly Trinitarian if we are to engage fully in the life God has intended us to have. The great deficit in the modern Christian church, where this lack of Trinitarian discipleship plays out practically, is in a low view of Jesus in discipleship and a misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit’s role and power in the Christian life.

Jesus is seen by far too many in the church as though He were merely a great prophet. Oh, we know that the “right thing” to say is that Jesus is God, Jesus is divine, Jesus is Lord, but do we follow after Him as though that is who He really is? Do we allow the words of Jesus to impact our lives as though they are the very words of God? Consider the way in which you relate to Jesus in your inner thought life. What do you tell yourself about Jesus? Is He the Son of God or is he a very interesting man whose life you hope to maybe one day imitate unceremoniously? In the person of Jesus Christ we see the God of creation breaking into human history, shattering earthbound myths and conceptions of God’s nature and character, and breaking with equal force into our very lives! To follow Jesus is not to follow a “guru” from Palestine; it is to engage in life with God!

What of the Holy Spirit? Can there possibly be any less well understood doctrine of the Christian church than that of who the Holy Spirit is? Some have likened the Holy Spirit to a force that emanates from God, empowering believers. Others have suggested that the Holy Spirit is a gift of spiritual empowerment from Jesus upon His departure from this world, following His earthly ministry. As with most inadequate views of the Holy Spirit, both of these are partially true. The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God dwelling bodily within the hearts of believers. The Holy Spirit empowers us as followers of Jesus Christ. He is the gift of Christ to His church, the gift of the Father to individual believers, but He is more than that; He is the very presence of God dwelling within us and guiding us along the journey of this life!

Prayer

What of prayer? From the very beginning of my Christian pilgrimage I have wondered what the doctrine of the Trinity had to say to the prayer life of followers of Jesus Christ. As the pastor of a local church, I have had more than a few questions posed to me about how one ought to pray. Often the confusion of how to pray stems from a confusion over the nature and manner of the way in which we are supposed to relate to God as the Trinity. Are we always supposed to pray to God? What specific language should we use and in what way is He to be addressed? Should we pray to the Father when we are in need of God's power, to Jesus when we are in need of forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit when we are in need of comfort?

These are valid and practical questions indeed. They cut right to the heart of our relationship with God. How can we rightly relate to God if we are unsure of how we are even supposed to speak to Him? How many prayer lives are stifled because of a lack of certainty on this very matter? Prayer is more than merely words spoken, read, or considered in devout meditation. Prayer is an attitude we must live in continually. Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, the seventeenth century monastic, said of his daily life with God that he was as much in the presence of God when he was peeling potatoes as when he was kneeling to receive the sacrament of communion. (See *The Practice of the Presence of God: Conversations and Letters of Brother Lawrence*, www.PracticeGodsPresence.com.) You see, prayer is simply communication with almighty God. The nature and manner of prayer does not have to be formal, beforehand prepared, or greatly considered. Prayer is very much like the constant and ongoing conversation between two people who love each other very much, such as a husband and wife or a mother and child.

In the gospel of Matthew 6:5–8, Jesus said “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” *Prayer is the soul's conversation with God, not the outward task of religious piety.*

When we pray, we pray to God our Father in the name of Jesus Christ as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is to the Father that we make our petition known. It is through the Son that our petitions are valid because it is in Him that we have received the adoption of the saints, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. It is in the power of the Holy Spirit that our prayers are made effectual as He gives us the spiritual power and vigor to pray those things that ought to be prayed. The very act of prayer is triune in nature as we engage in the triune God of the Holy Scriptures. Perhaps the best way to state the nature of triune prayer is to consider it an act of *exploration* of the mystery and majesty of the triune God.

The great and mysterious beauty of intimacy with the triune God can be understood only by those who engage in journeying through it. It is difficult to explain the beauty of the Rocky Mountains to one who has never trekked across her trails, waded through her streams, or stood atop her vast peaks. So it is with intimacy with God. As to the specific language used in prayer, there are many perspectives theologically and practically.

Some believers pray using the language most reflective of prayer to the “entire Trinity.” Prayers that begin with “almighty God or God” are entirely appropriate. In addressing God in such a way we are engaging in a pattern of prayer consistent with biblical instruction. Many of these prayers will end simply by stating, “In Jesus’ name.” Others pray directly to Jesus in His name. Others will pray to the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name. None of this is in any way inappropriate. People will find that God leads and directs them differently in their prayer life. So long as the essential elements of faith in God according to the grace offered in Christ are present, our prayers are acceptable to God.

The manner of our prayer is not as important as the fact of our praying. The nature of our language is not nearly as important as the attitude of our hearts. The effectiveness of our prayer is not conditioned upon the style of our praying; it is God who answers the prayers, gives us the power to utter the prayer, and according to His sovereign will, directs us in our prayers to the extent that we are yielded to His authority in our lives. It is entirely appropriate to pray directly to the Father, to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit; God exists in three distinct yet perfectly united wholes. At the same time, through the Holy Scriptures, we have been given a pattern for prayer which is distinctly Trinitarian and speaks to every concern of this life.

The Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen” (Matthew 6:9-13 KJV). In the Lord’s Prayer we see again the pattern of prayer we have been discussing. We are to pray to our heavenly Father in the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. You see, it is to the Father that we turn our hearts as the Holy Spirit within us enables us. Jesus Christ has made a way for us through the shedding of His blood for forgiveness that we might be granted full

access to the Father as sons and daughters through the adoption offered to us through faith in Jesus Christ.

Dear saints of God, the inexpressible majesty and wonder of the God of creation and eternity is accessible to us through the life of prayer. The life of prayer is not available only on Sunday mornings any more than it is only available to a distinct few who know the “right” prayers to pray and who have been given access to the “right” formula of words to speak to God. If you have long enjoyed a rich and full prayer life, commit today to continue on that journey. If you have not yet found the enjoyment of the life of prayer, commit today to plumb the depths of a relationship with the triune God of eternity!

Worship

I am convinced that a great deal of what passes for Christian worship in our time is little more than vague commemoration of a distant and hazy conception of the divine. Rather than worshipping intimately the God revealed in the Holy Scriptures, many Christians sing praises to an unknown God, of unknown origins, of unfelt impact on their lives. I am further convinced that the root of this most tragic of maladies affecting the people of God is a lack of definition with regard to who it is that they worship. Far too many do not know that the one who is to be worshipped is the God of all creation who furiously pursues them the splendor of His incensed love. God is not an afar off deity of vague consideration. He is the maker and lover of our souls who longed so much to restore fellowship with us that He broke into human history in the person of Jesus Christ to make Himself known to us and to draw us unto Himself!

Worship is not supposed to be the dry exercise of sending a card out of obligation for the birthday of a very distant and seldom or ill-considered relative. Worship is the place where our minds, hearts, and souls become intertwined with the love, mercy, and grace of God! Worship is the ongoing process of becoming more intimately connected to the celestial and unimaginably intimate God of creation. To fathom even the surface of the depths of God’s great love for us we must first consider why we were created. Every single living human being has a vacuum in the core of their very being that can only become full and satisfied when filled to overflowing with the presence of God. Consider the words of King David when he was in the wilderness of Judah, “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (Psalm 63:1). Does your heart long for the presence of God as a great thirst that must be satisfied?

Such a deep desire for the presence of God grows from the regular seeking of God. Do not become discouraged, wondering if your faith compares with that of David, or any other person for that matter. Corporate worship does involve the body of Christ as we gather together to bring honor and glory to His name. There is certainly a group dynamic to the church that is of the highest and greatest importance to the life of all of God’s people. There is also, however, the daily, lifelong, ongoing process of growing as disciples of Jesus Christ and worshippers of God. The God of the Bible is distinctly Trinitarian; having revealed His eternally existent nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Savior has a name: Jesus.

What I am declaring to you now is that in order to worship God fully and to grow in the passion, presence, and divine provision of God, we must move beyond vague conceptions of God unto the worship of the triune God who is revealed in the pages of the Holy Scriptures and in the life of Jesus Christ, our Lord. There is a great difference between believing in some god who exists somewhere in some place and knowing the God of the Bible who exists eternally triune and who is in this very moment in our hearts according to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Speaking of union with God, in the pure worship of God, Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection says, “It is not a mere fleeting emotion, such as would prompt a passing cry, My God, I love thee in my heart’s full strength. It is rather a state of soul—if I can but find words—which is deeply spiritual and yet very simple” (from *The Practice of the Presence of God*).

Sacraments

As with worship, the same problem of a lack of definition of God applies to the administration of the blessed sacraments. How the sacraments are received and to what extent they affect the development of our faith is entirely dependent upon our understanding of their nature.¹ A vague conception of some distant god will not make us fully aware of the radical nature of the grace of God in offering new life in Christ as symbolized in the washing away of sins in baptism. An incomplete view of the deity of Jesus Christ as God the Son will leave us with an impotent view of what Jesus accomplished in the shedding of His blood on the cross to cover our sin and reconcile us back to the Father. A misunderstanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit will rob us of the great truth that God is present in the sacraments in so much as the Holy Spirit is present within us!

The Father is both holy and just as well as merciful and loving. These seemingly contradictory aspects of the personality of God are reconciled perfectly by His grace. In Christ, God poured out His wrath upon sin so that He might shower His creation (us) with grace. In the brokenness of Jesus’ body on the cross, the blood that was offered as a ransom for sin was so powerful that it covered all the sin of all of humanity. By faith God has made a way for us to access the forgiveness offered at the cross. His wrath for collective human sin and for our individual sin has been covered. His holiness has been satisfied and, praise unto God, the righteousness of Christ has been given to us!

Blessed redeemed of the Lord, today won’t you drink fully from the cup of forgiveness, taste completely of the bread of eternal life, and bathe unashamedly in the fountain of His grace and mercy, which has been poured out unto us? In the blessed sacraments we see the perfection of God given to mankind. We see the holiness of God expressed in perfect love. We see the sacred reality of a right relationship restored.

¹ For a more complete examination of the Sacraments, see “The Blessed Sacraments” booklet from this same series.

Community

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit relate to one another perfectly in love. They are co-equal, co-eternal, and co-existent as they relate perfectly to one another, sharing the same essence, power, and majesty. The great mystery of the Trinity is further applied in our lives as we learn to live in harmony with one another. Just as the triune God exists in harmony, so too, we are enabled to exist in harmony as the body of Christ. In our marriages we must learn the example of equal submission, shared responsibility, and perfect love that is exemplified in the triune nature of God. In our relationship with the world, as Christ's church, we must likewise learn gentle submission to the task of loving others as Christ loved us.

Genuine community is more than a lofty ideal. It is a divine reality for which God's people should strive as they are enabled by the grace of the Father, the mercy of the Son, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

I am terribly afraid that for a lack of understanding many of us have adopted an attitude of calm resignation to perplexity regarding what the Trinity is and what it means to our experience of the Christian life. Yet who understands love? And who can live without its presence in their life? So it is with the triune God who has revealed Himself to us in the fullness of His eternal nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While our finite minds cannot possibly comprehend the depth of God's nature, we are amiss nonetheless if we fail to apply the truth of who He is to our lives! I trust that at the very least this booklet has encouraged you to think more deeply on the nature of God and your relationship with Him. Perhaps, just maybe, by God's grace alone, the material presented here will spur you on to further study of God in His word, to closer connection with His presence in your life, and to a deeper and more complete trust in the infinite God of creation revealed in the Holy Scriptures! Amen.

Glossary of Terms

Immanence: The view that God is present in and with the created order. In Christian belief, God is not identified with the created order. It contrasts with transcendence.

God, immutable: God's freedom from all change, understood to emphasize God's changeless perfection and divine constancy.

God, oneness of: God as a single essence who exists as a trinity of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God, simplicity of: God as absolutely ultimate and perfect by being completely free from all composite "parts." All the attributes of God do not become added together to form God; rather, God's attributes are identical with God's essence and constitute God's oneness.

God, worship of: The praise and honoring of God above all else as the supreme good in the universe (Ex. 23:25; Deut. 10:20; Pss. 22:27; 95:6)

Trinity: The church's doctrine of the Trinity, that God is a trinity in unity and a unity in trinity. God as three in one is experienced by humans as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Trinity share in the same essence and relate to each other in love.

Triune: Being one in three.

Transcendence: Philosophically, that which stands beyond all limits of human experience. In the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), that which is beyond human knowledge. Typically, in Christian theology, God is described as transcendent.

(Reference: The Westminster Theological Dictionary. John Knox Press. Louisville, KY, 1996)

Glossary of Scripture

Matthew 28:18-20: “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’ ”

2 Corinthians 13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

1 Peter 1:1–2: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: may grace and peace be multiplied to you.”

Galatians 4:6: “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ ”

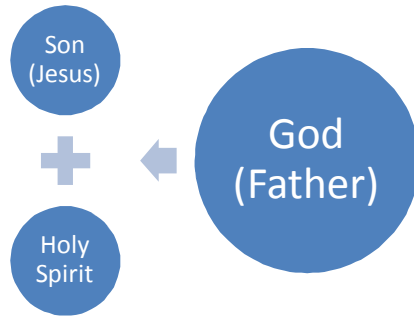
Colossians 1:5–8: “Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.”

Titus 3:4–7: “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

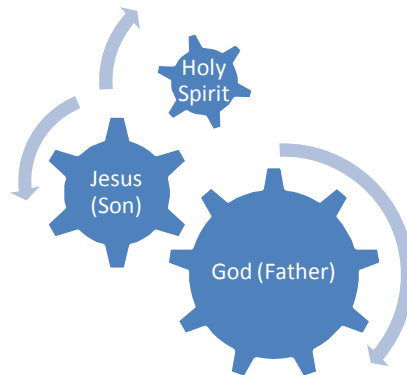
Charts

Inadequate Views of the Trinity:

1. Some have wrongly formulated that Jesus is the first creation of God (the Father) and that the Holy Spirit is like a divine energy or force that God gives to believers. This view is known as *Aryanism* and it has many offshoots. The great fault of this view is that it severely diminishes the divinity of Jesus.



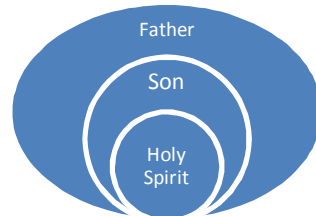
2. Some have suggested that God exists complete in Himself in absolute unity and that He has then expressed Himself in three persons analogously in order to better relate to us. This is known as *Modalism* or *Economic Trinity*. The fault of this view is that it denies the reality of the eternity of the triunity of God and greatly diminishes the role of Jesus in salvation.



3. *Tritheism* is a view held by very few people outright and is seldom articulated openly. It is, however, an easy misunderstanding to make by those seeking sternly to affirm the very biblical doctrine of the Trinity. We must remember that God is both One (unified, whole, complete) and Three (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). There are not three distinct Gods but one God eternally existent in three “persons.” While this is a great mystery to our understanding, it is what the Scriptures teach and what Jesus affirms in the resurrection. This view ignores the unity of God as put forth in the Old Testament and creates a great contradiction.

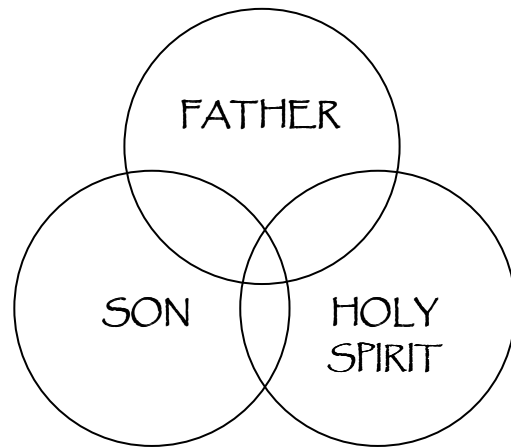


4. *Binitarianism* is a view held by many unknowingly and by a small group of Bible scholars and pastors who teach this doctrine subtly. It is the view that only Father and Son or only the Father and Holy Spirit are eternally divine. Most often this view is held by honest believers who have not been taught or never understood the reality that the Holy Spirit is, in fact, a divine “personality” of the triune God and not merely a force that emanates from God. This view creates a hierarchy of lesser deities that is foreign the revealed truth of the Bible.



The Biblical View of the Trinity:

God is eternally existent in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are *co-eternal*, having existed from the beginning of time. They are *co-equal*, each possessing the divine essence of God in the fullness of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. They are subordinate in function but not in deity; the Son yielding to the will of the Father, and the Spirit proceeding from the Son. God is revealed in the Scripture as such and the Scriptures do not yield to our understanding or lack thereof. The same Scriptures testify of the work of Jesus and He affirmed them in His resurrection as He provided evidence to His deity. Our task is to yield not to human reason, for it is flawed and limited. Our great and divine calling is to yield to the grace of the triune God who calls us His child!



God is at once One and at the same time revealed as the co-eternal, co-equal, and co-existent triune God. To God be all glory and honor and power, forever and ever. Amen.