

Father, Son and Holy Spirit: grasping the good news of the Trinity

"It is rashness to search, godliness to believe, safeness to preach, and eternal blessedness to know the Trinity."

- Thomas Adams

- How would you describe the doctrine of the Trinity?

- Which parts of your life are affected by the truth that God is Three-in-One?

I. The Trinity - a revealed reality

"Since then we are to discourse of the things of God, let us assume that God has full knowledge of Himself, and bow with humble reverence to His words. For He Whom we can only know through His own utterances is the fitting witness concerning Himself."

- Hilary of Poitiers, *On The Trinity*

i) Revealed in and by Christ

"The revelation itself was made not in word but in deed. It was made in the incarnation of God the Son, and the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit"

- B.B. Warfield, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity*

Matthew 11:25-27 - Matthew 28:19 - Luke 11:1-13 - John 5:19-24 - John 14:15-17
John 15:26 - John 16:12-15

ii) In Scripture

a. One God: *Ex 20:1-6; Deut 6:4; Matt 28:19; Eph 4:4-6*

b. In Three Persons:

Old Testament allusions

i) *Plural name for God, Elohim*

ii) *Plural pronouns, "us" - Gen 1:26, 3:22; Isa 6:8*

iii) *Plural verbs - Gen 20:13; 35:7*

iv) *Repetitions of God's name - Get 19; Ps 45:6-7, 110:1; His 1:7*

v) *Threefold liturgical formulas - Num 6:24-26; Isa 6:3*

vi) *Personification of Wisdom, Word and Spirit - Prov 8; Gen 1:3; Ez 2:2*

vii) *The "Angel of the Lord" - Gen 16:2-13; Ex 3:2-5; Josh 5:13-15*

New Testament assumption and clarity

Ephesians 1:1-14 - Galatians 4:4-7 - 2 Cor 13:14 - Rom 8:1-30

Each Divine Person is the Lord God: Father (Matt 11:25), Son (1 Cor 8:6) and Spirit (Acts 5:3-4)

Each Divine Person has a work that is particularly, but not exclusively, ascribed to them: eg, Atonement

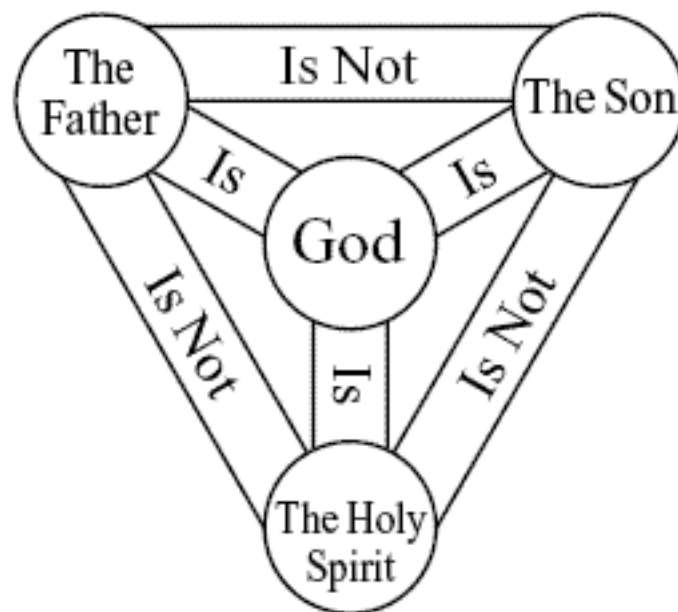
The **particular** work of the Son... - 1 Peter 3:18a, John 10:18

but **also** the work of the Father... - Rom 8:32, 1 Jn 4:10; Isa 53:10

... **and** of the Spirit - Heb 9:14

Summary

1. There is only one God, with one divine essence
2. That God exists in Three Divine Persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each fully God
3. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each a distinct Person
4. The distinction between Father, Son and Holy Spirit lies *not* in their deity, power, will or work, but in their relationships one to another



“No sooner do I conceive of the one than am I illumined by the splendour of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one.

- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Five Theological Orations*

II. The Trinity - a *foundational* truth of the Church

The Nicene Creed - 381 AD

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 by the Father before all ages, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made; consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things came into existence, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became a man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and there will be no end to his kingdom; and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets; and in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We wait for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

III. The Trinity - a transformational truth for the Christian

i) Union with the Triune God

a. The shape of redemption - *Eph 1:1-14; John 3:16; Rev 21:1-7*

b. The nature of eternal life - *John 6:52-59, 17:1-3; Gal 4:4-7*

ii) Communion with the Triune God

a. Hearing from and speaking to God as He is - *2 Tim 3:15-16; Luke 11:1-13*

b. Becoming like the Son - *2 Cor 3:12-18; Rom 8:29*

“One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures, whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over.

- Screwtape, in C.S Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

d. Loving God’s family as they are - *John 17:20-26*

e. Calling others to this God - *Mt 20:18-20*