

THE EXQUISITE SIMPLICITY AND REMARKABLE COMPLEXITY OF THE DOCTRINE
OF THE TRINITY

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The Doctrine of the Trinity has been a difficult concept for centuries to articulate. It is in fact one of, if not the greatest mysteries in the Bible. For the Old Testament Israelites, the monotheistic God was unquestioned. What is interesting is that something remarkable happened at Jesus' First Advent. Special people, those that were given to Jesus in His earthly life, were given special revelations as to the dynamic complexity of our one true and living God. For Christians today it is of utmost importance to be able to articulate this doctrine which is why I selected studying it for my paper. There are vast amounts of historic research and arguments that have been recorded regarding this doctrine. How does One Deity have within Himself three persons? God is undivided and eternal so how does this all work? How do we explain this very critical aspect of Our God, one that in fact is the element that distinguishes Himself from all other gods? This begins to be revealed when we begin to understand the hypostasis of Christ. When we read through all of God's Word to look carefully at what is there. Scripture is "breathed out by the Holy Spirit"¹ (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV) Is it conceivable to find deep hidden clues in the Bible that are placed there to make us smile and know God loves us? I think so. Just look at another "3:16" in Scripture. Where we are given "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."² (John 3:16, ESV) It is by the grace and blessing of God our Father that we alone, as Christians are given the Holy Spirit to assist us in discerning these details. We must read the Bible very carefully because from the beginning of its first book to its last, the Trinity is revealed through God's Word in both subtle and direct ways. This journey of discovery has reminded me of the first day my son went to ballet class and as he jumped from one girl to the next he realized that he was the only boy in his class. He was two years old and the joy that came over his face as he leaned in and looked into the eyes of this girl and then that one, finally actually touching their faces and giggling with

pure joy. It has been like that for me with Scripture and searching for the “directions” of where the answers are to be found regarding the Trinity. And as I have read and re read and learned this or that, I have experienced pure joy! This paper will discuss the doctrine of the Trinity. Further we will explore why it is important and where in the Bible it is the most clear. The word trinity is never outright written in either of the Testaments, however it is implied both implicitly and explicitly. Finally, I will give my thoughts regarding what understanding the Trinity means for my own life and ministry.

Let us first begin by stating the facts that one must understand as absolute as we begin to understand the Biblical teachings of the Trinity. The Westminster Confession Larger Catechism Questions 7-11 state clearly what we are to know about Our Triune God.

Question 7: What is God? Answer: God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Question 8: Are there more Gods than one? Answer: There is but one only, the living and true God. Question 9. How many persons are in the Godhead? Answer: There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these are three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties. Question 10. What are the personal properties of the three persons in the Godhead? Answer: It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to process from the Father and the Son from all eternity. Question 11. How doth it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal to the Father? Answer: The Scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father, ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works, and worship, as are proper to God only.³

3. Church, O. P., & America, P. C. I., *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*. (The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2007), 158-161.

“The doctrine of the Trinity teaches both God’s threeness and his oneness.”⁴ It is easy to see how this can be confusing because it is precisely here that Our God makes both Himself known and unique to His creation. “The belief that God is a personal being is one which is shared with other monotheistic religions, especially Judaism and Islam, but Christianity is fundamentally different from them in that it claims that the one God in whom we all believe is known to us not as one, but as three distinct persons.”⁵ This is where my friends all other gods are collapsed by comparison and what distinctively makes Our God the Christian God the only true and living creator of all. Knowing God is of course very important because to deny Him or to not correctly know Him has devastating effects. “Today, less than 2 percent of the world population claims to be atheist. Many who reject the idea of God affirm a kind of spiritual awe toward human life and the physical universe, and both atheists and spiritual secularists must define the God they reject.”⁶ This is what I think we have been discussing in all of seminary about how we as humans are sinful and many choose to deny what is before their very eyes when they subdue their own real revelations so as to avoid the confrontation of what they must learn to articulate as their beliefs. “God doesn’t exist because the arguments are true; the arguments are true because God exists. God is not a logical conclusion...God is the logical cause; the universe is the effect.”⁷ There are great differences

4. Frame, J. M., *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. (P&R Publishing Company, 2013), 423.

5. Bray, G. L., *The doctrine of God*. (IVP Academic, 1993), 11.

6. Svigel, M. J., & Holsteen, N. D., *Exploring Christian theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. (Bethany House Publishers, 2014), 187.

7. Svigel, *Exploring Christian theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. 189.

between the One True and Living God and the other gods. With regards to Judaism, “The difference between Judaism and Christianity was not simply that the latter offered a super human mediator between God and humanity, but that it preached the need for, and the possibility of, a new type of relationship with God. Christianity gave human beings the opportunity to know God from within, on the inside, whereas the Jews had only ever known him on the outside.”⁸ With regards to Islam,

The world is filled with innumerable, often wildly different candidates for “God.” Some are good, some are not. You see it in the Bible, where the Lord God of Israel, Baal, Dagon, Molech and Artemis are completely different. Or take, for example, how the Qur’an explicitly and sharply distinguishes Allah from the God described by Jesus: Say not “Trinity.” Desist; it will be better for you: for God is one God. Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. Say: He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him. In other words, Allah is a single person God. In no sense is he a Father (“he begets not”), and in no sense does he have a Son (“nor is he begotten”). He is a one person, and not three. Allah, is an utterly different sort of being to the God who is Father, Son and Spirit.⁹ (Reeves 17-18)

I point this out in this paper because I live in a culturally diverse city and there are many folks who can not articulate these differences. Many think the “God” they think about when they do think about “God” is all the same “God” and clearly they are not at all the same. “Allah exists and functions in a completely different way from the Father, Son, and Spirit.”¹⁰ The God of the Bible has always been a Father to His creation. Judaism forgoes this outpouring of mercy, grace and yes, revelation of Himself to His creation. “The revelation of the Trinity, as

8. Bray, *The doctrine of God*. 119.

9. Reeves, M., *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. (InterVarsity Press, 2013), 17-18.

10. Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. 18.

opposed to the implied unitarianism of Judaism, can be explained only by the transformation of perspective brought about by Jesus. The trinity belongs to the inner life of God, and can be known only by those who share in that life.”¹¹ In terms of eternity with our God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit the doctrine of the Trinity is the distinction and it is “the cockpit of all Christian thinking.”¹² It is our responsibility as Christians to not only understand those differences but to be able to articulate the differences to others to impart to them the wisdom of knowing the only one true and living God and show them why the doctrine of the Trinity is in fact the only way to salvation and eternal life.

Scripture teaches us of God’s oneness implicitly in the Old Testament. It is more difficult to “see” in the Old Testament but I think carefully looking at scripture there are glimpses of the Trinity. Throughout my studies, it has been revealed that God moves His Kingdom forward in stages and it is helpful to see how the Trinity is revealed in stages to creation as well. “God is one being (quantitatively) because there is only one Lord (qualitatively).”¹³ In the Old Testament God reveals what his creation needs to know and He continues to reveal more in the New Testament. There are several Scriptures that teach glimpses of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament. “The Spirit is divine; he is God at work in the world. The Old Testament also makes a distinction between God and Spirit, as in Genesis 1:2, when God creates and the Spirit hovers over the waters.”¹⁴ Later when making humanity, there is a sort of

11. Bray, *The doctrine of God*. 119.

12. Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. 16.

13. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. 424.

14. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. 435.

conversation taking place within the inner sanctuary of God's being. "Then God said, 'Let *us* make man in *our* image, after our likeness.'"¹⁵ (Genesis 1:26, ESV) (italics mine)

The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into the clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery in the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view.¹⁶

This unfolding of the Kingdom is prevalent throughout all of God's Word.

Similarly, more is revealed as to how God works with the persons in the Godhead can be seen in other books of the Old Testament such as in 2 Samuel where we read The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue."¹⁷ (2 Samuel 23:2, ESV) and in Ezekiel where we read "And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me."¹⁸ (Ezekiel 2:2, ESV) Frame also speaks of a triadic reference to the three divine beings. "This is in reference to God's word and wisdom, that are divine, yet somehow distinct from God. So God is able to 'send forth' his word to create the world by his wisdom. God and his word are one but also two."¹⁹ In Psalm 33:6 here we read: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host."²⁰ (Psalm 33:6, ESV) By the reference of both breath and God, Frame connects these two and yet one concepts of the trinitarian dialogue.

We as Christians have a broader vantage point in our ability to understand the Trinity in

16. Warfield, B. B., *Biblical Doctrines (Classic Reprint)*. (Forgotten Books, 2018), 141-142.

19. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. 438.

that we are able to see from the other side having both the Old and New Testaments. Warfield puts the gradual revelation this way:

It was the task of the Old Testament revelation to fix firmly in the minds and hearts of the people of God the greatest fundamental truth of the unity of the Godhead; and it would have been dangerous to speak to them of the plurality within this unity until this task had been fully accomplished. The real reason for the delay in the revelation of the Trinity, however, is grounded in the secular development of the redemptive purpose of God: the times were not ripe for the revelation of the Trinity in the unity of the Godhead until the fullness of the time had come for God to send forth His Son unto redemption, and His Spirit into sanctification.²¹

It is important to see this as part of the unfolding redemptive plan that God has for creation.

“Gerald Bray says: The revelation of the Trinity, as opposed to the implied unitarianism of Judaism, can be explained only by the transformation of perspective brought about by Jesus. The Trinity belongs to the inner life of God, and can be known only by those who share in that life.”²²

This is why when the Jews had Jesus walking with them they were unable to grasp the complexity of the Deity of God. Some of course did and the Biblical writers were tasked to reveal this doctrine so that Jews and Gentiles alike could see and come to understand this private inner life that God has.

Bray goes on to state: As long as we look at God on the outside, we shall never see beyond his unity; for, as the Cappadocian Fathers and Augustine realized, the external works of the Trinity are undivided (*opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*). This means that an outside observer will never detect the inner reality of God, and will never enter the communion with him which is promised to us in Christ. Jews may recognize God’s existence and know his law, but without Christ they can not penetrate the mystery of that divine fellowship which Christians call the Holy Trinity.²³

21. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines (Classic Reprint)*. 145.

22. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. 421.

23. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. 421.

The Apostles were a part of the life of Christ and He revealed to them more about the Trinity which is why more is revealed to us in their writings of the New Testament.

Much more of course can be seen in the New Testament and what it teaches about the doctrine of the Trinity. “The basic beliefs that compose Trinitarian theology were fully intact in the earliest days of the church.”²⁴ The biblical writers knew or felt a nudge from the Holy Spirit as they developed and wrote for their churches. “What was vaguely intimated in the Old Testament has become a clear settled doctrine in the New Testament, needing no elaborate definition or defense.”²⁵ An assumed theology was there if not articulated as such amongst the Apostles and early church as to the ways that the Triune God was moving His Kingdom forward through the inauguration of His Kingdom with the life work and ministry of Jesus Christ. “Why it is that the doctrine of the Trinity lies in the New Testament rather in the form of allusions than in express teaching, and why it is rather everywhere presupposed is because the revelation, having been made in the actual occurrences of redemption was already common property of all Christian hearts.”²⁶ Clearly, some Biblical writers understood this better than others. Those that walked and were with Jesus had a tremendous advantage in their understanding of the Trinity.

In the New Testament, I began by looking at Mark’s Gospel and wanted to see what He had to teach regarding the Trinity. According to Bauckman there are “three key movements of

24. Svigel, *Exploring Christian theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. 168.

25. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. 440.

26. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines (Classic Reprint)*. 145.

revelation in the Gospel of Mark. They can be found in Mark 1:9-11 with the vision at the Baptism, Mark 9:2-8 at the Transfiguration, and in the Centurion's Confession Mark 15:37-39."²⁷

In all three there's an explicit relationship established between God the Father and God the Son.

At both the Baptismal and the Transfiguration we hear the voice of God (the only occasions in Mark's Gospel in which God himself speaks.) In both cases, God refers to Jesus as his 'beloved Son' (a phrase only used in these two passages of the Gospel). Both are declarations that Jesus is God's Son, and the same is true of the third passage, where it is not God but the centurion at the cross who declares Jesus to be God's Son. There is a difference in the third case, but all three are revelations of Jesus' identity as God's Son.²⁸

What I most liked about reading Bauckman was his description of specific wordage that is unique to Mark's Gospel and the implications for us to recognize a deeper level of understanding his Gospel. "Mark has the strikingly violent image of the sky *torn apart*. The Greek verb he uses, *schizo*, is used only eleven times in the New Testament, and only twice by Mark, once here and again at 15:38, where he uses the same verb to describe the extraordinary event that occurs in the temple at the time of Jesus' death: the veil was torn in two. This must be a deliberate echo of 1:10, a verbal indication of a connection between the two events."²⁹ It shows that something mysterious has happened and it reveals that not only is Jesus God's Son but that His relationship to Father and Spirit is the Trinity. Also in Mark's Gospel Bauckman points out another revelation.

27. Bauckham, R., *Who is God?: Key Moments of Biblical Revelation*. (Baker Academic, 2020), 89-90.

28. Bauckham, *Who is God?: Key Moments of Biblical Revelation*. 91.

29. Bauckham, *Who is God?: Key Moments of Biblical Revelation*. 91.

There is another verbal link between the first and last moments of revelation in the word *pneuma*, ‘spirit.’ At the baptism, Jesus sees the Spirit come down onto him, and then God calls him his ‘beloved Son.’ The moment of Jesus’s death Mark describes by means of a verb related to the word *pneuma*. In 15:39, he says that Jesus expired (*exepneusen*, from the verb *ekpneo*.) The NRSV translates the verb in 15:39 as ‘he breathed his last.’ It seems very likely that by means of the words *pneuma* and *exepneusen*, Mark has made a deliberate verbal link between Jesus’s baptism vision and his death. Up until this point in the biblical story, God had not been perceived as Trinity because God did not in the the Old Testament story, act in a way that revealed God as Trinity.³⁰

There are many other nuances in the Gospel of Mark that we could delve into regarding the Trinity but there is one more that I found that I feel I must mention. It has to do with Mark’s pulling together his Gospel and tying it to the Old Testament.

In his prologue, Mark has already signaled that his story is a fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah. The later chapters of Isaiah (from chap. 40 onward) were probably for the early Christians the most important part of the Bible. In this passage the prophet has been speaking on behalf of the faithful within Israel at a time when it seemed as though God had abandoned them. He has been recalling the way God had saved Israel from Egypt in the dramatic events of the exodus from Egypt, and he begs God to do something like that again. The image of tearing the heavens apart is appropriate here because it suggests that irruption of divine power into the world. So when Mark uses the same image, it means that the prophet’s prayer is at last being answered.³¹

God has come to walk among His people and to redeem them from a greater evil than the Egyptians, that of death itself.

I then turned my attention to looking at the Gospel of Matthew to find in his scripture teachings about the doctrine of the Trinity. His Gospel is surely always a part of any study on the Trinity because of his explicit words of the baptismal formula. “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make

30. Bauckham, *Who is God?: Key Moments of Biblical Revelation*. 91-92.

31. Bauckham, *Who is God?: Key Moments of Biblical Revelation*. 93-95.

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.”³² (Matthew 28:18-20, ESV) Matthew’s use of the words to describe the person’s of the Trinity has relevance to understanding the Godhead and the doctrine. “Using the word Father would have been a bit unusual for any regular Jew but this was the specific way in which Jesus spoke of God. Matthew contributes to the idea of God as Father, and is particularly keen on labeling God as ‘the Father in heaven’ (thirteen times) and as the ‘heavenly Father’ (seven times).”³³ Additionally, “Matthew presents Jesus as ‘the Son’ of God sixty eight times. And while all three of the Synoptics describe Jesus as the Son of David, Matthew uses this phrase more than the others. Leaving one to argue that Matthew 1:1 with it’s two fold description of Jesus’ double sonship—son of David, son of Abraham—sets the tone for the rest of the New Testament’s Christological and redemptive-historical claims.”³⁴ Matthew’s Gospel shows the understanding of the Triune God at the baptismal scene as well in 3:13-17. “We are given a clear trinitarian picture when we see Jesus come back up out of the water: the Spirit of God descends like a dove and alights on Jesus, and the voice of the Father speaks from heaven and declares Jesus’s sonship.”³⁵ Matthew 11:25-27 Jesus says: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your

33. Smith, B. D., *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. (B&H Academic, 2023), 85-86.

34. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. 87.

35. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. 103.

gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by the Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”³⁶ (Matthew 11:25-27, ESV) This is another revelation of the deep inner relationship between the persons of the Trinity.

Constantly throughout the Matthew narrative Jesus is shown by his activities and teachings to have authority that only God has. 5:17-20// 7:28-29 // 18:18-20—Jesus has the authority to interpret God’s commands (including keys and binding and loosing), claims that this is his authority and these are his words. 8:23-27 // 14:22-33—Jesus has authority over wind and water, actions that uniquely associate him with the divine. 9:1-8—Jesus can forgive sins. In this case the scribes accuse Jesus of blasphemy because they recognize that forgiving others is a divine prerogative. The reason underneath their accusations of blasphemy is correct. Their misstep is that they fail to see that Jesus is indeed divine. 26:64— Jesus as the Son of Man has authority over the world from God. 28:18-20— By virtue of his obedient sonship, Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth and commissions his disciples to go to all nations and make Jesus -disciples.³⁷

It is clear to me that Matthew, although he only spells out the Trinity formally in his Gospel when stating the correct baptismal wording to be used, that in fact all throughout his Gospel he connects the three persons of the Trinity.

We must now take a look at Luke’s Gospel and see where more revelation lies in explaining and discerning the doctrine of the Trinity. “The Gospel assumes the identity of Yaweh, the God of creation and the Lord of Israel. It then proceeds to demonstrate how Jesus of Nazareth, conceived and empowered by the Holy Spirit, is the embodiment of this one God-in his attributes, actions, names, and titles, as well as in the worship that he receives-yet in such a way that it does not erase the distinctions between the Abba and his Son and the Holy Spirit

37. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. 109.

between them.”³⁸ Luke’s Gospel shows how each of the three persons work together as revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Many scholars have discerned the Scriptures asking for guidance in understanding how the Trinity works as one. “Ephrem sees the Spirit’s coming upon Mary as analogous to his hovering over the waters in Genesis 1:2. The Spirit is the “Architect” of both creation and new creation, but so too the Father (the Progenitor) and his Son, to whom he has entrusted judgment and through whom he accomplishes both creation and restoration. As the three divine persons indivisibly accomplished creation, they also indivisibly accomplish salvation.”³⁹ It is implicit that all the persons were at the conception of Jesus Christ in Luke’s Gospel. For Augustine,

He uses the term *missa* to describe these missions or sendings. He means by this that it is an outward and visible expression or presentation of a particular divine person. The incarnation of the Son is the most obvious example of such a mission, but the manifestation of the Spirit at Jesus’s baptism (Luke 3:22) or on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) are also examples. These missions reveal not only that God is one and acts as one, but also that he is three, and that the three are really distinct.⁴⁰

For anyone studying the Doctrine of the Trinity I feel that Luke is rich with helpful Scriptures to understand how God reveals Himself as to how He works in His creation.

In Acts we find a deep development of what the Body of Christ has been given in through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. “If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that could stand in God’s way?”⁴¹ (Acts 11:17, ESV) The trinitarian doctrine is clearly understood if not spelled exactly out. This is

38. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. 162.

39. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. 165.

40. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. 169.

important because in Acts we see God working through the establishment of the early church.

“Acts is dedicated to ‘all that Jesus began to do and teach’ (Acts 1:1) it provides the church with a thick Christology that undergirds the salvation promised to those who obey him.”⁴² It explains how humanity is redeemed through the life work and ministry and empowerment of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to move the Kingdom of the Father towards salvation and redemption.

In Galatians, Paul reveals the means of which we have been given redemption by God’s grace and mercy. “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”⁴³ (Galatians 4:4-7, ESV) We are in relation to God the Father as Jesus’s brothers and sisters. In thinking further about what I learned in sending the persons and how they work in a totally undivided union to accomplish salvation and redemption, I read this which I also think helps to explain the Trinity. In Galatians that I just quoted: “Crucially, God’s Son and the spirit are both described as ‘sent.’ There are, in other words two missions that emanate from the Father to us to accomplish our redemption and adoption. They are both necessary, and they necessarily go together. ‘Without the mission of the spirit the mission of the Son would have been fruitless; without the mission of the Son the Spirit could not have been sent.’ Distinct from each other, they are nevertheless related as part of the overarching movement of salvation, which once again

42. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. 234.

originates from the Father, works through the Son, and comes to completion in the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁴

Paul’s letters to the churches reveal to us an understanding of the triune God despite lacking the word “Trinity.” “This triadic pattern has been traced in Paul, Hebrews, the First Epistle of Peter, the Pastoral Epistles, Jude, Revelation, Matthew and John.”⁴⁵ The eternal undivided relationship of the persons of the Trinity as One is assumed in the biblical writers teaching through Scripture in the salvation and redemption of humanity.

I saved John for last to demonstrate what he has left for us in the New Testament with regards to understanding the doctrine of the Trinity, because I feel that his contribution in revealing the Word of God is so clear even though the word “Trinity” is not used. His Gospel is rich and deeply profound. He was with Jesus in his earthly life. He knew Him and he loved Him. He even describes himself as “the one who Jesus loved.”⁴⁶ (John 13:23, ESV) “John’s Gospel quickly became the principal source of the church’s teaching on the Trinity. The Fourth Gospel furnishes much of the terminology used in the church’s trinitarian doctrine and establishes many of the patterns of speech fundamental to the church’s praise of the triune God.”⁴⁷ When Jesus is speaking to the Jews at the Feast of Dedication we read:

44. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. 259.

45. Wainwright, A. W., *The Trinity in the New Testament*. (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 246.

47. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal*. 179.

If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one’⁴⁸ (John 10:25-30, ESV)

Jesus revealed the Father Son relationship and again, for those that have been given eyes to see and ears to hear the Trinity is clear as a bell here.

One of my favorite Scriptures in the entire Bible is the Farewell Discourse found in John chapter 17:

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. ‘I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All of mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.’⁴⁹ (John 17:3-11, ESV)

I pick back up with Verse 14:

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. ‘I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you

*have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*⁵⁰ (John 17:14-24, ESV)

There is in this discourse so much knowledge of who God is and how the persons of the Trinity are One. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit that John's Gospel gives to us in order to understand our Lord.

John has also given us the book of Revelation and there are many things to be learned about the Trinity from this book as well. "Revelation's portrayal is a distinct contribution to trinitarian theology by giving the clearest glimpse of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on and around the throne, receiving worship and carrying out divine activity. It is the most colorful portrait of what the triune God's heavenly activity 'looks like,' thus giving us a tangible portrait of hypostatic union or inseparable operations."⁵¹ As we have seen there are many places in the entire Bible where God has revealed Himself as One God and how the persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are undivided and the perfect union as the Trinity.

So how does this doctrine shape my life and ministry? It profoundly affects it because everything I do in my Christian walk is with all three persons in mind all the time. I know that my God is the only true and living one. He is not Allah, He is ABBA! "The triune God is an ecstatic God: not hoarding his life, but One that gives it away, as He showed in that supreme moment of self-revelation on the cross. My Father finds His very identity in giving His life and being to the Son; and the Son images His Father in sharing His life with us through the Holy

51. Smith, B. D., *The Trinity in the Book of Revelation: Seeing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in John's Apocalypse*. (InterVarsity Press, 2022), 187-188.

Spirit.”⁵² I understand the ways in which all three persons work harmoniously together for my redemption and forgiveness and salvation. In my prayer life I see each of the persons working together at all times for my own good and sanctification. I see the fullness of God in understanding the doctrine of the Trinity more clearly. As I was working on this paper I came across this that I wanted to include in my paper as I feel I will use it to help others in their understanding of their own prayer life. “The hearing and answering of prayers is the responsibility of the Trinity, and while all prayers are directed to the Trinity as a whole, certain of these should especially be prayed to one member or another, as appropriate to that work. It is appropriate to ask the Father to provide for one’s needs, to thank the Son for his work of redemption, and to address the Holy Spirit the expression of desire to be more fully conformed to the likeness of Christ.”⁵³ I am fond of C.S. Lewis and wanted to add this in my paper as well because what he says about Christ is important to think about and be at the ready to say to a non-Christian. “What are we to make of Christ? There is no question of what we are to make of Him, it is entirely a question of what He intends to make of us. You must accept the story.”⁵⁴ And frankly, as I have dissected other ideas about who “God” is; the only God that I believe is the one of the Christian faith. I love what C.S. Lewis says about Jesus as our teacher.

52. Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. 45.

53. Erickson, M. J., *Making sense of the Trinity: Three Crucial Questions*. (Baker Academic, 2000), 78.

54. Lewis, C. S., *Essay collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*. (HarperCollins UK, 2002), 41.

The things He says are very different from what any other teacher has said. Others say, 'This is the truth about the universe. This is the way you ought to go,' but He says, 'I am the Truth, and the Way, and the Life.' He says 'No man can reach absolute reality, except through Me. Try to retain your own life and you will be inevitably ruined. Give yourself away and you will be saved.' He says, 'If you are ashamed of Me, if, when you hear this call, you turn the other way, I also will look the other way when I come again as God without disguise. If anything, whatever is keeping you from God and from Me, whatever it is, throw it away. If it is your eye, pull it out. If it is your hand, cut it off. If you put yourself first you will be last. Come to Me everyone who is carrying a heavy load, I will set that right. Your sins, all of them, are wiped out, I can do that. I am Re-birth, I am Life. Eat Me, Drink Me, I am your Food. And finally, do not be afraid, I have overcome the whole Universe.' That is the issue.⁵⁵

Oh what a Mighty God we serve! In all of His complexity when I think about what He has created with every star and flower, with every creature and season it is no wonder that He is incomprehensible and omnipotent. I am grateful for having the opportunity to learn more and at a deeper level about God who is my Father that loves me and forgives me, Jesus Christ who is my brother who came to redeem me as His chosen, and continue to be given correction and knowledge and sanctification through the Holy Spirit who is my counselor, and guide.

55. Lewis, *Essay collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church*. 41.

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