

## The Trinity

“Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently *consolatory (satisfying)*. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead’s deepest sea; be lost in His immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead.”<sup>1</sup> Charles Spurgeon

- This study will be deep, but we will leave no man or woman behind. Missing one of these lessons, however, may cause you to get lost when you pick back up. Therefore, a student guide is provided.
  - i. Though this will be a deep study, it will not be boring. Feel free to ask as many questions as will help you grasp what we are talking about.
- Our study on the doctrine of the Trinity will be our longest and most extensive study.
  - i. We will be laying a lot of groundwork for the attributes of God that follow.
- We will be looking at apologetics, philosophy, church history, and theology.
- Can the Trinity be explained by analogy without entering into heresy?
  - ❖ The answer is no. We will explore this more at the end of this study.
- We should mention at the onset that all of the attributes of God are present in each of the three persons of the Trinity.
  - i. Some people believe that different members of the Trinity have different attributes, but that isn’t the case.
- The first thing you should understand is that God, (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) displays every attribute entirely and equally according to His own character, eternal decree, wisdom, and free choice.

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<sup>1</sup> The Immutability of God. *New Park Street Pulpit Volume I*. January 7, 1855

- i. You have to be careful how you understand what I just said because God has character attributes that do not change and He has wisdom attributes that He exercises within His own character, according to His will, that does not violate His character.
- a. An example would be the difference between God's truthfulness and God's decision how to rule over His creation. God is always truthful, that does not change, and God made a free decision how all things created will play out.

## The Spirituality of God

- We live in a world that is material. This makes it difficult for us to understand something that we have never witnessed. We read about spiritual beings. We see Hollywood's portrayal of spiritual things. So, we are left with shadows of understanding.

- i. A shadow does not represent the absoluteness of the person.

- God is immaterial.

**John 4:24** *"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

- i. God is without physical composition. He is spirit.
  - a. We live in a physical world, a world created by One whose domain is outside of material things.
  - b. We do not believe the physical world is evil, and the spiritual world is good like the Gnostics believe. The physical world was created good by God but cursed because of the rebellion of man.

- God is infinite because He has no material which makes up His being, He is immaterial. Material has an expiration date unless it is sustained by the power of God which by necessity must be immaterial.

**John 1:18** *No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

"God has no ontological boundaries" RC Sproul  
(Ontology is the study of being.)

- God has no height nor weight that we can measure. He has no body parts.

- i. We read in Scripture about God having a strong arm<sup>2</sup> or that His eyes roam to and fro<sup>3</sup>. How do we understand this?
  - Why does Scripture talk about God’s body parts if He has no body parts?
    - ❖ This is called anthropomorphic language.
  - Anthropomorphic language isn’t unique to Christianity. It is a word that is used to give God human anatomy in order for us to be able to relate to Him. In secular culture it can also mean giving human attributes to a being or thing that is not human.
    - i. While these are very similar definitions, in the first case (Scripture) God is communicating to us who He is in a way that we can understand.
    - ii. In the secular idea it is reversed. It is man giving human qualities to something in order to define it as an idol.
      - a. That is why when you see the hieroglyphs in Moab or somewhere there is usually a sign that says that these are anthropomorphic.
  - God reveals Himself to us in ways that we can easily understand.
    - i. He uses a type of baby talk in which we can associate something we are familiar with to us in order to get an idea communicated to us.
- “The Anthropomorphites also, who imagined God to be corporeal, because the Scripture frequently ascribes to Him a mouth, ears, eyes, hands, and feet, are easily refuted. For who, even of the meanest capacity, understands not, that God lisps, as it were, with us, just as nurses are accustomed to speak to infants? Wherefore, such forms of expression do not clearly explain the nature of God, but accommodate the knowledge of him to our narrow capacity; to accomplish which, the Scripture must necessarily descend far below the height of His majesty.” John Calvin<sup>4</sup>
- If God had a physical body, He could not be omnipresent.
    - i. God is with us wherever we go because He occupies all space.
      - a. He is not only with us, but He is fully with us, not partially.
  - Because God is immaterial, He is invisible.
    - i. This is why we must live by faith.

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 89:13

<sup>3</sup> 2 Chronicles 16:9

<sup>4</sup> The Institutes of the Christian Religion

**John 1:18** *No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*<sup>5</sup>

**John 6:46** *“Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.*

**1 Timothy 1:17** *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

- God has revealed Himself to mankind in two ways:
  1. Natural revelation, also called general revelation.
  2. Special revelation, also called divine revelation.

## God Revealed

### God reveals Himself through Natural Revelation.

- God is revealed to all people by what is visible. Like a painting must have a painter and a building must have a builder, creation must have a Creator.

**Romans 1:19** *19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

- Though God reveals Himself to us through natural revelation, one cannot come to faith by observing natural revelation.
  - i. Natural revelation should set one on a quest to find God. Faith is only received by hearing the gospel.

**Romans 10:17** *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

- Natural revelation is used a lot in apologetics.
  - What are apologetics?
    - ❖ Giving a defense or presenting evidence for what you believe.
      - i. Natural revelation is something that we can see and touch: making creation an easy apologetic for a Creator.

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<sup>5</sup> John 6:46; Deuteronomy 4:12,15;

**1 Peter 3:15** *But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.*

### **God reveals Himself in Special Revelation.**

- We must be careful the way that we understand God and the way that we understand how that God reveals Himself.

- i. Everyone has a concept of who God is but only Scripture reveals who He truly is.

“Mingled vanity and pride appear in this, that when miserable men do seek after God, instead of ascending higher than themselves as they ought to do, they measure Him by their own carnal stupidity, and neglecting solid inquiry, fly off to indulge their curiosity in vain speculation. Hence, they do not conceive of Him in the character in which He is manifested, but imagine Him to be whatever their own rashness has devised. This abyss standing open, they cannot move one footstep without rushing headlong to destruction. With such an idea of God, nothing which they may attempt to offer in the ways of worship or obedience can have any value in His sight, because it is not Him they worship, but, instead of Him, the dream and figment of their own heart.” John Calvin<sup>6</sup>

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** *16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

- Special revelation is what we call the Bible.
  - i. Today God only reveals Himself in special revelation through Scripture.
- The canon of Scripture is closed. God’s Word is sufficient. This is why continued special revelation is a false doctrine.
  - i. Briefly stated: the New Testament (and the Old Testament, which is usually not in question) was always accepted by the church. It wasn’t until a man named Marcion (85AD–160) tore pages out of his Bible that Scripture was canonized.
  - ii. Marcion believed the God of the New Testament was not the same God of the Old Testament, so he tore pages out that he disagreed with.
  - b. This forced the church to start assembling the books that had always been known to be Scripture. They only reaffirmed what was already known to be Scripture.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Chapter 4. P. 12

### God reveals Himself in Scripture as light.

**1 Timothy 6:16** *who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.*

- Light is pure, there is nothing hidden in it and when light comes into a dark place all is exposed that has been hidden.
  - i. Our world is getting darker every day because of God's plan and design to bring things to a close. However, the darker things become the more comforting the light of God becomes.
- The purity of God is too much for a totally depraved human to experience. His holiness, His glory would either kill us or drive us mad if He fully manifested Himself to us.
  - i. The sun is a fading spark compared to God who created it by simply speaking it into existence.
    - a. It is God's grace that He reveals our sins slowly to us.
- That God reveals Himself as light shows us which of His attributes?

### God has chosen to reveal Himself as a person.

**John 1:14** *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

**Hebrews 1:1–2** *1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

- God the Son took on the nature of man. We will talk more about that as this study progresses. For now, we should understand that we can see what God is like by looking at the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ.
  - i. God is always the hero.

### Apologetics on the Trinity

- Does the Trinity break the law of non-contradiction?
- The law of non-contradiction states that A cannot be A and non-A at the same time and in the same relationship.
  - i. Many people dismiss the Christian faith on the basis of our stand on the Trinity. They believe that the Trinity breaks the law of non-contradiction.

- Nothing about God ever breaks the law of non-contradiction.
  - i. This includes the nature of the Trinity as well as the two natures of Christ that we will get into later.
    - a. To say that God can break the law of non-contradiction because He is God is to not understand His nature and perfect order.
- God cannot contradict Himself in any way because He cannot lie (**Numbers 23:19**). There is a depth to God that is unreachable for us, but we must be careful in the way that we understand and teach people the character of God.
  - i. Our God is a God of order.
- If we do not understand something about God where does the problem lie?
- The historical confession concerning the Trinity states that the Trinity is one in essence and three in persons. Is that a contradiction?
  - ❖ If we believe that God is one in essence and three in essence that would be a contradiction. If we believe that God is one in person and three in person that would be a contradiction. But to believe that God is one in essence and three in person is not.
    - i. God is one in A and three in B

## Church History on the Trinity

- The church is accused today of inventing the Trinity at The Council of Nicaea.
  - i. Of course this is not true, the church had to define the Trinity and defend the Trinity at Nicaea.
- Why did the church need to define the Trinity?
- God reveals Himself by what we call progressive revelation.
  - i. This isn't a new revelation; we do not believe in new revelation. We believe in the sufficiency of Scripture.
- Progressive revelation means that God, by the passing of time, reveals more about Himself to His church.

- i. He does this by allowing heresies to rise up about Himself in order to force the church to look deeper into who He is and better define Him to the best of our understanding.

“Isn’t it amazing that God gives breath to a man who is going to blaspheme Him all day!”  
Leonard Ravenhill

- ii. Progressive revelation does not mean that God reveals something about Himself in the Old Testament and later contradicts or changes in the New Testament. God is immutable, He does not change.
- iii. Progressive revelation means that our knowledge about God is built upon the backs of those fighting against heresy and are forced to sharpen theology.
- iv. God has given the church teachers. Sometimes, in history He blesses men that stand above the others in order to help us have a greater understanding of who He is. He allows heresy in order for these men to stand because they cannot tolerate the blasphemy of God.
  - a. This is important to understand because the Bible does not give us a verse and chapter that clearly teaches the Trinity. If there were such a verse, there would be no disputing that God is triune.
- The theory of evolution began to dominate the thinking of philosophers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of which came from the philosophy of Frederick Hegel. They carried the idea of evolution beyond the boundaries of species and into the realm of almost every philosophical idea.
  - i. Religion was also a target of this thinking. The idea of the simple to the complex as applied to religion caused some men to start a school called The Religious Historical School.
    - a. They developed an ideology of religion that goes something like this: All religions developed in a similar pattern beginning with animism.
- What is animism?
  - ❖ Animism is the idea that there are living souls in that which is inanimate. It can also refer to seeing the spirits of gods in animals.
  - i. This idea came from examining primitive cultures and their strong view of animism that is still prevalent today, such as totem poles, statues, idols of stone and wood, etc.



- ii. They assumed animism in the book of Genesis because we find Eve and a serpent having a conversation and later in Numbers where Balaam's donkey speaks to him.
- Did Eve literally have a conversation with a serpent and did Balaam literally have a conversation with a donkey? Yes.
  - How do we explain this?
  - ❖ God created the natural world, and He can interrupt it.
- Their next assumption was that religion evolved from animism to polytheism.
- What is polytheism?
  - ❖ The idea that there are many gods. This is found in such cultures as Roman and Hindu culture.
  - ❖ People believed and still believe in a multitude of gods that exist to serve various functions of human life.
    - i. An example would be Baal over weather or Molech over fire.
- What does Scripture say about polytheism? (John 14:6, 17:3)
- These philosophers' next assumption was that religion evolved from polytheism to henotheism.
- What is henotheism?
  - ❖ It is a hybrid between polytheism and monotheism.
  - ❖ The belief in one god that reigns sovereignly over each people group or nation.
    - i. A God for the Jews, Yahweh, a god for the Canaanites who was Baal, and a god for the Philistines who was Dagon.
      - a. Often, the wars between nations were seen as battles between individual gods of the people.
    - ii. These philosophers assumed that the Bible teaches henotheism in the Old Testament because of the mention of battles between the God of Israel and the god of other nations.
      - a. An example would be **1 Kings 3:15–27**.

- Does Scripture validate other nations gods because they are mentioned in the text?
- Their next assumption was that religion evolved from henotheism to monotheism.
- What is monotheism?
  - ❖ The belief that there is only one God.
- Using this framework, the 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophers challenged the idea that the Bible is consistently monotheistic.

**Genesis 1:1** *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

- i. The Bible confirms the fact that there was one God who created all things, therefore reigns over all things.
- ii. These philosophers argued that even in the creation narrative, there are two names for God, confirming their framework of the evolutionary development of religion.
  - a. God is referred to as *Yahweh* and *Elohim* in the Old Testament.
  - b. The *him* on the end of *Elohim* is the plural ending of the Hebrew noun. It can be translated as gods.
- In **Exodus 20:3** they assumed that God was saying that you can have no other gods greater than me, but what does this verse really mean?

**Exodus 20:3** *“You shall have no other gods before Me.*

- ❖ The words *before Me* literally means *in my presence*. If God is omnipresent, and He is, how can there be a lower form of God anywhere in the universe? Impossible.
- The Bible very clearly teaches monotheism. But this became problematic in church history, and still today, over the doctrine of the Trinity.
  - i. When we get to the New Testament the church affirms that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are each divine all the while still holding to monotheism.
    - a. This is why this study is so important; to help us understand what the Bible teaches about the Trinity.

“The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.” Augustin

- There is a perfect unity, a perfect hermeneutic between the Old and New Testaments in all doctrine, and this includes the Trinity.
- Can we see the Trinity in the Old Testament without eisegizing Scripture?
  - i. To eisegize means to read into. To read your own ideas and doctrines into Scripture rather than to draw the true meaning out of Scripture.
- We have already mentioned that one of the names of God, *Elohim*, has the suffix *him* which is in the plural form.
  - i. This may be an indication of a triune God within this name itself. But the name itself does not demand that God is triune or there would be no debate between Jews and Christians.
    - a. At the very least this is a clue for us to pick up on.
- In **Genesis 1:1** we see that *God created the heavens and the earth*. In **verse 2** we are introduced to *the Spirit of God*, who was moving over the surface of the waters.

**Genesis 1:26** *Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness . . .*

**Genesis 3:22** *Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil;*

**Genesis 11:7** *Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.*

The most quoted Old Testament verse from the New Testament is Psalm 110:

**Psalm 110:1** *The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”*

- When the word *LORD* is spelled in all capital letters the translator is making a distinction between *Yahweh* and the lowercase word used *Lord* that means *Adonai*.
  - i. Here we see that *Yahweh* is having a conversation with *Adonai*.
- Another verse to look at, where Paul confirms both monotheism and that God exists as Father and Son. **1 Corinthians 8:4–6** *4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*

- i. Paul is at the same time showing us the deity of Christ and the unity of the Father and Son as God.
- The deity of Christ is affirmed on many pages of Scripture; we will look at a couple examples:

**John 8:58** *Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”*

- i. Jesus is using the same name for Himself as God the Father in **Exodus 3:14: I AM**.
- ii. This is one of the statements that drove the Jewish people to outrage, craving the death of Christ, because He was a man who was claiming to be God.

**John 20:27–29** *27 Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.” 28 Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”*

- i. We see in this passage that Jesus accepts Thomas’s worship. Thomas calls Jesus both *Lord* and *God*.
  - a. The Apostles rebuked people in **Acts** for attempting to worship them. We see the same reaction from angels throughout Scripture, quickly telling people not to worship them. Yet Jesus accepts Thomas’s worship.

**John 1:1–2** *1 In the beginning was the Word [logos], and the Word [logos] was with God, and the Word [logos] was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.*

- i. *The Word* must be distinguished from *God* yet must be identified *with God* and as *God*.
- Are there any contradictions in the Bible? No
- How can there be no contradictions in a book that took over fifteen hundred years to write?
  - ❖ Because it had a divine author: The Holy Spirit.

## **The Holy Spirit is God and distinguished from the Father and Son**

- The deity and personality of the Holy Spirit is seen throughout Scripture.

- i. We see Him working from Genesis 1 with the creation of the world all the way through **Revelation 22:17**.
- The gift of the Holy Spirit is the apex of blessing Christ died to give us.

**Galatians 3:13–14** *13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”— 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.<sup>7</sup>*

- The Holy Spirit is who spoke through the Prophets and Apostles.

**Acts 28:25** . . . *“The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,*  
*. . .*<sup>8</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit can be lied to.**

**Acts 5:3–5** *3 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? 4 “While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” 5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.*

- i. He is also called *God* in verse 4.

### **The Holy Spirit can be grieved.**

- What is the unforgivable sin?
- What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?
- In order to answer the above questions, we should look at two things: context and the definition of the word blasphemy.
  - i. First, we should note that all sin is directed against the Holy Spirit. He is part of the Godhead. But there is one particular sin that is unforgivable.
- What does the word blaspheme mean?
  - ❖ Blasphemy is a verbal or written act. It isn’t a lack of action or failure to do something.

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<sup>7</sup> Haggai 2:4–5

<sup>8</sup> Acts 1:16

- i. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was a moment in a person's life in which they committed a certain act or speech or writing.
- Today, many people teach that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a lack of action: specifically, unbelief and not an action of speech like historically taught.
  - i. Some believe it simply means dying in a state of sin.
- Now that we understand what blasphemy is, let us look at some context to help us understand what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is.
  - i. It is interesting that blasphemy against God the Father and God the Son is forgivable.

**Matthew 12:31** *Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.*

- Let us look at the context of Matthew 12:31

**Matthew 12:22–32** *22 Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. 23 All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" 24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." 25 And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26 "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? 27 "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. 28 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. The Unpardonable Sin 30 "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters. 31 "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. 32 "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

- In Matthew and Mark, the Pharisees charge against Christ was by what power was He performing miraculous things.
  - i. This is a question of not only power but unity.
    - a. This is a charge of who Jesus is united to. Rather than Jesus being united perfectly to the Holy Spirit, they say He is united to Satan.

- Remember at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, when He was baptized, the Father spoke from heaven and the Spirit descended upon Christ, showing who Christ was united to.
  - i. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit were both showing all of mankind that Jesus is part of the Trinity. He is truly God: God the Son.
- It should be noted that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is something done intentionally while understanding who Christ truly is.
  - i. That is why Jesus tells the Pharisees that they are dangerously close to committing this blasphemy.
- Jesus is showing us what it means to commit the unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. It was attributing His work to Satan rather than having perfect union with God the Holy Spirit.
- This brings up another question:
  - What about the opposite? What would it be to attribute the work of Satan to the Holy Spirit?
    - i. This is why we point so hard at the sufficiency of Scripture. Could telling people God spoke directly to you be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit if indeed God had not?
- We must be careful here. Many people today claim that God speaks directly to them.
  - i. People say, "thus says the Lord," or "God told me," or "God spoke to me through a dream or vision." Then they go on to add something to Scripture that Scripture does not say, rendering Scripture insufficient and forcing the canon of Scripture to remain open.
    - a. You must think carefully about what you mean when you say that the canon of Scripture is closed, and Scripture is sufficient. If you believe it . . . believe it. If you truly don't, then stop claiming Scripture is sufficient and the canon is closed.

### **The Holy Spirit can come upon you.<sup>9</sup>**

**Luke 1:34–35** *34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."*

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<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 63:11–14

### **The Holy Spirit was active in creation.**

**Psalm 104:24&30** *24 O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions. 30 You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the ground.*

### **The Holy Spirit is active in salvation.**

**John 6:63** *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”<sup>10</sup>*

### **The Holy Spirit instructs us.**

**Nehemiah 9:20** *“You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst.*

### **The Holy Spirit leads us.**

**Psalm 143:10–11** *10 Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground. 11 For the sake of Your name, O LORD, revive me. In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.”<sup>11</sup>*

### **The Holy Spirit perfectly knows the Father.**

**1 Corinthians 2:9–11** *9 but just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” 10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.*

- Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that the Holy Spirit is the power of God and not a person.
- Does the Bible support their belief? We just read that it does not.

“That which has mind or perception, volition or will, and affections, must be an intelligent entity. The proof of the personality of the Spirit is as complete as that of the personality of the Father. If the Holy Spirit be not a divine person, then there is no such being in existence as a personal God, and Pantheism is the only true religion.” John Stock<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:6; Romans 8:2,11

<sup>11</sup> John 16:13

<sup>12</sup> Stock. *A Handbook of Revealed Theology* with prefatory recommendation by Charles Spurgeon. P. 74



- i. In Stock's mind, the gods of other religions are so unqualified because they are so much like us, that the only other option to him was pantheism.
- The Trinity is beyond humanity's ability to invent.
  - i. A God not like us, but who has given us certain attributes of Himself for us to reflect as image bearers. A God that is holy and a God whose means of salvation is opposite of every human made, satanic inspired, religion of the world.

Stock makes another good point: "The Holy Ghost is said to be influenced by the actions of other personal agents, as only a personal agent can be. For example: He is said to be "lied unto" (Acts 5:3); but this implies that He is capable of examining the truth of falsehood of testimony, and consequently possesses judgment. He is said to be "grieved" (Eph. 4:30); "vested" (Isaiah lxiii:10) "tempted" (Acts 5:9); and "blasphemed" (Matt. 12:31,32); which could not be affirmed, in any sense, of Him, if He did not possess the power of judging of the qualities of actions as excellent or otherwise. Certain things are said to "seem good unto Him" (Acts 25:28), which proves His power of perceiving and appreciating their moral properties."<sup>13</sup>

- The early church began to wrestle through different ways of attempting to understand and teach the triune God, especially in respect to Christology. Some of the ideas presented by theologians were good and some were outright heresy.
  - i. This forced the church into coming together in an attempt to agree on a creed that would set in stone our understanding of both Christology as well as the Trinity.
    - a. We will look at this great creed of the church in a moment. First let's see how it developed.

## A Crash Course in Philosophy

### An Interlude

- Before we get into early church theology on the Trinity, we need to take a moment to define three important words in early church thinking:
  1. Essence
  2. Existence
  3. Subsistence

### Essence

- The word *ousios* in Greek means *to be* and in English we translate it as meaning *being*.

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<sup>13</sup>Stock. *A Handbook of Revealed Theology* with prefatory recommendation by Charles Spurgeon. P. 75

- i. We have already used the word *being* in our study. It will be used a lot more.
  - ii. In the mind of early philosophers, this was their focus. What we call metaphysics or physics that are above and beyond what we perceive in this world.
    - a. They were looking for the ultimate reality: that which does not change.
- Some synonyms for the word *being* that you will hear in this study include *substance* and *essence*. *Being*, or *substance*, or *essence* was referred to as *ousios*.
  - i. Plato made a very important distinction between *being* and *becoming*, which will be an important part of our study on the aseity of God.
- Parmenides, a pre-Socratic philosopher, made the famous statement: “What ever is, is.”
- Does that sound like a deep and profound statement that would rock the world?
  - i. What he meant was that if something is constantly changing, can we truly say what *it* is. As soon as you think you have described what *it* is, *it* is not that anymore, *it* has changed.
    - a. So, if anything is real ultimately, *it* has to be in a state of *being*.
- Heraclitus disagreed with Parmenides and made the statement: “Whatever is, is changing.” His famous statement is: “The same man cannot step into the same river twice.” He believed that nothing was in the state of *being* and that everything in the universe was in a state of *becoming*.
  - i. We will talk more about Heraclitus’ statement when we get to the immutability of God.
- Plato made that important distinction between being and becoming because he believed that nothing could be in the state of becoming unless there was something out there in the state of being.
  - i. In other words, there must be something fixed in the state of being or unchangeableness or nothing changeable could exist.
- Philosophy greatly impacted Christian theologians. They understood God was the pure being that Plato was describing and all of God’s creation was the becoming. Humans are not human beings but human becomings.
  - i. God says that He is the Great I Am. He is being and the source of all becomings.
    - a. So, the word *ousios*, essence, or substance becomes very important.

- Do you agree with Plato’s distinction?

## Existence

- The word *existence* becomes synonymous with *becoming*.
- All created things are in the state of becoming or existence. God is not in the state of existence, or He would be in a state of change. He does not change therefore is in the state of being or essence.
  - i. This will be important when we get to our study of God’s immutability, and we will revisit a portion of this.
- We say that God exists, but historically speaking God is beyond the state of existence, He is whom all that exists receives their ability to exist.
- The attribute of God that shows His unchangeableness is called what? His immutability.

## Subsistence

- When it comes to the Trinity the term used is *subsistence*. The prefix *ex* is replaced by the prefix *sub* which means below or under. It literally means “real being.”
  - i. We simplify the historic definition of the Trinity which was that God is one in essence and three in subsistence, with God is one in essence and three in person.
- There are three persons who stand under the essence of God. They are the same essence, but we distinguish between three subsistence’s under the same essence.
- Which word better describes the Trinity: Subsistence’s or persons?

## Church History

- In the second century a view of God was developed called Monarchianism.
- What is Monarchianism?
  - ❖ The teaching that God exists as a single ruler.
    - i. Monarchianism began as an attempt to preserve monotheism, but it drifted into heresy, and that is what it is known for today.
- Monarchianism came in two forms:

1. Modalism
2. Adoptionism

– What is Modalism?

- ❖ It considers God to be one person who works through the different “modes” of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ❖ In the Old Testament God was in the mode of Father. In the New Testament God was in the mode of the Son. Today God is in the mode of the Spirit.

– What is Adoptionism?

- ❖ It teaches that the Son was not co-eternal with the Father, and that Jesus Christ was essentially granted godhood, or adopted, for the plans of God and for His own perfect life and works.
- The main voice behind Monarchianism was a man named Sabellius who was heavily influenced by Gnosticism and Platonic ideology.
- Sabellius came up with an analogy of modalism. His analogy was the analogy of the sun and its rays.
  - i. We make a distinction between the sun and its rays. The light beams that shine through the clouds and into our homes are a part of the sun even though the sun is ninety-three million miles away.
  - ii. Sabellius taught that these rays of sunlight partake in the very nature of the sun. They are the same essence as the sun; they are simply further removed from the core of the sun.
  - iii. He used this analogy to compare the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. God is the sun and Jesus is the sunbeam. He emanates from the Father at a lower level.
    - a. Because he was influenced by Gnosticism and Platonism, his understanding of God was rooted in pantheism.

– What is pantheism?

- ❖ The idea that God’s essence is in everything. The universe is god.
- Sabellius used a word that became the most controversial word in church history; the word homoousios. He used homoousios to describe God.
- What does the Greek word homoousios mean?

- ❖ Remember that ousios means to be or being. Homo means the same. It means the same being or the same substance.
- What Sabellius meant by using homoousios to describe God, was that Jesus was of the same substance of God, which is correct, but of a lesser value, such as the sunbeam and the sun.
  - i. In AD 267 (the Council of Antioch) the church rejected the term homoousios because of what Sabellius meant in the background of what he was teaching.
    - a. They replaced the word with homoiousios which means of a similar substance.
- Today the Oneness Pentecostal Church is Modelist.
- The next view of God that hit like a hurricane was introduced by a man named Arias (AD 256–336). His view of God became known as Adoptionism and later became known as Arianism. He became extremely popular because he and his follower's used propaganda through music and song to spread his doctrine.
  - i. Fights erupted in the streets and people were killed over Arianism vs the triune Godhead.
  - ii. It got so bad that the Roman emperor Constantine had to call an ecumenical council, or worldwide church council called The Council of Nicaea.
- Arius taught that the first thing that God created was the Logos and then the Logos created everything else.
  - i. Jesus was the first-born creation of God therefore higher than all other creatures including angels.
  - ii. Jesus is creaturely divine but not eternal. He is not equal with God but is like a demigod.
  - iii. Because Jesus is in perfect agreement and obedience to God, He is adopted by the Father as God's Son.
- Arius said that Jesus was neither homoousios, nor homoiousios but heteroousios (of a different substance).
- The Council of Nicaea was presented all three views of God:
  1. Homoousios = of the same substance
  2. Homoiousios = of a similar substance

3. Heteroousios = of a different substance
  - i. They determined that the correct view of God was homoousios, of the same substance. They changed their stance that God was homoiousios.
    - a. Remember, the reason the church denied homoousios in the first place was because of the way it was taught by Sabellius.
- At the Council of Nicaea, Arius was condemned as a heretic and the Nicene Creed was written.
  - i. This creed was written in order to once and for all clarify the relationship that Jesus has with the Father. It was in that respect a necessary creed as I am sure you are beginning to understand.

### **The Nicene Creed**

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made: of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.

Note: The word catholic means universal and does not refer to the Roman Catholic Church.

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

- We believe in one God. We are monotheists.
- God the Father is the first described of the triune God.
- God is almighty.
  - i. He has all of the might in the universe. Anything that has might in His creation has been given their might from the One who holds it all.
- The next statement was to fight Gnosticism.

- i. Gnostics taught that all things materially created was evil. Only things invisible or spiritual was good.
- ii. This statement says that God created all thing material and all things invisible, such as the human soul, and all of these things were created perfect and good.

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ,*

- We believe in one Lord, one head of the church — Jesus Christ.
  - i. We don't believe that Peter or the Pope or a pastor or any other person has ever been the head of the church. Jesus Christ is the head of the church.
- The word “church” comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* which means those who are called out of the world.
- The word Lord comes from the Greek word *Kyrios*. It means the name that is above every name.

*the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,*

- This statement was to fight against the Arian heresy that Jesus was a creation of God.
  - i. Jesus existed as the second member of the Trinity before all ages. In other words, like God the Father with no beginning.
  - ii. They have always existed together perfectly unified.
    - a. That we say Jesus is the Son of God, or the Second member of the Trinity does not place Him under the Father, it distinguishes Him from the Father.
    - b. They are the same in rank, they are equal in every way. But they have different roles, though each role each member of the Trinity plays a role in.

*begotten, not made: of the same essence as the Father.*

- Why does it say begotten, not made?
  - ❖ Again, this is fighting the Arian heresy that Jesus was created like Satan and the other angels.
  - ❖ To be begotten means bringing forth the same nature or substance.
  - ❖ Begotten comes from the Greek word *monogenes*:

*monogenes* has two primary definitions.

1. Being the only one of its kind within a specific relationship
2. Being the only one of its kind or class, unique in kind.

**John 1:14** *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

- i. Yet John tells us that this begotten son had no beginning:

**John 1:1-2** *1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.*

- i. We see here that Jesus was *of the same essence as the Father*.
  - a. We talked last week about the word essence and the synonym *being*.
  - b. God is the only true being according to philosophers, because in order to have *being* or *essence* something must be fixed in a state of unchangeableness.

- Read Hebrews 1

*Through him all things were made.*

- Line 1 of this creed says that God the Father was the maker of heaven and of earth, so why does it say here that through Jesus all things were made?
  - ❖ Again, the church is fighting Arianism. Jesus was not made, but through Him all things were made.
  - ❖ This is showing the unity of God the Father and God the Son in the creation narrative.
    - i. If Jesus were created, He could not have died and paid the debt for God's creation.
    - ii. Only an eternal uncreated God can pay for a sin against an eternal God which by nature would be an eternal sin.

**Colossians 1:13-17** *13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

*For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;*



- This is where I wish they did a better job of explaining Jesus. This is clarified later in the Chalcedonian Creed that we will look at.
- Jesus *came from heaven* yet never leaving heaven. He took on the nature of man or added to Himself the nature of man.
  - i. He did this *for us and for our salvation*.
    - a. If God had not become truly man, we could not have been truly saved.

*he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human.*

- Jesus became incarnate: God became man, by the work of The Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary.
- The Creed brings the third member of the Trinity in by showing that the Holy Spirit was involved in this work as well.
  - i. Again, the Trinity cannot be separated, they all three are involved in every work, yet they each play distinct roles.
- I don't like the way they say that Jesus *was made human*.
  - i. This was before other heresies about Christ had entered into the picture. The church later clarifies this through the Chalcedonian Creed.
  - ii. Jesus took on the nature of man.

*He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried.*

- Jesus Christ was truly man. He actually died.
  - i. Gnosticism taught that Jesus did not have a physical body, because anything physical was evil, so God could not have an actual physical body.
  - ii. Jesus had a physical body, and it was crucified under Pontius Pilate.
  - iii. His body suffered because it was an actual body just like ours.
- Jesus was killed, literally killed, and His body was buried.

*The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.*

- The grave couldn't hold Him.
- He was perfect and never committed the act that death requires — sin.
  - i. Jesus bore our sin; it was imputed to Him by us. By everyone who would believe.

- His body lay in the tomb for three days then He came walking out with a glorified body.
  - i. This is why Scripture refers to Him as the first born from the dead.<sup>14</sup>

*He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

**Mark 16:19** *So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.*

**Acts 1:9–11** *9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11 They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”*

*He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.*

- The entire book of Revelation talks about this event.

*His kingdom will never end.*

**Luke 1:32–33** *32 “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”*

*And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.*

- The third member of the Trinity.
  - i. Not third in rank but third in distinction.
- The Holy Spirit is Lord.

**2 Corinthians 3:17** *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

- The Holy Spirit is the giver of life.

**Titus 3:5–7** *5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

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<sup>14</sup> Colossians 1:18, Revelation 1

*He proceeds from the Father and the Son,*

- This isn't talking about origin of being. This is talking about the command of God, in perfect harmony within the Trinity, being carried out by a distinct person—the Holy Spirit.

**John 15:26** *“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,*

*and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.*

- The Holy Spirit is worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son.
  - i. This is why we baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each are to be worshiped and glorified.
- The Holy Spirit is united to God and is God, so when we worship God, we are worshiping all three persons.
  - i. Worship isn't only something we sing, it is the actions that we take, it is our obedience to God. When we walk in the Fruit of the Spirit we are worshiping the Holy Spirit and all members of the Godhead.

*He spoke through the prophets.*

**2 Peter 1:20–21** *20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

*We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.*

- The word catholic means universal, not Roman Catholic.
- There was only one united church when this was written.
  - i. This is hard for us to comprehend because today we have thousands of churches, most of which are not united by any means.
  - ii. We understand that if you are a believer, we are united by the gospel, we are all the bride of Christ. But we are not united like the early church was united.
- We talked about how that the word Kyrios is the Greek word for Lord. This is a possessive title.
- We talked about the Greek word for church is *ekklesia*.

- An individual within the *ekklosia* is the Greek word *doulos*. Some Bible translates *doulos* as bond servant or servant, but the word means something more, it literally means slave.
  - i. *Doulos* belongs to a possessor or a *Kyrios*.
  - ii. The church is made up of people who belong to Christ. People who have been removed from the world by Jesus.
  - iii. This is how that we are united, we are united by Christ.

*We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.*

- You only have to be baptized one time.

**Acts 2:38** *Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

**Romans 6:3–10** *3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.*

*We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.*

- This is the reality of the believer.

**James 4:13–14** *13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.*

- What religion is Arian in their theology today?

❖ The Jehovah’s Witnesses

- Satan wants to distort the church’s understanding of the Trinity, especially concerning the nature of Christ. So, the Nicene Creed was not the end of the controversy as the council had hoped for.

- i. One of the best ways of learning the attributes of God and Christian orthodoxy is by learning what God isn't.
      - a. That is one of the reasons we are closely looking at battles the church had to face in antiquity, in order that we are not prone to repeat them.
    - ii. God allowed heresies to enter into the church in order to force the church to be precise in what we believe about Him.
  - The next battle that the church had to face over the doctrine of the Trinity was over what is called Eutychianism or Monophysitism.
    - i. Mono means one. Physit means nature.
  - Eutyches overreacted to the Nestorian heresy that the Council of Ephesus dealt with in AD 431 over the nature of Christ.
    - i. Nestorius taught that Jesus was fully God and fully man in one person but turned on and off His divinity like a light switch. Jesus has two natures, but they are separated.
      - a. Eutyches was present at this council and concocted a view of Christ that not only is Christologically wrong but also distorted the doctrine of the Trinity.
  - He stated that Christ was theanthropic, which means God with one nature.
    - i. In other words, Jesus was divinely human or humanly divine.
    - ii. He meant that Jesus's humanity was essentially dissolved or obliterated by His divine nature, describing it as being "dissolved like a drop of honey in the sea."
  - The church realized that what Eutyches was teaching made Jesus to be something entirely different, neither God nor man, like mixing powder with water and getting Jell-O.
    - i. He is more than man but less than God. A deified humanity or a humanized deity.
      - a. The two natures of Jesus are being mixed together or confused into one nature. This is an overreaction to Nestorius's teaching that Jesus had two natures separated.
  - Orthodoxy confesses that Jesus has two natures: one divine and one human.
- "One of the most important distinctions you will ever make is the distinction between a distinction and a separation. If I distinguish your body from your soul, I haven't harmed you, but if I separate your body from your soul, I've killed you." RC Sproul

- We will get deeper into how to understand the two natures of Christ and the implications of Monophysitism when we get to Christology in another class.
  - i. What we should understand now in our study of the Trinity, is when we change the nature of Christ to be anything less than God in His deity and more than man in His humanity, you have distorted not only Jesus but the Trinity.
- The church once again called an ecumenical council at Chalcedon in AD 451 to battle both Nestorianism and Monophysitism.
  - i. They wrote the Chalcedonian Creed, which has been considered to this day the fence of which to go outside of is to enter into heresy concerning the nature of Christ.
    - a. There were five hundred twenty bishops that wrote and agreed on this creed.

### Chalcedonian Creed

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of nature's being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

- Does anything stand out to you that we have studied in this class?
  - ❖ The word subsistence. This should help us understand the two natures of Christ.
- The council of Chalcedon confessed that Jesus is:
 

Vere Deus, Truly God.  
And: Vere homo, Truly man.

  - i. People who should know better today confess that Jesus is fully God and fully man, which is a contradiction, and an impossibility. The correct term is Truly God and Truly man which does not violate the law of non-contradiction.

- a. Well-meaning pastors and teachers have made one of two mistakes here. They have either attempted to recall the Chalcedonian Creed and got the word *truly* confused with the word *fully*, or they have attempted to improve upon the Creed's meaning. Both of which are a huge mistake.
- ii. You cannot have a person who is fully divine and fully human at the same time and in the same relationship.
  - a. Fully signifies 100% which is one nature that is full. Something that is completely full cannot in the same relationship be completely full of something else. That is absurd.
  - b. Jesus is truly God and truly man. This is just as difficult for us to understand as the Trinity. But we need to sharpen our vocabulary concerning the nature of Christ. This will help our understanding of Scripture and this will help our apologetics when speaking with logical people. Every word of the Chalcedonian Creed was very carefully selected because of these kinds of issues.
- When Jesus sweated it wasn't His divine nature that was sweating. When His side was pierced His divine nature wasn't pierced. When Jesus said that He didn't know something, that was His truly human nature. Yet we cannot separate His divine nature from His human nature.
  - i. At times Jesus revealed His divine nature and at times He revealed His human nature. We are distinguishing the two without separating them.
  - ii. His human nature died on the cross, but His divine nature cannot die and does not die.
- The Chalcedonian Creed is known for what is referred to as: **The four negatives of the creed** (the withouts):
  1. Mixture (inconfusedly)
  2. Confusion (unchangeably)
  3. Division (indivisibly)
  4. Separation (inseparably)
  - i. The Monophysite heresy confused the natures of Christ and mixed them together to form something else. Nestorianism both divided and separated the natures of Christ.
    - a. Negatives are given to reinforce positive statements in theology.
    - b. These are the boundaries set forth by the council as to the nature of Christ.

- One of the things in which we divide from the Lutheran Church is on this very issue in regard to communion. They believe that there is a communication of divine attributes to the human nature of Christ that makes it possible for His human body to be in more than one place. This is a monophysite doctrine. The human body cannot be in two places at one time. They are mixing or confusing the two natures of Christ.
  - i. Remember what the Creed said: *“the distinction of nature’s being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons.”*
- A heresy held today by those in the New Apostolic Reformation is known as Kenosis.
  - i. They teach that Jesus laid aside His deity and walked the earth as a man only, who relied on the Holy Spirit to perform miracles.
    - a. Scripture does not teach this, Chalcedon is correct in not allowing this, and to believe such is idolatry: creating a Jesus that does not exist.
- As I mentioned before, we will get much deeper into Christology in another class.
- Where did the word Trinity come from?
  - ❖ It was coined by Tertullian (AD 155–240) in response to Monarchianism.
- Let’s look at some ancient creeds and confessions concerning the Trinity.

Note: Remember that the word catholic means universal not Roman Catholic.

### The Athanasian Creed

Whosoever will be saved , before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance (or being or essence or ousios) . For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is



God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be both God and Lord, So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another; But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved is must think thus of the Trinity. Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of his Mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood; Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the Manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

### **1689 Baptist Confession: Of God and of the Holy Trinity**

1. The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.
2. God, having all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself, is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto,

and upon them; he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, and he hath most sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth; in his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain; he is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands; to him is due from angels and men, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience, as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them.

3. In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.

### **Westminster Confession of 1646: Of God, and Of the Holy Trinity**

1. There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal, most just, and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.
2. God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever himself pleaseth. In his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent, or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them.
3. In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

## The Heidelberg Catechism

Q. What is thy only comfort in life and death?

A. That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my Heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.

## Salvation is Trinitarian

- Each person of the Trinity is involved in Salvation.

“The gospel is essentially Trinitarian. Every member of the Trinity performs an indispensable function in our salvation. Without God the Father, there would be no one to send the Son and Spirit into the world, to accept the Son’s sacrifice, or to hear the Spirit-wrought prayers of the redeemed. Without the obedience and sufferings of God the Son, no one could escape God’s curse or enjoy God’s blessing in the Spirit. Without the renewing work and indwelling presence of God the Spirit, no one would benefit from Christ’s redemptive work or have any assurance of being reconciled to God as his child. Apart from the divine Spirit, God could not dwell within the hearts of the redeemed to relate them to the Father and the Son. Without the Trinity, the gospel disappears.”<sup>15</sup>

**Galatians 4:4-6** *4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”*

**Titus 3:4-8** *4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.*

**Ephesians 2:17-18** *17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.*

## Questions

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<sup>15</sup> Beeke & Smalley. Reformed Systematic Theology Volume 1. P. 879

- Remember at the onset of this study the question: Can the Trinity be explained by analogy without entering into heresy? How do you now answer?
  - ❖ There is no analogy that can explain 1 in A and 3 in B.
- When speaking of the nature of Christ, the Chalcedonian Creed tells us that Jesus is what?
  - ❖ Truly God and Truly Man
- What does the Greek word *ousios* mean?
  - ❖ Being
- What did the word *catholic* mean to the early church?
  - ❖ Universal
- What does Eutychianism or Monophysitism teach about the nature of Christ?
  - ❖ That Jesus had only one nature.
- Why is Eutychianism or Monophysitism wrong?
- What does Arianism teach?

### Notes

