THE TRIUNE NATURE OF GOD
(God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit)
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Of all the Christian doctrines, without question the most difficult one of all is that of the triune nature of God. Down through the years I have heard many people question it, and try to reconcile the reality of it in their minds, but due to the fact that it is actually a construct of thought that transcends human thinking, they soon discover it is not at all a simplistic concept. Trying to wrap one’s mind around the eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent triune God is simply not possible for temporal minds—what is possible is that of humbly accepting God’s self-revelation as it is stated in Scripture. Though the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught in Scripture, it is still a very perplexing reality to us as Christians, simply because our temporal minds cannot fully grasp anything that is infinite in scope—the human mind can only process that which is finite and limited in scope, and even then it often struggles. That should not be a difficult construct for any of us to understand; after all, we continually face issues in life that are outside our ability to fully understand—we are not infinite creatures with unlimited capacities—we are finite creatures with extreme limitations. Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, the term “Trinity” itself is not used to describe a relationship of three gods (so do not make that erroneous deduction), instead it is used to describe a relationship of one God in three persons. According to God’s divine self-revelation (i.e., according to Scripture), God is one in essence, and three in person. Though the term “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, the fullness of divine revelation clearly teaches that God is one in essence and three in person. The term itself is a technical term that arose during the early years of Church history to communicate the entirety of what the Bible teaches about the triune nature of God, without having to spell it all out every time the fullness of the Godhead was being addressed. Incidentally, the term “Bible” is not found in Scripture; it is simply a derivative of the Greek term for “books,” and is used in the Christian world to describe all of the Old Testament & New Testament books (there are 39 books in the OT and 27 books in the NT); together they form the “Canon” of Holy Scripture—the term “Canon” is derived from a Greek word that means “measuring rod, standard, or norm;” historically, the Bible has been the authoritative rule for faith and practice in the Church; i.e., “the Bible is the rule or standard of authority for Christians.”

With that in mind, the term “Trinity” simply gives definition to what Scripture teaches about the Godhead. By the way, the terms “Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent” are also not found in Scripture; but the totality of God’s omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence is clearly taught. When one studies the totality of Scripture, and does not simply limit his thinking to just a few select passages, he will conclude that “God indeed
is one in essence and three in person. It should also be understood that the doctrine of the Trinity does not fully explain the mysterious nature and character of God; instead, it simply sets the boundaries for us, outside of which we must not step. As the late theologian, pastor, professor, and founder of Ligonier Ministries, Dr. R. C. Sproul, states in his doctrinal work, “Essential Truths of the Christian Faith” — The term Trinity “defines the limits of our finite reflection, and demands that we be faithful to the biblical revelation that in one sense defines God as one, and in a different sense that He is three.” Incidentally, I have listed over 150 passages in this study, so it is important that you read those passages if you are really interested in adequately giving definition to this subject; a casual read simply won’t suffice.

So, God, although one, nevertheless exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Though some people question the triune nature of God because they can’t get their minds around it, that does not justify their rejecting what Scripture teaches. As the famous twentieth century theologian C. S. Lewis pointed out in his book “Mere Christianity” — Reality is not neat, not obvious, and frequently not what we expect; reality oftentimes is something we would not have guessed… this is true of countless things in life. The truth is, what we know about the Trinity we know only because of God’s revelation of it in the Bible. As fallen creatures, we must be especially careful not to go beyond what Scripture teaches and misinterpret it… sadly, such is very common in the Christian world; it often twists reality and makes it what they want it to be or think it is, rather than what it is. This was very common in the ancient Jewish world; they simply embraced constructs of thought that meshed with human thinking, rather than what the Torah itself said (i.e., what the Pentateuch or first five books of the OT actually taught). Just because one struggles with accepting what God’s Word says, he doesn’t have the option of changing the discourse, and making it correspond with his own human reasoning or what he wants it to say; rather than letting his proud heart govern what he believes, he must humble himself before the Lord, that God might enlighten his heart as to the truth of what Scripture says — without humility, one will simply travel down the road of his own choosing. Now, though the Christian world is often frequently accused of believing in three gods, that is not at all what Scripture teaches. Christians, like believing Jews, are “monotheists,” i.e., they believe in one God. As Moses said to his people following their exodus from bondage in Egypt, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut 6:4-9). One of the reasons why Moses said that to his people was the polytheistic beliefs that existed in the Egyptian world where the Israelites had lived for over 400 years; many Jews had also become polytheistic in their thinking (i.e., they believed in a number of gods)… polytheism was a very common problem in the Jewish world all the way up until God sent them into captivity in Babylon… it was only then that the Jewish world finally, once and for all, abandoned polytheism… to this day, the Jewish people have never again become victims of polytheism. Down through the ages (basically 1300 to 500 BC) God told the Jewish people over and over and over again to “not worship any other God but Him” (cf.
Ex 20:1-6; 23:24; 34:14; Deut 5:9; 11:16; 30:17-20; 1 Kg 9:6-8; 2 Chron 7:19-20; Jer 25:6; 35:15; Dan 3:28). Five verses in Deuteronomy chapter six (verses 4-9) are known as the “Shema” in the Jewish world (it is the Hebrew word for “hear, hearken, listen, obey,” and is found 1160 times in the Bible) — the Shema has been cited daily as a creed by devout Jews now for more than 3,000 years. The Shema in the clearest language teaches us that “GOD IS ONE” and that this teaching was to be known by God’s people, and talked about by them, and taught to their children (Deut 6:4-9). The same truth is also emphatically stated in the New Testament — “there is no God but one (1 Cor 8:4)… there is but one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:6); conversely, said James (the brother of Jesus), “You believe that God is one, you do well” (Jam 2:19).

It should also be pointed out that the word “one” in the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 6:4) is “echad” — the word “one” there does not mean one in isolation, but one in unity. The fact is, the word “echad” is never used in the Hebrew Bible of a stark singular entity — it is used in speaking of one bunch of grapes, or in saying that the people of Israel responded as one person. After God brought the woman named Eve to Adam as his wife, He said the following to him: “A man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (cf. Gen 2:23-24); again, the word “echad” does not suggest that the man and woman were to become one person, but rather that in a divine way they do become one. The problem with the English language (and pretty much all other languages) is that it does not have the capacity to express the nature of the different existences within the Godhead. Obviously, the fact that God is one, yet exists in three persons, is not a construct of thought that any human being can fully grasp. Some have adventured to compare the triune nature of God to “light, heat and air” – though each of those elements are distinct, it is not possible to have one without the other here on earth; together they make up the environment in which we have our being. The interesting thing about this illustration is that the Bible speaks of each of these elements in relation to God — “God is light” (cf. 1 Jn 1:5)… “God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29)… “God is air or wind; it blows where it wills” (cf. Jn 3:8).

Though the foregoing does not adequately define the triune nature of God, in a way it helps shed a little light upon the subject. Interestingly enough, other people speak of the triune nature of man and the fact that man actually has a triune nature — that he is body, soul and spirit; with that in mind, since we were created in God’s image (Gen 1:26), some seek to identify Jesus with the body, God the Father with the soul, and the Holy Spirit with the spirit… though that may not accurately define the trinitarian ideal, it is a rather interesting thought. Keep in mind, Scripture teaches that God is “spirit” (Jn 4:24), thus we are “spiritual creatures,” who are relational, have the capacity to reason, have an intellect, have emotion, and have a will. Again, though none of us can understand God completely, He has revealed truths about Himself to us in Scripture in a way that we can understand… as Christians we should want to understand God’s revelation of His own character as clearly as possible. Remember, the Trinity is central to all that we believe; thus it is important for us to believe it… so carefully contemplate all of the
following verses; you’ll notice I basically quote just one verse to help you see the integrity of that construct, and then list a number of other verses for you read on your own —

- **There is only One God** – “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (cf. 1 Tim 2:5); also read Deut 6:4; Is 44:6; 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22; 46:9; Rom 3:30; Cor 8:6; Jam 2:19.

- **The Plurality of God in the OT** – Said God, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (cf. Gen 1:26); also read Gen 1:26; 3:22; Is 6:8; and Ps 110.

- **The Trinity of God in the NT** – At Jesus’ baptism, all three persons of the Trinity were involved (cf. Matt 3 and Mk 1). Conversely, Jesus commands believers to “be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (cf. Mt 28:19). Also read Rom 8:3-4; 8:16; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Heb 2:3-4; 9:13-14; 1 Pet 1:2; 1 Jn 4:13-14; Jude 1:20.

- **The Father is God** – “There is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him” (cf. 1 Cor 8:6a). Also read Gen 1; Jn 8:42; 14:26; 4:21-23; 6:27; 17:3; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3.

- **The Son is God** – “In the last days God has spoken to us in His Son… and He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (cf. Heb 1:3); also read Jn 14:9; Col 2:9; Heb 1:8; Jn 1:1-4, 14, 18; Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:8; 13:8; Jn 5:17-23, 26; 10:30-39; 12:37, 41; 20:28; Mt 28:9; Acts 14:8ff; Rom 8:3; 9:5; 1 Cor 8:4-6; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet 1:1; 1 Jn 4:2; Is 6:9-11; 7:14; 9:16; 20:28-29.

- **The Holy Spirit is God** – Peter said to Ananias, who had tried to deceive the apostles: “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?.... You have not lied to men but to God” (cf. Acts 5:3-4); also read Acts 13:2; Ps 139:7-8; 1 Cor 2:10. The Bible is also clear that only God can give spiritual life (1 Jn 3:9); Jesus said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn 3:5-6); also read Micah 3:8; Acts 1:8; Rom 14:17; 15: 13, 19; Heb 9:14; Is 40:13-14; Gen 1:2; Ps 104:30; Mt 3:16-17; 28:20; Jn 14:16; 2 Cor 3:16-18.

- **The Creator is a Trinity** – At creation, the Father spoke the commands that caused things to come into existence (Gen 1:1)... and the Spirit of God moved
over the surface of the waters (Gen 1:2)… and Jesus was the agent of creation, through whom all things came into existence (Jn 1:1-3, 14); also read Heb 1:2; and Col 1:13, 16-17.

I have written extensively on the importance of “believing divine truth and what Scripture says” in numerous studies; should one defer to human reason, he will misinterpret much of what Scripture says… thus his faith will be deficient and lack a significant degree of integrity. Obviously, if one rejects certain aspects of divine truth, his faith will not fully coincide with what Scripture teaches. If you would like to access what I have written on this subject, let me encourage you to read the first 20 pages of a study I did titled, “A Theology of Suffering & Faith” — you can find it under the Additional Studies Link on my website: www.thetransformedsoul.com When one understands the significance of “the languages of Scripture,” he will not only grow in his understanding of Scripture, he will grow greatly in his appreciation of Scripture and his love for God — the Greek language is an absolutely incredible language; as such it gives us great assurance of the truth. In short, that is why one must study Greek and Hebrew in seminary, that his faith might be grounded in the Word, and not human thinking. Again, let me encourage you to read the first 20 pages of the study I just mentioned. The important point is not whether we fully understand the essence of divine truth and the Trinity, but whether we will believe what the Bible has to say about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and about their relationship to each other. Because the Christian world at large is not in wide-spread agreement on numerous theological issues, many Christians struggle with why that is the case; thus they even question what they also believe. The answer to that problem is this: if one aligns his thinking with the fullness of what Scripture teaches, his theology will be a biblical theology… on the other hand, if one values human logic over the fullness of what Scripture teaches, his theology will not be grounded in the truth and have a biblical foundation. It’s important to remember that nearly two-thirds of the Christian world (i.e., those who profess to be Christians) are not really born-again Christians; so to think that all professing Christians should be in agreement, is to completely misjudge the so-called “Christian world;” it is a mix of believers and unbelievers, thus there is great variance in what they believe. Such was the case back in the first century Jewish world… though they all professed to believe in the God of Israel, only five-percent at most were genuine believers, due to the Pharisical teaching of the Jewish rabbis which ultimately distorted what Scripture teaches… thus the vast majority of the Jewish world walked in darkness — to them “identifying with their father Abraham” and “compliance with the Law” was that which defined their faith. Contrary to what they believed, the purpose of the Law has never been to make one righteous… it was given to reveal one’s sinfulness (i.e., one’s unrighteousness — read Rom 3:19-20; 7:7; 8:2-4; Gal 2:16; 3:10-14, 24); though the Law reflects the perfect righteousness of God, it also reveals the unrighteousness of man. The long and short of it is this — our theology must be grounded in the truths of Scripture; we do not have the option of making our theology the product of human thought, or the product of just a few select passages that can easily be misinterpreted, because one has not considered the context of those particular passage.
The reality is, our theology as believers must be grounded in God’s inerrant Word! The primary problem for many in the Christian world is that they simply do not know what God’s Word teaches, because they have not been properly taught what it teaches, and because they have not invested much time in determining what it teaches. The truth is, this matter of theology is really not that difficult; all one must do is humbly study what Scripture teaches, which means “embracing a contextual understanding of what it teaches.” If one will humbly reflect upon the teaching of Scripture, his theology will soon conform to what it teaches, because God’s Spirit will be working in his heart. It should be noted, when someone ignores the context of a particular passage, or argues against something that Scripture teaches, it becomes very evident to genuine believers that that person’s theology is not at all biblical in its orientation. Again, should someone state something that runs counter to what Scripture teaches, one can be sure that all such thinking is erroneous and does not coincide with divine truth; though human thinking at times can be very clever, if it is antithetical to what Scripture teaches, it is heresy, and does not at all coincide with divine truth. The Christian world doesn’t claim brilliance, it is simply humble and believes in God’s divine revelation, which, incredible as it may seem, does possess a level of divine brilliance that transcends human thought (cf. Ps 19:7-8; 119:97-104; Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Jam 3:17; 1 Pet 1:24-25; 2 Pet 1:20-21). It should be noted, there are a number of publishing companies in the Christian world here in our country who only publish books by individuals who align their thinking with what Scripture teaches; that is, many publishing houses have a very strong theological mandate that they will not compromise on — that should be easily understood by genuine born-again Christians; why would a so-called Christian organization publish something that does not coincide with what Scripture teaches? If they are truly governed by men & women who believe in the lordship of Christ, they would never publish something that was contrary to what Scripture teaches. To mention a few of the most highly acclaimed publishing houses — they are Zondervan Publishing, Baker Book House, Thomas Nelson Publishing, Tyndale House Publishers, InterVarsity Press, Moody Press, Baker Academic, and Holman Bible Publishers. By the way, if you are struggling with some theological constructs because of some book you are reading, look at the publishing house and inquire as to its respect in the Christian world.

It should also be noted, that the various “Church Councils” that were held down through the centuries, have also been judged by their respect for the integrity of Scripture and the ancient biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek. When one aligns his thinking with the teachings of Scripture, his theology will be biblical in its orientation, not simply a product of human reason. Having a biblical theology is a matter of embracing the totality of what Scripture teaches, and not simply taking a few verses out of context and being swayed by human thinking. Furthermore, if our theology is to be grounded in Scripture, we must believe in the integrity of Scripture and the totality of what it teaches — let’s say that is a problem for you, then you need to first study the inerrancy of Scripture so that you might believe in the integrity of Scripture... the integrity of Scripture is a correlative of the inerrancy of Scripture — one cannot have one without the other. When one fails to believe
in the inerrancy of Scripture, he will make human thought the ultimate authority as to what is true & what is not true. When one truly believes that Scripture is “God’s divine revelation to man,” he will believe it and not question it (i.e., not question the integrity of it); instead, he will seek to understand it by studying it. If one does not have confidence in what God’s word says, his faith will be a very remedial faith (cf. Heb 4:12; 11:1; Jn 8:31-32; 17:17; Acts 17:11; Rom 8:24-25; 2 Cor 5:7; 2 Tim 2:15). Remember, God’s word is “GOD’S WORD” (not man’s word)… it is “GOD BREATHE” (i.e., it is “GOD INSPIRED” (cf. 2 Tim 3:16), not the product of human thinking. Scripture is “not a matter of man’s own interpretation… or an act of human will… it is the product of the Holy Spirit moving in the minds of men” (cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21). Now, since believing divine truth “requires humility” (i.e., seeing oneself for who he truly is – a fallen creature), it is at that point where we must each begin; as the brother of Jesus (James) states, “In humility receive the word implanted” (cf. Jam 1:21; 4:6; Eph 4:22). Down through the years the believing community brought together hundreds of bishops and church leaders a number of times, to give definition as to what Scripture teaches on some particular subject; obviously, without believing in the integrity of Scripture, these men would never have come together and humbly interpreted things as they did; it was the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives by which God gave them the ability clearly understand divine truth (cf. Acts 16:14; 1 Cor 12:3; 1 Th 1:5; Jn 14:26; 16:13); again, understanding Scripture has never been a matter of human brilliance — it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the minds and hearts of men. Beloved, without one humbling himself before the Lord, one will embrace “foolish thinking” rather than “divine thinking,” that’s been man’s problem since the beginning of time (cf. 1 Cor 1:18, 25; 2:10-16; 3:19). Since Scripture is God’s revelation to us, either we approach it with great reverence and humility, or we will struggle greatly with understanding and accepting it. Remember, God only gives grace to the humble (cf. Jam 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5)… without grace we would not come to know the truth. For those of you who are truly born-again believers, it should be pretty evident to you that divine truth is not something that fallen creatures can grasp (Scripture states that over and over again); it is only by the Holy Spirit that one’s heart can be opened to the truth, and by His grace that one can come to understand the truth. With the foregoing in mind, divine revelation must be the foundation of every doctrinal truth that we believe. Probably the ten most significant theological doctrines we must grow to understand are these:

1. The Eternality of God
2. The Sovereignty of God
3. The Triune Nature of God
4. The Unconditional Love of God
5. The Inerrant Sinfulness of Man
6. The Integrity and Inerrancy of Scripture
7. The Significance of the Law
8. The Significance of the Cross
9. The Essence of Faith
10. The Purpose of Signs, Wonders & Miracles
At this point let’s return to the subject at hand – [the triune nature of God] – if Jesus was and is not **GOD**, then He was simply a temporal creature that God created to purchase our redemption (i.e., to die for our sins that we might be forgiven); though that may be somewhat reasonable to some people, that would mean that God simply made some creature, independent of Himself, to die for our sins; thus He never genuinely experienced any significant pain on our behalf (i.e., it essentially didn’t cost Him anything, because all He did was make a creature who didn’t previously exist to atone for us and pay our debt). God could have made billions of creatures to independently die for each one of us, if indeed it would have been efficacious, and He could have made billions of these creatures in the blinking of an eye; again, that would have meant it really wouldn’t have cost Him anything personally. Such an action would be akin to paying a **“billion dollar dept” for someone**, and simply doing so by making a **“one billion dollar bill with a little machine that He invented,”** and handing it over to that person — in other words, there would be absolutely no identification on His part with the horrific debt that particular person experienced, and the value of the money in God’s eyes would have been completely insignificant; almost meaningless. By the way, that would make for a very weird impersonal god. Thank God we have a **“loving compassionate God!”** who loves us with an unconditional everlasting love! and who fully identifies with us and all of our needs and weaknesses! (cf. Heb 4:15). One of the great preachers here in America in the twentieth century was **Dr. James Montgomery Boice**: in his work **“Foundations of the Christian Faith”** by InterVarsity Press, he summarized what the Bible has to say about the Triune Nature of God with five propositions:

1. **There is but one living and true God who exists in three persons** — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Here we note a plurality within the Godhead that is even alluded to in the Old Testament (i.e., prior to the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon all of God’s people). Consider the following passages: **“God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”** (Gen 1:26). **“Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language”** (Gen 11:7). **“I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’”** (Isa 6:8). In other passages, a heavenly being described as **“the angel of the Lord”** is, on the one hand identified with God, yet on the other hand, is also distinguished from God (cf. Gen 16:7, 10, 13). An even stranger case is the appearance of the three angels to Abraham and Lot — the angels are sometimes spoken of as three and sometimes as one… moreover, when they speak, it is the Lord who, we are told, speaks to Lot and Abraham (cf. Gen 18). There is also the words of the prophet Agur in Proverbs 30:4 — in it he speaks about the nature of Almighty God, confessing his ignorance of Him: **“Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth?”** Then comes, **“What is His name, and what is His Son’s name? Surely you know!”** In that day the prophet
only knew the Father’s name (the name Jehovah); today we know the name of His Son as well (the Lord Jesus Christ).

2. **The Lord Jesus Christ is fully divine, being the second person of the Godhead who became man.** The deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is taught in many crucial passages. A very significant one is the teachings of John chapter one and Genesis chapter one: “**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth**” (Gen 1:1)… “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**… all things came into being by Him… **and the Word became flesh,** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:1, 3, 14). And then there is Paul’s description: “**Christ existed in the form of God** (i.e., He possessed the fullness of deity)… **He emptied Himself, and took on the form of a bondservant, and was made in the likeness of men**… and **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross**” (Phil 2:5-8). Said Jesus to His disciples, “**I and the Father are one**” (Jn 10:30; 5:18; 17:21); conversely, He said, “**He who has seen Me has seen the Father**” (Jn 14:9). It should be noted, the second person of the Trinity “became a human being” (i.e., He became flesh); prior to His incarnation, He was not a human being, and neither is He a human being today (i.e., He is no longer a fleshly creature). Jesus was made in the likeness of man that He might redeem him & conform him to His own image (cf. Phil 2:6-11; Jn 1:14; Lk 2:11; Rom 1:3-4; Gal 4:4; 1 Jn 3:2, 16, 4:2; 2 Jn 1:7; Acts 1:9).

3. **The Holy Spirit is fully divine.** It was the Lord Jesus who clearly taught about the nature of the Holy Spirit. Said Jesus, “**I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth**” (Jn 14:16-17). When Ananias and his wife tried to deceive the believing world, Peter told him that “**he had lied to the Holy Spirit, not men, but God**” (Acts 5:3-4). This understanding of the Holy Spirit is supported by the fact that distinctly divine attributes are often ascribed to Him — everlasting (Heb 9:14), omnipresence (Ps 139:7-10), omniscience (1 Cor 2:10-11), omnipotence (Lk 1:35), and others.

4. **While each is fully divine, the three persons of the Godhead are related to each other in a way that implies some differences.** It is usually said in Scripture that the Father (not the Spirit) sent the Son into the world (cf. Mk 9:37; Mt 10:40; Gal 4:4), but both the Father and the Son sent the Spirit (cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). In addition to the foregoing, it is usually said in Scripture that the Son is subject to the Father, for the Father sent Him, and that the Spirit is subject to both the Father and the Son, for He is sent into the world by both the Son and the Father. What is important to remember is that “subjection” does not imply inequality or inferiority; though some people may logically make that deduction, that is not what Scripture teaches… the reality is, all three members of the Godhead are “**the same in substance, and equal in power and glory,**” as the Westminster Shorter Catechism states.
5. **In the work of God the members of the Godhead work together**, yet Christians commonly divide the work of God among each of the three persons, applying the work of **creation** to the Father, the work of **redemption** to the Son, and the work of **sanctification** to the Holy Spirit. A more correct way to address this, however, is to say that each member of the Trinity cooperates in each of these works. One example is the **work of creation** — it is said of God the **Father**, **“Of old Thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands”** (Ps 102:25); and **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”** (Gen 1:1). It is written of the **Son**, **“For in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible”** (Col 1:16-17); and **“All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made”** (Jn 1:3). It is written of the **Holy Spirit**, **“The Spirit of God has made me”** (Job 33:4). In the same way, the **Incarnation** is shown to have been accomplished by the three persons of the Godhead working in unity, though only the Son became flesh (Lk 1:35). At the baptism of the Lord Jesus all three were present — the Son came up out of the water, the Spirit descended in the appearance of a dove, and the voice of the Father was heard from heaven declaring, **“This is My Son, with whom I am well pleased”** (Mt 3:16-17). In addition to the foregoing, all three persons were present in the **atonement** — “Christ… through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God” (Heb 9:14). The **resurrection of Christ** is likewise attributed sometimes to the Father (Acts 2:32), sometimes to the Son (Jn 10:17-18), and sometimes to the Holy Spirit (Rom 1:4). So we should not be surprised that our salvation as a whole is also attributed to each of the three persons of the Trinity — **“chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood”** (1 Pet 1:2). Nor are we surprised that God’s people are sent forth into all the world to **“make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”** (Mt 28:19).

Again, though we can say meaningful things about the Trinity, there is still much that transcends human understanding. We don’t believe the doctrine of the Trinity because we understand it, we believe it because the Bible teaches it and because the Holy Spirit Himself witnesses within our heart that it is so. Crucial to the biblical doctrine of God is **His Trinitarian nature** — God is one in being or essence who exists eternally in three distinct coequal persons. Remember, the doctrine of the Trinity flows from the self-revelation of God. Though God used man to write it, **“not a single word of Scripture is a matter of a man’s own thinking, his own interpretation, or his own will, but the work of the Holy Spirit moving in his heart”** (cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21). As stated earlier, **“All Scripture is inspired by God”** (cf. 2 Tim 3:16). **Though God is one** (Gal 3:20; Jam 2:19), both the **Father** (Jn 6:27; 1 Cor 8:6), the **Son** (Jn 1:1; 14; 9; Col 2:9) and the **Holy Spirit** (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor 3:16) **are all fully God**… in spite of the fact they are actually distinct from each other. The doctrine of the **Trinity** developed out of the church’s desire to safeguard the biblical truths of the God of heaven and earth; that is, the transcendent Lord over all of history. Ever since **Sabellius** and **Arius** preached erroneous doctrines back in the third century AD, the triune nature of God has been under attack; the thinking of these men is still strongly promoted by organ-
izations like the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” — they deny the eternality of the Son of God and the doctrine of the Trinity, and make Christ an intermediate being between the Creator and creation, not divine deity. They take the position that the doctrine of the Trinity was forced upon the church a few hundred years after the first century. Since the days of the apostles themselves in the first century, the leaders of the church at times came together to “clarify the teachings of Scripture” — the first gathering took place at the “Council of Jerusalem” around 50 AD, to address the issue of observance of biblical law in the early Christian community (read Acts 15:1-29). By the third century the name “council” came to refer to the meetings of bishops for the administration of the church; all councils in the believing community were naturally believed to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 18:20; Jn 14:16-17, 26; 1 Cor 2:12; 1 Jn 2:27)… when we humble ourselves before the Lord and His inerrant Word, the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth; without humility, we will not experience the grace needed to believe. Sabellianism was an influential theological movement back in the second and third century; it rejected the triune nature of God. The renowned theologian Tertullian vigorously opposed that movement around 200 AD; remember, this was only about 130 years after the formation of the Church by the apostles. Historians believe it was Tertullian who first used the term “Trinity” near the end of the second century, to reference the totality of what Scripture teaches about who God is. Arianism was another influential theological movement back then — it denied the eternality of Christ (i.e., the eternality of the Son of God) as the pre-incarnate Logos; i.e., it denied that the Son was coeternal with the Father; Arius believed that since Christ was begotten, He must have had a beginning; therefore He could not have been coequal with the Father. Though the Son of God was made in the likeness of men about 2,000 years ago, to redeem man of his sinfulness (cf. Phil 2:6-7; Jn 1:14; Jn 8:58; Rom 8:3; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 4:4-5; Heb 2:17), He now no longer exists in the state that He did at the time of His incarnation; He is now back in His eternal state (cf. Jn 17:1, 5; Mk 16:19; Eph 1:20; Phil 2:9; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22). Regarding the heretical teachings of Sabellius & Arias, all such thinking was condemned at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, and the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD; both of these councils maintained that Christ does not simply have intermediate status, but that He is of the same substance as the Father. The reality was, biblical Christianity eventually triumphed over the heretical doctrines of Sabellius and Arius and others.

It should be noted, though the majority of Christians down through the ages have read much of the Bible and have reflected upon what it teaches, only a small percentage of them have actually studied it in depth; remember, the printing press didn’t come into existence until the time of the Reformation in the 16th century, so very few people had a copy of the Bible in their home; the majority of people prior to that point didn’t even know how to read (by the way, the ancient world “memorized” numerous passages of Scripture because of their inability to read; and many of its teachings were actually put into musical lyrics that were also memorized; just like the psalms of Scripture in the ancient Jewish world). In spite of the foregoing, many people in our fallen world have seriously distorted what Scripture teaches (that’s how the Devil works in our world); in
spite of that, however, thousands of individuals since the first century have vigorously defended the integrity of divine truth & Christian doctrine as it is expressed in Scripture; obviously, studying Scripture is the will of God for the Christian world. As the apostle Paul told Timothy, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (cf. 2 Tim 2:15; Acts 17:11; 1 Pet 1:10; 2:2; 2 Pet 3:18); by the way, those emboldened words in that verse are emphatic in Greek. It should be noted, by the end of the second century “heresy” had become a menace in the Christian world, thus causing the Church to hold meetings and councils to refute the heretical views that were being promulgated by unbelievers… the leaders of the churches in Rome, Constantinople and Alexandria (those were the largest Christian communities in the Mediterranean world back then) brought together over a hundred Christian bishops to give clarity as to the essence of divine truth and what Scripture teaches. As the years went on, the Church at Rome back in 1302 (200 years prior to the Reformation) erroneously claimed that submission to the Roman Pontiff (i.e., the Roman Catholic Pope) was essential for salvation (incidentally, Pope John Paul II back in the 20th century did not agree with that statement; he said anyone who places his or her faith in Christ will go to heaven)… and then in 1869 the Church at Rome claimed that the Pope was infallible when he spoke from the chair on matters of faith. So just because professing Christians (not necessarily genuine born-again Christians) make certain claims, that does not validate those claims; what validates one’s claims is what Scripture teaches; and therein is the rub to many in the Christian world. Regardless of what position we may hold in this world, none of us have the authority to overrule the teachings of Scripture, or add to those teachings (as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormon Church, and numerous other cults have done). Should we make a claim that goes against what the Bible teaches, we are making ourselves, or some little group of people we may identify with (but not God), the ultimate determinant of reality; beloved, we cannot go down that road no matter what the situation may be… we must defer to God and what His Word teaches.

Throughout history, God’s people (or so they thought themselves to be) “changed the discourse” as to what Scripture teaches, and fell prey to diabolical heresies (cross reference the book of Judges – in particular the last verse of Judges); this ultimately is what occurs when one refuses to humble himself before the Lord — he simply lets “human reason” determine reality in his life. Nearly every Christian institution down through the ages has ultimately collapsed and deferred to the thinking of men… just because these institutions were established by born-again believers, does not at all mean those institutions would continue to reflect the integrity of those individuals who were the founders of those ministries. In that regard, I’m reminded of the famous “Ivy League Schools” here in the US; they were all pretty much founded by strong Christians back in the 17th, 18th & 19th centuries, yet today these schools are pretty much “anti-Christian.” Why’s that? Because proud individuals (not genuine believers) ultimately ended up controlling the throne-room in those schools, and “a proud heart” does not mesh with divine thinking. Such has been the path that several Popes have traveled down through...
the ages, as well as the pastors and leaders of thousands of churches, colleges and other Christian institutions. When I was in seminary back in the 70s, I asked one of my professors what the oldest ministries were in our country that still had a strong biblical foundation; though he was not able to answer that question, he did say there were probably very few old institutions still in existence that are strongly grounded in Scripture. Since that is probably the case, the Christian world is constantly at work developing and building new ministries all over the world. Just because a particular ministry was founded by a dedicated Christian, does not mean that particular ministry is going to go on and on ad infinitum without succumbing to Satan and his minions — the leadership of all such ministries must continue to be individuals who are highly-dedicated to the Lordship of Christ; if they are not, they will collapse and succumb to the demonic world. Remember, Satan is doing every he can to destroy Christian ministries all over the world. The Papacy in Rome has stumbled over and over and over again down through the ages — why’s that? because proud individuals ended up taking the thrown and ruling over the Catholic Church. By the way, Catholics have never uniformly reverenced the Papacy to the degree that most Evangelical Protestants believe; yet, outright repudiation of the Papacy has been very rare. The present Pope (Pope Francis) doesn’t believe in hell, yet many in the Catholic world strongly disagree with him, and believe that he should be removed as Pope. The Roman Catholic Church is not nearly as united as some in the Protestant world make it out to be.

Now, in closing… regarding our triune God, were it not for the love of the Father, we would never have come to know the love of the Son, and experience the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8; Eph 1:4; 2:4-5; Col 1:13-14; Titus 3:5-6; 1 Pet 1:3; 1 Jn 3:16; 4:10).