



VI. THE NATURE OF GOD

A. Introduction to the Trinity

1. The scriptural revelation of God comes in four ways:
 - a. The Bible displays the works of God (Psalm 104:24)
 - b. The Bible declares the names of God (Exodus 6:1-3; Exodus 33:17-19)
 - c. The Bible defines the attributes of God (Psalm 145:3-9)
 - d. The Bible discloses the essence of God in the Trinity (1 John 5:7)
2. The trinity, being a name we give to our best understanding of the inner being of God, must fall far short of the reality.
3. The doctrine of the trinity is beyond human understanding. “That three beings should be one being, is a proposition which contradicts reason, that is, our reason; but it does not from thence follow, that it cannot be true; for there are many propositions which contradict our reason, and yet they are demonstrably true. One is, that very first principle of all religion, the being of God. For, that any thing should exist without a cause, or that any thing should be the cause of its own existence, are propositions equally contradictory to our reason; yet one of them must be true, or nothing could have existed. All these difficulties arise from our imagining that the mode of existence of all beings must be similar to our own, that is, that they must exist in time and space, and hence proceed our embarrassments on the subject. We know that no two beings, with whose modes of existence we are acquainted, can exist on the same point and space, and that therefore they cannot be one. But how far beings whose mode of existence bears no relation to time and space, may be united we cannot comprehend. And, therefore, the possibility of such a union we cannot positively deny.” –from *50 Years Among the Baptists* by David Benedict (p.154-155).
4. The importance of the study of the Trinity
 - a. A true understanding of God and His working cannot be obtained without some understanding of the Trinity. It is one of the two great mysteries of the New Testament (along with Jesus being both God and man). We need to have a basic knowledge of this critical doctrine.
 - b. It is a doctrine much taken for granted today. This causes many Bible students to accept its validity on the basis of a couple of simple proof texts without any depth of knowledge of the historical and doctrinal issues involved. This shallow understanding in turn opens many up to the influence of false teachers who know the subject from their standpoint much better than the orthodox believers. Historically within a group, a doctrine is established with much study and depth of understanding. Then, with each proceeding generation the knowledge



of that doctrine (though still believed) is more and more shallow. Finally, many are led astray by false teachers who know their doctrine much better than the followers of true doctrine.

- c. It is opposed by the major cults (like the Mormons and the Jehovah Witnesses) and we need to be ready to give an answer to them of what we believe (1 Peter 3:15).
- d. Among major world religions (especially Judaism and Islam), it is one of the most maligned doctrines of Christianity. It can also be taken as permission for more than one god by polytheistic religions (like Hinduism and Buddhism). Therefore, in order to witness to people who follow these religions, we must have a thorough understanding of the trinity.

5. Problems concerning the doctrine of the trinity

- a. Clearly, the doctrine of the trinity in its fullness is beyond human understanding. Can we believe a doctrine that we cannot understand?
- b. How can one God be found in three persons?
- c. If there are three distinct persons who each are God, are we still polytheists believing in more than one God?
- d. The doctrine of the trinity is not found in any complete statement in the Bible; the word, trinity, is not even used in the Bible. How can we believe such a crucial doctrine that is not directly stated in scripture?

B. The Basic Proofs of the Trinity

1. God is one. The oneness of God can be best seen in the three biblical senses of God's oneness.
 - a. His numerical oneness; that is, there is only one God.
 - 1) He is by number one Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29)
 - 2) He is only one God (Malachi 2:10; Mark 12:32; Galatians 3:20; James 2:19).
 - b. His uniqueness; that is, there is none other like Him.
 - 1) God is the only God; that is, there is none else beside Him (Exodus 20:1-4; Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 1 Kings 8:60; Psalm 86:10).
 - 2) God is the only God who is really God; all else are impostors (1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 7:22; Isaiah 44:6-8; Jeremiah 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6).
 - c. His unity; that is, there is no division within the Godhead.
 - 1) In His works
 - a) God is the only source of all creation (2 Kings 19:15; Nehemiah 9:6).
 - b) God is the only source of salvation (Isaiah 45:22; Zechariah 14:9; 1 Timothy 2:5).



- 2) In the trinity
 - a) The oneness of the Son with the Father (John 10:30)
 - b) The oneness of the Spirit with the Son (John 16:13)
 - c) Note: this will be dealt with in the section on the relationships within the trinity.

2. God is three persons.
 - a. The plurality of God in the Old Testament
 - 1) The plurality of God in pronoun usage
 - a) The plurality of God in creation
 - i. “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26-27)
 - ii. Note: as God is a three in one being, so is man (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
 - b) The plurality of God at the time of the fall: “Behold, the man is become as one of us” (Genesis 3:22)
 - c) The plurality of God at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:5-8)
 - d) The plurality of God at the call of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8)
 - 2) Other instances of the plurality of God
 - a) “The LORD said unto my Lord” (Psalm 110:1)
 - b) God to save them by the LORD their God (Hosea 1:6-7)
 - c) The Lord as messenger and the LORD of hosts (Malachi 3:1)
 - b. The suggestions of trinity in the Old Testament
 - 1) God, the Spirit, and the Word (Genesis 1:1-3)
 - 2) The threefold priestly blessing (Numbers 6:24-26); compare with the threefold blessing of 2 Corinthians 13:14.
 - 3) The LORD, His Word, and the breath of His mouth (Psalm 33:6)
 - 4) O God, thy God, and the oil (Psalm 45:6-7)
 - 5) God as judge, lawgiver, and king (Isaiah 33:22).
 - 6) The Lord GOD, his Spirit, and the Sent One (Isaiah 48:16).
 - 7) Threefold references to the LORD (Jeremiah 33:2; Daniel 9:19)
 - 8) The Spirit, the LORD, and the Prophet (Isaiah 61:1)
 - 9) The Lord, the Angel of His Presence, and His Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:7-10)
 - 10) The threefold declarations of holiness (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8)
 - 11) The LORD, the Spirit remaining with them, and the Desire of all nations (Messiah) coming to the Temple (Haggai 2:5-7).
 - c. The identification of the three distinct persons of the Godhead in the Old Testament.
 - 1) Father (Isaiah 63:16; 64:8)
 - 2) Spirit (Job 33:4; Isaiah 48:16; 61:1)
 - 3) Son
 - a) As the Son (Psalm 2:7; Proverbs 30:4; Isaiah 9:6)
 - b) As the Word (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 147:18)
 - c) As Wisdom (Proverbs 8:22-30)



- d) As the Angel of the Lord (Genesis 24:40; 48:16; Exodus 3:1-6; 23:20-23; Isaiah 63:9)
- d. The manifestations of trinity in the New Testament
 - 1) Benjamin Warfield, in his *Biblical Doctrines* (p.141-142), summarizes the revelation of the Trinity in the two testaments: “The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus, the Old Testament revelation is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged.”
 - 2) In the creation of the world
 - a) The Father, of whom are all things (1 Corinthians 8:4)
 - b) Jesus Christ, by whom are all things (1 Corinthians 8:4; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2)
 - c) The Spirit, who moved in creation (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30)
 - 3) In the birth of Christ (Luke 1:35)
 - a) The Holy Ghost
 - b) The Highest
 - c) The Son of God
 - 4) At the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:16-17)
 - a) Jesus baptized
 - b) Spirit like a dove
 - c) Voice of the Father from heaven
 - 5) In the resurrection of Christ
 - a) The power of Christ to give His life and to take it again (John 10:17-18)
 - b) Raised up by God (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30)
 - c) Quickened by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18)
 - 6) In the exaltation of Christ (Acts 2:33).
 - 7) In the salvation of the lost (1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 2Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 9:14).
- e. The statements of trinity in the New Testament
 - 1) In the formula for baptism (Matthew 28:19)
 - 2) The Father, the Son, and the Comforter (John 14:16, 26; 15:26)
 - 3) In the work of the ministry (Romans 15:16, 30).
 - 4) In the working of the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-6); Note: in the epistles of Paul, he normally (as here) uses “God” to refer to the Father, “Lord” to refer to the Son, and “Spirit” to refer to the Holy Ghost.
 - 5) In the blessing of Paul (2 Corinthians 13:14)
 - 6) In the adoption of the believer (Galatians 4:6)
 - 7) In our access to God (Ephesians 2:18)
 - 8) In the oneness of the Godhead (Ephesians 4:4-6)



- 9) In the election of the believer (1 Peter 1:2)
 - 10) In our faith in the incarnation (1 John 4:2)
 - 11) In the formula of John (1 John 5:7)
 - 12) In the life of the believer (Jude 1:20-21)
 - 13) In the introduction of Revelation (Revelation 1:4-6)
3. Each of the three persons is fully God.
 - a. The deity of the Father (John 8:41; 20:17; Romans 15:6; James 3:9)
 - b. The deity of the Son (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1-3; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20)
 - c. The deity of the Spirit (Acts 5:3-4; Hebrews 2:4)
 4. Each of the three persons is distinct from the others.
 - a. Between the Father and the Son (John 5:23, 30, 36-39; 17:25)
 - b. Between the Father and the Spirit (Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 104:30)
 - c. Between the Son and the Spirit (John 14:16-17)
 - d. Note: one doctrinal error argues that the Spirit is merely an extension of the power of the Father and not a separate person of the Godhead. It is true that the Spirit often works as an extension of the Father, but He is also referred to in ways that require Him to be a separate person.
 - 1) He is continually referred to as a separate person alongside the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; see above passages).
 - 2) Jesus speaks of the Spirit as a person (John 14:17).
 - 3) The Spirit speaks in the first person as "I" (Acts 10:19-20; 13:2).
 - 4) The Spirit has a mind (Romans 8:27).
 - 5) The Spirit does things that only a person would do: teaching, comforting, revealing, interceding, speaking, etc.
 - 6) The Spirit can react to others. For example, He can be vexed (Isaiah 63:10) and grieved (Ephesians 4:30).
 5. The three persons are related as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Note: this is clearly seen in the proof given above.

C. The Doctrine of the Trinity Illustrated

1. Scripture, nature, and human knowledge are filled with examples of related threes: triads. They do not prove the trinity, but they do demonstrate the significance of three in God's idea of being. In fact, three is clearly the number of perfect being in scripture (with seven being the number of perfect work). Here are some examples of triads.
 - a. Examples from the Bible
 - 1) Prophet, priest, and king (1 Kings 1:32, 45; Jeremiah 13:13).



- 2) Revelation, inspiration, and preservation.
- 3) Holiness, truth, and love. These are the central expressions of God's attributes under which all other attributes can be found. Using different words, this triad is found in numerous passages: 2 Chronicles 31:20; Psalm 45:4; Psalm 85:10; Ephesians 5:9; 2 Timothy 1:7.
- 4) Threefold repetition of "holy" in Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8.
- 5) God as life (John 14:6), light (1 John 1:5), and love (1 John 4:8, 16).
- 6) Signs, wonders, and mighty deeds (2 Corinthians 12:12).
- 7) Heaven, earth, and sea (Exodus 20:11).
- 8) Sun, moon, and stars (Deuteronomy 4:19; Psalm 148:3).
- 9) Man as spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
- 10) Law, prophets, and psalms (Luke 24:44).
- 11) Three stories in Noah's ark (Genesis 6:16).
- 12) Three sendings of birds after the flood (Genesis 8:6-12).
- 13) Three sons of Noah (Genesis 6:10).
- 14) Three visitors to Abraham (Genesis 18:1-2).
- 15) Three original patriarchs (Exodus 3:6).
- 16) Three divisions of the tabernacle: courtyard, holy place, holy of holies.
- 17) Three early feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:4-14).
- 18) Three later feasts: Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:23-44).
- 19) Three sweet-savor and free-will offerings: Burnt, Meat, and Peace.
- 20) Leper cleansed with the placing of blood and oil on the ear, the thumb, and the toe (Leviticus 14:14, 17).
- 21) Staples of food given as corn, wine, and oil (Deuteronomy 11:14; 2 Chronicles 32:28; Nehemiah 13:12; Hosea 2:22; Joel 1:10; 2:19).
- 22) In the ministry of Christ: three years of ministry, three temptations, three times the Father speaks from heaven, three disciples in the inner circle, and three crosses.
- 23) Three great commandments of love: love God, love neighbor, love the brethren (Matthew 22:36-40; John 13:24-25).
- 24) The gospel: death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
- 25) Faith, hope, and charity (1 Corinthians 13:13).
- 26) Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life (1 John 2:16).
- 27) The world, the flesh, and the devil
- 28) Thoughts, intents, and actions (Hebrews 4:12).
- 29) Lust, sin, and death (James 1:14-15).
- b. Examples from nature
 - 1) Three dimensions: height, width, and depth.
 - 2) Three aspects of time: past, present, and future.
 - 3) From physics: field, wave, and particle.

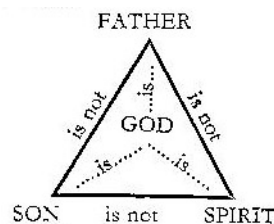


- 4) Three states of matter: solid, liquid, and gas.
 - 5) Primary colors: red, blue, and yellow (from which all other colors can be made).
 - 6) In music: melody, harmony, and rhythm.
 - 7) In music: the three primary chords (I, IV, and V).
 - 8) Three parts of the egg: shell, white, and yoke.
 - 9) Three parts of a tree: trunk, root, and branches (Romans 11:17).
 - 10) In the family: husband, wife, and child (1 Samuel 30:22).
- c. Examples from human thought
- 1) Beginning, middle, and end.
 - 2) In logic: major premise, minor premise, and conclusion.
 - 3) Hegel's thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.
 - 4) In language: subject, verb, and object.
 - 5) Three tenses: past, present, and future.
 - 6) Three persons in pronouns: first (I, we), second (you), and third (he, they).
 - 7) In writing: introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - 8) In government: executive, legislative, and judicial.
 - 9) The classic trivium: grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic.

2. Illustrations of the Trinity

- a. The Trinity can be illustrated by thinking of God has one "What" and three "Whos." The one What is His essence; the Godhead. The three Whos are the three persons of the one What; or, of the Godhead. God has an unity of essence (what He really is; His essential nature) in a plurality of persons. "Since God is one in His basic essence, how can He also be three? First, it must be pointed out that 'one' and 'three' are not being used in the same sense. The word 'one' applies only to the nature of the divine being; there is only one God. The word 'three' refers to the three Persons or personal distinctions within the divine oneness. It is just as wrong to state that God is one Person as to claim that there are three gods." –from *The Virgin Birth* by Robert Gromacki (p.20).
- b. The Trinity can be illustrated mathematically by distinguishing between addition and multiplication.
- 1) Those who deny the Trinity look on it as addition: $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$. This, they correctly declare, is tritheism; or, a belief in three different gods.
 - 2) The Trinity can be illustrated by multiplication: $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. The trinity has three persons, but they are one God. They are like the number one cubed (1^3).
- c. The Trinity can be illustrated geometrically with a triangle. One triangle has three corners which are inseparable from and simultaneous to each other. The "divine mystery of the Trinity in Unity allows itself to be represented to the spiritual human eye by the mathematical figure

of the triangle... The church fathers had already pointed this out early in the history of Christianity. For of all forms the triangle is the first. Neither the point as a mere object of thought, nor the line as mere extension, has shape. But the triangle, though containing three lines and three corners, is of all forms the first, or, so to speak, form 'One,' that has completeness and unity, thus uniting in itself harmoniously the numbers three and one and therefore it was early employed as a symbol of the Godhead... The most detailed elaboration of the 'trinitarian' triangle was that by Raymond Lull, the great and well-known missionary to Moslems (died as martyr, 1315). It is a triangle with its centre of gravity and with lines which connect the corners of the three angles with this centre. At the corners and the centre of gravity there are the words 'Father, Son, Spirit, God,' and on the sides and lines there are the small words 'is' and 'is not.' This is to indicate that the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is not the Father. But the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God." –from *From Eternity to Eternity* by Erich Sauer (p.13-14).



- d. A moral illustration: "God is love (1 John 4:16). Love is the deepest element of His life, the innermost fount out of which His nature eternally flows forth, the creative centre that begets all His working and ruling. But love is a trinity...
- 1) "it always proceeds *from* the Lover:
 - 2) "it always moves *toward* the Beloved:
 - 3) "it always intertwines the two together through the common Spirit of *union*...
 - 4) "But the fact that three persons of the Godhead actually correspond to these three fundamental conceptions of the idea of God, this only the revelation of the eternal God Himself can make known. The Father is the One *out of* Himself existing, the Son is the One *to* Himself attaining, and the Spirit the One *in* Himself moving God. The Father is the Lover, the Son the Beloved, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Love." –from *The Dawn of World Redemption* by Erich Sauer (p.19).
- e. The nature of man is probably the most powerful biblical illustration of the Trinity.
- 1) Man was made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Very likely, the "image" has to do with the basic form of man's being and "likeness" has to do with basic qualities such as a



- sense of justice, an appreciation of beauty, an understanding of love, and other things.
- 2) Therefore, the image of God in man probably refers to man being a three-in-one being just as God is a three-in-one being. Man is made up of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
 - a) The body is that part of man which is seen. This matches Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the only person of the Godhead to be manifest in the flesh.
 - b) The soul of man is the center of control and matches much of what is said in scripture about the Father.
 - c) The spirit of man matches the Spirit of God.
 - 3) This illustration is not perfect. Man is certainly NOT three persons in one being. However, his body, soul, and spirit have some form of independent existence.
 - a) The body: death occurs when the spirit and soul leave the body. Yet, men commonly refer to a person being buried in a certain place--though it is just his body. And people speak of how good someone looks at the funeral home.
 - b) The soul: the Bible refers to the souls as being the people themselves. In Revelation 6:9-10, the souls of those who have been slain are seen and they cry unto God for vengeance. In Luke 16:24, the soul of the rich man in hell speaks and mentions his tongue.
 - c) The spirit: the spirits of men also have some sort of independent existence. By comparing Ecclesiastes 3:21 with Ecclesiastes 12:7, we see that the spirits of men return to God in heaven after they die.
 - 4) Yet, even though each part of man has a form of existence apart from the other parts, man is not fully complete unless all three parts are combined into one person.
 - a) By application, although the three persons of the Godhead seem to operate separately and distinctly, they work in perfect harmony and are one.
 - b) There was a time when they separated. The Son proceeded forth from the Father (John 8:42) and the Spirit proceeded forth from the Father and the Son (John 15:26).
 - c) There will also be a time when they come back together in full unity. 1 Corinthians 15:28 states, "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."
 - d) In the same way, the three parts of man may be separated for a time. But there will also be a time when the three will all be joined together again. This is called the resurrection.



D. The Relationships of the Trinity

1. Their mutual indwelling

- a. “Lorraine Boettner wrote: ‘The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can be distinguished, but they cannot be separated; for they each possess the same identical numerical substance or essence. They do not merely exist alongside of each other, as did Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, but they permeate and interpenetrate each other, are in and through each other.’ He further stated: ‘What the one knows, the others know; what the one desires, the others desire; and what the one wills, the others will. Independence and self-existence are not attributes of the individual persons, but of the Triune God.’” –from *The Virgin Birth* by Robert Gromacki (p.25).
- b. The scriptural teaching
 - 1) The Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father (John 10:38; John 14:10-11, 20; John 17:21).
 - 2) To see the Son is to see the Father (John 1:18; 14:9) because the Son and the Father are one (John 10:30).
 - 3) Both the Father and the Son are in the Spirit and the Spirit is in them (Romans 8:9).
 - 4) When Jesus went away, He sent the Spirit to take His place (John 16:7). Yet, at the same time, Jesus came to the disciples in the Spirit (John 14:18; Romans 8:9).

2. Their mutual glorification

- a. The Father glorifies the Son (John 8:54; 12:23; 17:1)
- b. The Son glorifies the Father (John 13:31-32; 17:4)
- c. The Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:14)

3. Their mutual cooperation

- a. “The Persons of the Godhead, being one, have one will. They work always together, and never one smallest act is done by one without the instant acquiescence of the other two. Every act of God is accomplished by the Trinity in Unity. Here, of course, we are being driven by necessity to conceive of God in human terms. We are thinking of God by analogy with man, and the result must fall short of ultimate truth; yet if we are to think of God at all, we must do it by adapting creature-thoughts and creature-words to the Creator. It is a real if understandable error to conceive of Persons of the Godhead as conferring with one another and reaching agreement by interchange of thought as humans do. It has always seemed to me that Milton introduces as element of weakness into his celebrated *Paradise Lost* when he presents the Persons of the Godhead conversing with each



other about the redemption of the human race.” –from *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A. W. Tozer (p.28).

b. This mutual cooperation can be seen in almost all of the great works of God. See above for fuller notes on these works:

- 1) Creation (see Genesis 1:1-3)
- 2) Revelation
- 3) Incarnation
- 4) Crucifixion
- 5) Resurrection
- 6) Redemption
- 7) Preservation

4. Their structural relationship

a. The procession passages: although there is complete equality of being and attributes among the three persons of the Godhead, there is a predetermined order of authority between them. This is clearly seen in two verses in John that speak of one proceeding out of the other.

- 1) The Son “proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me” (John 8:42).
 - a) The divine nature of things is that a son is to submit to his father.
 - b) The fact that the first two persons of the Godhead are revealed to us as Father and Son anticipates such a relationship.
 - c) The Son was clearly sent to earth (given to the world) by the Father (John 3:16; 7:28-29; 12:49; 17:8, 25; Galatians 4:4; 1John 4:9-10).
 - d) While on earth, Jesus fully submitted Himself to the will of the Father (Mark 14:36; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).
 - e) At the end of time, the Son who proceeded from the Father will return to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:26-28).
- 2) The Spirit proceeded from the Father and is sent forth by the Son (John 15:26).
 - a) Careful reading of the scriptures will demonstrate that the Spirit of God does the work of God.
 - b) The work of the Spirit in relation to the Son is seen in John 16:13-14.
 - i. He will not speak of Himself.
 - ii. He will only speak what He hears.
 - iii. He will glorify the Son.
 - iv. Note: The Spirit fulfills the work of the Father and the Son and glorifies them without glorifying Himself.
- 3) Note: this proceeding forth does not indicate any sort of creation or bringing into being. The three persons of the Trinity are co-eternal in their existence and are without beginning. However, this does indicate that the separate works of the three persons in time is



different in some ways to their relationship to each other in eternity. They have not changed, being the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). However, the work of redemption gave varying duties to the three persons; duties in which they work always for the same purposes and toward the same goals.

- b. The Father, Son, and Spirit cooperate in their work in a way can be generalized by considering some carefully placed prepositions.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 8:6 states: “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”
 - a) The Father is the One “of whom are all things.” He is the source and the origin of the works.
 - b) The Son is the One “by whom are all things.” He is the One who executes the work.
 - 2) Romans 11:36 states: “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” Note: although the persons of the Godhead are not directly mentioned, this is an excellent description of their actions.
 - a) The phrase, “of him,” would match the Father as seen in “of whom” in 1 Corinthians 8:6. All things proceed, or come forth, from Him.
 - b) The phrase, “through him,” is similar to “by whom” and would look to the work of the Son. Both “through” and “by” indicate process.
 - c) The phrase, “to him,” indicates purpose or completion. The work of the Spirit tends to enable or to adorn the work of the other persons of the Godhead.
 - 3) Conclusion of this study
 - a) The Father originates.
 - b) The Son executes.
 - c) The Spirit enables.
 - 4) The example of creation.
 - a) The Father was the source of creation. Therefore, Genesis 1:1 and Exodus 20:11 refer to Him.
 - b) The Son carried out the work of creation as seen in various scriptures (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). Ephesians 3:9 speaks of “God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”
 - c) The Spirit enabled and adorned creation.
 - i. The Spirit moved on the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2)
 - ii. The Spirit “garnished” the heavens (Job 26:13).
 - iii. The Spirit renews the face of the earth (Psalm 104:30)
 - 5) The example of the work of salvation. In *The Doctrine of God* (p.264), Herman Bavinck states:



- a) “The good pleasure, foreknowledge, election, power, love, and kingdom pertain to the Father (Matthew 6:13; 11:26; John 3:16; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:9; 1 Peter 1:2).”
- b) “Reconciliation, mediatorship, redemption, grace, wisdom, and righteousness pertain to the Son (Matthew 1:21; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:10; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 2:2).”
- c) “Regeneration, rejunenation, sanctification, and communion pertain to the Holy Spirit (John 3:5; 14:16; Romans 5:5; 8:15; 14:17; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 5:6).”
- 6) One way to look at it is to say that the Father originates, the Son accomplishes, and the Spirit completes. In salvation, the Father planned redemption and sent the Son, the Son became the Saviour and saved the lost, and the Spirit gives the believer new life through regeneration and enables him through sanctification. The three always work together to accomplish the same things but their specific actions may not be the same.

E. False Doctrines Concerning the Trinity

1. Tritheism
 - a. This is the belief that the three persons of the Godhead are simply three different gods.
 - b. This doctrine has not been a major doctrine in Christianity.
2. Unitarianism
 - a. Generally, this doctrine teaches that the unity of God excludes the idea of three equal persons in the Godhead.
 - b. Practically, this demotes the Son and the Spirit to lesser beings. The common teaching is that the Son is a created being subordinate to God and the Spirit is simply an extension of God.
 - c. Specifically, Unitarianism by name was a product of the Enlightenment and came out of the eighteenth century. A number of Baptists of this time fell into this error.
 - d. Historically, Unitarianism was a revival of the Arianism of the fourth century.
 - 1) Developed from the teachings of Arius (250-336), a native of Alexandria who was influenced by the Gnostic teachings of the day.
 - 2) His view of Christ was as follows:
 - a) He was created by the Father
 - b) He was subordinate to the Father
 - c) He was neither fully God nor fully man
 - d) He was created before everything else, in turn created all other things, and is therefore the highest created being
 - e) He is worthy of worship



- e. Currently, the teachings of Arianism and Unitarianism are carried on by the Unitarians, the Mormons, the Jehovah Witnesses, and others.
- 3. Modalism
 - a. Modalism is a general word used to describe various teachings that speak of the one God working in various *modes* but as the same unique God.
 - b. Monarchianism
 - 1) A doctrine developing in the third century
 - 2) It denies the personal distinctiveness of the Son and the Holy Spirit.
 - 3) Adoptionistic monarchianism taught that Jesus was a mere man endowed with the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Sabellianism
 - 1) Named for Sabellius who lived in Rome early in the third century
 - 2) He taught that the one God revealed Himself through history, first as the Father, second as the Son, and finally as the Spirit.
 - a) As the Father, he was Creator and Lawgiver.
 - b) As the Son, he was the Redeemer.
 - c) As the Spirit, he is the giver of grace.
 - 3) However, each of these is the same God who reveals Himself in different modes at different times.
 - 4) This teaching has been revived in recent times by the Apostolic Church and other groups.
 - d. The satanic trinity
 - 1) The ultimate perversion of the Trinity is found in the satanic trinity as revealed in the book of Revelation.
 - 2) The three persons of the satanic trinity are the devil, the antichrist, and the false prophet.
 - 3) The three persons of this unholy trinity are unified by the name of the *beast*. Revelation makes 36 references to one or the other of these three as the beast.
 - a) The beast of the bottomless pit is the devil (Revelation 11:7)
 - b) The beast of the sea is the antichrist (Revelation 13:1)
 - c) The beast of the earth is the false prophet (Revelation 13:11)