

Theology Proper

Part 3 – God is One What and Three Who's

“The doctrine of the Divine Unity is a truth of natural religion; the doctrine of the Trinity is a truth of revealed religion.” - William Shedd

Can we understand things about God?

Is God consistent and coherent?

Is it a contradiction to say that God is one and, at the same time in the same relationship, He is three?

Is it a contradiction to say that God is one in one sense and three in another?

- **Are there more Gods than one?**

There is only one, the living and true God.

There is *one* God.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 – *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”*

Isaiah 44:6-8 – *“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.*

Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it?

And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.”

Isaiah 45:5-7 – *“I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.”*

Augustine – “It is difficult to contemplate and fully know the substance of God; who fashions things changeable, yet without any change in Himself, and creates things temporal, yet without any temporal movement in Himself... whereto not having yet attained, we are to be nourished by faith, and led by such ways as are more suited to our capacity, that we may be rendered apt and able to comprehend it.”¹

¹ Augustinus, Aurelius. *St. Augustin on the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*. Edited by Philip Schaff. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. Vol. 3. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. 2014. Kindle Edition.

God is **living** and **true**.

Jeremiah 10:10 – “*But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King...*”

John 17:3 – “*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*”

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 – “*For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...*”

1 John 5:20 – “*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*”

- **How is there only one God, but three Persons in the Godhead?**

There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, distinct but not separate, of the same in substance and equal in power and glory.

Shedd, quoting another author, says, “as he that denies this fundamental article of the Christian religion may lose his soul, so he that much strives to understand it may lose his wits.”²

There is perfect communion in the Godhead

Pink – “God was under no constraint, no obligation, no necessity to create. That He chose to do so was purely a sovereign act on His part, caused by nothing outside Himself, determined by nothing but His own good pleasure; for He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). That He did create was simply for His manifestative glory.”³

Is Reason helpful or a hindrance?

Shedd – “In some sections of Christendom, it has been contended that the doctrine of the Trinity should be received without any attempt at all to establish its rationality and intrinsic necessity. In this case, the tenets of eternal generation and procession have been regarded as going beyond the Scripture data, and if not positively rejected, have been thought to hinder rather than assist faith in three divine persons and one God. But the history of opinions shows that such sections of the church have not proved to be the strongest defenders of the Scripture statement, nor the most successful in keeping clear of the Sabellian, Arian, or even Socinian departure from it.”⁴

² Augustinus, Aurelius.

³ Pink, Arthur Walkington. *The Attributes of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975.

⁴ This statement quoted from William G. T. Shedd in his essay that prefaces Augustine’s work already cited previously. For further investigation of the ‘departures’ listed see the following introductions. Sabellian:

The Father is God.

“We believe in God, the Father almighty, the maker of heaven and earth. Father refers to the first person of the Godhead...”⁵

Isaiah 43:3 – *“For I am **the LORD your God**, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”*

Other passages for study include: Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14, 6:2-3; Psalm 19:1-3; Matthew 6:9; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; Galatians 4:6; and Ephesians 4:6.

The Son is God

“We believe that Jesus Christ is the Eternal God, the second person of the Godhead and Creator of all things. He is of the same substance or essence as the Father. The Word became flesh. Jesus is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood; the only God-man. Christ is also the eternal Son of God....”⁶

John 1:1-3 – *“In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God**, and **the Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”*

Other passages for study include: Genesis 18:1; Psalm 2:7; 110:1; Isaiah 7:14; 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16, 27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6, 19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18, 29; 10:30, 38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11, 16:15-16, 28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20, 28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5, 20; Romans 1; 3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3, 34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8, 24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15, 24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1Pe 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; and Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

The Holy Spirit is God.

“We believe the Holy Spirit is God, the third person of the Godhead...”⁷

Psalms 139:7 – *“Where shall I go from **your Spirit**? Or where shall I flee from **your presence**?”*

Other passages for study include: Genesis 1:2; Jud 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalm 51:11; 139:7; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10, 12; Luke 1:35; 4:1, 18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17, 39, 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11, 14-16, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8, 14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; and Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

<http://carm.org/modalism> and <http://carm.org/monarchianism> ; Arian: <http://carm.org/arianism> ; and Socinian: <http://carm.org/socinianism>

⁵ This statement is a portion of the affirmation made in the Confession of Faith for First Baptist Church of Diana under the heading of “God the Father.” <http://www.fbcdiana.org/we-believe-at-fbc/>

⁶ This statement is a portion of the affirmation made in the Confession of Faith for First Baptist Church of Diana under the heading of “God the Son.” <http://www.fbcdiana.org/we-believe-at-fbc/>

⁷ This statement is a portion of the affirmation made in the Confession of Faith for First Baptist Church of Diana under the heading of “God the Holy Spirit.” <http://www.fbcdiana.org/we-believe-at-fbc/>

What does it mean; the persons of the Godhead are distinct, but not separate?

The Christian's affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity (or the Triunity of God) is an affirmation of the truths found in scripture, just as they are found. The Bible affirms that there is only one God. The Bible affirms that the Father is God. It affirms that the Son, Jesus, is God. It also affirms that the Holy Spirit is God. The Bible distinguishes each from the other, but never separates or confuses them.

Matthew 3:16-17 – *“And when Jesus was baptized, **immediately he went up from the water**, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the **Spirit of God descending** like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a **voice from heaven** said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

2 Corinthians 13:14 – *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”*

1 Peter 1:1-2 – *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.**”*

What does it mean; the Father, Son and Spirit are of the same substance and equal in power and glory?

The substance of God refers to the “stuff” of God. This, as in other aspects of God's existence, is a subject about which words seem so inadequate. There is no “stuff” that composes the parts or core of God. He is not material and has no parts. Yet, God is essentially present and real. It is in His essence that we understand that there is one God. That one God is due all glory, honor and worship.

Because the Father, Son and Spirit are of the same essence, they each and collectively are due all glory, honor and worship. In fact, Jesus says that it is in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit that Christians are to baptize fellow believers. This is a statement of equal value and authority.

Matthew 28:19 – *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

Nicene Creed (dated 325 AD)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made...

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets...

What analogies have you heard or used in order to attempt an explanation of the Trinity?

Why do you suppose analogies fall short?

Why do Christians insist on affirming that God is three and one?