

Systematic Theology Series

Theology Proper: The Study of God the Father

Wednesday Night Teaching Schedule			
Date	Lesson	Teacher	Topics
10-7	1	Matt	Introduction to Theology Proper: Why Theology Matters and What is Needed in the Study of Theology Proper
10-14	2	Matt	The Existence of God and The Trinity: God is 3 in 1
10-21	3	Matt	The Essence, Attributes and Sovereignty of God
10-28	4	Tom	The Aseity, Immutability and Eternality of God
11-4	5	Matt	The Immensity, Omnipresence, and Omniscience of God
11-11	6	Ben	The Wrath, Jealousy and Patience of God
11-18	7	Rob	The Holiness, Faithfulness and Glory of God
12-2	8	Ben	The Love, Goodness and Wisdom of God
12-9	9	Matt	The Names, Grace, Mercy and Will of God

A.W. Tozer in his classical book on theology proper entitled *The Knowledge of the Holy* said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” Sadly, our fallen world is plagued with a man centered view of God, and the modern church has become deeply infected by this so that what often comes into the mind of many so called believers is not what Scripture teaches regarding the person and work of God the Father. Therefore, we will spend this fall semester on Wednesday nights studying the person and attributes of God. Here at Belcroft Bible we unashamedly have and minister with a high view of God because that is what the Bible declares about God and that is what He demands of us. Thus, as we begin this semester in an ongoing study in systematic theology we will grow deeper in understanding of God that He alone has Ultimate Authority, that He works in Undeniable Sovereignty, that He lives in Unapproachable Holiness, that He is marked by Unquestionable Mercy, that He will bring Undisputable Wrath, that He offers Unfathomable Grace, that His character, plans and promises are all covered in Unending Faithfulness and that all the earth was created to give Him Unequivocal Worship. May the quote below further provoke your thoughts on why this study in Theology Proper matters in our day.

“The god of this century no more resembles the Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The god who is talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday school, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences, is a figment of human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form gods of wood and stone, while millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a god out of their carnal minds.” – A.W. Pink

Review:

1. **What is Theology?** The word “*theology*” comes from two Greek words: *Theos* = God *Logos* = Word. One could rightly say that theology is “God words” meaning words or teachings about God or from God. Thus, theology is the discourse or study of God in some form either the person of God in Theology Proper or the thoughts and declarations of God in the other areas of systematic theology. For this study please know that *Theology Proper is the study of God the Father*. God is the focus in all sound studies in theology and the Word of God is always the primary foundation in sound theology. God is the best to speak about and teach others about Himself which is what He does in His Word. God’s Word is perfect, sufficient, and all authoritative so there is no better place to learn about God than in God’s sure revelations about Himself found in Holy Scriptures. As Dr Mook says, fruit of a humble pursuit in studying God through His Word is *blessed discovery, blessed discernment, blessed despair, blessed devotion, and blessed development*.
2. **Why Study God?** Because we are commanded to love God. We are commanded to know God. We are commanded to worship God. We are commanded to serve God. We are commanded to be holy as God is holy. We are commanded to tell others about God. We are eternally accountable to God. We must strive against the diminished view of God in the Church. We must guard against the plethora of errors being taught today. We must remember that our greatest joy flows from growing in our knowledge of God. We have been redeemed to know God and enjoy Him forever and God has revealed Himself to us through the incarnated and inscripturated Word for this purpose. As J.I. Packer says, “We must seek, in studying God, to be led to God. It was for this purpose that revelation was given, and it is to this use that we must put it. How are we to do this? How can we turn our knowledge about God into knowledge of God? The rule for doing this is demanding, but simple. It is that we turn each truth that we learn about God into matter of meditation before God, leading to prayer and praise to God.”
3. **What must we have in the study of God?** A Regenerate heart and Illumination by the Holy Spirit. A Disciplined Mind. An Inquisitive Mind. An Ability to think in Abstract and Concrete Terms. Holy Attitudes regarding who God is and who we are not. This means reverence and worship as we study God and always faith in God. Humility in seeing God rightly and ourselves clearly. Obedience to listen, learn and live out what God commands, forbids, and reveals in His Word. We must never forget that God knows best and His self revelation is the ultimate source of truth regarding who He is and how He works. We never turn to man’s reason, emotion, or experience as a foundation in theology for that is a theology from below but we always seek a theology from above which comes down from heaven to us as given only through God’s perfect Word.

I. The Existence of God¹

A. Basic Points²

1. God's existence is assumed from the first verse of the Bible forward. Nowhere is God's existence defended or given a series of evidences to prove it. It is assumed that if God did not exist, nothing could be adequately explained. In other words, the Bible teaches that the existence of God is self-evident and transcendent.
2. God's existence is made absolutely clear through the creation itself. Creation is the proof of God's existence. Its existence demands a Greater who brought it into existence. The universe cannot be its own cause for it is bound by space & time. Only some greater cause outside of space and time can be the cause of space and time.
3. Man is religious in nature. Universally man seeks a higher power. Atheism has, and continues to be, a small minority on the global scene because it is self-contradictory in its assertions.
 - a) Even atheists indicate their heart's search for something, and some of them confess their need for God in times of trouble or near death.
 - b) Stephan Charnock, The Existence and Attributes of God, "It is a folly to deny or doubt that which has been the acknowledged sentiment of all nations, in all places and ages. There is no nation but hath owned some kind of religion, and therefore no nation but hath consented in the notion of a supreme Creator and Governor."
4. It is self-evident to most thinking, logical people. It is assumed by man's use of logic which has no explanation except that a greater mind produced reason. This point will be expanded below.
5. It is assumed by the existence of moral right and wrong which is meaningless in an atheistic universe. Random chemicals and atoms cannot result in wrong or right, nor in any way of determining what is

¹ Grateful for Pastor Tom Leake and GAMA Bible Institute notes that I have used in different ways throughout this study. I used to teach the *Theology Proper* class at the GAMA institute and Tom's notes were used in that class and used by permission in making these notes as well. Also, I am grateful for my seminary notes from Dr. Mook and his class on *Theology Proper* that have been used by permission in helping create these notes for this series. Also portions of The Shepherds Training Institute (TSI) notes on *Theology Proper* taught by Dr Paul Shirley will be used at times in this class.

² While there are some "natural proofs" of God's existence those are secondary and not a primary focus in *Theology Proper*. "Still, God has revealed himself by means other than Scripture. He has revealed himself nonverbally to all people through nature, conscience, and history. This is referred to as *general* or *natural* revelation, and the Bible strongly affirms it. But knowledge of natural revelation of God must never be considered independent of Scripture, because the Bible shows that, left to his own thinking, man will corrupt the revelation of God in nature." For a fuller treatment both positive and negative on "natural proofs" see *Bible Doctrine* pgs 145-154.

wrong or right.

6. It is easily perceived through intelligent, brilliant, design seen in all of nature. The Intelligent Design debate is amusing to us Christians. Of course there is intelligent design. It is the design of our God. There is not much intelligence in not seeing intelligent design in creation. Macro evolution teaches the irrational and religious doctrine of unintelligence producing the most brilliant designs of nature.
7. Though sinful, proud minds deny it, it is undeniable. In other words, the universe and mankind cannot be explained adequately without assuming the existence of God. Any attempt to deny the existence of God must assume His existence in order to use argumentation to deny His existence. No one can deny His existence without falling into utter foolishness and chaos.
8. God's existence is a proven fact not an opinion. We should never concede in argument with unbelievers or skeptics that God's existence still needs to be proven. The proof is already there.

B. Scriptural Proof: Theology Proper does not seek to prove the existence of God, but to show that Scripture asserts God's existence and to derive Scripture's description of God's nature and works.

- The Scriptures do not present any detailed rationalistic argumentation for the existence of God. The Scriptures simply assume and implicitly assert the existence of God.
- The only reliable proof of the existence of the true God consists of statements from and about him in his inspired Word. God must not be excluded from testifying about himself.³
- Gen 1:1 – "In the beginning, God."
- John 1:1 – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Berkhof says:

"The Christian accepts the truth of the existence of God by faith. But this faith is not a blind faith, but a faith that is based on evidence, and the evidence is found primarily in Scripture as the inspired Word of God, and secondarily in God's revelation in nature. Scripture proof on this point does

³ MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (p. 144). Crossway.

not come to us in the form of an explicit declaration [i.e., a syllogistic declaration], and much less in the form of a logical argument. In that sense the Bible does not prove the existence of God It presupposes the existence of God . . ." (Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 21)

- Scripture asserts the existence of “the only true God” (John 17:3). The Bible begins with the foundational presupposition that God existed “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1). So every statement from the Bible about God’s nature and actions is proof from him of his existence.⁴

C. The Proof from the Requirement to Believe in His Existence. The Scriptures do not base a saving relationship with God on the basis of human reasoning about God. The Scriptures simply require man to believe in Him – and to begin that belief by believing that He exists.

- Heb 11:6 – “. . . he who comes to God must believe that He is”

D. The Proof from the Assessment of Denial of His Existence. Scripture calls those who in their heart and thinking do not believe that God exists “fools” and “wicked”⁵

- Ps 14:1; 53:1 – “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” These psalms also describe the atheist as “corrupt” practicing “abominable works” without understanding. cf. 1 Cor 1:20-21.
- Ps 10:4 – “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.” (Or, “All his thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’” – NASB) This is the practical atheist – the one who ignores God in making his plans.

E. The Proof from the Assertion of God's Eternality. The Scriptures assert that God is eternal – without beginning, without ending, without succession of moments.

- In the Bible, God is called “the eternal God” (Deut. 33:27). Psalm 90:2 says that God existed eternally in the present before the world was created: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”⁶

⁴ MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (p. 144). Crossway.

⁵ Ibid. (p. 144).

⁶ Ibid. (p. 145).

- In Isaiah 41:4, God declares, “I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.” Isaiah adds, “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’ ” (Isa. 44:6). And Isaiah 57:15 affirms that God “inhabits eternity.”⁷

F. The Proof from the Assertion of God's Self-Existence. The Scriptures assert that God is living, and He is the source of His own life.

- God told Moses by what name Israel was to know him: “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’ ’ ” (Ex. 3:14). God is. So he depends on nothing for his existence.⁸
- This inference from God’s covenantal name is reflected in the apostle Paul’s words: “For from him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom. 11:36), and, “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24–25).⁹
- One could go on to multiply biblical proofs of God’s existence from all the scriptural statements about God’s being and works. However, these suffice to show that God affirms his existence in the statements of the Bible as the primary, foundational, and foremost proofs by which people must believe that he does exist.¹⁰

One Final Point by Reminder: The Knowability and Incomprehensibility of God

- Because God has revealed the fact of his existence in Scripture, he has given humans statements by which they can have at least some knowledge of him. The Bible makes God knowable to humans, to the extent that the content of the Bible reveals truth about him. Scripture teaches that man may know God truly, yet not exhaustively. In the classical terminology, God is truly knowable but not exhaustively comprehensible.¹¹

⁷ Ibid. (p. 145).

⁸ MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (p. 145). Crossway.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

- The incomprehensibility of God results in what I call “Blessed Despair,” the holy frustration we have whenever we try to make an exhaustive search of God in any aspect of His being and/or works. But that frustration should not discourage us, but encourage us with the prospect of studying and learning about God for the remainder of our lives now – and forever. Again, Grudem has well articulated how the frustration of theology should motivate us to continue studying God:
- “If we ever wished to make ourselves equal to God in knowledge, or if we wished to derive satisfaction from the sin of intellectual pride, the fact that we will never stop growing in knowledge of God would be a discouraging thing for us – we might become frustrated that God is a subject of study that we will never master! But if we rather delight in the fact that God alone is God, that he is always infinitely greater than we are, that we are his creatures who owe him worship and adoration, then this will be a very encouraging idea. Even though we spend time in Bible study and fellowship with God every day of our lives, there will always be more to learn about God and his relationships to us and the world, and thus there will always be more that we can be thankful for and for which we can give him praise. When we realize this, the prospect of a lifelong habit of regular Bible study, and even the prospect of a lifetime of study of theology (if it is theology that is solidly grounded in God’s Word), should be a very exciting prospect to us. To study and to teach God’s Word in both formal and informal ways will always be a great privilege and joy.” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 151).

II. The Trinity: God is Three in One

Introduction

- A. Learning the attributes of God is crucial in a study of God, but it is not sufficient to comprehend God. The fact that God has always existed as three-in-one is also necessary to understand the Infinite One. The fullness of New Testament revelation manifests God to us as three persons in one God. To know God He must be known as a Trinity or a Triunity.
- B. There is only one God, and he consists of one simple (uncompounded, indivisible) essence (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29; John 17:3; James 2:19;¹²
- C. The Trinity is biblically declared as one God eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who are co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and yet retain distinct ministries in relation to creation, salvation, and people.

¹² MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (p. 190). Crossway.

- D. Grudem, p. 226, "The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith. To study the Bible's teaching on the Trinity gives us great insight into the question that is at the center of all of our seeking after God: What is God like in himself? Here we learn that in himself, in his very being, God exists in the person of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet he is one God ... When we think of God as eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and so forth, we may have a tendency to think only of God the Father in connection with these attributes. But the biblical teaching on the Trinity tells us that all of God's attributes are true of all three persons, for each is fully God."
- E. McCune, p. 280, "The Tri-unity of God is one of the great fundamental doctrines concerning God. In fact, without the tri-unity of God, there could be no incarnation of God the Son. And, without the incarnation, there could be no redemption accomplished by the Son, nor could there be any application of the redemption by the Spirit."

The concept of the trinity is strongly implied within the OT through a multiplicity of ways. First, there is the usage of plural pronouns when referring to God (Gen 1:26, 3:22). Second, the name of God (Elohim) is plural suggesting some sort of plurality within one God (Gen 1:1). Furthermore, there is the reference of the coming Messiah being God (Isa 9:6) and the mention of multiple persons as deity (Isa 48:16; 61:1-5). Additionally, there is the reality of God's work in creation with the Spirit hovering over the waters (Gen 1:1-2) with the Son being the ultimate agent of creation (John 1:1-5). Moreover, the Spirit of God empowers people for specific God ordained roles or tasks (Ex 31:3; Judges 3:10) and there are allusions to a tri-unity in the Godhead with the thrice-holy character referenced by Isaiah (Isa 6:2-3) and the thrice blessing given to Aaron by Moses in the name of the Lord (Num 6:24-27 cf. Mt 28:19). Finally, you have David's dual reference to Yahweh and his Lord (Ps 110:1) as well as multiple divine entities mentioned in Isa 63:7-10.

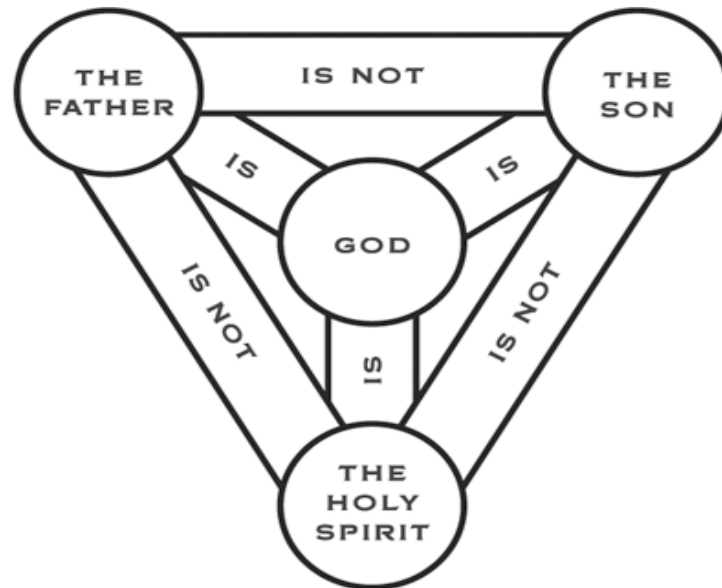
Group Exercise: Look up Isa 61:1 and identify where and how this passage has the Trinity implied in it.

Look up Genesis 18:1-33 and point out the specific areas where the Trinity is implied in this passage.

III. God is Three Persons

- A. The word "person" refers to attributes or characteristics that make up an individual with thought, choices, and emotions. It refers to a true and distinct personality.
- B. Grudem, p. 231, "The fact that God is three persons means that the Father is not the Son; they are distinct persons. It also means that the Father is not the Holy Spirit but that they are distinct persons. And it means that the Son is not the Holy Spirit."

The distinctions between the persons is further specified by the following ancient illustration, variously referred to as “The Shield of the Trinity” or “The Shield of the Faith” (the earliest attestation dates to the early thirteenth century AD).⁴¹



- C. John 1:1-2
1. In referring to the Word of God being “with” God and being God also, “with” translates the Greek preposition “pros” which has the meaning of being - toward God, right there facing God. It is a preposition that indicates, not only close proximity but relationship. Right there where God was, the Word was. In other words, the Word is orientated toward God.
 2. The Word also is God. This shows the distinction of the two persons.
- D. Matthew 3:16-17
1. All three persons of the Holy Trinity participated in Jesus baptism. The Son comes and humbly submits to baptism. The Spirit Himself descends from Heaven and rests on Jesus. God the Father speaks from His throne in Heaven.
 2. The three persons are one God, and as one God work in union in the saving work of mankind.
- E. Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name (singular) of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (three names)," Implication: Three persons of the Triune Godhead -- one eternal God.

- F. Romans 8:27: The Holy Spirit intercedes with God on our behalf in prayer. The Holy Spirit is not the Father.
- G. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6: All three persons are at work in the spiritual gifting of the church for service. They work cooperatively but are spoken of distinctly.
- H. 2 Corinthians 13:14: This verse shows that the Holy Spirit is mentioned with the other two persons and speaks of His personhood. The Holy Spirit is not a mere force or power. The Spirit of God can be saddened or grieved, Ephesians 4:30.
- I. 1 John 2:1: Jesus is the advocate with the Father. He speaks to the Father in our defense. This makes it impossible for the two to be the same person.
- J. John 14:16, 26: The Father will send the Spirit in the name of Jesus after Jesus leaves. Again this shows that the Father is not the Spirit but sends the Spirit. The Father remains where He is and sends the Spirit into the world. The Holy Spirit is referred to as a person not an “it” or some energy from God.
- K. McCune, p. 286, “Another line of evidence for the Trinity in the New Testament is the observation that the three persons of the Godhead are objective to each other. For instance, the Father loves the Son (John 3:35). ... Also in several places, the Father addresses the Son (cf. Luke 3:22; Heb 1:6), whereas the Son is said to be the way to the Father (John 14:6) and the one who glorifies the Father (John 17:5). Further, the Father is said to send the Spirit in the name of the Son (John 14:26), and He is said to reward the Son (Heb 2:9). Each of these specifically designates actions done by distinct persons.”
- L. McCune, p. 287, under the subtitle “Trinitarian Consciousness” “... the Son is never conscious that He is the Father or the Spirit, and the other persons are likewise conscious only of being the persons that they are in the one essence of the Godhead. “

IV. Each Person is Fully God

McCune, p. 287, “... each person of the Godhead is called God, which is a proof of equality as well as unity. In addition, the Trinitarian persons are associated in ways denoting equality, as seen in the Baptismal Formula (Matt 28:19) and the Apostolic Benediction (2 Cor 13:14). One cannot simply put in an apostle’s name, an angel’s name, a great king’s name, or the name of the President of the United States without totally disrupting the obvious equality of the three persons in the Formula and Benediction. This equality is further seen in that there is no standard numerical order in the association of the persons of the Godhead. One order is Father, Spirit, and Son (2 Thess 2:13-14; 1 Pet 1:2-3; Rev 1:4-5). Another order is Spirit, Son, and Father (Eph 4:4-6; 5:18-20; 1 Cor 12:4-6). Another is Spirit, Father, and Son (Jude 20, 21). There is Father, Son, and Spirit (Matt 28:19). And finally there is Son, Father, and Spirit (2 Cor 13:14).”

A. The Father is Declared to be God.

1. Title God is usually joined with reference to Father.
 1. (1) 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6
 2. (2) Rom 15:6; 1 Cor 15:24
 3. (3) John 6:27; Jas 3:9
2. Title God when used alone usually refers to Father.
 1. (1) Jas 1:5
 2. (2) 1 Pet 3:18

B. The Lord Jesus Christ is Declared to be God.

(1) He claimed to be God.

(a) Matt 26:63-64; cf. Mark 14:61-62; Luke 22:67-70

(b) John 4:25-26; 9:35-38

(c) The "I AM" (evgw. eivmi,) statements (John 6:20; 35; 8:12, 58; 10:7, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1; 18:6; Mark 14:62; etc.)

(2) He claimed to come from heaven.

(a) John 1:11; cf. Matthew 10:34-35; Mark 2:17; Luke 19:10

(b) John 3:13 – first occurrences of phrase "came down from heaven"

(c) John 5:36-37 – first occurrences of phrase "Father hath sent me"

(d) John 8:42; 16:28,30

(3) He claimed a unique relation to God as Father.

(a) Matt 7:21; 10:32-33; 11:25-27

(b) Luke 22:29; 24:49

(c) John 5:17ff – many references follow this

(d) Matt 6:8-9 (note "Your Father" and "Our Father")

(e) John 20:17 (note "my Father" and "your Father")

C. The Holy Spirit is Declared to be God.

a) His titles relating Him to God.

1. Spirit of God – Matt 3:16

2. Spirit of the Lord – Luke 4:18

3. Spirit of your Father – Matt 10:20

4. My Spirit – Acts 2:17-18

5. Spirit of Christ – Rom 8:9

6. The Lord the Spirit – 2 Cor 3:17-18

b) Specific statements.

1. (1) Acts 5:3-4, 9

2. (2) 2 Cor 3:17-18

3. (3) 1 Cor 3:16; cf. 6:19; Eph 2:22
4. (4) Comparison of New Testament quotations with Old Testament passages quoted.
 1. (a) Cf. Acts 28:25-27 with Isa 6:1-13
 2. (b) Cf. Hebrews 3:7-11 with Ps 95:7-11
 3. (c) Cf. Hebrews 10:15-17 with Jer 31:31-34
 4. (d) Cf. Acts 7:51 with context and Old Testament
 5. (e) Professor's Note: Cf. Heb 3:7-9 with Exod 17:7; Ps 95:8-11

V. There is One God

- A. Grudem, p. 238, "Up to this point we have two conclusions, both abundantly taught throughout the Scripture: 1. God is three persons. 2. Each person is fully God. If the Bible taught only these two facts, there would be no logical problem at all in fitting them together, for the obvious solution would be that there are three Gods. The Father is fully God, the Son is fully God, and the Holy Spirit is fully God. We would have a system where there are three equally divine beings. Such a system of belief would be called polytheism - or, more specifically, 'tritheism' or belief in three Gods. But that is far from what the Bible teaches. ... The Scripture is abundantly clear that there is one and only one God. The three different persons of the Trinity are one not only in purpose and in agreement on what they think, but they are one in essence, one in their essential nature. In other words, God is only one being. There are not three Gods. There is only one God."
- B. God's essence is not composed of three persons. Rather, the uncompounded, undivided divine essence exists in each of the three persons. The various personal properties unique to each person are not things added to the divine essence but are only distinctions of personal subsistence and of relationship. In all the external works of the Trinity, each person acts without dividing the divine essence.¹³ The point to not missed here is, "There is only one God, and he consists of one simple (uncompounded, indivisible) essence"¹⁴
- C. There is only one Divine essence – undivided, not distributed, but always simply one. Each Person of the Trinity is identical to each other in essence, not in Person. The distinctions in God are called "Persons." They are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- D. The doctrine of the Trinity can be summarized with the following statement: *God is one essence eternally subsisting in three persons who are internally distinguished by eternally ordered relations, externally revealed to man through*

¹³ MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (p. 174). Crossway.

¹⁴ MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (p. 190). Crossway.

individual names and redemptive appropriations, and subsisting distinctly without division or multiplication of the divine essence.

- E. Monotheism is the foundation of the Ten Commandments as seen in Exodus 20:1-6. Even the great Jewish Shema declares the oneness of God. Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear O, Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord is One”.
1. The word for “one” here is the Hebrew word “Echad” which stresses God’s unity.
 2. It does mean one as in the numerals “one, two, three,” but it is a word that also stresses the idea that God is eternally unified. He is unified; He is One.
 3. It is the Hebrew term used when God declared a married man and woman were to become “one” flesh in Genesis 2:24. The two became one. It was a compound unity.
 4. The same word is used on the first day of creation when it says that there was evening and morning which together made one day.
 5. Though the word “One” does not actually teach the Trinity, it does leave room for the teaching of the Trinity to be unfolded later as God revealed more of Himself.
 6. There is only one God, but He has three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is a compound unity - a triunity -- or using the more popular term - the Trinity.
 7. God did not become the Trinity at some time, He always was and is the One Triune God.
- F. 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, And there is no God besides Me. 7 ‘Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place. 8 ‘Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.’”
- G. Isaiah 45:5 "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. ..."
- H. 1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”

- I. James 2:19 “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”
- J. 1 Corinthians 8:6 “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.”
- K. Stanley Rosenthal, One God or Three?, p. 36-37, “We are certain that the Bible does not teach polytheism. The gulf between triunity and the concept of many deities is unspannable. To accuse Christians of believing in three gods is a baseless assertion. Polytheism projects gods who are independent entities -- gods who consistently act at cross-purposes with one another. Within the triunity there is always absolute unity in desire, design and execution. Every biblical reference shows the Father, Son and Holy Spirit operating in perfect union.”

Group Exercise: Look up 2 Cor 1:20-22 and explain where you can clearly see the trinity in this passage and the practical encouragement the Trinity brings to the daily life of the believer.

VI. A Plurality of Persons are Associated as God.

1. Two Persons are Associated as God.

- John 10:30
- John 5:17-29
- 1 Cor 8:6
- 1 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:2; etc.
- 2 Pet 1:1
- Eph 5:5; Rev 20:6
- John 16:15; 17:10

2. Three Persons are Associated as God.

- 1 Cor 12:4-6
- Eph 1:3-14; 2:13-18; 3:14-16
- Eph 4:4-6
- John 1:29-34; cf. Matt 3:16-17
- John 14:9-10,26; 15:26; 16:7-15
- 2 Cor 1:21-22; 13:14
- 1 John 5:1-12
- Phil 3:3
- Col 1:3-8
- Gal 3:11-14
- 1 Pet 1:2; 4:14

VII. Three Persons Possess the Attributes of God.

1. Attributes Possessed by the Father.

1. Holiness – John 17:11
2. Righteousness – John 17:25
3. Life – John 5:26; 6:57
4. Mercy – 2 Cor 1:3
5. Omnipresence – Matt 6:4, 6
6. Omniscience – Matt 6:4, 6, 8
7. Love – John 5:20

2. Attributes Possessed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Eternity – John 1:1; 8:58; (Professor's Note: John 17:5; Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13)
2. Omniscience – John 1:47-48; 2:24-25 (Professor's Note: John 16:30; 21:17; Rev 2:23)
3. Omnipresence – John 1:48-50; Matt 18:20; 28:20 (Professor's Note: John 3:13, Majority Text)
4. Life – 1 John 1:2, 5:20 (Professor's Note: John 5:26 – passage speaks of Jesus as the source of resurrection)
5. Love – Eph 5:2
6. Immutability – Heb 13:8 (Professor's Note: Heb 1:10-12)
7. Truth – John 14:6
8. Omnipotence (Rev 1:8; Heb 1:3; Matt 28:18; Mark 5:11-15; Luke 4:38-41; Matt 9:25; Luke 7:14, 15; John 11:43-44; Matt 8:26-27; John 2:11; Matt 21:19; John 5:36; 10:25, 38)
9. Holiness (Luke 1:35; John 8:46; Heb 7:26-27; 1 John 3:5)

3. Attributes Possessed by the Holy Spirit.

1. Holiness – Eph 4:30
2. Truth – John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6
3. Life – Rom 8:2
4. Grace – Heb 10:29
5. Knowledge – 1 Cor 2:11
6. Eternity – Heb 9:14
7. Glory – 1 Pet 4:14 Professor's Notes:
8. Omniscience (1 Cor 2:10-11; John 14:26; 16:12-13)
9. Omnipotence (1 Cor 12:11; Rom 15:19; Luke 1:35, 37)

VIII. Three Persons Exercise the Prerogatives (Rights) of God.

1. Representative Prerogatives of God in the New Testament.

1. Receive worship – John 4:24; Matt 4:10
2. Forgive sin – Mark 2:6-7
3. Receive service – Matt 6:24
4. Bestow rewards – Heb 11:6
5. Be the object of faith – Mark 11:22

2. Prerogatives Exercised by the Father.
 1. Receive worship – John 4:23
 2. Forgive sin – Matt 6:14
 3. Receive praise – Jas 3:9
 4. Bestow reward – Matt 6:6
 5. Give commands – John 14:31
3. Prerogatives Exercised by the Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. Receive worship – John 9:38; 20:28 (Professor's Note: Matt 14:33; 15:25; 28:9; Heb 1:6)
 2. Forgive sin – Mark 2:8-12
 3. Bestow reward – Rev 22:12
 4. Be the object of faith – John 1:12; 20:31
 5. Give commands – John 15:12,14
 6. Judge (John 5:22; 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10; Rev 19:15; Acts 17:31; Matt 25:31-32; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1; 1 Pet 4:5).
4. Prerogatives Exercised by the Holy Spirit.
 1. Receive worship (opposite of being insulted, grieved) – Hebrews 10:29; Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19
 2. Give commands – Acts 8:29; 10:19
 3. Bestow gifts – 1 Cor 12:4,7-8
 4. Know the deep things of God – 1 Cor 2:10

VII. Three Persons Execute the Works of God.

1. Representative Works of God in the New Testament.
 1. Creation – Mark 13:19; 1 Tim 4:3-4
 2. Providence – Matt 6:30
 3. Resurrection – Acts 2:24,32
 4. Revelation and Inspiration – Heb 1:1-2; 2 Tim 3:16
 5. Judgment – Rom 2:2,5
2. Works executed by the Father.
 1. Creation – 1 Cor 8:6
 2. Providence – Matt 6:26
 3. Revelation – Matt 16:17
 4. Resurrection – Rom 6:4
 5. Judgment – Matt 15:13
3. Works Executed by the Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. Creation – John 1:3,9; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; 10; Eph 3:9; 1 Cor 8:6
 2. Providence – Col 1:17; Heb 1:3
 3. Resurrection – John 10:17-18; 5:28-29
 4. Revelation – John 16:12-13

5. Judgment – John 5:22,27; Acts 17:31 (Professor's Note: Acts 10:42; Phil 3:21; 2 Tim 4:1)
4. Works Executed by the Holy Spirit.
 1. Revelation and Inspiration – 2 Pet 1:21; 1 Cor 2:12-13 (Professor's Note: John 16:13)
 2. Resurrection – Rom 8:10-11
 3. Guidance – Rom 8:14
 4. Security by sealing – Eph 1:13-14
 5. Indwelling – 2 Tim 1:14
 6. Regeneration (John 3:5, 6; Titus 3:5)
 7. Gives God's love (Rom 5:5)
 8. Creation – Gen 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps 33:6

II. The Element of Mystery.

A. The Trinity is a biblical mystery in the sense that it is a truth that was hidden until revealed. But it is also a mystery in that, in its essence, it is supra-rational, ultimately beyond human comprehension. It is only partly intelligible to man, because God has revealed it in Scripture and in Jesus Christ. But it has no analogy in human experience, and its essential elements (3 co-equal Persons, each having the complete simple Divine essence, and each eternally relating to the other two without ontological subordination) are beyond man's reason.

Berkhof says: "The real difficulty lies in the relation in which the persons in the Godhead stand to the divine essence and to one another; and this is a difficulty which the Church cannot remove, but only try to reduce to its proper proportion by a proper definition of terms. It has never tried to explain the mystery of the Trinity, but only sought to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity in such a manner that the errors which endangered it were warded off." (Berkhof, p. 89)

Consequently, the doctrine must be accepted by faith as He is revealed in Scripture. And it must be articulated in such a way that the essence of God is not divided, and the distinction and the co-equality of being between the three Persons are not compromised. (Note the "negative theology" in the Trinitarian creeds.)

B. The Trinity has no perfect analogies in human experience. Many have attempted to find a perfect illustration of the Trinity, but all these attempts have either divided the essence or compromised the distinction between the three Persons. Below is a summary of Berkhof's categorization of these illustrations:

Berkhof, p. 90:

1. Illustrations from Inanimate Nature.
 1. Water of the fountain, creek, and river.
 2. Rising mist, cloud, rain.
 3. Rain, snow, ice.

4. Root, trunk, branches of a tree.
Weakness: The whole essence is not present, but divided, distributed.
2. Illustrations from Man's Life and Mind.
 1. Augustine: psychological unity of memory, affections, will.
 2. Hegel: logical unity of thesis, antithesis, synthesis.
 3. Shedd: metaphysical unity of subject, object, subject-object.
Weakness: No unity of three persons.
3. Illustration from Love.
Necessitates subject, object, and union of the two.
Weakness: 2 persons (concretes) and a relationship (abstract) make up this triad. Also, it is not a substance that is commonly possessed, but a quality.
4. Selected Challenges to Trinitarianism
 - a) **Modalism** (i.e. Monarchianism, Sabellianism, Noetianism and Patripassianism) *Each person of the Trinity is not, in fact a person, but a mode of God's revelation.*
 - b) **Arianism** *The Son was the first created being, but not full God.*
 - c) **Partialism** The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three parts that together make up one God.
 - d) **Subordinationism** The Son and the Spirit each have distinct wills that are subordinate to the will of the Father.

Can you think of any modern cults, religions or movements that reject the Trinity?