

Trinity and God's Works: Trinity, Decrees, Providence, Problem of Evil

Topics: Trinity; decrees; providence; secondary causes; concurrence; evil and suffering.

Key Question:	How does the Triune God act in the world?
Big Idea:	The one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—acts inseparably in all His works, yet distinctly in his operations in history, governing all things wisely while remaining good in the face of evil.

Doctrine at a Glance

- God is one in essence and three in persons—coequal and coeternal.
- God's decrees are His eternal, wise purpose by which He foreordains all that comes to pass, and providence is the outworking of that decree in time through real means and responsible human agency.
- The doctrine anchors confidence and worship: God is not distant, not chaotic, and not morally compromised; even in suffering, the cross and resurrection frame God's triumph over evil and his fatherly care.

Core Claims

- **Trinity:** There is one God (monotheism), with one essence and three persons; each person is fully God.
- **Decree:** God's decree is eternal, wise, efficacious, immutable, absolute, and all-comprehensive; with respect to sin it is permissive.
- **Means and Agency:** God is the primary cause, ordinarily working through secondary causes (created processes and responsible human actions) so sovereignty is total and agency is genuine.
- **Evil:** Evil is real (moral and natural), and the Christian response is not denial but faithful confession of God's goodness and sovereignty.

Confessional Touchpoints

- Nicene Creed (381)
- Athanasian Creed (Trinity sections)
- WCF 2.3; 3.1
- Belgic Confession Articles 8–13
- Heidelberg Catechism Q27-28

Key Terms

- **Essence / nature (ousia):** what God is (one).
- **Person (persona):** who God is (three).
- **Economy of Trinity:** how the triune persons act in God's works and missions
- **Decree:** God's eternal purpose foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass
- **Providence:** God's governing activity in time as the outworking of the decree
- **Moral vs. Natural Evil:** Sin/Injustice vs. Suffering/Natural disaster
- **Theodicy:** a proposal of how evil can exist under God's omni-attributes

Biblical Foundation (Key Texts)

- **Matt 28:19** — One name; three persons.
- **John 1:1–3** — The Son as Creator.
- **John 14:16–17** — Distinct persons in divine mission.
- **Acts 5:3–4** — Spirit's deity.
- **Eph 1:11** — God works all things according to His will.
- **Rom 8:28** — Providence ordered for good.

Common Errors / Missteps

- Classic Trinitarian Errors
 - Modalism – God in 3 forms, not 3 persons
 - Arianism – Jesus as created being, not eternal Son
 - Partialism – Each person is “part” of God
- Practical Tritheism – “Jesus is nicer than OT God”
- Fatalism – “It doesn't matter what I do”
- Moralizing Tragedy – “This happened because you sinned/didn't have enough faith”