

THE TRINITY

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Preface

Before you begin your Bible study, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be sure you have named your sins privately to God the Father.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all [unknown, or forgotten sins] unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

You will then be in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready to learn Bible doctrine from the Word of God.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the filling of the] spirit and [biblical] truth.” (John 4:24)

If you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue is not naming your sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

THE WORD OF GOD is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God might be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

The Trinity

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY is unique to Christianity. No other faith, religion, sect, or philosophy advocating one God also proclaims that there are three who are God. This apparent paradox does not mean that there are ‘three gods in one,’ but that one God exists as three distinct persons who are coequal, coinfinite, and coeternal, all possessing the same essential nature (John 10:30). Each member of the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—is therefore a separate person, individually possessing identical, eternal attributes (Matt. 28:19). God is one in essence, but three in persons.

Each person of the Godhead has a specific purpose related to the eternal will and plan of God. The Scriptures ascribe distinct roles to each Person that are not jointly shared by the other members of the Trinity. The Father is the author and planner, the source of all things. The Son is the agent through whom the Father’s plan is enacted. The Holy Spirit is the revealer and empowers the plan in our lives.

Trinitarian tenets are not abstract theology. There are practical and essential reasons for every believer in Jesus Christ to fully comprehend

this doctrine. Your view of the Trinity determines your understanding of Christology, the person and work of Jesus Christ. Your view of the Holy Spirit affects your concept of living the Christian life. Your worship and spiritual life are possible only with the biblical perspective of the Godhead. In short, if you are to love God and grow spiritually, you must understand the doctrine of the Trinity.

You may wonder how one God can exist in three persons; yet from Scripture you can know that He so exists! All that God has made known about Himself can be understood (Rom. 1:19–20), even the fact that He is singular in one sense and plural in another. Though your finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit who reveals the Scriptures, you can understand and accept spiritual truth by means of faith (1 Cor. 2:10–12).

Man possesses three systems of human perception: rationalism, empiricism, and faith. Nothing is known that is not learned through one or a combination of these three systems. *Rationalism* relies on human ability to reason in order to establish the criterion for reality apart from the authority of divine revelation. *Empiricism* establishes reality based on observation and experience of the senses independently of scriptural revelation. Empiricism is based on the ability to see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. The third system, *faith*, is the only nonmeritorious system of perception. Faith establishes a criterion for reality based on the authority and veracity of God and His revelation rather than any human ability. Only by means of faith can man comprehend the infinite spiritual truths, which are beyond human finite reasoning powers or the sensory systems (2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1).

THE BIBLICAL CONFIRMATION

The word “Trinity” is not found in the Scripture, but the concept is biblical. Rarely does a single passage of Scripture delineate point-by-point a complex doctrine. Rather, theologians formulate the principles of any major doctrine by comparing and correlating all related biblical passages. The believer should accept a doctrinal truth derived from many passages of Scripture just as he would accept a biblical principle directly stated in a single context. Over the years, the doctrine of the Trinity was likewise formulated by combining all passages related to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Historically, the formal doctrine of the Trinity derives from a succession of early church controversies and councils that sought to explain the biblical testimony regarding:

1. The oneness and unity of God in three persons,
2. The deity of Christ,
3. The personality and deity of the Holy Spirit.

The councils were held in response to heresies such as monarchianism and Arianism.¹ The Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) affirmed that God the Son possessed the same nature as God the Father. The Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) confirmed the deity of the Holy Spirit. In the following centuries, ‘Trinity’ became a technical word for the three persons of the Godhead.

The concept of the Trinity is firmly established in both the Old and the New Testaments.²

The Hebrew word for God, **אֱלֹהִים** (*Elohim*), is plural and indicates the existence of more than one person in the Godhead. When Genesis 1:1 declares “*Elohim* created the heavens and the earth,” the plural asserts that all three persons had a part in creation: The Father conceived the plan; the Son accomplished creation (John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2); and the Holy Spirit restored creation (Gen. 1:2) after Satan’s fall from heaven.³

Further Old Testament passages clearly declare the plurality of the Godhead.

“Come [Israel] near to Me, listen to this:
From the first I have not spoken in secret,
From the time it took place, I was there.

1. Modalistic monarchianists believed there was one God who expressed Himself in three modes, not three distinct persons. Dynamic or adoptionistic monarchianists believed Jesus Christ was not God Incarnate, but a deified man, an honorary god.

Arianism believed Jesus Christ had a different nature from the Father. The Son was created, not eternally preexistent.

2. For Trinitarian doctrine in the Old and New Testaments, see “The Trinity Manifested,” pages 23–26.

3. R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Creation, Chaos, and Restoration* (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1995), 12–13. Hereafter, cross-references to my books will cite only author, title, date of publication (in the first reference), and page(s).

And now the Lord GOD [יהוה, *JHWH*, “the Father”] has sent Me, and His Spirit.” (Isa. 48:16)⁴

Generally, the Old Testament uses the word יהוה (*JHWH*) to refer to only one member of the Trinity. *JHWH* is the doubling of the verb “to be,” meaning “absolute existence.” Called the Tetragrammaton, or “four letters,” *JHWH* is the proper name for God or Lord. *JHWH* is considered sacred and never pronounced by devout Jews. We translate *JHWH* as *Jehovah* or *Yahweh*.

The context of a passage of Scripture indicates which member of the Trinity the Tetragrammaton describes. In Isaiah 64:8, *Yahweh* refers to God the Father and in Isaiah 11:2, to God the Holy Spirit. Most uses of *Yahweh*, however, refer to God the Son since He is the visible person of the Trinity (John 6:46; cf. John 14:9–10; Isa. 6; cf. John 12:39–41). Numerous passages in the Old Testament document the preincarnate appearances—theophanies—of *Yahweh* or the Lord Jesus Christ to man (Gen. 16:7–13; 18:1–33; 32:24–32; Ex. 3:2; cf. Acts 7:30–35; Ex. 13:21; 14:19; 23:20–23; 24:9–11; 32:34; 33:2; Num. 20:16; Judg. 2:1–4; 6:11–24; Isa. 63:9; Hosea 12:4).

Occasionally, *Yahweh* implies all three persons as in the general blessing:

“The LORD [*Yahweh*] bless you, and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace.” (Num. 6:24–26)

Other Old Testament references to the Trinity include the pronoun “Us” where God refers to Himself in the plural (Gen. 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8).

Then God [*Elohim*] said, “Let *Us* make man in *Our* image. . . .” And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him. (Gen. 1:26a, 27a, italics added)

4. All Scriptures in this book are quoted from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Bracketed commentary reflects amplification of the NASB translation taught in Bible class lectures (available on MP3 CD from R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, Houston, Texas).

Such biblically recorded ‘convocations’ among the members of the Trinity serve to verify the existence of the threefold personality of God.

While these heavenly convocations among the members of the Godhead suggest a decision-making process, they do not imply that God is indecisive. God knows all that is knowable and His mandates come from His infinite and eternal knowledge. He then communicates to us, describing His seemingly indescribable person and plan in terms of our human experience and in a form of expression we can understand. His language accommodates our limited ability to comprehend the infinite. Thus, we can understand God, what He has revealed about Himself, and what He has set forth in His divine decree.⁵

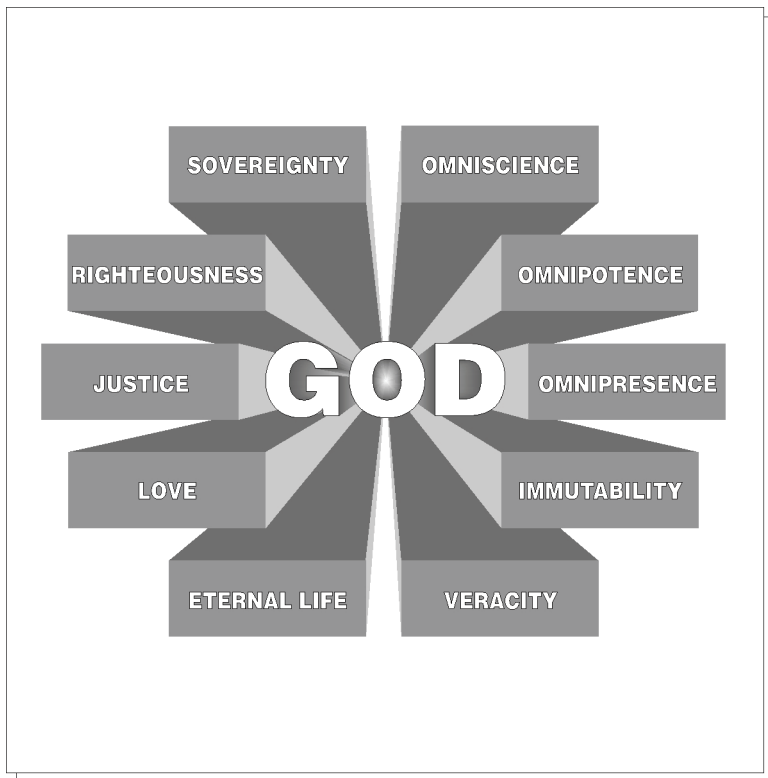
THE ESSENCE OF THE TRINITY

While our present study emphasizes God as a triune being, understanding His person is essential. Immediately we face a problem; we need a specialized vocabulary. Each term must convey the exact meaning of each divine characteristic. Once mastered, this vocabulary will save thousands of words of explanation and lay the foundation for further categories of Bible doctrine.

Before we can grasp the concept of the Trinity, we must first comprehend the oneness or unity of the Godhead. The *unity* of the Trinity is defined as the three persons having *one* divine essence (Isa. 48:16; Matt. 28:19; John 10:30; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 3:20*b*; James 2:19*a*). *Essence* is the essential being or nature of a person, what that person is. Each member of the Godhead is a joint partaker of the same essence, the same majesty, and the same eternal glory.

Attributes are those intrinsic qualities which compose the essence of a person. Each person of the Godhead has identical and identifiable attributes. These divine attributes never change. Neither can they separate from divine essence as a whole. All divine attributes are of equal value. No one attribute overrides another; all work in complete coordination without any compromise to His essence. Only through knowledge of His attributes can God’s essence be known.

5. The decree is the sum total of God the Father’s plan for the human race, with emphasis on the believer. The decree was designed “before the foundation of the world,” is centered in the person of Jesus Christ as Savior (Eph. 1:4–6; 1 Pet. 1:20), and is based on the principle of grace (Eph. 2:8–9). See pages 19–23. See also Thieme, *The Integrity of God* (2005).



THE ESSENCE OF GOD

Sovereignty

God is sovereign; that is, God has absolute authority, will, and prerogative (Ps. 47:2; 93:1; Isa. 46:7). Sovereign God is the Supreme Ruler of the universe, King of heaven and earth (Deut. 4:39; 1 Chron. 29:11; 2 Chron. 20:6). His sovereignty is expressed in His divine decree.

With regard to the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father, the psalmist writes: “Thou alone, whose name is the LORD, Art the Most High over all the earth” (Ps. 83:18*b*). Ultimately, the will of the Father will “be done, On earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Concerning the

Son, the Father said: “But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain” (Ps. 2:6). Jesus Christ as the God-man also declared His own sovereignty: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18b; cf. Phil. 2:11; Rev. 19:6).⁶ Although Satan is now the ruler of this world (John 12:31; cf. 16:11), the Lord’s will is infinitely greater.⁷ How reassuring to know that Jesus Christ controls history and the destiny of believers (Ps. 33)! As Sovereign, the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts “to each one [believers] individually just as He wills” (1 Cor. 12:11).⁸

Righteousness

God is absolute righteousness—perfect goodness, sinless in character and person (Ps. 25:8; 34:8; 86:5; 119:68; Luke 18:19). The righteousness of God is the perfect standard of His essence. All of His attitudes and actions conform to His flawless righteousness.

The Father asserts His own righteousness: “My righteousness shall be forever” (Isa. 51:8b); and the Son affirms the Father’s perfection (Luke 18:19; John 17:25). The Son Himself is said to be “holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners” (Heb. 7:26), “righteous” (1 John 2:1), and the One “who knew no sin [He did not possess a sin nature]” (2 Cor. 5:21).⁹ His name “will be called, the LORD our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6). The scriptural designation of the Spirit as “Holy” signifies that He, too, possesses absolute righteousness.

6. God-man refers to Jesus Christ during His first advent in whom undiminished deity and true humanity were inseparably united in one person forever (Phil. 2:5–11; Heb. 10:5, 10). See pages 29–30.

7. Since the fall of Adam in the Garden, Satan rules the world until Jesus Christ returns at the Second Advent. See Thieme, *Satan and Demonism* (1996), 7–9.

8. Thieme, *Tongues* (2000), 43–44, Appendix B; *The Integrity of God*, 130–32.

9. The sin nature is the inner source of temptation to commit sin and perpetuate Satan’s plan. Formed as a direct result of Adam’s first sin, the sin nature resides in the cell structure of the human body (Rom. 6:6; 7:5, 18). Transmitted genetically by the male in procreation (Gen. 5:3), the sin nature is the center of man’s rebellion toward God. Synonyms for the sin nature include the “old self” of Ephesians 4:22, the “flesh” of Romans 8:3–4, the principle of “sin” of Romans 7:8–20. Because Jesus Christ was conceived by means of the Holy Spirit, He was born without the genetically formed sin nature (Matt. 1:18). See Thieme, *The Integrity of God*, 65–70.

God's absolute righteousness stands in marked contrast to relative righteousness in the human realm.¹⁰

For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our [relatively] righteous deeds are like a filthy
garment. (Isa. 64:6a)

God's righteousness cannot accept anything less than His own perfect righteousness. Neither is He free to disregard or forgive sin apart from the satisfaction or propitiation of His righteous claims. The righteousness of God can only condemn sin.

God's righteousness combines with His justice to form the holiness or integrity of God (Ex. 15:11; 19:10–16; Lev. 11:44–45; Isa. 6:3). Righteousness is the *principle* of God's integrity; justice is the *function* of God's integrity. What the righteousness of God demands, the justice of God executes. Righteousness and justice work together to prevent any compromise of His essence (Deut. 32:4; 1 John 2:29).

Justice

God's justice is absolute and incorruptible fairness. God treats all His creatures alike, without bias or partiality (Neh. 9:33; Rom. 2:11). He judges with perfect fairness; He never makes exceptions for anyone. As the function of God's integrity, justice executes what righteousness demands (Lev. 19:2; 2 Chron. 19:7; Job 37:23; Ps. 19:9b; 50:6; Isa. 2:2; 45:21; Jer. 50:7; John 17:11; Rom. 3:26; Heb. 10:30–31; 12:23; Rev. 3:7; 4:8; 6:10). What God's righteousness rejects or condemns—our sin nature and personal sin—His justice judges (Rom. 5:12). What the righteousness of God accepts—His own righteousness in the believer (1 Cor. 1:30)—the justice of God blesses. The justice of God is the source of both judgment and blessing.

In order to reconcile sinful mankind to Himself and yet satisfy His righteousness, the justice of God the Father imputed our sins to His Son and judged Him as our substitute (John 3:16; Rom. 3:24–26).¹¹ He

10. Relative righteousness is a comparative righteousness between one set of human morals and values and another, and yet no human righteousness can ever meet God's righteous standards. See Thieme, *The Barrier* (2003), 19–20.

11. Imputation is the action of the justice of God whereby condemnation or blessing is assigned, credited, or attributed to a human being. See Thieme, *The Integrity of God*.

also appointed the Son the “righteous Judge” (2 Tim. 4:8), giving Him the “authority to execute judgment” (John 5:27). As an expression of His fairness, the Holy Spirit supplies common grace—His work that convicts “the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:7–11).¹²

Love

God is eternal, unchangeable, perfect love (1 John 4:8b, 16). His love along with righteousness and justice are the cause of all His actions. God’s love and integrity are inseparably united; they are two sides of the same coin. Righteousness and justice are the bulwarks of God’s love, “the foundation of Thy throne” (Ps. 89:14a). Integrity is the stability behind His love.

For the word of the LORD is upright;
And all His work is *done* in faithfulness.
He loves righteousness and justice.
(Ps. 33:4–5a)

There never was or will be a time when God does not have perfect love (1 Chron. 16:34; Ps. 118:1–4, 29; 136:1–26; 138:8).

God’s love existed before the creation of man, angels, or the universe—before anything existed apart from God Himself. Therefore, He does not fall in love or begin to love. His love does not require inspiration or an object. His love is not disappointed, frustrated, or diminished by knowledge of the sins and failures of His creatures. His love is not complicated by ignorance, silliness, or absurdities. Neither is His love emotional or sentimental. God does not have emotion. His love always functions in a rational manner. God’s love is perfect because of His perfect integrity. God’s love is expressed in three categories: divine self-love, divine impersonal love, and divine personal love.

12. Common grace includes the general blessings from God to all mankind such as maintaining all scientific phenomena that sustain the universe (Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:3); the benefits of the natural bounties that sustain all life on earth (John 1:16); the restraint of sin by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:2); the convicting or convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit to the world regarding sin, righteousness, judgment (John 16:8–11); and the Spirit’s function as a human spirit at Gospel hearing (1 Cor. 2:13–14). See pages 35–36. See also Thieme, *Victorious Proclamation* (2002), 8–9.

DIVINE SELF-LOVE

Divine self-love is directed toward the perfect righteousness among the members of the Godhead. God loves His own integrity and the perfect integrity belonging to each member of the Trinity. Each Person is worthy of admiration to an infinite degree. Not only does each member of the Trinity love Himself, but there never was a time that God the Father did not love God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; or that God the Son did not love God the Father and God the Holy Spirit; or that God the Holy Spirit did not love God the Father and God the Son.

“For Thou didst love Me [divine self-love] before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24b)

For God to love Himself and the other members of the Trinity, there is no compromise of His essence. But how can God love sinful, spiritually dead mankind who is totally unworthy without compromising His integrity?¹³ The answer to this question is found in two categories of God’s love for mankind: divine impersonal love and divine personal love.

DIVINE IMPERSONAL LOVE

Divine impersonal love is the category directed toward all spiritually dead mankind. *Impersonal* love is *unconditional*; it does not depend on the merit of the object, but on the merit, the integrity, of the subject. Divine impersonal love is the most powerful love that has ever existed. This love provided our so-great salvation.

“For God so loved [impersonal love] the world, that He gave His only begotten [uniquely born] Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

By this the love [impersonal love] of God [the Father] was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten [uniquely born] Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (1 John 4:9)

13. Spiritual death is total separation from God, inability to have a relationship with God (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22a; Eph. 2:1). Spiritual death occurs at birth when Adam’s original sin is imputed to the genetically formed sin nature. See Thieme, *The Barrier*, 25–28.

But God demonstrates His own [impersonal] love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)

The cross is the greatest demonstration of God's impersonal love for all mankind. God the Father demonstrated His love for us in His decision to impute and judge all the sins of human history in the impeccable human nature of Jesus Christ (John 3:16–17; Rom. 5:8). Because Jesus Christ as God loved us, He became true humanity in order to bear the imputation and judgment of all the sins of human history and to die as our substitute. God the Holy Spirit also demonstrated His love toward us when He made the decision to sustain the human nature of Jesus Christ while He carried our sins in His own body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24).

DIVINE PERSONAL LOVE

Divine personal love is the category directed only toward perfect righteousness. Divine *personal* love is therefore *conditional*, emphasizing the integrity of the object. To be the recipient of divine personal love, the object must possess perfect righteousness. Since Christ paid the penalty for sin on the cross, the justice of God is free to impute the righteousness of God to every believer at the moment of faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24–26).

He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21)

God loves His own perfect righteousness wherever it is found. Therefore, from the moment of salvation every believer is the object of divine personal love forever.

Eternal Life

God *is*. He is the absolute self-existing one, *Yahweh*, the great “I am” (Ex. 3:14) who has neither beginning nor end (Ps. 90:2; 102:27). The self-existing life of God means His existence is entirely self-contained and does not depend on anything external to Himself. When related to the Godhead, the Hebrew word רֵאשִׁית (*rešit*), translated “beginning”

(Gen. 1:1), refers to the beginning of Their work of creation, not the beginning of God. John 1:1 states that both God the Father and God the Son existed eternally prior to creation. They had no beginning. Jesus Christ was “with” the Father and already “was” when time began.

In the beginning was the Word [Jesus Christ, God the Son], and the Word was with God [the Father], and the Word *was* God. (John 1:1, italics added)

The New Testament asserts that “eternal life . . . was with the Father” (1 John 1:2) and this same “life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11). Jesus Christ is the “Alpha and the Omega” in Revelation 1:8. “Alpha,” the beginning letter of the Greek alphabet, refers to the eternal preexistence of Jesus Christ. “Omega,” the final letter of the Greek alphabet, refers to Jesus Christ in hypostatic union during His incarnation or first advent.¹⁴ He is the eternal Son of God and the Son of David who in hypostatic union will return as the King of kings and Lord of lords at His second advent to reign forever.¹⁵

God is timeless, yet He invented time for the passing of human history. We think in terms of past, present, future; of short or long periods; of years, months, days, hours, minutes, seconds. But God likens our lives to “vapor” (James 4:14): here today and gone tomorrow. No wonder David exclaimed,

What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? (Ps. 8:4a)

Yet an eternal, loving God cares enough to extend a gracious offer for us to share His eternal life.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

14. The Greek word ὑπόστασις (*hypostasis*) means “substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality.” When God the Son took upon Himself true humanity, He became the God-man, the unique person of the universe. The hypostatic union describes the complete person of the incarnate Christ as the union of two natures, divine and human, in one person forever (John 1:14, 18; Rom. 1:2–6; Phil. 2:6–8; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:2–3). See pages 29–32. See also Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History: Dispensations and the Church* (1999), 37–39; *King of Kings and Lord of Lords* (2004), Appendix A.

15. Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 71–77.

Omniscience

God is all-knowing. Omniscience derives from the Latin *omni*, which means “all,” and *scientia*, “knowledge.” Eternal God in three persons has always known all things including both the actual and the possible past, present, and future events. Before the creation of the world, God knew every problem, every heartache, every moment of your life, including every sin you would ever commit. Although His omniscience transcends time and eternity, His knowledge of events before they occur does not violate or interfere with your volition. By divine design, you are a free agent who can choose to partake of or reject God’s grace. You are accountable to God for all your decisions and actions (Rom. 14:12).

All three members of the Godhead are omniscient. The Father is “perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16; cf. Matt. 6:8; 10:29–30; Acts 1:24); the Son knows “all things” (John 16:30; cf. Matt. 9:4; John 2:25); and the Holy Spirit is called the “spirit of wisdom and understanding . . . counsel and . . . knowledge” (Isa. 11:2).

Omnipresence

God exists beyond spatial limitations. He is immanent and transcendent. *Immanence* means His entire essence is always present everywhere in nature, in history, in all the affairs of mankind (Jer. 23:23–24; Acts 17:27–28). *Transcendence* means He is independent of the created universe so that no particular place exclusively contains Him (Ps. 113:5–6; Isa. 55:8–9; John 8:23).

Immanence and transcendence exist in balance, so that “the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa. 6:3*b*). His whole being is present in every point in the universe, while at the same time He is “Holy” and “lofty and exalted” infinitely beyond the universe (Isa. 6:1, 3*a*). The members of the Godhead pervade the universe, while at the same time They are free to be in a specific location, including:

1. Giving the Law to Moses (Deut. 4:10),
2. Appearing as a theophany (Gen. 18:1; Ex. 3:2–6; Num. 14:10; 1 Kings 8:10–11; Isa. 6; cf. John 12:37–41),
3. Living on earth as the incarnate person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14),
4. Indwelling the believer (John 14:20, 23; 2 Cor. 6:16).

Omnipresence assures that no believer will ever be alone (Heb. 13:5*b*). The Father fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:23–24); the Son who

is in the Father and in the believer (John 14:20; Col. 1:27) promises, “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20); and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit resides in every Church Age believer (1 Cor. 6:19).¹⁶

Omnipotence

God is all-powerful, unlimited in His ability and authority. His omnipotence guarantees that “nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37). If God is limited in any sense, the restriction is self-imposed, to be consistent with His essence. God can do all He wills, but may not will to do all He can (Eph. 1:11).

Omnipotence is the superior divine power of the Trinity. The Father is called “the Almighty” (Job 11:7) and His power is eternal (Rom. 1:20). The Son’s power created the universe and holds it together, perpetuating history (Isa. 40:26; cf. Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:3). Jesus Christ is also called “Almighty” (Gen. 17:1; Rev. 4:8), “Mighty God” (Isa. 9:6), and “Lord God omnipotent” (Rev. 19:6, KJV) and is

Declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection
from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus
Christ our Lord. (Rom. 1:4b)

The Holy Spirit supplies the divine power for believers to execute the plan of the Father (Zech. 4:6; Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:19).¹⁷

During the Incarnation, Jesus Christ limited the independent use of His deity to strictly conform to the plan of the Father (John 5:17; 6:65; 8:28; Phil. 2:6–8) and to utilize the power of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 42:1; Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:18–19; John 3:34). His purpose was to demonstrate to Church Age believers that dependence on the Father’s plan and the Holy Spirit’s power is necessary to learn, think, and apply Bible doctrine and to fulfill the Christian life.

Immutability

God is unchangeable. He is neither capable of nor susceptible to change. He is absolute stability. God’s sovereign decisions, His

16. God’s administration of human history is divided into dispensations. A dispensation is a period of time defined in terms of divine revelation. The Church Age began circa A.D. 30 on the day of Pentecost, and will terminate on an unknown future date when the Church is resurrected or raptured. See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 63–70.

17. Thieme, *God the Holy Spirit vs. The Sin Nature* (2013).

omniscience, His integrity, in fact all His characteristics are eternally the same and of equal stature (Num. 23:19; Ps. 33:11; 102:27; Mal. 3:6). His Word and His works are unalterable.

The question is frequently asked, “If God is all-powerful, could He not *alter* anything He desires?” No! Each attribute is consistent with His integrity. No attribute can supersede or operate independently of God’s other attributes. This means God will never act capriciously or arbitrarily or in violation of what He has already decreed. Therefore, God’s omnipotence cannot override His immutability.

From God’s immutability comes His faithfulness (Lam. 3:22–23). The Scriptures declare repeatedly that God is faithful. He is always reliable; God will never let anyone down. He is faithful to keep His Word (Heb. 6:17–19). Not one of His promises has ever failed (1 Kings 8:56). Although we may be faithless, He remains faithful (2 Tim. 2:13). With the Father there is “no variation, or shifting shadow” (James 1:17). Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday and today, *yes* and forever” (Heb. 13:8). The Holy Spirit is faithful to assist the believer in all things (John 14:16) and to teach him God’s Word (1 Cor. 2:13).

Veracity

God is absolute truth (Ps. 12:6). His veracity is evident in His words (John 8:45–46), in His works (Ps. 33:4), and in His ways (Rev. 15:3). God means what He says in all His revelation, including mandates, promises, and warnings. His faithfulness upholds His Word of truth (Ps. 100:5). The veracity of the Father is affirmed by the Son: “He who sent Me is true” (John 7:28; cf. John 17:3). Of Himself, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6). In 1 John 5:7, “the Spirit is the truth.”

THE SPECTRUM OF DIVINE ESSENCE

While all the attributes of divine essence are resident in all three persons of the Godhead, not all are manifest at the same time. This unity of essence but individuality of attribute can be illustrated using the properties of light. For just as God is one in essence, so is light; and just as God has many attributes in His essence, so light has many colors.

Every single ray of light from the sun is pure white, and yet within each ray all of the colors of the spectrum exist. We see this spectrum when a ray of white light is refracted through a prism; all the colors emerge from violet to blue to green to yellow to red. We see the manifestations of the color spectrum all around us. When white light illuminates an object, certain colors are absorbed and others are reflected. The colors which the object absorbs determine its color. For example: When a ray of light strikes an object that absorbs red and yellow, the object's reflected color—the color we see—is blue. If yellow and blue are absorbed, the reflected color is red. Likewise, the entire spectrum of divine essence in each member of the Trinity remains present and constant no matter which attribute is reflected at a given point in time.

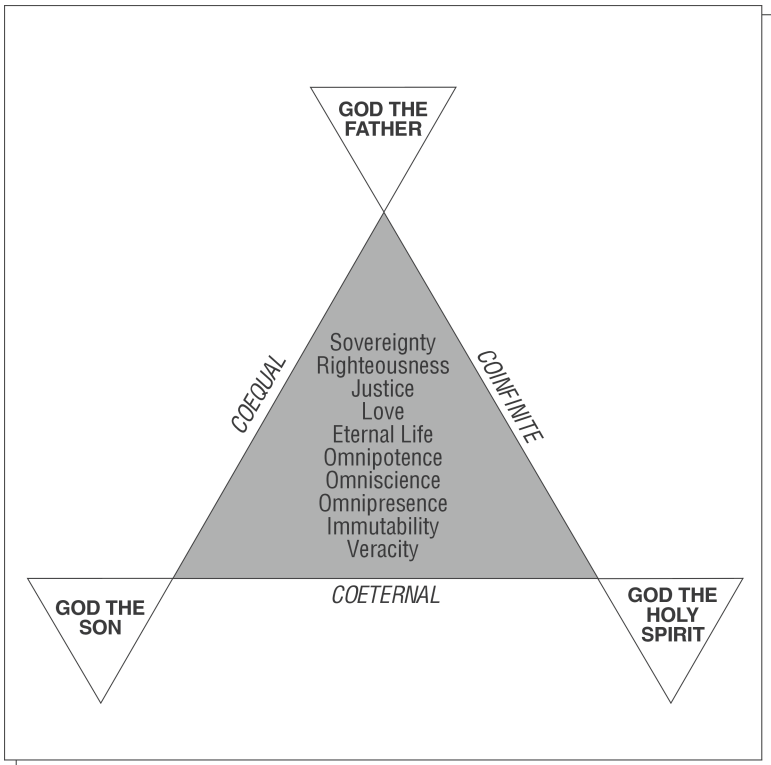
For example, to ask the question, “How can a loving God send someone to hell?” focuses attention on the divine attribute of God's love while excluding His righteousness and justice. To isolate God's love from His integrity reduces His love to human sentimentality. God's love is inseparably united with His integrity. The absolute standards of God's integrity regard the unbeliever as totally unacceptable. Yet even while we were unacceptable, the Father “loved the world so much” that He sent His Son to die as our substitute so that anyone who believes in the Son would have an eternal relationship with Him (John 3:16). The same righteousness and justice that were satisfied by the salvation work of Christ on the cross condemn and execute eternal judgment on those who reject His work. The love of God never rejects the unbeliever; the unbeliever rejects the love of God.

“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”
(John 3:18)

The attributes of the Trinity never operate independently of each other. As in our analogy to light, all divine attributes and all three persons of the Trinity are reflected in the work of salvation for mankind. Other circumstances bring out other facets of His essence. The righteousness and justice of God condemn and judge unbelievers. The attributes of love and eternal life receive the focus when a person believes in Jesus Christ. Omniscience and sovereignty are the origin of God's plan, while immutability and veracity are foremost in the faithfulness of God to the believer.

THE PERSONALITIES AND ROLES OF THE TRINITY

One God exists in three distinct personalities. The Bible distinguishes the role of each person of the Trinity as the plan of God for man unfolds. But, the three divine personalities are not the same as three separate human personalities. No two humans have the identical essence of personality as the members of the Godhead possess. The uniformity of essence and the three separate but equal personalities of God are best illustrated by an equilateral triangle.



THE TRINITY

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are coequal and coeternal; no one Person is any less God than the other. Only in describing Their works related to man can one member be viewed as ‘subordinate’ when executing different aspects of the divine plan. This is demonstrated in the Son’s obedience to the plan of the Father by going to the cross (John 4:34).

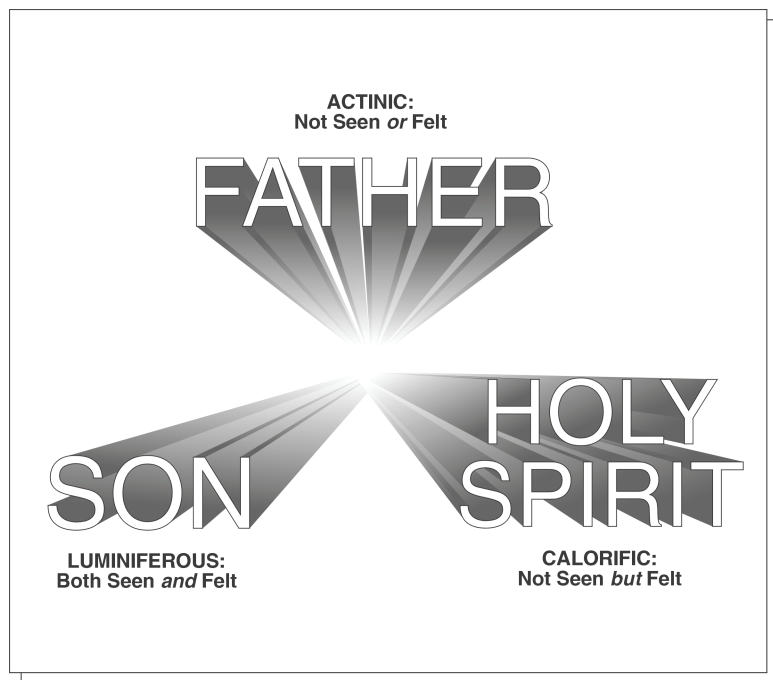
“THEN I [Jesus Christ] SAID, ‘BEHOLD, I HAVE COME
(IN THE ROLL OF THE BOOK [Old Testament] IT IS WRITTEN
OF ME)
TO DO THY WILL, O GOD [the Father].’” (Heb. 10:7)

The Holy Spirit also demonstrates obedience by revealing the Father’s plan to unbelieving mankind (Gen. 6:3; John 16:8).

The Father is the architect of the plan, the Son is the executor of the plan, and the Holy Spirit is the revealer of the plan. Always remember that descriptions of the individual functions of each member of the Trinity never reduce the equality of deity among the Three. Although each member of the Godhead has a different function, They cannot act in opposition to one another. The three Persons are separate and distinct, even though They are one God in essence.

People who cannot explain the profound biblical truth of the Trinity shrug off Their existence as a ridiculous and outmoded superstition. Yet, the Trinity is not an inscrutable concept beyond the grasp of human understanding. If this were true, the Trinity would not have been *revealed* in Scripture.

The Trinity can be understood, perhaps, by examining a second analogy to light. While no analogy to nature can fully explain the trinity of God, a simple example may clarify the concept. Light is a single phenomenon with three distinct properties: actinic or radiating energy, especially in the ultraviolet spectrum; luminiferous or illuminating; and calorific or heat-producing. Each property is distinct, but all unite as light. The actinic property is like God the Father, neither seen nor felt. The luminiferous property is like God the Son, both seen and felt. The calorific property is like God the Holy Spirit, felt but not seen.



THREE-IN-ONE

The Divine Decree

God has always known His plan for the ages and He has revealed His plan in a form His created beings could comprehend. The theological term for God's plan for mankind is called the divine decree. The decree is defined as God's eternal, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose, comprehending simultaneously all things that ever were or will be, in their causes, courses, conditions, successions, and relations, and determining their certain futuration (Ps. 148:6).

In eternity past—prior to the creation of the heavens, earth, and mankind—the members of the Trinity formulated Their decree. The decree included the creation of a perfect man as a free moral agent even

though, from His omniscience, God knew that the first man would use his volition to sin and disobey Him. The original sin of Adam brought condemnation on himself and subsequently on the entire human race (Rom. 5:12).¹⁸ Now spiritually dead, mankind would be incapable of having a relationship with God. Nevertheless, from eternity past God still loved undeserving mankind with impersonal love, desired to bless mankind, and wanted to share with mankind His eternal life.

Therefore, God decreed that sin and the resultant spiritual death of mankind would not terminate His plan. A way of salvation would be provided by which undeserving man could be brought back into eternal relationship and temporal fellowship with God without compromising divine essence.¹⁹ God's grace is the key. Under His policy of grace, God alone accomplishes the work and man receives the benefit totally apart from his own merit or ability.²⁰

The work God accomplishes on our behalf occurs in three phases: phase one is salvation; phase two is the Christian way of life; and phase three is eternity. All three members of the Trinity contribute to make salvation a reality: God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, agreed to be sent by God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, into the world by means of the virgin birth, to become true humanity, and to pay the penalty for sin (John 3:16; 6:38). The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, would be the agent of the Son's conception (Luke

18. Adam's first sin of disobedience resulted in his acquiring a sin nature. The sin nature is the center of man's rebellion toward God, the source of temptation, lust, and human good, but not the source of sin. Man's volition is the source of sin. The sin nature resides in the cell structure of the body and is transmitted genetically (Rom. 6:6; 7:5, 18). At birth, Adam's original sin is imputed to the genetically formed sin nature in each person so that we are born physically alive but spiritually dead under condemnation from the justice of God. We are condemned not because of our personal sins, but because of Adam's original sin. See Thieme, *The Barrier; The Integrity of God*, 63–79.

19. Temporal fellowship with God is the absolute status of being filled with and under the control of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). When the believer sins, he loses the filling of the Holy Spirit and temporal fellowship with God and is in the absolute status of carnality. Temporal fellowship with God and the filling of the Spirit are recovered through confession of sin to God the Father (1 John 1:9). See page 22. See also Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!* (1993).

20. Grace is the policy of God in bestowing His unmerited favor on sinful mankind. Grace is all that God is free to do for mankind based on the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Isa. 30:18).

1:35) and sustain Him throughout His life on earth (Matt. 12:18, 28; Luke 4:1, 14, 18; John 3:34; Acts 10:38).²¹

The virgin pregnancy resulted in the birth of the unique person of the universe; Jesus Christ is God and man in one person forever (Luke 2:11). Different from God, Jesus Christ is true humanity; different from humanity, Jesus Christ is undiminished deity. Because of the virgin pregnancy, the humanity of Jesus Christ was born perfect, without a sin nature.

Throughout His earthly ministry, the Son executed the will of the Father (John 8:29; Heb. 10:9). In His humanity He was tempted far beyond anything we can imagine, yet He remained sinless. As the only perfect member of the human race, He was qualified to pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:23)

As Jesus hung on the cross and was judged by the Father for our sins, the Holy Spirit faithfully continued to sustain Him. When Christ said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), our salvation was accomplished. All three members of the Trinity contributed to our salvation.

Our acceptance of this magnificent gift from the grace of God is all that remains. How do we accept God's unspeakable gift?

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved." (Acts 16:31b)

Entrance into phase one, salvation, is by the nonmeritorious system of faith. In faith, the object, Jesus Christ, has all the merit. Salvation is not by works, but by faith.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)

21. The virgin pregnancy was caused by God the Holy Spirit providing twenty-three perfect chromosomes to fertilize Mary's normal, pure ovum of twenty-three chromosomes that were uncontaminated by the sin nature. Consequently, there was no genetically formed sin nature passed down through the male and no imputation of Adam's original sin. See Thieme, *The Integrity of God*, 65-70, 85-87.

Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone (John 3:16; 20:31). The moment we believe in Christ, we enter into an eternal relationship and temporal fellowship with God.

Phase two begins at the moment of salvation and continues throughout the believer's life on earth. The Christian way of life is a supernatural way of life. Fulfillment depends on the enabling power of the filling of the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine resident in the believer's soul. God's purpose is to provide phenomenal blessings for each believer in time.

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ. (Eph. 1:3)

Such blessings can only come to the believer who grows in the grace and knowledge of the Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), by means of the teaching and filling ministries of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).²²

The filling of the Holy Spirit, the power for the Christian life and the key to temporal fellowship with God, is maintained by the rebound procedure—private confession or acknowledgment of sins to God. When we sin, we lose the filling of the Spirit and temporal fellowship with God. But,

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [wrongdoing]. (1 John 1:9)

Private confession is simply naming known sins to the Father who then cleanses the believer from all sins, including the unknown and forgotten ones.²³ Rebound results in the filling of the Holy Spirit and restoration to temporal fellowship with God. The filling of the Holy Spirit enables us to learn and understand Bible doctrine and to grow spiritually from learning, thinking, and applying doctrine.

22. Thieme, *Giving: Gimmick or Grace?* (1990), 24–26; *Christian Integrity* (2002), 89–94.

23. Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!*

Phase three is God's plan for the believer in eternity. This ultimate promotion begins at the point of physical death.²⁴ God also provides phenomenal blessings for every believer in eternity.

“In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I [Jesus Christ] would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2)

We are not told the full extent of the blessings and provisions of eternity. Beyond the grasp of our finite minds, eternity is described in terms of negatives:

“There shall no longer be *any* death; there shall no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” (Rev. 21:4b)

Because the divine decree is grace, man's entrance into and fulfillment of the plan of God must be compatible with grace. God is perfect; His plan is perfect. The good works of imperfect man will always fall short of the perfect standards of God.

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy [grace in action], by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

THE TRINITY MANIFESTED

Two events, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament, vividly demonstrate to us the reality of the Trinity. When God called Isaiah to be His servant, the prophet was shown a rare vision of heaven.

24. The generation of believers alive at the end of the Church Age will not die but will go directly from phase two into phase three. This is called the resurrection or Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:14–17).

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said,

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory.” (Isa. 6:1–3)

Why did these angelic beings repeat the word “Holy” three times? Their praise was addressed to the Trinity. Notice, they did not say, “Holy, Holy, Holy *are* the *Lords* of hosts.” God is three persons, but one in essence.

Jesus Christ is the only visible member of the Trinity. Isaiah saw Him seated upon His throne as the sovereign of heaven and earth. So glorious was the sight of the Lord's holiness, or integrity, that Isaiah came face to face with his own unworthiness (Isa. 6:5). Though saved, how could Isaiah or any sinner, including ourselves, stand before holy God and continue to live? When we see ourselves as we really are, we know that it is because of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed.

For His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
Great is Thy faithfulness. (Lam. 3:22b–23)

At one point in history, the Trinity was uniquely manifested on earth. This occasion was the baptism of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist had been announcing the first advent of Christ and baptizing believers in the Jordan River to identify them with the coming Kingdom. Then, Jesus appeared on the scene and asked John to baptize Him. At first John refused, protesting his unworthiness. Only after the Lord explained that He must be baptized to identify Himself with the Father's plan did John agree to perform the baptism.

But Jesus answering said to him [John], “Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him. (Matt. 3:15)

Jesus Christ's baptism foreshadowed the cross where “all righteousness” would be fulfilled. That is, God the Father would be satisfied, or propitiated, with the righteousness of the Son. This biblical statement

also involves the doctrine of redemption which requires that the Savior be perfect righteousness in order to purchase the freedom of the human race from the slave market of sin.²⁵

Of the various baptisms mentioned in Scripture, the baptism of Jesus Christ was unique.²⁶ This baptism demonstrated the Son's complete obedience to the Father's will. The sinless One was willing to identify Himself with sinners by being judged on the cross as our substitute.²⁷

During the baptism ritual, the extraordinary manifestation of the Trinity occurred.

And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the [Holy] Spirit of God descending as a dove, *and* coming upon Him. (Matt. 3:16)

Water represented the will of the Father for the Son during the First Advent. Under the water, Christ was identified with the Father's plan for man's salvation. As Jesus emerged from the water, the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, descended upon Him "in bodily form like a dove" (Luke 3:22). By this sign, John and everyone present undoubtedly knew that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity (John 1:33–34).

And behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I [the Father] am well-pleased."
(Matt. 3:17)

The voice of approval was from God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity. Therefore, at Christ's baptism, the beginning of His earthly

25. Thieme, *Slave Market of Sin* (1994).

26. The English word "baptism" is a translation of the Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*), meaning "to dip" or "to immerse." When someone or something was baptized it was "identified" with a second person or object so that the nature or characteristics of the first person or object were changed. There are seven baptisms in the Scripture: three are ritual baptisms in water—of Jesus (Matt. 3:13–17), of John (Matt. 3:1–11), and of believers (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:36–38); and four are real baptisms—of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), of Moses (1 Cor. 10:2), of fire (2 Thess. 1:7–9), and of the cross (Matt. 20:22). See Thieme, *Tongues*, 30–36, Appendix A.

27. Thieme, *The Blood of Christ* (2002), 23.

ministry, the three members of the Trinity worked in concert to confirm the identity of the God-man. Three years later, before His ascension to heaven, Jesus Christ commissioned believers to represent Him on earth. The formal words of the appointment again bring the Trinity into focus.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the *name* of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 28:19, italics added)

Believers are baptized in the “name”—not names—of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “Name” in the singular parallels “Lord” in Isaiah 6:3, affirming that God is one in essence but three persons. While the emphasis in Isaiah 6:3 is on the Three-in-One, in Matthew it is on the One-in-Three.

HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE PERSONS OF GOD?

How can the infinite personalities of the Godhead be described to our finite minds? What vocabulary, what means of communication can best explain to man that which is normally incomprehensible? One method of revelation the Holy Spirit has chosen to use is language of accommodation, which utilizes anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms. God uses these analogies to human characteristics and behavior which He does not actually possess to give us insight into His divine character and policy. Anthropomorphisms ascribe to God portions of human anatomy to explain His *modus operandi*, and anthropopathisms ascribe to God human feelings, passions, and thoughts to explain divine policies, actions, and decisions in terms of our human frame of reference.

The term “Father,” for example, is an anthropopathism that draws upon our familiarity with the concept of a paternal relationship. Father not only describes the relationship between the First and Second Persons of the Trinity, but also defines our family relationship with God the Father through regeneration (1 Cor. 11:3). Likewise, the names “Son” and “Holy Spirit” describe for us the roles of the other persons within the Godhead.

God the Father

AUTHOR AND PLANNER

In Scripture, the father is the head of the family (1 Cor. 11:3). God the Father is the epitome of fatherhood and is the supreme authority over all things (1 Cor. 8:6). The title “Father” emphasizes the absolute authority of the First Person as the author of the divine plan for humanity (John 14:24; Eph. 1).

One God and Father of all [believers] who is over all [sovereign] and through all [omnipresent] and in all [indwelling of the Father].²⁸ (Eph. 4:6)

Yet God the Father does not surpass the other members of the Trinity in either quality or degree, but is coequal with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In eternity past, the Father planned and designed all that was, is, or ever shall be (Gen. 1:1). He “marked out the foundations of the earth” (Prov. 8:29), prepared the elements (Job 28:25–27), and set the bounds for the seas (Job 38:11). The Father purposed to make man (Gen. 1:26) and to treat him in grace (Eph. 1:2, 4; 2:8–9). All planning and production of the Father are manifestations of His essence.

FATHER OF JESUS CHRIST

“The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is one title of the First Person (2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3). This title indicates the relationship between Christ and the Father. Christ is both the revelation of the Father and the focal point of His plan (John 1:14; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 3:11; Heb. 1:2).

No man has seen God [the Father] at any time; the only begotten [uniquely born] God [Jesus Christ], who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*. (John 1:18)

The relationship of Father and Son has existed from eternity past in the divine decree (John 17:5, 24). Although eternally equal with the

28. The indwelling of God the Father is a permanent, absolute status acquired at the moment of salvation of every Church Age believer (John 14:23; Eph. 4:6; 1 John 4:15).

Father (Phil. 2:6), the Son functioned in a subordinate role to accomplish the redemptive will of the Father. Such phrases as “His only begotten [uniquely born] Son” (John 3:16) and “the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18) must be understood in the sense of the unique mission of the Second Person of the Trinity. Although eternal God, He proceeded from the Father to be manifest in the flesh (John 1:14; 8:42). Jesus Christ is the only one born into the world without a sin nature (1 Pet. 1:19) through the virgin birth (Ps. 2:7; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23) and the only one qualified to act as a substitute to be judged for the sins of all mankind (Isa. 53:4–6; Heb. 9:16*b*, 28*a*; 1 John 3:5).

FATHER OF ALL BELIEVERS

Since God the Father is the author of salvation, all believers are personally and eternally related to Him through the new birth (Eph. 1:5; 3:14–15; 4:6). We are called sons of God (John 1:12; Gal. 4:6–7). Contrary to the popular notion of the universal fatherhood of God, God is *not* the father of all mankind (John 8:42, 44) but the Father of all believers. Membership in the family of God is not automatic, but is the result of a simple act of faith in Jesus Christ.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
(Gal. 3:26)

As members of His family, we may address God as “Father” (Rom. 8:15).

Just like all loving fathers, God the heavenly Father provides what is best for His children (Matt. 7:11). All our needs were met and supplied in abundance in eternity past through the divine decree. As a guarantee of this eternal provision, God the Father not only indwells every believer (John 14:23; Eph. 4:6), but is the personal grantor of these blessings. These grace blessings include all of the gifts bestowed on the believer in phase one, salvation;²⁹ in phase two, including promises and Bible doctrine; and those bestowed in phase three, eternity:

An inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. (1 Pet. 1:4*b*)

29. The Church Age believer receives at least forty gifts from God at the moment of salvation. See Thieme, *The Plan of God* (2003), Appendix.

Like all children we sin and disappoint our heavenly Father. We are then disciplined by the Father for our own good (Heb. 12:5–11). Yet our Father is always ready to receive His children back into fellowship as soon as we return to His plan by way of private, direct confession to Him (1 John 1:9).³⁰

God the Son

THE UNIQUE PERSON OF THE UNIVERSE

Jesus Christ, the Second Person, is the only visible member of the Trinity (John 1:14, 18; 14:9). He is known as God the Son and the Lord Jesus Christ. His title, “Lord,” which is *Κύριος* (*Kurios*) in the Greek and *Yahweh* in the Hebrew, proclaims His deity. “Jesus,” which may be translated “Savior,” is the name of His humanity and signifies His redemptive work on our behalf (Matt. 1:21). The designation “Christ,” meaning “the Anointed One” or “Messiah,” indicates His offices of prophet, priest, and king to Israel.

As the unique person of the universe, Jesus Christ possesses two natures that are inseparably united in hypostatic union without loss or mixture of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal. He is undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever (Rom. 1:2–6; Phil. 2:6–8; 1 Tim. 3:16). He bears every attribute of deity and is eternally related to the other two members of the Trinity (Isa. 48:16; John 1:1–4; Heb. 5:5).

For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form.
(Col. 2:9)

As deity, Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18), possesses life in Himself (John 5:26), imparts eternal life (John 10:28), forgives sins (Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:7), and executes judgment (John 5:22). As the Son of God (Rom. 1:1–4), Christ is the “exact representation of His [the Father’s] nature” (Heb. 1:3). On the rare occasions when He referred to Himself as the “Son of God,” He was accused of blasphemy (John 10:33) and threatened with death (John 5:18). Many who heard His claim to being deity and Messiah violently rejected that claim.

30. Thieme, *The Prodigal Son* (2001); *Rebound and Keep Moving!*

As the “Son of Man” (Luke 19:10), Christ took on the “likeness” and “form” of man (Phil. 2:7). He stressed this title more often than any other title during His earthly ministry. Since His deity had always existed (John 1:1), He now focused on that which was new and which must also be understood—His humanity (Matt. 1:25). During His life on earth, Jesus experienced physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth (Luke 2:40, 52). He knew fatigue (John 4:6), hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), testing (Heb. 4:15), suffering (Heb. 2:18), and death (Luke 23:46).

When the God-man in hypostatic union spoke from His divine nature, Christ referred to God as His Father; when He spoke on the cross from His human nature, He referred to the Father as His God (Matt. 27:46; cf. John 20:17). Yet His humanity in no way diminishes or detracts from His deity nor from His equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit (John 5:23).

Jesus is clearly revealed in the Old Testament as:

1. The Creator (Gen. 2:7; cf. John 1:3, 10; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16–17),
2. The Angel of the Lord (*Yahweh*, Gen. 16:10; 22:11; Judg. 13:17–23; cf. John 1:18),³¹
3. The Messiah or Anointed One (Ps. 2:2; Dan. 9:25; cf. John 4:25–26). He is repeatedly declared to be *Yahweh*.

The New Testament records His ministry and greatly expands our understanding of His person and work.

HIS INCARNATION

The Incarnation of the Son of God, His coming in the flesh, and His hypostatic union are the very foundation of Christianity. To provide salvation for mankind, the Son had to become a true member of the human race. As sovereign and eternal God, He is not subject to judgment or death on the cross. What an astounding endeavor for the Creator to lower Himself to the level of His own creation that He might lift us to His own sphere of glory! In the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), Jesus

31. The Angel of the Lord was the *visible* manifestation of God, the Second Person of the Trinity in the Old Testament, who no longer appeared as the Angel in the New Testament after Jesus Christ took on humanity.

Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Luke 1:31–35), “was revealed in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) and “dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

During His ministry on earth, He displayed the glory and omniscience of God (Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:29–35; 2 Cor. 4:6), yet He came primarily to reveal the love of God (1 John 4:9–10). The supreme proof of that love was the cross.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)

Even His sinless, perfect life alone could not save us. His miracles, which presented His messianic credentials, only alleviated the suffering in the lives of a few. In order to provide salvation for all mankind, *Jesus Christ had to become “flesh” to take our place and be judged for our sins.* The perfect, sinless humanity of Jesus Christ had to pay the penalty for our sins.

The penalty God had declared for sin was spiritual death, separation from God under condemnation (Gen. 2:17; cf. Gen. 5:3–5; Rom. 5:12). To pay that penalty, Christ, as our substitute, had to bear the sins of the world in His humanity and be judged by the Father (Matt. 27:46; 1 Pet. 2:24). So excruciating was the suffering of Christ while He bore the sins of the world that the Father veiled His Son’s agony and shrouded the hill of Golgotha in total darkness (Luke 23:44). After God had judged every sin—past, present, and future—Jesus said, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). Jesus Christ had suffered spiritual death for all. The work of salvation was completed. Then, by an act of His own volition, Jesus gave up His physical life.

Physical death separates the body from the soul and human spirit but never terminates the consciousness of the soul and spirit. During the three days and nights following the crucifixion, the body of Jesus Christ was entombed (Luke 23:50–53). His human soul went to Paradise (Luke 23:43).³² His human spirit went into the presence of the Father (Luke 23:46).

All three members of the Trinity had a part in Christ’s resurrection. After three days, the omnipotence of God the Father (Acts 2:24; Rom. 6:4; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Pet. 1:21), the omnipotence

32. Thieme, *Victorious Proclamation*, 19–22.

of God the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:4; 8:11; 1 Pet. 3:18), and the omnipotence of God the Son raised the humanity of Jesus Christ from the dead (John 2:18–21; 10:14–18). Jesus was “raised from the dead through the glory [power] of the Father” (Rom. 6:4) who returned His human spirit to His body in the grave. He was “made alive in the spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18) when the Holy Spirit returned His soul to His body. God the Son designed and created His own resurrection body (Col. 1:16). Jesus came forth from the grave (Matt. 28:6) with His soul and spirit reunited in a glorified, immortal resurrection body. He is the only human being ever to be resurrected. The resurrection of Christ with His glorified body guarantees the future resurrection and eternal life of all believers (1 Cor. 15:22–23, 54).³³

During the Incarnation the humanity of Christ became lower than angels, but through resurrection, ascension, and session, His humanity became superior to angels (Heb. 1:4; 2:9). His crucifixion had to come before His glorification. The cross had to come before the crown.

HIS GLORIFICATION

Forty days after His resurrection—during which the Lord “presented Himself alive . . . by many convincing proofs”—He visibly departed from this earth and entered into heaven (Acts 1:2–3, 9–10). There Christ presented Himself, the first resurrected man in heaven, and was accepted by the Father as the perfect and only sacrifice for sinful humanity (Heb. 9:24–28). Upon entering heaven, the God-man “sat down [session] at the right hand of the Majesty [Father] on high” (Heb. 1:3). His session demonstrates His complete acceptability to God in His humanity (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:13). At the Father’s right hand, the place of honor, Christ continues His ministry as our intercessor, high priest, and advocate (Heb. 7:25; 8:1; 1 John 2:1).

As the visible person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Shekinah Glory, dwelt with Israel in the sacred Tabernacle or Temple. He was the God of Israel (Lev. 26:11–12) whose presence in the Holy of Holies was demonstrated by a brilliant cloud above the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34–38). During the Incarnation, the visible Christ ‘tabernacled’ or

33. Resurrection occurs when the believer receives a resurrection body that is no longer subject to death. This is in contrast to cases of resuscitation noted in the Scripture, in which a dead person is restored alive to his mortal body but subsequently dies again (John 11:43–44; 12:10).

dwelt among men in the flesh (John 1:14). His transfigured glory was made visible to Peter, James, and John during His ministry on earth (Matt. 17:1–5). After His ascension, the sacred tabernacle for His indwelling was transferred to the body of the believer (John 14:20; 17:23, 26; Col. 1:27–29). Now, we share His glory both in time and eternity (2 Cor. 3:18).

HIS RETURN

In heaven Jesus Christ is preparing a place for Church Age believers variously called His bride (Rev. 19:7), the Church (John 14:1–3), the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11–12), and the royal family of God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). On earth His royal family is being formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit who places each Church Age believer into union with Christ at the moment of faith in Him (Gal. 3:1–5, 14, 26–27; Eph. 4:4–5; 2 Thess. 2:13–14).

The moment His royal family is completed, Christ will descend from heaven and assemble all believers of the Church Age, dead and living, to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:16–17).³⁴ As the royal family is gathered together to Him to be forever with Him, all the members will receive bodies like His glorified resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:51–53; Phil. 3:21). His veracity and immutability guarantee His promise. Therefore, the resurrection of the Church becomes the “blessed hope” of each believer (Titus 2:13).

Seven years after the resurrection or Rapture of the Church, Jesus Christ, accompanied by His bride, the Church (1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 14; Rev. 19:14), will return “as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west” (Matt. 24:27). At His first advent, He came in humility (Phil. 2:5–8) to be judged; at His second advent, He will appear in power and glory (Matt. 24:30; 26:64) to judge, to wage war, and to rule (Rev. 19:11, 15–16). Every eye will see the returning Sovereign of heaven and earth, His eyes “a flame of fire” and on His head many crowns (Rev. 1:7; 19:11–12).

With the defeat of all satanic forces, the millennial kingdom will be established on earth and Christ will begin His reign of everlasting righteousness. At the termination of the literal one thousand years of perfect environment, He will judge all unbelievers before His great white throne (Rev. 20:11–15) and sentence them to the lake of fire for

34. For more on the Rapture, see Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 134–37.

rejecting His saving work on their behalf. Then, the present universe will be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10), and the new heavens and new earth will be created. The Lord Jesus Christ will rule His eternal kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11) under the authority of the Father (Rev. 22:3) and in perfect union with Him (1 Cor. 15:28). “The whole earth [will] be filled with His glory” (Ps. 72:17–19). Truly our incomparable Christ, “the Lamb who has been slain” (Rev. 13:8), is “worthy . . . to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Rev. 5:12).

God the Holy Spirit

THE PERSON OF THE SPIRIT

Some who reject the concept of the Trinity seek to reduce the Holy Spirit to nothing more than an influence, just as some view the Son as mere man. But the incorporeity, or lack of material form or substance, of the Spirit does not make Him any less a person than the Father, who is equally invisible. The term “ghost” is a misleading translation of πνεῦμα (*pneuma*), which means “spirit.” There is no word in the Greek for ghost. The closest word is φάντασμα (*phantasma*, Matt. 14:26), which means “apparition.” But this word is never used of the Third Person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is a true person in the same sense that the Father and the Son are persons (2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2).

God the Holy Spirit’s many titles in both the Old and New Testaments indicate His deity and reveal His relationship to the other members of the Trinity. Regarding His attributes, He is called “Spirit of holiness” (Rom. 1:4), “Spirit of life” (Rom. 8:2), “spirit of knowledge” (Isa. 11:2), and “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17). Such titles as “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of our God” (Gen. 1:2; Matt. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:11) and “Spirit of your Father” (Matt. 10:20) relate the Holy Spirit to the Father while “Spirit of Christ” and “Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19), “Spirit of His Son” (Gal. 4:6), and “Spirit of the Lord” (Acts 5:9) relate Him to the Son. These titles do not mean that He is merely an attribute of God. No attributes are designated by the personal pronouns “He,” “Him,” and “His.” Nor could an attribute “guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13–15) or restore and give life (Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4). These titles refer to the Holy Spirit as a separate and distinct person.

The term “Spirit” relates to the distinct role of His person, since the Father and Son are also spirit (John 4:24). The Holy Spirit is the unseen power of God, the person through whom divine power is conveyed. As such He reveals the plan of God on earth and is the agent for executing the Christian way of life.

The role of the Holy Spirit must not be confused with the other members of the Trinity.

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. (2 Cor. 3:17)

The phrase “the Lord is the Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit, not the Second Person of the Trinity. “The Lord is the Spirit” asserts the deity of the Third Person. The phrase never means that the Spirit supersedes the presence of the resurrected Christ indwelling the believer (Rom. 8:10; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27). The activity of One cannot be attributed to the Other. They are separate and distinct Persons, both of whom are equally present with and in the believer.

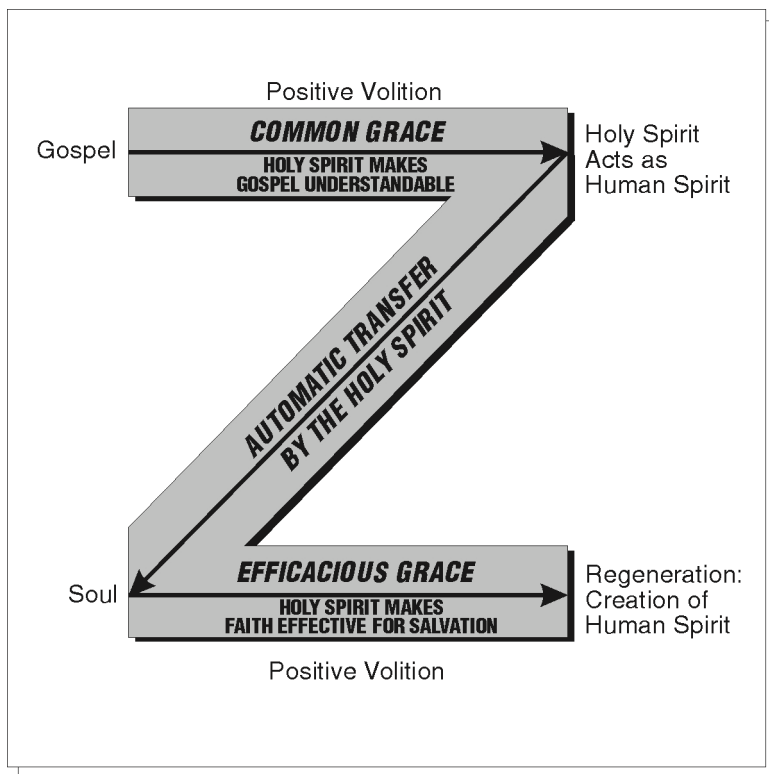
HIS MINISTRY TO MANKIND

The Old Testament credits the Holy Spirit with the renewal or restoration of the earth after the judgment and destruction of original creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps. 104:30).³⁵ To keep humanity from returning the earth to chaos, the Holy Spirit, as the power of God, restrains sin (2 Thess. 2:6–7). This is one of God’s *common grace* benefits to all mankind. Another benefit of common grace occurs in evangelism. Since every human being born subsequent to the fall of Adam is born spiritually dead—without a human spirit, the Holy Spirit acts as the missing human spirit so that the spiritual information of the Gospel is comprehensible (1 Cor. 2:14b).³⁶

35. Thieme, *Creation, Chaos, and Restoration*, 12–13.

36. Adam was created trichotomous, possessing a body, soul, and human spirit. When he sinned, he became dichotomous: body and soul. The human spirit can only be acquired through the regeneration ministry of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration is the theological term for spiritual birth, or being “born again,” the imputation of eternal life at the moment anyone believes in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. A regenerate person passes from spiritual death to spiritual life when the Holy Spirit creates a human spirit. Because of the virgin pregnancy, Jesus Christ is the only exception in human history. Since Jesus was born as Adam was created, trichotomous, He was therefore born spiritually alive. See Thieme, *The Barrier*, 13–16.

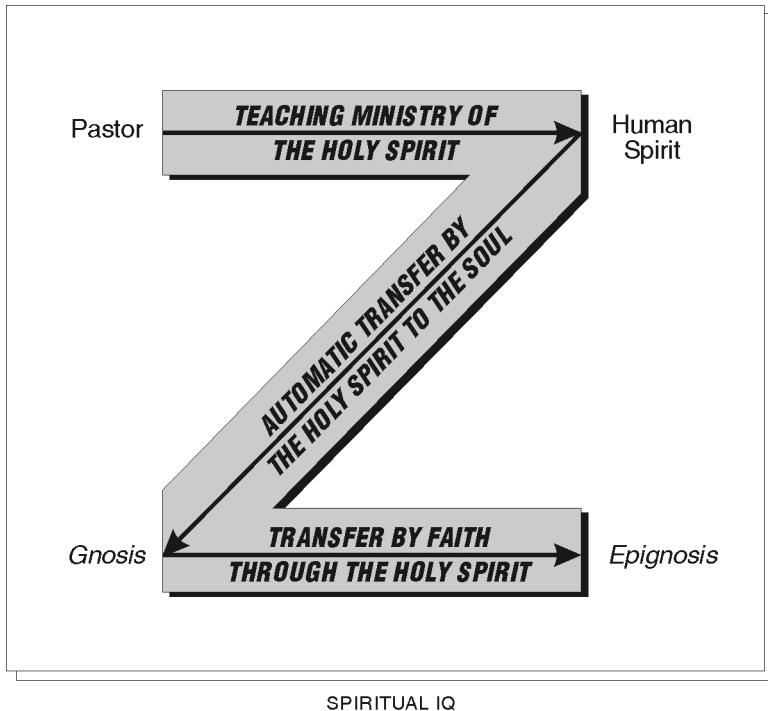
When the spiritually dead person is willing to listen to the Gospel message, the convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit makes the message lucid (John 16:7–11). If that person responds positively through faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit acknowledges that faith and makes it effectual for salvation through His ministry of *efficacious grace* (Eph. 2:8).



HIS MINISTRY TO BELIEVERS

The Holy Spirit is the divine author of the Word of God, also called the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16; Heb. 3:7). Not only does the Holy

Spirit guarantee the accuracy of the Word in the original languages (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20–21), but He also teaches the believer (John 14:26; 15:26). Our human intelligence alone cannot comprehend spiritual information. The Holy Spirit provides the necessary ‘spiritual I.Q.’ for our finite minds to understand the revelation of the infinite wisdom of God.³⁷ This teaching ministry converts academic “knowledge” of doctrine, termed γνῶσις (*gnosis*) in the Greek (Eph. 3:19), into full “knowledge” or ἐπίγνωσις (*epignosis*, Eph. 4:13; 2 Pet. 1:8). *Gnosis* doctrine has no spiritual benefit. Only *epignosis* knowledge is usable for application in the Christian life.



37. Thieme, *The Integrity of God*, 1–4, Appendix A.

Although the Holy Spirit has been in the world from the beginning, His ministries vary from dispensation to dispensation. His function is essential in every period of history, yet there is a marked difference between His work in the Old and New Testaments. Throughout Old Testament times, God sovereignly limited the enabling or enduing presence of the Spirit to certain individuals who had special tasks and responsibilities to perform:³⁸ leaders (Gen. 41:38; Num. 11:17, 25; 27:18), skilled artisans of the Tabernacle (Ex. 35:30–35), judges (Judg. 3:10), kings (1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13), prophets (Dan. 4:8; Zech. 4:3–6). The Spirit could be asked for and received (2 Kings 2:9–10). The Spirit could be removed from the believer because of perpetual carnality (Ps. 51:11).³⁹

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Church Age is a unique manifestation of the grace of God. Never before did the Holy Spirit accomplish the following five supernatural works in every believer. These works comprise five of the ministries of the Holy Spirit to the believer at the point of salvation.

1. *The baptism of the Spirit* places us into union with Christ, making each Church Age believer a member of the body of Christ, the Church, the royal family of God (1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Pet. 2:9).
2. *The indwelling of the Spirit* transforms the believer's body into a temple for the simultaneous indwelling of Jesus Christ—the Shekinah Glory (Rom. 8:9–11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19–20; 2 Cor. 6:16; cf. Col. 1:27–29).
3. *The filling of the Spirit* is the power for the Christian life and the key to temporal fellowship with God.
4. *The sealing of the Spirit* guarantees the eternal security of each member of the royal family (Eph. 1:13; 4:30).
5. *A spiritual gift* is given to every believer to function as royalty on earth (1 Cor. 12:4–11; Eph. 4:11).

Possessing these five blessings, the believer today has the most phenomenal spiritual privileges of history. The primary purpose of

38. Enduement was a temporary endowment of the power of God the Holy Spirit given to certain Old Testament believers designed to provide wisdom, doctrine, leadership, and the administrative, craftsmanship, prophetic, or communication skills necessary to serve the client nation Israel (Ex. 31:2–5; Ps. 63:11).

39. Perpetual carnality is the result of the continued rejection of the rebound procedure.

these privileges is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:14; Gal. 5:22–23). Whether or not this purpose is fulfilled depends upon the volitional choices of the believer regarding the filling of the Spirit and the application of *epignosis* doctrine. The *filling* of the Spirit is an absolute status commanded of every believer for empowering the Christian life (Eph. 5:18). The filling of the Spirit may be lost at any time through sin, but may be regained instantly through confession of sin (1 John 1:9). By contrast, the *indwelling* of the Spirit is a permanent condition, not mandated, but represented in Scripture as an accomplished fact for all believers.⁴⁰ Maximum effectiveness in the function of spiritual gifts is also dependent upon the enabling power of the Spirit and Bible doctrine resident in the soul of the believer. Divine good can be produced in the Christian life only by means of the filling of the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:12–13). This good of intrinsic value, “gold, silver, precious stones,” is the only work that can survive the test of time and be rewarded in eternity (1 Cor. 3:14). Thus, the Holy Spirit, often neglected and unrecognized, is as majestic and all-powerful as the other two persons of the Godhead.

JUST A BEGINNING

If you are to love God, you must know who and what He is. You can know God only to the extent that you learn what God has revealed about Himself in His Word. Understanding who and what God is and relying upon His perfect character in both adversity and prosperity build a foundation of confidence, inner peace, and spiritual strength.

This study has only begun to explore the infinite depths and greatness of the Trinity. Every scriptural examination of God’s character illuminates the wondrous facets of each member in the Godhead. Every examination of Their individual roles uncovers crucial resources for living the Christian life.

God presents all truth “through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things [of Scripture], even the depths [doctrines] of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). As you “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” you develop the capacity to love God as the Holy Trinity and the motivation to serve and honor Him.

40. Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 131–33.

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