



# Understanding the Holy Trinity

A bit more anyway

Ehab Roufail



- **1. These three Persons are each fully God**
  - God the Father is God
  - Jesus Christ is God
  - The Holy Spirit is God
  - There is one God
- **2. The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity**
  - The Creed
  - Person and Essence
- **3. Objections**
  - That the Trinity doesn't appear in the OT
  - That the Trinity doesn't appear before Nicea
  - That Jesus never claimed to be God





# Introduction

- The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is **foundational** to the Christian faith. It is crucial for properly understanding what God is like, how He relates to us, and how we should relate to Him. But it is also something that raises many difficult questions.
  - How can God be both one and three?
  - Is the Trinity a contradiction?
  - If Jesus is God, why do the Gospels record instances where He prayed to God?
- While we cannot *fully* understand everything about the Holy Trinity, it is possible to answer questions like these and come to a solid grasp of what it means for God to be three in one.





# Introduction

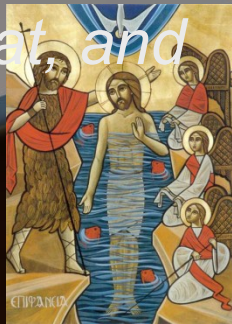
- We call it a '**Mystery**' because we can't know it all, it is too big and too glorious to understand it in full.
- We could not know it at all if God had not drawn aside the veil that we might see. Even when He has told us, we might be tempted to feel that it was altogether beyond us. But God would not mock us by revealing something of which we could make nothing at all. **Since He wants to be known by us, we must respond by making the effort to know him.**





# Trinity in Holy Scripture

- The word *trinity* is never found in the Bible, it is simply the name given to the complex teaching of the tri-unity of God that is found throughout the Bible, although we see that it is progressively revealed from Old Testament to New. That is, whereas the Old Testament is more inclined to suggest or imply that God exists in three Persons (for example:
- **Genesis 1:26:** *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*
- **Genesis 3:22** *Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever—”*





# Trinity in Holy Scripture



- **Psalm 45:6-7** *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; 7 you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;*
- **Hebrews 1:8** *But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.*



# Trinity in Holy Scripture



- **Proverbs 30:4** *Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Whose hands have gathered up the wind? Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is the name of his son? Surely you know!*
- **Isaiah 63:10** *But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.*



# Trinity in Holy Scripture



The New Testament reveals this truth more explicitly:

- **2 Corinthians 13:14** *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*
- **1 Peter 1:2** *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:*
- **Jude 1:20-21** *But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.*





# 1. Three Persons are each fully



## God

- **God the Father is God**
  - We need only look to the first verse of the Bible to see that God created heaven and earth. We also see throughout the Bible that God is clearly Lord over all, and is prayed to by all.
- **Jesus Christ is God**
  - **Isaiah 9:6:** *[Isaiah predicted,] "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*
  - **John 1:1-4:** *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men."*
  - **John 20:27-29:** *"Then [Jesus] said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*



# Jesus Christ is God



- **Romans 9:5:** *[Paul, talking of the Jews:] "Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen."*
- **Colossians 2:9-10:** *" For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority."*
- **Titus 2:13:** *"...we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ..."*
- **2 Peter 1:1:** *"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours..."*



# Jesus Christ is God



- **Hebrews 1:8-9:** 8 But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”
- **Titus 2:13-14:** 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.
- **1 John 5:20:** 20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.
- **Psalms 45:6-7:** 6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; 7 you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions



# The Holy Spirit is God



- **Psalm 139:7-8:** *[David cries to God:] "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there."*
- **Acts 5:3-4:** *"Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.""* (Emphasis added.)
- **1 Corinthians 2:10b-11:** *"The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."*





# There is one God



- **Deuteronomy 6:4-5:** *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."*
- **1 Kings 8:59-60:** *[Solomon speaks:] "And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other."*
- **Isaiah 45:5-6:** *"I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other."*
- **Isaiah 45:21-22:** *"Declare what is to be, present it - let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."*







# There is one God

- **1 Timothy 2:5:** *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..."*
- **Romans 3:29-30:** *"Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith."*
- **1 Corinthians 8:5-6:** *"For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live."*
- **James 2:19:** *"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder."*





# 2. Doctrine of The Holy Trinity

- The Doctrine of the Trinity is best summed up in four definite statements:
  - God is Three Persons
  - These Three Persons are each fully God
  - No one of the persons is either of the others, each is wholly himself
  - They are not three Gods but one God
- While the three members of the Trinity are distinct, this does not mean that any is inferior to the other. Instead, they are all identical in attributes. They are equal in power, love, mercy, justice, holiness, knowledge, and all other qualities.





# 2. Doctrine of The Holy Trinity

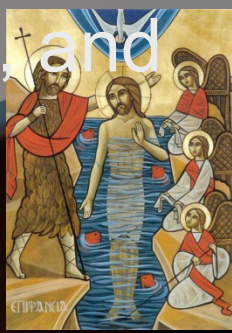
- The Creed states
  - Truly we believe in **One God**,
  - **God the Father, the Almighty**, creator of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
  - We believe in one Lord, **Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God**, born of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; True God of True God; begotten, not made; consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us and for our salvation descended from Heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man. He was crucified for us during the reign of Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. He arose from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to the heavens, and sits at the right hand of His Father. He will come back in His glory to judge the living and the dead; and His Kingdom shall have no end.
  - Truly we believe in the **Holy Spirit**, the Life-Giving Lord, **who proceeds from the Father**; we worship and glorify Him together with the Father and the Son, Who speaks through the prophets. We believe in one Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church, and we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. We await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen





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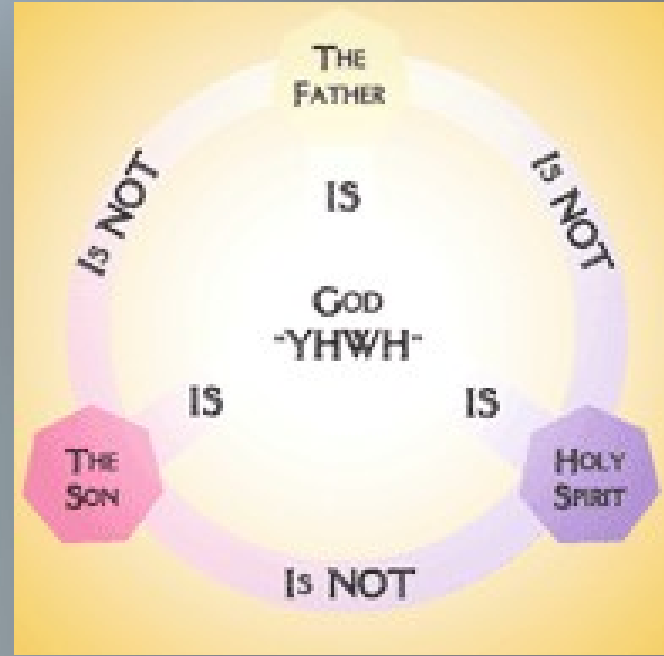






# 2. Doctrine of The Holy Trinity

- God is Three Persons
- These Three Persons are each fully God
- No one of the persons is either of the others, each is wholly himself
- They are not three Gods but one God
- Each share the same will
- Each share the one nature of God
- The being of each Person is equal to the whole being of God not like pieces in a pie

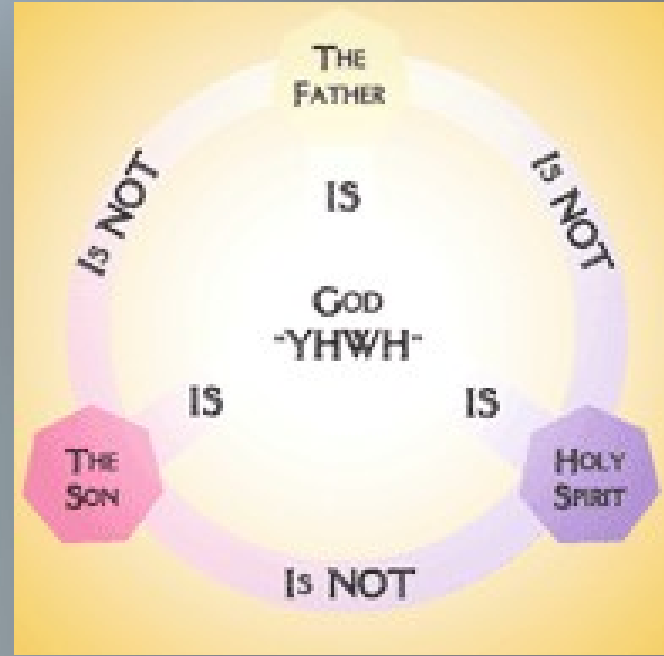






# 2. Doctrine of The Holy Trinity

- All three Persons are each 100% God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all fully God. For example, it says of Christ that “in Him *all the fullness* of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9).
- The being of each Person is equal to the whole being of God not like pieces in a pie
- God is one in essence, but three in Person
- He is not three and one in the same way. He is three in a *different way* than He is one.





# 2. Doctrine of The Holy Trinity

## Essence and Person

- **Essence.** God's essence is His being. To be even more precise, essence is *what you are*.
- **Person.** In regards to the Trinity, we use the term “Person” differently than we generally use it in everyday life. Therefore it is often difficult to have a concrete definition of Person as we use it in regards to the Trinity.
- What we do *not* mean by Person is an “independent individual” in the sense that both I and another human are separate, independent individuals who can exist apart from one another.
- Because each of these “forms of existence” are relational (and thus are *Persons*), they are each a



22nd January 2004 Understanding the Holy Trinity with each centre of



# 2. Doctrine of The Holy Trinity

## Essence and Person

- Because each of these “forms of existence” are relational (and thus are *Persons*), they are each a distinct *centre of consciousness*, with each centre of consciousness regarding Himself as “I” and the others as “You.”
- **Psalm 45:6-7:** *"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."*





# 2. Doctrine of The Holy Trinity

- By *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* we learn that **God is personal**. God before creation ever occurred, was giving and receiving love within the divine essence itself. God has always existed as a community of love, a love expressed between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- *Father and Son* also teach us that God has eternally existed in such a way. God has always been and always will be Father. He has not become Father at certain point in time. If so, God as Father must always have had a Son, a Son who finds his origin in the Father, a Son “begotten” by the Father, but in **a generation that is eternal**.
- This is a mystery.







# 2. Doctrine of The Holy Trinity

- St. Gregory of Nazianzus (330 – 389 AD) in his *Third Theological Oration – on the Son* states: *“The Father is the begetter and the emitter; without passion, of course, and without reference to time, and not in a corporeal manner. The Son is the begotten, and the Holy Spirit the emission; for I know not how this could be expressed in terms altogether excluding visible things”*
- The analogy of the sun and its rays illustrates this point. Can one imagine the sun as existing apart from the light rays it constantly emits? The rays find their source, their origin in the sun. Still the rays and the sun came into existence at the same time. The rays are not “after” the sun. They are part and parcel of what it means to be the sun.

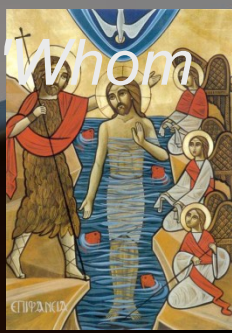






# 3. The Holy Trinity in the OT

- **Genesis 1:26:** *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'"*
- **Genesis 3:22:** *"And the LORD God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.'"*
- **Genesis 11:6-7:** *"The LORD said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.'"*
- **Isaiah 6:8a:** *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'"*





# 3. The Holy Trinity in the OT

- **Psalm 45:6-7:** *"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."*
- **Psalm 110:1:** *"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'"*



# The Lord Jesus Claims to be God



- Our Lord Jesus Christ's use of "I am" is His declaration of divinity. Although there are times when "I am" in Jesus' words mean simply "It is I," or "I am here," there are a number of occasions where it clearly means that he was identifying himself as the "I Am" of the Bible.
- In **John 8:58** the Pharisees were disputing over the identity of Jesus, and Jesus said that Abraham rejoiced to see his day (perhaps a vision of the sacrificial death of Jesus). They challenged this statement because Jesus was not yet fifty years old. Jesus said, "**Before Abraham was, I Am.**" And they wanted to kill him for blasphemy. In that very same chapter, verses 24 and 28, Jesus said, "unless you believe that I am ... ." Now, if you compare Isaiah 43:10, 11, you will see that same thing being said by God in the Old Testament. Clearly, Jesus was equating himself with Yahweh, the I Am of the Old Testament.



# The Lord Jesus Claims to be God



- **John 10:30-33:** *"I and the Father are one." The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."*
- **John 12:44-46:** *And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me. And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me. I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness."*





# The Lord Jesus Claims to be God



- **John 13:12-14:** *And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."*
- **John 14:6-9:** *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*
- **John 20:28-29:** *Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."*





# How He describes himself



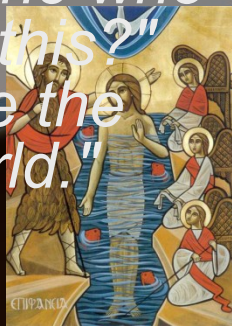
- **John 6:32-35:** *Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." They said therefore to Him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."*
- **John 8:12-14:** *Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true." Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true; for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from, or where I am going."*



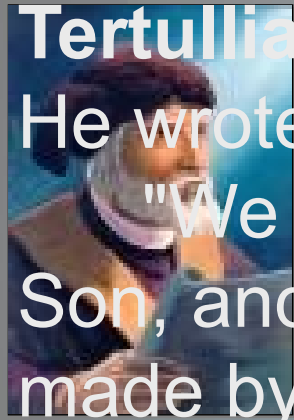
# How He describes himself



- **John 10:7-11:** *Jesus therefore said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."*
- **John 11:21-27:** *Martha therefore said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Jesus said to her, "Your brother shall rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."*



# Holy Trinity before Nicea



• **Tertullian** (160-215). African apologist and theologian. He wrote much in defense of Christianity.

"We define that there are two, the Father and the Son, and three with the Holy Spirit, and this number is made by the pattern of salvation...[which] brings about unity in trinity, interrelating the three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are three, not in dignity, but in degree, not in substance but in form, not in power but in kind. They are of one substance and power, because there is one God from whom these degrees, forms and kinds devolve in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (Adv. Prax. 23; PL 2.156-7).



# Holy Trinity before Nicea



- **Origen** (185-254). Alexandrian theologian. Defended Christianity and wrote much about Christianity.

"If anyone would say that the Word of God or the Wisdom of God had a beginning, let him beware lest he direct his impiety rather against the unbegotten Father, since he denies that he was always Father, and that he has always begotten the Word, and that he always had wisdom in all previous times or ages or whatever can be imagined in priority...There can be no more ancient title of almighty God than that of Father, and it is through the Son that he is Father" (De Princ. 1.2.; PG 11.132).





# Holy Trinity before Nicea



- "For if [the Holy Spirit were not eternally as He is, and had received knowledge at some time and then became the Holy Spirit] this were the case, the Holy Spirit would never be reckoned in the unity of the Trinity, i.e., along with the unchangeable Father and His Son, unless He had always been the Holy Spirit."

"Moreover, nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less, since the fountain of divinity alone contains all things by His word and reason, and by the Spirit of His mouth sanctifies all things which are worthy of sanctification..."

