

Why the Trinity Matters

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Introduction

The concept of the Trinity has been debated and taught throughout church history. Church leaders, theologians, scholars, and philosophers have tried to grasp this mysterious doctrine. Intellectually, this one doctrine is one of the most difficult concepts to understand. The intellectuals in the second century were the last social group to be drawn to Christianity in significant numbers. Many of the intellectuals in that day were never converted.¹

Can the deep mysteries of faith be explained intellectually or apologetically? Is there a strong case for the Trinity within the Scriptures, and within church history? How could God be three distinct persons and yet one? How could a theology of the Trinity exist without polytheism? In all of its mystery and controversy, is the doctrine of the Trinity worth the time, energy, and debate? Does the doctrine of the Trinity matter to our faith?

For the sake of this paper, we will look at two specific reasons why the doctrine of the Trinity is vital to faith. First, we will look at a brief overview of how the doctrine of the Trinity came into existence. Second, we will look at how the Trinity reveals the fullness or wholeness of God. Third, we will see the Trinity as an invitation for us to corporately and individually experience that same fullness. The fullness of the Trinity directly impacts anthropology, spirituality, community, and mission.

The history of the doctrine of the Trinity

In all fairness, the word Trinity is not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, but the reality of the Trinity is expressed throughout. Trinity is defined, as “tri-unity” or ‘three-in-oneness.’ It is

¹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 10.

used to summarize the teaching of Scripture that God is three persons yet one God.”² As one carefully reads and studies the Christian canon, one uncovers a mysterious depiction of the Father, Son, and Spirit all as God yet distinct. As mentioned in the introduction, some Scriptures communicate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all God. There are also verses that depict each as being distinct as well. “The Son is not the Father (John 1:1-2) and the Spirit is not the Father or the Son (John 14:16-17).”³

2 Corinthians 1:3 recognizes the Father as God when it says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.”⁴ Titus 2:13 also communicates the Son is also God. It says, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. One will see further in this paper how the early disciples, early church fathers, and leaders did not see any contradiction to the Shema (Deut. 6:4) as they worshipped Jesus as God.

Lastly, the Historian Luke writes in Acts 5:3-4 how the early disciples believed the Holy Spirit was God as well. It says, But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God (underlined added).⁵

²Nathan Busenitz, “Did Constantine Invent the Trinity?: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Writings of the Early Church Fathers,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 24, no. 2 (2013): 217–242, accessed September 28, 2018, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0001991318&site=ehost-live>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ All Scriptures references will be ESV unless otherwise noted.

⁵ Nathan Busenitz, “Did Constantine Invent the Trinity?: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Writings of the Early Church Fathers,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 24, no. 2 (2013): 217–242, accessed September 28, 2018,

The New Testament authors did not develop or refine the doctrine of the Trinity, yet they laid the foundation for its later construct. “Although the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was theologically less refined in the early Church than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, there was still recognition that the Holy Spirit was both personal and God.”⁶ There was a belief in one God, yet they identified the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all as God. Those who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity are correct in their argument that the word Trinity is not in the Bible. However, they still have to wrestle with the fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all identified as God in the Scriptures.

As the church continued to expand and develop its doctrine, the Trinity became a prime center of debate for Christians. Despite the debate, many early Church Fathers began to pen a compelling doctrine of the Trinity. In the final section, this paper will spend more on uncovering the remarkable impact the doctrine of the Trinity has on the totality of our lives. For now, let us highlight four early church fathers and what they believed regarding the Trinity.

Ignatius of Antioch, who lived 50-117 AD., said, “For our God. Jesus, the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God’s plan, both from the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit. He was born and baptized in order that by His suffering He might cleanse the water.”⁷ Ignatius strategically points to the fact that Jesus was born human, yet He was divine since He was also born of the seed of the Holy Spirit.

Polycarp of Smyrna, who lived around 69-155 AD., also said, “ Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal high priest Himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ,

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0001991318&site=ehost-live>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Joseph Barber Lightfoot and John Reginald Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 197.

build you up in faith and truth. ., and to us with you, and to all those under heaven who will yet believe in our Lord and God Jesus Christ and in his Father who raised him from the dead.”⁸

Polycarp, a disciple of John, who was one of the original twelve disciples, felt there was no contradiction to monotheism, in worshipping Jesus Christ as God. Polycarp’s doctrine is important since he was known to be a disciple of the apostles.⁹

Justin Martyr, who lived around 100-165 AD. said, “You can see that Christ is also called the Lord by the Holy prophetic Spirit and that God the Father of all, raised Him up from the earth, and placed Him at His right hand until He makes His enemies His footstool; which indeed happened when our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, after His resurrection from the dead.”¹⁰ Justin Martyr and other early church Fathers did seem to focus their writings and teachings on defending Jesus as God. The Holy Spirit does not get mentioned as often, but it could be due to the strong heresies regarding Christ’s divinity. The intense focus on defending the divinity of Jesus would naturally lessen the focus on the Spirit’s divinity.

Tertullian, who lived around, 160-225 AD. does put forth thought and doctrine that the Holy Spirit was equally divine. He said, “God, wished to make the mystery new in such a manner that He should be believed to be One in a new way through the Son and the Spirit.”¹¹ He also said, “Thus Christ is spirit of spirit, and God of God, as light of light is kindled...In this way

⁸ Ibid, 295.

⁹ Wilhelm Pratscher, *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*, (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010), 137.

¹⁰ Saint Justin (Martyr), Pseudo-Justinus, and Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho Selections from the Fathers of the Church*, Volume 3, (Washington DC: CUA Press, 2003), 49.

¹¹ Tertullian, *Tertullian Against Praxeas*, (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920), 117.

also, as He is Spirit of Spirit and God of God. He is made a second in manner of existence -in position, not in nature; and He did not withdraw from the original source, but went forth.”¹²

Lastly, Tertullian writes in *Praxeas* 2 a clear understanding of his theology regarding the Trinity.

All of them are One, by unity of substance; while we still keep the mystery of the distribution which spreads the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But they are three, not in state, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in appearance; yet of one substance, and of one state, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom these degrees and forms and appearances are understood, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.¹³

Trinitarian thought and doctrine had developed by this time in early church history and continued to grow in the West.

As time continued, more of the church fathers brought up the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity came to a climax at the council at Constantinople. Church leaders agreed on a specific creed that declared the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“Dissatisfaction with Arius led a new wave of thinking about the unity and nature of God, especially in the relationship between the Father and the Son. The conclusion that the Father and Son shared the same substance was reached at Nicea under the ecclesial leadership of Athanasius and the political sway of Emperor Constantine. This Nicene concern for God’s unity was extended to the Holy Spirit at Constantinople, where the nature of God was decided in radically unifying relational terms. The Conciliar creed, now called the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, brought the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity to its formal completion.”¹⁴

Once the theology of the Trinity was formalized at the Nicene-Constantinople councils, it has remained a consistent doctrine among recognized theologians from the end of the fourth century

¹² Tertullian, *The Writings of Tertullian - Volume I* (Lulu.com, 2017), 38-39.

¹³ Jonathan Hill, *The History of Christian Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 37.

¹⁴ C C Pecknold, “How Augustine Used the Trinity: Functionalism and the Development of Doctrine,” *Anglican Theological Review* 85, no. 1 (2003): 127–141, accessed September 28, 2018, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001358386&site=ehost-live>.

until the beginning of the eighteenth.¹⁵ Looking at a brief overview of history helps us understand how we arrived at the thoughts and doctrine we have today.

The Trinity reveals the fullness or wholeness of God.

Some scholars like Holmes believe the doctrine of the Trinity is useless on a practical level. However, I want to put forth the case that the Trinity reveals the fullness of God which has vast practical implications for our lives. In the words of C.S. Lewis, the doctrine of the Trinity “matters more than anything else in the world.”¹⁶

Several primary texts in Scripture shed light on the Trinity and the fullness of God it reveals. This paper will focus on three specific primary texts starting first with Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:13; 16-18 says, but now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Paul paints a vibrant picture in these verses of the work or function of the Trinity. He is not explicitly giving a doctrine or treatise on the Trinity in this verse yet this verse gives us a glimpse into Paul’s thoughts on the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Paul is communicating to the church in Ephesus; they are one body both Jews and Gentiles. All have access to the Father because of what Christ has done. The specific word choice in verse 18, ‘we both,’ shows Paul’s heart and passion for reconciliation with God and each other. Jews and Gentiles alike, have unlimited ability to enter the presence of the Father

¹⁵ Stephen R. Holmes et al., *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 39.

¹⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 137.

because of the Son. Paul brings it all together by showing how this one body is brought together with the Father, through the Son by one Spirit. Could Paul be communicating just as Jews & Gentiles are one, the Father, Son, and Spirit are one? Later on in this paper, this question will be looked at more deeply.¹⁷

Understanding that Jews and Gentiles now making up one body was just as difficult to understand as the Father, Spirit, and Son being one yet distinct. Understanding this perspective, one can follow Paul's logic and progression. He first mentions we are brought to the Father through the blood of Jesus Christ. It is Christ who takes us from being far from the Father and brings us close. Paul's thoughts on the Father and Son are consistent with other New Testament teachings.

The writer of the fourth Gospel says in John 10:7-10 that Jesus is the door. He is the one who provides access for all people to encounter the Father. Paul, being a missionary to the Gentiles, places extreme importance on the Son of God, His death and resurrection.¹⁸ In Paul's letters, there is a consistent theme of all people, especially Gentiles, being included in the body of Christ.

One could argue that Paul's reference to the Spirit in verse 18 is too vague and it does not communicate doctrinal thought regarding the Trinity. However, taking this verse along with the entire context of Ephesians, we see Paul's thoughts on the role of the Holy Spirit. "The Personal Spirit of God is obviously intended here, and the form of the phrase should be noted. As Paul repeatedly uses the words 'in Christ' in this letter, so a number of times he says 'in the Spirit,' to

¹⁷ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Alban Books Limited, 1999), 208-210.

¹⁸ Francis Foulkes, *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 93.

emphasize that for the new life of the Christian ‘the Spirit’ is...the surrounding sustaining power.”¹⁹ For Paul, being ‘in the Spirit’ sees equal in importance as being ‘in Christ.’

Paul, who had tremendous knowledge of Judaism and the law, knew the Torah and the precise words from God to Israel that the Lord was one. Paul did not see any conflict or pluralism in communicating the same Lordship to the Son and the Spirit throughout His letters. Paul upheld his monotheistic theology while worshipping the Father, Son, and Spirit. The Trinity matters since it is the Trinity that reveals the fullness or wholeness of this one God.

The second primary text for this paper is Hebrews 1:2-4. It says,

But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

The author of Hebrews makes a strong argument that Jesus is the same as the Father. “The Greek word *charakter*, occurring here only in the New Testament, expresses this truth even more emphatically than *eikon*, which is used elsewhere to denote Christ as the ‘image’ of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15)...What God essentially is, is made manifest in Christ.”²⁰ Jesus is fully divine and the visible image of the invisible God.

The author of Hebrews answers an age-old question, what is God-like. The author of Hebrews is not the first one to reveal this truth. Jesus Himself taught this same principle in John 14:9 when He said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” Jesus became the touchable, visible and relatable Son of God. The disciples, writer of Hebrews and early church leaders, did not invent Jesus’ divinity, they merely passed on what they saw and heard (Matthew 28:20).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 48.

“The clause ‘through whom He made the universe’ further identifies the Son in His pre-incarnate role as a protological agent of creation. It is impossible not to see in the Son’s agency in creation of the universe a statement of His eternal preexistence.”²¹ Jesus was a part of creation which means He was a part of the Godhead. The only difference is that Jesus chose to enter a specific time and space in history to reveal the very nature and character of God in a way we could understand. Jesus revealed aspects of the Father not previously known. He also corrected distorted beliefs regarding what God is like and how He views people. He brought greater revelation of the fullness of God.

The third primary text is John 14:16-17. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. The disciples had grown accustomed to Jesus being with them as they ministered to people. Jesus was their helper or counselor.

“Although Jesus is never referred to as a parakletos in the Fourth Gospel explicitly, the title is applied to Him in 1 John 2:1.”²² As Jesus was preparing for the cross, resurrection, and ascension, He introduces the role of the Holy Spirit. There is a debate on whether or not Jesus’ phrase another counselor, was meant to imply the same as the first. Regardless, Jesus had been a helper, strengthening and leading His disciples during His ministry but now this task is being given to the Holy Spirit to continue a relationship with God and the mission to the nations.²³

²¹ David L. Allen, *Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 110-11.

²² D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 500.

²³ *Ibid.*

Where is the Holy Spirit coming from and where is Jesus going? Jesus is going to the Father and is going to send the Spirit from the Father (John 15:26). The Fourth Gospel does not have a specific teaching on the concept of the Trinity but throughout the Gospel, the belief of the Trinity begins to crystallize. There is one sovereign God who reveals Himself in three persons.²⁴

Another exciting truth that is uncovered in this passage is the intimacy with the Holy Spirit. The disciples had spent years following Jesus during His earthly ministry. However, He was about to go away. Jesus's specific role in their lives was going to change but in all reality, change for the better (John 16:7).

Moreover, the Holy Spirit is going to not only be an advocate or helper just like Jesus, but He is going to be present with them always. Once He comes, He is going to be in followers of Christ and not just with them.²⁵ The level of intimacy seems to increase as the Holy Spirit provides another element of relating to God. He provides greater awareness or fullness of the one God we worship.

It is easy to dismiss what we do not understand. Throughout human history, brilliant individuals have dismissed the Trinity accusing it to be a doctrine of pluralism or pure nonsense. To dismiss one aspect of the Trinity is to dismiss an attribute or aspect of God Himself. The Trinity matters because the Trinity reveals the fullness of God to humanity. Each distinct Person of the Godhead gives us a greater glimpse of the nature of God in a way we can relate to, and understand, even if slightly. Can God ever fully be understood and grasped, even by scholars?

The Trinity is an Invitation for us to Experience the Same Fullness

²⁴ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 785.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 784.

The Trinity is an invitation for us to corporately and individually experience that same fullness. It is the Trinity that has a direct impact on anthropology, spirituality, community, and mission. The remaining part of this paper will speak to the impact of the Trinity in each of these areas.

The Trinity directly impacts anthropology. When one studies the Trinity, one discovers an open invitation for a personal and intimate relationship with the Highest Being. It is through a personal relationship with the Father, Son & Holy Spirit; one understands what it is to be human and what the purpose of life is.²⁶ One who seeks answers to these questions outside of the Trinity comes to the same conclusion the author of Ecclesiastes did when he wrote, Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. (Ec. 1:2)

The foundation of morality is to be human. There is only one thing that gives moral worth to how we live our lives: compassion. To be compassionate is to enter another's pain with seriousness and intentionality as if it was one's own. This type of compassion could also be described as agape, which was first formalized as a virtue by Christians.²⁷ It was Christ-followers that took care of the sick when others would not. Why? The Scriptures communicate that every person has intrinsic value made in the image of God (the Trinity).

Genesis 1:27 says, so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Every human being bears the image of God in their lives. Human beings are intrinsically valuable because of the image of God. To be human is to live out the image of God in our daily lives?

²⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 27.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 33.

Humans are also valuable since the Father was willing to send the Son into the world in order to pay the ultimate price for sin. John 3:16 says, for God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Each person was loved by God enough for divinity to take on humanity through Jesus Christ.

As a result of Jesus' sacrifice, the Trinity is an invitation to every individual to experience new life. Jesus died on the cross and rose again on the third day so people of all backgrounds and nations could experience His love and grace. Once again God places importance on all people regardless of their background, race or gender. Matthew 28:19 says, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is an invitation for us to experience His fullness in our humanity. It is an invitation to experience the totality of God in its fullness personally.

One more side note regarding anthropology is how the Trinity brought an invitation to equal social status. Back in Genesis 1:27 one reads both male and female are made in the image of God. In Acts chapter one and two we see both male and female in the upper room, and all were filled with the Holy Spirit. In John 20:11-16, one reads the story of Jesus' resurrection and how it was Mary, who was the first one to encounter the resurrected Jesus. The doctrine of the Trinity reveals to be human is to be made in the image of God, valuable, compassionate, moral and loving. Regardless of ethnicity or gender, all were created to encounter the Trinity.

The Trinity also directly impacts spirituality. The work of the Trinity has brought us back into a close relationship with God. "The greatness of divine sacrifice is magnified when we think how out of their fullness, Father and Son turn outward. The greatness of divine salvation is magnified when we think how the Spirit as Person incorporates us into this fullness."²⁸

²⁸ Ibid, 35.

Ephesians 2:13, 18 says, but now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. Sin brought death and destruction into humanity (Romans 6:23). As a result, the Trinity went to work in order to bring us back to right relationship with God. In this simple verse, we see how the Father, Son, and Spirit all played a part in our salvation.

The Trinity is not only involved in our salvation but also in our spiritual growth as a believer. The Holy Spirit develops the very character of God in our lives. Galatians 5:22-23 says, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things, there is no law. A life yielded and obedient to the Holy Spirit will see the fruit mentioned above grow in their life.

Another way the Trinity impacts our spirituality is through transforming our personal paradigm. Life transitions from being about the individual to being about the body of Christ and ultimately the mission of God to reach the world with the Gospel. In Luke 22:26 Jesus teaches His disciples that the greatest in the Kingdom of God is a servant. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers believers to take the message of the Gospel to the entire world (Acts 1:8). It is also the Holy Spirit who empowers the body with different gifts to build each other up (1 Cor. 14:12).

Three traditional prayers have been used throughout church history. These three prayers are a great example of how the Trinity impacts our spirituality in unique ways. First, Jesus taught us in Matthew 6:9-10 to pray to the Father in heaven and to surrender to His will in our lives. Second, the Orthodox Church has taught us to pray the Jesus prayer which states, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' Third, the Orthodox church has also started off services with a powerful prayer to the Holy Spirit. 'Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of truth, who are everywhere present and fillest all things, treasury of blessings and giver of life, come

and abide in us.’²⁹ What beautiful descriptions of how each person of the Trinity is One yet distinct in impacting one’s spirituality.

The Trinity directly impacts our spirituality because Jesus not only died on the cross for our salvation, but He also taught us how to relate to the Father, how to pray, fast and love our enemies. He showed us how to value people more than status. Jesus even spent time going through the Scriptures before His ascension, showing His disciples how the Old Testament scriptures pointed to Him. (Luke 24:44-47). Trying to walk in a vibrant and growing relationship with God, without the Trinity, is missing out on the fullness of God in our spiritual lives.

The Trinity also directly impacts community. As earlier discussed at the beginning of this paper, Ephesians 2:13-18 has a groundbreaking shift on what community is. Paul gives us different functional aspects of the Son and Spirit. The result of what the Son has done and what the Spirit is doing gives an open invitation for both Jews and Gentiles to become one body. The work of the Trinity is monumental. The unity and oneness of the Trinity is the same oneness, and unity believers are called to exhibit. Regardless of our background, past, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, we are all one body with access to the presence of the Father. No longer is there a veil separating us from the Holy of Holies (Matthew 27:51).

Gentiles are no longer limited to the outer courts. Everyone is invited into communion and reconciliation with the Father and with each other. Human history is full of communities and people groups who segregated fought and manipulated for position and power. The Trinity models a unique unity and oneness for all believers to follow. Just as each part of the Trinity has a different function or expression so does each believer within the one body (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

²⁹ Khaled Anatolios, *The Holy Trinity in the Life of the Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 55.

Romans 12:4-5 says, for as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. Very similar language and thought are found in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, and 27. It says, for just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

“The Trinity is useful as a model for seeing how the One can be conceived under many aspects.”³⁰ Just as the Trinity is one, we are all called to be one within the body of Christ. The Trinity models how to love in community with others. The Trinity models how to submit out of reverence to each other (Eph. 5:21-24; Heb. 13:17). The Trinity models how to work together in uniqueness yet in different expressions.

Lastly, the Trinity directly impacts mission. In the New Testament, one sees the evidence of Spirit empowerment. Acts 1:8 says, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. One of the aspects of the Holy Spirit is to empower individuals to live on mission. To live as a witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in every relationship and situation.

When one studies the development of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis, one discovers that God has always had a heart for the nations. On the surface, it can seem like God is for Israel and against the nations but it is in all reality the opposite. God is for Israel and with Israel because He loves the nations. Even though there are slight variances in terminology, the phrase

³⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 27.

blessing of the nation's occurs five times throughout Abraham's call and covenant. God is revealing the heart of the Gospel from the very beginning.³¹

The fullness of the Trinity helps accomplish the fullness of God's plan. Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant as He provided the way for all nations to be blessed. As mentioned earlier, the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers believers to carry out the mission of God and live out the heart of God. The Trinity has a profound impact on the mission of God.

Conclusion

The Trinity is seen in the Scriptures, affirmed by the early church Fathers, and practiced throughout church history. The Trinity is not a made-up theology invented by the church, but an essential doctrine that has been preserved by the church. Believing in the Trinity is not a light-hearted decision made without intellectual thought, but a faith-filled step built upon thousands of years of believers who acknowledged the same doctrine.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is essential to our faith in order for us to know the fullness of God and experience the fullness of God. I agree with Stephen Holmes when he says, "God is triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The church believes, adores, and worships, the one simple divine essence, which exists three times over, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit inseparably united in life and in action."³²

The church needs the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at work within its midst. Each aspect of the Godhead will interact with God's people uniquely and equally powerful. Not only doctrine

³¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 193-194.

³² Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 120.

but a personal relationship with the Trinity will enrich one's spiritual life and allow one to experience discipleship holistically.

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<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001991318&site=ehost-live>.
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