

The Doctrine of The Trinity And Its Implications for Everyday Worship

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Abstrak

Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan dan menguraikan implikasi doktrin Trinitas dalam ibadah sehari-hari orang percaya. Sebagaimana telah diwahyukan secara ilahi dalam Kitab Suci, dan dipahami dalam kekristenan ortodoks historis, doktrin Trinitas seharusnya memengaruhi dan membentuk ibadah sehari-hari orang percaya kepada Tuhan. Implikasi doktrin ini dalam ibadah sehari-hari dapat dilihat setidaknya dalam tiga bidang utama. Pertama, objek ibadah kita adalah Allah Tritunggal itu sendiri, atau Allah yang dipahami sebagai tiga pribadi dan bukan hanya sebagai satu pribadi. Kedua, ketika orang percaya mengucapkan syukur kepada Allah perlu mengaitkan kepada setiap pribadi Trinitas. Ketiga, doktrin ini menghasilkan kekaguman dan kerendahan hati di hati orang percaya ketika mereka merenungkan dalam ibadah.

Kata Kunci: Trinitas, tiga pribadi, implikasi, ibadah

Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to explain and reflect the doctrine of the Trinity in the daily worship of believers. As divinely revealed in Scripture and understood in historical Orthodox Christianity, the doctrine of the Trinity should influence and shape the daily worship of believers to God. The implications of this doctrine for daily worship can be seen in at least three main areas. First, the object of our worship is the Triune God Himself, or God understood as three persons rather than just one. Second, when believers give thanks to God, they need to show affection for each person of the Trinity. Third, this doctrine evokes awe and humility in the hearts of believers as they reflect on it in worship.

Keywords: Trinity, three personalities, implications, worship

A. INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most essential and important articles of the Christian faith. One cannot be a true Christian, worship and commune with God rightly, know Him truly, or be saved from eternal death, unless he holds to this doctrine, and directs all of his worship and devotion to the Triune God alone. In his book *The Christian Faith*, Michael Horton writes, “The Trinity is not merely one doctrine among others; besides being proclaimed in Word and sacrament, this article of faith structures all the faith and practice of Christianity: our theology, liturgies, hymns, and lives”.¹ It is the very heart of the Christian faith, apart from which our whole religion shall crumble, and cease to be Christian. It shapes the entirety of our lives as Christians, from our theology, to our liturgy and hymns, to our worship of and relationship with God, and even our daily lives.

¹ M. S. Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. (Zondervan, 2011), 273.

In his article “Understanding the Doctrine of The Trinity”, the STTRI professor Oscar Lontoh writes that every Christian must understand what is fundamental to his faith.² The Trinity is a basic doctrine that must be correctly understood and accepted by every Christian. Without a proper understanding of this doctrine, it will undermine other related doctrines, namely the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of Christology, the doctrine of redemption, and the doctrine of eternal life”. In his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, the 17th-century Reformed scholastic theologian Francis Turretin writes that “Anybody who denies the doctrine of the Trinity and refuses to acknowledge and believe in it does not have the true God, but has erected for himself an idol in the stead of God”.³ In fact, he even writes that⁴ “not only the denial, but also the simple ignorance of the Trinity is damnable”. This doctrine is so fundamental to Christianity that mere ignorance of this divine truth without active rejection, is sufficient to render one damnable and endangers one’s salvation. Anyone who denies this fundamental article of the Christian faith, and believes in a god who is not triune, whether that be the unitarian god found in other Abrahamic religions such as Islam and Judaism, or even heretical views of the Trinity such as those found in Arianism, Sabellianism and Tritheism, does not worship the true and living God of the Scriptures, but an idol; a counterfeit god of his own imagination.

The doctrine of the Trinity occupies a central and indispensable place because it shapes the Church’s understanding of the identity of God and His saving work. For this reason, Francis Turretin emphasizes that the doctrine of the Trinity is not merely a speculative theological concept but a foundational truth upon which the whole of Christian theology rests. Turretin lays down five reasons as to why the doctrine of the Trinity is such an important and fundamental article of the Christian faith⁵: 1) Firstly, eternal life consists of the knowledge of the Trinity. In John 17:3, when Christ was praying to the Father, He said: “This is life eternal; that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent”. Eternal life consists of one’s knowledge of the Father, and of Christ Himself, whom the Father has sent into the world; it is an absolute prerequisite unto eternal life. We must have right apprehensions of the doctrine of the Trinity in order to be saved. Eternal life consists of the knowledge of it. 2) Secondly, the Triune God is the primary object of our faith and worship.⁶ Turretin writes: “It is not sufficient to know that God is (quod sit) as to existence or what He is (quid sit) as to His attributes; but we must also know who He is (quis sit) as to the persons as He presents Himself to be known by us in His Word”. To reject the knowledge that God is three persons would be to reject who God is, which knowledge He has revealed to us in Scripture. 3) Thirdly, because various other fundamental doctrines of Christianity depend upon a right conception of this doctrine of the Trinity.

² F. O. Lontoh, “Understanding The Doctrine Of The Trinity”, *Kerugma* 2 (2019), 50
<https://jurnal.sttii-surabaya.ac.id/index.php/kerugma/article/view/115/210>.

³ F. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, (P & R Publishing, 1997), 262.

⁴ Ibid, 261

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 262

The Trinity is the foundation of the Christian faith, and many other essential doctrines depend upon it, such as: the sending of the Son, His incarnation, His satisfaction, the mission of the Holy Spirit, and many others.⁷ Without the doctrine of the Trinity, the principal causes of our salvation, such as the Father's eternal predestination, the Son's merit and satisfaction, and the Spirit's work of regeneration and sanctification, cannot be rightly known, and thus, the denial of the Trinity also has implications upon our soteriology. 4) Fourthly, the doctrine of the Trinity is what distinguishes the Christian faith from the other false faiths and belief systems of this world. Jews and Muslims are also monotheists who believe in and acknowledge only one supreme and transcendent deity. However, they deny this doctrine and affirm a unitarian monotheism rather than a trinitarian monotheism. 5) Fifthly, the doctrine of the Trinity was the uniform faith of the ancient Christians who lived in the past. It is taught in the great councils and creeds of the Church, the wise and venerable doctors and fathers of the faith, and the epistles of the earliest and most ancient followers of Christ. However, it is not my principal design in the present work, to merely give an explication of this doctrine, and demonstrate it to be true by the exegesis of various proof texts from Scripture; but rather, to explain how exactly this doctrine impacts our everyday worship of God. For theology must not be merely theoretical or intellectual. Theology must not be confined to the textbooks and to the seminaries; it must rather flow out into and impact our daily lives and practices, and how we serve, worship and commune with God.

B. METHODOLOGY

This paper will investigate the doctrine of the Trinity primarily using a systematic-theological or dogmatic method, in which the doctrine of the Trinity is articulated using the concepts and terminology of dogmatics or systematics. In its systematic-theological or dogmatic explication of the doctrine, the theological literature of classical Reformed theologians, such as Calvin, Turretin, Berkhof and various others, as well as that of modern theologians such as Matthew Barrett, will also be cited and reviewed, in order to show how classical Reformed theology has conceived of and formulated the doctrine dogmatically and draw upon their theological insights regarding the doctrine. The study will also employ an exegetical method in its citation and exposition of the relevant Biblical texts which support this doctrine, taking into consideration such factors as the original languages, situational context, scholarly perspectives etc. in order to argue for it upon the ground of the Biblical text, since as Protestants we hold Scripture to be the rule and norm of our faith, and ultimate source of all our doctrine. Finally, the study will also utilize a practical method in drawing out the practical implications of this doctrine in the believer's worship of God, since theology must not be purely theoretical or academic; it must also be practical and influence the believer's life and personal relationship with God. Every doctrine studied in systematic theology must have some practical implication and be applicable to the believer's life.

⁷ F. Turretin, 262.

C. DISCUSSION

1. A Brief Doctrinal Exposition and Exegetical Demonstration Of The Doctrine Of The Trinity

Although the principal aim of this essay is neither the explication nor the exegetical demonstration of this doctrine, it is nevertheless necessary to first engage in these two tasks; for it would make no sense to speak of its implications in worship, unless we have first understood it well and have taken the pains of trying to give a good and precise articulation thereof, as well as demonstrate it to be true from the Scriptures, which are God's infallible Word, and our sole external principle of knowledge in theological matters (*principium cognoscendi externum*). A few of the disagreements and different views among Christian theologians in relation to this doctrine will also be briefly mentioned.

a) General Systematic-Theological Explication of The Doctrine Of The Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity within Christian theology states that God is one with respect to His essence or nature, but three with respect to His persons or hypostases. There is only one God, and thus, only one simple, indivisible and numerically singular divine essence, which nevertheless subsists eternally, immutably, necessarily and essentially, as three distinct persons or hypostases; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three persons are all fully, truly and equally God, sharing one and the same divine essence, without division or numerical multiplication with respect to it. They are nevertheless distinct, however, and not identical, by virtue of their eternal, necessary and immutable intra-Trinitarian relations of origin within the divine essence, whereby they subsist in one and the same divine essence, though in distinct modes or manners. The Father begets the Son, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both, and by virtue of these internal acts or relations within the divine essence, they are distinguished from one another as distinct persons.

Louis Berkhof explains: "There are certain personal attributes by which the three persons are distinguished. These are also called *opera ad intra*, because they are works within the Divine Being, which do not terminate on the creature. They are personal operations, which are not performed by the three persons jointly and which are incommunicable. Generation is an act of the Father only; filiation belongs to the Son exclusively; and procession can only be ascribed to the Holy Spirit".⁸ The contemporary theologian Matthew Barrett further writes that "The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of AD 381; what we now call the Nicene Creed, distinguishes the Son from the Father, as well as the Spirit from the Father and the Son, according to eternal relations of origin".⁹ More, however, needs to be said regarding the acts of eternal generation and eternal spiration in particular, and what exactly they entail, both of which constitute the intra-Trinitarian relations of origin by which the persons of the Trinity are distinguished from one another.

⁸ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 89.

⁹ M. Barrett (Ed.). *On Classical Trinitarianism: Retrieving the Nicene Doctrine of the Triune God*. (IVP Academic, 2024).

The eternal generation of the Son will be discussed first, and then the eternal spiration (or procession) of the Holy Spirit. By the eternal generation of the Son is denoted that act of the Father, whereby He “communicates the undivided divine essence to the Son, such that whatever the Father is, the Son is likewise”.¹⁰ The divine generation of the Son is also very different from the generation of creatures, such as when a human father begets a human son, and these differences must be noted and emphasized lest we fall into error in our conception of this doctrine. The eternal generation of the Son is an eternal and timeless act. In human or creaturely generation, there is a beginning, an end, and temporal succession; for a father begets his son in time, and thus, there is a beginning to it, an end to it, and temporal succession of moments involving it. This is not the case with the Son’s generation however; for “His generation is an *eternal* generation in which the Father ever communicates the one divine substance to the Son”.¹¹

Francis Turretin writes that “This generation was made without time (achronos); not in time, but from eternity. Therefore not priority or posteriority of duration can be observed here, although there may be a priority of order according to which the Son is from the Father, although not after the Father”.¹² Louis Berkhof explains that the eternal generation of the Son does not mean, however, that it is an act that was completed in the far distant past, but rather that it is a timeless act, the act of an eternal present, an act always continuing and yet ever completed.¹³ Its eternity follows not only from the eternity of God, but also from the divine immutability and from the true deity of the Son”. In the Son’s generation, the Father also communicates to Him the whole and entire divine essence, without division or remainder. Therefore, it is not the case that the Son merely receives *some* of the divine substance and shares in *some* of the divine perfection. Rather, the Father communicates the divine essence in its fullness to his Son in eternal generation.¹⁴ The Son is identical to the divine essence itself, and He subsists in it wholly and completely, fully sharing in all of the divine perfections and attributes. In human generation, when a father begets a son, the son only inherits a “portion” of his father’s essence, so to speak, which is alienated and separated from the begetter. This is not the case with the Son’s generation, however, since He subsists in the exact same essence that the Father subsists in, wholly and completely, without division or alienation.

The generation of the Son is also a *necessary* act of the Father, and by no means a *contingent*, *mutable* or *free* act of the Father. It is not as if the Father could simply cease to generate the Son had He so willed. The Father generates the Son in every possible world (to use the language of modal logic), and He is unable to not generate the Son. Berkhof explains that a generation dependent on the optional

¹⁰ M. Barrett, Kurtz, R., Parkison, S. G., & Lanier, J. *Proclaiming the Triune God: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Life of the Church*, (B&H Publishing Group, 2024), 101

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² F. Turretin, 293.

¹³ L. Berkhof, 93.

¹⁴ M. Barrett et al.

will of the Father would make the existence of the Son contingent and thus rob Him of His deity. Then the Son would not be equal to and *homoousios* with the Father, for the Father exists necessarily, and cannot be conceived of as non-existent. The generation of the Son must be regarded as a necessary and perfectly natural act of God.¹⁵ Now, we will turn our attention to the procession of the Holy Spirit. By the eternal spiration or procession of the Holy Spirit is denoted that personal act of both the Father and the Son jointly, wherein they both spirate or breathe out the Holy Spirit, thereby communicating to the Holy Spirit the whole and entire divine essence. Among Christian theologians, however, there is a disagreement as to who the Holy Spirit proceeds from exactly. The Protestant and Roman Catholic churches affirm and teach that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This belief is also known as the *filioque*.

The Eastern Orthodox church, however, rejects this view and teaches that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, since they highly emphasize the idea that the Father is the *monarchia* or the sole principle and fountainhead of the deity, while the Son and Holy Spirit are God only by the Father's acts of generation and procession. They argue that believing in the *Filioque* would make the Holy Spirit proceed from two *principles* within the Godhead instead of only one principle. Our response to this view is that the Holy Spirit's dual procession; that is, from the Father and the Son, does not make the Holy Spirit proceed from two principles, since the Father and Son together breathe out the Holy Spirit *as one principle*, or conjointly. Rather than asserting that the Father and the Son together breathe out the Holy Spirit, it would be more accurate to assert that the Father breathes out the Holy Spirit *through the Son*. Moreover, if the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, as the Eastern Orthodox maintain, then the Holy Spirit would not be able to be distinguished from the Son; for the persons of the Trinity are distinguished by opposite relations. There would be no way to distinguish the Son from the Spirit if the *Filioque* is denied.

b) Exegetical Demonstration of The Doctrine of The Trinity

We will now proceed to the exegetical demonstration of this doctrine, and consider whether or not this doctrine is truly Biblical.¹⁶ According to Wayne Grudem, the doctrine of the Trinity can be summarized and understood in three points, which are all foundational to the doctrine of the Trinity, and constitute the Biblical teaching concerning it: 1. Monotheism, or the absolute unity of the divine essence, whereby it is denoted, both that there is only one God, and that this one God is absolutely simple and devoid of all composition or division. 2. The consubstantiality of the three persons wherein they subsist in one and the same divine essence fully and equally, and are therefore fully and equally God. 3. The personal distinctions between the three persons by which they are distinguished from one another.

¹⁵ L. Berkhof, 93.

¹⁶ W. A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology, Second Edition: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Zondervan, 2020), 273

Moses Adeleke reiterates this by stating that “The idea of the Trinity is founded on three scriptural truths: that there is only one God, that God exists in three separate people (Though I would prefer saying ‘distinct persons’ over ‘separate people’), and that each of those persons is completely God. This is something that can be seen by thoughtfully and carefully studying the Scriptures”.¹⁷ All three of these truths are taught in Scripture, and if we are able to demonstrate all 3 of these points from Scripture, then we have successfully demonstrated the doctrine of the Trinity from Scripture. If anybody denies just one of these three truths, he has denied the Biblical and orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and has fallen into heresy. Tritheism, for instance, denies the first point. Arianism, Partialism and Subordinationism deny the second. Modalism or Sabellianism denies the third. We will, therefore, go through each of these points, further expound upon them, and attempt to demonstrate each of them through the exegesis of various Biblical passages.

1) Monotheism

The Bible explicitly and uniformly teaches monotheism from the Old all the way to the New Testament; that there is only one supreme and omnipotent God who created all things out of nothing, whom alone we ought to worship as God. In Deut. 6:4, which is also known as the Shema, we read: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord”. In Deut 4:35, we read: “Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightiest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him”. In Isa. 44:6, Yahweh Himself said: “Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God”. In Isa. 43:10, we read: “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me”. In 1 Kings 8:60, King Solomon said: “That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else”. In 1 Tim. 2:5, Paul asserts that “There is only one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus”. The Bible repeatedly and consistently teaches monotheism.

Moreover, when we speak of monotheism, or the unity of the divine essence, there exists also a distinction between what is called the *unitas singularitatis* and the *unitas simplicitatis*, both of which must be affirmed with regard to the divine essence whenever we treat of its unity and what it entails. According to Louis Berkhof, the *unitas singularitatis*, stresses both the oneness and the unicity of God, the fact that He is numerically one and that as such He is unique and implies that there is but one Divine Being, that from the nature of the case there can be but one, and that all other beings exist of and through and unto Him.¹⁸ The *unitas simplicitatis*, on the other hand, is used ²⁰“to describe the state or quality of

¹⁷M. Adeoye, “Augustine and Cappadocian Fathers' Summation of the Doctrine of the Trinity: A Theological Perspective”, *ASEAN Journal of Religion, Education, and Society* 2, no.2 (2023), 59-66, <https://ejournal.bumipublikasinusantara.id/index.php/ajores/article/view/212/198>

¹⁸ L. Berkhof, 61.

being simple, the condition of being free from division into parts, and therefore from compositeness” and ²¹“means that God is not composite and is not susceptible of division in any sense of the word”. Thus, the former denotes the fact of God’s numerical unity, or the fact that there is only one God and thus, only one divine essence. The latter, however, denotes the fact of His essential or ontological simplicity, or His being free of all composition and divisibility.

Concerning the *unitas simplicitatis* in particular, Berkhof further explains that ²²“The simplicity of God follows from some of His other perfections; from His self-existence, which excludes the idea that something preceded Him, as in the case of compounds; and from His immutability, which could not be predicated of His nature, if it were made up of parts”. The independence and immutability of God would be compromised, and indeed denied by logical consequence, if the simplicity of His being is denied. The doctrine of the unity of the divine essence, consisting of both the *unitas simplicitatis* and *unitas singularitatis* which we have just explained also has implications for our doctrine of the Trinity. If we truly believe and acknowledge that God is numerically one, that His essence is ontologically simple, devoid of all division and composition, and is not made up of, nor reducible to, simpler parts, then we cannot conceive of the three persons as either three *primary essences* who merely partake of a common species, genus or *secondary essence*, or as three parts which together constitute one whole. \

As James Dolezal writes in chapter 16 of Matthew Barrett’s book *On Classical Trinitarianism*, “If we conceive of the unity of the three persons along the lines of three primary substances; as we might for a group of three humans or three angels, say; then the three persons must be conceived as three gods, rendering monotheism untrue. Alternatively, if we conceive the three persons as three parts of one God, then we cannot say unqualifiedly of any one person that he is God since all parts are inferior to, and really distinct from, the wholes which they comprise”.¹⁹ The three persons of the Trinity, then, all subsist in one simple, indivisible and numerically singular essence completely and equally, without division or numerical multiplication pertaining to the essence. As Turretin writes, “The singular numerical essence is communicated to the three persons not as a species to individuals or a second substance to the first (because it is singular and undivided), nor as a whole to its parts (since it is infinite and impartible)”.²⁰

In modern theology, however, there is also a view regarding the Trinity known as *Social Trinitarianism* which highly emphasizes the distinction between and individuality of the Trinitarian persons. Theologians who hold to this view conceive of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as three persons each having His own individual will, intellect and center of consciousness, instead of conceiving of them as having exactly one will, intellect and center of consciousness. However, they are always in agreement with one another, and always act in perfect agreement and unity. Although this model for understanding the Trinity is increasingly becoming more prominent and widespread among modern

¹⁹ M. Barrett, 257.²⁰ F. Turretin, 265.

Christian scholars and theologians, it does have many theological problems and ought therefore to be rejected as an unorthodox theological view. For if it is affirmed that the three persons of the Trinity have three different wills and centers of consciousness, then the absolute unity of the divine essence would be compromised and it would be hard to conceive of the Trinity as one divine essence which merely subsists in three distinct persons. This view of the Trinity, moreover, also imposes the modern and highly individualistic conception of a person as a rational being with a distinct mind, will and center of consciousness.

2) The consubstantiality of the triune persons.

The Bible teaches that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all fully and equally God. In John 1:1-3, the apostle John asserts that the Logos is God Himself (v. 1), that through Him all things came into being, and apart from Him not even a single thing that has come into being came into being (v. 3). In John 8:58, Jesus said to the Jews: “*Prin Abraam genesthai ego eimi*”; that is, “Before Abraham came into being, I am”. Now, our Lord here, besides perspicuously asserting His pre-existence, also employs the divine title *ego eimi* which is found in the LXX translation of Exodus 3:14 when Yahweh spoke to Moses through the theophany of the burning bush. In John 5:19, our Lord asserts that whatever the Father does, He also does, thereby claiming to be one with the Father with respect to operation, which no mere creature can claim for Himself. In Philippians 2:6, Paul writes that Jesus “subsists in the form of God”, or *ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων* (subsisting or existing in the form of God) in the original Greek text. The word *morphe* in the original Greek does not merely refer to external form or appearance; but also to the very nature, essence or substance of a thing. It was actually a technical term in Greek philosophy which was used to denote that which makes a thing what it is. Plato, for instance, used the word *morphe* to refer to the eternal, invisible and archetypal *ideas* or *forms* of things which reside in a higher, transcendent realm known as the *realm of the forms*, and which are the underlying essences or natures of particular things. Aristotle, however, uses the term to designate a substance that inheres within the particular itself, instead of some abstract universal floating in a higher transcendent realm. Thus, in asserting that Jesus *ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων*, or was “subsisting in the form of God”, Paul is thereby asserting that Jesus is co-essential and ontologically co-equal with the Father since He shares in the same divine essence that the Father subsists in.

In Colossians 1:15-17, Paul calls Jesus “the image of the invisible God” (*εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου*), and further asserts that “by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him”, and that “he is before all things, and by him all things consist”. In the next chapter; namely, in Colossians 2:9, he asserts that “In Him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (*ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς*). The Greek word *θεότης* which is used here, and which is usually translated as “Godhead” or “divinity” in most English

translations, refers to the divine essence or divine nature itself, in all of its glory, and with of its essential properties. Thus, in asserting that in Christ “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”, Paul is asserting Jesus’ deity in the strongest and most unambiguous words possible. In fact, the word *θεότης* that Paul uses here is actually even stronger than the word *θειότης* which Paul uses elsewhere in Romans 1:20 since *θειότης* refers only to God’s attributes or characteristics as manifested through His works, while *θεότης* refers to deity or the fullness of the divine nature itself.

Hebrews 1:3 also states that Jesus is “The brightness (*απαύσμα*) of His (The Father’s) glory” and “The express image (*χαρακτηρ*) of His person (*υποστασις*)”. Commentating on this verse, Grudem notes that “God the Son exactly duplicates the being or nature of God the Father in every way: whatever attributes or power God the Father has, God the Son has them as well”.²¹ Another powerful proof text for Christ’s full deity is also found in Hebrews 1:8, in which the Father says to the Son, “Your Throne, o God, is forever and ever (Literally, “Into the age of the age” in Gk.)”, and the Father also attributes the creation of the heavens and the earth to the Son in Hebrews 1:10. Besides from the full deity of the Son, Scripture also teaches the full deity of the Holy Spirit. For example, in Matthew 28:19, Jesus asks His disciples to baptize people “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”, thereby equating the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son. For believers can only be baptized in the name of God alone. Concerning this verse in particular, Ekawahyu Kasih et al. write that “This verse presents a triadic formula, explicitly mentioning the three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the context of baptism, indicating their co-equal and co-eternal nature within the Godhead”.²² In Acts 5:3, Peter also accuses Ananias of lying against the Holy Spirit, but then in verse 4, he tells Ananias that he is also lying against God, thereby identifying the Holy Spirit with God.

a) The distinction between the Triune persons

In addition to teaching that there is only one God, and that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all fully, truly and equally God, Scripture also teaches the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons. In John 1:1-2, we read: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. On one hand, this passage teaches that the Word is somehow one with the Father; that is, He shares one and the same essence as the Father. But it also teaches that the Word is somehow distinct from the Father; that they are not identical, but are distinct persons. We read that the Word was God, but also that He was “with God” (*pros ton theon*). How can the Word be properly said to be with the Father from eternity if they are one and the same person, and are merely different forms or names assumed by one person?

²¹ W. A. Grudem, 278.

²² Ekawahyu Kasih and Manoppo, John Josep and Kadar Slamet, Erwin Ernetus, “Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity from the Perspective of the Christian Bible and Expert Opinions” (2024), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4809423>

Several commentators on this passage also note that the phrase “προς τον Θεον”, when applied to the Logos in this passage, indicates some kind of communion or relationship between the two persons. In his *New Bible Commentary*, D.A. Carson writes that “The Greek preposition translated *with* suggests the idea of communion.²³ The thought is lit. towards God’, which requires some distinctiveness between God and the Word”. Ekawahyu Kasih et al. write that “Here, the ‘Word’ refers to Jesus Christ, who is depicted as both distinct from God (being “with God”) and yet identified as God Himself. This passage underscores the intricate relationship between the Father and the Son within the Godhead, laying a foundational framework for Trinitarian theology”.²⁴

In *The Institutes Of The Christian Religion*, John Calvin writes: “If the Word were simply God, and yet possessed no other characteristic mark, John would wrongly have said that the Word was always with God”.²⁵ The Father and the Son are distinct persons from eternity. In John 17:5, when Jesus was praying to His Father, He asked the Father to glorify Him with the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, further indicating that the Father and the Son have already existed in distinction to each other in eternity; even before the world existed. Even the baptism of Christ Himself is sufficient and abundant proof for the distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; for this incident recorded in the gospels demonstrates that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not merely three different manifestations of God, but three distinct persons. The Father says, “This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased” with reference to the Son, who is being baptized, and upon whom the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove was descending. Moreover, we also have many instances in the gospels, and especially in the fourth gospel, where Jesus speaks of the Father doing certain things in the third-person perspective and of Himself in the first-person, showing that the Father and the Son are distinct persons. It would make no sense for Jesus to speak of the Father in third person and Him in first person if they are nothing more but three different forms or modes in which one divine person manifests Himself.

The distinction of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son is also clearly asserted in John 15:26, where Jesus Himself said, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me”. In this verse, Jesus says that He would send forth the Holy Spirit from the Father, and that the Holy Spirit shall testify of Him, clearly demonstrating the Holy Spirit’s distinction from the Father and the Son *economically* or *ad extra*. This verse also contains a proof for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit’s eternal procession, or His *immanent* and *ad intra* distinction from the Father and Son, when it declares that the Holy Spirit is “the one who proceedeth from the Father”, or ὁ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, where the verb ἐκπορεύεται is here being used in the present tense.

²³ D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, (Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1025.

²⁴ Ekawahyu Kasih et al.

²⁵ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (Westminster Press, 1960), 128.

D. CONCLUSION

The implications of the doctrine of the Trinity in our everyday worship may be seen in at least three ways; First, pertaining to the object of our worship. When we engage in the worship of God, we are not worshipping His essence alone, apart from His persons, but instead, we are worshipping the triune being who exists as three distinct persons, and direct our worship and praise to each of the three persons, and His divine essence as conceived in inseparable conjunction with His three personalities, instead of merely to a vague and abstract notion of the infinite and simple divine essence alone. The essence and the persons; the essential unity and hypostatical plurality of God are inseparable. These two aspects must be conceived of together in our acts of worship and devotion, lest we become “practical modalists”, and instead worship a merely generic and abstract conception of God; a cold and distant impersonal Unmoved Mover, instead of the Triune God revealed in Scripture. We cannot direct our adoration and praise to only what He is essentially, but also who He is personally. If we worship only the abstract idea of God’s infinite and singular essence, apart from the knowledge of His persons, then we are essentially worshipping an idol instead of the true God. Now, this does not necessarily mean that we must explicitly make mention of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit every time we praise and worship Him; it simply means that we must acknowledge that we are worshipping God as He has supernaturally revealed Himself to us in Scripture as a triune being who exists as three distinct co-eternal and co-equal divine persons instead of merely worshipping the vague and abstract idea of the divine essence alone, nor the Father alone, nor the Son alone, nor the Spirit alone; but all three persons; for all three are fully God and therefore, ought to be equally worshipped. For worship is proper to God alone.

Second, pertaining to our acts of thanksgiving unto God. When we give thanks to the Lord for saving us (For giving of thanks to God is a form of worship), we must properly ascribe to each person their respective and distinct roles in the great work of our redemption, for which they are responsible, and give thanks to each person for their respective roles in the work of redemption. Although every *ad extra* operation of God is undivided and belongs equally to all three persons (For the divine operations *ad extra* belong to the divine essence universally shared in common by the three persons), it is nevertheless true that the three persons of the Triune Godhead have distinct roles in the external works of the divine essence, and always act in an inseparable and co-operative unity.

For instance, in the work of our redemption, it is the Father who elected us, who sent His only-begotten Son into the world to make oblation for us as our High Priest and Mediator, and who imposed upon Him the wrath due unto us. It is the Son who is sent into the world, who became incarnate and took on human flesh, and who made propitiation unto the Father by surrendering His flesh, which He assumed in the act of the incarnation, unto the powers of death, yet who was raised up again from the dead, and who is also the *causa materialis* of our salvation; for by His active and passive obedience, whereby we sinners are both considered fully and perfectly righteous before God upon the basis of Christ’s external righteousness imputed to us, and expiated us of our sins by His oblation.

It is the Holy Spirit who applies that redemption to us, by regenerating us while we were dead in our sins and trespasses, and continually sanctifying us until the day when we are called home, and who also was sent by both the Father and the Son to save and sanctify the Church. Although their roles are distinct, they are nevertheless all involved in the glorious work of the saints' redemption. It is important for us to understand that it is the Father who elected us, sent Jesus into the world, and imposed upon Him the divine wrath and judgment due unto us, and that it is Jesus who was sent into the world as a man under the law, received the divine wrath and judgment poured out by the Father, and who is also the material cause of our salvation by His active and passive obedience, and that it is the Holy Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies, applying the redemption wrought by Christ unto the saints, in order to have an accurate and holistic understanding of how God saves His elect. When we give thanks to God for redeeming us, we must keep in mind the respective and distinctive roles each of the three persons have in the work of our redemption; we must not confuse them. The Father is the one who sends the Son into the world and pours out His wrath upon Him; the Son is the one who is sent into the world as a man and receives the wrath of the Father, making oblation for us, and not the other way around.

Third, humility and awe in worship. When we ponder upon how wonderful and incomprehensible our Triune God is, the more our hearts are moved to be in awe of Him; to exalt Him more above all other things, to love and adore Him more, to be made humble. God's transcendence and incomprehensibility stir humility and adoration towards Him in our hearts. We recognize that we are not worshipping something which can be comprehended by our intellect easily and perfectly, or which is anything similar to His finite creatures with respect to His nature and being, but rather, something *wholly other*. Thus, when we sing hymns and praises to God, and submit to His Lordship, bowing before Him and exalting Him above all things, giving to Him what is due to Him as God, we are struck by the realization that this object of our worship is something infinitely greater than us, exceeding and surpassing all of our powers, reasonings and natures as finite creatures. The hypostatization of the divine essence is wholly and fundamentally distinct from that of all creaturely and finite essences. For in the latter, the one and numerically singular divine essence subsists wholly and equally in each person without division or partition, so that there is no distinction between *prima essentia* and *secunda essentia* with respect to God, since each person possesses the numerically same divine essence without division. With respect to creaturely and finite hypostatization, however, the essence is divided and partitioned among the different particular persons which share in the essence, so that each person possesses his own individual or particular essence, separate and numerically distinct from those of the other persons which share the same universal essence.

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