

# The Trinity

The Relational God  
of the Christian Faith

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# What the Trinity is not

- \* Binitism (not to be confused with Dualism): 1 deity in 2 persons, or 2 deities
- \* Unitarianism: 1 deity in 1 person; ~ Jewish Shema or Muslim Tawhid (God is 1); “Improper for God to have a son”
- \* Modalism / Oneness Pentecostalism: 1 deity manifested in 3 separate *aspects*
- \* Dualism / Polytheism: divine power shared by more than 1 being; beings which can and do conflict and fight with each other
- \* Universal Consciousness; MTFBWY

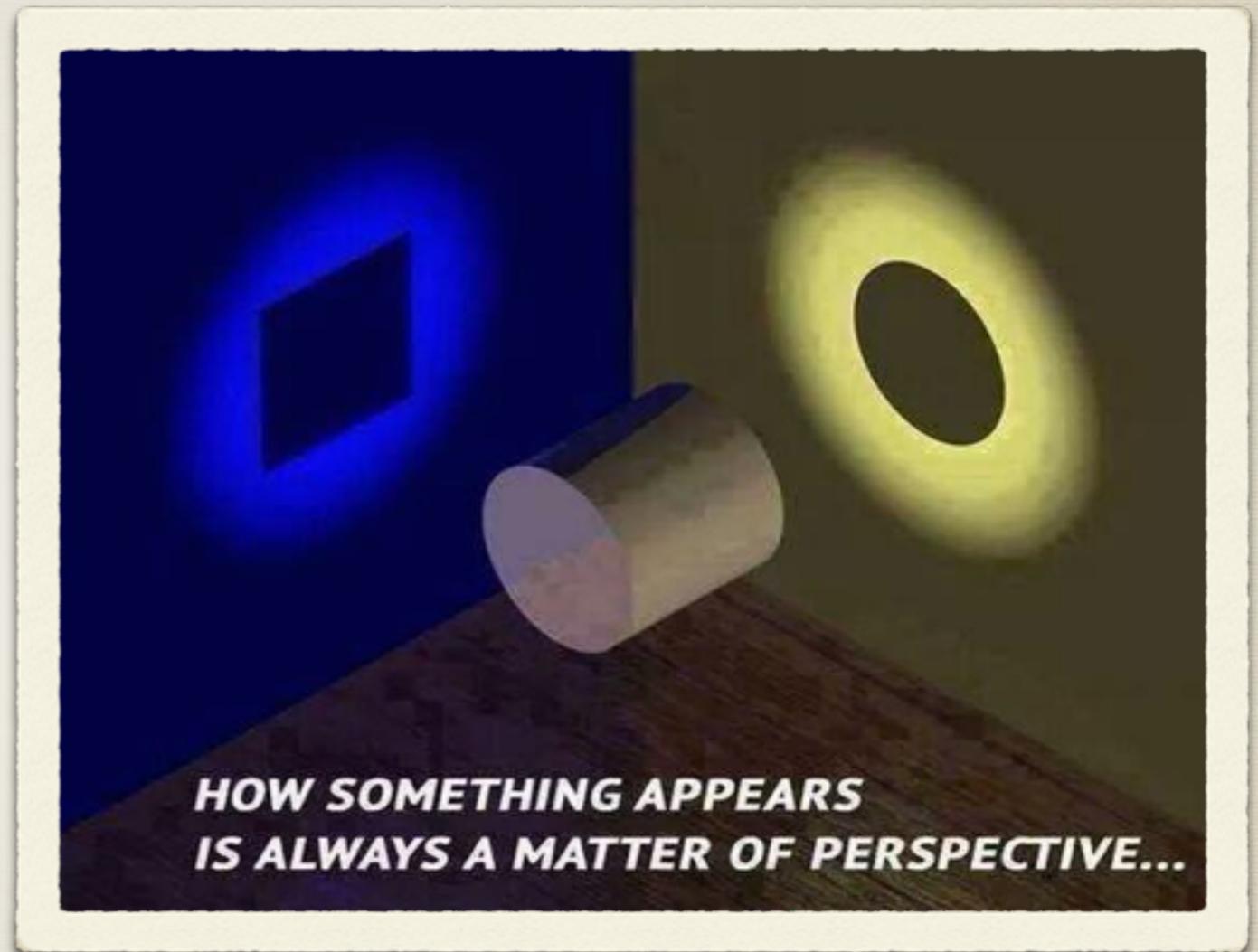
# What the Trinity Is (like)

- \* What, not how
- \* God is eternal but did not create man because he was alone or lacked anything; He was always more than a solitary “person” while being One.
- \* CSL: Of all the religions, only Christianity defines what “more than a person” could be. Not "merely" breath returning like drops back into the ocean
- \* Shoreline / Ship analogy: “You will not get anywhere by looking at maps without going to sea. Nor will you be very safe if you go out to sea without a map.” i.e., “God is Love”, not the other way around
- \* “begotten”: We are all sons and daughters of God in the created sense. But of Christ we say “begotten not made”. This is not virgin birth, but pre- or co- existence. What God begets is God. What God creates is not God, just as what man begets is man, but what man creates is not man.
- \* CSL: “A world of 1 dimension would be a straight line. In a 2-D world you still get straight lines, but many lines make 1 figure. In a 3-D world you still get figures but many figures make up a solid body. As you get more complicated levels you don’t leave anything behind, but combine them in new ways, ways you could not imagine if you only knew the simpler levels.”

# Trinitarianometry 101

“On the human level 1 person = 1 being and 2 persons = 2 separate beings. On the divine level you still find personalities; but on that level you find them combined in ways which we who live on this level cannot imagine. In God’s dimension you find a Being who is 3 persons while remaining 1 being, just as a cube is 6 squares while remaining one cube.

Of course we cannot fully conceive a Being like that, but we can get a sort of faint notion about it. It is something we never could have guessed, and yet, once we have been told, one almost feels one ought to have been able to guess it because it fits in so well with all the things we know already.”



# Biblical Foundations

- \* OT: Gn 1:26-7: “Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness... So God created man in his own image... male and female he created them.” 18: The Oak at Mamre; Psalms: “Sophia” at Creation
- \* Mt 28:19 “Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”
- \* Jn 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Without him was not anything made that was made”; 15:16: “All the Father has is mine” (echoes Mt 11:27: “All things have been handed to me by my Father”; 15:26: “When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.”
- \* Col 2:9 “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form”
- \* Phil 2:4-11 “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
- \* 1 Cor 2:11: “For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”

# Doctrinal Formation

- \* Wiki! “Reflection, proclamation, and dialogue led to the formulation of the doctrine that was felt to correspond to the data in the Bible. The simplest outline of the doctrine was formulated in the 4th Century, largely in terms of rejection of what was considered not to be consonant with general Christian belief. Further elaboration continued in succeeding centuries.”
- \* 110 Ignatius of Antioch exhorts obedience to “Christ and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit”
- \* Late 2C Theophilus of Antioch defines “Trinity” as “God, His Word (Logos), and His Wisdom (Sophia)” in describing the first 3 days of creation
- \* Creeds were created in reaction to disagreements over the nature of the Father, Son, and HS:
- \* Adoptionism: Jesus is an ordinary man, born of Joseph and Mary, and became Christ and Son of God at his baptism
- \* Sabellianism: Father, Son and HS are essentially the same, just different words / roles
- \* Arianism: 4c; Father existed before the Son; Son not = God
- \* ? Jn 14:28 “I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I”. Athanasius' double account of the Son: his temporal and voluntary subordination in the incarnation, and the other his eternal divine status. Such human traits are not to be read back into the eternal Trinity.

# Doctrinal Formation (cont'd)

- \* 325 Council of Nicea: Nicene Creed - "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten not made; consubstantial with the Father..." (one in being)
- \* Nicene Creed doesn't say much *about* the Holy Spirit... becomes the "forgotten guest".
- \* Cappadocian Desert Fathers: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus:
- \* 1 Cor 2:11 and 1 Cor 3:16: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" They argued it would be blasphemous for an inferior being to take up residence in a temple of God, proving that the Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son. (At this point the doctrine is pretty much in its current form.)
- \* 1014: Latin Church adds the Filioque footnote. The Eastern Orthodox reject it, maintaining that "from the Father" = "from the Father alone".
- \* 1213: Fourth Lateran Council: "It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds".
- \* So?

# Trinitarian Application

- \* CSL: “Well, there isn't any good talking about Him. The thing that matters is actually being drawn into that three-Personal life, and that may begin any time... tonight, if you like.”
- \* “When you say your prayers in your bedroom, what is prompting you to pray is also God, so to speak, inside you. God is also the path along which you are being pushed to Himself; you're being caught up into the higher three-Personal life of God”.
- \* The Meaning of Life? To enter the Trinitarian Exchange.
- \* CSL again: “We did not make this up. It is in a sense experimental knowledge. If you are a geologist, you have to go and find the rocks. They will not come to you. You go to them, and they cannot run away. Animals for zoologists can run away so you have to be very quiet. Now a stage higher. To know a human they have to be determined to let you know them. The initiative is equally divided. But when it comes to God, the initiative is on his side. If he does not show himself, nothing you can do will let you find him. What's more, he shows himself more to some than to others (for the same reason light cannot be reflected in a dusty mirror as much as in a clean one).
- \* Trinitarian Prayer and Beyond: Lectio Divina, Centering Prayer, and Christ living inside you

Once a man was asked “What did you get by regularly praying to God?” The man replied “Nothing... but let me tell you what I lost: Anger, ego, greed, depression, insecurity, and fear of death.” Sometimes the answer to our prayers is not gaining but losing; which ultimately is the gain.

# Breathe

This is the air I breathe  
This is the air I breath  
Your Holy presence  
living in me

This is my daily bread  
This is my daily bread  
Your very Word  
spoken to me

And I... I'm desperate for you  
And I... I'm lost without you