

**Thanksgiving:** As negative as things may look in the world, we can look beyond the present sufferings because God tells us the outcome of his plan of salvation: “**22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,**” (Re 21:22-24 ESV)

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

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**ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 2019 (Please note some changes for Moncton and Saint John)**

Times of worship services: Moncton – 10:30 AM every Sunday

**Time of services** in Saint John – November 10 and November 24 at 10:30 AM

**Communion-** On the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5th Sunday – Moncton and 2nd and 4th Sunday in Saint John. Address: Moncton—70 King St. — Sage building, second floor;

Saint John—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

**The next Discipleship groups** Thursday, November 21 – 7:30 p.m. We will study Philippians chapter 1

**Mr. Bill Rabey, GCI regional coordinator, will be visiting both Moncton and Saint. John for worship services on November 24.**

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*Should you have forgotten the password to enter "For members only" on the [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) website, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Vautour.*

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**Prayers for GCI congregations in Canada:** that we will walk in God's will for us and that we will see, understand and participate in his work.

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## AN INTRODUCTION TO TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

### I. Introduction: why we need to learn this

#### A. Stating the topic

We say that we have a "Trinitarian theology." However, lots of churches accept the doctrine of the Trinity, and their theology is at least somewhat Trinitarian, but we emphasize the Trinity more than most churches do.

Sometimes we say that we have a Trinitarian Incarnational theology, or a Trinitarian Christ-centered theology. None of these are completely distinctive terms, but they do mention some of the emphases that we have.

We call our theology Trinitarian because the doctrine of the Trinity is not a side point, or just one of many other doctrines. We are trying to be more consistent with it, to let it be the organizing principle for other doctrines. Whether we are talking about sin or salvation or the church, we want to ask, how does the doctrine of the Trinity help us understand this particular doctrine? How is it all connected with the nature of God, and of who God is in his innermost being?

We are trying to understand a little better some points about God's relationship with humanity: his purpose in creating humanity, the way in which he saves us, and how we should respond to him. We believe that our theology is true to the Bible, and that it helps make sense of what we are doing on the earth and in the church. It helps tie different doctrines together.

#### B. Not trying to criticize others

In the process of explaining our theology, we find that our beliefs are sometimes a little different from other theological traditions, and in some points of doctrine, we conclude that those other Christians are mistaken. This does not mean that we think they are non-Christian, or that those people won't be saved. We all make mistakes, and we have no doubt made a few of our own.

We all believe that we are saved through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – and it is good for us to have that in common with many other Christians around the world.

Thankfully, we are saved not by having absolutely perfect theology, but we are saved by Christ, by grace, by trusting in Jesus to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Other Christians are doing the best they can, and we are doing the best that we can, to understand the Bible, and to understand the meaning of life and how it all fits together. Our purpose here is not to criticize other people and other theologies, but simply to do the best that we can in explaining what we believe, and how we think it is true to the Bible, and how we think it helps us understand what our life is all about.

### **C. A desire to understand as much as we can**

This is what the early church called “faith seeking understanding.” We already understand some things about God, and we believe them, but we are convinced that this is something we’d like to know more about, and so we try to know as much as we can. We have fallen in love with Jesus, and we’d like to learn more about who he is, and the relationship he has with us, and what he has in mind for our future.

We could also describe our goal as an act of worship: we want to praise God for who he is and what he has done and what he has promised to do in the future – and in order to praise God for these things, we need to understand what they are. The goal is to explain things as best as we can, based on the Bible and the way that God has revealed himself to us ultimately and personally in Jesus Christ.

### **D. Practical significance**

We will not try to cover all the biblical or historical evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity. We have published other articles about that. What we would like to focus on here is the practical significance of the doctrine.

At first, it seems like the doctrine of the Trinity is just information about God: God is three persons in one being. But what does that have to do with us? Does it make any difference to us here on earth?

Well, yes.

That is because persons have relationships with one another, and relationships are important for all of us. God created us to have relationships similar to the relationships that exist for all eternity within the Triune God. The Divine Persons in the Godhead have relationships, and persons here on earth have relationships, too, and there is supposed to be some similarity in the kind of relationships we have.

The Bible tells us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Not that he has love, but that he IS love. That is descriptive of who he is and how he lives in eternity, how he interacts with other persons. Even before God created the universe, even before God created angelic beings, he was love. When God was the only thing there is, God was love—love among the triune Persons.

So, before God created anything, what would God be like? If there is only one person in God, there would be no one to love, because love means caring for and caring about someone else. But if God were somehow loving but alone, that would mean that God would be unable to fully be or express some of his internal nature. God would be deficient. The statement that “God is love” would be meaningless, if God were only one Person, because the love could not be expressed.

The doctrine of the Trinity tells us that even before God created anything, he could be love, because the Father loved the Son, and the Son loved the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit loves the Father, and so forth. There was love within the Triune God, even before anything had been created. The three Persons were distinguishable from one another, but united to one another in love. This is important for who God is, and it’s important for who we are, as well.

## **II. Trinitarian theology is centered on Jesus Christ**

As mentioned in the introduction, we sometimes say that we have a Trinitarian, Christ-centered theology. And some people wonder, if all three Persons in the Godhead are fully divine, and equal in being divine, then why should we center our theology on one of them in particular?

### **A. Jesus is fully divine**

We are simply acknowledging that God is revealed to us most clearly in the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is where God has chosen to make himself visible to us. Jesus is the Word made flesh—God the Son become human. He has revealed himself in a way that we could see him, touch him, hear him and see how he lives. Jesus is the way that God has chosen to reveal himself to us.

In John 14:8, Philip asked Jesus: “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus responded in verse 9: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (New International Version).

Jesus is not saying that God the Father is 5 foot 8 inches tall, with brown hair and a Jewish nose. But he is saying that in his most important respects, his character, purposes, heart, and mind, God the Father is like Jesus Christ – and

that is in terms of the way he interacts with others. The compassion that Jesus had shows us exactly what God is like. The zeal for righteousness, that's what God is like. The willingness to sacrifice for others, God is like that, too. Jesus helps us see what God the Father is like – and the Holy Spirit is like that, too.

When Jesus became incarnated as a flesh-and-blood human being, he was showing us in a tangible and visible way what the Triune God is like. The apostle Paul says, "The Son is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). Even though we cannot see God directly, Jesus shows us what he's like, in a way that we can see and hear. Colossians 2:9 says, "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." Jesus is the summary we are given of what we need to know about God. We can never know God completely – he is simply much bigger than our minds are capable of comprehending – but we are able to have an accurate understanding of at least some things about God, because Jesus embodies all that any human being can know of God, and he came to reveal God to us. John 1:18 says, "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."

### **B. Jesus is fully human**

All orthodox Christian theology includes the teaching that Jesus is fully human. That might seem obvious to many people – he was born as a baby, grew as a boy, and he died. As the Bible says, in John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." He didn't just put on a costume that made him look human – no, he was a real human being. He ate ordinary food, breathed air like an ordinary person, his fingernails grew and he got thirsty and tired. When he scraped his knee, he bled real blood, and when they crucified him, he died just like other people would have.

He was fully God and fully human – both at the same time. We've never seen that combination before, but with God, all things are possible, and so if that's what he did, then we have to make room in our theology for it. God can do one-of-a-kind things that aren't comparable to anything else. The Incarnation of the Son of God is that unique kind of thing.

There are a number of reasons as to why a divine Person would become a human being. He came to communicate to us on a level we could understand; he came to die for us; he came to experience life as a human so that we could know for sure that he understood what it's like for us to be human.

But one thing I want to point out now is that just as Jesus shows us what God is really like, he also shows us what humanity is really like. Jesus simultaneously shows us divinity and humanity – and that implies that there is an important similarity between God and humans, and I'll explain more about that in a minute.

### **C. Connecting human beings to God**

Jesus has a unique role. He has been part of the circle of God's triune life, and he's been part of the human circle of life, and because of that, he provides a unique connection between humanity and God. In a sense, he is a bridge between the two, a bridge we use to participate in the God circle. Not that we are part of the Trinity, of course, but in and through his humanity, we do share in God's life.

2 Peter 1:4 says, "He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature." So in some way we participate in what God is. We are in the family of God, or the kingdom of God. We are in fellowship with God, in a relationship with God – and this is all made possible by Jesus.

1 Timothy 2:5 says, "There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus." A mediator is a person in the middle, in this case, a person serving to connect humanity with God. Of course, God initiated this; he is the one who sent Jesus to earth to become a human being, and to be resurrected back into heaven to make this connection work. Jesus is the key link or connector between humanity and God.

And the doctrine of the Trinity is important for this understanding. For our connection with God, for our future with God, it is essential that our mediator be fully God in his own right. No human being is good enough to earn a connection with God, who is infinitely far above us in power and glory and wisdom and righteousness. No created human being could rise up to God's level as Creator, but God is able to put himself at our level.

Jesus is perfect in righteousness and holiness, and yet one of us. He is the pathway by which other human beings are brought into the presence of the holy and perfect God. The doctrine of the Trinity says that Jesus is fully God, and the doctrine of the Incarnation says that Jesus became fully human, and he continues to be both divine and human, and with that combination, now we are ready to talk about a relationship between God and humanity. (To be continued – written by Michael Morrison – GCI minister)

## Passing On the Blessings



Grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. ([2 Corinthians 4:15, NIVUK](#))

Some years ago, a lady invited my family and me around for a meal. It was quite a daunting task because our family group consisted of 9 adults and 4 children! She and her husband plus her sister were exemplary hosts and put on a sumptuous fare. I asked her why she



By James  
Henderson  
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When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he reminded them of how blessed they were, and how blessings are for sharing. It's part of the thankfulness for grace received. Not many of us are able to have large groups for dinner, but there are other things we can do. Send a card, give an encouraging word or smile, or help in an unexpected way. Paul went on to explain to the Corinthian church that their "generosity will result in thanksgiving to God" ([2 Corinthians 9:11](#)).

Let's pass on the blessings.

**Father in heaven, thank you for all the blessings we receive and help us in our gratitude to share them with others. In Jesus' name. Amen**

GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—[www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org), [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca), [www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton](https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton); For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. *Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—[evautour47@outlook.com](mailto:evautour47@outlook.com)*