

Living the Trinity

Introduction

How big is your vision of life?



Consider the story of Pascal Siakam. He grew up in a small town, with a small vision of life, and of God. Sent by his father at age 11 to be a boarder at a Catholic Seminary in Cameroon, priesthood was to be his future career.



Soon after graduating, Siakam took part in a *Basketball Without Borders* camp in South Africa “just for fun”. His small view of life was about to change. Scouts from the NBA at the camp identified him as having elite potential for the game and they whisked him away to

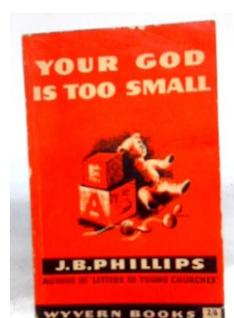
New Mexico USA. Siakam’s vision of life, and of God, exploded beyond his imagining.

Just a decade on and he is now famous for leading the Toronto Raptors to a 2019 victory in the NBA finals. He is now counted among the best in the world in his field of sport. Siakam still points to the sky and kisses the cross hanging around his neck when he walks on court. But his vision of life and of God, once small, is now higher and longer, wider and deeper than ever before.



40 years ago J.B. Phillips published a book entitled “Your god is too small.” Like Pascal Siakam, many people start their lives with a very **limited vision of life and of God**, for example:

- some grew up in families where God was pictured as a kind of **heavenly police officer**. For them God is merely a distant agent of rules and boundaries; morals and order; something to fear;



- others grew up with an image of God as a **Father Christmas figure**, expecting life to give them gifts without many demands; now possibly disillusioned with religion and life.

In both examples, the person concerned had **too small a vision of God**, to use Phillips' descriptor.

Trinity Sunday is a perfect opportunity to **expand your vision** of God by considering the witness of the Bible to a God whose love is wide and high, long and deep and richly fulfilling for our lives, beyond our imagining (see Ephesians 3:18-21).

Tri-unity of God in the Bible

The New Testament includes many testimonies of an expansive vision of God and of life. In 1 Peter 1:2 the apostle speaks of those...

“...chosen and destined by God the Father, sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood”

(1 Peter 1:2)

Note the “three-ness” of God in this testimony about the impact of God’s grace on believers in Christ.

In Old Testament times God was worshipped as **One**. For example, the “Shema”¹, recited every morning and night by a faithful Hebrew person begins, “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one”. No doubt Jews believed firmly in this both quantitatively and qualitatively. Yet, Jewish people such as the Apostle Peter on coming to know the love of Jesus began to testify to God both one God, yet three “Persons” **contributing in particular ways** to our existence, our salvation and our future hope; all three acting in **complete unity**.

¹ Shema Yisrael (or Sh'ma Yisrael; Hebrew: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל; "Hear, [O] Israel") is a prayer. It is also the first two words of a section of the Torah and is the title (better known as The Shema) of a prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. The first verse encapsulates the monotheistic essence of Judaism: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Hebrew: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה (אֶחָד)), found in Deuteronomy 6:4

No wonder the word **Trinity** (tri-unity) was later adopted to describe God. Many statements in the New Testament reveal a **consciousness of the Trinity**, even in some of the earliest documents. For example...

- 1 Cor 12:4 says, “⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.”
- 1 Cor 8:6 says, “there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”
- 2 Cor 3:17 says, “¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

Note that **the one-ness of God** is not challenged or diminished. Reference to Jesus and to the Spirit as Lord does not draw away from praise to God as Heavenly Father. Instead, all three together **complete the apostle’s assurance of the one God’s love and grace.**²

The **one-ness** and **three-ness** of God is present in Jesus’ teaching too. Consider a passage like John 14:16-24...

“¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Advocate**, to be with you for ever...

¹⁸ ‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you...

²³ Those who love me will keep my word, and **my Father will love them**, and **we will come to them** and make our home with them.

The background idea is from the Old Testament where **God longs to make His home with His people** (e.g. Lev. 26:11-12). Jesus says that in the future Christians will **go to be at home** in God’s “house”, **but in the meantime, God makes His home in them** through the sending of the Holy Spirit (“another advocate/counselor/helper” verse 16, gk. *parakletos*). But notice that Jesus says, “I will not leave you orphaned. I will come to you” (18). Then he goes on to say, the Son and the Father will make their home with us (23).

² Such statements stand against dysfunctional beliefs down the ages, such as three gods (“tri-theism”) or a god who appeared in different forms (“modalism” or “Sabellianism”).

The presence of the Holy Spirit, in John's Gospel, does not suggest that God the Father and God the Son are **disconnected and absent**.

Athanasius, a Christian theologian and noted Egyptian church leader of the fourth century CE defined orthodox Christian worship as "neither confounding the (three) Persons; nor dividing the (one) substance" of God.

So we can see oneness & three-ness in many of Jesus' words. For example, from John chapter 16:12-15:

'...When the **Spirit** of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will **not speak on his own**, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify **me**, because he will take what is **mine** and declare it to you. All that the **Father** has is **mine**. For this reason I said that he will take what is **mine** and declare it to you."

The Rev'd Dr Peter Adam points out that, "the divine work of God is done **not by the Spirit alone, nor by the Lord Jesus alone, nor by the Heavenly Father alone**, but by the Spirit, the Lord, and God."³

Trinity, then, is a title we adopt to point to what the Scriptures reveal is a divine, loving community of **three "Persons"** in the **one and only God**.⁴ The Nicene Creed, recited in many churches world-wide, and which offers us a common set of words to state our belief in God as Trinity, was a product of various councils of church leaders in the early centuries of the Church seeking to refute common misconceptions of God.⁵

³ Adam, P., Living the Trinity, Grove Spirituality Series, No. 1, 1982

⁴ Church leaders such as Alexander and Athanasius during the Council of Nicea in the 4th Century CE argued that God is one, but three coeternal consubstantial persons (*hypostases*, Greek pointing to soul/intellect) — the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit - "one God in three Divine Persons". The three Persons are distinct, yet are one "substance, essence or nature" (*homoousios*, Greek meaning same essence). In this context, a "nature" is what one is, whereas a "person" is who one is. Many alternatives to Trinity were posited in the first 3 centuries which motivated the meeting of several councils of the Church meeting to formulate statements and creeds considered "orthodox" and true to the biblical witness. This article may interest you for further consideration <https://reformedforum.org/heart-trinitarian-heresy/>

⁵ See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nicene-Creed> for more information

Churches ignorant of The Holy Trinity

Why is all this important? Why bother being so particular about language to do with describing God?



Too small a vision of God (or indeed one at odds with Scripture) can lead to an unhealthy and dysfunctional church community.

I offer below **three parodies** describing three different fictitious churches.⁶ Each one emphasizes one Person of the Trinity over and at the expense of the other two. In each case there are outcomes that we may find attractive and helpful (**green text**), but also certain consequences that are unhealthy, even destructive (**red text**).

1. A church of the **Father** only

This “church of the Father” affirms God as **creator and provider**. People may be respected for their contribution to a certain type of “normal” society. Stability and status are of high value here. Some positive features of this church are that it...



- Promotes order and sets clear moral boundaries
- Honours supporters of a stable, “normal” society
- Is formal and detailed in its sacraments, hymns, & prayers
- Praises individual achievement, skill or status

Yet, the church of the Father may present some serious deficiencies:

- Underplaying the seriousness of the human condition (sin)
- Excluding those who don't play by the rules, don't conform
- Rigidity in traditions, stifling creative expression
- Fearing change, disruption, radical action, progressive ideas

Neglect of Christ and the Spirit makes this church weak on Christian identity, with little interest in seeing all people as needing God's forgiveness and sanctification, and averse to interruptions to the “norm”.

⁶ With acknowledgment to The Rev. Dr. Peter Adam for this concept

2. A church of the **Son** only

This church praises God as **redeemer & leader**. It firmly believes in the power of the Gospel to change lives. It fervently wants to make the Gospel known to others that they too may become followers and to become like them. Some of its positive features may be that it...



- Worships earnestly, confident in God's saving power
- Sees the Word of God as central (Bible, sermons)
- Calls for conversion, repentance, faith, baptism regularly
- Is committed to effecting ethical change in society/politics

Yet, there are also some deficiencies in this small vision of God. For example, this church of the Son only may...

- View itself as a "refuge" from a dangerously sinful world
- Exclude those who do not confess "truth" with conformity
- Neglect "natural" talents in favour of "spiritual" ministry
- Embrace suffering and persecution as proof of authenticity

Neglecting the Father and the Spirit makes this church overly critical of society. God is at work in the church, not the world for them. Their commitment to truth becomes overly academic and they tend to **exclude those who hold to "incorrect" ideas.**

3. A church of the **Spirit** only

This church celebrates God as **guide** and **healer**. It helps people focus on the presence of God in the now, changing the course of lives daily. There is an elevated expectation that God acts, through faith, in radical ways. Some positive features include...



- Dynamic, unpredictable, high-participation public worship
- Expectation of spiritual empowerment in words/actions
- Mutual ministry for every member
- Life-changing guidance and strength from God daily

But there are also some potential dysfunctions in this church. It...

- Excludes others based on their lack of "evidence" of faith
- Pressures expectation of divine intervention now

- Favours those who are more able/gifted
- Seeks “knowledge” disconnected from the Bible’s teaching

Churches of the Father may exclude people who do not conform to the status quo. Churches of the Son may exclude those they deem “incorrect”. But the church of the Spirit can discriminate according to evidence of spiritual experiences or **in favour of those who “look” “spiritual”**.

The Church of the Trinity

The three fictitious churches pictured above are, of course, **parodies** to help make a point.



Yet, we can each probably see in them at least one such church that we’ve visited.

Defining a **church of the Trinity** is **actually very difficult**. It’s much **easier to parody** errors. That’s because churches that over-emphasize one Person of the Trinity over the other two tend to **simplify matters** of faith and church for their **own convenience**. Simplicity is very popular too, yet we know that neither God, nor life itself is ever simple.

God is **complex and challenging** and well beyond our **full comprehension**.⁷ A church of the Trinity will be complex and challenging too. For example, a church of the **Father** that rewards people who contribute to society and the status quo will also need to be a church of the **Son** that points out the need for all to seek God’s forgiveness and transforming grace. It will also need to be a church of the **Spirit** that embraces God’s disruptive and unpredictable presence and power, often challenging what is thought to be “normal” or “good”.

⁷ E.g. Romans 11:33-36; Ephesians 3:20

What should we do?

1. ANALYSE WHERE YOU ARE

- Review our language in worship (e.g. language in worship/prayers, lyrics in songs of praise). Are we worshipping God as Trinity?
- Assess who we include and exclude in our church - to whom we offer care and love and hope and to whom we do not - “why?”
- Consider how central God’s Word is to our life together
- Test our openness change and to challenges
- Measure the liveliness of our faith and expectations

2. Secondly, get involved in BIBLE STUDY & LEARNING

Let’s leave behind our small-town seminary with its too small view of God and expand our vision.

- **Expand** your understanding of God as Heavenly Father e.g. **Matthew 5-7, The Letter of James, Luke 15, Gospel of John**
- **Enrich** your knowledge of God the Son e.g. **Acts 2, Mark 14-16, Colossians 1-2, John 1-6, Revelation 5**
- **Enlarge** your vision of God the Spirit e.g. **John chs. 7, 14-15, Acts chs. 1, 2**
- **Explore** the Trinity e.g. **John 3, John 14-17, Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:14-19, Acts 2**

3. DEEPEN YOUR PRAYERS

Try praying to the ‘Person’ of the Holy Trinity you have come to know best. Some of our songs and hymns give us examples...

Prayers to God the Heavenly Father

- Father, hear the prayer we offer
- Hallelujah, my Father
- Be thou my vision
- Almighty and ever-living God

Prayers to God the Son

- Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us
- Lord Jesus, think on me
- Jesu, thou joy of loving hearts

Prayers to God the Holy Spirit

- Come Holy Ghost our souls inspire
- Breathe on me breath of God
- O Breath of Life, come
- Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me

Prayers to God the Trinity

- Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost
- Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer
- ...through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Spirit is one God, now and forever. Amen.

Conclusion

Let's leave behind the small god we may have grown up with in the small-town "seminary" of our past. Although understanding God as Trinity can seem complex and challenging, it is the desire of the apostles that we should never sit back and imagine we have arrived at "knowing" God. The Gospel calls us into a dynamic relationship of love that God offers us through Jesus Christ by faith. Consider this prayer from The Letter to the Ephesians. The writer hopes that Christians will always seek to expand their vision of God...

"¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:18,19).

Though God the Trinity is greater and more wonderful than we could ever imagine, the Lord has made a way that is clear and accessible to all that doesn't require us to look elsewhere to know the fullness of God. As St. Paul says to the Colossians...

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, **continue to live your lives in him**, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7).

Going Further

St Augustine of Hippo once said, "If you deny the Holy Trinity you lose your soul; if you try to explain it lose your mind."

Wrestling with the knowledge of the God of the Bible is indeed challenging, yet as Augustine asserts, it's critical for life!

Trinity, as a word, captures something uncontainable and not fully explainable, since we are talking about God, who is other than us. Yet the Bible gives us many examples that help us to express our worship and exercise our faith in God as Trinity.

God – one, yet three

God is infinitely higher than, and other than we are, yet the Bible gives us confidence we can know God sufficiently, though not exhaustively (e.g. 1 John 5:13; Romans 11:34-35). The Bible also teaches fundamentally that there is **only one God** (e.g. Deuteronomy 6:4; James 2:19). Yet, it also testifies that:

- the Heavenly Father is God (e.g. John 6:27),
- Jesus Christ is God (e.g. John 1:1,14; 8:58),
- the Holy Spirit is God (e.g. 2 Cor 3:17; Acts 5:3-4).

Christians speak of God as being "One God, three persons". How these two statements of doctrine can both be true at once is not fully able to be reconciled by the human mind. Be sure to share St. Paul's humility, when he says:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" (Romans 11:33-34)

God's transcendence does not render useless the Bible's testimony and our attempts to know God. Yet, we should express our worship humbly and with attention to the Bible's words. No illustration from earthly examples will be completely accurate and if pushed may even mislead. With respect to the Trinity, many popular illustrations to describe God's oneness and three-ness are unhelpful. For example...

- Using H₂O as an example of three in one (water, vapour, ice) misleads in that each is a **form** of the same matter – suggesting that Christ and the Spirit are simply God in other forms (the heresy of Modalism e.g. 3rd Century CE Sabellianism)
- Using the Sun as an example of three in one (sun, heat, light) seems helpful, but fails because heat and light are mere products of the star. This may suggest that Son and Spirit are **created** by God, not co-eternal with the Father, and therefore less than God (the heresy of Arianism 4th Century CE)
- Using a 3-leaf clover as an illustration of three in one misdirects because it suggests that Father, Son or Spirit are only "**parts**" of God manifest to us, and not fully God (the heresy of Partialism 4th Century CE).

So, while some illustrations may give a starting point for discussion about God the Trinity, the picture given may not be entirely accurate or helpful. If God is infinite, we

cannot expect to adequately contain God in a finite illustration. Be careful not to rely on simple illustrations to point to the oneness and three-ness of God. Give clear warnings of the deficiencies in doing so to those you speak to. As the 18th Century preacher John Wesley famously said,

"Bring me a worm that can comprehend a (human), and then I will show you a (human) that can comprehend the Triune God."

Instead of expecting to know everything about God as Trinity, try to focus on indications of God's greatness and infinitely higher nature than our own; and yet, be comforted that God has entered our lowly state in the incarnate one, Jesus Christ. We have the Gospel to sufficiently reveal to us God's love in Christ's death and resurrection and to know how to respond with the help of the Holy Spirit (see John 1-3 as a good summary of this hope).

Views of God to reject

As is often the case in the discipline of theology, it is often easier to say what **not to believe** than it is affirm what one can believe (such are our limitations of knowing anything!) History has shown **3 common heresies** when presenting the Bible's view of God. All three have significantly negative consequences for a person's faith and living and cannot be called "Trinitarian" or orthodox.

1. Polytheism

The first common misguided belief about God is **polytheism**: a belief that there are multiple gods.

Jesus himself was criticized by religious leaders for making claims only God can make, and monotheists such as 1st Century Jews were suspicious of his claims. Christians can appear to others as if believing in three gods, not one. However, Christianity, with Judaism affirms that there is but one God ("⁴Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" Deuteronomy 6:4. For example, Article 1 of the Anglican Church's 39 articles of faith, written during the English Reformation, begins: "*There is but one living and true God...*".

Down the ages, however, some have spoken of Father, Son and Spirit as if they are three among multiple gods. A contemporary example would be the Mormon's of America. One arm of this "church" says there are multiple gods and that Jesus was a man who became God, not God who became human. More than this, they teach that men and women like Jesus have the opportunity to become gods too!

The Bible does not present the Living God as polytheism does (many gods).

2. Modalism

Modalism is a second common distortion people adopt when confronted with the teaching of the bible about God. Modalism, sometimes referred to as **Sabellianism** or Monarchianism, **denies that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are three distinct "Persons"**.

The Modalist may say that in the Old Testament God acts **like** the Father, in the days of Jesus he acts **like** the Son, and then from The Book of Acts onward God acts **like** the Holy Spirit. Modalism suggests that God takes on different roles and

only one at a time. This helps to preserve the idea that God is one, but it fails on many points. In contemporary circles this view is found in movements in the USA called *Oneness* or *Jesus Only* (a trend occurring in more and more Evangelical churches in Australia!)

Modalism denies that Jesus is fully God and fully human (just God taking on a mode). It denies that the Holy Spirit is fully God. It also opens the possibility that God might take on **other forms** or roles in history. Yet the Bible confounds these assertions at many points.

3. Arianism

A third common heresy regarding the God of the bible is often referred to as Arianism, named after Arius who was a prominent church leader in Asia in the fourth century CE. This view **denies** that the Father, Son, and Spirit are equally God. Arianism suggests that God the Father is fully divine. In a sincere attempt to preserve the oneness of God, it teaches that Jesus Christ is higher than humans in the created order, but not God.

Arius famously declared "There was a time when the Son was not" in direct opposition to the opening words of The Gospel of John. A contemporary example of Arianism today would be found in the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Arianism's failings are many and Arius' views led to the most comprehensive debates in history about what can be commonly agreed to about the God of the Bible (e.g. The Council of Nicea). Not least importantly, because Arianism suggests that Jesus is less than God (a super-human go-between), our eternal salvation would therefore be mere vanity, as only God can forgive sins (e.g. Ps. 79:9; Mark 2:7)

Summary

The clear implication of any doctrine that **diminishes the divinity** of Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit is that Christ's death on the cross is robbed of effectiveness. If Christ was indeed not divine (fully God), we are not saved from our sins (for only God can forgive sins; only God could bridge the gap between sinful humans and a holy God). If the Spirit is not divine, the fulness of God does not dwell in us and make us new.

The doctrine of the Trinity seeks to preserve the truth that God is one, and also affirms the Bible's revelation that God is equally three distinct persons.

The revelation of Jesus Christ leads us to affirm with all Christians that the Father, Son and Spirit are each truly God – not three Gods as the polytheists might think; not one God taking different forms as Modalists claim; not one God with semi-divine helpers as Arians might say - but one God, in three divine Persons.

Why the Doctrine of the Trinity matters?

Some of you say, "Okay, but why does this matter? Isn't this all a bit pedantic-dotting I's and crossing T's? And aren't these all old heresies? Why bother getting so worried about them now?" Well, there are lots of Christians who misunderstand, misappropriate, and misrepresent God because they are not aware of the importance, mystery and wonder of God as Trinity...

- Athiesm leads to a subjective basis for morality and as a parable of Jesus illustrated, people living for this life only might as well “eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die” (Luke 12:19).
- Unorthodox beliefs about God; views that contradict that which is revealed in the Bible, can lead to burdensome and unhelpful beliefs and practices.

The doctrine of the Trinity seeks to hold all the truth about God in the bible together in complexity, as is shown in the following examples, without dismissing or diminishing the oneness or three-ness in the witness of Scripture...

1. **There is only One God**

“... the LORD is God; there is no other besides him” (Deut. 4:35).

“... there is no god beside me” (Deut. 32:39).

“... you alone are God” (Ps 86:10).

“Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me” (Isa. 43:10).

“I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God” (Isa. 45:5).

“... the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God” (1 Tim. 1:17).

“... there is one God” (1 Tim. 2:5).

All other gods are demonic false gods.

“... the only true God” (John 17:3).

“They sacrificed to demons that were no gods” (Deut. 32:17).

“... what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons” (1 Cor. 10:20).

2. The **Father is God**

“Israel is my firstborn son” (Exod. 4:22).

“God the Father” (John 6:27).

“... there is one God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:6).

“...I bow my knees before the Father” (Eph. 3:14)

3. The **Son is God.**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14).

“Truly, truly, I [Jesus] say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

“Thomas answered him [Jesus], ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28).

“... Christ who is God over all” (Rom. 9:5).

“... our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

“... Jesus Christ. He is the true God” (1 John 5:20).

4. The **Spirit is God.**

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17–18).

“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? . . . You have not lied to men but to God’” (Acts 5:3–4).

“...one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all..”
(Eph. 4:4-7)

Note: It must be stressed that the Spirit is a “He” (ie. Personal, not intrinsically male)⁸ and not an “it.” The Spirit is not an impersonal force, but personal (e.g. can be grieved Eph. 4:30, resisted Acts 7:51, outraged Heb. 10:29.)

Furthermore, note that the statement “God is love” in 1 John 4:8 only makes sense in light of the fact that God is a perfectly loving Trinitarian community. This insight also helps illuminate what Jesus said in John 3:35, “The Father loves the Son,” and in John 14:31, “I love the Father.” C.S. Lewis wrote:

"All sorts of people are fond of repeating the Christian statement that "God is love." But they seem not to notice that the words 'God is love' have no real meaning unless God contains at least two persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love."⁹

Additionally, the consciousness of the Trinity in the early pages of Genesis also comes to light:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:1–2).

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’” (Gen. 1:26).

“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us’” (Gen. 3:22).

“And the LORD said . . . ‘Come, let us . . .’” (Gen. 11:6–7).

Proverbs also perhaps hints at a community within God such as in Prov. 8:1-4; 22-31. The theme of wisdom therein lies behind the suggestion in Matthew’s Gospel that Jesus fulfils the role of the Greek word *sophia* in his coming (Matthew 11:19)

Hints of the Trinity in the Old Testament Prophets apply directly to the incarnation of Jesus:

“And now the Lord GOD [Father] has sent me [Jesus], and his Spirit” (Isa. 48:16).

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD [Father] is upon me [Jesus], because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor” (Isa. 61:1).

As an insightful aside, Jesus began his public ministry by reading Isaiah 61:1 (see Luke 4:18,19).

How interesting the interplay between the seven “I AM” statements of Jesus in The Gospel of John¹⁰ held in tension with God’s revelation to Moses in Exodus 3 as having the name “I AM WHO I AM” (Exod. 3:14), known as the Tetragrammaton in Hebrew (YHWH) translated in our English Old Testament as LORD in capitals.

⁸ Some thoughts here about using inclusive language to speak of the Trinity and avoiding subordinationism in worship and community life - <https://directionjournal.org/29/2/god-language-and-gender-some-trinitarian.html>

⁹ For more see - <http://merecslewis.blogspot.com/2011/02/dynamic-love-of-father-son-and-holy.html>

¹⁰ <https://gracethrufaith.com/topical-studies/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>

What a moment too in John chapter 20 when “doubting” Thomas believes in the resurrected Christ and confesses:

“28 ‘My Lord and my God! (*theos* Gk.)’ 29 Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’”

We can also see in New Testament many occasions when God the Holy Trinity appears in action or where the doctrine is illustrated. For example, look at...

- the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:35),
- the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16–17), and
- the Great Commission of Jesus (Matt. 28:19–20).

Conclusion

You may like to dive into the *Athanasian Creed*¹¹ of the 4th Century CE to explore an orthodox argument behind the Doctrine of the Trinity that remains important today. Perhaps a brief quote from Athanasius of Alexandria best concludes this section:

“Jesus is the Son of God, equal with the Father and Spirit in substance, power, and glory”.

Yet, to many, such statements and creeds may leave them cold. The Doctrine of the Trinity may seem to many like a theoretical or academic pursuit disconnected from real life.

But nothing could be further from the truth. This understanding of God has intensely practical outcomes to offer us. As Tyler Smith concludes in his excellent article on the *5 Ways the Doctrine of the Trinity Is Surprisingly Practical*¹²...

“...the doctrine of the Trinity reveals that woven into the very fabric of the universe is the self-giving love of God. And what could be more practical than love?”

¹¹ <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/109017/Athanasian-Creed.pdf>

¹² <https://blog.logos.com/2016/03/5-ways-the-doctrine-of-the-trinity-is-surprisingly-practical/>