

Our Faith In the Triune God

Which of the three persons is God? *Each is.* Which person has been sent into the world? *Both the Son, as a human being, and the Spirit have been.* Which person is Creator? *All three are.* Which person is Saviour and Redeemer? *All three are.* Which person is Sanctifier, making us holy? *All three are.* Who inspired person men to write the Scriptures? *All three are..* Which person gives us life? *All three are.* Which person is our teacher? *All three are.* Which person preserves us? *All three are.* Which person controls everything that happens in the world? *All three are.* Which person dwells in us? *All three are.* Which person will raise the dead at the last day? *All three are.* Which person is our Advocate? *The Son and the Spirit are.* Which person intercedes for us with the Father? *The Son and the Spirit are.* Which person reveals the Father? *The Son and the Spirit are.*

When we refer to the great works of God like creation, giving life, raising the dead, making us holy, and inspiring prophets, it is not possible to distinguish the persons of the Trinity in these operations (or works) of theirs. The persons are distinguished only by the way in which they are related to each other. The Son is begotten. The Spirit “proceeds” into the world, just as the Father has sent the Son into the world.

Which person died on the cross for us? *Only the Son died.* Which person shows us Jesus and has led us to faith? *The Holy Spirit.* Does the Father intercede with the Son or the Spirit? Scripture does not say that. How should we understand what Paul said in 1 Cor. 15: “When all things have been put under Him [the Son], then the Son Himself will also be put under the One who has put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all”? The Father, though equal with the Son and the Spirit, and there is no subordination of the divine persons, remains Father. What did Jesus mean in John 14:28 when He said, “the Father is greater than I”? *He said that as a human being.* What did Peter mean when he said, “God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, Lord and Christ”? *He spoke about Him as a man. Whenever something is also said to be given to Him, like all power in heaven and on earth, or the authority to forgive, it is given to Him as a man.*

A “trinity” is a group of three, a triad. The word “trinity” does not occur in the Scriptures. Often when the Scriptures refer to “God” they mean the Father. In the Nicene Creed the “one God” is the Father. In faith in His Son we are bold to call Him our Father also.

In the Creed we go on to say that the Son is “very God” and “of one substance with the Father”. That is right and proper. When the New Testament speaks about “the Lord” it usually is Jesus Christ. According to Old Testament usage, “Lord” is the name for God when we refer to God in His close covenant relationship with His people. Jesus Christ is Lord. People call upon the name of the Lord for salvation. Think also of the other names given to the Son. “Immanuel” means “**God** with us.” He is “the First and the Last.” Quite rightly, we address prayers to the Son as God, as Stephen did, and as John did at the end of Revelation. It would be blasphemous to pray to any but God. Jesus Christ is quite properly worshipped. Think of the hymns to Him already in the New Testament. He was from the beginning, and through Him God created the world at the beginning. He claimed to be the Son of God, and Jews wanted to stone Him as a blasphemer when He said that He is “I am”, and when He said “I and the Father are one.” They understood very well what those claims meant.

The Son is what only God is, and the Son has done, and does, what only God can do. He knows all things; He has everlasting dominion, and He preserves all things. He will raise the dead, and He gives eternal life. It is important for us that Jesus is very God. He is our Mediator between God and us. He is the mighty victor over our enemies, sin, death, and the devil. We can be sure that His atoning work for us sinners is valid in God’s sight, because it has divine validity.

As several passages of the Scriptures do, we call the Holy Spirit “Lord” and “God”. The Spirit knows the mind of God, and searches the deep things of God. The Nicene Creed does not say outright that the Holy Spirit is “very God” or “of one substance with the Father and the Son”. Yet it deliberately implies it, by saying things about the Holy Spirit that can only be said about God. Because the Holy Spirit does what only God can do, gives life, and is worshipped, He is truly God. We baptize into the name of the Spirit as well as into the name of the Father and the Son. In the *Gloria* we link the Spirit with the Father and the Son in worship. It would be idolatry to worship the Spirit if He were not God. That worship is right and proper. Though the churches of the East do not use hymns or prayers to the Spirit, we do, as, for example, in the hymn “O Holy Spirit, enter Thou”, and many others. Indeed, when Jesus was speaking of the sin against the Holy Spirit, He regarded it as more serious than blasphemy against Himself.

Almost everything that we say about the Holy Spirit is what we can already say about Jesus. The Father has sent His Son into the world, and sends His Spirit into the world. Both teach us, both are our “Paracletes”, Comforters, or Advocates. We dwell in Them, and They in us. Even the charismatic gifts to believers are common gifts from the three persons, not just from the Spirit (1 Cor 12:4-6).

No one has ever seen God the Father. The only Son, who is in the lap of the Father, has revealed Him. He who has seen the Son has seen the Father. In a similar way, the Spirit’s work is to reveal the Son to us. The person of the Spirit remains unrevealed in the sense that His person is not fully revealed by the other two persons.

The Son's unique work was to become a human being like us to redeem us. Whatever He did in His life here on earth was "for us men and for our salvation". The Spirit's unique work is to point Christ out to us. Jesus' humanity was conceived by the Spirit, and Jesus' ministry on earth was done as the One anointed or "*christed*" by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit still works through the Gospel. When the crucified Christ is proclaimed, the Spirit's work is being done. In baptism, too, the Spirit is both the gift and the agent of God's blessings. It is important for us that the Holy Spirit is true God. His work in us is God's work.

So we worship the trinity in unity. As children of God and heirs of God because of Jesus Christ our Lord, we give Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all praise and glory, for ever.