

The Glory of the Holy Trinity

By Pastor Christopher Seah

We modern evangelical Christians tend to be impatient with *mystery*. We want things practical, clear, and easy to understand. If we do not perceive something to be immediately relevant to our lives—or “abstract” as we call it—we lose interest.

But there are many truths in Scripture that seem abstract because they deal with transcendent realities, otherworldly truths. Could it be that our obsession with practicality is rooted in our secularism? Could it even be that our pragmatism hides a secret, idolatrous desire to control God, and reduce him to an easy principle?

Today, many churches will celebrate one of the most precious mysteries of the Bible: The doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine states that YHWH our holy God is a Community of three distinct but equal Persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each Person is fully God, and therefore of equal power with the Others. Yet, we do not worship three separate Gods, but one God who exists as three distinct Persons. God is one Being and three Persons. The holy Name of YHWH is shared by each Member of the Trinity. To use the language of our Confession: “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost...” (WCF II:3).

However, it is hard to understand the Trinity because there are no earthly analogies that can fully explain it. Every attempt to explain the Trinity through some earthly example is lacking. For instance, I’ve heard it explained that the Trinity is somewhat like our experience of the sun. God the Father is like the sun, the Lord Jesus is like the light (who reveals the sun), and the Holy Spirit is like the heat that we feel. That analogy has some merits. It helps us understand the way each Member *functions*. But you can see how far short it still falls. For one, the light that comes from the sun is not quite the sun itself. Jesus, however, is fully God, not just a luminous glow from the heavenly Father. And though he makes the lordship of Jesus felt in our lives, the Holy Spirit cannot be reduced to a “feeling” of passion for Jesus. He is fully God in his own right. So you can see how difficult it is to explain the Trinity with earthly examples.

God is beyond our feeble attempts to explain him. Not only does he forbid us from capturing his image in statues. But God also seems to elude our vocabulary. God is infinitely above us and there is no human tool—whether visual or verbal—that can fully capture him. This is to be expected since anything that can actually define God can also replace him! We are reminded of Solomon’s words: “But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built!” (2 Chron 8:18 ESV).

Rather than try to figure God out, the highest tribute we can pay to his triune nature is *adoration*. The triune nature of God is best received by faith and adored in worship. We believe God as he is revealed in Scripture. And we adore our God for who he is, without demanding that he be more “practical,” and less “*cheem*.” We adore God as the eternal Community of the Three. And we adore each of the Members, bowing down to the absolute God-ness of each Person. We adore God the Father as YHWH the Creator-King; the One who ordains all things. We adore God the Son as YHWH the Savior-Lord, the heavenly King who acts in time and space to fulfill the plans of the Father. We adore God the Holy Spirit as YHWH the Power of the eternal Kingdom; as the eternal Master who imposes the heavenly rule of the Father and the Son upon the world with unwavering patience and irresistible grace. All glory to God the Father. All allegiance to God the Son. All obedience to God the Holy Spirit.

But there are practical implications that come from adoring our most blessed triune God. First, the Trinity reminds us that *God is God-centered*. The fact that the Father and the Holy Spirit exalt the Son, and the Son exalts the Father, suggests to us that the Trinity seek their own glory.

This implies that the worship of God is the most fundamental principle in the universe. God has made a God-centered universe because God worships God. Divine worship is the fundamental purpose of all things.

Secondly, the fact that God is Community means that *relationships are massively important*. Since God made us in his image, it should come as no surprise that we reflect the relational nature of the Trinity. This means that no man is an island. We are all made to relate to one another. Additionally, God has also made us dependent on one another. We depend on our parents for our sense of identity and basic training for life; on the Church for our understanding of the Word of God, and on many other people for sustenance, encouragement, correction, and instruction. Anti-social, self-centeredness is clearly not God's will for mankind.

Thirdly, the fact that God is Community implies that *love is the connective tissue of human community*. Scripture says that our God is love (1 Jn 4:8). It also states that "Anyone who does not love does not know God..." This holy love is not limited to feelings of affection. It reveals itself in words and deeds of goodness and kindness. 1 John 3:18: "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." However, it would be wrong to say that love is all dutiful activity and no affection. Since God made us emotional creatures, it is hard to believe that the Members of the Trinity only love one another in a cold, cerebral, "dutiful" sort of way. Zealous affection is part of the relating between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This means that church members should strive, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to grow in true Christian affection for one another.

God cannot be reduced to a moral principle, or good advice for life. God is the eternal Trinity. He is almighty Father, eternal Son, and sovereign Holy Spirit. We bow to the Trinity. But we also take our lead from the Trinity. Because the Trinity is God-centered, relational, and loving, human society must be such as well. *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*