

PRAISE FOR GOD'S INNER LIFE BY SAMUEL SANNI

Samuel Sanni's new book, *God's Inner Life*, is a finely crafted annotated (and anointed) companion to navigating 'the issues of life' that flow from the inner Christian journey. It's simultaneously theological, practical, devotional, and experiential—a rare and wonderful alchemy. The book offers a fresh yet deeply orthodox perspective on the Trinity, Christus Victor atonement, the Resurrection, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the divine dance of our souls' swirling salsa with the energies of God. I cherish the beauty, bounty, and balance of this work—and so will you.

—**Richard Murray,**

Author, *God Versus Evil: Sculpting an Epic Theology of God's Heroic Goodness*

Samuel Sanni offers the reader a sweeping tour of trinitarian theology, weaving together biblical studies, voices from Church History, and a stage full of theologians. Together, they unveil God's grace to present the harmony of God's Inner Life, reaching out into the world invitationally. The flow of the conversation draws one ever deeper to know the heart of God as it expands toward us and catches us up into the nexus of love ex-

pressed in God's community life. This book brings theology for head and heart to lead us toward the goodness of God's presence.

— **Marty Folsom, Ph.D.**

Relational Theologian

Executive Director, Pacific Association for Theological Studies

Author, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics for Everyone* Series (Zondervan)

Author, *Face-to-Face* Series (Wipf & Stock)

This book is not only intellectually stimulating but heart-awakening — a rare blend of theological depth and devotional warmth. Samuel delivers biblical truths that stir the heart to abandon oneself into the celebration existing in the Trinity. It was difficult to put down.

— **Anthony Greco,**

Founder and Senior Pastor of Calgary Life Church,

Author of *In Christ* and *Hope for the Heart*

GOD'S INNER LIFE

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SAMUEL SANNI



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Most of the verses quoted in this book are from accessible translations like the ESV (English Standard Version) and the NIV (New International Version). Some verses reflect my own modifications of these translations for clarity or emphasis, unless otherwise noted. On occasion, I also reference more interpretive or specialized editions, such as David Bentley Hart's New Testament, N.T. Wright's Kingdom New Testament, and the Mirror Bible.

This is not an academic book, although some very important theological terms have been used. All terms and concepts presented throughout this book have been accurately explained within the context in which they are employed. For your convenience, I have also compiled a list of these terms and their definitions at the end of the book.

The best way to get the most out of this book is to pray-read it meditatively. The book is an invitation to the dance of divine life.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved wife, Ola—your unwavering support and love inspire me every single day.

To my precious children, Charis and Agape—you embody the grace and joy that make this journey so meaningful.

To the church family across the world—this work is humbly offered as my contribution to the Body of Christ.

To the many contemporary and classic authors—your wisdom and insight have shaped this work, helping me navigate the depths of faith and understanding.

And above all, to the Triune God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who is the source of all things, the fountain of love, and the wellspring of grace. May this book reflect the beauty of Your presence and the transformative power of divine love that binds us all together.

A WORD OF GRATITUDE

The inspiration for this book comes from Christ, who is the self-revelation of God—God's Word made flesh. Through Him, we behold the fullness of divine love. Along this journey, I have been profoundly shaped by the writings and teachings of many faithful voices. From the early Church Fathers to modern christian thinkers like Karl Barth and the Torrance brothers—especially T.F. Torrance—their insights have opened windows into the mystery of the Triune life. I am deeply grateful for Trinitarian teachers such as C. Baxter Kruger, Brad Jersak, Steve McVey, N.T. Wright, Marty Folsom, Richard Murray, Brian Zahnd, Richard Rohr, Gregory A. Boyd, and Douglas A. Campbell, as well as the faithful guidance of my local pastor, Anthony Greco. The list is truly endless. I give thanks to God for bringing me into contact with such voices, who have each in their own way deepened my understanding of who He is.

FOREWORD

The Inner Life of God is not merely an intellectually stimulating deep dive into perhaps the greatest of all mysteries — the inner relationship of the Blessed Trinity — but a heart-awakening invitation into the bliss of the Divine Romance.

Too often, the Bible is seen as a database for dogmas and doctrines. Very few scholarly manuscripts can both instruct the intellect while enriching the heart simultaneously. This book does just that. Supported by Scripture, scholars, and the early Church Fathers, yet written in layman's terms, Samuel delivers biblical truths that stir the heart to abandon oneself into the celebration existing in the Trinity.

This was a difficult book to put down. Each new chapter provided new insights into Scriptures I was so very familiar with but now saw in a completely new light.

A man dancing to music must look like a total idiot to a deaf man. We have been invited to the divine dance — the *perichoresis*! May the Spirit open your ears to hear heaven's love song!

— **Anthony Greco**

Founder and Senior Pastor of Calgary Life Church
Author of *In Christ: 25 Meditations for Your Personal Transformation*
and *Hope for the Heart: Hope for the Future, Power for the Present!*

PREFACE

Have you ever gazed at a masterpiece, a painting vibrant with color and intricate detail, and felt a sense of awe, a whisper of something profound just beyond your grasp? Or listened to a symphony, its melodies weaving together in breathtaking harmony, and felt a stirring in your soul, a longing for connection? These moments, these glimpses of beauty and order, are not mere accidents. They are echoes, faint but resonant, of a deeper reality, a reality that lies at the very heart of existence.

This book is an invitation to explore that reality, to journey into the very inner life of God. It's a journey into love—a love so profound, so boundless, so utterly transformative that it changes everything. It's a journey into the Trinity, the eternal dance of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the source and pattern of all creation.

For centuries, theologians and mystics have wrestled with the mystery of the Triune God, seeking to understand the incomprehensible love that binds three distinct persons into one God. This book doesn't pretend to offer easy answers or simplistic explanations. Instead, it invites you to enter into the mystery, to explore the depths of divine love through the lens of Scripture, apostolic tradition, and reflection.

We will delve into the beauty of the divine dance of love that flows eternally within the Godhead. We will explore how this dynamic love shapes our understanding of God's attributes, creation, humanity as the

image of God, covenant, incarnation, cross, resurrection, and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. We will see how this love is a lived reality, a transformative power that shapes the Church and empowers the Christian life.

This book is for anyone who longs for connection, seeks deeper meaning, or has ever felt the whisper of something more. Whether you are a lifelong seeker of wisdom, someone curious about the nature of love, or simply looking for a fresh perspective on relationship with God, this book offers a path into the heart of what makes life truly meaningful.

If you are curious, if you are searching, if you are open to the possibility that love holds the key to understanding the deepest aspects of existence, then this book is for you. Come, join us on this journey into the essence of connection and meaning. We will also explore the beauty that shapes our lives.

Samuel Sanni
Calgary
2025

INTRODUCTION

Love is the first thing we crave when we enter this world, and the last thing we long for as we leave it. Love drives us, shapes us, wounds us, and heals us. It is sung about in songs, woven into poetry, and preached from pulpits. Yet for all our speaking of love, do we truly understand it? We speak of love as affection between parent and child, as passion between lovers, as devotion between friends. We attach it to emotions and lifelong commitments alike. But beneath all our definitions and experiences, there remains a deeper question—What is love, really? Where does it come from? And why does it have such a hold on us? If love is merely a human construct, an evolutionary trick to keep our species alive, why does it stir within us so deeply? Why do we yearn for something greater, something eternal, something that will not fade or fail? Could it be that our longing for love is a whisper of something beyond us—an echo of a greater Love that called all things into being? This book is an invitation to follow that whisper to its source. To trace love back to the One who is Love. To step into the greatest mystery of all—the very heart of God.

Imagine, for a moment, a dance—not the kind where a single dancer moves in isolation, but a breathtaking, interwoven ballet. A dance of perfect harmony, where each movement flows seamlessly into the next. I will return to this dance metaphor again and again throughout this work. This is not a dance of competition or chaos, but of mutual delight—a

joy so deep that it overflows. Now, imagine that this dance has no beginning and no end. That it has been happening for all eternity. That it is, in fact, the very rhythm of existence itself. This is the mystery of the Trinity. Before there was time, before the first star burned in the heavens, before the foundations of the earth were laid, there was Love. Not a solitary being sitting in distant isolation, but a community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—eternally delighting in one another, eternally giving and receiving love in a way that surpasses human understanding. This divine communion is not a cold doctrine to be analyzed from a distance, but the heartbeat of reality itself. The universe was not created out of necessity or loneliness, but out of the overflow of this perfect love. Creation is not an accident—it is the result of an eternal dance so full, so abundant, that it could not help but spill over into something new. And here is the great mystery: we were created to join this dance. This invitation is not a static concept, but a dynamic, ever-present call. It echoes through every moment, every breath, urging us toward the heart of this divine rhythm. This is the invitation that lies at the core of the Christian faith—not merely to believe in God from a distance, but to be drawn into His very life. To experience the love that has always existed. To become participants in the divine fellowship that has no beginning and no end. But how do we step into such a mystery? How can finite, fragile creatures enter into the infinite communion of the Trinity? That is the story of salvation.

Somewhere deep within us, we long for something we cannot quite name. A love that is vast yet personal. A belonging that is unshakable. A home that does not fade with time. We catch glimpses of it—perhaps in the embrace of a loved one, in the quiet beauty of a sunset, in the ache of nostalgia when we remember a time of perfect joy. But these moments are fleeting, like echoes of a song whose source remains just beyond our reach. What if that longing is not an illusion? What if it is a signpost,

pointing us back to the love that made us? The ancient Christian story tells us that this longing is no accident. We were made for love—not just human love, but divine love. We were created to dwell in the embrace of the Trinity, to live in the fullness of communion with Father, Son, and Spirit. But something went wrong. Like a note that falls out of tune in a great symphony, humanity lost its harmony with divine love. We turned inward, seeking fulfillment in ourselves, in power, in pleasures. The result was estrangement—not because God abandoned us, but because we pulled away from the very life we were made for. And yet, the Love that formed the universe refused to let us go.

The story of Christianity is not about humanity climbing its way back to God—it is about God coming for us. It is the story of a Love so relentless, so boundless, that it entered into our brokenness to bring us home. This is why the Incarnation stands at the center of history. The eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, did not remain distant. He stepped into our world—not as a distant deity draped in untouchable majesty, but as one of us. He walked our streets, shared our sorrows, felt the weight of human suffering. Why? Because divine love does not remain an abstract idea. He becomes a person and takes on flesh. He enters the mess of human existence. He suffers. He redeems. In Jesus, we see the heart of the Trinity laid bare. On the cross, we witness a love that gives itself completely. In the resurrection, we see love's victory—death undone, the doors of divine communion thrown open once more. This is the love we were created for. This is the love that calls us home. And this is the love that this book seeks to explore.

The journey before us is not merely an intellectual exercise. Knowing God is not meant to be cold speculation; it is an invitation to transformation. To understand the Triune nature of God is to be drawn deeper into love itself and to be let in into the inner life of God. We will explore how this divine communion is the source of all things—how perichore-

sis, the eternal dance of Father, Son, and Spirit, shapes creation, salvation, and even our own existence. We will trace this love through the pages of Scripture, through the voices of ancient and modern christian teachers, through the life of the Church, and into the very fabric of our daily lives.

This book is not just about Christian truth. It is about reality. It is about a love so vast that it created the stars, yet so intimate that it calls you by name. The dance of divine love has never stopped. The invitation has never been withdrawn. So step in. Let the journey begin.

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CHAPTER 1

God: A Community of Love

Love is a word we use every day. We talk about loving our family, our friends, our pets, and even our favorite foods. We know what it feels like to be loved, to be cherished, to belong. Love is a fundamental part of the human experience, something that shapes our lives in countless ways. Think about the love a parent has for a child – that deep, unconditional care that drives them to protect, nurture, and guide. Or the love between close friends, the kind of bond where you can be yourself, share anything, and know you'll be accepted. These experiences of love, in all their different forms, give us a glimpse into something truly profound.

Christians believe that love is not just a human feeling, a romantic emotion that comes and goes. It's something much, much deeper. Christians believe that love actually defines *God Himself*. It's not just something God *does*; it's who God *is*. 1 John 4:8 tells us, "God is love." But how can that be? If God is just one being, all alone, how can we say that God *is* love? Love, after all, seems to require relationship and connection with another. This is where the Christian understanding of God as the Triune God comes in. Christians believe that God is one being, but exists as three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This goes be-

yond a simple philosophical construct. It's the key to understanding the very nature of God and the depth of God's love for us. It's a mystery, to be sure, but a mystery that reveals God's very heart. The good news is that this mystery has been revealed through His self-revelation in His Son by His Spirit (Matthew 11:27, 1 Cor. 2:10).

In many modern church settings, the doctrine of the Trinity has been quietly eclipsed, often overshadowed by an emphasis on personal spiritual experience rather than deep theological reflection. This shift has led to a focus on Jesus or the Holy Spirit in isolation, sometimes sidelining the full triune nature of God. Contributing factors include a lack of historical grounding, minimal engagement with the early creeds, a preference for practical clarity over theological mystery, and worship trends that highlight one person of the Godhead at a time. Yet the Trinity remains essential—not as a complicated concept to be dissected, but as the living, relational heart of Christian faith and reality.

To picture the Trinity, imagine a three-sided coin. It's still one coin, but it has three distinct sides. This is a very imperfect analogy for the Trinity—and we'll discuss why later—but it provides a starting point. The Trinity is one God, existing eternally as three persons in a perfect relationship of love. The Holy Trinity can be understood as the Lover (Father), the Beloved (Son), and the Love between them (Holy Spirit).¹ Many of the early Church Fathers recognized that the Trinity is a community of love—a divine dance of persons united in one being.

In this chapter, we're going to explore the idea of the Triune God as a "community of love." We will look at how the Bible gives us glimpses of this truth, unpack some of the important terminology and begin to understand why this understanding is so vital to the Christian faith. As we will see, this understanding of the Triune nature of God is essential for grasping the depth of God's love for us. My goal is not to fully explain the Trinity—that's beyond our human capacity—but to make it less intimi-

dating and more accessible so we can begin to appreciate the wonder of God's Triune nature.

THE BIBLICAL GLIMPSES OF THE TRINITY

While the word "Trinity" itself is not explicitly written in the Bible, the *idea* of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is woven throughout both the Old and New Testaments. A seed carries within it the potential for a full-grown plant, even when its final form isn't yet visible. In the same way, the Bible contains the seeds of the Trinitarian doctrine—truths that the early church would later nurture, cultivate, and articulate more fully. The doctrine of the Trinity is not an imposition upon the biblical revelation, but a deepening understanding drawn from within it—an explication of what the Scriptures themselves reveal about God.

Right at the beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, we encounter a subtle hint of the plurality within God. In Genesis 1:26, we read, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." This use of the plural pronouns "us" and "our" raises the question: Who is God addressing? While there are various interpretations, this passage suggests a conversation or deliberation happening within the Godhead itself, pointing to a dynamic relationship within the divine nature. A key aspect of this discussion is the name for God used in Genesis 1:1—Elohim, a plural form of the Hebrew word for God. Despite its plural form, Elohim is used with singular verbs, suggesting that the one God is being referred to in a way that hints at plurality within the divine essence. The plural "us" in Genesis 1:26, therefore, aligns with the plural nature implied by Elohim, providing an initial clue toward understanding God as more than a solitary being. It's important to note that this isn't conclusive proof of the Trinity, as the full doctrine is more explicitly developed in the New Testament. Some scholars argue that "us" could refer to God speaking to

the heavenly court—such as the angels or divine council. However, the use of plural pronouns in this foundational moment of creation suggests a complex relational nature within God, pointing to a plurality within the one God. This early suggestion resonates with later Trinitarian understandings, where God exists as three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—yet remains one essence. Many commentators view this passage as a prefiguration or foreshadowing of the Trinity, even if it's not a fully articulated doctrine. While we cannot definitively prove the Trinity from this verse alone, the combination of Elohim and the plural pronouns in Genesis 1:26 provides a strong foundation for later Trinitarian interpretation, setting the stage for the deeper revelation of God's nature throughout Scripture.

The prophet Isaiah, in a vision of God's holiness (Isaiah 6:3), hears the angels crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty" This threefold repetition of "Holy" is striking. While it primarily emphasizes God's supreme holiness, it can be seen as a possible allusion to the three persons of the Trinity. While not a direct proof text, the threefold repetition invites reflection on the Triune nature of God.

The New Testament provides clearer and more compelling glimpses of the Trinity. The scene of Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:16-17 is particularly significant. We see the Father speaking from heaven, declaring, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." We see the Son, Jesus, being baptized in the Jordan River. And we see the Holy Spirit descending like a dove upon Jesus. This single event beautifully portrays all three persons of the Trinity interacting, each with distinct roles, yet all united in one divine action.

In the Gospel of John, chapters 14-16, Jesus speaks extensively about the Holy Spirit. He promises to send the Spirit to his disciples after he ascends to heaven. He describes the Spirit as the "Helper," the "Spirit of truth," who will guide them and empower them. These passages high-

light the distinct role of the Holy Spirit while also emphasizing the close connection between the Spirit, Jesus, and the Father. Jesus says, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper" (John 14:16), showing the cooperation and unity of purpose within the Trinity. As John Calvin noted, these passages demonstrate the Spirit's distinct personhood and role within the Godhead.

Calvin explained that:

"Christ intimates the distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Father, when he says that the Spirit proceedeth from the Father, and between the Holy Spirit and himself, when he speaks of him as another as he does when he declares that he will send another Comforter; and in many other passages besides (John 14:6; 15:26; 14:16) "³

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gives his disciples the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This verse is perhaps the clearest articulation in the Bible of the Trinitarian formula. It links all three persons together in a single act of baptism, emphasizing their equality and their unified work in salvation. This Trinitarian formula, as many commentators have pointed out, became a foundational element in early Christian worship and practice.

Within the very fabric of Paul's closing benediction to the Corinthian church, we find a subtle yet profound glimpse of the Triune nature of God. He writes, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:14). This isn't merely a string of well-wishes; it's a concise expression of the interconnectedness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Notice the distinct yet unified nature of this blessing. "The grace of the Lord Jesus

Christ' highlights the Son's sacrificial love. 'The love of God' points to the Father's divine affection. And 'the fellowship of the Holy Spirit' emphasizes the Spirit's role in bringing believers into communion with God. Paul, under the inspiration of the holy spirit, invokes each person of the God head. This verse, therefore, while a blessing, also serves as a powerfull reminder of the reality of the Trinity. It shows us that Gods grace, love, and presence, comes to us through the distinct, yet unified persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Finally, the Apostle John, in his first epistle, writes, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 John 5:7, KJV). This verse offers a glimpse into the Trinitarian nature of God, emphasizing the unity of the Father, the Word (Christ), and the Holy Spirit as one. While the term "Trinity" is not explicitly found in the Scripture, passages like this provide a foundation for understanding God's Triune nature—distinct in persons yet unified in essence. This harmonizes with Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19, where He instructs His disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, affirming the co-equal and co-eternal relationship within the Godhead.

It's important to remember that the Bible doesn't present the doctrine of the Trinity in a systematic way. Instead, it offers glimpses, hints, and suggestive passages that the early church would later draw upon to develop a fuller understanding of God's Triune nature. The New Testament, in particular, gives us a much clearer picture of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, working together in love and unity. While the *word* "Trinity" isn't used, the *concept* is present, waiting to be unfolded.

TRINITARIAN TERMINOLOGY

The language we use to talk about God matters. Because the Trinity is a mystery that stretches the limits of human understanding, great Christian thinkers have developed specific terms over centuries to help us grasp this profound truth as best we can. These terms aren't just dry theological jargon; they are tools that help us articulate the core beliefs of the Christian faith about the nature of God. Although our language is limited, God allows us to use finite words to communicate eternal realities. While no human vocabulary can fully capture the depth of divine mystery, these terms serve as glimpses—imperfect yet meaningful—into the nature of God. Let's explore some of these key terms, taking our time to unpack their meaning and significance.

One God, Three Persons

At the heart of the Christian faith is a simple yet profound truth: we believe in one God. That's not up for negotiation—it's the foundation. But here's where it becomes beautifully mysterious: this one God exists eternally as three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—united in perfect love. The Trinity doesn't mean Christians believe in three gods. That would go against everything Scripture teaches. Rather, it's the way Christians have come to understand how the one God exists—a unity that holds within it a deep, relational distinction. One God, not in isolation, but in eternal communion. This isn't a departure from the monotheism of the Old Testament. In fact, it's rooted right in the heart of it. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, reaffirms this truth in a striking way. He takes the Shema—the central Jewish confession from Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one,” and he does something astonishing: “For us 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.” (1 Corinthians 8:6) Paul isn’t breaking from the Shema. He’s reinterpreting it in light of Jesus. He holds onto the oneness of God while placing both the Father and Jesus within that divine identity. The term “Lord,” used for Jesus, is no generic title—it’s a deliberate echo of the Shema’s declaration that Yahweh is one. This is the mystery Christians confess: within the oneness of God, there is relationship. There is love. The doctrine of the Trinity does not water down monotheism; it enriches it, revealing a God who has always existed in fellowship—and who invites us into that divine life.

C.S. Lewis provides a helpful analogy:

“A world of one dimension would be a straight line. In a two-dimensional world, you still get straight lines, but many lines make one figure. In a three-dimensional world, you still get figures but many figures make one solid body. In other words, as you advance to more real and more complicated levels, you do not leave behind you the things you found on the simpler levels: you still have them, but combined in new ways – in ways you could not imagine if you knew only the simpler levels.”⁴

He continues,

“The human level is a simple and rather empty level. On the human level one person is one being, and any two persons are two separate beings—just as, in two dimensions (say on a flat sheet of paper) one square is one figure, and any two squares are two separate figures. On the Divine level you still find personalities; but up there you find them combined in new ways which we, who do not live on that level, cannot imagine. In God’s dimension, so to speak, you find a being who is three

Persons while remaining one Being, just as a cube is six squares while remaining one cube. Of course we cannot fully conceive a Being like that: just as, if we were so made that we perceived only two dimensions in space we could never properly imagine a cube. But we can get a sort of faint notion of it."⁵

This analogy helps us glimpse the Trinity: one God in three persons, a concept that transcends our everyday experience of separate individuals.

The Trinity in Three Words: Ousia, Hypostasis, Homoousios

The Greek word *ousia* refers to the shared divine essence or being. It's what makes God, *God*. It's the very ground of God's existence, the underlying reality that is common to all three persons of the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all share the same divine *ousia*. They are all equally God, possessing the fullness of divine nature. There is no hierarchy of being within the Trinity; each person is fully and completely God. The Son is not "less God" than the Father, nor is the Spirit a diminished expression of divinity. They all share the same, undivided divine *ousia*. This shared *ousia* is what unites the three persons into one God, preventing us from falling into the error of tritheism (believing in three separate gods). Imagine three gold coins—each distinct, yet all sharing the same "gold-ness." In a similar way, the *ousia* is the "gold-ness" of God, the divine essence fully and equally shared by each person of the Trinity.

While the three persons share the same divine *ousia*, they are also distinct individuals, each with their own unique personhood. The Greek word *hypostasis* is used to describe this distinctness. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not just different modes or manifestations of God, like an actor playing different roles; they are distinct persons, each with their own unique role and relationship within the Trinity. They are not interchangeable; the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit. Each

person is eternally and uniquely themselves. The Father is the eternal source of the Godhead, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father (and, in some traditions, from the Father and the Son). These distinctions are important for understanding the inner life of the Trinity and the roles each person plays in creation and redemption. Three actors can share the same stage—the divine *ousia*—while each plays a distinct character, with their own personality and relationship. This reflects the *hypostaseis* of the Trinity: distinct persons, yet united in one divine essence.

Thomas F. Torrance explains this profound reality as follows:

"In our understanding of the New Testament witness to God's revelation of Himself, 'the Father,' 'the Son,' and 'the Holy Spirit' are unique and proper names denoting three distinct Persons, or real Hypostases, who are neither exchangeable nor interchangeable while, nevertheless, of one and the same divine Being. There is one Person of the Father who is always the Father, distinct from the Son and the Spirit; and there is another Person of the Son who is always the Son, distinct from the Father and the Spirit; and another Person of the Holy Spirit who is always the Holy Spirit, distinct from the Father and the Son. In this three-fold tri-personal self-revelation of God, one Person is not more or less God, for all three Persons are coeternal and coequal. They are all perfectly one in the identity of their Nature and perfectly homoousial or consubstantial in their Being. Each of the three Persons is, himself, Lord and God, and yet there are not three Lords or Gods, but only one Lord God, and there is only one and the same eternal Being of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity of three divine Persons is, thus, perfectly homogeneous and unitary, both in the threeness and oneness of God's personal activity, and in the threeness and

oneness of His eternal unchangeable personal Being. *One Being, Three Persons.*"⁶

This articulation of the Trinity underscores that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *distinct yet fully and equally God*, existing in an eternal communion of love, with no division in their divine essence (*ousia*).

Another important term worth examining is *homoousios*. This word was central to the early Church's understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son, especially during the Arian controversy. *Homoousios* means "of the same substance" or "of the same being." It affirms that the Son, Jesus Christ, is fully God—just as the Father is fully God. The Son is not a lesser god or a created being; He shares the same divine *ousia* (essence) as the Father. This vital truth about the Son's divinity was affirmed at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD and became a cornerstone of Trinitarian orthodoxy. Athanasius, one of the key defenders of Nicene theology, passionately argued that the Son's *homoousios* with the Father is essential for our salvation. If Jesus were not truly God, then His sacrifice on the cross would lack the divine power necessary to reconcile us to God. The doctrine of *homoousios* affirms that in Jesus, God Himself entered into human history to redeem us—a truth that lies at the very heart of the gospel.

The Limits of Analogy

Because we're dealing with a mystery that transcends human comprehension, analogies can be helpful, but they must be used with caution. They are tools to illuminate, not to define. One common analogy is water: water can exist in three forms—ice, liquid, and vapor—but it's still the same substance (H₂O). Similarly, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God existing in three "forms" or persons. However, it's crucial to immediately point out the limitations of this analogy. Ice, liquid, and vapor are not

distinct persons in the same way that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are. They are simply different states of the same substance. Furthermore, the water analogy suggests a sequential or temporal relationship, which is not true of the eternal Trinity. No analogy perfectly captures the Trinity. The goal of using analogies is to provide a starting point for understanding, not a complete or accurate explanation. As Augustine cautioned, "...these things are said, not that we may perfectly understand the Trinity by these, but that by them we may in some measure exercise our understanding, and prepare it for the apprehension of higher things"⁷. The Trinity remains a mystery, a truth that we can explore and contemplate, but never fully exhaust. These terms, however, help us to articulate the core beliefs of the Christian faith about the nature of God, preventing us from falling into various heresies and allowing us to approach the mystery with reverence and humility.

WHY THE TRINITY STILL MATTERS TODAY

Understanding of God as Trinity is not just a theological exercise—it has real, life-changing implications for how we see God, ourselves, and what love truly is. It's not just about having information about God; it's about actually knowing Him. And at the heart of that relationship is the Trinity. The truth is, the Trinity isn't some extra detail tacked onto the Gospel—it *is* the Gospel. To understand the Gospel, we must understand the God who reveals Himself within it.

T. F. Torrance clearly notes that,

"It is the message of this Triune Love that constitutes the very heart of the Gospel: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.'"⁸

He continues,

"The eternal Lord God lives and is he who he is in the free unstinting outflow of that limitless love toward us exhibited and enacted at infinite cost to himself in the sending of his beloved Son to be the propitiation for our sins. It also belongs to the very heart of the Gospel that by his Triune Nature as a Communion of Love in himself, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit ..."⁹

Morrison, in his review of Torrance's work, notes that:

"T.F. Torrance calls the Church to return to its roots and discover the doctrine of the Trinity as an essential truth for the proclamation of the Gospel, as the ultimate ground and basic grammar of all our talk of God."¹⁰

The triune nature of God reveals that He is inherently relational. Before creation, before the universe even existed, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were eternally loving one another. As 1 John 4:8 states, "God is love," and this love is not dependent on creation. It is an eternal reality within the Godhead. Love is not something God acquires by creating beings to love; it is intrinsic to His very being, flowing from the eternal relationship among the three persons of the Trinity.

This understanding is key to seeing why God created us in the first place. We weren't made to fill some emptiness in God—He wasn't lacking anything. Instead, we were created out of love, pure and overflowing. God, who *is* love in His very being—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—made us to share in that love. Creation is an invitation to step into the eternal dance of divine love that's always been, even before time began. This echoes the Eastern Fathers' emphasis on God's kenosis, His self-giving love. Gregory of Nazianzus expressed this beautifully: "God became man

so that man might become God."¹¹ Highlighting the divine initiative in drawing humanity into the divine life. Augustine reflected on this in *City of God*, seeing creation as an act of divine love that invites us into the Trinitarian dance of love.¹² Karl Barth similarly emphasized the relational nature of God's being, particularly through his doctrine of the Trinity, where he described God's very essence as "a being-in-relation."¹³

The Trinity is the foundation for understanding love itself. If God is love, and God is triune, then love is intrinsically relational, rooted in the eternal communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Human love, in all its expressions—the joy of a parent for a child, the deep bond between friends, the intimacy of marriage—reflects this divine love. When we experience love, we are catching a glimpse of the very nature of God. Our capacity to love, to give and receive love, is grounded in the image of God within us. This image, particularly in its relational aspect, mirrors the Trinitarian life.

This love—this deep sense of connection and relationship—isn't something humans just made up. It's written into the core of who we are because it reflects who God is. We're wired for relationship because we come from a relational God. Irenaeus put it beautifully when he said, "...man is a living being, and therefore like God."¹⁴ Pope John Paul II also highlighted this relational side of our identity. He reminded us that we're created in the image of a relational God—not as isolated individuals, but as beings made for connection. As he put it, "Man, created in the image and likeness of God himself, bears in himself the divine image in the duality of man and woman."¹⁵ In other words, our ability to love, to connect, to be in relationship—it's not just a nice part of being human. It's sacred. It echoes something deep and divine. This capacity for relationship, this duality mentioned by the pope, reflects the very heart of who God is—a God who exists in eternal relationship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is the original blueprint for love and community.

Love, then, isn't just a feeling—it's a way of being. It's how we relate to others in a way that mirrors God's own nature. True love gives—it puts others first, just like the Father, Son, and Spirit eternally give themselves to one another in a divine dance of love. As Catherine Mowry LaCugna reminds us in *God for Us*, the doctrine of the Trinity is not just a theological riddle to solve but a pattern for life itself—a relational model that reveals how we are meant to live in communion with God and one another.¹⁶

Similarly, T.F. Torrance echoes this when he says that:

"the New Testament witnesses to the fact that God is Love, and indeed a Communion of Love, out of which his love overflows freely and gratuitously toward us through the Son and in the Spirit as the Love of God for us, in a redeeming movement of Love in which God through his Son and in his Spirit gathers us into union and communion with himself."¹⁷