

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE TRINITY...THE BIBLICAL MANDATES FOR
PREACHING, TEACHING, WORSHIPPING
AND EVANGELISM IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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by
Pedreto Antonio Graham-Brown

Lynchburg, Virginia

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THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

Mentor: Dr. Charles N. Davidson
Director, Doctor of Ministry Program
Associate Professor of Chaplaincy

Reader: Dr. David Hirschman
Associate Dean
Assistant Professor of Religion

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ABSTRACT

**TITLE: THE TRINITY...THE BIBLICAL MANDATES FOR PREACHING,
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Pedreto Antonio Graham-Brown

Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016

Mentor: Dr. Charles N. Davidson

The Trinity is viewed as the bedrock of the Christian faith. Notwithstanding, the worship of the Trinity in local churches today are hardly mentioned by pastors in their sermon. The researcher chose this topic to introduce the importance of assimilating the worship of the Trinity in the areas of the four key biblical mandates. The researcher surveyed 50 Southern Baptist Pastors and 10 members were selected from each church to participate. It was discovered that both pastors and members lack the essential understanding of incorporating the worship of the Trinity in these four areas of the ministry. The results of these participants are analyzed and displayed in graph form. The desired outcome is to equip Baptist pastors and members toward the utilization of their knowledge of the Trinity to empower members to incorporate the practicality of the Trinity into their daily lives and become models for Christ in the world.

Abstract length: 150 words

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the doctrine of the Trinity is a very controversial subject in Christendom. The topic of discussion concentrates on the second person of the Trinity. The Son of God is the person of great interest. He is of great interest because the Son unlocks the door, so to speak, to the divine knowledge of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, it has caused major split between the East and West.

In the historical disposition of the Trinity the East and West have encountered “different tendencies toward imbalance on one side or the other”¹ according to Letham. For instance, the East almost falls into the danger of subordinationism² by viewing the Son and Spirit as being subordinated to the Father. Meanwhile, the West falls into the danger toward modalism. That God functions in three successive modes as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is known as the Sabellius³ doctrine. One of the discrepancies focuses on the filioque⁴ doctrine that teaches that the Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son.

¹ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004), 2.

² The doctrine of subordinationism is the “teaching that the Son and the Holy Spirit are of lesser being or status than the Father.” Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004), 502.

³ Sabellius was a third-century priest and theologian who taught in Rome. Sabellius theologically believed “that God is not three distinct persons but a monad that appears in salvation history in three different ways or ‘modes.’” Modalism are called Sabellianism and today time Modalism are considered to be Oneness Pentecostals because they held to the same theological view of Sabellius. For more discussion see Karl Rahner, *The Trinity: With An Introduction, Index, And Glossary* By Catherine Mowry LaCugna, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003); and Gregory A. Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals & The Trinity: A world-wide movement assessed by a former Oneness Pentecostal*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992).

⁴ The doctrine on the Filioque is a very controversial doctrine. For instance, western theologians generally held to belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. However, Eastern theologians held to the notion that the Holy Spirit only proceeds from the Father alone and not the Son. For more discussion see Louis Berkhof, *The history of Christian Doctrines*, (Grand Rapids, MI: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1937) and Nick Needham, *The Filioque Clause: East or West?* *Journal of the Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 15-2, (1997): 142-162.

In the fourth century, the major intercourse concerning the Trinity between Athanasius and Arius was amplified. Arius believes that the Son was simply a creation of the Father. Consequently, Athanasius repudiates Arius' theological view of Christ. Letham states the following:

Part of the problem for the ordinary Christian may be that in its debates and struggles, the ancient church was forced to use extrabiblical terms to defend biblical concepts. This was necessary because heretics misused the Bible to support their erroneous ideas. Athanasius provides a glimpse of what happened at the Council of Nicaea (A.D.325), when the assembled bishops rejected the claim of Arius that the Son was not eternal, but was created by God, who thereby became his Father. Originally, the statement was proposed to the Council that the Son came 'from God.' This meant that he was not from some other source, nor was he a creature. However, those who sympathized with Arius agreed to the phrase, since in their eyes all creatures came forth from God. Consequently, the Council was forced to look for a word that excluded all possibility of an Arian interpretation.⁵

The Christology of the Son needs to be affirmed within the doctrine of the Trinity. The existence and the mission of the church depend on this biblical truth.

In juxtaposition to what Letham states in the above assertion, Beisner gives four theological reasons for the institution of the Athanasian Creed:

First, Christians wished to find ways to express briefly and succinctly, yet without imprecision or inaccuracy, what they taught about Christ and the rest of the faith.

Second, creeds developed as ways of expressing what Christians experienced. Unlike pure philosophical discussion, the creeds invariably had to do with the heart of the experience of Christians.

Third, creeds were formed for the purpose of making known to prospective converts precisely what Christianity believed and taught, so that they could make informed decisions.

Fourth, creeds were formed in order to combat what Christians thought was error. This was the most powerful stimulant to the development of the creeds by the early Christians.⁶

⁵ Letham, 1-2.

⁶ E. Calvin Beisner, *God in Three Persons*, (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1984), 15.

The introduction and the defense of the Athanasian Creed of the Trinity affirm the core foundation of the church's mission of the divinity of Christ. This biblical affirmation of the Trinity plays a crucial role in the preaching, teaching, worshipping and evangelism of the church.

Jesus' biblical mandate of the Trinity is clearly spelled out for the disciples and the church to see. Jesus declares in Matthew 28:19-20 "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, and teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..."⁷ No one can truly deny the doctrine of the Trinity here. It is plain black and white.

Statement of the Problem

When Christians hear about the doctrine of the Trinity they automatically jump to the conclusion within their understanding of Trinity that it is about the various theological disputation of the early church father's conceptualization of the triune God. Some will say that they find the Trinity to be interesting but at the same time find it very complex to understand. Others would acknowledge that the Bible makes reference to the triune God in the scriptures but make no significant connection to their faith in worshipping the Trinity.

The former sees the Trinity has complex because of the limitation of the mind to fully understand it. When it comes to the Trinity, Alister McGrath asserts that "There are limits to what we can understand. The first and most inconvenient of all theological responsibilities is to recognize our limitations."⁸ McGrath gives three causations to man's limitation which are

⁷ Matthew 28:19-20 NKJV

⁸ Alister E. McGrath, "The Doctrine of the Trinity: An Evangelical Reflection." In *God the Holy Trinity* (Beeson Divinity Studies): Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice, edited by Timothy George, 17-35. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

“human finitude,”⁹ “human creatureliness,”¹⁰ and “human sinfulness.”¹¹ He makes assertion toward Augustine’s notion that “we simply cannot ‘comprehend’ God.” He then speaks of the Trinity has a “mystery.” There is no doubt that the Trinity is a “mystery” within itself.

For McGrath “mystery” is understood in two explanations. First to make logic of the Trinity can be incoherence to the mind. In other words, it is a superstitious belief for the modern minds to accept. Secondly, though the mind cannot totally grasp the reality of the Trinity to some extent the mind is able to embrace some aspect of the doctrine. God is a God that cannot be completely comprehended. Therefore, to counterbalance these two notions of the Trinity McGrath states that:

The doctrine of the Trinity gathers together the richness of the complex Christian understanding of God; it yields a vision of God to which the only appropriate response is adoration and devotion. The doctrine knits together into a coherent whole the Christian doctrines of creation, redemption, and sanctification. By doing so, it sets before us a vision of a God who created the world, whose glory can be seen reflected in the wonders of the natural order; a God who redeemed the world, whose love can be seen in the tender face of Christ; and a God who is present now in the lives of believers.¹²

⁹ McGrath describes it as human being frailty, sinfulness and limitation of trying to understand the divine reality of a Supreme God. Humans do not have the full capacity to comprehend the nature of God especially the Doctrine of the Trinity. Timothy George editor, *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

¹⁰ McGrath says that the Enlightenment period viewed the “doctrine of the Trinity as irrational nonsense.” The Enlightenment thinkers did not think that the doctrine of the Trinity make sense to their rationale. Timothy George editor, *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

¹¹ McGrath directs this form of human sinfulness back to the Enlightenment thinking. The Enlightenment agenda is to the desire to dominate something or idea in their reasoning. McGrath explains this form in his own words, “To understand something is essential before it can be mastered. Understanding is the first step in a process of bringing something or someone to submission.” In other words, if the Trinity cannot come under their reasoning then it is not something to be entertained. Timothy George editor, *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

¹² “The Doctrine of the Trinity,” 22.

He is right to make these assessments about the Trinity. Here McGrath is alluding to the Christian faith of understanding the Trinity. The Trinity does present “richness” and a “complex” understanding of God.

The problem goes a bit deeper for Christians not understanding the worshipping of the Trinity. In Hosea 4:6 the prophet said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”¹³ Part of the problems according to Parry is that the teaching of the Trinity is not “properly integrated” in the lives of the church. There is lack of sermons, worship, and “lived faith” that is neglected in Christian living. Therefore, says Parry, “But it is also in part because the Trinity is almost never spoken of directly. The Trinity, most crucially, needs to saturate our praise, but it also needs to be explained from time to time.”¹⁴ Hence, pastors especially need to preach more on the Trinity and its importance to toward worship.

Parry also gives a second problem for the lack of worshipping the Trinity. It was already alluded before that others (Christians) who claim to understand the Trinity demonstrates lack of interest. They do not see how knowing the Trinity can greatly affect their worship of the triune God. The reason for this is that they see the Trinity as an “abstract doctrine that matters in theory but not in practice.”¹⁵ The underling factor here is not in practice. This is where the problem lies when it comes to worshipping the Trinity. Too many Christians including pastors only view the doctrine of the Trinity as abstract. Therefore, they do not practice the worshipping of the Trinity in the faith they hold so dear to their heart.

¹³ Hosea 4:6 NKJV

¹⁴ Robin A. Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012), 3.

¹⁵ Parry, 4.

This is not to blame pastors for their lack of interest in knowing the true nature of embracing the Trinity in their worship. However, the worshipping of the Trinity must be a practice of the Christian faith for the church to live out Matthew 28:19-20. Parry states that “Take the Trinity out of Christian faith and practice and you no longer have Christian faith and practice...*It matters*.¹⁶ It matters to the Christians faith and it matters to the church’s mission to the world.

To practice the art of worshipping the Trinity there needs to be a proper theology that focuses on the teaching of the Trinity. Pastors who do not have a proper theology of the Triune God do injustice to their churches as well as to themselves. For worship to be effective in the area of the Trinity good theology must be the utmost proclamation. Thus, “A God-centred theology must, by definition, give centre-stage to what is distinctive of Christianity, the high watermark of God’s self-revelation in the Bible.”¹⁷ Why? Because it affects how the church worships, exercise its faith, and the life that the church proclaims to know in Christ. Good theology can make a difference on how the church worships the Trinity. Parry illustrates, “My conviction is that theology is relevant to Christian living...the Trinity is central to Christianity, and understanding it is necessary for healthy Christian worship, faith, and life.”¹⁸ To what Parry says about the Trinity Letham makes an analogous reference to Gregory Nazianzen’s view of the Trinity:

‘This, then, is my position...to worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three persons, one Godhead, undivided in honour and glory substance and kingdom.’ Putting it another way, from the other side as it were, *the worship of the church is the communion of the holy Trinity with us his people*. We are inclined to view

¹⁶ Parry, 5.

¹⁷ Robert Letham, “The Holy Trinity and Christian Worship,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 13, (2002):87-88.

¹⁸ Parry, 6.

worship as what we do, but if we follow our arguments, it is first and foremost something the triune God does, our actions initiated and encompassed by his.¹⁹

This research will shed light on the areas where pastors and church members can be more aware of worshipping the Trinity. It is important that pastors educate their congregants about the significance of the Trinity in Christian worship. This is the source of the church existence.

Statement of Limitations

This research only focuses on the context of the subject matter. It will not focus on the various theological argumentations that surround doctrine of the Trinity. For instance, there are arguments that suggest that the Trinity has relative meaning of how the church can witness to our society. Mark Husbands who is a strong proponent of the traditional understanding of the Trinity through the Cappadocian fathers opposes the new teaching on the Trinity known as the social Trinity.

For husbands this type of description of the Trinity tends to create negative interpretations that can devalue the true meaning of the Trinitarian teaching of the Godhead. He asserts that proponents of the social Trinity such as Miroslav Volf who supports this concept is deeply misguided in postulating that the Trinity is their own personal social program. According to Husbands, theologically, defenders of the Nicene Creed with a stroke of pen would dismiss this concept of the Trinity without hesitation.

A second concern is that the concept of the social Trinity tends not to preserve the ontological distinction between God and humanity in their natures. Husbands states the following concern,

...a theology that purports to be properly ‘trinitarian’—and by this I mean consistent with both the biblical witness and Nicene Christianity—must preserve an ontological distinction between God and humanity in order to maintain an order consistent with

¹⁹ “The Holy Trinity and Christian Worship,”94.

their distinct natures. The inherent danger in failing to maintain this ontological distinction is the possibility that one's doctrine of God will be eclipsed by any number of contemporary social, cultural or political concerns.²⁰

There is no doubt that Husbands has expressed some grave concerns for the ontological distinction of God and humanity and that the church must know its place before God. Hence, there are strong implications that do suggest that the doctrine of the Trinity can be instrumental in giving meaning within the church's social context of how the church relates to one another in the Trinity. This research will not delve into the theological discrepancies between the social Trinity and the traditional understanding of the Trinity—but the author will glean from the implications of the social Trinity teaching because they have great applications of how Christians can live out the Trinity in worship.

This research will survey 50 churches. These 50 churches will be Southern Baptist Churches. From these 50 churches the author would like the pastors to ask ten members of their congregations to participate in a survey. Thus, because of the limitation of the research nature the author may only address these 50 churches. The purpose of selecting Southern Baptist Churches is because they consider themselves conservative in their doctrinal teachings. The author would like to view their teaching on the Trinity. How well are they informed when it comes to worshipping the Trinity. Their congregations are well informed about the teaching of the Trinity when it comes to worshipping the Trinity.

There are three reasons for this approach. First, to see how often do they teach and preach on the importance of worshipping the Trinity. For instance, how does the Trinity affect their discipleship training? Secondly, do they consider the Trinity as important doctrine to the

²⁰ Mark Husbands, "The Trinity Is Not Our Social Program." In *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*, edited by Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber, 120-141. Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Christian faith? For instance, how often does the choir sing doxology on the Trinity in their worship service on a Sunday. Does praying in the Trinity improve their prayer life? Is there a difference between praying in the name of Jesus “only” and praying in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Thirdly, does the Trinity have any relevance to their daily walk in Christ? For example, does the Trinity play a significant role in their Christians’ fellowship? Does understanding the Trinity affect how they live a holy life before God? Does understanding the Trinity help bring about Christian unity in the body of Christ. Does having a lack of understanding of the Trinity affect how they do evangelism? Since Southern Baptist Churches is one of the second largest Protestant churches in the world, some of the analysis may seem biased at first, but it is not intentional.

Definition of Terms

What is the economic Trinity? The economic Trinity deals with how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relates to each other and the salvation of the world. Greek the word that is used for economic is *oikonomikos* which means arrangement of activities.²¹ Put more delicately by Letham. He says that, “The worship of the church is grounded on who God is and what he has done. The father has sent the Son ‘for us and our salvation.’ This is prominent in John, chapter 5, 10, and 17, but Paul also directs attention to it in Romans 8:32. In turn, the Father together with the Son has sent the Holy Spirit to indwell the church. The focus of the Spirit’s ministry is to speak of Christ the Son.”²² Thus, the economic Trinity describes the different functions of each person of the Godhead.

²¹ <http://www.carm.org/dictionary-economic-trinity>

²² “The Holy Trinity and Christian Worship,” 92.

The Father sent forth the Son (John 6:44; 8:18). The Son accomplished the Redemptive work of the Father (John 3:16) The Son became down from heaven to do the Father's will not His own will (John 6:38-40). The Holy Spirit came forth from the Father and Son (John 14:16-17 & 26). The functions of the Holy Spirit is to empower the church (Acts 1:8) to accomplish the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19:20 and to sanctify the church until redemption (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). The application of the economic Trinity will spell out in the evangelism section.

Worship the Father: The Christian faith only embraces one God who is eternal and everlasting. God manifests in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Yet, "Each member of the Godhead is equally God, each is eternally God, and each is fully—not three gods but three Persons of the one Godhead."²³ Therefore, "The Father, then, is fully God. He is not one-third God, but he eternally exists along with the Son and the Spirit, each of whom also possess fully the identically same divine nature."

Worship the Son: "The Son...is fully God. He is not one-third God, but fully God. Yet, it is not the Son alone who is fully God, but he eternally exists along with the Father and the Spirit, each of whom also possess fully the identically same divine nature...Therefore, "what distinguish the Son is his particular role as Son in relation to the Father and to the Spirit and the relationship that he has with each of them."²⁴ "In the New Testament, the Book of Revelation powerfully portrays the ultimate vision of worshipping the Son: the Lamb sits down on the very throne of God himself, alongside the Father, and receives the worship of all creation (Rev 5:11-

²³ Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, & Relevance*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), 42.

²⁴ Bruce A. Ware, 69.

14)...John's Gospel suggests that whoever honors the Son honors the Father who sent him (John 5:23; 12:26)."²⁵

Worship the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit...is fully God. He is not one-third God, but fully God. Yet, it is not the Spirit alone who is fully God, but he eternally exists along with the Father and the Son, each of whom also possesses fully the identically same divine nature...Therefore, what distinguishes the Spirit is his particular role as the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father and to the Son and the relationships that he has with each of them."²⁶

Preaching: The Greek word for preaching is *kerygma* which means "proclamation." The primary art of preaching is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ redeeming power. Preaching is a form of interpreting the word of God to the people of God. Concerning preaching Allen states that "Preaching is theological interpretation of life."²⁷

Worship: Now there are many variations in worship. Worship is praising the God of the Bible who creates all things. However, worship will be used in the context of the Trinity. It will incorporate doxology on worshipping the Trinity.

Teaching: The Apostle Paul encourages Timothy to "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."²⁸ Interestingly, in one of the gospels Jesus encourages the disciples to beware of the Pharisees' doctrines. Teaching should be one of the utmost apparatus that need to be stressed in the church. The author will stress this more in the application area that deals with discipleship training in the worshipping of the Trinity.

²⁵ Parry, *Worshipping Trinity*, 86-87.

²⁶ Bruce A. Ware, 103.

²⁷ Ronald J. Allen, "Preaching as Mutual Critical Correlation through Conversation." In *Purposes of Preaching*, edited by Jana Childers, 1-23. Missouri: Chalice Press, 2004, 1.

²⁸ 2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV.

Evangelism: For evangelism to be effective the doctrines of the church must be biblically based. In this context, the worshipping of the Holy Spirit can empower the pastor and the church to do effective evangelism. Evangelism is very important to the growth of the church therefore understanding the worshipping of the Trinity in the area of the Holy Spirit can help the church tremendously to function in the ministry of the Spirit. Dr. Mark Terry is a well-known professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who teaches on church evangelism says that the Holy Spirit is “empowered the ministry of Jesus.”²⁹ Understanding the doctrine of the Trinity can make a paramount impact to the church’s ministry.

Theoretical Basis

The Doctrine of the Trinity

The theoretical basis of pursuing this research gleans from the volume of books written on the Trinity. In the 20th Century Western theologians began to rediscover the doctrine of the Trinity. Sanders offers five factors for the resurgent interest of Trinity. He sees these factors as affecting the teaching of the Triune God: (1) “the early high Christology movement;” (2) “recent questioning of eternal generations;” (3) “the gender relationships debate;” (4) “the explosive growth of philosophical theology;” and finally (5) developments among anti-trinitarian groups.”³⁰ The Trinity is truly a hot topic.

The greatest controversial interest of the Trinity is the doctrine of Christology. Both liberal and conservative theologians begin to investigate the relationship between Christ and the Trinity in salvific purpose of the world. Simply put, to deny the Christology of the Son is to deny

²⁹ John Mark Terry, *Church Evangelism: Creating A Culture For Growth In Your Congregation*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 7.

³⁰ Fred Sanders, “The State of The Doctrine Of The Trinity In Evangelical Theology” *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 47, no.2 (2005): 154.

the doctrine of the Trinity. To justify this rationale Bloesch affirms this by saying, “One can also show that where the Trinity is denied, related doctrines such as the deity of Christ and his preexistence fall by the wayside.”³¹ This is so true of the Trinity.

Other areas of interest glean toward societal concerns about suffering and what the model of the human community should look like within the Trinity. Theologians who express concern in these theological intercourses are Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Leonardo Boff and Jürgen Moltmann and others. This form of doctrine is known as the ‘social trinitarianism.’³² The current intricacy of the Trinity has become a global phenomenon that seems to motivate theologians all over the world to employ the Trinity as a model of building human communion. As McDougall profoundly highlight the great interest of the Trinity he states that:

The twentieth century has seen many a dramatic turn in theology, but perhaps none so startling as the contemporary renaissance of trinitarian doctrine. In the past thirty years Trinitarian debates have crossed confessional and continental borders and sparked new ecumenical discussion among the European, North American, and once-called Third World contexts. Within the Anglo-American context, this burgeoning trinitarian debate has galvanized around one issue: the practical significance of the doctrine for the life of faith. Theologians spanning the methodological spectrum—from postliberal narrative theologians and process thinkers to feminists and other liberationists—are exploring the relationship between the Trinity and various practices of the Christian life.³³

The underlining factor here is making the Trinity becomes practical to the Christian life.

This leads to the interest of the Trinity in practice. The worshipping of the Trinity has become of great interest to theologians of different theological variations. To illustrate, members of the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine communes with other churches bring

³¹ Donald G. Bloesch, *God The Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 186.

³² Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber, editors, *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship* (Downer Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 8.

³³ Joy Ann McDougall, “The Return of Trinitarian Praxis? Moltmann on the Trinity and the Christian Life,” *The Journal of Religion* 83, no.2 (2003): 177.

about a clear understanding of what it means for churches to worship the Persons of the Trinity. Religious organizations such as the Russian Orthodox Church in Britain (Diocese of Sourozh), the World Council of Churches, and the British Council of Churches and “its Division of Ecumenical Affairs” gather together because of their concern of the Pentecostal churches’ teaching on the Trinity.

The council of the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine was not happy with the Oneness Pentecostal churches approach of only worshipping the Holy Spirit by neglecting to worship the Father and the Son. For the BCC known as the British Council of Churches the entire Trinity is to be worshipped. To pledge an allegiance to one Person of the Trinity cannot be appropriate within the Christian faith.

In the church historical tutelages on the *perichoresis* of the Persons of the Trinity, it teaches that the Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son, and the Holy Spirit is in the Father and Son, the Father is in the Holy Spirit and the Son is in the Holy Spirit.³⁴ Letham expresses the same concerns as well as because if the biblical teaching on the *perichoresis* is not embraced by churches then they have done injustice to the Trinity. Letham says that, “Thus to worship one person at the expense of the others is to divide the undivided Trinity.”³⁵

On this note, the BCC states that one way that Christians participate in the worshipping of the Trinity is through the sacraments. The church participates in worshipping the Trinity in baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The BCC states:

There are various ways in which the trinitarian character of worship has been and is understood: as being offered to the Father through the Son and in the Spirit; or to the Father, to the Son and to the Spirit; or to the one triune God. But all alike witness to the reality of relationship, of communion. The communion of Christians with God and with each other is both symbolized and realized in the sacraments of baptism and the

³⁴ “The Holy Trinity and Christian Worship,” 98.

³⁵ “The Holy Trinity and Christian Worship,” 98.

eucharist. Baptism is universally administered in the Church in the threefold name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and by it we are initiated into the community of God's people.³⁶

This is one of the areas where the church worships the triune God. The author will build on this notion more in the thesis. Consequently, this is what the thesis is all about.

Statement of Methodology

The proposed thesis project will provide six chapters with an overview of worshipping the Trinity. These chapters will give strong biblical foundational substance of why the pastors need to approach the doctrine of the Trinity with an open eye. The Trinity is not an abstract for philosophical entertainment in the academia world. It must take root in Christian daily practice.

These are the chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Factors that Affect the Worship of the Trinity

Chapter 3: Worshipping the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Trinity

Chapter 4: Research and Findings.

Chapter 5: A Practical Guide for Pastors.

Chapter 6: Conclusion & Recommendation.

Chapter One--Introduction

The introduction will set the basis for the research. It will touch on the controversy of the Trinity in Christendom. It will speak on the reason for the controversy and that reason is the second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God. In the history of the church and even now, the Son of God is of great interest to many theologians. The East and West were at odds with each other concerning the Son of God. East falls in the danger of teaching the doctrine of subordinationism by implicating that Christ and the Holy Spirit was subjected to the Father.

³⁶ British Council of Churches, *The Forgotten Trinity: The BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today-Report, Study Guide and a Selection of papers* (London: Inter-Church House, 1989), 3.

Meanwhile, the West entertains the doctrine of Modalism known as Sabellism. It teaches that God acted as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The major controversy of the Trinity surrounds the intercourses of Athanasius and Arius in the 4th Century. The introduction will also propose the statement of the problem, the statement of limitations of the thesis project. It describes the theoretical interests of the worshipping of the Trinity. The introduction provides a methodology a review of literatures. It also provides the basic rationales for the thesis topic “The Trinity...Key Biblical Mandates for Preaching, Teaching, Worshipping and Evangelism in the Local Church,” that the worship of the Trinity can focus in these areas of ministry.

Chapter Two— Factors that Affect the Worship of the Trinity

In this chapter, the author will focus on some of the factors that hinder the worship of the Trinity. Interestingly, two factors already mention in the statement of the problem. The author is going to delve into more detail. Other factors that hinder the praise of the Trinity are Oneness Pentecostal imbalance teaching of the Trinity. For instance, baptizing and praying in “Jesus only” and giving allegiance to the Holy Spirit worship. Meanwhile, some pastors do lack the understanding of the Trinity.

Chapter Three—Worshipping the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Trinity

This chapter will lay out the theological foundation of the undivided divine nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It will cover how the Father is in relationship to Son and Holy Spirit. How the Son is in relationship with the Father and Spirit. How the Holy Spirit is in relationship with Father and Son. This process is known as the *perichoresis* the indwelling of the Godhead.

Chapter Four—Research and Findings

The author will present two sets of questionnaires. The first questionnaire is going to be presented to pastors. The second questionnaire will focus on the congregation. The purpose of the presenting two questionnaires is to see if there is any consistency with the pastors' knowledge of the Trinity to that of the congregation's understanding. The congregations' knowledge of the word of God is a direct reflection of the pastor's teaching the Bible. Consequently, Scazzero says, "The starting point for change in any nation, church, or ministry has always been the leader: As go the leaders, so goes the church."³⁷ Author will perform a quantitative analysis of 50 churches. However, it is hard to say what exactly will be the result from this research until the survey questionnaires are given out to the appropriate churches.

Chapter Five—A Practical Guide for Pastors

This chapter will present a practical guide of why the Trinity is important and the need to be incorporated in Christian worship. This will help equip pastors to be aware of the Trinity and its usefulness within the church. It will also help pastors to understand the implications of the Trinity and how it plays an important role in the life of the church and in the life of every believer. This chapter will develop more on the finding of the questionnaires.

Chapter Six—Conclusion

This chapter will give a summarization of the results from the surveys. Also, it will give future recommendations that are pertinent to the Christian faith. Also, the research will give scriptural implications of how the worshipping of the Trinity can tremendously affect corporate worship and private worship. It will touch on community fellowship and other areas of living.

³⁷ Peter L. Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2010), 36.

Literature Review

Books

Interestingly, there are many books and articles written on the subject extensively. These materials will support the subject matter at hand. It will demonstrate the gravity of why churches in America need to embrace the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity helps to breathe and maintain life in the life of the church, so to speak.

In *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*,³⁸ Bruce Ware did an outstanding job on discussing the importance of the Trinity. Ware underlines that the very nature of God is the heartbeats of the Christian faith. For any Christian to truly know the God of the Bible must first come to know the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For Jesus says to the disciples that if “you see Me you see the Father also.” The book is not written for the academia astute but it also written for layman and ministers in the church. The book presents Christians with various applications to live out the Christian faith for the glory of God. For instances, Bruce says that, “Clearly, when we behold the Trinity for what it is, we stand amazed. We are astonished at the unity and harmony of their common work in and through the authority-submission relationship that marks their roles and responsibilities for all eternity. Unity of purpose and harmony of mission, yet with differentiation in lines of authority and submission within the Godhead—this truly is a marvel to behold.”³⁹ Yes, it is truly to “behold.”

James B. Torrance’s book on *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*⁴⁰ believes that the doctrine of the Trinity is strongly rooted in Scripture and theology. Torrance

³⁸ Bruce A. Ware, “Father, Son, & Holy Spirit.”

³⁹ Bruce A. Ware, “Father, Son, & Holy Spirit,” 131.

⁴⁰ James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

graciously points the reader(s) to the central focus of Christian worship which is the triune God of grace. Torrance says that authentic worship flows from a Christian confession that acknowledges a Trinitarian theology that speaks of God in three Persons. Accordingly, “True theology is theology that sings... They are based on the conviction that how we worship God must reflect who God is—the triune God of grace—and what he has done and is doing for us in Christ and by the Holy Spirit.”⁴¹ There are strong implications here that the Christians Church can benefit from knowing the triune God. Therefore, true worship is to be done within the nature of the Trinity.

Robin A. Parry’s book on *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*⁴² is a must have book in any Christian book collection. The book goes straight to the heart of the problem when it comes to understanding what Christian worship is all about. The heart of Christian’s worship is the Trinity. The book is written for worship leaders, songwriters and church leaders. It is also written for students of theology. There is a wide failure in the churches today, those that do not understand the dynamic nature of worshipping the Trinity.

In this book, Parry touches on some of the problems that create a deficiency in embracing the Trinity in worship. Parry provides practical applications that are essential for the church community. This is one of the books that the author greatly loves and recommend to those who are interesting in knowing more about the Trinity and how it can affect the Christian’s life tremendously.

⁴¹ James B. Torrance, 10.

⁴² Parry *Worshipping Trinity*,

The book on *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*⁴³ edited by Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber is a collection of essays on the Trinity with a contemporary interest of applying the Trinity in the social context (social Trinity). This book provides the reader(s) with current deliberation on the Trinity. Here, theologians trace the argument of the Trinity from the time of the Councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381) which brings about the Nicene Creed. It also talks about the essential involvement of the Trinity in churches' mission for Christ. It also touches on why the church needs to practice living in the triune God.

*The Trinity*⁴⁴ by Philip W. Butin is one of many books release from the “Foundations of Christian Faith series” that deals with central elements of Christian belief. Here, Butin tries to make the language of the Trinity plain and understandable for the reader to understand. He helps guides the reader through the complexity nature of the Trinity and the continuous debates that surround the topic. He demonstrates that the doctrine of the Trinity is not an abstract concept for the astute theologians but has important meaning when the church practically live out the Trinity. Butin says that “Christian faith stands or falls with ‘the strong name of the Trinity.’ Christian teaching about the Trinity is the heart and center of Christian faith.”⁴⁵ Therefore, it is incumbent that all churches should experience the intimacy of the Trinity in their worship service.

Robert Letham is a very prolific writer and savvy theologian. Letham knows his material. There is no doubt about it. In his book *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and*

⁴³ Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber eds., *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

⁴⁴ Philip W. Butin, *The Trinity* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2001).

⁴⁵ Philip W. Butin, xiii.

*Worship*⁴⁶ he talks about the transcendent that is immanent in Christ. Letham examines the essential biblical foundations of the Christian faith. He then traces the historical materialization of the Christian doctrines through the twentieth century. In his book, he speaks of four critical issues that are important to the faith which are: (1) “persons,” (2) “missions and creation,” (3) “prayer and worship,” and (4) the “Trinity.” he talks about how the worship of the Trinity affirms the incarnation of Christ, the church’s worship and prayer life. Also, how the Trinity is instrumental in Creation and mission. Finally, how the Trinity affirms the Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Ruth Duck and Patricia Wilson-Kastner’s book on *Praising God: The Trinity in Christian Worship*⁴⁷ says that the Trinity is the heart of Christian worship. The book provides the reader(s) with liturgical resources that surround the Trinity. They talk about prayer and includes hymn texts that mention the worship of the Triune God and with sample sermons. The author(s) states that “Christian worship is, by nature, trinitarian.”⁴⁸

Sinclair B. Ferguson’s book on *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology* underlines the ministry of the Holy Spirit the third Person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit’s ministry seems to be less forgotten in the churches today. Ferguson emphasis of the Holy Spirit will focus on the application of the Spirit in the life a Christian. The Holy Spirit empowers believers to participate in the ministry of Christ while Jesus reveals the Father to believers. Consequently, the church participates in the worship of the Trinity.

Journals

⁴⁶ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004).

⁴⁷ Ruth C. Duck and Patricia Wilson-Kastner, *Praising God: The Trinity in Christian Worship* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

⁴⁸ Ruth C. Duck and Patricia Wilson-Kastner, 1.

“Trinity as Communion in the Spirit: Koinonia, Trinity, and Filioque in the Roman Catholic—Pentecostal Dialogue” by Veli-Matti Karkainen is adapted from The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. This study demonstrates that Roman Catholic and Trinitarian Pentecostals do embrace the tradition of the Trinity. Both believe that the Koinonia of Christian community is rooted in the trinitarian teaching of the scriptures. Since the Holy Spirit brings believers together the church experiences the Trinity in worship.

In the “Trinity and Church: Trinitarian Perspectives on the Identity of the Christian Community” by Marcel Sarot is adapted from the International Journal of Systematic Theology. The identity of the Christian community lies within the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, by the church becoming the body of Christ the Spirit brings the church into the trinitarian community of worship.

Articles

“A Missionary Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Father’s Anointing of Christ and Its Implications for the Church in Mission” by Leopoldo A. Sanchez M is adapted from the Missio Apostolica. Here Leopoldo demonstrates that the ecclesial participation of the Holy Spirit influences Christ’s mission. Leopoldo says that the anointing of the church’s mission is participation in the Trinitarian worship.

“It’s all about Jesus: a critical analysis of the ways in which the songs of our contemporary worship Christian songwriters can lead to an impoverished Christology” by Andrew Goodliff is adapted from the Evangelical Quarterly. Goodliff points out that contemporary songwriters and worship leaders only focus on person of the Trinity in praise. He underlines that through Christ the church gets to experience the worship of the Trinity.

“In The Spirit of Truth: Worship and Prayer in the Gospel of John and the Early Fathers” by Dorothy Lee is adapted from *Vigiliae Christianae*. Lee says that Christ’s Christology affirms the Spirit role in His ministry. Lee speaks about four areas of revelation: (1) “Worship and the Samaritan Woman,” (2) “Jesus as the Locus of Worship,” (3) “Jesus as the Object of Worship,” (4) “Jesus and Prayer.”

“The Trinity and the Life of the Christian: A Liturgical Catechism” by Lewis Ayres is adapted from *New Blackfriars*. Ayres gives a Catholic perspective of the Trinity in the church’s liturgical prayer. For Catholics, to pray in the Trinity gives them deeper meaning of their Christian relationship to Christ.

Internet

www.Bible.org is a website that is dedicated to uphold the biblical teaching and preaching of the traditional teaching on the Trinity. In his article “A Call to Preach The Trinity” by Dr. Roger Pascoe. Pascoe says that is necessary to preach the Trinity because without the church cannot function appropriately for the glory of God. He says that the Trinity needs to be incorporated in the churches’ worship services.

Scripture Review

There is no doubt that the Scripture should always be the foundation of what Christians claim about God. The word Trinity is not in the scriptures but the concept of the Trinity is very obvious in the Bible. The author will give ten scriptures to support the purpose of why the church needs to worship the Trinity.

In Isaiah 6:8 reveals the triune God’s commission to the prophet. The prophet hears the voice of God says to him “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and

who will go for Us?” The text reveals a situation that occurs in the time of the prophet. The writer of Isaiah says that he was able to see the Lord after the death of King Uzziah.

Matthew 28:19-20 declares the admiration of the Trinity. Jesus gives His Great Commission to the disciples to teach, preach and baptize all nations in the name of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Matthew gives the church a clear picture of the Trinity.

In Colossians 1:6 Paul says to the church “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” Paul was addressing false teaching about Christ. So, Paul begins to defend the Christology of Christ

. Another classical text that speaks of Jesus’ divinity is John 1:1 that says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Jehovah Witness believes that Jesus was part of God’s first creation. This is further from the truth. John theologically embraces the Christology of Christ. This is one of the reasons why Christian should worship the Trinity.

Another text that demonstrates Jesus and Father as one in essence the question that Philip asked Jesus. In John 14:9 Jesus responds to Philip’s question by saying, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, Show us the Father? Jesus empathetically makes clear to Philip as well as the other disciples that He and His Father is one.

When it comes to the third Person of the Trinity the Holy Spirit much is said less of Him. The Holy is deity. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul says of the Spirit of God, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth not to defile their bodies with sexual immorality. For the Spirit of God who lives in them is holy.

Also, the Holy Spirit is eternal just as the Father and Son are eternal. The Spirit shares the same attributes as the Father and Son. The Spirit is omnipresent. In Psalm 139:7 David says “Where can I go from your Spirit?” this is the quintessence of the work of the Holy Spirit to be imminently present with the church.

When Paul gives the benediction to the Church at Corinth he concludes with these words to them in 2 Corinthians 13:14, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” This reveals to the church that the church has the authority to bless other Christians in the Trinity. The Trinity releases blessings to Christians.

Again in 2 Corinthians 1:2 Paul says, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” In the church’s private and public prayer life the church can invoke the trinitarian presence.

In Ephesians 2:18 Paul pronounces a strong worship attitude toward the triune God when he says to the Christians at Ephesus that, “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Christ gives the church the access to commune with the Father and the Spirit.

The above scriptures and many more will be used in each chapter of the thesis. The goal of this thesis is to present a practical Christian guide of worshipping the Trinity. The author will introduce factors that affect Christians to come into full fellowship with the triune God. The implications will give more meaning of what it truly means to know the Trinity intimately.

CHAPTER 2

FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE WORSHIP OF THE TRINITY

It was said by George Santayana many years ago, that, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”¹ It is safe to say that Santayana’s historical assertion is somewhat like what Hosea 4:6 says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”² If the church is going to be effective in the climate of ministry, it must recognize the urgency of knowing the Trinity. The Trinity is one of the most important doctrines in the life of the church. Nevertheless, less credence has given to the importance of the Trinity. For this reason, history is prone to repeat itself again in the local churches within the Southern Baptist Convention. It is safe to say that other denominations under the umbrella of conservatism are under the same judgment of repeating history because of lack of knowledge of the Trinity.

Unfortunately, the writer cannot speak for all churches within the Southern Baptist Convention when it comes to the doctrine of the Trinity. However, there are many factors shape the hindrance to the lack of worshipping the Trinity. Notwithstanding, what the writer is obligated to do here in this endeavor is to introduce three major factors that hinder the worship of the Trinity. Now, others may debunk these three major factors as being exaggerated.

The Influence of Thoughts

Hindrance: Lack of understanding

R. C. Sproul is a well-known pastor, teacher, and a brilliant theologian as well. In the Christian world, his works speaks volume. To be quite honest his work speaks by itself. He writes a book that truly speaks to the matter at hand. In this book, he speaks about The

¹ George Santayana, *The Life Of Reason* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 284, Kindle.

² Hosea 4:6 NKJV.

Consequences of Ideas, which is also the title of his book. He talks about how medieval philosophers' ideologies change how the Western world think. His profundity speaks to the notion at hand. He says the following assertion,

Philosophy forces us to think foundationally. By foundational I mean first principles or basic truths. Most ideas that shape our lives are accepted (at least initially) somewhat uncritically. We do not create a world or environment from scratch and then live in it. Rather we step into a world and culture that already exists, and we learn to interact with it.³

Some pastors and preachers have already interacted with a world that already exist. Their form of interaction is a world of silence. Since their predecessors have not taught them about the purpose of the Trinity in Worship or they just lack the understanding of the Trinity. Then it is safe to make the following assumption about this world.

One of the parasites that is causing more harm to the knowledge of the Trinity is the parasite of silent. This type of parasite has hindered the health and growth of the church because pastors and preachers are theologically sleeping on the Trinity. So, then it is appropriate for the writer to say that ignorance is bliss. Sometimes the lack of silence tends to shed light on the lack of pastoral understanding of the Trinity.

It may be that some pastors and preachers may find the Trinity perplexing. Thus, through this perplexing disposition the congregants tend to suffer from lack of knowing the Trinity. Robin Parry confirms the problem by saying that, "Now the doctrine of the Trinity is one of those Christian beliefs that we all affirm but which, in our more honest moments, we often think

³ R.C. Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts That Shaped Our World*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 9.

is rather perplexing and somewhat remote from ordinary life.”⁴ Parry went further to give two dispositional reasons for this problem.

The first dispositional reason is already alluded to in the first chapter. Nevertheless, it needs to be repeated here again because of its relevance of the growth of the church to know the Trinity. Parry says that the reason why congregants and preachers do not understand the Trinity is that it not integrated in the lives of the church. In other words, churches are not living out the application of the Trinity. This comportment creates a problem for Karl Rahner as well. Rahner encountered a similar dilemma within his own denomination (Roman Catholic). Rahner discovered that the application of the Trinity is being marginalized in the life of the church.

Rahner does not dispute the essentiality of the theological contribution of explicating the Trinity. But he believes that it must also be incorporated in the lives of the church. Rahner calls this Christian piety. He acknowledges the extensive works done on the Trinity and how few theologians attempt to incorporate the Trinity in Christian piety. However, Rahner believes that more theological works needed to be done by assimilating the Trinity in the life of believers. He says the following assertions:

It is surprising that, though a considerable amount of work has been devoted to the study of the history of Trinitarian theology...there has been, at least until now, little momentum towards future development within this dogma. This is not to deny that religious literature has occasionally tried to situate Christian piety in more explicit and vital connection with Trinitarian doctrine, or that a few theologians have become explicitly and actively aware of their obligation to understand and present the doctrine of the Trinity in such a way that it may become a reality in the concrete life of the faithful.⁵

⁴ Robin A. Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012), 3.

⁵ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity: With An Introduction, Index, And Glossary* By Catherine Mowry Lacugna, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 9-10.

To bring clarity to what already stated above; Rahner states that it is good to have an orthodox confession of the Trinity. However, theologians need to understand that Christians are, “in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheists.’ We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.”⁶ In other words, Christianity is a life of piety. Consequently, Rahner was heavily criticized by other theologians inside of his own denomination as well as outsiders for the latter part of his dissertation.

Rahner is very passionate when it comes to receiving and applying the Trinity in Christian piety. This is understood by Rahner in a deeper appreciation through faith in salvation history. This is what Rahner says about the matter.

The Trinity is not for us a reality which can only be expressed as a doctrine. The Trinity itself is with us, it is not merely given to us because revelation offers us statements about it. Rather these statements are made to us because the reality of which they speak is bestowed upon us. They are not made in order to test our faith in something to which we have no real relation. They are made because the grace we have received and the glory we expect cannot wholly become manifest if we are not told about this mystery. Thus the two mysteries, that our grace and that of God in himself, constitutes one and the same abysmal mystery.⁷

Again, Rahner postulates that Christians can only experience Trinity through grace and God’s revelatory presence.

The second dispositional reason for the lack of understanding the Trinity according to Parry is the attitude of those who say does the Trinity really matters. It may seem Parry states the following department, “The second problem is that those who do ‘understand’ the contours of Christian claims about the Trinity often don’t see why the doctrine matters.”⁸ With this type

6 Rahner, 10-11.

7 Rahner, 39.

8 Parry, 4.

of department the Trinity is theologically sound in theory but not in practicality. The author will not recapitulate what is already stated on the practicality of Trinity in Christian piety. However, the Trinity matters because it creates an atmosphere of worship and knowing God. It matters for these reasons according to Johnson who states the obvious.

The Trinity is a matter of knowing God in his complexity, totally different from us in our singularity yet radically similar in having personality in his image, then letting this knowledge of God become the pattern of a renewed Christian mind that replaces control beliefs from unbelieving sources that constantly distort our lives...It is important because it means getting to know God. It is also important in order to make the faith attractive to our children and neighbours, overcoming the distortions that drive people from the faith. It is worth serious effort.⁹

Knowing the Trinity matters because it creates a posterity that carries on the knowledge of the triune God.

It not only matters in the posterity of the church as well as to Christian parents to their children. It matters because it also reveals the counsel of the Godhead. It creates and prevent any distortion of the true knowledge of God. Why is this important, because the Trinity reveals the authentic understanding of God to those who seek to worship and to know the true God. Johnson states the obvious again.

The articulation of the theory about the Trinity was not only the development of truths in the Bible; it was the attempt to clarify biblical control beliefs which were also tools for pastoral-theological diagnosis to overcome distorted lives by means of pastoral care and teaching. The ancient heresies, modern distorted zeal, and liberal theology destroy the lives of people and institutions. It is important, therefore, to observe that the doctrine of the Trinity was articulated to teach the full counsel of God, address distortions in the faith of believers, to thereby overcome the power of non-biblical control beliefs. The doctrine of the Trinity simultaneously provided a key control belief and a theological tool to diagnose serious distortions of the faith.¹⁰

⁹ Thomas K. Johnson, "Why is the Trinity so Difficult and so Important?" *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 38:2, (2014): 100.

¹⁰ Johnson, 102.

Therefore, the Trinity brings about a clear theological perspective of God of the Scripture. To those who seek Him by faith. The Trinity removes any distortions about God. Period!

In addition, Paul Copan gives several foundational reasons why the Trinity matters to Christians, especially, around singularity of God when it comes to other religious views of God. Here are the reasons why it is a matter to know the Trinity. The first reason is that the Trinity helps Christian differentiate from other versions of theism. These versions include Judaism and Islam which are considered Unitarian. These versions of theism do not hold to the central tenet of the Christian faith of the triune God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹¹ According to Copan it is disappointing to say that many Christians seem to be unaware of this uniqueness of their faith.

The second reasons that Copan gives is that some Christians are not intellectually prepared to counteract antitrinitarian thought and argumentation of Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims view of God.¹² Therefore, "many are incapable of articulating an effective doctrinal response to alternate theological perspectives, not to mention defining and appreciating their own."¹³ This should never be the state of any Christian. The final reason is that Christian's worship is often misguided and uninformed when it comes to knowing the distinction of the triune God, because they are doctrinally ignorant of its importance in worship.¹⁴ Copan has testified by his own experience that he heard pastors and elders thanking

¹¹ Paul Copan, "Is The Trinity A Logical Blunder? God As Three and One." In *Contending with Christianity's Critics: Answering the New Atheists and Other Objectors*, edited Paul Copan & William Lane, 205. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009.

¹² Copan, 205.

¹³ Copan,

¹⁴ Copan, 205-206.

the Father for dying on the cross.¹⁵ He also heard these pastors calling the Holy Spirit an ‘It.’¹⁶ This is why it is a matter to truly know the Trinity and its function in the life of believers.

Although many pastors and preachers who may seem to ‘understand’¹⁷ the contour of the Christian faith. But they seem to lack the importance of why the Trinity matters to them as well as to the church. The Trinity is not to be viewed or approached in this department especially from pastors and preachers.

There is a third dispositional reason why the Trinity becomes unimportant for many Christians according Shirley. She states that the doctrine of the Trinity has become an embarrassment and even offensive to mention.¹⁸ Rather than viewing the Trinity has an embarrassment and offensive Christians should affirm and consider the doctrine as foundational to their Christian life.¹⁹ Subsequently, she states again “So if we are to defend and make sense of this ancient doctrine today, we must first deal with some problems and objects that make it an obstacle rather than the entrance to faith in the God whom Christians worship and serve.”²⁰

One of the obstacles that Shirley points out why the doctrine of the Trinity seems embarrassing for many Christians is the mystery of God ‘three persons in one Godhead.’ It is a mystery because no one can completely understand the Godhead. Shirley believes that the mystery of the Godhead should not be an excuse for Christians not to know the triune God of their faith.

¹⁵ Paul, 206.

¹⁶ Paul, 206.

¹⁷ Parry, 4.

¹⁸ Shirley C. Guthrie Jr., *Christian Doctrine*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 70.

¹⁹ Shirley, 70.

²⁰ Shirley,

The danger of overlooking the mystery of God and finding it embarrassing and offensive can create problems for the church. According to Shirley the Trinity is one of the foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. It also helps the church to guard against false teaching of the uniquely biblical understanding of who God is and the nature of God. The latter is in juxtaposition to Johnson's position of how the Trinity helps prevent any distortions to the teaching of the Scripture pertaining to the nature of God being. Shirley is very passionate about the subject matter of coming to understand this mystery of the Trinity. She says the following,

But this mystery is far too central to the Christian faith to be either unthinkingly accepted because we are supposed to accept it or casually shrugged off because no one can explain it. If it were only a mathematical puzzle or a numbers game, we might take someone's word for the solution or simply say that we are not interested. But the doctrine of the Trinity is far more than that. It is the church's admittedly inadequate way of trying to understand and guard against false interpretation of the uniquely biblical-Christian understanding of who God is, what God is like, how and where God is at work in the world, what God thinks about us human beings, does for us, requires of us, promises us.²¹

These are concrete results why there is a major hindrance when it comes to worship of the Trinity and to protect the faith.

Hindrance: Feminist view of the Trinity

This may seem surprising to most Christians to suggest that the teaching of feminist theologians can hinder the comprehension and worshipping the Trinity. However, it is safe for the author to say that not all feminist theologians are liberal theologians who employ the doctrine of the Trinity for their own personal, public, and political agenda. In the preface of his book, Donald Bloesch points out the contribution that feminist perspectives made toward theology. He states that:

Where feminist theology makes its most signal contribution to theology is the way in which it calls us to reexamine the language of faith. It reminds us that much of the language of Scripture is symbolic and pictorial, that it points beyond itself to realities that

²¹ Shirley, 71.

cannot be directly apprehended by theoretical reason. If we think of God as Father in a univocal way, then God becomes male, and this is indeed idolatry.²²

Notwithstanding, the inclusion of feminist theology seems to shift the theological focus of the Holy Trinity to a more political agenda.

The political movement of feminist theology is to eradicate the patriarchal understanding of the Holy Trinity in Scripture. It is more a resymbolization of the Christian faith to give life to feminist theology says Bloesch.²³ For feminist theologians what is needed for its theology to thrive and to make an impact in the world of theology is by creating a new imagery of the Holy Trinity that speaks to the modern culture of women struggles and oppression of the patriarchal system. Bloesch says that the force of this movement is to change how the church should do theology in the perspective of women's plight in society. Bloesch says the following point of view, "What is needed, the feminists say, is a new imagery that will reflect the holistic vision of modern culture. The biblical metaphors drawn from a patriarchal and hierarchical culture are considered dualistic and monarchial and should be replaced by images more in tune with the spirit of the times."²⁴ This is very intriguing to note.

One proponent of the feminists' movement who theoretically and theologically rejects the traditional patriarchal understanding of Jesus is Elizabeth Johnson. She postulates that Jesus has been construed within a patriarchal framework to give men power over women. Johnson believes that part of the influence that synchronize this false concept of men's superiority over women in the church is the Greco-Roman world. According to Johnson,

Historically as the early church became enculturated in the Greco-Roman world, it gradually shaped its structures according to the model of the patriarchal household and

²² Donald G. Bloesch, *The Battle for the Trinity: The Debate over Inclusive God-Language*, (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), xviii.

²³ Donald, 1.

²⁴ Donald,

imperial empire. The image of Christ consequently assumed the contours of the male head of household or the absolute ruler. He was seen as the Pantocrator, the absolute king of glory whose heavenly reign sets up and legitimizes the earthly rule of the head of family, empire, and church. Thus coopted into an imperial model, the powerful symbol of the liberating Christ lost its subversive significance.²⁵

Johnson has no problem acknowledging the maleness of Jesus. She claims that Jesus' maleness reveals his personal identity which is "part of the perfection and limitation of his historical reality, and as such it is to be respected."²⁶ Rightly so! Notwithstanding, of course, the problem it creates for Johnson is how the early church employs Jesus' maleness to justify a "christic function and identity"²⁷ which prevent women from experiencing their full Christian identity in Christ. Johnson gives three distortional views why this is the case.

The first distortional view that Johnson gives is how the maleness image of God is employed historically to reinforce male dominance. For her the patriarchs employs Jesus as the perfect character, to the revelation of God, which points them to the divine being itself that the maleness of God is revealed in Christ.²⁸ Therefore, the divinity of Jesus gives a strong identification toward maleness rather than femaleness. Consequently, Johnson says, "This view is intensified by the almost exclusive use of father-son metaphors to interpret Jesus' relationship with God."²⁹ This has been the history of the church to procreate male dominance over women.

The second distortional view builds off from the first view. According to Johnson, since Jesus was a man the patriarchs employed Jesus' maleness to legitimize men's superiority over women that give men to belief that a special honor has been given to them because the Son of

²⁵ Elizabeth Johnson, "Redeeming The Name Of Christ: Christology" in Catherine Mowry LaCugna (ed), *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1993), 118.

²⁶ Johnson, 118.

²⁷ Johnson, 119.

²⁸ Johnson,

²⁹ Johnson,

God was chosen to be a male in the incarnation.³⁰ Subsequently, “Indeed, thanks to their sex, men are said to be more conformed to the image of Christ than are women.”³¹ Lastly, since both the human race and the image of God are understood from an androcentric philosophy the Christology of Christ seemingly jeopardize women’s salvation, “at least in theory.”³²

Unfortunately, though, it is not the author intention to engage into the politics of maleness and femaleness in this dissertation. There are some political gestures that needs to be address by both liberal and conservatism theologians.

There is one thing that the author needs to say here, that is, women oppression is a serious matter, and it must not be overlooked by anyone. It is a sin issue and it needs to be dealt with accordingly to proper biblical interpretation. Needless to say, what feminist theologians have suggested to do is to “resymbolize” the whole concept of the Holy Trinity to characterize their political agenda. To do that can create a major threat to the formula of the gospel especially the Trinity. Therefore, changing the language of faith call into question of the sovereignty of God.³³ This also call into the question of Jesus’ lordship and headship of the church, which threaten family fellowship, and the structure of society and of changing the liturgical language for worship says Bloesch.³⁴

The problem with this social movement is the spirit of vendetta that it has against the biblical concept of patriarchal headship. It is a systemic problem because most feminist theologians still wrestle with the biblical-philosophical notion of the headship of man over

³⁰ Johnson,

³¹ Johnson,

³² Johnson,

³³ Donald,

³⁴ Donald,

woman. The authority of the home is placed on the shoulder of man. Again, it is safe for the author to say that not all feminist theologians are committed to the “resymbolization” of the Christian faith; however, some have suggested that the masculine pronouns for God tend to create problem for women and it must be avoided to prevent any tensions between the sexes.

On that note, Bloesch gives three different types of feminism discourse. This is not to be redundant here by the author. But it is of interest to this chapter that the author includes these three discourses by mentioning them here. The first feminists discourse is committed to challenge the patriarchal subordination language of the patriarchs’ writing. However, they are not willing to give up their historical language of the faith. But they are willing to press for more “people language” that can be inclusive in nature. For instance, terms such as “man,” “men,” and “mankind,” should be replaced by “people,” “humans,” and “humankind.”³⁵ This group is classified as conservative feminists.

The second discourse mentioned by Bloesch is known as the reformist feminists. They seek “a wholesale revision of God-language in order to counter alleged sexism in this language and to prepare the way for a more inclusive family of God.”³⁶ Interestingly, reformist feminists try not to deny the Trinity, but they believe that the Trinity should have inclusive languages that accommodate both male and females understanding of God such as “Redeemer,” “Creator,” and “Sanctifier.”

Also, reformist would rather remove the patriarchal language of “Heavenly Father,” and replace it with “the Holy One.”³⁷ When it comes to the second person of the Trinity they would rather call Christ the “Child,” and or call him the ‘Son;’ moreover, Jesus would not be

³⁵ Donald, 4.

³⁶ Donald, 5.

³⁷ Donald,

acknowledged as ‘Lord,’ or ‘Master,’ but as ‘Friend.’³⁸ Interestingly, for this group the Holy Spirit is referenced as a ‘she.’³⁹ The reformist feminists see themselves as reformers by committing to purge sexism and patriachalism from Christianity.

The final discourse of feminist’s movement is known as revolutionary or radical feminists. They see no cure for Christianity because Christianity is polluted by patriarchal and the sexist language of God. This group believes in starting a new Christian religion that “proves to be a form of nature mysticism.”⁴⁰ In other words, this form of Christianity is based exclusively on women’s spiritual consciousness.⁴¹

This theological discourse is right in line with the radical view of Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel who says that, “Feminist theology, which is practical theology, is fascinating for women because women are reflecting their situation, are acting as women who are aware of themselves, are becoming clear about themselves and experiencing their own liberation in liberating action towards others.”⁴² This view is surely detrimental to the faith of the church, because it only brings deeper separation between the sexists in the body of Christ. Consequently, the second is of great interest to the conservation at hands because it re-symbolizes the Christian faith. This discourse plays a major role in shifting the focus of worshipping the Trinity.

The second feminist discourse claims to say that its purpose is not to deny the Trinity but only to provide inclusive languages that can give true meaning to feminists’ worship of the Trinity. In this school of thought is Ruth C. Duck who holds to this theological disposition. She

³⁸ Donald, 5.

³⁹ Donald,

⁴⁰ Donald,

⁴¹ Donald,

⁴² Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *A Land Flow With Milk and Honey: Perspectives on Feminist Theology*, New York: Crossroad, 1989), 74.

believes by changing the traditional formula of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will give more credence to the feminists' experience in worshipping the Holy Trinity. Thus, since the first person of the Triune God is named 'Father' considered to be "unoriginated Source who begets Jesus Christ, breathes forth the Holy Spirit, and creates everything else in the universe."⁴³ Duck believes that the metaphors for the Father can include 'Mother,' 'Source,' 'Creator,' 'Holy One,' 'Eternal, Living God,' and 'Mystery.'⁴⁴

Before the author speaks on the Son, feminist theologians have a hard time addressing God as "Father." In the commencement of her thesis Janet M. Soskice asks one fundamental question to the feminists' problem. The question is "Can a feminist call God 'father'?" For any feminists to call God "father" would only approve the hierarchical position of men's dominance over women. Therefore, the metaphor 'God as father' is to be eradicated. She expresses the emotional discrepancy of feminists by saying,

The immediate cause for complaint is the growing number of women (and men) who find sex-exclusive language in the liturgy and, by extension, the tradition's almost exclusively male language for God both alienating and offensive. Given the universal and egalitarian nature of Christian faith, they say, we can no longer utter the creedal phrases 'for us men and for our salvation' or 'almighty and most merciful Father.' This language must go.⁴⁵

Janet points out the reasons why feminists materialize this type of deportment toward "God as father."⁴⁶ Women were not considered to be created in God's image because they lack the capacity for freedom, dominion, and rationality.⁴⁷ She describes the irrationality of the 'fathers'

⁴³ Ruth C. Duck & Patricia Wilson-Kastner, *Praising God: The Trinity in Christian Worship*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 28.

⁴⁴Duck, 28.

⁴⁵ Janet Martin Soskice, "Can a Feminist Call God 'Father'?" In *Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenges of Feminism*, edited by Alvin F. Kimel, Jr., 82-83. Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1992.

⁴⁶ Janet Martin Soskice,

⁴⁷ Janet Martin Soskice,

who held to this type of reasoning such as Plato, Aristotle, Philo, Origen, Augustine, and Chrysostom who said that God's image in men is understood through men's capacity to reason. Therefore, says Janet, "...these features—rationality, freedom, and dominion—were precisely those which, according to the consensus of classical antiquity, women lacked."⁴⁸ It is safe to say that the author does not support the "fathers" conclusion of viewing women in this image.

There is no way that the "fathers'" view of women bring justice to the true image of God in the life of believers especially women. The danger comes when people begin to employ human languages to explicate what the fatherhood of God should be. Thomas cautions us of employing anthropomorphic language to describe the fatherhood of God.

Thus the act of God's self-revealing to us takes our human speaking, hearing, and knowing into its concrete realization within God's personal interrelation with us, and so there is necessarily included within it an anthropomorphic component. It cannot be stressed too much that this is not an anthropomorphic element which is generated by any independent act of knowing or conceiving of God on our part, but one that arises in the self-determination of God's being toward us, in his creating us for fellowship with himself, in his establishing personal relations between us and himself, and in his making himself known to us within those relations.⁴⁹

Therefore, the only way to understand the true image of a godly father is found in the Father and Son relationship. Thomas strongly emphasizes that this revelation can only happen in the incarnation of Jesus. He states that the knowledge of knowing God as Father is through the revelation of Jesus. Consequently, this can only happen through the incarnation of God's Son through the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit who reveals the relationship of the Father and Son where the church enters into communion with God.⁵⁰ By this revelation the church comes

⁴⁸ Janet, 84.

⁴⁹ Thomas F. Torrance, "The Christian Apprehension of God the Father." In *Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenges of Feminism*, edited by Alvin F. Kimel Jr., 124. Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1992.

⁵⁰ Thomas, 120.

to truly apprehend the “eternal nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”⁵¹ Interestingly, both Bloesch and Catherine Mowry LaCugna illuminate this notion in their thesis, which the author will underline later in the following sentences.

Meanwhile, the second person of the Godhead, the Son, who is manifested as Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Word of God and communicate the Father to the world. His name metaphorically includes as ‘Son,’ ‘Word,’ ‘Christ,’ ‘Sophia,’ ‘Redeemer,’ ‘risen One,’ and ‘incarnate One,’ or ‘Mother.’⁵² Meanwhile, the metaphors that is employed to delineate the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit are ‘Giver of Life,’ ‘Sanctifier,’ ‘Comforter,’ and ‘Sustainer.’⁵³ Consequently, these metaphorical languages promote a lifestyle of justice, love, and bring a balance between the males and females in worshipping God. Duck states the following assertion,

Language used to speak of the Trinity should reflect love, justice, and equality, which are the marks of ethical life based in Trinitarian faith. This means that language and images of Christian worship should not reflect a patriarchal culture of domination of women by men, which is suggested when God is always associated with masculine images such as ‘Father’ and ‘Lord.’ Nor should it reflect racist culture by constantly portraying God as light and never dark. Fully Trinitarian liturgical language is emancipatory, showing the Holy One at work bringing justice and communion among humanity in the continuing mission of Jesus the Christ through the power of the Spirit.⁵⁴

The reformist feminists’ conceptuality of the Trinity tends to create major problems for worshipping the Trinity. The question is, should the traditional formula of worshipping the Holy Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be compromised to support one’s political agenda? This question is inevitable to be ignored.

⁵¹ Thomas, 120.

⁵² Duck, 29.

⁵³ Duck, 29.

⁵⁴ Duck, 31.

To change the biblical grammar of the triune name of God can lead to serious consequences in worshipping the Trinity. For example, whose name does the church baptize people who come to God. It is in the names of “Creator,” “Redeemer,” “Sanctifier,” “Mother,” “Lover,” or “Friend.” These names have no biblical substance or creedal support to say otherwise. These are not proper names for God to comprehend the true nature of the Trinity. This piece of information is critical when it comes to worshipping the Trinity in the church. The words of Bloesch’s must be heeded. This is what he says when the church accepts the new grammar of feminism.

To replace the foundational symbolism of faith with more inclusive symbolism such as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer is to abandon the ontological or essential Trinity for the economic Trinity, in which the three terms refer only to a threefold activity of God and not also to a threefold relationship within himself. This is the ancient heresy of modalism associated with the theologian Sabellius, who was willing to affirm that God assumes three roles, but not that he is in himself Father, Son, and Spirit.⁵⁵

This is the reason why the author believes that reformist feminism’s view is detrimental to the true worship of the Holy Trinity.

Alvin Kimel, Jr. postulates that the proper name to baptize people into the body of Christ is through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It removes any confusion when it comes to worshipping and knowing the Holy Trinity. This is what he says concerning the matter.

Proper names are distinguished from common nouns in that they signify singular and unique objects rather than classes of objects. A proper name allows us to designate a specific something, separating it from the anonymity of existence for communication, study, use, love. Even deities need proper names. We need to be able to identify which one we are addressing, worshipping, obeying, fleeing.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Bloesch, 51.

⁵⁶ Alvin F. Kimel, Jr., “The God Who Likes His Name: Holy Trinity, Feminism, and the Language of Faith,” *Interpretation*, 45 no 2, (1991): 150.

The proper name of the Trinity plays a vital role when it comes to obeying and worshipping the true God in the Scripture. Thus, for not applying the proper name of God goes against the core foundation of the historical affirmation of the church. Historically, the Church confesses and prays in the proper name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Consequently, says Alvin

As we have been baptized, so much we confess and pray our faith. We are incorporated into a distinctive language and grammar. To replace the Trinitarian formula is to repudiate the creed, church, God our baptism. Take two recent proposals: Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier; Mother, Lover, Friend. The former cannot function as a proper name; it does not identify; it does not specify which God we are talking about...Within the divine life of the Godhead, however, the deity is eternally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is his name before time and forever.⁵⁷

furthermore, through this understanding of the sacraments of baptism, the Eucharist

(Communion), prayer; they all give credence to the worship of Trinity. He says again that,

With the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our God is clearly identified and our experience of deity linguistically defined. Each believer, by the mandate of the risen Christ, is baptized into this name, initiated into a new relationship with the triune God of the Scriptures. From this point on, we meet and experience the deity from within the trinitarian narrative proclaimed in the community of faith. We are the people of the Trinity, shaped and formed by the threefold appellation of our God. 'Baptism into the name of the 'the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,' 'writes Catherine LaCugna, 'means incorporation into the power and essence of God, into the history and story of God, into the life and heart and identity of God.' The dominical command, therefore, both sanctions the triune name by divine revelation and establishes it as a necessary function in our knowledge of the living God. God gives himself to us in his name, and by his name defines our experience of him as triune. We know the deity as the Holy Trinity because we speak, pray, hear, believe, worship his personal name.⁵⁸

Here the Trinity is being magnified as the center of Christian worship. It is the center of worship because the proper name of God is acknowledged in its entirety in the worship of the sacraments. To bring credence to what being stated above about the proper name for God Bloesch succinctly states that "In the Bible the name of God represents the very reality and being of God. It is in his

⁵⁷ Alvin, 151.

⁵⁸ Kimel, Jr., 150.

name that he reveals himself and saves us.”⁵⁹ This is done by understanding the full purpose and nature of the Trinity.

There is no doubt that the feminists’ view of the Trinity has made some major contribution toward the social deliberation of the subservience of women. However, the Trinity should never be an instrument of one’s own personal and political agenda. Through this social dispositional argument, the focus of the Trinity has been shifted. It shifts the focus to be about male’s dominancy over women rather than seeing maleness and femaleness being incorporated in the worship of the Trinity. In other words, when there is mutual fellowship of the sexes the church fully comes into the true worship of the Trinity.

In her critique of the feminists’ movement, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, highlights the importance of maintaining the biblical baptismal formula of the Father, Son, and Spirit. She postulates that the Bible and the Trinitarian tradition are revelatory sources that help bring truth toward the mystery of God.⁶⁰

Interestingly, she does not see the patriarchal culture as a threat toward feminists’ identity in the body of Christ. She says the following, “On that basis I am proposing that the baptismal formula and Trinitarian theology need not be repudiated as inherently sexist and patriarchal.”⁶¹ The baptismal formula, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is to be seen as a “powerful symbol of liberating relationships promised by Christ and realized in the reign of God.”⁶² She succinctly says again that “Baptism has the power to create a community based on interdependence,

⁵⁹ Bloesch, 25.

⁶⁰ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, “The Baptismal Formula, Feminist Objection, And Trinitarian Theology” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 26:2, (1989): 238.

⁶¹ Catherine Mowry LaCugna,

⁶² Catherine Mowry LaCugna,

mutuality, and reciprocal love and self-sacrifice, which are leitmotif of theological feminism.”⁶³

In other words, true biblical understanding of the baptismal formula brings meaning to the feministic identity. Mowry LaCugna also sees baptism as the gateway of a new social order where maleness and femaleness identity is understood within the Christian community, though, it is not practiced as regularly in the manner it should be, the way the church intellectually professes it.⁶⁴ It only becomes a threat when sin is involved which leads to personal distortion (self-interest).

Bloesch shares the same theological sentiment with LaCugna’s comprehension of the true purpose of the traditional baptismal formula of the Trinity—that it has the power to create a community of “mutuality” and a “reciprocal love” where femininity and masculinity are grounded in the true biblical metaphor of fatherhood. He states following,

...because feminine as well as masculine imagery for God exists in the Scriptures, it is possible to speak of a divine motherhood as well as a divine fatherhood. Yet the latter is the controlling symbol. Femininity is grounded in masculinity in the Bible (Eve came out of Adam) just as motherhood is grounded in fatherhood. The masculine is the ground of the feminine, but the feminine is the goal and glory of the masculine (1 Cor 11:7).⁶⁵

Bloesch further says again that this can only happen when both sexes understand the biblical meaning of true fatherhood and true Lordship of coming to reality that God is their heavenly Father and Jesus is their divine Lord.⁶⁶ This is when true manifestation of worship begins in the Trinity. On that note the author turns his attention to the final hindrance to the worship of the Trinity.

⁶³ Catherine Mowry LaCugna,

⁶⁴ Catherine Mowry LaCugna,

⁶⁵ Bloesch, 34-35.

⁶⁶ Bloesch, 35.

Hindrance: Oneness Pentecostalism “In Jesus’ name” only.

The best persons at times to speak on any religious heresy especially the view of God are those who came out from this religious environment. Gregory Boyd is such a person. Boyd was a former member of the Oneness Pentecostal movement. He is from the denomination of The United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI). The UPCI is the largest of all Oneness denominations in the United States. In the preface of his book Boyd voices the threat that Oneness Pentecostal teaching has toward the worshipping of the Trinity. Thus, he states the following concern,

The Oneness heresy begins with the conviction that the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity is fundamentally incompatible with a faith that there is only one God. Therefore, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit cannot in this view be real, distinct, coequal persons in the eternal Godhead, but are only different roles that one divine person temporarily assumes. Though this heresy can initially appear relatively harmless, in rejecting the Trinity this belief actually cuts to the heart of all that is essential to the Christian faith.⁶⁷

This denomination shares an ancient heretical view of the Trinity. Oneness Pentecostals’ view was considered in the early church as Modalism, Sabellianism, Patripassianism, or Monarchianism. These views were rejected by the Orthodox Church and considered to be detrimental to the worship of the Holy Trinity.

Boyd points out in his book that there are two reasons why this movement is growing so rapidly all over the world—to the point that it has begun to creep into some mainline Trinitarian churches. The first reason is that most antitrinitarian sects tend to be restrictive in structure which make them most identifiable as opponents toward traditional Christianity.⁶⁸ This is not the

⁶⁷ Gregory A. Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals & The Trinity: A World-wide movement assessed by a former Oneness Pentecostal* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1992), 1, Kindle.

⁶⁸ Gregory, 11 Kindle.

case with Oneness Pentecostalism. Oneness Pentecostalism tends to branch out in its discipline. In other words, it is one of the fastest growing denominations all over the world.

The second reason is that though other antitrinitarian groups tend to reject the Trinity by denying Christ's divinity, "the Oneness Pentecostals reject the Trinity by denying that Jesus Christ is any sense distinct from the Father."⁶⁹ Hence, since the church identifies more with Christ's divinity rather than the Trinity, "the Oneness error on the Godhead can seem more innocuous than the subordinationist error."⁷⁰ Through these reasons Oneness Pentecostal's doctrine has slid under the radar undetected because Christian leaders according to Gregory become oblivious to see its detrimental influence. For Gregory, this is a major hindrance for the church to completely experience the Trinity in worship.

The Oneness movement has become a powerhouse throughout the world because many countries and nations have accepted this form of teaching on the view of God. Since many nations and countries have welcomed it's teaching many Christians do not see the danger of accepting the Oneness view of God. Gregory believes that Christians' need to open their eyes to the subtleness of Oneness' doctrine of God because they deny any distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, Gregory says that the "the inconspicuousness and apparent harmlessness of this theological aberration renders it all the more dangerous and makes the need for Christians to be informed about it the more urgent."⁷¹

In addition, Wolfgang Vondey also confirms the rapid growth of modern-day Pentecostal movement in the twenty-first century. Vondey states that "Today's Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon, an ecumenical melting pot, a theological puzzle consisting of a multiplicity of

⁶⁹ Gregory, 11 Kindle.

⁷⁰ Gregory, 11 Kindle.

⁷¹ Gregory, 11-12 Kindle.

voices and positions, and a major factor in the shaping of late modern Christianity.”⁷² As stated before its teaching has crept into some Trinitarian fellowship where some members fail to recognize the theological differences. This is the reason why the author incorporates this heretical doctrine as one of the major hindrances to the worship of the Holy Trinity.

Is it the author intention to devalue the Oneness Pentecostal denominations? The answer is no. The purpose here is to highlight the danger of its doctrinal tutelage. So, then, how does this tutelage affect how Christians worship the Triune God? In a major way! Oneness Pentecostals are known as Modalists. Now, not all Pentecostals movement are classified as Modalists. There is another charismatic movement that calls themselves Trinitarian Pentecostals. This group holds strongly to the doctrinal statement of the biblical Trinity.

Interestingly, Trinitarian Pentecostals holds to the same view of the Trinity as the Western traditions by embracing the unity of the Godhead “and then emphasizing the three eternal and personal distinctions within the divine essence.”⁷³ It differs from the Western traditional understanding of the filioque. The West understands that the filioque of the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Conversely, Trinitarian Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only and not from the Son.

Now, when it comes to worshipping the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Oneness Pentecostals tend to reject this baptismal formula. Oneness theology does not believe in the distinct persons of the Godhead. What they do believe is that the Old Testament name for Yahweh is synonymous to the New Testament name for Jesus. David Reed recorded the words

⁷² Wolfgang Vondey, “The Unity and Diversity of Pentecostal Theology: A Brief Account for the Ecumenical Community in the West,” *Ecclesiology* 10, (2014): 77.

⁷³ Veli-Matti Karkainen, “Trinity as Communion in the Spirit: Koinonia, Trinity, and Filioque in the Roman Catholic—Pentecostal Dialogue,” *The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 22, no.2 (2000): 211.

of Frank Ewart a Oneness theologian who claims that ‘God’s presence and power and glory were all in His Name.’⁷⁴ Thus, God’s Name is the ‘self-expression, or self-declaration, of God’s Own Being.’⁷⁵ For Ewart the Name signifies the monotheistic nature of God’s being.

The oneness of God is manifested in the divine name in the Old Testament and it is revealed in the New Testament as the name of Jesus. Why? For Jesus name reveals God’s self-revelation as being one God. Therefore, oneness theologians claim that Jesus is not only the Son, but Jesus is also the Father and the Holy Spirit.⁷⁶ Boyd postulates that since Oneness holds to the biblical notion of the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 that the Lord is One, then Jesus Christ is God. Oneness theologians such as David Bernard postulates that the teaching of Trinity ‘violates the Shema,’ and ‘denies...the sole and supreme Deity of Jesus.’⁷⁷ Therefore, it is in the Name (Jesus Christ) that the fullness of Godhead is manifested. Another proponent of this belief that gives credence to the name, Ralph Del Colle believes that the Oneness faith does acknowledge the fullness of the Godhead. The fullness of the Godhead is to be understood through the manifestation of Jesus. Therefore, the oneness of God is to be “absolute” and “indivisible” because there is no distinction within the Godhead.⁷⁸

It is from this understanding that the true nature of knowing and worshipping the Trinity is being hindered in many churches today; especially within Trinitarian fellowships. Boyd states the following observation, “On the surface, this argument appears to have great force, so much

⁷⁴ David A. Reed, “In Jesus’ Name:” The History and Beliefs of Oneness Pentecostals, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series* 31, (Deo Publishing: Blandford Forum, 2008), 247.

⁷⁵ Reed, 248.

⁷⁶ Doug Batchelor, *The Trinity: Is It Biblical?* (California: Amazing Facts, Inc., 2010), 67, Kindle.

⁷⁷ Gregory Boyd, 28, Kindle.

⁷⁸ Ralph Del Colle, “Oneness and Trinity: A Preliminary Proposal For Dialogue With Oneness Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 10, (1997): 92.

so that many sincere Trinitarian Christians have been convinced by it.”⁷⁹ Also, there is strong accentuation of pneumatological teaching of the Holy Spirit in Oneness denominations. The teaching of the Holy Spirit is a major factor in Oneness theology. For Oneness sees Jesus as the Holy Spirit. Boyd who is excellent for revealing the weaknesses of Oneness theology points out that theologians within this organization tend to employ scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 3:17 where Jesus is explicitly called ‘the Spirit.’ In Romans 8:9-11 where Jesus is identified as the ‘Spirit of Christ,’ ‘Christ,’ or the ‘the Spirit of him who raised Jesus.’⁸⁰

The underlining of the Holy Spirit in Oneness Pentecostals is focused on the Spirit baptism. Since there are no distinctions in the Godhead “The majority of Pentecostals would agree that ‘Spirit baptism brings the reign of the Father, the reign of the crucified and risen Christ, and the reign of the divine life to all creation through the indwelling of the Spirit.’”⁸¹ Therefore, Oneness Pentecostals do not concentrate on the “inner life of the triune God.” This inner life of the Godhead is clearly manifest in the *perichoresis*. This is where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit mutually dwells together in the Trinity without any compromising of the distinction of persons. The *perichoresis* is also called the ‘divine dance.’

The problem this tends to create is that when it comes to worshipping the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Christians are only worshipping one person of the Trinity from this mindset. The center of worship is Jesus. There is no doubt that the scriptures call upon all believers to worship Jesus. The incarnation of Jesus and His death on the cross solidifies the church hope before the Father. Christ’s death on the cross provides for the church an opportunity of experiencing the triune God’s love for us.

⁷⁹ Gregory Boyd, 28, Kindle.

⁸⁰ Gregory Boyd, 30, Kindle.

⁸¹ Gregory Boyd, 30, Kindle

The Spirit is given to all believers to be in a relationship with the Son and to understand the Father's love. When Christians worship Jesus they also honor the Holy Spirit. The Spirit that dwells in the life of all believers' delights in drawing attention to the Son (John 16:13-15). Likewise, the Son delights in drawing attention to the Father (John 6:38; 4:34; 17:3). There are so many contemporary Christian songwriters that tend to ignore the worship of the Father and Spirit or vice-versa. Parry expresses his theological concerns that by focusing on one person of the Trinity can hinder the true nature of Christian worship. He says the following,

I want to suggest that worship of Jesus is central to Christian faith, and that it is honoring to both Father and Spirit, but that it must not move towards an exclusive focus on worshipping Jesus that denies the reality of the Trinity by pushing the Father and the Spirit to the margins. Trinitarian spirituality requires a balance that some are in danger of losing. However, there is another danger present that must also be resisted—and that is to neglect the worship of Jesus by singing songs exclusively to 'God' and 'Lord' and 'Father.'⁸²

To separate the worship of the Son and by only addressing the Father and Spirit only, will only bring injustice and dampen the true spirit of worship.

The author concludes this chapter with the words of Andrew Goodliff when he says that Christian worship speaks of the Trinitarian drama of salvation.

Christian worship is a balance between the two ancient doxologies: 'Glory to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit' and 'Glory to the Father with the Son, together with the Holy Spirit.' The first doxology acknowledges that worship is something we participate in, as James Torrance says, 'worship is the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father.' The second doxology acknowledges that we worship God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While the Son and the Spirit enable and mediate our worship to the Father, they also share the Father's divinity and therefore 'they are equally to be given that which only God should receive...worship and honor and glory.' Accordingly, Christian worship should be both mediated through the Son and in the Spirit and be given to the Father with the Son and with the Spirit. To deny one or the other is to be in danger of either creating a distance

⁸² Parry, 88.

between God and worshippers—no mediator—or to suggest the Son and the Spirit are not fully divine.⁸³

Therefore, when theology is diluted the church's worship songs and prayers can create poor spiritual worshippers.⁸⁴ Christians need to be aware of these three major hindrances when it comes to worshipping the Trinity. Thus, chapter three is important because the author will provide clarity to the biblical understanding of the three-ness of God unity.

⁸³ Andrew Goodliff, "'It's all about Jesus': a critical analysis of the ways in which the songs of four contemporary worship Christian songwriters can lead to an impoverished Christology," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 3, (2009): 255-256.

⁸⁴ Parry, 10.

CHAPTER 3

WORSHIPPING THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT IN THE TRINITY

In the previous chapter three major theological views were introduced to demonstrate the hindrances to fully worshipping the Trinity. In this chapter, the author will provide biblical evidence that speak of the distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, this chapter will not fully dialogue about the theological discrepancies that surround the dissertation of the distinction of each person of the Trinity. This is not the purpose here. The purpose here is to demonstrate that the Trinity is vital to the Christian faith of knowing the mystery of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

To engage this biblical endeavor of knowing the mystery of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Trinitarian scholars have employed biblical hermeneutics to help communicate the meaning and the mystery of the Trinity. Thus, the essential purpose of hermeneutics is to “provide a strategy that will enable us to understand what an author or speaker intended to communicate.”¹ This is what the gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have done. They have used the Old Testament text, the Torah, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit’s guidance to explain the Godhead. The gospel writers also affirm the bold claims of Jesus statement that He and the Father are one in divinity. For instance, both Paul and the synoptic writers’ give their theological interpretation to the divine unison of each persons of the Godhead. This is one way that theology serve its purpose. Emery says it this way, “The fundamental task of theology is to render an account of faith and hope.”² The truth of the matter is that Christians’

¹ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, JR, Introduction To Biblical Interpretation, ed. Kermit A. Ecklebarger (Dallas: World Publishing, 1993),

² Gilles Emery, O.P., The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), xi.

hope lies within the biblical understanding of the Trinity. So, the query of the day is, who is God? How does knowing God bring theological meaning to Godhead?

The author is not going to do too much justice here when it comes to clarifying the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this chapter. To be quite honest, to write on each person of the Trinity would have required a separate chapter on the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So much can be said of each persons. In conjunction to this notion, Dr. Wayne Grudem speaks on this matter of the attributes of God, his incommunicable/communicable attributes, by saying,

When we come to talk about the character of God, we realize that we cannot say everything the Bible teaches us about God's character at once. We need some way to decide which aspect of God's character to discuss first, which aspect to discuss second, and so forth.³

The author essential purpose here is to speak on each persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by explaining why it is important for Christians to worship the Holy Trinity.

Worshipping the Father in the Trinity

To fully experience God is to know the Father as triune.⁴ Scripture teaches that there is one God who manifests Himself in three Persons. Another way to express this 'threeness' of God is this way, "God is three Persons in one being—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."⁵ To worship the Father is to acknowledge that the sending forth of the Son is to reveal the love of the Father. It is through the Son manifestation that Christians get to know the Father. This is very foundational in order to fully appreciate the experience of knowing the triune God. Philip Ryken underscores this important factor in worshipping the Trinitarian faith by stating,

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction To Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1994), 156.

⁴ Philip Ryken, Michael LeFebvre, *Our Triune God: Living In The Love Of The Three-In-One* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011), 13, Kindle.

⁵ Ryken, 13.

This Trinitarian truth is foundational to the worship and the service of God. To know God as triune is to worship him as he is, rejoicing in his very being. we praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for having equal, divine majesty, while at the same time honoring each Person's unique personality: the Father is the Father of the Son; the Son is the Son of the Father; the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son.⁶

Through this understanding, Christian come to experience the Father's mercy and love through Christ.

The term Father is implicitly related to God in scriptures. The Old Testament also references the term Father to God. For instance, the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:6 speaks of God as Father, the One who formed and established Israel.⁷ Other scriptures such as 2 Samuel 7 speaks of the analogy of a father and son relationship. Here the Prophet Nathan's oracle to King David was to remind David of God's covenantal promise to his posterity. The Prophet Nathan reminded David that the Lord will be a Father to his descendants if his sons walked in the Lord's statutes and commandments. In the New Testament Jesus references God as His Father in the Gospel of John over 118 times. It is important to point out here that the biblical motive to employ Father in the scriptures was to distinguish Israel's God from the gods of Baal, Asherah and Near East goddesses.⁸ This is significant to point out here because it speaks of the nature of God. Why? Because God is Father and the Father is God. Here both the NT and OT agrees concerning God as Father.

Moltmann postulates that God's nature is expressed in two ways. First, God is the *supreme substance*. Secondly, God is the *absolute subject*. The *supreme substance* speaks of the cosmological proofs of God creative order in the universe while the *absolute subject* of God

⁶ Ryken & LeFebvre, 13.

⁷ Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 14, Kindle.

⁸ Gerald O'Collins, S.J., 17.

speaks of the “biblical testimonies of salvation history”⁹ of God ministering His salvation to the world through the prophets and Christ. Therefore, God becomes the *absolute subject* of discourse. So, the query that comes to mind then, why does God the Father possess a divine nature? Does God the Father’s divine nature make a difference in the format of Christian development? The author believes that these two questions are necessarily essential to the discussion at hand.

The name Father is very intriguing to the Roman Catholic faith because the name “integrates all the attributes that the Old Testament gave to the Lord God. He is the creator and savior of his people, the creator of the world, the personal God, unique and immortal, provident, ruler and Lord, king, judge, the Father who blesses”¹⁰ according to Gilles Emery, O.P. The divine nature of the Father (God) can be explained in various ways. But because of the nature of the dissertation the author will only discuss few of God’s divine nature. The divine nature of God is also known as God’s characters or God’s attributes. First, the Father’s divine nature is defined as His incommunicable attributes. The incommunicable attributes of God are attributes that speak of His eternity. These incommunicable attributes include God’s *eternity*, *immutability*, *omniscience*, *omnipotence*, *omnipresence*, etc. Hence, these attributes are independently related to God and to Him only.

Interestingly, God does not share these attributes with us. A.W. Tozer says it this way, “If an attribute is something true of God, it is also something that we can conceive as being true of Him. God, being infinite, must possess attributes about which we can know nothing. An

⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 278, Kindle.

¹⁰ Gilles Emery, O.P., 22-23.

attribute, as we can know it, is a mental concept, an intellectual response to God's self-revelation."¹¹ This only happens by the revelatory presence of His Spirit in the life of a Christian.

Most importantly, God is *infinite* and *personal*. The Father is infinite because He is not subject to the limitations of humans' frailty. God is infinite because He knows no bounds.¹² Respectively, "Whatever God is and all that God is, He is without limit."¹³ Thus, for God to be God, He is implicitly understood as being immortal.¹⁴ If there is any form of limitations that are expressed in His divine nature therefore the Father cannot be who He says He is. The Father is a personal being. He interacts with us through His Word, through His Son, through our worship of Him, and through our prayers to Him. Influentially, the personal being of God is deeply rooted in His creation of Adam. The scriptures say that God (Father) creates Adam in His own image after His own likeness (Gen.1:26).¹⁵ The Father is personally connected to His creation.

The second divine nature of the Father's character speaks of His communicable attributes, which are: *love, knowledge, justice, mercy, wisdom, goodness, holiness, jealousy, and wrath*.¹⁶ Christians share these communicable attributes also. These attributes relate to how God the Father communicate and establishes His covenantal relationship to the Church. The Church acknowledges and affirms these communicable attributes of God because there is no greater or higher qualities to be found in any other beings but God. This also includes His incommunicable

¹¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy, The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (HarperSanFrancisco: A Division of HarperCollinsPublishers, 1961), 13.

¹² A.W. Tozer, 45.

¹³ A.W. Tozer, 45.

¹⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 54.

¹⁵ Paul E. Little, *Know What You Believe: Connecting Faith and Truth*, Updated and expanded by Marie Little (Colorado: Victor, 2003), 25.

¹⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Bible doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, Edited by Jeff Purswell (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 88-94.

attributes. Gerald Bray says this way, “We may think that God is not the only being who has these characteristics, but a Christian is bound to say that God possesses them in greater measure (quantity) and to a higher degree (quality) than any other being.”¹⁷ Therefore, no Christians can say otherwise because they will find themselves on the verge of committing theological suicide.

The Scripture also teaches that God is one. The prime illustration of this oneness of God is found in Deuteronomy 6:4 which speaks of the *Shema*— “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” The Father is declared has one according to the *Shema*. But His oneness of being does not contradict the three hypostases (persons) of His being. The three hypostases “persons” of God do not go against the teaching of the *Shema*. Respectively, the author truly appreciates the theological clarification of Dr. Ware’s view on the matter. Ware says that:

The God of the Jews and the God of the Gentiles, who brings both together by faith in Christ, is one God. He is not one god for the Jews and a different god for the Gentiles. He is one God—the God both of the circumcised and the uncircumcised, who come together to this one God through faith in Christ...Rather, early Christians uniformly affirmed what both Old and New Testaments declare with consistency, clarify, and forcefulness, namely, that there is but one God, and that the covenant God of Israel and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ are one and the same God.¹⁸

There are several places in the Old Testament that theologically embraces and affirms the Threeness of God. For instance, Genesis 1:26 says, “Let *us* make man in our image,” Genesis 3:22 says “The man has become like one of *us* in knowing good and evil,” Genesis 11:7 says, “Let *us* go down and there confuse their language,” and the three supernatural beings who pay Abraham a visit to reveal to him their plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah’s sinfulness in Genesis 18:1-21. Also, the word “us” was mentioned in Isaiah 6:8 when Isaiah witnessed God’s glory in the temple and the Lord declares “...who will go for *Us*?”

¹⁷ Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine Of God: Contours of Christian Theology* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 54.

¹⁸ Bruce A. Ware, 28.

When the writers of these scriptures speak of “us” to whom are they referring to? According to David Wells during the Reformation period and the early centuries the Church has exegetically interpreted these passages to be pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.¹⁹ However, the full knowledge of the Father can only be known through the redemptive presence of Christ. Wells affirms this by implicating that “He is only Father to those who are in Christ...God is known to us as Father only through Christ, and not everyone is in Christ.”²⁰ This is the reason why the Father is to be worshipped. Larry Hurtado is a binitarianist who concentrates on the early Christians’ worship of the Father and Son. He states that the Father is to be worshipped not because of “an extension of ourselves, as justifying patriarchy,” but worship in the context of being “categorically transcendent” over all His creation.²¹

Worshipping the Son in the Trinity

It was stated within chapter one by the author that the second person of the Trinity, the Son, is of great interest. Christ is of great interest because of His divinity. Many books and articles are written by theologians to combat the biblical view of the Trinity especial in the area of Christology. Karkkainen speaks of this Christological fascination by saying,

Beginning in the biblical period and traveling through two thousand years of winding theological roads, Christian theology has tried to make sense of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity and the most hotly debated figure of religious history. Every generation of theologians and Christians has responded to Christ’s person and influence in the context in which it has found itself.²²

¹⁹ David F. Wells, *What is the Trinity?: Basics of the Faith* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2012), 13.

²⁰ David F. Wells, 17.

²¹ Larry W. Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 1049, Kindle.

²² Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 9.

Karkkainen states the central reason for this department. He says that, “The person of Jesus Christ stands at the center of Christian faith and theology.”²³ In other words, if the divine Christology removes from the Church’s doctrine Christianity today would fall flat on its face. In juxtaposition to this notion Sanders talks about theological danger of devaluing the essence of the Son by stating that “After a long period of quiet, there is now considerable noise in evangelicalism regarding the Trinity...It seems to me that we are living through a period in which the traditional ways of deriving the doctrine of the Trinity from Scripture are losing some of their persuasive power.”²⁴ This is not just a random attack on the Trinity. It has been strategically orchestrated for centuries to discount the robustness of Christ’s divinity within Christendom. What perfect place to begin by attacking the Christology of the Trinity.

Theologians such as Richard Swinburne claims that the only way to make sense of the Trinity is through philosophical dialectic from the view of metaphysic. He postulates that a divine being does not have a “thisness.”²⁵ Richard Swinburne’s principle of “thisness” states that “two individuals are the same if they have all the same properties; but takes different forms according to what is allowed to constitute a property.”²⁶ He claims that the divine necessity is better understood from a metaphysical discourse of the Trinity rather than approaching it from the ontological dialectical claim. He continues to construct this argument by saying that,

A divine individual who exists of ontological necessity would be such that there is no cause active or permissive of his existence at any time. But, if he is the creator and sustainer of any universe, there may be, any other substance can only exist if he is, at

²³ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, 9.

²⁴ Fred Sanders, 1-2.

²⁵ Richard Swinburne, “The Trinity.” In *Philosophical and Theological Essays on the Trinity*, edited by Thomas McCall & Michael C. Rea, 19-37 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁶ Richard Swinburne, *Thisness*, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 73-3, (1995): 389.

least in part, the cause of its existence. Hence there cannot be, besides an ontologically necessary divine being, another such.²⁷

In other words, the Son and the Holy Spirit only exist because the Father exists.

Wolfhart Pannenberg is another interesting theologian who is of the mindset that faith in Christ does not suffice to embrace the divinity of Jesus. Faith in Christ is the teaching and concept of holding to the “Christology from above.”²⁸ That through faith alone Christians come to accept the divinity of Christ’s nature. Notwithstanding, of course, Pannenberg formulates the concept of “Christology from below.”²⁹ What does this mean for Pannenberg? It means that to fully understand the Christological divinity of Jesus is to inquire into the “historical Jesus and the historical basis for beliefs in Christ.”³⁰ In other words, a theologian or a Christian must go beyond the scriptural interpretation of Paul and the New Testament writers to historically discover the true Christology of the second person in the Trinity. Dr. Akin finds both to be advantageous because he says that “The Jesus of history and the Christ of faith is one and the same.”³¹ Interesting! Then the author comes to a critical question that must be answered.

How do Christians know the true divinity of Christ? The simplest answer given by Sinclair Ferguson is this, “You know what Jesus knows-.”³² In other words, Christians can only know the true divinity of Christ by the revelatory presence of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus asked the disciples in Caesarea Philippi “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” Peter immediately responded by saying to Jesus that He was the “Son of the living God.” Jesus then

²⁷ Richard Swinburne, 19.

²⁸ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, 12.

²⁹ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, 12.

³⁰ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, 12.

³¹ Daniel L. Akin, “The Person of Christ.” In *A Theology For The Church*, edited by Daniel L. Akin and associate editors David P. Nelson & Peter R. Schemm, Jr, (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 492.

³² Sinclair B. Ferguson, *A Heart For God* (Pennsylvania: The Banner Of Truth Trust, 1987), 12.

affirmed Peter's confession by saying "...for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."³³ Christians come to worship the Son because it is the Father who reveals the Son's divine nature through the Spirit. The reverse revelation of this statement can also be expressed in this fashion. According to Emery, "The revelation of Christ Jesus in the economy of salvation is the sole path of access to the divine mystery of his filiation."³⁴ Through the revelation of the economy of salvation the death and life of Christ reveals to the church that Christ is eternally connected to the Father.

Jesus shares the same attributes of the Father. For example, Jesus is *eternal, immutable, infinite, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and transcendence*. What the Father possesses the Son and the Holy Spirit possesses, but, yet distinct in persons. Tozer summarizes it this way for us, "Persons of the Godhead, being one, have one will. They work always together, and never one smallest act is done by one without the instant acquiescence of the other two. Every act of God is accomplished by the Trinity in Unity."³⁵ Thus, worship of Jesus also signifies to the Church that it only worships one God who is uniquely reveals in Jesus Christ.³⁶ In juxtaposition to what is being stated Dr. Akin says something similar to that effects. He says that "The word Father is qualitative. It tells us something about the character of Messiah and his relationship to his purpose."³⁷ The Messiah's purpose is to reveal the only true God, "and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" according to John's gospel.

³³ Matthew 16:13-17 NKJV

³⁴ Gilles Emery, O.P., 123.

³⁵ A.W. Tozer, 22.

³⁶ Larry W. Hurtado, 1124, Kindle.

³⁷ Daniel L. Akin, 488.

The Gospel of John speaks of the true nature of Jesus' divinity. It was not by accident or coincident that John somehow stumbles upon this revelation. The prologue of his gospel commences by declaring "In the beginning the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." John's purpose here was very intentional. The Greek word that John employs is *Logos*. To the Greek *Logos* is reason. To the Jews *Logos* is word/wisdom.³⁸ John portrays Jesus as the *Logos*. Jesus is the Word of God.

One of the intriguing theological observations of the gospel of John is the *Logos*. It is already stated that John employs the *Logos* in his prologue to reveal the authenticity of Christ's divine nature. But there is a deeper reason why John employs the Greek word *Logos* in his declaration of Christ. According to Dr. Akin John, he uses the *Logos* "because of its capacity to communicate to multiple cultures, i.e., Jewish and Hellenistic. He uses it for the purpose of missions and evangelism."³⁹ In other words, John uses a language that was already familiar to the culture.

The cultures at the time would be more receptive to entertain the *Logos* so therefore it was very evangelistic. Just like when the Apostle Paul encountered the Epicurean in Areopagus worshipping the "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" in Acts 17. Paul uses this opportunity to reveal Christ in this unknown God. This is what John has done here. John provides a different meaning to his cultural context that Christ is the *Logos* and that He is God. Through this understanding, John reveals to the Church and his culture that Jesus is the second person of the triune God.

³⁸ Daniel L., Akin, 492.

³⁹ Daniel L. Akin, 493.

The Christological Trajectories verify His Trinitarian Identity

The New Testament writers confirm the Christological identity of Jesus and his direct connection to the Father. The names of the gospels writers, including the Apostle Paul, employ to delineate the Son was to verify His divinity with the Father. Clark and Johnson state, “Essential to the grand mystery of the incarnation is that the One who has come among us knows God *as God knows himself*. And he knows God in this most remarkable way in our humanity—Jesus Christ is fully God and *fully human*.”⁴⁰ What better way to say it. The names of Christ that the writers of the gospels use and echo in Paul’s writings are very important to understanding the Son’s divinity. There are several names that the New Testament writers including Paul that were mentioned that speak of the Son’s divine nature. But only two of them will mention here for now.

“Son of God”

In John’s gospel, the writer uses the term “Son of God” about eight times in his gospel (1:49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4; 11:27; 19:7; 20:31).⁴¹ Emery speaks and stresses the importance of the title that the “Son of God” signifies the unity of both the Father and Son’s divine relationship. When speaking of the revelation of the incarnation of Christ, Clark and Johnson says that,

The Son’s relationship with his Father is everything to him; he has eternally existed in the intimacy of his Father’s loving embrace, enjoying the most perfect and intimate of all unions from before time began. The relationship that the Son and Father share transcends the bounds of time and the limits of our imagination...⁴²

⁴⁰ John C. Clark & Marcus Peter Johnson, *The Incarnation of God: The Mystery of The Gospel as the Foundation of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 49.

⁴¹ Andreas J. Kostenberger & Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel*, ed. D.A. Carson (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 75.

⁴² John C. Clark & Marcus Peter Johnson, 54.

It speaks of His eternal divinity with the Father in eternity. Jesus is the shining glory of the Father. Both John and the writer of Hebrews testify of the brightness of the Son's glory of the Father (John 17:5; Hebrews 1:3). Daniel Ebert IV speaking on the wisdom of God in the nature of the Son being the image of God's wisdom says it this way, "The Son as the image of God is more than a revelation of God's wisdom; he is a revelation of God himself."⁴³ On the contrary, there are those who oppose the usage of the term "Son of God." The reason for this is because the "Son of God" can also apply to Old and New Testament characters. For instance, Israel at times is referred to as God's son. Solomon, Adam, the Israelites, the peacemakers (NT believers), and the angels of God are all called the "Son of God."⁴⁴ One opponent who refuses to accept the linkage of the "Son of God" to Christ's divinity is Anthony Buzzard. Buzzard who is a strong proponent of the Socinian doctrine of Christ also known as Unitarian believes that the "Son of God" is understood as simply a title given to Christ as "a supreme representative of God."⁴⁵

The "Son of God" is simply a representation of one who speaks for. Making reference to this notion Buzzard highlights the theological thought of Jacob Jervell who he is agreed within saying, 'Jesus is not God but God's representative and, as such, so completely and totally acts on God's behalf that he stands in God's stead before the world. The Gospel clearly states that God and Jesus are not be understood as identical persons.'⁴⁶ Buzzard believes that Jesus was the "Son of God" but not in relationship of being equal with God's divine essence. The title only

⁴³ Daniel J. Ebert IV, *Wisdom Christology: How Jesus Becomes God's Wisdom for Us* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2011), 94.

⁴⁴ D.A. Carson, *Jesus The Son of God: A Christological Title Often Overlooked, Sometimes Misunderstood, And Currently Disputed* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 79, Kindle.

⁴⁵ Anthony F. Buzzard & Charles F. Hunting, *The Doctrine Of The Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound* (San Francisco: Christian Universities Press, 1999), 309.

⁴⁶ Anthony F. Buzzard & Charles F. Hunting,

describes a creature relation to God but does not speak of being God Himself.⁴⁷ To accept this without question should cause “churchgoers to shrink in horror from such potential polytheism.”⁴⁸ This is not the case here in the New Testament. The New Testament writers see it differently and understand it differently. In his review of Carson’s theological assessment of the “Son of God” Richard Gaffin Jr. comments in Carson’s book that, ‘No Christological designation is as essential as ‘Son of God’; none is more important.’”⁴⁹ The title that is given to Christ the “Son of God” has a greater Christological significance than those who are called the “Son of God” in the Old and New Testament.

Whenever the title “Son of God” is mentioned by John’s gospel it speaks of Jesus’ Messianic authority. In His messianic ‘name’ it is said that life flows from Him. John records eight of Jesus’ “I am” sayings. These “I am” sayings also speak of Jesus’s divinity. For R. Kendall Soulen the “I am” sayings of Jesus truly reveals the divine identity “as the one who has been given the divine name and who makes it known.”⁵⁰ The “I am” sayings speak of the one who spoke within the burning bush to Moses. Thus, Jesus’ declares in John’s gospel by saying, “I am the bread of life” (6:35, 48), “I am the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5), “Before Abraham was, I am” (8:58), “I am the door” (10:9), “I am the good shepherd” (10:11), “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25), “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6), and “I am the true vine” (15:1).⁵¹

⁴⁷ Anthony Buzzard, *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian: A Call to Return to the Creed of Jesus* (Morrow, GA: Restoration Fellowship, 2007), 2507, Kindle.

⁴⁸ Anthony Buzzard,

⁴⁹ D.A. Carson, 10, Kindle.

⁵⁰ R. Kendall Soulen, “The Name Above Every Name”: “The Eternal Identity of The Second Person of The Trinity and The Covenant of Grace. In *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations In Constructive Dogmatics*, edited Oliver D. Crisp & Fred Sanders 120. Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 2014 Kindle.

⁵¹ John’s Gospel, NKJV

These “I am” sayings signify that His ‘name’ truly gives life. According to Veli-Matti when Jesus makes reference to Himself as being the “Son of God” Jesus is claiming a personal intimacy with the Father.⁵² Veli-Matti says that when Jesus was praying to the Father to remove the cup of suffering from Him in Mark 14:36, Jesus uses the word “Abba.”⁵³ By using this phrase “Abba” Jesus was declaring His eternal intimacy with the Father.

“Son of Man”

This title speaks of God’s reign being accomplished in Jesus through the incarnational birth; however, Karkkainen shares three biblical understandings of the term “Son of Man.” First, God addresses Ezekiel as “Son of man.” God uses this term to address Ezekiel over one hundred times. Secondly, the term is used to underline the “frailty of human nature.” Thirdly, Daniel 7:13-14 speaks of the “Son of man” as one who christologically bridges the gap between God and man. Emery says that the “Son of man” signifies the awesome reign of God through the accomplishment of Jesus’ birth and death.⁵⁴ While Kostenberger and Swain says that the “Son of man” speaks of Jesus as “the ‘new Bethel,’ the place where God is revealed, where heaven and earth, God and humanity, meet.”⁵⁵ Christ is the middle ground where God and man can meet for fellowship.

To conclude here with both terms is of vital necessity. Why? Because both terms speak of the Son’s preexistence with the Father (God). To reject the notion of Christ’s deity is to put Christianity in a dark room. By understanding the second person of the Trinity gives Christians the theological opportunity to worship a Deity who is deserving of our worship. All of what

⁵² Veli-Matti Karkkainen, 25.

⁵³ Veli-Matti Karkkainen,

⁵⁴ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, 26.

⁵⁵ Andreas J. Kostenberger & Scott R. Swain, 85.

have been said about the Son's deity can truly be synopsized in the doctrine of preexistence. Donald Macleod succinctly speaks of the coexistence of both the deity and preexistence of Jesus when he accentuates that "A person who was divine could not but be pre-existent. His godhead proved that he could not have come into being..."⁵⁶ This speaks of Christ's coexistence with the triune God.

To end here would be an injustice to this chapter. There is a strong implication here when theologians such as Anthony Buzzard who disconnects the names that verify Christ's deity. For one to only view the titles given to Christ as being functional rather than affirming His preexistence with the Father put Christians' salvation in jeopardy. Here the words of Douglas McCready on this matter.

...the doctrine of Christ's preexistence says the Son personally existed at the side of God before he existed at our side. That is an essential truth for the biblical idea of salvation, but it also tells us a very important truth about God. It says God loves us so much that he came in person to save us;...The preexistence the church attributes to Christ is a real or personal preexistence. Without that there could be no true deity...Yet it is his deity that guarantees the efficacy of Christ's salvific work.⁵⁷

In simpler words, to deny the Son's preexistence is to devalue the importance of the incarnation.

R.C. Sproul speaking on the incarnation believes that the person of Christ is intimately connected to the work of Christ. Sproul says that "...the work of Jesus reveals a great deal about who He is. So, His person and His work may be distinguished but never separated."⁵⁸ Consequently, this is why Jesus affirms His own deity and preexistence with the Father to the Pharisees in the gospel of John. This is sufficient theology. It is sufficient because it really does

⁵⁶ Donald Macleod, *The Person Of Christ: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 70.

⁵⁷ Douglas McCready, *He Came Down From Heaven: The Preexistence of Christ and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 245.

⁵⁸ R.C. Sproul, *The Work of Christ: What The Events of Jesus' Life Mean For You* (Colorado: David C Cook, 2012), 82, Kindle.

not need any one to speak for Him. His word is christologically sufficient. Jesus says to the Pharisees who reject His “I am” sayings when they refuse to see Him as divine. Jesus says to them in John 10:38 that “though you do not believe Me, believe the works,” that they may know that the Father lives in Him and that He dwells in the Father.

This is why it is so essential that Christians need to worship the Son because the Son is the key of the church existence. The Son provides salvation and He is salvation. Salvation is just one aspect of why Christians worship the Son. Christians should worship the Son because He is eternally divine.

Worshipping the Holy Spirit in the Trinity

The question is, who is the Holy Spirit? What significant role does the Holy Spirit play in the salvation of the Church? Should the Holy Spirit share equal worship with the Father and Son? These are critical questions to be addressed appropriately. If the responses to these questions are no then the church has a major problem on its hands. It has been stated that the Holy Spirit is called the ‘forgotten’ member of the triune God.⁵⁹ Part of the reason is clearly manifested in the work of Larry Hurtado. Hurtado believes in the binitriatristian view of God. In this doctrinal teaching, only the Father and the Son are worshipped.

Now, another reason as it was stated in chapter one that sincere Protestants worshipers tend to neglect the Holy Spirit in their worship and only focus on the Son. The Holy Spirit role is vital to the life of the church. So, what is the function of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit shares the same attributes of the Father and Son. The Spirit is *eternal, immutable, infinite, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and transcendence*. R.C. Sproul mentions that there

⁵⁹David Wells, 20.

was never time that the Holy Spirit did not exist. Thus, the Spirit is all-powerful.⁶⁰ He is not an impersonal “it.” He is more than that. Whatever the Father and Son possesses the Spirit also possesses. The Father and Son are holy (Rev. 15:4) so is the Holy Spirit for the Scripture says He is “holy.”⁶¹ The Scripture says that the Father is glorious in Ephesians 1:17.⁶² Also, the Scripture says that Christ is “the Lord of glory” in First Corinthians 2:8.⁶³ Likewise, the Scripture says that the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of glory” in First Peter 4:14.⁶⁴ The Father is truth in John 7:28 while Jesus embodies truth itself in John 14:6. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is seen as “the Spirit is the truth in First John 5:6. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal “it” because He is a person.

The personhood of the Holy Spirit is important to the doctrinal teaching of His deity. Why is this important to the church? R.A. Torrey gives us the answer and reason why this is important. He says that “It is of the highest importance from the standpoint of experience that we know the Holy Spirit as a person.”⁶⁵ The truth of the matter is that believers cannot worship an impersonal “it” or experience an impersonal force. God is a very personal ontological being. He is transcendent and immanent at the same. The ultimate manifestation of His immanent presence is Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that lives in the hearts of all Christians. In John 15:26 Jesus references the Holy Spirit as “He.” The Holy Spirit is to be addressed as a person.

⁶⁰R.C. Sproul, *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus, 1990), 214, Kindle

⁶¹David Wells, 21.

⁶²David Wells, 21.

⁶³David wells, 21.

⁶⁴David Wells, 21.

⁶⁵ R.A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 10.

Personhood entails intelligence, will and individuality. Therefore, “A person acts with intentionality. No abstract force can ever ‘intend’ to do anything.”⁶⁶

There are several functions that Jesus underlines about the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. These functions what the author calls, Trinitarian functionality, by affirming both works of the Father and Son. The functions of the Spirit reveals that He will ‘teach believers all things’ (John 14:26), He will ‘bear witness’ of Christ (John, 15:26; Romans 8:16; Hebrew 10:15), He will ‘convict the world’ of sin (John 16:8), He will ‘intercedes for us’ (Romans 8:27), and He will speak and give utterance to believers (Acts 8:29; 13:2; 16:6-7, 21:11).⁶⁷ These are just few of the functions that the Spirit does which reveals His divine nature.

The third person of the triune God, Holy Spirit, plays a significant role in the ministry of Jesus. The point that the Spirit involves in Jesus’ ministry and baptism show us that He is truly divine. Let illustrate this point. First, the Holy Spirit was part of the sending of the Son into the world according to Isaiah 48:16-17.⁶⁸ He was part of the triune conversation of the redemption of the world. Secondly, the Son was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). The incarnation is one of the most controversial doctrinal prepositions in the Christological debates.

This is very important for Christians to understand because this is not a new being “who was called into life, but One who had existed eternally...entered into vital relationship with human nature.”⁶⁹ Thirdly, the Spirit was part of Jesus spiritual growth (Luke 2:40). Finally,

⁶⁶ R.C. Sproul, 115, Kindle.

⁶⁷ David Wells, 22.

⁶⁸ Guy P. Duffied & Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (California: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983,) 273.

⁶⁹ Guy P. Duffied & Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, 272.

Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.⁷⁰ In addition, His name verifies His deity ‘The Spirit of the Lord.’

The Holy Spirit has the intrinsic ability to know and to understand the depthness of God’s nature.⁷¹ These activities speak of the Spirit deity within the tri-personal being of God. The church is to worship the third person of the Godhead because He brings Christians into union with the Father and Son. This is why He should be worshipped. The Holy Spirit is very vital in bringing understanding of knowing the Son while the Son reveals the Father. Concerning the purpose of the Spirit Martyn Lloyd-Jones states that the Spirit reveals the “Lord Jesus Christ and his person.”⁷² In other words, the Spirit reveals the deity and the incarnational status of Christ.

Sinclair Ferguson also states that the central role of the Spirit is to unite Christians to Christ and to reveal Christ to us. He went further to say again the indwelling of the Spirit in Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit in believers “are two aspects of one and the same reality in the New Testament, so to sustain us ‘in Christ’ is the heart and soul of the Spirit’s ministry.”⁷³ The Spirit brings revelation to the Father and Son.

To conclude this chapter by saying then that “all three have a part in the work of redemption⁷⁴ to restore world to the Father. Colin Gunton summaries it this way for us that the “New Testament trinitarianism is about life; that is to say, about access to God through Jesus

⁷⁰ Guy P. Duffied & Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, 273.

⁷¹ Matthew Barrett, “‘We Believe in the Holy Spirit’: Revisiting the Deity of the Spirit,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 16 no 4, (2012):40.

⁷² Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Assurance of Our Salvation: Exploring the Depth of Jesus’ Prayer for His Own* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 90.

⁷³ Sinclair B. Ferguson, 100.

⁷⁴ E. Calvin Beisner, 39.

Christ and in the Spirit.”⁷⁵ Hence, the Father initiates salvation. The Son carries out or accomplishes the Father’s plan of salvation. The Holy Spirit affirms salvation in the heart of a believer. The Spirit is to be worshiped. This is why the Trinity brings meaning in the worship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

⁷⁵ Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son & Holy Spirit: Toward A Fully Trinitarian Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 7

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

In this chapter, the author will present a qualitative approach of the primary research proposal which ascribe to a phenomenological model of understanding the methodology of the research design, the participants, the approach, and the questionnaire. The phenomenological model speaks of the “common meaning for several individuals of the lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.”¹ In this case, the phenomenal model focuses on the concept of worshipping the Trinity and how the Trinity can play an instrumental role in the ministry of the church.

Research Question

In order to understand the nature of the study the author has displayed four essential questions that are vital to understand the outcome of the qualitative analysis. These analyses enhance the phenomenological model of the comprehensive understanding of pastors’ capacity to educate the congregation on the Holy Trinity paradigm. The paradigm entails of the four areas of ministry: *evangelism*, *worshipping*, *preaching*, and *teaching*. These four questions are as follow:

1. What does it mean to incorporate the Trinity in Christian worship?
2. What factor does the Trinity play in the growth of Christian relationship in Christ?
3. How does the role of Jesus and the Holy Spirit factor in with the preaching and teaching of the gospel?
4. How do you view the role of the Holy Spirit in living out your Christian life?

¹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013), 76.

Research Design

The task of being a pastor in the 21st Century is very challenging. Pastors are overwhelmed with many challenges. The task of comforting parishioners during times of adversity, engaging a world that is so distant from hearing the gospel, and protecting the purity of the gospel message of Christ can be challenging. These factors couple with the challenging factors, aforementioned in chapter two, *lack of understanding of the Trinity, the Oneness Pentecostalism “In Jesus’ name” only movement*, and the Feminist view of the Trinity; serve as a distractor of the Holy Trinity for pastors.

This research is focused on the four areas of ministry: *preaching, teaching, worshipping*, and *evangelism*. Perry’s theological assessment is in direct connection with these four areas of how the Trinity needs to apply in all areas of Christian ministry. He succinctly states that, “Think about it. Christianity is a God-centered religion. If God is Trinity, then it follows that Christianity is a Trinity-centered religion. We would expect the Trinity to be related to every area of Christian faith and practice.”²

The employment of this research was through Survey Monkey. To understand these four areas of ministry in-depth a survey was developed on Survey Monkey to allow fifty participants including ten of their members to participate in the survey. There were three steps developed in order for the participants to take the survey. The first step was when the researcher contacted the potential participants in regard to taking part in the survey. The researcher directed the participants to the appropriate survey link. At that stage the participants were able to review and acknowledge the consent form. They choose to agree or disagree with the rights and policies included in the consent form. Once they agreed, then they are able to take the survey.

² Parry, 15.

In the second step the researcher provided two survey links on Survey Monkey for the research study. A link was applicable for pastors and one was applicable for the congregational members. Finally, in the third step, the researcher informed the participants that their link, respectively, would take between 30 to 45 minutes to complete. After the survey questionnaires were completed by the participants the researcher is required to store the data for three years. The goal for employing Survey Monkey allowed the author to see the physical results in real time. This also allowed the author to relate the results from the questionnaires to determine if pastors need to emphasize more on incorporating the Trinity in Christian worship through preaching, teaching, worshipping, and evangelism.

Research Approach

The primary nature of this research is simply based on qualitative methodology through open-ended questions. As already stated, to enhance the qualitative nature of this study, a phenomenological model was included within the lived experiences of both pastors-members' view on the Holy Trinity. According to Creswell the essential nature of a phenomenologists is to focus on "describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon."³

Throughout church history the most challenging question for Christians to grapple with when it comes to the doctrines of the church is the Trinity. The Holy Trinity is really a mystery and a phenomenon. The Trinity is a mystery because the natural mind cannot comprehend the vastness of God's ontological disposition. The Trinity is a phenomenon because Christians experience the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three in one through worship.

To understand the phenomenological experiences of both pastors and members' knowledge of the Trinity. The author developed a survey that incorporated two sets of

³ Creswell, 76.

questionnaires that investigate both pastors and members' capacity of assimilating the function of the Trinity in their ministries as well as their own personal spiritual development. In the phenomenological model this is called the *intentionality of consciousness*. It states that a person's consciousness is "always directed toward an object. Reality of an object, then, is inextricably related to one's consciousness of it. Thus, reality, according to Husserl, is divided not into subjects and objects, but into the dual Cartesian nature of both subjects and objects as they appear in consciousness." The phenomenology approach is essential here in the study.

This is why the subject-object dichotomy is important to understand the relationship of the church to the Trinity. Consequentially, the subject is the Trinity and object is the church. One of the major factors that can create a hindrance to the congregational knowledge of the function of the Trinity is depended upon pastors' understanding of the Trinity.

It was earlier stated in chapter one that "The starting point for change in any nation, church, or ministry has always been the leader: As go the leaders, so goes the church."⁴ This is very critical to understanding the phenomenological study of both pastors and congregants lived experiences of the biblical teachings of the Trinity. Therefore, when the congregation lacks the biblical understanding of how the Trinity functions within the four areas of ministry, evangelism, worshipping, preaching, and teaching it is because of pastors' failure to make connection.

Ethical Consideration

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) had examined the research proposal to make sure that all requirements and expectations were in accordance with the IRB's guidelines of protecting participants' identity and insuring that both researcher and participants adhered to its ethical standard. The author immediately began to contact Southern Baptist pastors' whose

⁴ Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, 36.

churches were associated with Metropolitan New York Baptist Association website (MNYBA). The intentional goal was to contact and survey fifty churches and to encourage pastors to select ten of their members to participate in the survey.

The Participants

The participants in this study were pastors from within the Southern Baptist Convention whose churches are affiliated with the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association. The researcher estimated a target of 50 pastors from the population. Pastors were encouraged to choose ten of their members to participate in this theological endeavoring; and complete the survey online.

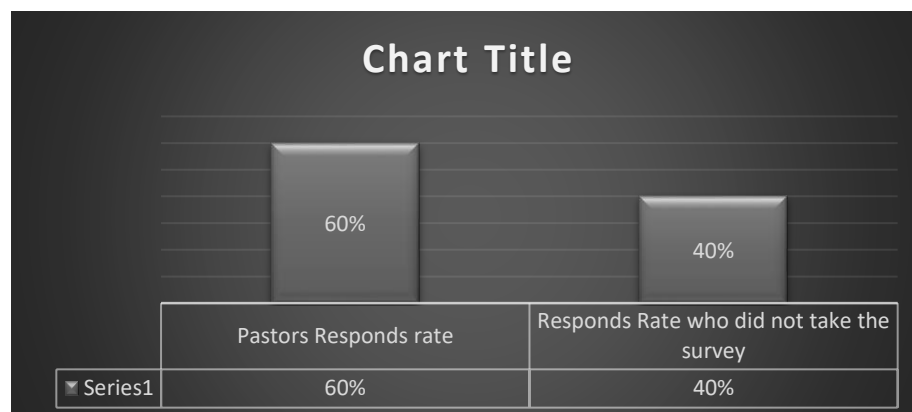
The author employed social media as the means of contacting 50 pastors on Facebook, LinkedIn. The Metropolitan New York Baptist Association website were used to garner the church contact information. Through this the researcher contacted pastors by informing them of becoming a participant of the survey. The researcher provided two links on Survey Monkey for both pastors and members to participate. One link was designated for pastors and the other designated to members. A permission letter was provided for both pastors and members on each link via email. The participants were able to access the links over the internet to complete the assignment. The survey allows anonymity among the participants. They were asked not include their names, church names, or any identifying information for this study.

Meanwhile, participants were informed that the questionnaires will not be recorded but it will be stored on a computer database in a password-protected file. The data will be required to store for three-years, and then deleted.

The researcher contacted 50 pastors to participate in the survey. Unfortunately, out of 50 only 30 respondents (pastors) agreed to participate in the survey. The other 20 pastors did not

respond to the email or phone calls that were made to them. Subsequently, several attempts were made again to get these 20 pastors to make a contribution. The respondent rate of pastors who responded was only 60% of pastors who took part in the survey while 40% refused to participate. See table 1.0 for details.

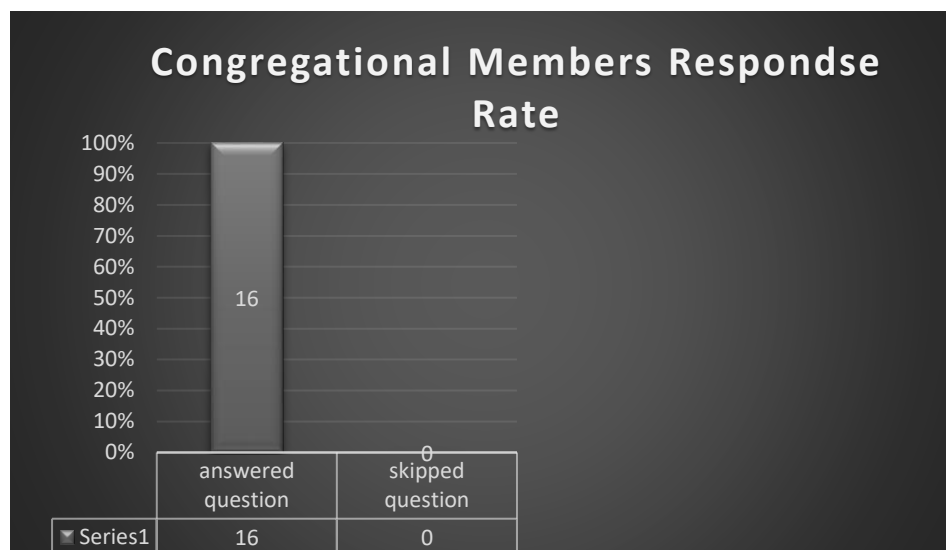
Table 1.0 Survey Response Rate



Meanwhile, the author randomly selects the questions to be implemented in this narration of the paper because there are thirteen questions for each questionnaire. However, the following questions were selected because they were similar to the research questions. By selecting these questions, they will help give credence to this research.

Out of the 30 pastors who took the survey only 16 congregational members took the survey. The researcher asked all 30 pastors the reason why some of their members did not take the survey. The majority of pastors responded by saying that some of their members were not technologically savvy. Others said that their members did not feel comfortable taking the survey. It was also expressed by some pastors that members were afraid of their privacy being compromised. The graph demonstrates the responds rate of these members.

Table 1.1 Survey Response Rate



The challenging factor of congregational members' intransigence was expected to some extent. Taking online survey can be a little bit intimidating especially when some people are not too familiar with the technology of the internet.

Results and Observations from the Questionnaire

Comparative Analysis

In the October issue of 2014 of Christianity Today a survey was released by the LifeWay Research for Ligonier Ministries. The findings were staggering. According to Stephen Nichols, the survey 'reveals a significant level of theological confusion.'⁵ The title of the article is *New Poll Finds Evangelicals' Favorite Heresies*. The article reveals that many evangelicals do not have an orthodox view of God and the sinful condition of humans.

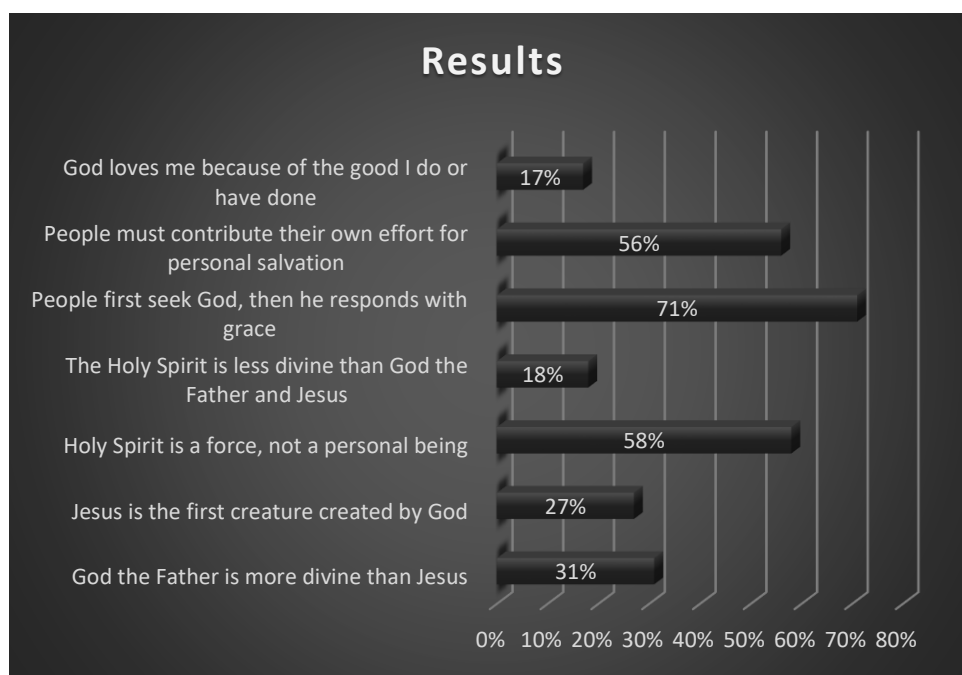
In this staggering revelation about 96% of evangelicals believed that Jesus rose from the grave. Thus, 92% claimed that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ; while 89% upheld the

⁵Kevin P. Emmert, "New Poll Finds Evangelicals' Favorite Heresies," Christianity Today (October 2014): accessed May 11, 2016, <http://www.Christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/october-web-only/new-poll-finds-evangelicals-favorite-heresies.html>.

sovereignty of God over all people. Then 88% believed that the Bible is the Word of God. This right here may seem that evangelical Christians are heading in the right direction. Unfortunately, this is not the case here because the theological rhythm is off balance.

The interesting thing about this article is what it says about evangelicals' doctrinal understanding of the Godhead. The survey reveals that 96% of evangelicals believe in the Trinity. Then, about 88% of evangelicals believe that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. What seems to follow may look shocking. But it is shocking because it speaks to the nature and purpose of this research. The following survey from the LifeWay Research speaks for itself.

Table 1.2 Survey on Evangelicals' Heresies



Kevin Emmert's findings in Christianity Today October 28, 2014

Now, if 96% of evangelicals believed in the Trinity and 88% affirmed Jesus' hypostatic union that Jesus has two distinct natures, the divine and human. Then why are only 31% of evangelicals claiming that the Father is more divine than the Son. Further, 27% evangelicals also believed that Jesus was the first of God creation. This leads to Arianism.

Meanwhile, 58% believed that the third person of the Trinity, The Holy Spirit, is not a personal being but a force. While 18% believed that the Holy Spirit is less divine than the Father and Son. This is why chapter two is important to the dialogue of worshipping the Trinity.

Sanders in his theological astuteness gives an answer to these statistical dishearten revelations.

Sanders says the following assertion that,

The doctrine of the Trinity has a peculiar place in the minds and hearts of evangelical Christians. We tend to acknowledge the doctrine with a polite hospitality but not welcome it with any special warmth...How has it come about that so many evangelicals today are cold toward the doctrine of the Trinity, confused about its meaning, or noncommittal about its importance? Even though solid biblical and theological teaching on the subject is available, the doctrine of the Trinity continues to be treated as an awkward guest in the evangelical household.⁶

There seems to be a strong surface confession of the Trinity in what Sanders calls “polite hospitality.” But what seems to be missing is the essential meaning and function of the Trinity.

Analytical goal

The nature of this survey was to theologically examine Southern Baptist pastors’ perception of the doctrine of the Trinity. As it stated within the survey that was released by LifeWay Research for Ligonier Ministries reported by Emmert in the October issues of 2014 of *Christianity Today* that 96% of evangelicals believe in the Trinity.

In the survey question two was intentionally given follow the pastors’ agreement to participate in this theological endeavor. The question was posted to these pastors because the author tries to understand the phenomenological nature of their perception and importance of the Trinity. The approach was to see how important the Trinity plays in their ministries, and does the Trinity make a difference in their own ministerial development.

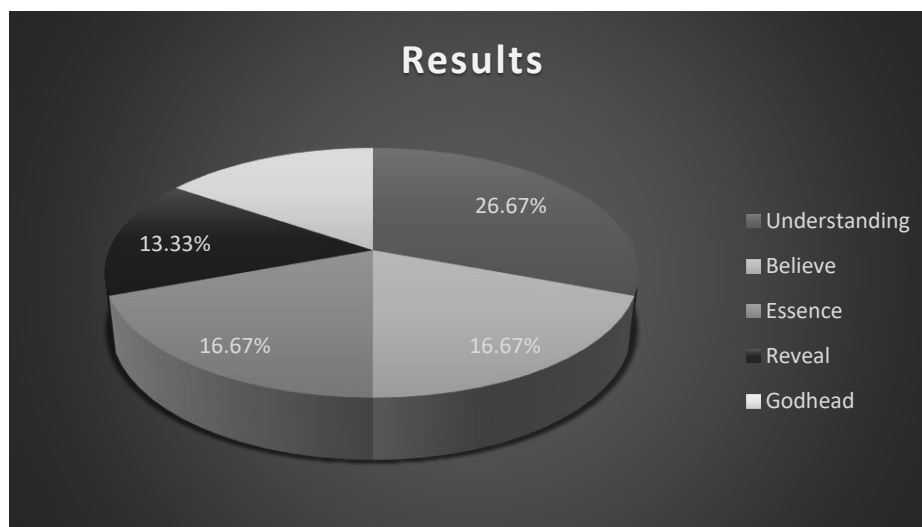
⁶Fred Sanders. *The Deep Things of God: how the Trinity changes everything* (Illinois: Crossway, 2010), 7, Kindle.

The pastors' perception will help guide the nature of this research. The answer they gave to the questionnaires will bring more clarity to the four critical questions. As shown from question two, 27% of the respondents (pastors) view the Trinity was the *core understanding* of the personhood of God. Here, the understanding is that the revelation of God is understood throughout biblical history as three distinct personalities. But each has 16% of the respondents *believe* that the Bible is very clear about the God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Thus 17% of respondents view the Trinity as "equal in power and essence of one mind and will." Another 13% of respondents claim that "One God who has revealed himself in three persons. The other 13% say that the *Godhead* exists with three coequal and coeternal persons which share one essence." Table 1.3 reveals four highest results.

Table 1.3 Pastors' Perception of the Trinity

Q 2 What is your perception of the Doctrine of the Trinity?

Answered: 30 Kipped: 0

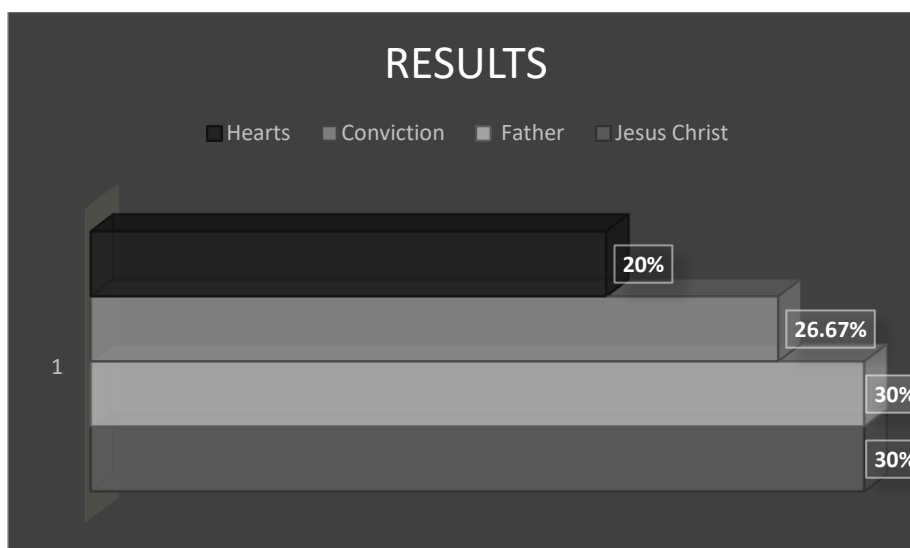


In question three, respondents were asked what specific role do Jesus and the Holy Spirit play in their salvation. About 27% of the respondents claimed that the Holy Spirit convicts them

of their sins. Then, through the Spirit conviction of sin it leads them to surrender life. The Holy Spirit also begins the process of regeneration by bringing meaning and understanding to their salvation. While, 20% believe that the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of believers. In the chart below 30% of pastors acclaimed that both the Father and Jesus are an important factor of living out their Christian life.

Table 1.4 Role of the Son and Holy Spirit in Salvation

Q 3 What specific role does the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit play in your salvation?
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



Results of what area of the Trinity are being focus more than the other

Question four address respondents' specific reasons of why they focus more on one area of the Trinity than the other. Interestingly, a large number of pastors consequentially focus more on the Holy Spirit and the Father than Jesus. This came out to be about 60%. The reason being according to the results, is that one Baptist pastor believed that radical Pentecostal teaching on the Holy Spirit seemed to misrepresent the true function of the Spirit. Therefore, to educate his parishioners he "paid particular attention to the Holy Spirit" by teaching the biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Meanwhile, about 30% of pastors teach more on Christ because they believed that Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice for sin. Then, another 30% of the participants focus on the entire Trinity. For instance, the Father is worship through the Son, while the Son is praised and the Holy Spirit is praised for the comfort He brings in the lives of believers.

In question five it explores the type of methodology that pastors employ to teach their congregational members about the Trinity. This is very critical because it will help to answer the first essential question that is vital to understanding the qualitative nature of the research.

When it comes to *teaching* about 43% of pastors teach on the Trinity. This is done through Bible study and Sunday School. To teach the Trinity the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creeds are incorporated as well. Sermons are used by the pastors to inform their congregations.

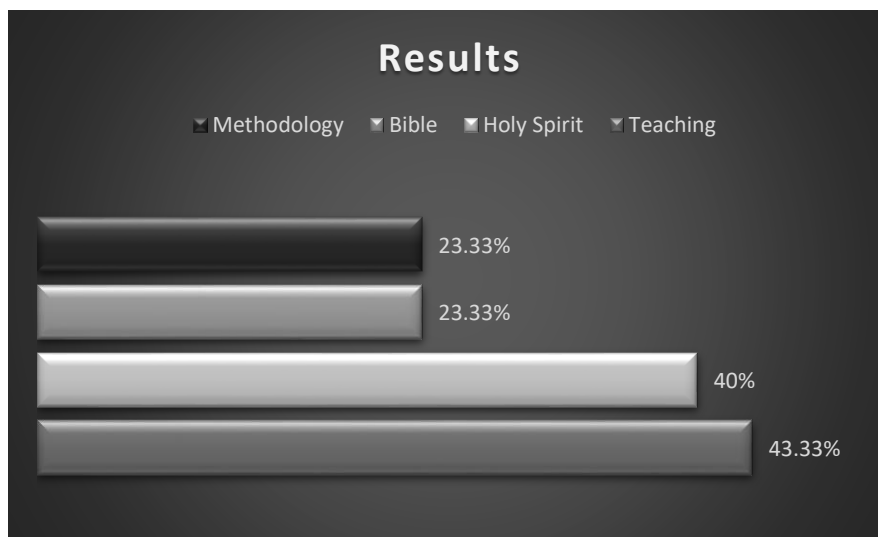
To explain the role of the Holy Spirit some pastors employ the analogy of H₂O (water). To illustrate, the Father represents the water, the ice represents the Son, while the steam is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also explained through evangelism and “servant ministry.” Another example is the candle analogy. The wax represents God, the wick represents Jesus and the flame is the Holy Spirit.

Both the Bible and methodology equal the same percentages. When it comes to the methodology section some pastors said that they do not have a specific methodology to explain the Trinity. Thus, one few pastors said that the methodology they employed is “Biblical Studies (scriptures),” “science (Sun as a source gives off heat and light and their three in one),” and “Math (Trinity is not $1+1+1=3$ but $1 \times 1 \times 1=1$).” However, the Bible is seen as the main method for teaching on the triune God. See table 1.5 more details.

Table 1.5 Methodology of teaching the congregation about the Trinity

Q 5 Describe the current methodology you use to teach your congregation about the Trinity?

Answered: 30 Skipped:0



Question six explores any current methods that pastors may employ to incorporate the Trinity in their church evangelism. The statistical results revealed that only 7% of *method* were emphasized. This is the same results when it comes to the *evangelism ministry* and *evangelism* and *mission*. In the method approach pastors used gospel tracks because it is the easiest way to explain the Trinity. This gives the pastors the peace and assurance that the whole gospel message will be clearly conveyed to the community. In the *evangelism* and *mission* approach the concept is introduced as “A family on mission strategy.” The purpose of this approach was to create a healthy community that “flows out of God’s Trinitarian nature and is a part of the missio dei.”

Question seven addresses the significance of the Holy Spirit in the pastoral preaching style. According to the pastors about 27% *believe* that the Holy Spirit uses the gifts, talents, and abilities, and the personality and the culture of the pastors. They also believe that the anointing to preach must come from the presence of the Holy Spirit. Also, 27% of the *sermon* depends on the Holy Spirit guidance, wisdom, clarity and illumination to preach. Through the illumination of the

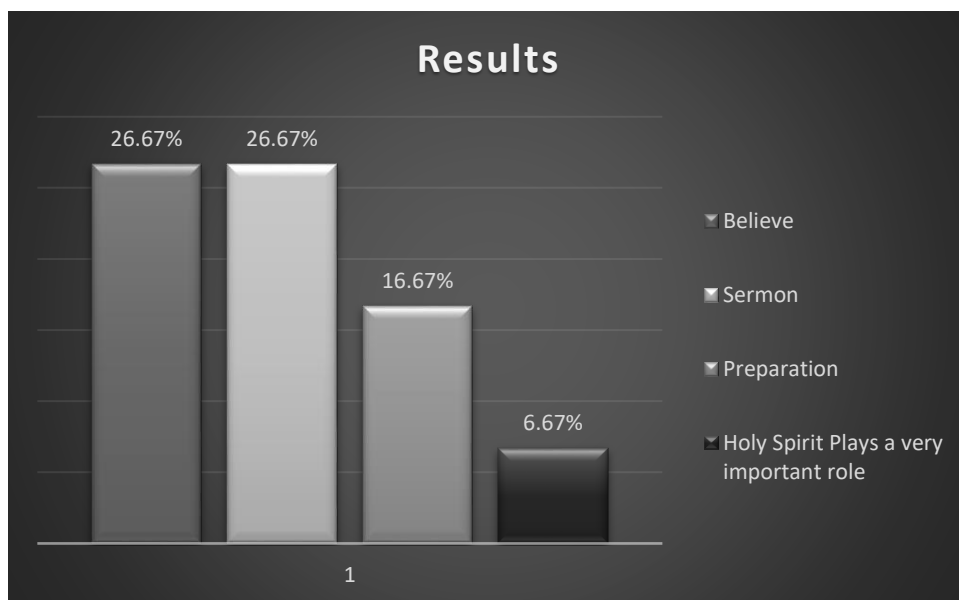
sermon pastors also depend on the Spirit to bring about creative ways to minister the gospel to older and newer congregants as well as visitors.

Meanwhile, when it comes to *preparation* only 17% of pastors said that all preparation should include “strong prayer” so that the Spirit may grant wisdom and understanding to bring meaning to the passage. Also, all preparation should be under the guidance of the Spirit so that their delivery is direct to the heart of the hearers. Thus, only 13% believed that *prayer* is another essential factor of relying on the Spirit. Now, there seems to be some discrepancy when it comes to role of the Holy Spirit in their preaching. Sad to say, only 7% postulated that the *Holy Spirit plays a very important role* in their preaching. See table 2.0 for more details.

Table 2.0 The significant role of the Holy Spirit in your preaching style

Q 7 Tell me how the Holy Spirit plays a significant role in your preaching style?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



Results of questions regarding Christian fellowship and the Trinity

Now, questions eight and thirteen were similar pertaining to how the Trinity is related to Christian fellowship. The connecting phrase for question eight is “vital role” and the connecting

phrase of question thirteen is how the Trinity “is connected” to Christian fellowship. In question eight about 27% view *Jesus Christ* as the source of Christian fellowship. The respondents affirmed that the New Testament speaks of the Church as the body of Christ. Also, 27% of pastors understood *Christian fellowship* within the unity of the Trinity. According to one of the respondents “Our Christian fellowship is a powerful demonstration of the love of the Father, the peace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.” To affirm this statement Jesus says to the disciples “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”⁷

Now, in question thirteen about 46% connect the *Holy Spirit* to Christian fellowship. For these pastors, it is the Holy Spirit who applies the Father’s saving power and sanctification of all believers through the work of the Son. The Spirit breaks down all barriers and hostility that separates believers from having the mind of Christ. Interestingly, about 39% of pastors viewed the *Trinity* as the perfect model to cultivate a health Christian fellowship amongst other believers. As stated, “There is no fellowship without full affirmation of the Trinity for the entire body.” Furthermore, “The Trinity serves as our example of mutual submission” toward fellowshiping.

Question nine addresses how pastors introduce the Trinity in the practical lives of their members on a daily basis. Once again, about 44% of pastors view the *Holy Spirit* as a major factor. They believed that their members needed to understand why the Holy Spirit is important. The Spirit is important because the Spirit functions as a teacher, comforter, advisor, and protector and guides all believers in the truth of God’s word. The Holy Spirit helps believers’ light to shine in the world for Christ. Meanwhile, about 37% of the respondents view the *Trinity*

⁷Matthew 18:20 NKJV

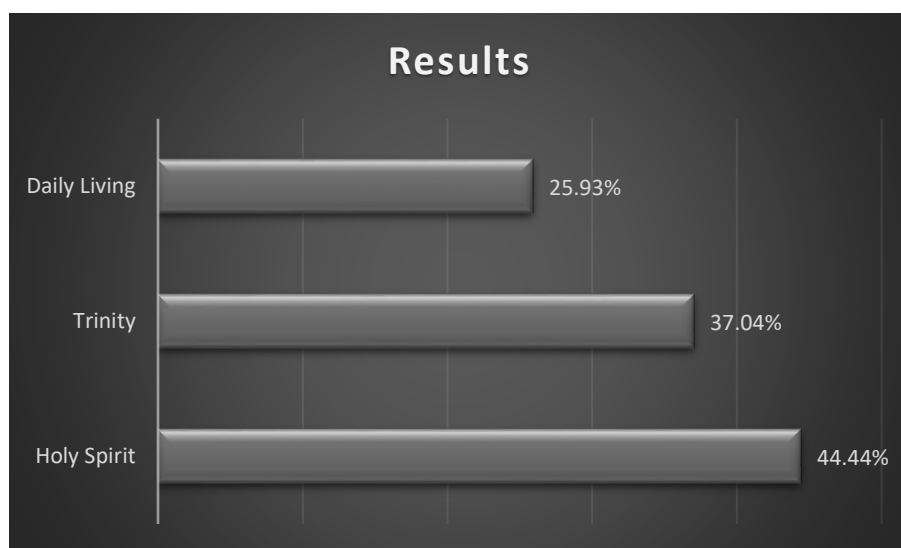
to be the guideline of what holiness should be. For example, one respondent stated that “as the Trinity is Holy, we ought to be holy.” This was in direct reference to I Thessalonian 5:23 where the Apostle Paul says, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸

Also, the Trinity is linked by the eternal substance of God. Therefore, all three persons of the triune God wills are unified, aligned, and harmonious in relationship with each other. Thus, it is an example how Christian fellowship ought to be conducted. When it comes to linking the Trinity in Christians’ daily living 26% of respondents say that Christians should follow the daily example of Jesus. Also, the scripture teaches Christians to pray to their “Father in Heaven” because the Son intercedes on behalf of all believers. The Holy Spirit also “renew our minds and sanctify us daily through instruction and correction.” See table 2.1 for more details.

Table 2.1 Linkage between the Trinity and living daily

Q 9 How do you address a linkage between the Trinity as a practical example of daily living in your member?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 3



⁸ I Thessalonians 5:23.

Question twelve asked pastors to explain how the Trinity is involved in their discipleship training process for new members, and to explain how the Trinity is factored within their salvation. Interestingly, 34% employed *discipleship training* in teaching new members how the Trinity relates to their salvation. To bring biblical understanding to this area of ministry discipleship training involves small groups. These pastors found it to be very important for their members. Thus, the Trinity is incorporated into small groups discussion along with other biblical doctrines through the year annually according to one pastor.

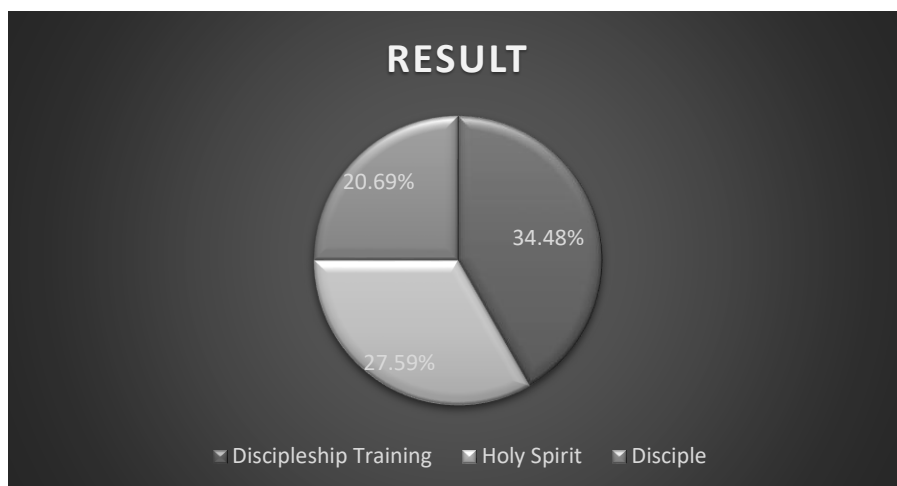
Also, discipleship training is employed through Life Groups material. This material is used to explain to new members about their salvation by studying the Bible. Baptismal class is another way of explaining the Trinity and how it relates to their salvation. Other pastors called this “the factored of salvation” where it is completely based on the Trinity.

Again, the emphasis of the *Holy Spirit* is included in this process. As stated, “The Trinity is important for salvation because the Holy Spirit convicts, the Son paid the price, and the Father accepts the payment.” This is the scriptural concept of the Trinity. Hence, 28% of the participants stress the functions of the Holy Spirit in the purpose of salvation. Once the new members understood their salvation by coming to know the Trinity they are informed through the pastors that they need to become disciples of Jesus. New members are taught the importance of being *disciples* for Christ. This is about 21%. See table 2.2 for more details.

Table 2.2 Discipleship training process of factoring the Trinity in new members’ salvation

Q 12 Describe your discipleship training process for new members. How is the Trinity factored into their salvation? Explain why or why not

Answered: 29 Skipped: 1



Congregational Analysis

The research demonstrated that only sixteen congregational members took the survey. This amount is quite insufficient to give some substantive weight to the research. However, these sixteen results can shed some light to the matter of the subject at hand.

Question five addressed the frequency of the pastors' capability of teaching their members about the biblical principles of the Trinity and how it is related to their members. As it reports 25% of members believed that their *pastors* included the biblical principles of the Trinity in their sermons and devotions. One member said that the pastor encourages him or her to seek the assistant of the Holy Spirit to live according to the principles of the scripture.

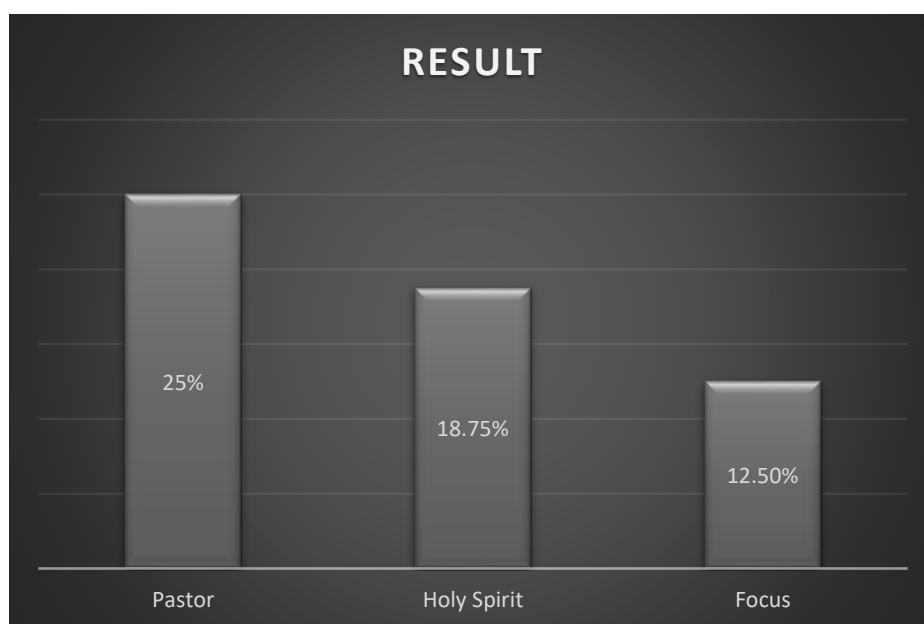
Other members observed that their pastor taught biblical principles of the Trinity to the congregation every Sunday when he preached. The teaching of the Trinity is introduced in the weekly bible study on Wednesday. Few of the members said that their pastor stressed the important of the Triune-God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and how all three-persons are related to the Christian fellowship. Then 19% of members said that their pastors encouraged them to seek the presence of the *Holy Spirit* in their lives; because the Spirit empower Christians to live out their faith to the world. Thus, few members said that their pastors emphasized how the Holy

Spirit continues the work of Christ through the church. Notwithstanding, not every member shares the same sentiment here. Other members said that their pastors do not focus on the Trinity as much. Thus, only 13% of their pastors only *focus* on church's mission, on repentance, deliverance, salvation, and Bible expositions. See table 2.3 for more details.

Table 2.3 Pastor teaching biblical principles on the Trinity

Q 5 How often does the pastor teach biblical principles of the Trinity to the congregation?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0

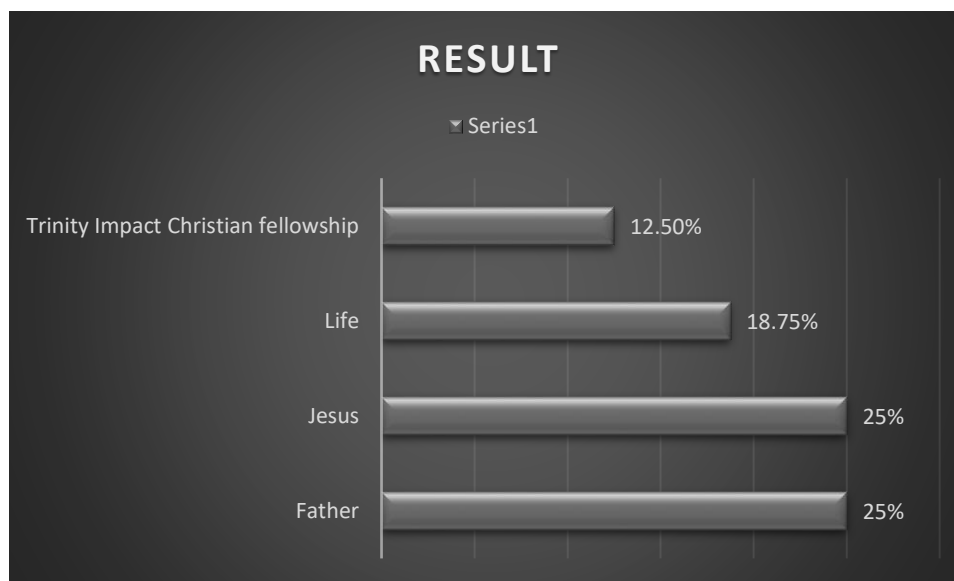


Question ten asked members to share if the doctrine of the Trinity makes any difference in their Christian walk with the Lord. Interestingly, 25% believed that it is good to know that they have a loving *Father* who cares for them. To know this, they said help strengthen their confidence in the faith. They also believed that the *Trinity* brings meaning to their identity in Jesus which is 25%. When it comes to their Christian walk within the Trinity only 13% find it to be significant because it is the very foundation of their faith. See table 2.3 for more details.

Table 2.4 The significant role of the Trinity in your Christian walk

Q 10 Describe how the doctrine of the Trinity plays a significant part in your Christian walk?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



Summary of Results

Southern Baptist churches are considered strong conservatives when it comes to biblical doctrines—especially when it comes to the doctrine of the Trinity. The purpose of this survey was to investigate the level of understanding between the pastors and their congregational members when it comes to worshipping the Triune God. Both pastors and members share the same “lived experience,” or religious experiences.

However, the results demonstrate some concerns. For instance, by comparing table 1.3 with table 2.3 out of the 30 pastors who took the survey only 16% claimed that the scripture is clear about the Trinity. In table 2.3 only 13% of the members, the few members that took the survey, said that their pastor “not very often” preached or teach on the Trinity. They said that there is rather a strong emphasis on *mission, repentance, deliverance, salvation, and bible*

exposition. There is no doubt that the “lived experience” of both pastors and members are statistically different.

Comparing the research done by LifeWay Research for Ligonier Ministries, the statistical analysis demonstrated that 96% of evangelicals claimed to embrace the doctrine of the Trinity. Looking at each graph the percentages are low. There seems to be a low perception of the Trinity from both pastors and members. For instance, the pastors’ understanding toward the Trinity was only 27%; while only 13% of the few members said that their pastors do not focus on the rudiments of the Trinity. It seems that pastors are not doing a decent job on teaching and preaching the importance of worshipping the Trinity. According to Parry, “if the Trinity is to become fixed again at the centre of our worship then it is essential that worship leaders, songwriters, pastors, teachers, preachers, and small group leaders understand how the Trinity fits at the heart of Christian faith.”⁹ Therefore, there must be a theological balance of the worshipping of the trinity in all fours area of the ministry: *preaching, teaching, worshipping*, and *evangelism*. The researcher would love to continue the dialogue by doing some future work in this area of study.

The results did not fully support the four research questions. It demonstrates that pastors are not spending an ample amount of time relating the Trinity to their congregational members and in addition a major part in their Christian fellowship. The researcher’s expectation of the results was supported, because concern was made by theologians that the Trinity had become irrelevant to the Christians’ life. John Zizioulas notes the following assertion, “There is growing concern among theologians of all traditions and denominations that the doctrine of the Trinity has become irrelevant for the lives of ordinary Christians: worship, piety, spirituality, etc., seen

⁹ Parry, 15.

to be entirely unaffected by this doctrine for the majority of Christians.” However, the research study examined a small sample size of Southern Baptist pastors and members. Consequently, the results cannot statistically reflect the larger practical population of Southern Baptist Churches. Additionally, research possibly on a larger and longitudinal scale can be completed by the researcher for future works and publications.

CHAPTER 5

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PASTORS

There is no doubt that the doctrine of the Trinity can be a theological conundrum for theologians, pastors and congregational members. However, the mystery of the Trinity should never prevent pastors, preachers and Sunday school teachers from preaching and teaching the importance of the doctrine to the Christian faith. Anne Hunt affirms this notion by saying, “...preaching the Trinity is important in fostering and deepening a personal appropriation of the mystery of the Trinity.” In other words, the mystery of the Trinity gives awe to the depth of God.

The tenet of the Trinity is crucial to the Christian faith. It is crucial to the faith because it gives credence and structure that help guides the church to worship the true Triune God. The word of Jesus in the Gospel of John speaks to this credence. Jesus says to the disciples, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”¹ Jesus makes direct reference to the ministry of the Triune God.

The words of Philip Butin juxtapose with the words of Jesus in John 17:3. Butin says that the faith of Christianity is rooted in the *historic conviction* that God is triune.² God is one, and uniquely exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Butin continues to say that the “Triune’ is a compound adjective that points to the historic but mysterious Christian conviction that God is both three and one...Christian teaching about the Trinity is the *heart* and *center* of Christian faith.”³ It is this understanding according to Butin that Christian can center their confidence that God’s love is expressed in the Trinity toward us in the Son. Therefore, “God has entered our

¹John 17:3 NKJV

² Philip W. Butin, *The Trinity*, (U.S.A.: Geneva Press, 2001), xiii.

³ Philip W. Butin, xiii.

world and poured out the divine love for us once for all in Jesus Christ.”⁴ There are several key phrases that Butin uses here that need to be pointed out.

The first phrase is the understanding that the biblical doctrine of the Triune God is “rooted in the historic conviction” that God is revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Secondly, the Trinity is “the heart and center of Christian faith” without it Christianity as we know it becomes just like any other religious group. To reject the Son’s divinity is to reject the Trinity itself. In John’s gospel Jesus says that no one can come to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). The final phrase is that the “Trinity is our confidence” that the love of God is expressed within and through the Trinity and that it is unalterable. These are key phrases that cannot be overlooked within the foundational doctrine of the church. These phrases or statements speak to the importance of understanding and experiencing the Trinity

Experiencing the Trinity in Preaching

The presence of the Holy Spirit is very crucial when it comes to preaching. At the heart of preaching is the glorification of the Trinity. The Spirit reveals how the Father and Son play a significant role in how Christians speak of God. Mike Pasquarello III best summarizes it this way, “At its heart, preaching is the human articulation of the speech of God, the gospel, through which the Spirit is actively gathering up all things in heaven and on earth under the lordship of Christ for the praise and glory of the Father.”⁵ The Spirit speaks of God the Father.

To approach preaching without the third person of the Trinity is like driving a car without a license. The license gives drivers’ full authority to be on the road. If a driver was to be pulled over by a police officer, the first two identifications that are immediately requested by the officer

⁴ Philip W. Butin, xiii.

⁵ Mike Pasquarello III, *Christian Preaching: A Trinitarian Theology of Proclamation* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 46.

are approval of insurance and license of registration. Hence, Joseph Pipa gives a clear credence of why preaching should include the Spirit of God when preaching persuasively. Pipa states that the effectual calling of God when it comes to preaching the Word is always persuasive. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit the persuasiveness of the Word becomes impotent. According to Pipa, “The Bible clearly teaches that the efficacy of preaching depends on the Holy Spirit, who is sovereign in making the work of preaching efficacious.”⁶

The Spirit must align to the preach word of God and acts accordingly to the preached word of Jesus. Jesus makes this emphatically crystal clear to the disciples in John 16: 13 when He says “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak.”⁷ The Spirit represents the word of God and through this representation the word becomes efficacious. Thus, preachers, Bible teachers, and Sunday school teachers must depend on the Spirit for the word to be persuasive and interesting to the listeners. Thus, for a preacher especially says Pipa “Both in his preparation and proclamation, the preacher must actively depend on the Holy Spirit.”⁸

The preaching process does not only involve the Spirit, it also involves the Father and the Son as well. Preaching focuses on all three persons of the Trinity. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 affirm this theological process. Thus, by preaching under the persuasive power of the Spirit, the preacher is honoring the Triune God.

Preaching the Trinity is of utmost importance in the pulpit. When it comes to honoring the Triune God in this capacity Jonathan Edwards comes to mind. For Edwards, the doctrine of

⁶ Joseph A. Pipa, *The Holy Spirit and the Unique Power of Preaching.* In *The Beauty and Glory of the Holy Spirit*, edited by Joel R. Beeke and Joseph A. Pipa. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 307.

⁷ John 16:13 NKJV.

⁸ Joseph A. Pipa, 307.

the Trinity is filled with practical implications that give Christians a deeper knowledge of understanding the spiritual world.⁹ According to Studebaker and Caldwell III, Edward's purpose of preaching the doctrine is to inform his members that the Trinity plays a vital role in their spiritual lives and salvation.¹⁰ The purpose of salvation is not about being saved from sins. It is about fellowshiping with the Triune God that can enhance believers' prayer life and affection for God. Studebaker and Caldwell III give the reason why Edwards incorporates the Trinity in his sermons by saying, "In brief, he incorporated the Trinity into his sermons because it served as the necessary theological prerequisite to his many discussions on redemption. He frequently preached on the Trinity because redemption, which is essentially a Trinitarian affair, was such a prominent theme in his sermons."¹¹ For Jonathan Edwards it is the Father who sends the Son and both the Father and Son mutually gives the Holy Spirit to live in hearts of believers. Therefore, since the Father sends the Son and the Spirit dwells in believers the church is united in Christ—Christians come to love the Father and the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹² These basic Christian tenets adhere only in Trinitarian context.¹³ By leading his members in this understanding Edwards underscores how each member of the Godhead plays a very significant role in their salvation and spiritual development.

Jonathan Edwards' Trinitarian Preaching

Edwards employs theological themes in his sermons to convey the practicality of the Trinity to his members. For instance, themes such as "economy of the Trinity" and the "covenant

⁹ Steven M. Studebaker, Robert W. Caldwell III, *The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards: Text, Context, and Application*, New York & London: Routledge, 2012), 157.

¹⁰ Studebaker & Caldwell III, 157.

¹¹ Studebaker & Caldwell III, 157.

¹² Studebaker & Caldwell III, 157.

¹³ Studebaker & Caldwell III, 157.

of redemption” was strongly emphasized in his preaching. The most prominent theme is the economy. He explains in his preaching that all three persons of the Godhead take on “functionally different roles in the economy of salvation.”¹⁴ Stuebaker and Caldwell III state that Edwards’ understanding of scripture is “abounds with pictures of the distinct works that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit accomplish on behalf of the salvation of humankind. It also represents the Son as being functionally subordinate to the Father, and the Spirit as being functionally subordinate to both the Father and the Son.” Unfortunately, the issue of subordination is not the subject of this conversation so the author will not speak too much on it.

Now when it comes to preaching the theme of the “covenant of redemption” Edwards wants to guide his members to have a greater appreciation because their salvation is understood within the eternity of the Trinity.¹⁵ Before the foundation of the world the Father has orchestrated the wonderful plan of salvation through the Son for the redemption of mankind.¹⁶ This segues right into why preaching the Trinity is critical. To preach the Trinity does not only involve the Spirit but it also involves the Father and Son.

In Edwards’ sermons, he views the Father as the sender of the Son while the Son secured the redemption of the saints. The Holy Spirit is viewed the divine gift of the Father’s love because the Spirit dwells in the hearts of believers; therefore, “the redeemed have a unique relation to each member of the Trinity.”¹⁷ To preach the Trinity is to understand that the Father is the source of Christians’ redemption. Thus, it is the Father who gives the Son as the Redeemer and accepts His work of redemption to the world. Hence, the Father “gives Christ to ‘become

¹⁴ Stuebaker & Caldwell III, 159.

¹⁵ Stuebaker & Caldwell III, 160.

¹⁶ Stuebaker & Caldwell III, 160

¹⁷ Stuebaker & Caldwell III, 164.

ours,’ and ultimately ‘pardons and justifies and delivers from going down to hell.’ It is because of the Father that Christians have ‘all grace,’ which is summed up in the gift of his Son.”¹⁸

When it comes to the Son, Edwards preaches on the “Son’s fitness” to be the Savior and mediator for sinners because of His sinless nature. The “Son’s fitness” is recognized because faith is directed to Him alone. Through Christ, believers are able to access the Father’s throne of grace. According to Studebaker and Caldwell III for Edwards,

He is the gateway to the Father, the spiritual sun who shines the beams of God’s knowledge into the created order, and the great reconciler who unites diverse attributes into the harmony of his person. These themes populate his numerous sermons on Christ and several of them explore the Trinitarian background to Christ’s redemptive work.¹⁹

The Son gives believers a clear picture of the Father. Meanwhile, the preaching of the Holy Spirit is expressed as the “principle of excellency” that empowers Christians to walk in holiness before the Father and the Son. Also, the Spirit allows Christians to enjoy the Father’s presence. For Edwards, the third person of the Trinity “not only causes the saints to have spiritual excellency and blessedness, he is in fact the very excellency and blessedness itself that they partake of by the virtue of the Spirit’s indwelling.”²⁰ The Spirit allows Christians to experience the harmony of the Father and Son’s oneness of unity. The Spirit affirms both the Father and Son’s love of forgiveness toward sins. This is the reason why preaching the Trinity so important in the context of the church. Thus, Jonathan Edwards’ theological exposition of including the Trinity in his sermons is a big contribution of *experiencing the Trinity in preaching*.

¹⁸ Studebaker & Caldwell III, 165.

¹⁹ Studebaker & Caldwell III, 167.

²⁰ Studebaker & Caldwell III, 169.

Experiencing the Trinity in Teaching

The best method to teach the doctrine of the Trinity according to Russell Thorp is through Christian education. Christian education focuses on the primary rudiments of the Bible. Through Christian education the believers get to learn and understand biblical theology of the God they worship. Thorps states that “Christian education, at its best, will help persons to worship the one true God in all God’s totality and splendor. Education for mission, or for whatever task God gives us in extending His kingdom, is ultimately to bring glory to Him.”²¹ To have a sound theology Christian education must be the catalyst to its formation. Therefore, “Christian education would not be ‘Christian’ without theology. We cannot separate one from the other.”²² When Christian education has become the catalyst to sound theology it provides us with the knowledge of God, His creation of human beings which are “central to the way we go about teaching, learning, and living as Christians.”²³

To give credence to the teaching of the Trinity Thorp approaches it from a social view of the Trinity. Thus, through the history of salvation Jesus’ commission to the disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 to disciple, baptize, and teaching nations is understood within a Trinitarian context.²⁴ Therefore, “Christian education has a theological foundation, which is Trinitarian.”²⁵

The word Trinity was invented by the first Christian apologist Tertullian. Tertullian created the word to describe God as one substance (*ousia*) or essence. For him God is also describes as in three persons (*hypostasis*). Later on in his teaching Tertullian changed the Greek

²¹ Russell Thorp, “The Doctrine Of The Trinity and Christian Education,” *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 14-2, (1998): 28.

²² Russell Thorp, 44.

²³ Russell Thorp, 44.

²⁴ Russell Thorp, 31.

²⁵ Russell Thorp, 31.

word *hypostasis* in the Latin as *persona*. By referencing Alister McGrath, Thorp states that Tertullian wants his readers to understand that God is ‘one substance, three persons’ who function in three distinct roles which bring about the great drama of Mankind’s redemption.²⁶

There are two different understanding that emerges in the early century when it comes to viewing the Godhead. First, the understanding of the Trinity such as Western tradition, Tertullian and Augustine views the Trinity as the unity of God. All three persons of the Godhead are understood in their mutual fellowship also known as the *perichoresis*. In the Eastern tradition, the Cappadocian Fathers speak of “God’s *relational ‘threeness.’*”²⁷ This speaks to the distinct nature of the individuality of the Threeness of God.

To make the Trinity becomes relevant and essential in the areas of Christian Education, Thorp believes that it must start with the modern understanding of the Trinity which is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit living within an eternal *perichoresis* relationship. Thus, “being one in the others, through the others, with the others, and for the others.”²⁸ There is no better way to commence here because it makes the Trinity becomes practical in the areas of Christian community and Christian relationship. Consequently, then,

The modern view of the Trinity is a better starting point to understand Trinitarian doctrine, as a foundation for Christian education, because it is a more-dynamic understanding of God that heightens the value of persons, while underlining the importance of community and relationships, as formative agents in the education.²⁹

Interestingly, there are three educational elements that help structure the formation of Christian education such as content, persons, and the context of the Christian community. These three

²⁶ Russell Thorp, 31.

¹⁹ Russell Thorp, 32.

²⁰ Russell Thorp, 32.

educational elements speak to a relational activity of understanding the Trinity. Therefore, says Thorp, “When these are understood in relation to God’s entire Trinitarian revelation, they become a guide to the thought and practice of Christian education, affirming God as the dynamic centre of life and of education.”³⁰ This profoundly affirms the relevance of the Trinity.

Contextualizing the Trinity in Christian education

In the context of Christian education, the Father is revealed as the *source* of all truth. In this understanding the Father is the creator who creates all human beings in His image. Therefore, all wisdom and knowledge ultimately comes from the Father who is the creator and sustainer of all things.³¹ This points all Christians to respond to God as creator of all lives. When this is understood in the area of evangelism and mission that the Father sends the Son, and through the Son, the Holy Spirit comes into the world,³² then we can begin to understand that the Father also sends us to evangelize the world with the gospel.

In the context of Christian education, the Son is understood as the “example of true personhood.” The understanding here is that the Son is the one who redeems and transforms the lives of those who come to Him. Appearing as a person the Son was able to live life fully as a normal person. To live the life of a normal person did not make the Son as less of a person or diminish the Son’s divinity as God. Rather, “As an example of true personhood, the Son redeems and transforms all those who come to Him through faith, regardless of ethnic, social, or lifestyle

³⁰ Russell Thorp, 33.

³¹ Russell Thorp, 34.

³² Russell Thorp, 34.

background.”³³ Therefore, “Christ’s person and work ‘has a particular connection with the second element of education, namely, persons.’”³⁴

In the context of Christian education, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, “building and sustaining community,” is to continue to empower Christians to grow intimately in their relationship to the Father and Son. In other words, the Holy Spirit gives context to Christian fellowship. Thus, God’s grace begins to display to the world in the lives of Christians who affirm the Spirit’s ministry. This is expressed within the *perichoresis* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit communion with each other. Joseph Morecraft III speaks of the Westminster affirmations of the Spirit relationship to God’s word. He states that, “The written Word is powerless to save without the accompanying work of the Spirit. We cannot expect the Spirit to lead us apart from the Word. Desiring the Word without the Spirit leads to empty externalism and could intellectualism; desiring the Spirit without the Word leads to fanaticism, mysticism, and irrationalism.”³⁵ This is why Paul reminds the Corinthians that he does not speak with persuasive words but he comes in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4).

The Holy Spirit does not only bring or give context to the Christian fellowship but it also makes the word of God come alive in the heart of the Christian community. The Spirit is contemporary in the lives of Christians. The Spirit brings meaning and purpose to the word of God. The Spirit makes the word of God become authoritative. Thus, the work of the Holy Spirit affirms the Triune God presence in the lives of the Christian community, because God is connected to His word. This is why it is important to experience the Trinity in teaching.

³³ Russell Thorp, 36.

³⁴ Russell Thorp, 36.

³⁵ Joseph Morecraft III, “The Holy Spirit in the Westminster Standards.” In *The Beauty and Glory of the Holy Spirit*, edited by Joel R. Beeke and Joseph A. Pipa, Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 250.

Experiencing the Trinity in Worship

This is where the rubber meets the road, so to speak, when it comes to the true essence of worshipping the Triune God. Biblical worship must maintain its purest spiritual authenticity of the triune nature of God of the Scripture. To have a clear biblical understanding of what it means to worship then Christians will come to know the true Trinity in worship. It is said that “To know is to praise and to praise is to know.”³⁶ Debra says again that to know the true God of the Scriptures is to abide in God’s own Trinitarian existence.³⁷ She speaks from the perspective that for Christian to participate in the communion is an act of worship. The Trinity is always the object of worship. Interestingly, Anne Hunt speaks of Christian spirituality as intrinsically Trinitarian because all Christians participate in the very life of the Trinity.³⁸ Thus, Hunt says that “Christian worship, like Christian spirituality, is necessarily trinitarian.”³⁹

To build a building that can withstands the times, its foundation must be strong. If the builders do not follow what is in the blueprint, then the building will look out of place. This concept can also apply to the nature of worship. Therefore, there are two principles that can help guide proper worship of the Trinity which are theology and doctrine.

Theology is the study and foundation of knowing God while doctrine is the blueprint which guides worshippers to worship of what they know about God. These two rudiments are not exhaustive within themselves. Notwithstanding, these two rudiments are poorly employed by contemporary musicians and theologians. Bob Kauflin says it best, “Sadly, doctrine and theology

³⁶ Debra Dean Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education*, (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 2004), 101.

³⁷ Debra Dean Murphy, 107.

³⁸ Anne Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 183.

³⁹ Anne Hunt, 191-192.

rank fairly low on the popularity scale these days. But biblical worship is impossible without them.”⁴⁰ For biblical worship to be true it must align itself with the proper teaching of the Trinity.

As it was previously stated, Christians do not worship one-person of the Trinity which is categorized as the “Jesus only” movement (oneness Pentecostalism). Larry Hurtado teaches that Christians worship only the Father and the Son and not the Holy Spirit. Proper doctrine is everything when it comes to the authentication of worship. Kauflin further states that the Christian doctrine is crucial in affirming biblical truth when it comes to worship, holiness, the church and spiritual gifts. The studying of doctrine does not controvert what the Bible teaches about the triune nature of God. It only guides Christians in the right area of worshiping the Trinity. Kauflin affirms this notion by saying, “It’s how we find out what God is like, what he wants us to believe and how he wants us to worship him.”⁴¹ Doctrine is everything when it comes to worshipping the God of the scripture.

Proper worship is critical to the Christian faith. It is in worship that Christians come into an intimate understanding of the Triune God. John Thomson states that ‘It is our *worship* that most of us become aware of the *doctrine* of the trinity.’⁴² To say that the distinctive name for God is Father means the acceptance of God’s Fatherhood. To identify God as Father according to the British Council of Churches (B.C.C.) report is to speak of the Son and the Spirit. Thus, there is a direct relational of the Son and Spirit to the Father.

⁴⁰ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008), 28.

⁴¹ Bob Kauflin, 28.

⁴² John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 94.

Reading through the New Testament the Fatherhood of God is not something automatically given to God by the gospel writers because of the economic relationship that the Father has with the Son and Spirit. Thompson points out that God from eternity is the “Father of the Son by the Spirit.” Therefore, “...worship can be offered to God the Father by the Spirit through the Son or directly to the Father, the Son, or the Spirit.”⁴³ Also, Chan states that the church begins with the worship of the Father first because the Father is the origin and goal of the Christian worship. Then secondly, the church worships the Son because He reveals the Father and that the Son is the mediator between God and man. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is worshiped because He is the power by which Christ employs to lift fallen humanity to lead them to the Father.⁴⁴ This is important for the church to understand.

Philip Butin gives a meaningful perspective of what is preciously stated. He states that the Holy Spirit allows Christians to experience the nature of the Triune God. The Spirit opens the hearts and minds of Christian to recognize who God is, the creator.⁴⁵ Therefore, “As Trinity, God has made known to us God’s own self. The God whom we know in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is the true God.”⁴⁶ Christians are able to experience the Triune God because the Holy Spirit abides in the hearts of believers. Jesus says to Judas (not Iscariot) speaking from keeping His commandments that, “If anyone loves, Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”⁴⁷ This clearly speaks to the nature of communing with the Triune God.

⁴³ John Thompson, 94.

⁴⁴ Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community*, (USA: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 47, Kindle.

⁴⁵ Philip Butin, 75.

⁴⁶ Philip Butin, 75.

⁴⁷ John 14:23, (NKJV).

John Witvliet asks two important questions that can never be overlooked or devalued. The first question is, “What does trinitarian worship look like?” Secondly, “How would you know that you are worshipping in a congregation that affirms the Trinity?” For Witvliet Trinitarian worship is not a formula that concludes a hymn or prayer. There is no doubt that Matthew 28:19-20 does seem to present a Trinitarian formula: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus is not focusing on a formula per se, but rather underlining the importance of knowing and worshipping the Trinity.

Witvliet states that the fundamental purpose of the Trinity is to create a model of worship in every area of Christian worship even when the term “trinity is not mentioned in worship. Rather, the model of the Trinity is expressed in terms of “The doctrine of the Trinity is, after all, a map or description of the ultimate reality in which we live, move and have our being—the very nature, being and reality of God.”⁴⁸ Hence, it is like a map or description that helps Christians worship God who is Tri-personal in nature. Interestingly, Trinitarian worship includes several elements that complete the full experience of worship.

Prayer and the Trinity

Prayer is a vital part of offering homage to the Trinity. Thompson affirms this statement by saying that, “Most modern perspectives on the Trinity and worship see prayer as a central aspect of this relationship.” There is a strong continuity relationally of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To acknowledge the Father in prayer is to acknowledge both the Son and Spirit as well. Congruently, then, “It is because of God’s triunity that we have communion with God in

⁴⁸ John Witvliet, “What to Do with Our Renewed Trinitarian Enthusiasm: forming Trinitarian Piety and Imagination Through Worship and Catechesis.” In *the Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*, edited by Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009, 240.

prayer”⁴⁹ says Sanders. Jesus is the reconciler and peace-giver of the faith. The Trinity is necessary when it comes to address God’s uniqueness. When it comes to acknowledging the Father in prayer it is through the Son and the Spirit that gives believers access to the Father.⁵⁰ Thus, the Son reveals the Father and when Christians sees the Son they see the Father as well. When Jesus leads the disciples to pray the Lord’s prayer, Jesus directs their attention to the Father.

The Word and the Trinity

When it comes to the Word, one of the indictment given by Thompson is that modern Trinitarian theology spend less time on the Word and preaching and focuses more on prayer and the sacraments. To worship God without the Word is like committing a fraud. The Word reveals the expression of the Tri-persons of God in worship. Worship is well received when it is led by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, “Worship must be by the Holy Spirit, who through the written and preached Word leads us to the living Word. Through the ministry of the Word and Spirit speaks to the church and leads us to the Father.”⁵¹ So the Word is of utmost requirement to be incorporated within the worship.

The sacraments and the Trinity

The Communion or the Lord’s Supper allows Christians to celebrate and experience the “threefold” of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in worship. The Communion has a “trinitarian structure built into it as an act of worship.”⁵² In the sacrament, the prayers of the saints are offered up to the Father to invoke the presence of the Son and the Spirit. By invoking the

⁴⁹ Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010), 211, Kindle.

⁵⁰ John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 95.

⁵¹ John Thompson, 97.

⁵² John Thompson, 98.

presence of the Spirit by exalting Christ's presence in the Supper the Spirit enables Christians to share in the fellowship of Christ which allows Christians to commune with the Father.⁵³ Another way of expressing it says Thompson is to say "that the Holy Spirit exalts the community in Christ to God the Father."⁵⁴ In celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the Word plays a crucial part as well. According to Chan, the Word holds the sacrament together in a single rite from the birth of the church. Hence, to neglect the Word from the sacrament can become detrimental to the church's existence. Chan states that, "It is crucial that we maintain their proper emphases within the liturgy as well as their indispensability to each another. Failure to do so will result in the dissolution of the eschatological tension so crucial for the church's existence."⁵⁵ This is the reason why proper worship of the Trinity is important to the church.

Experiencing the Trinity in Mission

The theological mandates given to the disciples by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 embodies within the Trinitarian language. This Trinitarian language is revealed in the missiology of Christ ministry to the world. Thus, the missiology of the Triune God speaks of the true essence and purpose of creation. The Father (God) is considered as Creator of the world. Seng-Kong Tan says that though the Trinity is viewed as the Creator and Redeemer it is the Father who create and recreates because He is the "generative source of all things."⁵⁶

When viewing the Trinity from the linguistically model Tan also says that the Father, Son, and Spirit's activity of being redeemer, reconciler, and creator is "God's unveiling of

⁵³ John Thompson, 99.

⁵⁴ John Thompson, 99.

⁵⁵ Simon Chan, 64, Kindle.

⁵⁶ Seng-Kong Tan, "A Trinitarian Ontology of Missions," *International Review of Mission*, 93, no.369 (2004):280-281.

Godself as God is.”⁵⁷ This speaks of God affirming His Threeness in unity. Interestingly, in referencing the presupposition of the Trinity in creation by Herman Bavinck’s theological comprehension, Letham says that the Trinity plays an important role in creation and redemption. This is very descriptive in the first chapter of Genesis because “He is a relational being.”⁵⁸ God the Father is a relational being who desires to be in communion with His creation.

The Trinitarian language of Matthew 28:19-20 reinforce the intimacy that once was lost in the Garden. This is what the first chapter of Genesis is all about from the beginning. God the Father not only brings about the formation of the world, He also creates intimacy. God the Father creates intimacy in the language of redemption where the Trinity desires to reestablish again. In referencing the presupposition of the Trinity in creation by Herman Bavinck’s understanding of eternal generation Robert Letham affirms Bavinck by saying,

Without generation, creation would be impossible, and so if God were not triune, creation would not be possible. The procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son is the basis of the willing of that world. The creation proceeds from the Father through the Son in the Spirit in order that, in the Spirit and through the Son, it may return to the Father.⁵⁹

Speaking against the opposition of deism of a god who is disconnected from his creation, Letham says that Trinitarian theology speaks of God who is closely related to the universe and creation. Meanwhile, in addressing Irenaeus’ Trinitarian perspective of God creating creation out of nothing. Letham says that Irenaeus not only affirms God’s act of will and power in creation, but God creates the world as an act of love.⁶⁰ The church is called to participate in the mission and love of the trinity.

⁵⁷ Seng-Kong Tan, 285.

⁵⁸ “The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship,” 427.

⁵⁹ “The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship,” 433.

⁶⁰ “The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship,” 432.

Church and Trinity

To experience the Trinity in mission is to express the missional language of God's love to the world. The church is called to express the sacrificial love of the Triune God to a lost world. Therefore, the sending of the Son by the Father is an expression of the Father's love for Mankind. The church is called to be the *mission Dei* of God. The Father sent the Son to evangelize the world, so likewise, the Son sends the church to missionize the world. Robert says it best, "We cannot separate the church's triune origins from our mission to the world."⁶¹ The mission of the Trinity through the church should never be understood from human's perspective. Mission is of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God allows the church to participate in the mission of the Triune God.

In his theological understanding of *mission Dei* Dodds says that the Lord's prayer offers three petitions that should be the church's ultimate goals for mission. First, in its mission the church is to hallow the God's Triune name. Secondly, in its mission the church must declare the kingdom of God. Finally, in its mission the church must manifest the will of God on earth as it is in heaven.⁶² Since the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son, the Spirit functions as agent of the Father's "summing up of all things in Christ, '...to bring history to completion and fulfillment in Christ.'"⁶³ In other words, the Spirit's job is to empower the church to complete the works of Christ by evangelizing the world with the gospel.

⁶¹Robert K. Lang'at, "Trinity and Missions: Theological Priority in Missionary Nomenclature." In *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*, edited by Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber, 161-181. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

⁶²Adam Dodds, "The Mission of the Spirit and the Mission of the Church: Towards a Trinitarian Missiology," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35:2 (2011) 209.

⁶³Adam Dodds, 209.

The mission of the Spirit becomes the mission of the church. The church shares the same purpose of the Godhead. Tim Chester says that the church's mission is rooted in the missionary character of the Triune God.⁶⁴ Hence, the Triune God is the Father of mission who sends forth His Son.⁶⁵ The highest expression of the Godhead is the sending of both the Son and the Spirit. Thus, "The sending of the Son and of the Holy Spirit into the world was the highest expression of the divine missionary activity.' The real divine mystery of mission, by which it lives, is the coming of the Son, who is both sent by the Father and is the content of that mission, and, in turn, is moved by and sends the Holy Spirit."⁶⁶ The purpose of the sending is to bring salvation to humanity.

The continuation of the Father's sending is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The same way the Spirit of God empowers the prophets of old (Old Testament) also descends upon Christ at the commencement of His ministry. In this same fashion the Holy Spirit enables the church to participate in the Triune mission. The church's mission must agree with the Spirit's mission that represents the Godhead. Consequently, then, 'The mission of the church takes its lead from God's own mission.'⁶⁷ Jesus' union with the Father demonstrates that the church is, by grace, to be exalted into communion with the Son by the Holy Spirit to share in the Father's mission.⁶⁸

The Trinitarian languages of Matthew 28:19-20 through the sending out demonstrates that the church belongs to God. It belongs to God because it is the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Thus, mission is the core purpose that identifies the church's relationship with

⁶⁴ Tim Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity: Why Father, Son and Spirit are good news*, (UK: The Good Book Company, 2005), 174.

⁶⁵ "Modern Trinitarian Perspectives," 69.

⁶⁶ "Modern Trinitarian Perspectives," 69.

⁶⁷ "Modern Trinitarian Perspective," 73.

⁶⁸ "Modern Trinitarian Perspective," 73.

the Trinity. Thompson says that metaphors that are employed to describe the church such as the people of God, the body of Christ, and bride of Christ are not meant to be static in nature. The church is seen as a living community within the world but it is not part of the world.⁶⁹ Therefore, every function of the church plays an important role in reaching the world with the gospel. To affirm this notion then Thompson says that “The church as a whole and each member of it is called upon to participate in mission in these ways.”⁷⁰ In other words, the church embodies the immanent presence of the Triune God who expresses His love by sending the Son and the Spirit to witness to the world.

When the church participates in the missional life of the Trinity it demonstrates two things about its mission. First, the church’s mission manifest the completion of Christ’s work of reconciliation to the entire cosmos and all humanity.⁷¹ Secondly, the mission of the church is to be carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit presence the mission of the church becomes meaningless. The Spirit goes ahead of the church and prepares the hearts of man and woman because the mere nature of the church is not capable to bring about change.⁷²

Dodds preciously speaks of three petitions that helps the church focus on its mission. But the ultimate question to ask—what is the church’s primary goal for mission? Jesus’ primary missionary statement to the disciple is to make disciples. The essential mission of making disciples is to bring humanity into a living communion with the Triune God who brings

⁶⁹ “Modern Trinitarian Perspective,” 73.

⁷⁰ “Modern Trinitarian Perspective,” 73.

⁷¹ “Modern Trinitarian Perspective,” 73.

⁷² Adam Dodds, 213.

humanity together through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁷³ Therefore, the church becomes a dynamic instrument in the service of the Trinity.

It needs to be repeated here again that the church belongs to the Trinity according to Trinitarian language of Matthew 28:19-20. The sending out of the disciples is to manifest the unity of the Tri-personal being of God and His love for the world. As the church carries out the Christ's injunction of making disciples.

Contrastingly, both the church and sinners who come to Christ get to experience the sweet communion of the Trinity. Chester so eloquently makes it personal by saying, "God is not only relational; He has opened up the trinitarian relations to include us. There is an outward movement of sending and a return movement of glorification."⁷⁴ Thence, when the church is obedient to its Trinitarian mission the church glorifies the Tri-personal being of God. The mission of the Trinity is the mission of the church. This is the Trinitarian languages of Matthew 28:19-20. Thus, part of the church's mission is to introduce Tri-personal being of the God of the Scripture. This is what it means to experience the Trinity in mission. The core of mission is to experience the Trinity and knowing the Trinity.

Trinity in Practice

J.I. Packer speaks to the danger of Christians claiming to know much about God but they hardly know God at all.⁷⁵ Thus, the research demonstrated that both pastors and members lack the essential understanding of incorporating the worship of the Trinity in the four areas of the ministry. Therefore, the application of living out the Holy Trinity is of utmost importance to the body of Christ. The author sincerely believes that both pastors and members can tremendously

⁷³ "Modern Trinitarian Perspective," 75.

⁷⁴ "Delighting in the Trinity," 174.

⁷⁵ J.I. Packer, 26.

benefit from applying the Trinity into their daily lives. Once the practicality of Trinity becomes transformable in the lives of the pastors and members applying the Trinity in the four areas of ministry becomes meaningful and relevant to Jesus' word in Matthew 28:18-20 that the church is called to live out the Trinity.

Pastors are called to embody the knowledge, wisdom, and harmony of the Holy Trinity in their daily living. This can only happen through the preached Word of God. Therefore, pastors should exemplify spiritual maturity in the Spirit of God by imitating the second person of the Trinity, Jesus. When pastors begin to reflect the true nature of the Trinity it will encourage members to imitate their pastors. The Apostle Paul says to the Corinthians Church that they should imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Therefore, Mike Pasquarello says that,

Preaching as a pastoral practice is not simply a call to believe something, to learn something, or to do something. Rather, it is to be made a truthful witness to Christ, knowing and loving the Word that shapes our lives and gives shape to all the words we speak. In Augustine's words, the pastor is to become an 'eloquent sermon,' a holy performance that invites the church into truthful, enlivening conversation with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁷⁶

So, the question to be asked, is how does a pastor translate the significant of the Trinity in the lives of his church?

The first place to relate the theological importance of the Trinity in the life of the church is the book of Ephesians according to Philip Ryken and Michael LeFebvre. The Apostle Paul conveys how the Trinity plays an instrumental role in the lives of the Ephesians in chapter one when Paul speaks of God's plan of salvation for His people. The engagement of every Person of the Trinity was active to the saving of God's people, the church.⁷⁷ Thus, Ryken and LeFebvre

⁷⁶ Mike Pasquarello III, 111.

⁷⁷ Philip Ryken & Michael LeFebvre, 19, Kindle.

states that the Father's administered salvation and it was accomplished through the Son and applied by the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸ They say again that the mystery of the triune being of God is at the epicenter of the universe because it is the heart of the church's salvation.⁷⁹ Therefore, the redemptive work of the church is Trinitarian structure in its nature.⁸⁰ When pastors are able to come to this knowledge and revelation then they are able to translate this information into the lives of their members.

Christian Experience the Father's love through the Son

The Pastors' role then is to guide Christians to come into an intimate relationship with the Trinity. First, Christians come to know and experience the Father's love through the sacrificial death of the Son. The verse that is often quoted so many times that expresses the love of the Father is "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." (John 3:16).⁸¹ Jesus points believers to the Father's love because the Father is the *source* of their being.

It is with this understanding that Christians come to know the Father's love for their lives. Jesus death on the cross was to reveal the Father as the *source* of the love behind the Son's redemptive work for the salvation of the world.⁸² The historical appearance of the incarnate God (Father) in Christ was to manifest the atonement for the sins of the world.⁸³ The Scripture says that all have sinned and come short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). Thus, "The atoning sufferings and death of Christ for our sins were those of the incarnate God himself."⁸⁴ Sam Allberry

⁷⁸ Philip & LeFebvre, Kindle.

⁷⁹ Philip & LeFebvre, Kindle.

⁸⁰ Philip & LeFebvre, Kindle.

⁸¹ John's gospel, NKJV.

⁸² Philip & LeFebvre, 72, Kindle.

⁸³ Robert Letham, 30.

⁸⁴ Robert Letham,

confirms the implication of living out the Trinity by saying that Christ's death and resurrection provides Christians the opportunity to participate in the relationship of the triune being of God.⁸⁵ He says again that it was the "...perfect matrix of love, which has existed at the centre of all reality for all eternity, is open for us to join. Through the gospel, we have been invited in."⁸⁶ Thus, the death of Christ not only provide forgiveness of sin and the avoidance of eternal punishment but His death also provides Christians an invitation to participate in the fellowship of the Trinity.⁸⁷

Secondly, the implication of living out the Trinity is not only to recognize the Father as the *source* of all, but Jesus also teaches that "he is also to be served as the *object* of all."⁸⁸ Jesus makes it clear to the disciples that no one can come to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Jesus also says to the disciples again that whatever they ask in His name, He will do so that the Father is to be glorified through the Son (John 14:13). Hence, Jesus is the One to whom Christians "respond with love, with prayers, with worship and adoration"⁸⁹ to the Father.

The third implication as viewing the Father as the *source* of all heavenly blessings is the fact that the Father is to be considered the ultimate object of all Christians' prayers when prayers are offered through the name of Jesus.⁹⁰ The reason being is because Jesus is the Mediator to the Father. Therefore, the Scripture describes the appropriate pattern of addressing the Father in prayer is through the name of the Son through the leading of the Holy Spirit.⁹¹ In Ephesians 2:18

⁸⁵ Sam Allberry, 73

⁸⁶ Sam Allberry,

⁸⁷ Sam Allberry, 72.

⁸⁸ Philip & LeFebvre, 74, Kindle.

⁸⁹ Philip & LeFebvre, 74, Kindle.

⁹⁰ Philip & LeFebvre, 75, Kindle.

⁹¹ Philip & LeFebvre, 76, Kindle.

Paul describes this biblical pattern to the Christians in Ephesus by saying, “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”⁹² Jesus says to the disciples that they did not choose Him, but He chose them and appointed them to bear much fruit that their fruit should remain in Him; and whatever they ask in His name to the Father the Father will grant it unto them (John 15:16). Clearly the Trinity is at work here in the life of the disciples.

Fourthly, Christians come to learn and worship the Son and the Holy Spirit because both the Son and the Spirit share the Father’s glory and gives glory to the Father.⁹³ Thus, the union of the Godhead becomes real and rich in Christians’ fellowship. John and Marcus summarizes the Christians union this way,

To be united to Christ means that we are truly joined to the incarnate person of Christ himself, who is present in his gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit and received through faith, and by this union we are brought to participate in the very life and love of the Trinity.⁹⁴

In the incarnation of Christ Christians are united in Christ because He “made himself one with us.”⁹⁵ This is the foundation of all Christians’ blessing of salvation when they are united with the Son.⁹⁶ Hence, salvation in Christ consists of Christians being alive in Christ and seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:1ff).⁹⁷ This is very important for both pastors and members to understand the unique relationship Christians share with the Trinity through the Son. It is said that the Father is the one who plans salvation and the Son is the one who accomplishes salvation

⁹² Ephesians, NKJV.

⁹³ Philip & LeFebvre,

⁹⁴ John C. Clark & Marcus Peter Johnson, 160.

⁹⁵ Robert Letham, 77.

⁹⁶ Robert Letham, 81.

⁹⁷ Robert Letham,

and the Holy Spirit is the one who applies salvation.⁹⁸ Therefore, it is important for Christians to know the Trinity

The Holy Spirit and Christian Fellowship

The Holy Spirit plays an instrumental role in bringing Christians together for fellowship. One of the characteristic natures of the Trinity is unity and fellowship. Jesus speaks of the “oneness” of the Trinity fellowship that He shares with the Father and the Spirit. The famous priestly prayer of Jesus is recorded in John 17. In John 17:21 Jesus prayed to the Father, “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”⁹⁹ First, the oneness of the Trinity is to be maintained always, and it must be manifested within the lives of the church. The Apostle Paul encourages the Church in Ephesus to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”¹⁰⁰ because there is one *Spirit*, one *hope*, one *Lord*, one *faith*, one *baptism*, and one *God* who is the Father of the church (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Secondly, the Holy Spirit also encourages Christians to walk in obedience to do the will of the Father. The perfect illustration of this is the life of Jesus. Jesus in His encounters with the Jews (religious leaders) demonstrates His unity and obedience to the Father’s will by saying to the Jews that He can do nothing of Himself unless the Father reveals it to Him (John 5:19-20; John 8:28).

Jesus also says to the disciples that when the *Comforter* (Holy Spirit) comes, He will not speak on His own authority. The Spirit will speak only what the Spirit hears from the Son

⁹⁸ Joseph Morecraft III, 251.

⁹⁹ John’s Gospel, NKJV.

¹⁰⁰ Ephesians, NKJV.

because the Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:13-15). Christians are called to glorify the Trinitarian character of the one true God in their relationship.

Thirdly, one of the monumental functions of the Holy Spirit presence in the body of Christ is fellowship. The true sign of the Spirit is the relationship Christians have with each other. Jesus spent most of His energy teaching the disciples about the importance of creating a loving relationship. In John 13:34-35 Jesus says to the disciples that He gives them a new commandment to love one another as He has love them that they should love one another. Jesus further says to them, by this the world will know that they are His disciples because they have love one another. Bolsinger summarizes this way,

Christian community is an ontological irreducible organism. It is a living reality that is imbued with the Spirit of God. and most dramatically, it is the very life of the Triune God drawing people into a covenantal relationship with God and one another. It is God's own being one earth lived in and through believers for the single end result of seeing each person become like Jesus Christ.¹⁰¹

The Apostle Paul admonishes the Christians in Corinth to dwell in the sweet communion of the Trinity when Paul says to them, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Corinthians 13:14).¹⁰²

The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, empowers believers to be in fellowship with one another as it was commanded by Jesus. To ignore the functions of the Holy Spirit is to ignore the true fellowship of the Trinity itself. Philip and LeFebvre says that, "We cannot rightly think about so heavenly a topic as the Trinity without coming to as down-to-earth an application as loving one another."¹⁰³ In other words, true Christians relationship and fellowship breathes from the divine unity of the Trinity.

¹⁰¹ Tod E. Bolsinger, 25, Kindle.

¹⁰² 2 Corinthians, NKJV.

¹⁰³ Philip & LeFebvre, 91, Kindle.

Fourthly, the Holy Spirit reveals the perfect union of the Father's will of the Son. Thus, the Spirit unites Christians to do likewise by walking in the perfect will of the Father's salvation by edifying the body of Christ. According to Sinclair Ferguson on the matter of walking in union in the Spirit to glorify the Son and the Father says the following,

The central role of the Spirit is to reveal Christ and to unite us to him and to all those who participate in his body. Just as the indwelling of Christ and indwelling of the Spirit are two aspects of one and the same reality in the New Testament, so to sustain us 'in Christ' is the heart and soul of the Spirit's ministry.¹⁰⁴

Why is this so important for the body of Christ? Whenever the church functions in unity in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the church honors the ministry of the Trinity. The theological implication here is that the church models what the union of Christ looks like within the body to the world. The purpose here is to unite "all those who participate" in the body of Christ.

Ferguson drives home the theological implication by stating that,

The implication is that the model we employ for structuring the Spirit's ministry should be that of union with Christ. Every facet of the application of Christ's work ought to be related to the way in which the Spirit unites us to Christ himself, and viewed as directly issuing from personal fellowship with him. The dominant motif and architectonic principle of the order of salvation should therefore be union with Christ in the Spirit.¹⁰⁵

Just as the Spirit works in every facet of Christ's ministry the Spirit is to be exemplified in the ministry of the church individually and corporately. Here, Christians have received the "Spirit of sonship"¹⁰⁶ that cry out "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6).¹⁰⁷ The implication is that Christians come to participate in the sweet communion of the Father through the Son.

What better way to conclude the significance of living out the Trinitarian faith with the words of Catherine Mowry LaCugna who speaks strongly of the church's fellowship (*koinonia*)

¹⁰⁴ Sinclair B. Ferguson, 100.

¹⁰⁵ Sinclair B. Ferguson, 100.

¹⁰⁶ Sinclair B. Ferguson, 183.

¹⁰⁷ Galatians, NKJV

with the triune being of God says the following, “God moves toward us so that we may move toward each other and thereby toward God. the way God comes to us is also our way to God and to each other: through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is our faith, confessed in creed and celebrated in the sacraments.”¹⁰⁸ The author is in full agreeance with LaGugna’s statement.

¹⁰⁸ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, 377.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The topic of the Trinity is not an easy subject to intellectually entertain in areas of Christian's fellowship. Historically, it has caused many of Protestant denominations to break fellowship. It has created some enemies and created some allies along the way. However, there remain some theological differences between allies who embrace the Doctrine of the Trinity. For instance, Trinitarian Pentecostals believe in the Trinity but have a slight different interpretation of the baptismal formula than Oneness Pentecostal.

Oneness Pentecostal's formula invokes the name of Jesus only in water baptism. This is not the case with Trinitarian Pentecostals. Trinitarian Pentecostals tend to invoke the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their baptismal formula.¹ Another ally that fully embraces the doctrine of the Trinity is the Roman Catholic Church. Now, there is a slight difference between the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodoxy's comprehension about the doctrine of the *filioque*.

For the Roman Catholic Church, its creedal formula states that 'We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and Son is worshipped and glorified.'² In the Catholic creedal formula, the Son nor the Spirit is subordinated to the Father. All three-persons are coequal and coeternal and all receive the same worship and glorification. The Orthodox understanding of the doctrine of the *filioque* teaches that the Holy Spirit proceeds both from the Father and the Son. This teaching interestingly tends to lean toward the argument of subordinationism. Also, within Orthodoxy,

¹ Richard Shaka, "A Trinitarian Pentecostal Response," *The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Pneuma* 30 (2008): 240-244.

² Ralph Del Colle, "Oneness and Trinity: A Preliminary Proposal For Dialogue With Oneness Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10 (1997): 85-110.

most Protestants churches tend to differ with each other over the *filioque*. Though there may seem be slight differences within Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Protestantism teaching on the *filioque*, both uphold the doctrine of the Trinity to be vital to their Christian faith as well as Trinitarian Pentecostals. This leads into the purpose of why the dissertation was written.

The essential purpose for writing this dissertation is to demonstrate how the worship of the Trinity is related to the four areas of ministry: *preaching, teaching, worshipping* and *evangelism*. To ignore the core rudiments of the Trinity is to ignore the essence of Christianity. Bray speaking on the important of the Trinity states that, “Yet without the Trinity there would be no Christianity. Our belief in the saving work of Christ the Son of God and in the indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit demands that we worship God in that way.”³ All four areas of ministry must include the central message of salvation in the Son. Christ is the central message within these four areas of the Christian faith. Father Michael Downey summarizes it this way when speaking on the mystery of the Trinity and how it affirms the faith of the church, he says,

Christian faith is Trinitarian faith. Christian life is Trinitarian life. And Christian spirituality is Trinitarian spirituality. Yet most who profess Christian faith would be hard pressed to say what is meant by the word Trinity, to say nothing of the truth about God which the Trinitarian doctrine seeks to express.⁴

All four areas, *preaching, teaching, worshipping*, and *evangelism* speaks the truth of the inclusion of the Triune-God and how He affects the way the church does ministry. These are the reasons why these chapters were written in this order.

Chapter one, presented the essential problem of why the Trinity was not considered as a focal point of worship. The mention of the word Trinity tends to make most Christians shy away

³ Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine Of God: Contours of Christian Theology*, 111.

⁴ Father Michael Downey, “Trinity: Community, Communion, Contemplation,” *American Benedictine Review* 64 (2), (2013): 138-153.

from the conversation. McGrath gives three explicit reasons of why Christians struggles to understanding the Trinity. These include the following, “human finitude, human creatureliness, and human sinfulness.”⁵ All these reasons speak of human limitation when it comes to understand the totality of who God is. Accordingly, McGrath states that, “In each of these respects, we are highlighting an aspect of our existence as finite, fallen creatures.”⁶ Thus, the limitation of the fallen creatures creates the lack of understanding of fully understanding God’s triune nature.

Chapter one also looked at the “mystery” of the Trinity. Per McGrath the “mystery” of the Trinity is another manifestation of why most Christians shy away from worshipping the Triune God. Again, McGrath gives two explanations why this occurs in the life of the church. First, the mind cannot logically make sense of the “mystery” of the Trinity. It is superstitious for the modern mind to accept such a notion of the nature of God. Secondly, there is some aspect of the doctrine that the human’s mind can embrace but not the totality of the “mystery” of the Trinity. At the same time, the Trinity tends to provide a deep “richness” and a “complex” understanding of God.

Chapter one also presented why Christians lacked interest to engage the Trinity. Parry has discovered in his research that Christians do not see how the Trinity makes sense in their spiritual growth. For these Christians, the Trinity is viewed just as an abstract doctrine that only matter, in theory but not in practice. Letham findings also confirm Parry’s research which states,

For the vast majority of Christian, including most ministers and theological students, the Trinity is still a mathematical conundrum, full of imposing philosophical jargon, relegated to an obscure alcove, remote from daily life.⁷

⁵ Alister E. McGrath, “The Doctrine of the Trinity: An Evangelical Reflection,” 18.

⁶ Alister E. McGrath, “The Doctrine of the Trinity: An Evangelical Reflection,” 18.

⁷ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, 1.

The core problem is that the Trinity lacks practical application in the lives of believers.

Finally, chapter one also presented that for the Trinity to be appreciated in worship, proper theology must be put in place. Parry states that good theology will highlight the proclamation of the gospel and express the worship of the Triune God of the Scriptures. Therefore, “the Trinity is central to Christianity...” because Christians get to experience the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This strongly affirms what Jesus says to the disciples in John 14:23, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” The Scripture truly speaks for itself here.

Chapter two, presented the factors of why Christians fail to worship the Trinity. In this chapter, three major factors were selected to give credence to the argumentation of why the Trinity is neglected in worship. Notwithstanding, of course, these three factors are not exhaustive within themselves. There is no doubt that there are other factors which also contribute to the hindrance of experiencing the Triune God. The three major factors are: *lack of understanding*, *the feminist view of the Trinity*, and *Oneness Pentecostalism “In Jesus’ name” only theology*.

One of the manifestations in chapter two that surrounded the first hindrance is the argument of silence. The argument of silence demonstrated that there are pastors who seem to lack biblical understanding when it comes to the knowing the Trinity. Thus, whenever pastors become silent about the Trinity, it clearly indicates that many pastors find the subject matter to be perplexing. It is perplexing because the abstract nature of the subject is intellectually challenging.

Chapter two also presented why pastors and theologian within the academia sphere needs to move from the abstractness of the Trinity to make it more practical in nature. Karl Rahner

addresses this issue; Rahner believed that the Trinity should apply within Christian piety.

Whenever the Trinity becomes practical in the lives of Christians the “mystery” begins to unfold and it makes sense to Christians.

By presenting the feminist view on the Trinity, in chapter two, was to demonstrate how the political view of the feminist movement has changed the theological conversation on the Trinity. By changing the patriarchal framework of God, the practical purpose of the Trinity has lost its primary concentration; that is, worship. Rather, the theological argument has become the battle of the sexes. This is very crucial to the deliberation at hand, for sure.

Finally, chapter two highlighted the Oneness Pentecostal movement. It is one of the fastest growing denomination in the entire world. Since it is growing rapidly in size, many Christians tend embrace its doctrinal teaching without questioning if it is biblical or not. Its teaching, extremely denies the relevancy of the Trinity. This denomination teaches that the Trinity is fundamentally incompatible with the Christian faith and that there is only one God. Oneness Pentecostals only believe to baptize “In Jesus’ name,” only because they reject the traditional baptismal formula. They believe that the fullness of the Godhead is manifested in Jesus Christ.

Chapter three presented a biblical descriptive image of the distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is important for Christians to understand the Trinitarian distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By having a wrong view or image of the Trinity of God can infer as to how Christians worship the true God of the Scriptures. Letham stated the obvious,

Wrong views of God can twist and corrupt our worship and ministry, the life and witness of the church, and ultimately the peace, harmony, and well-being of the world around us.

A close study of the Trinity is also dangerous, for it must lead us to a closer and fuller sense of awe and worship.⁸

Therefore, chapter three provided biblical evidences from the Old Testament, New Testament, and from the Paul's letter to affirm the worship of the Godhead. The Old Testament testifies the monotheistic view God in the Scriptures. The *Shema* stated that the "LORD our God, the LORD is one!" Chapter three also demonstrated that the teaching of the *Shema* did not contradict the Threeness distinction and the unity of God.

The Old Testament only also spoke of a Trinitarian language that affirmed the distinctions of God in the New Testament. To illustrate, scriptures such as Genesis 1:26, Genesis 3:22; Genesis 11:7; Genesis 18:1-21; and Isaiah 6:8 all share the same phrase "let us." Hence, the New Testament writers and the Pauline letters only amplify the economic distinction of the Godhead.

The economic distinction dealt with the different roles that each person of the Trinity plays in the history of salvation. Though there are distinctions between the Godhead which speaks of the Immanent Trinity or Economic Trinity. Yet each person of the Trinity shares the same *ousia*. Chapter three theologically explained the incommunicable attributes of God which speaks to God's eternality. Thus, all three-persons of the Trinity share the same incommunicable attributes. These attributes include *eternity*, *immutability*, *omniscience*, *omnipotence*, and *omnipresence* etc. Chapter three gave a solid biblical foundation of why Christians should worship the Triune God.

Chapter four, purported the type of methodology that was employed to achieve the statistical outcome of the research. Additionally, a qualitative approach was employed which

⁸ Robert Letham, 11.

ascribed to a phenomenological model to help support the four basic queries that gives meaning to the research. It is important to reference these four queries again here which are:

1. What does it mean to incorporate the Trinity in Christian Worship?
2. What factor does the Trinity play in the growth of Christian relationship in Christ?
3. How does the role of Jesus and the Holy Spirit factor in with the preaching and teaching of the gospel?
4. How do you view the role of the Holy Spirit in living out your Christian life?

These four questions help to guide the structure and the formation of chapter four by providing charts and statistical data, endeavoring to understand the phenomenology paradigm on the worship of the Trinity. Consequently, the phenomenological model investigated the “common meaning” and “lived experiences” of a concept or a phenomenon that is experienced within a community. The community of believers in this context refers to the Southern Baptist Churches.

To reach these statistical data in chapter four the author implemented Survey Monkey with open-ended questions, when provided two separate links for pastors and church members, who took the questionnaires. The statistical data revealed that the “lived experiences” of both pastors and church members were inconsistent with the outcome of the research. It demonstrated that both pastors and members lack the knowledge of knowing the true purpose of worshipping the Trinity. The statistical data revealed the reason why this occurred, because most Christians, including pastors, do not find the doctrine of the Trinity to be relevant in their lives and found it to be esoteric in nature.

Chapter five provided a practical guide that can help pastors and members see the significance and the relevancy of worshipping the Trinity. It begins with the understanding that

Christianity is rooted in the *historic conviction* that the God of the Scriptures is triune. Chapter five pointed out that the Trinity is the *heart* and *center* of the Christian faith. If this is not understood, then it cannot be contributive in worship and the growth of the church.

Chapter five revealed that to understand the love of God, one must understand the Trinity. The Trinity reveals the mutual love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and that it is unalterable. This is the Christian confidence because it demonstrates how Christians ought to express the mutual love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit toward Christian fellowship. Meanwhile, chapter five is about *Experiencing the Trinity in Preaching*. The Holy Spirit is at the heart of Christian preaching.

In preaching, the Holy Spirit illuminates the preachers' mind to fully comprehend the true nature of God. The Spirit demonstrates that God is the Father. Also, the Spirit helps the preachers understand the Son's relationship to the Father. The Spirit also helps the preachers to understand that preaching is to be focused on the Tri-unity of God. In other words, preaching exalts the full counsels of the Godhead.

Chapter five also highlights *Experiencing the Trinity in Teaching*. It revealed that Christian education is important. It is through Christian education, contextually, that the Father is understood as the source of all truth. Contextually, Christian education demonstrated that true "personhood" is reflected in the Son. Finally, through Christian education the Holy Spirit is understood as the power that sustains the community of faith in Christ.

Chapter five also highlights *Experiencing the Trinity in Worship*. It revealed that Christian Worship must always maintain its *spiritual authenticity* of the Triune nature of God in the Scriptures. It also revealed that the Trinity played an important role in *prayer*. Christians do not pray especially to one person of the Godhead. When Christians acknowledge the Son in

prayer, they are also acknowledging the Father and the Spirit. When Christians pray, prayer allows them to experience the Triunity of God because it is not an abstract experience. Jungel states this way,

The doctrine of the Trinity has often been perceived as practically irrelevant. Prayers with trinitarian structure can begin to overcome this perception. The God who is confessed and proclaimed by Christians does not exist in splendid isolation, but is One who exists from eternity as a Being in community. Trinitarians prayers call Christians to experience the life of the triune God.⁹

Thus, to pray in Jesus' name is to experience the Tri-personal being of God.

Also, the Trinity aligns with the Word of God. It is through the Word of God that Christians get to know the Trinity. The Word helps Christians' worship to be authentic because Christians get to worship the Triune God.

Chapter five continues to note how the Christians' sacraments agreed with the worship of the Trinity. When Christians' partake of the sacrament, the Lord's Supper, prayers and reverence are offered up to the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit's presence is being manifested through Christians' fellowship.

Finally, chapter five also touches on what it meant to *Experience the Trinity in Mission*. The mission of the Trinity spoke of the *redemption* and *restoration* of Mankind's relationship to God. The mission of the Trinity reveals that God desires to be intimate with Mankind again. The mission of the Trinity revealed that it is the Father who sent the Son, while the Son express the Father's love by His sacrificial death on the cross, while the Holy Spirit affirms and confirms the Father's love through the sealing of the Spirit.

The church is called to be the *mission Dei* of the Trinity. Therefore, the church understands its mission through the Trinitarian language of Matthew 28:19-20. The mission of

⁹ Eberhard Jungel, Frederick J. Gaiser (Translator), "Trinitarian Prayers for Christians Worship," Word & World Volume XVIII (3), (1998): 244-253).

the Trinity becomes the mission of the church. If the church does not function or embraces the Trinitarian language of Matthew 28:19-20 then the church will run into spiritual bankruptcy, so to speak. In other words, the Trinity gives meaning to the sending out (mission) of the church's mission to the world. It was said by one Jewish writer, Arthur U. Michelson, speaking about Judaism and Christianity that,

Most of the people are under the impression that Christianity and Judaism are two different religions, but, as a matter of fact, they are not different, they are one and the same. Christianity is Judaism fulfilled and Judaism is Christianity promised. Christianity is Judaism unfolded. Judaism is the root and Christianity is the fruit. What is concealed in the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament.¹⁰

The Trinity is the root of all missions while the church is the “fruit” of mission because it fulfills the Great Commission of Christ.

Recommendation

To make the Trinity relevant and meaningful in worship the author would like to do seminar lectures in various churches, of the Southern Baptist Convention and encourage pastors to teach more on the importance of worshipping the Trinity in the lives of the church. Also, the author would like to continue future research in this area of study. The reason being is because theologians who are Trinitarian see the importance for Christians to be theologically educated in the practical worship of the Trinity in the lives of Christians.

Now, let close by singing the glorious wonder of the Trinity. Taken from the tenth-century hymn from the *O Pater Sancte*, these three verses show why the Trinity ought to be worshiped.

Father most holy, merciful, and loving, Jesus, Redeemer, ever to be worshipped, Life-giving Spirit, Comforter most gracious, God-everlasting.

¹⁰ Arthur U. Michelson, *The Jewish Passover and The Lord's Supper*, Los Angeles: The Jewish Hope Publishing House, 1960), 3.

Three in a wondrous unity unbroken, One perfect Godhead, love that never faileth, Light of the angels, succor of the needy, Hope of all living.

Lord God Almighty, unto thee be glory, One in Three Persons, over all be exalted; Thine, as we meet thee, be honor, praise and blessing, Now and for ever.¹¹

Worship the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ Parry, 99

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APPENDIX A**QUESTIONNAIRE ONE (PASTORS)**

1. What is your perception of the Doctrine of the Trinity?
2. What specific role does the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit play in your salvation?
3. What area of the Trinity do you focus on more than the other? Explain why?
4. Describe the current methodology you use to teach your congregation about the Trinity?
5. Describe the current methodology that incorporates the Trinity in the church's evangelism (community) outreach?
6. Tell me how the Holy Spirit plays a significant role in your preaching style?
7. How does the Trinity play a vital role in Christian fellowship?
8. How do you access a linkage between the Trinity as a practical example of daily living in your members?
9. How important for your church to understand the Trinity and its implications for Christian growth?
10. How do the church leaders incorporate the Trinity in the church ministries? Explain your answer?
11. Describe your discipleship training process for new members? How is the Trinity factored into their salvation? Explain why or why not?

APPENDIX B**QUESTIONNAIRE TWO (CHURCH-MEMBERS)**

1. In what other areas does your church incorporate the Trinity besides through the preached word? Explain your answer.
2. Do you find these methods effective? Why or Why not?
3. Explain how your church's ministries acknowledge the Trinity during activities or events.
4. How often does the pastor teach biblical principles of the Trinity to the congregation?
5. How important is praise and worship in your church experience?
6. Explain your concept of praise and worship.
7. How often does your Sunday school and/or Bible study teach on the Doctrine of the Trinity?
8. What area (evangelism, fellowship, or discipleship training) of the church experience can be improved? Explain why.
9. Describe how the doctrine of the Trinity plays a significant part in your Christian walk.
10. How does the Trinity play a vital role in Christian unity?
11. Tell how Christian fellowship is connected to the Trinity.

APPENDIX C

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
document for use from
May 25, 2015 to --
Protocol # 2181.052515

CONSENT FORM

The Trinity...Key Biblical Mandates For
Preaching, Teaching, Worshipping, and
Evangelism In The Local Church
Pedreto (Pedro) Graham-Brown
Liberty University
Baptist Theological Seminary

I am inviting you to participate in a research study that explores the impact of the Trinity in churches from the perception of pastors and congregational members. You were selected as a possible participant because you have pastored a church with more than 100 members for more than ten years; or you are the members of a church whose pastor meets the prerequisites for participation. The criteria for participation are Southern Baptist pastors and church congregational members only. The study will explore the many facets of the Trinity and how they are expressed in church ministry. The researcher will identify and investigate the topic of *The Trinity...Key Biblical Mandates For Preaching, Teaching, Worshipping, and Evangelism In The Local Church*. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Pedreto Graham-Brown, D. Min. candidate at Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary.

Background Information:

There is a lack of knowledge about the Trinity in church congregations; the problem is Christians do not understand the meaning of worshipping the Trinity. Part of the problem is that the teaching of the Trinity is not properly integrated in Christian worship. The Trinity plays an important role in the church's life and the growth of the church, and it also plays a vital role in Christian spiritual development. This research hopes to enhance the fellowship and knowledge of the Trinity in the areas of ministry through preaching, teaching, worshipping, and evangelism.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: Complete an anonymous, online questionnaire. A link will be provided where you can respond to the questionnaire. The questionnaire should take no longer than 30 to 45 minutes for pastors/congregation.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks of participating in this study are minimal, which means they are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefit of the study is that the research will equip pastors and congregational members with material that will enable them to understand the Trinity's role in church ministry and in Christian spiritual development. Participants will not receive any direct, personal benefits.

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Compensation:

Participants will not receive compensation for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. I will store the information on my computer in a password-protected file. I will store the data for the required 3 years, and then I will delete it. I will be the only person with access to the data.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Rev. Pedreto Graham-Brown. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 502-299-3330 or pgrahambrown@liberty.edu. Mr. Graham-Brown's faculty mentor is Dr. Charlie Davidson. Dr. Davidson can be contacted at cdavidson@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

APPENDIX D**APPROVAL THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)**

May 25, 2015

Pedreto Graham-Brown

IRB Exemption 2181.052515: The Trinity...Key Biblical Mandates For Preaching, Teaching, Worshipping, and Evangelism In The Local Church.

Dear Pedreto,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,