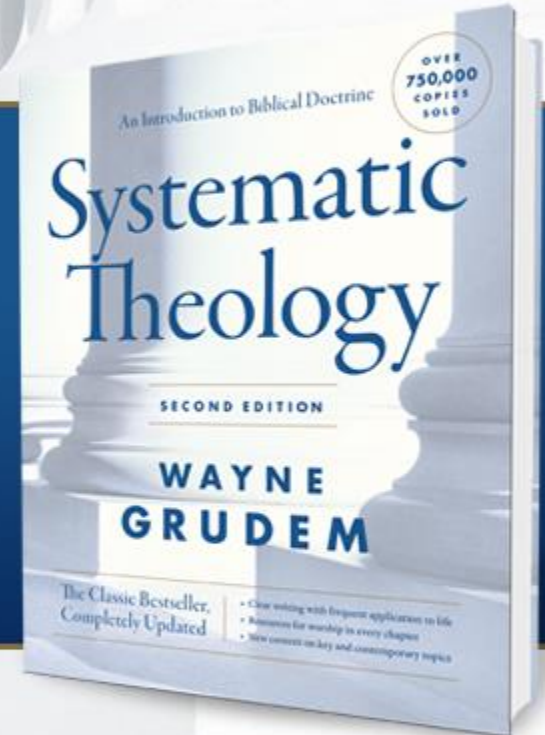


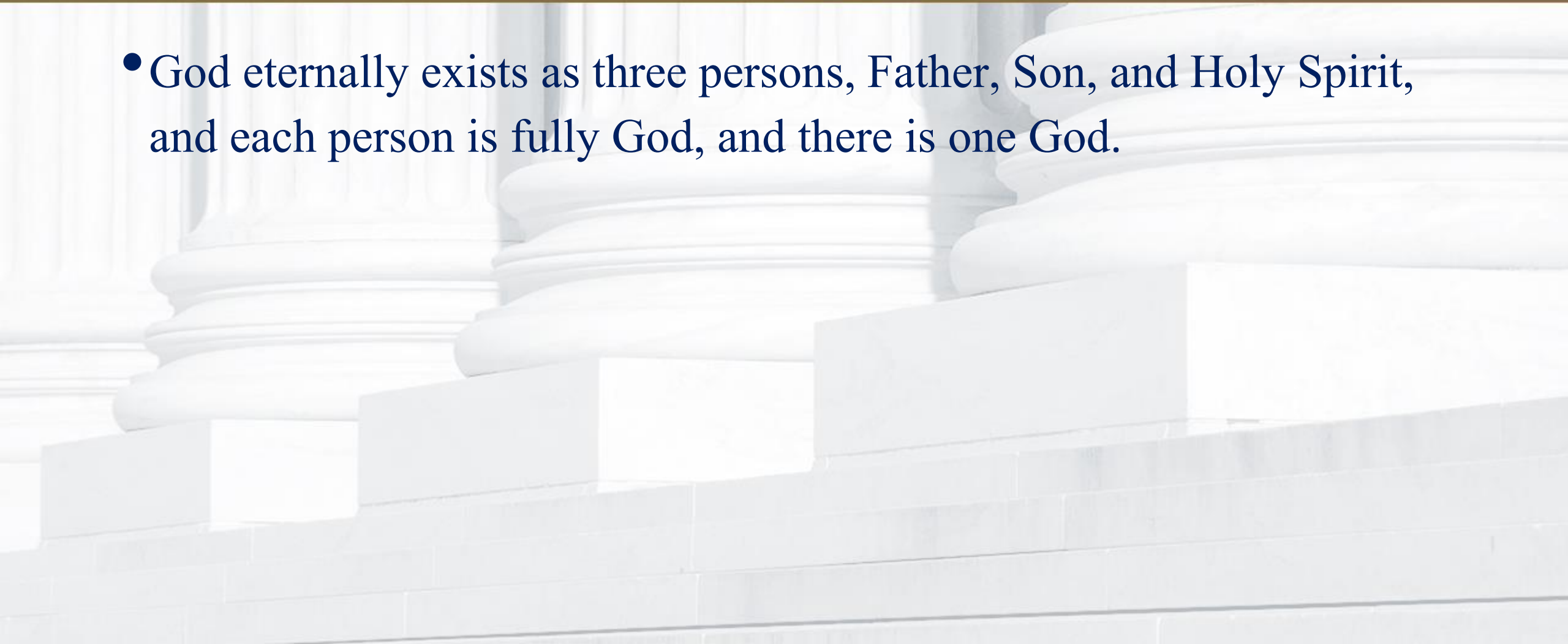
The Trinity

Chapter 14



Explanation and Scriptural Basis

- God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.



The Doctrine of the Trinity Is Progressively Revealed in Scripture

- **Partial Revelation in the Old Testament:**

- **Gen 1:26a:** Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ”
- **Isa 6:8:** And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”
- **Ps 110:1:** The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

The Doctrine of the Trinity Is Progressively Revealed in Scripture

- **Partial Revelation in the Old Testament:**

- **Isa 63:10:** But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.
- **Isa 48:16b:** And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit.

The Doctrine of the Trinity Is Progressively Revealed in Scripture

- **More Complete Revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament:**
 - **Mk 1:10–11:** And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”
 - **Matt 28:19:** 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...
 - **2 Cor 13:14:** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Three Statements Summarize the Biblical Teaching

1. God Is Three Persons.
2. Each Person Is Fully God.
3. There Is One God.

God Is Three Persons

- They are distinct from one another. (Jn 1:1–2; 16:7; 17:24)
- They are each persons.
 - The Holy Spirit is not simply a force or power.
 - He teaches, prays, knows, etc. (Jn 14:26; Rom 8:26–27; 1 Cor 2:11)

Each Person Is Fully God

- The Father is God. (See: The Bible)
- The Son is God. (Jn 1:1–18; 20:28–31; Col 2:9; Heb 1:3)
- The Holy Spirit is God. (Matt 28:19; Acts 5:3–4; 1 Pet 1:2)

There Is One God

- **Deut 6:4:** Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
- **Isa 45:5–6:** I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.
- **1 Cor 8:6:** ... yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

All Analogies Have Shortcomings

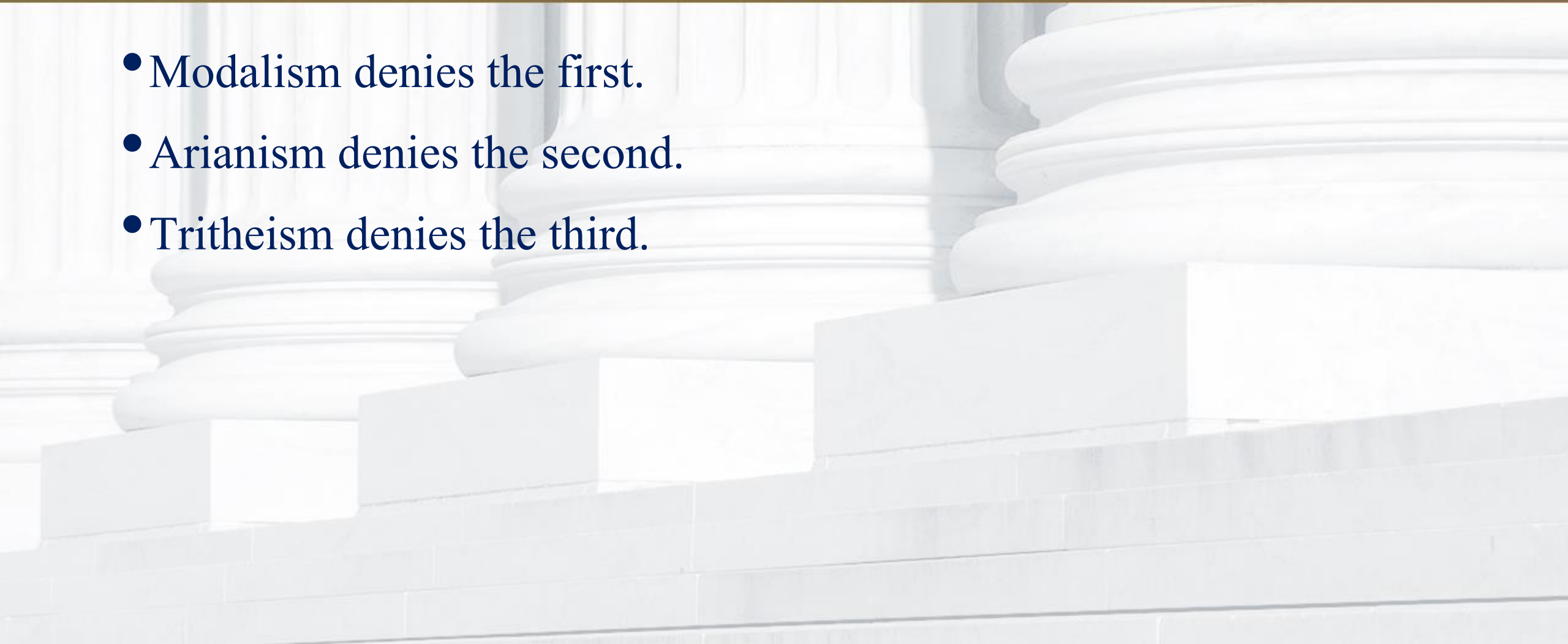
- **An egg?** Yet the yolk, the white, and the shell are all short of being a full egg, and each person of the Trinity is fully God.
- **Water (steam, water, ice)?** Yet each has differing properties which never co-exist in one quantity of water, and each person of the Trinity co-exists eternally.
- **A man who is a father, a son, and a husband?** Yet this is only one man in three roles, and the persons of the Trinity interact with one another as distinct persons.
- *Scripture never uses analogy to explain the Trinity.*

God Eternally and Necessarily Exists as the Trinity

- **Gen 1:1–2:** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth... And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.
- **Jn 1:1–3:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
- **Jn 17:5:** And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Errors Have Come by Denying Any One of the Three Statements

- Modalism denies the first.
- Arianism denies the second.
- Tritheism denies the third.



Modalism:

Denies that God is Three Persons

- **Modalism claims that there is one person who appears to us in three different forms (or “modes”).**
 - Seeks to emphasize the “one-ness” of God.
 - Fails to account for the obvious personal relationships between the persons of the Trinity.
 - Loses the heart of the doctrine of the atonement – the Son did not satisfy the holy demands of the Father.
 - Denies the independence of God and the eternal manifestation of his love between the persons of the Trinity.

Arianism:

Denies that Each Person is Fully God

- **Arianism denies the full deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.**
 - *The Arian Controversy:*
 - Pointing to verses that say Christ was “begotten” and “firstborn of all creation,” Arians taught that there was a time when Christ was not, and that the Father created the Son and the Spirit. (Jn 3:16; Col 1:15)
 - Arians taught that Christ was of a similar substance (*homoiousios*) to the Father, but not the same substance (*homoousios*).
 - These beliefs were rejected at the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople (AD 325 and 381)

Arianism:

Denies that Each Person is Fully God

- *Subordinationism:*

- Similar to but distinct from Arianism, this view held that the Son was eternal but inferior to the Father in being and attributes.
- Origen held that the Son eternally derives his being from the Father.

Arianism:

Denies that Each Person is Fully God

- *Adoptionism:*

- Also similar, this view holds that at Jesus' baptism, God adopted him as his "Son" and conferred on him supernatural powers.

Arianism:

Denies that Each Person is Fully God

- *The Filioque Clause:*
 - *Filioque* – “And the Son”
 - This phrase was inserted into the Nicene Creed at the Toledo Council in AD 525: The Spirit eternally proceeds “from the Father *and the Son*.” (Jn 15:26; 16:7)
 - This phrase was officially endorsed in AD 1017 and was the main doctrinal issue in the split between eastern and western Christianity.

Tritheism:

Denies that There is Only One God

- A very rare view in the history of the church.
- Yet, many evangelicals may unintentionally lean towards a tritheistic view as they recognize the distinct persons of the Trinity but fail to remain aware of the unity of God as one, undivided being.

The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

- **First**, the atonement is at stake. Could any creature, no matter how great, really save us?
- **Second**, justification by faith alone is threatened if we deny the full deity of the Son. Could we really depend on any creature fully for our salvation?

The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

- **Third**, if Jesus is not infinite God, should we pray to him or worship him? Who but an infinite, omniscient God could hear and respond to all the prayers of all God's people? And who but God himself is worthy of worship? Indeed, if Jesus is merely a creature, no matter how great, it would be idolatry to worship him—yet the NT commands it! (Phil 2:9–11; Rev 5:12–14)

The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

- **Fourth**, if Christ was a created being but nonetheless saved us, then this attributes credit for salvation to a creature and wrongfully exalts the creature rather than the Creator, something Scripture never allows us to do.
- **Fifth**, the independence and personal nature of God are at stake: If there is no Trinity, then there were no interpersonal relationships within the being of God before creation. How could such a God be genuinely personal or be without the need for relationships?

The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

- **Sixth**, the unity of the universe is at stake: If there is not perfect plurality and perfect unity in God himself, then we have no basis for thinking there can be any ultimate unity among the diverse elements of the universe either.

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

- **The persons of the Trinity have different primary functions in relating to the world:**
 - The persons of the Trinity are equal in attributes, but distinct in their relationships to creation.
 - The Son and the Spirit are equal in deity to the Father, but subordinate in their roles.

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

- **The persons of the Trinity have different primary functions in relating to the world:**
 - **In creation:** The Father spoke the universe into being, the Son carried out these decrees, and the Spirit manifested God's immediate presence. (Gen 1; Jn 1:3)
 - **In redemption:** The Father planned it and sent the Son, the Son obeyed and accomplished redemption, and the Spirit regenerates and brings redemption to completion. (Gal 4:4; Jn 6:38; Jn 3:5–8; Rom 8:13)

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

- **The persons of the Trinity eternally existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:**
 - The only distinctions between the members of the Trinity are in the ways they relate to each other and to the creation.
 - “Ontological equality [with] relational authority and submission”
 - Several verses speak of such relationships before the creation of the world. (Eph 1:3–4; Rom 8:29)

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

- **The meaning of *Monogenēs*:** (Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9)
 - This is translated “only begotten” in KJV, NKJV, and NASB.
 - Beginning in 1886, NT scholars began to challenge this translation and recommended “only” or “unique” as a more accurate translation.
 - In 2017, Charles Lee Irons published a convincing essay demonstrating that “only begotten” is actually the more accurate rendering.
 - The Nicene Creed also speaks of Christ as “begotten,” indicating that the early Christians understood *monogenēs* to include this sense.

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

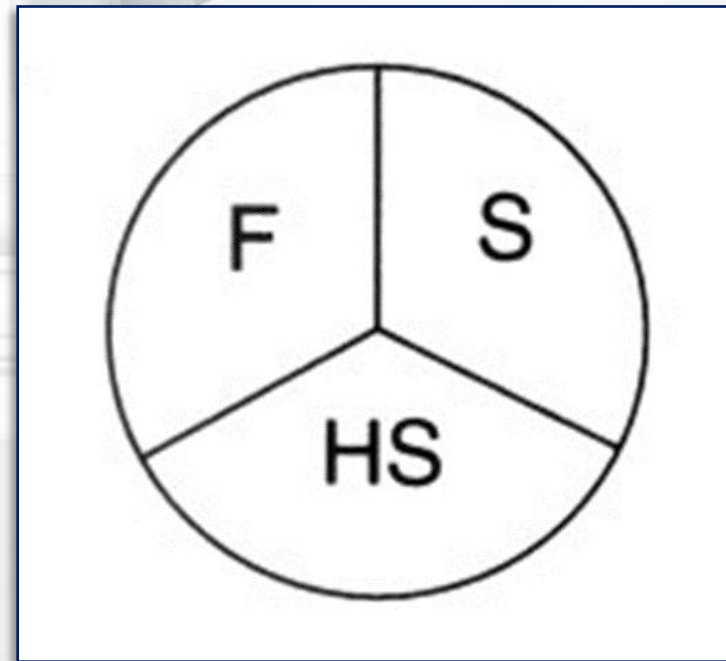
- **The meaning of the eternal generation of the Son:**
 - The Scriptures affirm that Christ is begotten (Jn 3:16) and that he has existed eternally (Jn 1:1–4).
 - Eternal generation of the Son means:
 - The Son is in some sense “from” the Father.
 - The Son is of the same nature as the Father.
 - The Son is a distinct person from the Father.
 - There is a specific order in the relationship between the Father and the Son.

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

- **Two common explanations for what “eternal generation” means:**
 1. The Father eternally communicates to the Son the divine essence, so that the Son fully shares in every attribute of the Father. Because this generation is eternal, the Son was not created but eternally existed as “the only begotten Son.” This has been the most common view.
 2. The Father is the source of the personal distinctions between Father and Son (and by implication, the Holy Spirit), but he is not the source of their divine essence (or being). This was John Calvin’s view, because he thought the first view could imply that in some way the Son and Spirit do not fully have all the attributes of the Father.

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

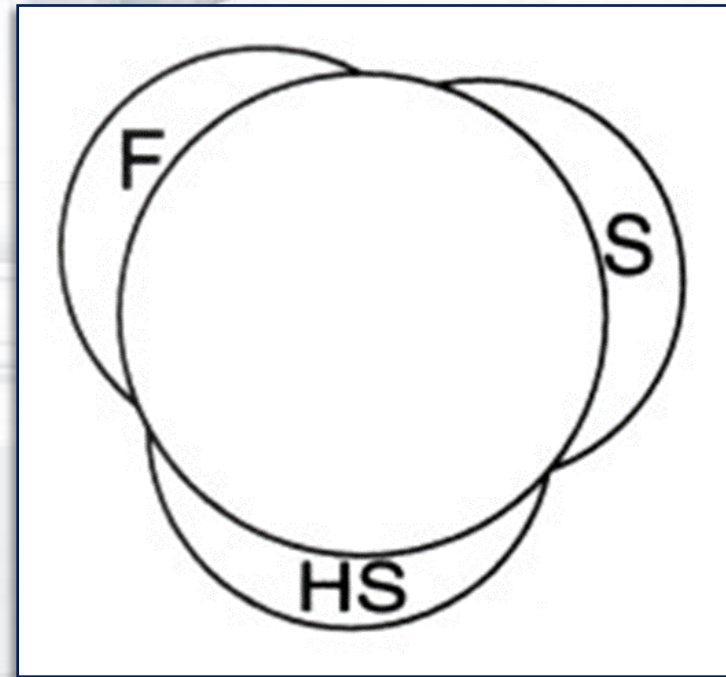
- What is the relationship between the three persons and the being of God?



God's being is not divided into three equal parts belonging to the three members of the Trinity.

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

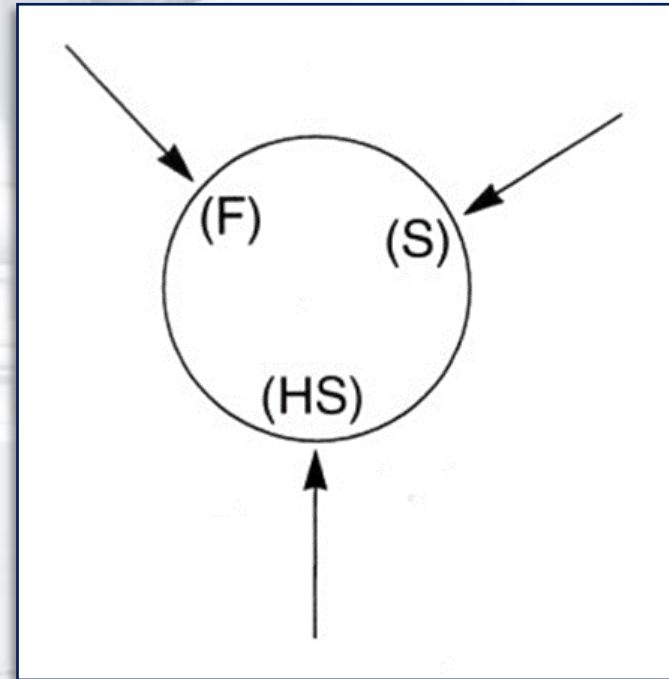
- What is the relationship between the three persons and the being of God?



The personal distinctions in the Trinity are not something added on to God's real being.

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

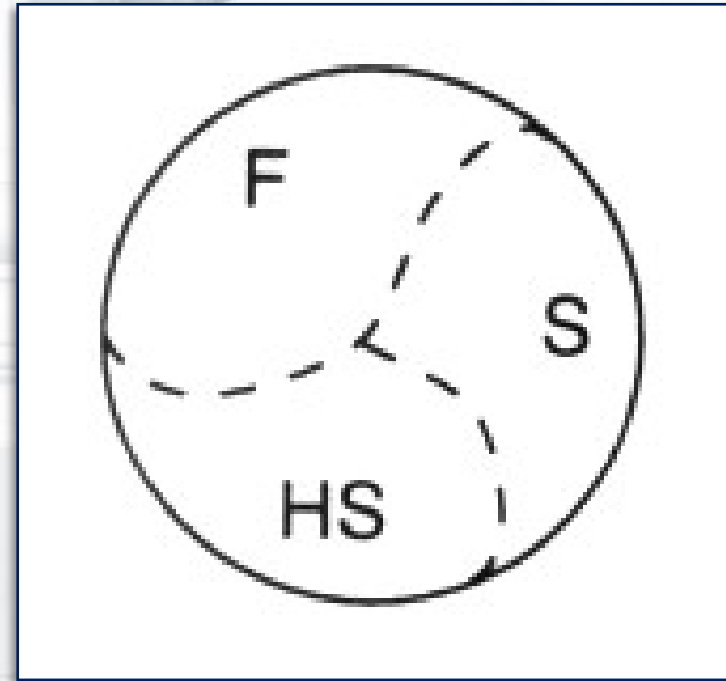
- What is the relationship between the three persons and the being of God?



The persons of the Trinity are not just three different ways of looking at God.

What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

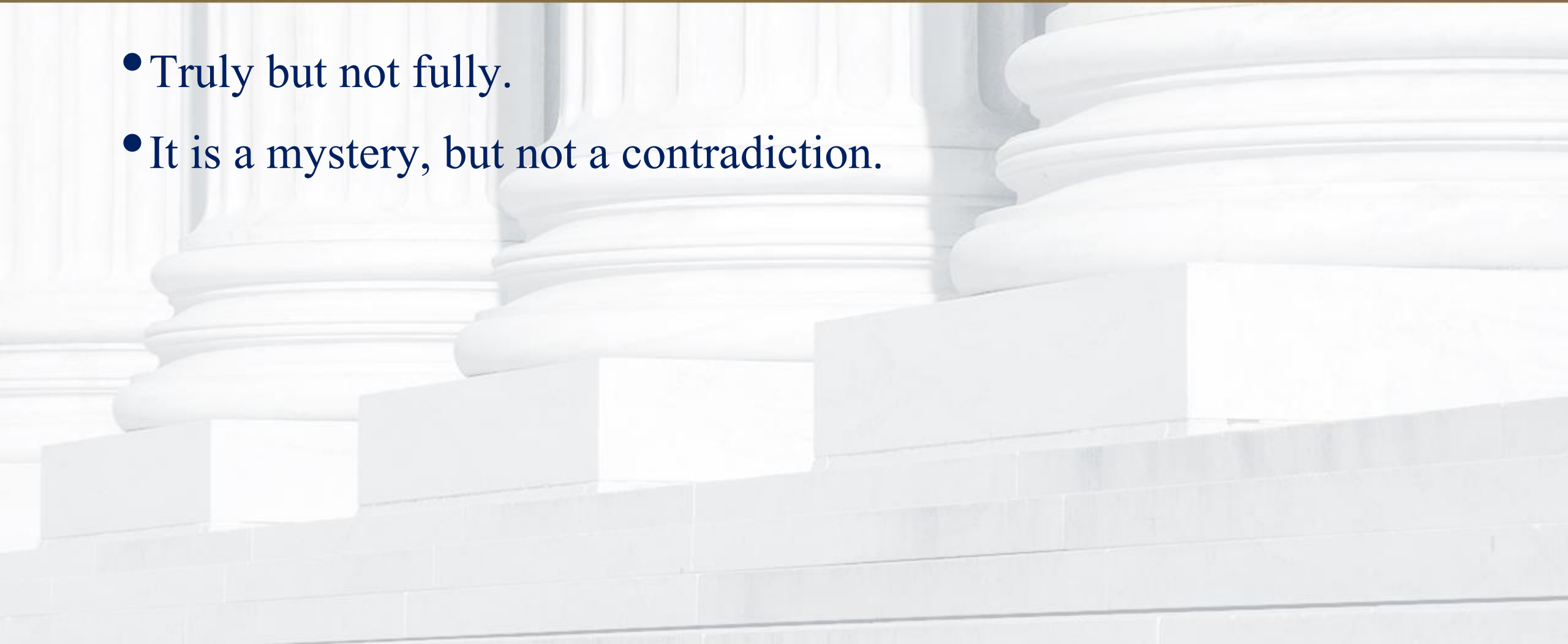
- What is the relationship between the three persons and the being of God?



There are three distinct persons, and the being of each person is equal to the whole being of God.

Can We Understand the Doctrine of the Trinity?

- Truly but not fully.
- It is a mystery, but not a contradiction.



Application

- God in himself has both unity and diversity, hence these also appear in human relationships.
 - Marriage (Gen 1:27)
 - The church body (1 Cor 12:12–31; Eph 2:11–16)
 - And many more human organizations and activities.
- We can worship God for who he is in our words and actions as they reflect something of his character.

Christianity and Mormonism

- Mormons teach a vastly different understanding of who God is.
- The following points are taken from *The 10 Most Important Things You Can Say to a Mormon* by Ron Rhodes.

Christianity and Mormonism: The Church

Mormonism

- The Mormon Church is the “restored church.”
- Apostasy dominated the church after the last apostle died.
- All the creeds are an abomination.

Christianity

- The early Christian leaders were not perfect, but they certainly were not apostates.
- Any group that places itself in substantial opposition to these early Christian writers and creeds is guilty of deviating from the Christian faith.

Christianity and Mormonism: The Scriptures

Mormonism

- The Book of Mormon is divine revelation, authoritative and trustworthy.
- The Bible available today is corrupt and untrustworthy.

Christianity

- In spite of claims that every letter was divinely translated, the Book of Mormon has undergone substantial revisions.
- There is no archaeological evidence for the claims of the Book of Mormon.
- We have the right canon (Chap 3).
- The Bible has been faithfully preserved and translated.

Christianity and Mormonism: God

Mormonism

- God the Father was created and has a physical body.
- The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct deities within a massive pantheon of other gods.
- We can become gods one day.

Christianity

- God is eternal and spirit. (Gen 1:1, Num 23:19; Rom 1:23)
- The Trinity involves three persons in one God. (See previous slides.)
- We are creatures and we never become gods.

Christianity and Mormonism: Jesus Christ

Mormonism

- Jesus Christ was born in heaven to one of God's wives—one of whom also gave birth to Lucifer and to the rest of us.
- He became God after a very long time.
- His atoning work only covers Adam's sin.

Christianity

- Jesus Christ is fully God and always has been. (Jn 1:1–18)
- His atoning work paid the penalty for the sins of all who believe in him. (See Chapters 26–27.)

Christianity and Mormonism: Salvation

Mormonism

- Resurrection is given to all of us, with faithful Mormons able to reach heaven and godhood, while the rest of us enjoy a less-glorious but still exalted afterlife.
- Exaltation to godhood is accomplished by works and God's grace only covers us after we have done all we can.

Christianity

- Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works. (Eph 2:8–9; Gal 2:16)
- The afterlife involves heaven and hell, not three degrees of glory.

Special Terms

- adoptionism
- Arianism
- economic subordination
- eternal begetting of the Son
- eternal generation of the Son
- *filioque*
- *homoiousios*
- *homooousios*
- modalism
- modalistic monarchianism
- only begotten
- ontological equality
- Sabellianism
- subordinationism
- Trinity
- tritheism