

The Greatest Letter Ever Written – the Spirit and the Trinity

1689 Baptist: In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God; ... which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.

Four momentous trinitarian events –

1. the Creation
2. the Incarnation
3. Pentecost
4. The Gospel

Sometimes it's easier to say what we don't believe than what we believe:

1. Orthodox Trinitarianism rejects **tritheism** which believes that the doctrine of the trinity means that Christians believe in three Gods which has been rejected by the church throughout history.
2. Orthodox Trinitarianism rejects **modalism** which believes that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different names for the same God acting in different roles or manifestations (like well-intentioned but misguided “water, vapor, ice” analogy). (as Sabellius did in the third century) – [God Father Son Holy Spirit on sidelines]
3. Orthodox Trinitarianism rejects **Arianism** which denies the full deity of Christ – Council of Nicea (325 ad), when assembled bishops outlawed the claim of Arius that the Son was not eternal but was created by God, who thereby became his Father.

Modalism believes that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different names for the same God acting in different roles or manifestations. In other words, the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit are all the same person appearing in different (in a sense) disguises. When Jesus prays to the Father, it is the human part of Jesus praying to God.

Jesus is not God the _____ in a created body, he is God the Son who has existed in all eternity, sharing the one divine nature with the Father and Spirit.

The Spirit is not just an active _____ of God, he is a separate identity who relates to the Father and Son, and to us.

The Father, Son and Spirit are not like _____, _____, and _____ because the Father is always the Father, the Son always the Son, and the Spirit always the Spirit.

Believing in a mode of God that was revealed at the time of the incarnation is very different to understanding Jesus as a personal identity:

1. through whom we were predestined for adoption before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4–6)
2. through whom the world was created John 1:2–3
3. and who was active during the Old Testament period – “I tell you the truth ... before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58).

The ‘so what’ question. (Richards)

If we lose the separate identities of the Father and Son, we lose the real example of their relationship as a model for ours.

the Son’s submission to the Father models our own suffering and obedience – 1 Peter 2:18–21 Hebrews 5:8–10

Oneness Theology undermines the atonement.

Oneness theology undermines our assurance by diminishing Jesus’ current work at the Father’s side.

2 Timothy 4:2 (NLT) ² Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.