

A Presentation of the Doctrine of the Trinity

This presentation is necessarily an overview, due to time constraints.

Scriptures referenced are included as supportive material for our Q&A and discussion.

Prerequisite Assumptions

- We believe the Bible is true.
- We believe that God is not constrained by the limits of our understanding or experience.

Preliminary Understanding of “Contradictory”

For two assertions to truly contradict each other:

- They must be asserted about the **same thing**.
- They must be asserted at the **same time**.
- They must be asserted in the **same respect, same way**, or from the **same perspective**.

The Bible Affirms that God is One

- The Books of Moses Affirm It:

Deuteronomy 6:4 (LEB)

4 “Hear, Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is unique. (LEB)

- The Prophets Affirm It:

Isaiah 45:5-6 (LEB)

5 I am Yahweh, and there is none besides me; besides me there is no god. I gird you though you do not know me, 6 so that they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west that there is none besides me; I am Yahweh and there is none besides me. (LEB)

- Jesus Affirms It: ↪

Mark 12:28-29 (LEB)

28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them debating. When he saw that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”

29 Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. (LEB)

- Paul Affirms it:

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NET)

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you too were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (NET)

And, Yet – The Bible Identifies Jesus as God. ↗

- As “the Word”, Jesus is equated with God.

John 1:1-3 (LEB)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 This one was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and apart from him not one thing came into being that has come into being. (LEB)

- Jesus is described with divine attributes. ↴
 - Eternality John 1:1-3, The Word
 - Omnipotence Matthew 28:18
 - Omniscience John 2:24-25
 - Power to Forgive Sins Mark 2:5-12

- Jesus is worshiped as God without contradiction. ⊕

John 20:26-29 (LEB)

26 And after eight days his disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Although the doors had been shut, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, “Peace to you.”

27 Then he said to Thomas, “Place your finger here and see my hands, and place your hand and put it into my side. And do not be unbelieving, but believing!”

28 Thomas answered and said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen me, have you believed? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” (LEB)

Compare Mt 4:10

And, Also – The Bible Identifies the Holy Spirit as God. ↗

- The Holy Spirit is equated with God.

Acts 5:1-4 (LEB)

1 Now a certain man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and he kept back for himself some of the proceeds, and his wife was aware of it. And he brought a certain part and placed it at the feet of the apostles. 3 But Peter said, “Ananias, for what reason has Satan filled your heart, that **you lied to the Holy Spirit** and kept back for yourself some of the proceeds of the piece of land? 4 When it remained to you, did it not remain yours? And when it was sold, was it at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? **You have not lied to people, but to God!**” (LEB)

- The Holy Spirit is described with personal attributes and actions. ↗

John 16:13-14 (LEB)

13 But when he—the Spirit of truth—comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak from himself, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will proclaim to you the things to come. 14 He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and will proclaim it to you. (LEB)

And, Finally – The Three are Brought Together in Unified Contexts. ↗

Matthew 3:16-17 (LEB)

16 Now after he was baptized, Jesus immediately went up from the water, and behold, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove coming upon him. 17 And behold, there was a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (LEB)

Matthew 28:18-20 (LEB)

18 And Jesus approached and spoke to them, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the age.” (LEB)

II Corinthians 13:13 (LEB)

13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. (LEB)

Seeking to Understand these Passages (and many others) Leads to the Trinity:

- There is exactly one God.
- There are exactly three persons who are properly called God.

According to this, we have a simple description: **God is an immaterial, tri-personal being.**

Some creedal formulations are much more detailed, but this is perhaps the simplest formulation of what could be called the “Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity” (Dr. William Lane Craig)

Errors to Avoid (Historic Heresies)

Modalism God as one person manifesting in three roles (e.g., Father, then Son, then Spirit) – Contradicted by simultaneous presence (Jesus' baptism: Matthew 3:16-17).

Tritheism Belief in three separate gods – Rejected; there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Subordinationism Inferiority in essence among the Persons – Rejected; all are equally divine in attributes, though distinct in roles.

Resource Material

The remainder of this presentation is intended to facilitate further discussion and Q&A. It is not a part of the intended speaker's presentation.

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Four Voices affirm Jesus as “Son of God”

- God's voice from Heaven

Mark 1:10-11 (LEB)

10 And immediately as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens being split apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (LEB)

- Demons recognize Him ↗

Mark 5:7 (LEB)

7 And crying out with a loud voice he said, “What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God, do not torment me!” (LEB)

- A Roman Centurion recognizes Him ↗

Matthew 27:54 (LEB)

54 Now the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that took place, were extremely frightened, saying, “Truly this man was God’s Son!” (LEB)

- Jesus' own Testimony ↗

John 3:16 (LEB)

16 For in this way God loved the world, so that he gave his one and only Son, in order that everyone who believes in him will not perish, but will have eternal life. (LEB)

The Face of God can't be Seen ↗

Exodus 33:18-23 (LEB)

18 And he said, “Please show me your glory.” 19 And he said, “I myself will cause all my goodness to pass over before you, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show compassion to whom I will show compassion.” 20 But he said, “You are not able to see my face, because a human will not see me and live.” 21 And Yahweh said, “There is a place with me, and you will stand on the rock. 22 And when my glory passes over, I will put you in the rock’s crevice, and I will cover you with my hand until I pass over. 23 And I will remove my hand, and you will see my back, but my face will not be visible.” (LEB)

The Bible Affirms that God must not be Worshiped as an Image ↗

Deuteronomy 4:10-12,15-16 (LEB)

10 Remember the day that you stood before Yahweh your God at Horeb when Yahweh said to me, ‘Summon for me the people so that I can tell them my words, that they may learn to fear me all of the days they are alive on the earth and so that they may teach their children.’ 11 And so you came near, and you stood under the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire up to the heart of the heaven, dark with a very thick cloud. 12 And Yahweh spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard a sound of words, but you did not see a form—only a voice.

...

15 “So you must be very careful for yourselves, because you did not see any form on the day Yahweh spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, 16 so that you do not ruin yourselves and make for yourselves a divine image in a form of any image, a replica of male or female, (LEB)

The Gospels Affirm that God is Spirit and Worshiped in Spirit

John 4:19-26 (LEB)

19 The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship.” 21 Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, that an hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know, because salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming—and now is here—when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for indeed the Father seeks such people to be his worshipers. 24 God is spirit, and the ones who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25 The woman said

to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (the one called Christ); “whenever that one comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” 26 Jesus said to her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he. (LEB)

And yet... We see Suggestions of a “Complex Unity”

A plural name (Elohim), pronouns, and verb forms

Genesis 1:26 (LEB)

26 And God said, “Let **us make** humankind **in our image** and according to **our likeness**, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every moving thing that moves upon the earth.” (LEB)

Genesis 3:22 (LEB)

22 And Yahweh God said, “Look—the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil. What if he stretches out his hand and takes also from the tree of life and eats, and lives forever?” (LEB)

Isaiah 6:8 (LEB)

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “I am here! Send me!” (LEB)

We see Divine names & Titles given to distinct figures

- Just one example...

Psalm 110:1 (LEB)

1 A declaration of Yahweh to my lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” (LEB)

We see God appearing as visible in Human Form

Genesis 18:1-2,16-17,20-23 (LEB)

1 And Yahweh appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre. And he was sitting in the doorway of the tent at the heat of the day. 2 And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, three men were standing near him. And he saw them and ran from the doorway of the tent to meet them. And he bowed down to the ground.

...

16 Then the men set out from there, and they looked down upon Sodom. And Abraham went with them _{to send them on their way}.
17 Then Yahweh said, “Shall I conceal from Abraham what I am going to do?

...

20 Then Yahweh said, “Because the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and because their sin is very serious, 21 I will go down and I will see. Have they done altogether according to its cry of distress which has come to me? If not, I will know.” 22 And the men turned from there and went toward Sodom. And Abraham was still standing before Yahweh. 23 And Abraham drew near to Yahweh and said, “Will you also sweep away the righteous with the wicked? (LEB)

We see Descriptions of Three Figures Together, Given Divine Characteristics

Isaiah 48:16 (LEB)

16 Draw near to me; hear this! I have not spoken in secrecy from the beginning; from the time it came to be, there I have been;
And now the Lord Yahweh has sent me and his Spirit.” (LEB)

Matthew 3:16-17 (LEB)

16 Now after he was baptized, Jesus immediately went up from the water, and behold, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove coming upon him. 17 And behold, there was a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (LEB)

Matthew 28:18-20 (LEB)

18 And Jesus approached and spoke to them, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the age.” (LEB)

Jesus Forgives Sins

Mark 2:5-12 (LEB)

5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Child, your sins are forgiven.”

6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 “Why does this man speak like this? He is blaspheming! Who is able to forgive sins except God alone?”

8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they were reasoning like this within themselves, said to them, “Why are you considering these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say ‘Get up and pick up your stretcher and walk’? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”—he said to the

paralytic— 11 “I say to you, get up, pick up your stretcher, and go to your home.”

12 And he got up and immediately picked up his stretcher and went out in front of them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” (LEB)

Jesus Knew What was in Man ↗

John 2:24-25 (LEB)

24 But Jesus himself did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people, 25 and because he did not need anyone to testify about man, for he himself knew what was in man. (LEB)

God is Incomparable ↗

Isa 40:25-26 (NET)

25 “To whom can you compare me? Whom do I resemble?” says the Holy One. 26 Look up at the sky! Who created all these heavenly lights? He is the one who leads out their ranks; he calls them all by name. Because of his absolute power and awesome strength, not one of them is missing. (NET)

Awesome Power, Unlimited Wisdom/ Understanding

Psalms 147:4-5 (LEB)

4 He counts the number of the stars; he gives names to all of them.
5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is
unlimited. (LEB)

Jesus, Son of Man, Cloud-rider, Seated with God

Did Jesus himself claim to be God? He did... in language that was clear to his hearers but not to a superficial modern reader of scripture.

Ps 110:1 (LEB)

1 A declaration of Yahweh to my lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” (LEB)

Dan 7:13-14 (LEB)

13 “I continued watching in the visions of the night, and look, with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man was coming, and he came to the Ancient of Days, and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and kingship that all the peoples, the nations, and languages would serve him; his dominion is a dominion without end that will not cease, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed. (LEB)

Mark 14:60-64 (LEB)

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst of them and asked Jesus, saying, “Do you not reply anything? What are these people testifying against you?”

61 But he was silent and did not reply anything. Again the high priest asked him and said to him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”

62 And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

63 And the high priest tore his clothes and said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. (LEB)

YHWH, embodied, rains fire from YHWH in Heaven

Genesis 19:21-25 (LEB)

21 And he said to him, “Behold, I will grant this favor as well; that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. 22 Escape there quickly, for I cannot do this thing until you get there.” Therefore, the name of the city was called Zoar. 23 After the sun had risen upon the earth and Lot had entered Zoar, 24 Yahweh rained down from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh. 25 And he overthrew those cities and the whole plain, and the inhabitants of the cities and the vegetation of the ground. (LEB)



3 “Men” revealed to be two angels and YHWH embodied ↗

Genesis 18:1-2,16-17,20-23 (LEB)

1 And Yahweh appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre. And he was sitting in the doorway of the tent at the heat of the day. 2 And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, three men were standing near him. And he saw them and ran from the doorway of the tent to meet them. And he bowed down to the ground.

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16 Then the men set out from there, and they looked down upon Sodom. And Abraham went with them to send them on their way.
17 Then Yahweh said, “Shall I conceal from Abraham what I am going to do?

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20 Then Yahweh said, “Because the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and because their sin is very serious, 21 I will go down and I will see. Have they done altogether according to its cry of distress which has come to me? If not, I will know.” 22 And the men turned from there and went toward Sodom. And Abraham was still standing before Yahweh. 23 And Abraham drew near to Yahweh and said, “Will you also sweep away the righteous with the wicked? (LEB)



Suggestions of Plurality in Creation

Genesis 1:26 (LEB)

26 And God said, “Let us make humankind in our image and according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every moving thing that moves upon the earth.” (LEB)

Genesis 3:22 (LEB)

22 And Yahweh God said, “Look—the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil. What if he stretches out his hand and takes also from the tree of life and eats, and lives forever?” (LEB)



God spoke from the Fire on the Mountain, not embodied ⊕

Deuteronomy 4:10-12,15-16 (LEB)

10 Remember the day that you stood before Yahweh your God at Horeb when Yahweh said to me, ‘Summon for me the people so that I can tell them my words, that they may learn to fear me all of the days they are alive on the earth and so that they may teach their children.’ 11 And so you came near, and you stood under the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire up to the heart of the heaven, dark with a very thick cloud. 12 And Yahweh spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard a sound of words, but you did not see a form—only a voice.

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15 “So you must be very careful for yourselves, because you did not see any form on the day Yahweh spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, 16 so that you do not ruin yourselves and make for yourselves a divine image in a form of any image, a replica of male or female, (LEB)



YHWH says to Adonai: Sit at my right hand... ↗

Psalms 110:1 (LEB)

1 A declaration of Yahweh to my lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” (LEB)

Who is the Creator, Who is His Son?

Proverbs 30:4 (LEB)

4 Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of his hand? Who has wrapped water in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and what is the name of his child? For surely you know. (LEB)

Reference in Isaiah to the Trinity ↗

Isaiah 48:12-16 (LEB)

12 “Listen to me, Jacob, and Israel, whom I called, I am he. I am the first; also I am the last. 13 Indeed, my hand founded the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they stand in position together. 14 Assemble, all of you, and hear! Who among them declared these things? Yahweh loves him; he shall perform his wish against Babylon and his arm against the Chaldeans. 15 I, I myself, I have spoken! Indeed, I have called him. I have brought him, and he will be successful in his way. 16 Draw near to me; hear this! I have not spoken in secrecy from the beginning; from the time it came to be, there I have been; And now the Lord Yahweh has sent me and his Spirit.” (LEB)

Isa 63:7-10 Messenger of His Presence

Isaiah 63:7-10 (LEB)

7 I will mention the loyal love of Yahweh, the praises of Yahweh, according to all that Yahweh has done for us, and the greatness of goodness to the house of Israel that he has done to them according to his mercy and the abundance of his loyal love. 8 And he said, “Surely my people are children; they will not break faith.” And he became a Savior to them. 9 In all their distress, there was no distress, and the messenger of his presence saved them, in his love and compassion he himself redeemed them, and he lifted them up, and he supported them all the days of old. 10 But they were the ones who rebelled, and they grieved his Holy Spirit, so he became an enemy to them; he himself fought against them. (LEB)

Hos 1:6-7 Yahweh will deliver by Yahweh ↵

Hosea 1:6-7 (LEB)

6 And she conceived again and bore a daughter, and he said to him, “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them. 7 But I will have pity on the house of Judah and I will save them by Yahweh their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, war, horses, or horsemen. (LEB)

Zech 2:6-12 Yahweh sends Yahweh of hosts ↗

Zechariah 2:6-12 (LEB)

6 “Woe! Woe! Flee from the land of the north,” declares Yahweh,
“for I have scattered you like the four winds of the heavens,”
declares Yahweh. 7 “Woe, Zion! Escape, you inhabitants of the
daughter of Babylon!” 8 For thus said Yahweh of hosts, after glory
he sent me against the nations plundering you Truly, the one
touching you is touching the apple of his eye. 9 “Yes, look! I am
going to wave my hand against them, and they will become
plunder for their servants, and you will know that Yahweh of hosts
has sent me. 10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for look, I am
coming and I will dwell in your midst,” declares Yahweh. 11
“Many nations will join themselves to Yahweh on that day, and
they will be my people, and I will dwell in your midst. And you will

know that Yahweh of hosts has sent me to you. 12 And Yahweh will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and he will again choose Jerusalem. (LEB)

Matthew 4:10, Jesus Affirms only God should be Worshiped

Matthew 4:10 (LEB)

10 Then Jesus said to him, “Go away, Satan, for it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’ ” (LEB)

John 1:1-18, John's full prologue ↗

John 1:1-18 (LEB)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 This one was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through him, and apart from him not one thing came into being that has come into being.

4 In him was life, and the life was the light of humanity.

5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 A man came, sent from God, whose name was John.

7 This one came for a witness, in order that he could testify about the light, so that all would believe through him. 8 That one was not the light, but came in order that he could testify about the light.

9 The true light, who gives light to every person, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, and the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to his own things, and his own people did not receive him.

12 But as many as received him—to those who believe in his name—he gave to them authority to become children of God, 13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a husband, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and took up residence among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 John testified about him and cried out, saying, “This one was he about whom I said, ‘The one who comes after me is ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ ”

16 For from his fullness we have all received, and grace after grace.

17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ.

18 No one has seen God at any time; the one and only, God, the one who is in the bosom of the Father—that one has made him known.

(LEB)

John 2:24-25, Jesus knew what was in Man ↗

John 2:24-25 (LEB)

24 But Jesus himself did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people, 25 and because he did not need anyone to testify about man, for he himself knew what was in man. (LEB)

John 5:22-23 The Fathers gives Judgment to the Son, the Son deserves Honor

John 5:22-23 (LEB)

22 For the Father does not judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son, 23 in order that all people will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. (LEB)

John 14:13-14 Jesus Answers Prayer ↗

John 14:13-14 (LEB)

13 And whatever you ask in my name, I will do this, in order that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (LEB)

Acts 7:59-60 Stephen prayed to Jesus

Acts 7:59-60 (LEB)

59 And they kept on stoning Stephen as he was calling out and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” 60 And falling to his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” And after he said this, he fell asleep. (LEB)

Rom 8:26-27 The Spirit Intercedes for Us

Romans 8:26-27 (LEB)

26 And likewise also, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as one ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unexpressed groanings. 27 And the one who searches our hearts knows what the mindset of the Spirit is, because he intercedes on behalf of the saints according to the will of God. (LEB)

Shield of the Trinity

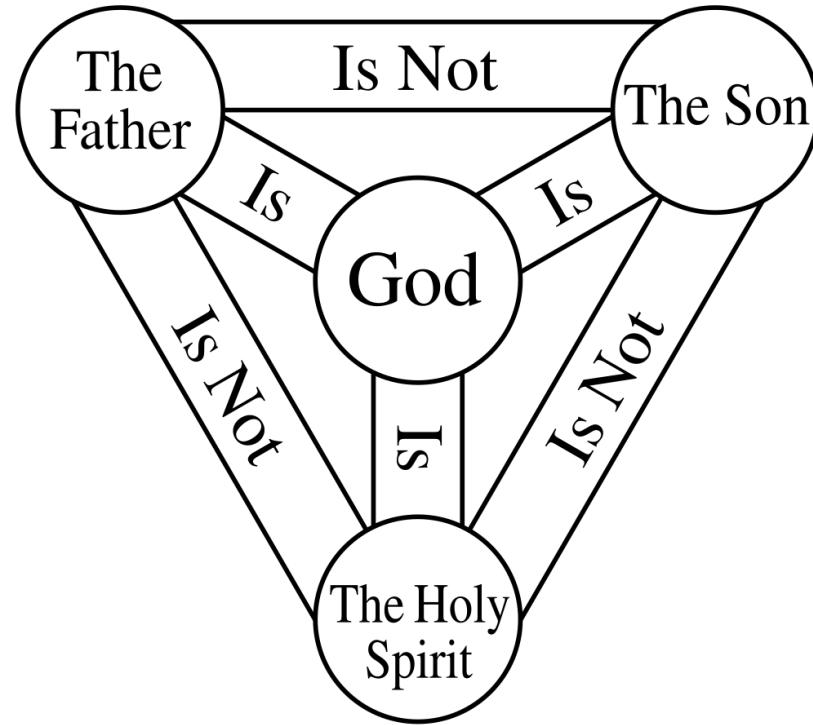


Figure 1: Traditional Christian Symbol used for teaching the Trinity