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Trinity: Getting Along so Others Want to Get Along with Us

What is unique to the Trinity is not that He is a Triad causing us to look for mysteriously interacting groups of three. What is unique is that He is Three and that He is One. God is fully 3 and fully 1. Threeness that doesn't fragment the Oneness; Oneness that doesn't Absorb the Threeness into oblivion or force them to conform.

The Trinity is not a Dualism seeking a golden mean. And the Trinity is not a Oneness that absorbs its parts. It is the Bible's Cosmology unmatched in any other religion or philosophy. It grew out of the fact that the Father, Son and Spirit are presented as Gods, and yet, God is One. The Christian doctrine is that God has created us to reflect that unique three in oneness and unite with Him as friends.

We should be looking for how this is made evident in the personal and social world we create as our habitat. We should build the

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human world together on our likeness to Him rather than replace it with an alien executive unity that must be forced on the members, who are individualists fighting against conformity.

How Does the Trinity Get Along with Itself?

God's Ontological Trinity — One in Being Three in Persons

- One in Being. The Divine attributes that define each Person of the Trinity as God, apply equally to each. (Each is omnipotent, omniscient, infinite in being, glory, blessedness, perfection etc.)
- Three in Person, unique in who they are. Unique in the Love that causes each to fulfill the other. Also unique in the Trust that receives the loving fulfillment of the other two.

God's Trinity as a Household, the Ecumenical Trinity

- Perichoresis Περιχώρησις (Literally “Dancing around” coined by G,G&B 4th Century) is how their unique persons without mingling, interact, fill and fulfil, interpenetrate completely with each other without harm, breaking their word, stealing, lying or coveting what is unique to the others. Indeed with those they would not exist.
- Unique persons in respect to their characteristics and functions
- United in purpose and how each fulfills it.
- United in how they decide upon their purpose each bringing what is unique to each to the decision of all.
- No one of them uses power to force from the others the formulation or agreement or execution of their united purpose so that each can be said to be doing the will of the others.
- The Three come to Unity of purpose. Unity of execution. Unity of end achieved.

How Do We Know Jesus Wants Us to Reflect the Trinity?

The Prayer Jesus teaches us to pray: “Thy kingdom come Thy will be done On earth as it is in heaven.”

The Prayer Jesus prays for all who believe throughout all time: “I have shared your glory with them ... That they might be one as you Father and I are One.... And that they might be one with us.”

What Relationships Look Like When They Are Trinitarian

We were made for transforming the earth in communion with God and each other (Celestaforming). Being made in His image is our guarantee of how it all works together. How we all work together.

Man's Ontological Trinity — One Humanity, Two Genders and as many Persons as it Takes to Fill the Earth.

- One in being, Human attributes apply to all.
- As many in person as there are people, each one unique in who they are, Unique in what they bring to each other
- Divided into two genders male and female. In the same way their seed can only unite one to one, so too the man and the woman are designed to unite only with one of the other gender to create a new person in their image and to create the basic social order of society: the family, the model/symbol of all other organization.
- Yet also designed to unite personally though not sexually with each other and by families and other organizations..
- These unions (forms of organizing) are not based on power and office but rather they are to be based on a Trinitarian not executive unity, *“that they may be one as we are one.”* Based on what each brings to the union, *“let each bring a gift to minister to one another”*
- The hierarchies formed are innumerable need-fulfilling unions not power-based but Love and Trust based.

Man's Reflection of God's Economic Trinity

Economic (household) is how the Trinity is our image likeness *“that you might know how to walk in the household of God”*

- Perichoresis Περιχώρησις (applied by Jesus' prayer to us) is how our unique persons interact fill and fulfil, interpenetrate completely with each other without confusion or loss of uniqueness appropriate to the purpose at hand. Where Trinitarian these unions make us more unique as we are more united.
- Unique persons in respect their personal characteristics
- United in purpose and how each functions to achieve it
- United in how we decide upon our purpose each bringing what is unique to each to the decision.
- No one of us uses power to force formulation or agreement or execution of our United Purpose onto the others.
- We Unite in purpose, Unite in execution, Unite in the end achieved.
- We reflect God by talking with, and exchanging with, each other.

This calls us far beyond excellent leadership. Far beyond the Bible as a how to, “self-help” manual for nicer people.

This calls each to transformational application of

- the Gifts of the Spirit.
- The 50 One-another (or allelon Αλλήλων) passages

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- It is the congregation that is to be equipped for the work of the ministry: the pastors/teachers equip, the congregation/ministers.

Epilogue—

Brandon and I did not sit down and have the following conversation after hours of prayer and fasting accompanied by midnight vigils. Rather we spoke in passing in parking lots, in the church foyer, in the hallway at Moments and in the cracks and crannies of the other things crowding for attention in our lives.

I am splicing together these passing conversations with Brandon and adding commentary as if we said it in one dialogue. I apologize if it is more stiff and formal than the friendly, hurried exchanges that made it up. But I think it summarizes how I came to this particular understanding of a Trinitarian Church.

Context, Helene and the Women of the Church

Hurricane Helene became the opportunity for our Church to lay aside its Churchiness and become the body of Christ for our community for the next 6 months. The result of responding, bringing food, digging out neighbors was an intense spiritual growth and sense that the Kingdom of God is a reality here and now. Perhaps unnoticed is that the disruption of our isolated lives resulted in almost the entire congregation at that time spending the next month or two together before we could go back to our separated lives. It was a month of intense non-stop conversations from sunrise to late into the night about the issues of life theoretically and personally. It was commonly called a revival. You know a time everyone seems to come spiritually alive for reasons we attribute to the Holy Spirit. A Year and a half later, on the one Wednesday each month our house-churches gather for common praise and worship. I noticed that aside from 2 men, and one the pastor, Brandon, the rest were women. That is unusual in a conservative Baptists Church. Bryce

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stood up and shared that his wife the night before was in England at her dying father's bedside. Late at night Bryce had been praying for her and singing so he missed her text telling him this was the critical hour. Bryce found out an hour later when one of the ladies of the Church texted him for more information. He didn't know what was happening. What unfolded was his wife was at her father's side, pleading for him to see Jesus. Her mother and brother told her to shut up and so she began to sing the same songs incidentally that Bryce was singing. They kicked her out of the room. Unable to contact Bryce who had set his phone aside, she texted the Swannanoa Christian Church Ladies Chat to alert them. They began to pray on line for her. I noticed when I had woken up that night around 2:00am that my wife was wide awake on the phone. At the time I didn't know why. I thought nothing of it. Rolled over and went back to sleep. She told me the next morning she was in prayer on the chat line with about 200 other ladies. (She had been involved like this before. Usually by day, but occasionally during the night.) When Bryce found out Catherine was asked to leave, He said, "Go back in, I've been singing the same songs, and I know there are far more angels singing with us than there is opposition in the room." She went back in and began to sing. Her Mother and brother began to join her. Many of the women were singing with them tiptoeing to a part of the house they could sing without awakening their family. "The entire room went from dark to light." she said. Her father's heart softened and he knew His savior and died. After the women of the church united in battle to rescue Catherine's grandfather on his death bed in England, Brandon and I began a conversation the next day which ran for the following months —

Dialogue: A Church Equipped for 24/7 Ministry

Joseph: Did you notice last night at the Home Church Prayer and Praise that only one man prayed and the rest were about 10 women? Did you find that different?

Brandon: Now that you mention it. Is that all who prayed? I thought at least one other man.

Joseph: The 2 years of communication among the women through group threads has led to their continued spiritual growth after Helene and God rallied them uniquely to join in a battle 3,000 miles away. Do you think the men might have grown this way too if on line?

Brandon: Women are chatty, men aren't. It's scientific fact. Social media works for them in a way it doesn't work for us.

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Joseph: True. But communication is not something unique to a gender, it is the basis and purpose of language. It is the means of our perichoresis of community. Part of God's image we're made in. The Trinity is perfect communication with each other where each one's uniqueness does not lead to individualism, and their unity does not lead to collective coercion. Which means we need to focus on that which brings us into conversation on the issues of life. I'm thinking this is an example of a tool that can do just that.

Brandon: That's a really good point. God's image in us should reflect how the Trinity relates to each other. The government of the Godhead should be our guide to fellowship since He made us to be like him and salvation is the invitation to join Him.

Joseph: And that is why I couldn't help but notice that the ladies had continued to grow spiritually while the men stayed where we were after the intense fellowship and ministry of Helene was done. But specifically Jesus told us to pray for earth to be like heaven and he prayed for us to be one as he and the father are one. So wouldn't you expect that something that increases communication and exchange would be a vehicle for increasing our spiritual growth.

Brandon: That's one of those things in the Bible that if Jesus didn't pray John 17 we would think it heresy. But that's why we can join the Father and Son "that they might be one with us." Which means we would need to relate to each other as the members of the Trinity relate to each other.

Joseph: Exactly. And it's why the New Testament gives little organizational polity advice on how to institutionally unify by leaders but often refers to organic union through body analogy tied together by sharing spiritual and tangible gifts "each of you bring a gift" or "if one of you is hungry" etc.

Brandon: We've talked about this, and I agree the leaders are to be gifted parts of the body building the others up, not administrative authorities. There's also the allelon passages, what to do 1) with, 2) to and 3) for one another. (Αλλήλων 50 passages) and the Fruit of the Spirit are for every Christian not the leader-Christians. They govern how we get along with each other and how we handle conflict.

Joseph: So what I'm wondering is, as we ask, "What should we be doing to continue what God has begun?" Shouldn't we encourage the things that reflect the Trinity such as facilitate talking with each other about the issues of life? Wouldn't they be things that enhance spiritual growth? The "wisdom, stature and favor with God and man" things in Jesus' own growth. It all ties together.

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Brandon: But the fact is, men don't know what to do with social media.

Joseph: Right, and men like me don't like to share intimate things. It's probably why I tell so many stories about people. Not comfortable whether I do it or I have to listen to someone else.

Brandon: How do we change that?

Joseph: I don't know. I do know that every significant advance in human history was the result of advances in communication clarifying us, broadening us, and involving larger groups in the conversation. Writing, Accounting, increasing trade, Law, making culture more stable, Literacy, growing and stretching the mind and heart through entertainment, song, poetry, Scripture. Moral codes stabilizing personal life. Higher math, the language of physical creation. Or even monogamy pushing the home toward profound heart-to-heart communion rather than dissipating in false masculinity. The essence of unity is made possible through communication. So technological advances that made communication broader created the possibility for greater and greater unity among very diverse people as they solve their problems together. The Trinity is its perfection. So these can be tools for us?

Brandon: I see where you're going. The world changed with every advance, in communication, especially the printing press, now the internet and social media takes us ... where? as our communication multiplies? Again, creating a men's thread won't itself change us. You have to know what to do with a tool before it is any good. You don't hand a power saw to a kid. And just go on line if you want to enter a world of toxic communication.

Joseph: That's a cold slap of reality. It's not just theory; people need to learn, that can be as deadly as anything else lulling us to think if we just think the right things we're good to go. This is what makes kingdom men the most important gift to our church and it came from Skip. It's unlocking men. The women are already "chatty" as you said so knew what to do with the medium. And without realizing it continued growing, tied together in a never-ending conversation.

Brandon: Same for Celebrate Recovery only it's more one-on-one. But you're assuming that communication is the magic wand. Why not spiritual disciplines? You criticized them because a technique can't be the answer to spirituality. It's Buddhist and impersonal.

Joseph: That is the perfect comparison. We can't separate prayer, night vigils, worship, fasting etc. from life-changing ministry to others. Spirituality is not a solo blessing. Both in Helene and the women "praying through the night watches" they did everything an

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ascetic does to artificially create a sense of Spirituality, but it was the reality of ministry that made it real. "This is the fast that I have commanded that you lose the bonds of the oppressed." (Amos and Isaiah) And "Though you lift up your hands I will not hear you because your hands are filled with innocent blood." (Isaiah)

Brandon: Right! You just made my point. Getting ascetic isn't getting spiritual. And getting in a chat room with other Christians doesn't foster spirituality either.

Joseph: Yeah . . . there is no magic pill to take or wand to wave. It can as easily turn into a place to post long devotions, or "spiritual insights," unburden their souls with long confessions, or sermons, "Finally someone who will listen to me." Or just plain gossip. It will be a turned off if it is used it these ways.

Kevin: I don't know about all that stuff. But we need to make it a part of kingdom men and their small groups will learn how to use it and why to use it. That can be part of what we teach that keeps the group in touch with each other all week long. Then I'll network them together. It's that 24/7 thing. Also teach the women specifically what to look for, or ask them what they have learned about how to do it and how not to do it. In other words, let's do it on purpose even if we are doing it the right way by accident.

Brandon: We can grow into it. But how do we teach people? What do we preach, how do we frame this? What do we study.

Joseph: Brandon, you always said character building is the essence or purpose of Christian fellowship. The heart of character growth is talking to each other, holding each other accountable. Ministering to others together etc. etc.. Without that character, even if men do use the chats, they won't profit by them. We don't know how to talk to each other.

Brandon: What do you mean? I'm always on the phone with you. That's the heart of the church. Grant, Zach, Gordon and I are constantly on the phone to each other and everyone else.

Joseph: Each other. And look how the four of you have continued to grow along with those you are talking to regularly. In the words of Jethro to Moses "The thing you do is not good, the people will wear you out...select Godly men who can bear this burden with you."

Brandon: We're doing that with elders. You're Presbyterian you should be for that.

Joseph: I was. But let's move past Jethro to Jesus who answered Moses' Prayer "Would that all God's people were prophets would that all Gods people had the Holy Spirit." (Numbers 11) What Jesus

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offered was the fulfillment of that prayer — Christian's are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. All have His mind. All are filled with the Holy Spirit. All bear the words of life. All are to bring a gift to build others up. All have the river of life flowing out of them. All share gifts to build up others. The job is too big for any pastor, group of pastors, or larger group of elders, or even larger organizational staff to do what everyone is supposed to be doing. It requires the whole church not just official "leaders".

Brandon: Character formation for every member to use what God has given them is what we're talking about already. This is just another tool. The "what" is pretty straightforward. The Theory is Simple. Teach the Body of Christ and the Trinity. Teach the allelon passages not as how to win friends and influence people, but as the heart of how the body interacts and grows. Teach the goal of "Church" is a 24/7 ministry of all to all.

Joseph: I would add to that, Ephesians 4, this is how the teaching gifts build up each of you to work together so you aren't blown around by every little thing and can be a part of everyone.

Brandon: So the Internet can be a tool to further the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, tying ministry and spiritual growth together. The same way a church calendar, or coordinating prayer or fasting throughout the congregation. It gathers us 24 hours a day to deal with issues and minister.

After-word

Thus was born a guarded concern to increase our opportunities to talk with each and coordinate Spiritual Disciplines in relation to active ministry to continue the revival we have been experiencing tying our future directly to the nature of the Trinity. Revivals tend to end in 1) business as usual reminiscences of good ol' days. 2) Legalism to be sure that original desire for holiness continues the presence of the Spirit. 3) Spiritualism, ritualism, asceticism and other ways to manipulate a continued euphoria. Not this time.