

# THEOLOGY ROUNDTABLE

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## Trinity

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Peninsula Bible Church  
September 2013

# Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks. We joyfully proclaim our faith in the mystery of your Godhead. You have revealed your glory as the glory also of your Son and of the Holy Spirit: three Persons equal in majesty, undivided in splendor, yet one Lord, one God, ever to be adored in your everlasting glory.

Roman Catholic prayer for Trinity Sunday



# Introduction

“I have often reflected on the rather obvious thought that when his disciples were about to have the world collapse in on them, our Lord spent so much time in the Upper Room speaking to them about the mystery of the Trinity. If anything could underline the necessity of Trinitarianism for practical Christianity, that must surely be it.” Sinclair Ferguson

“In no other subject is error more dangerous, or inquiry more laborious, or the discovery of truth more profitable.” Augustine *De Trinitate*

## Objections

1. Doesn't make sense – best left alone
2. Subject to ridicule
3. Mysterious and should not be investigated
4. Not biblical, a philosophical construct that leads to prideful intellectualism
5. Makes no difference



St. Augustine

# Trinitarian Order

1. **One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth**
2. **One Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father**  
The Father eternally begets the Son, and communicates the divine nature to him, yet the divine nature is not divided into two divine beings. The Father eternally communicates the simple, undivided divine essence to the Son constituting him a second divine person but not a second God.
3. **The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son**

The Spirit is the Spirit of the Father (Matt. 10:20) and of the Son (Gal. 4:6). The Spirit is Spirit in that he eternally receives the one divine essence from the Father and the Son by being “breathed out.”

“As the Father is the first person of the Trinity, neither begotten nor breathed, so he initiates all divine action. All things are “from him” (1 Cor. 8:6). As the Son is the second person of the Trinity, eternally begotten of the Father, so he

acts from the Father. All things are “through him” (1 Cor. 8:6). As the Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, eternally breathed out by the Father and the Son, so he acts from the Father and the Son: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak.” (John 16:13).” Scott R. Swain



St. Anselm

# Historic Errors

## 1. Modalism

Insistence on the unity of God at the expense of differentiating the divine persons. The Son and Spirit are merely different facets of the diamond.

## 2. Subordinationism

The Son and Spirit are created beings, ranked below the Father who alone is divine.

## 3. Tritheism

Father, Son, and Spirit are separate and divine. There are three gods.

# The Unveiling of the Trinity

## 1. Rigorous monotheism for Israel

- Allusions to God's complexity
- The promise of a Messiah

## 2. Jesus and the Father

“The trinitarianism of the New Testament is revealed to us largely in the conversation between the Father and the Son. The hearers of the New Testament get to listen in on the prayers of Jesus the Son to his God and Father . . . What must have passed in private between Father and Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit is more than we can safely guess.” Fred Sanders

## 3. The witness of the Spirit

*1 Cor. 2:12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.*

# God is Love

## 1. Trinitarian love is the deepest reality

*John 17:24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."*

"Single-person gods, having spent eternity alone, are inevitably selfish beings... Everything changes when it comes to the Father, Son and Spirit. Here is a God who is not essentially lonely, but who has been loving for all eternity as the Father has loved the Son in the Spirit. Loving others is not a strange or novel thing for this God at all; it is at the root of who he is" Michael Reeves

God is not uni-personal (and authoritarian) impersonal (and dissipated) or multi-personal (and competitive).

## 2. Love overflows from God's nature into the creation

"We can speak of the Spirit in ways that are impersonal: a divine force that convicts or awakens or equips. But we need to remember that the Spirit is a person. Jesus speaks of the Spirit as "he" not "it". He is every bit as much a person as the Father and the Son. In the Bible, we see the Spirit's work described in personal terms: he persuades, prays, testifies, cries out, creates, judges, leads, has a mind, can be blasphemed, and can be grieved. The Holy Spirit is not just a raw divine power that sloshes around inside of us; he is a person who indwells us and to whom we can relate." Sam Allberry

*Matt. 28: 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

# The Trinity and Worship

“The Christian faith exists in an atmosphere saturated by the Trinity... The Spirit creates a desire to pray and worship God, brings us to faith, and sustains us in a life of faithful obedience. In turn, our access to the Father is exclusively through his Son, Jesus Christ—no one comes to the Father except through him (Jn. 14:6). Now that he has offered the one perfect sacrifice for sins for all time, we have access to the presence of God (Heb. 10:19f), and so can approach with confidence the throne of grace, knowing that our great high priest is there to intercede for us, who has experienced to the full struggles of human life in a fallen world and can sympathize with us in our weakness (Heb.4: 14ff).”

Robert Letham

## 1. God within us and before us

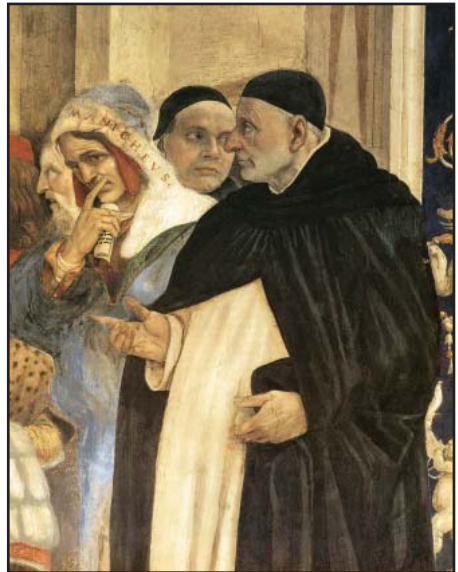
### 2. Prayer

*Gal. 4:6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*

### 3. Scripture

*2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed.*

*2 Cor. 2:10 The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.*



*St. Thomas Aquinas*



# The Trinity and the Church

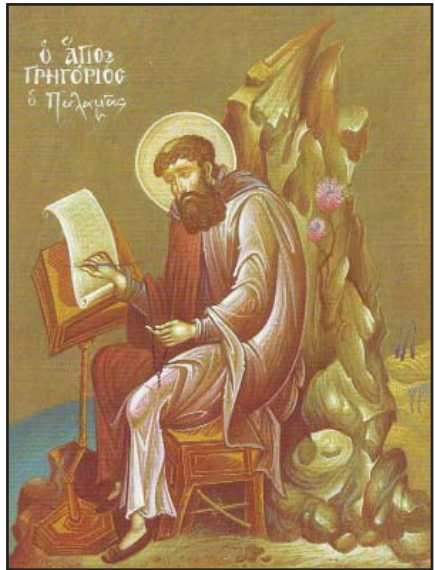
## 1. Unity and diversity

*Eph. 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

## 2. The Lord of the dance

“God did not create us to get the cosmic, infinite joy mutual love and glorification, but to share it. We are made to join in the dance. If we will center our lives on him, serving him not out of self interest, but just for the sake of who he is, for the sake of his beauty and glory, we will enter the dance and share in the joy and love he lives in . . . We were made to center our lives upon him, to make the purpose and passion of our lives knowing, serving, delighting and resembling him.” Timothy Keller

*Gen. 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*



St. Gregory Palamas

# Additional Resources

Sam Allberry, *Connected*

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God* (chapter fourteen)

Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity*

Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*

Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God*

James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity*

Credo (online magazine)

[www.credomag.com/the-magazine/archives/the-trinity-and-the-christian-life-why-a-triune-god-makes-all-the-difference/](http://www.credomag.com/the-magazine/archives/the-trinity-and-the-christian-life-why-a-triune-god-makes-all-the-difference/)