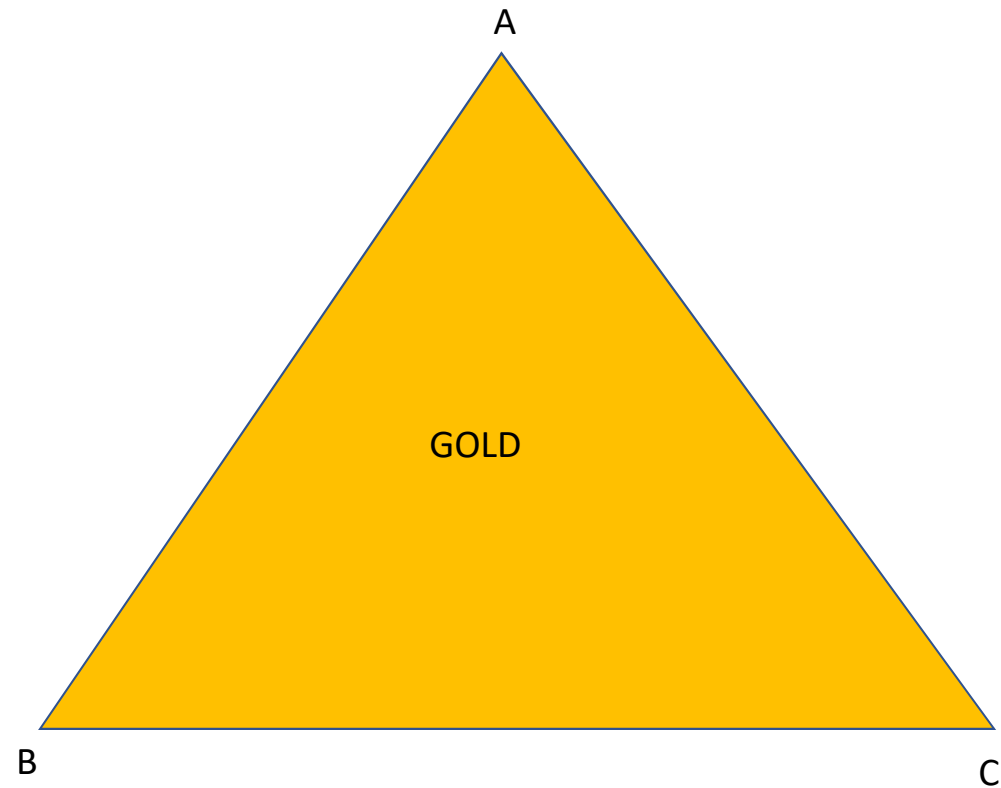


# THE ETERNAL GOD – THE TRINITY

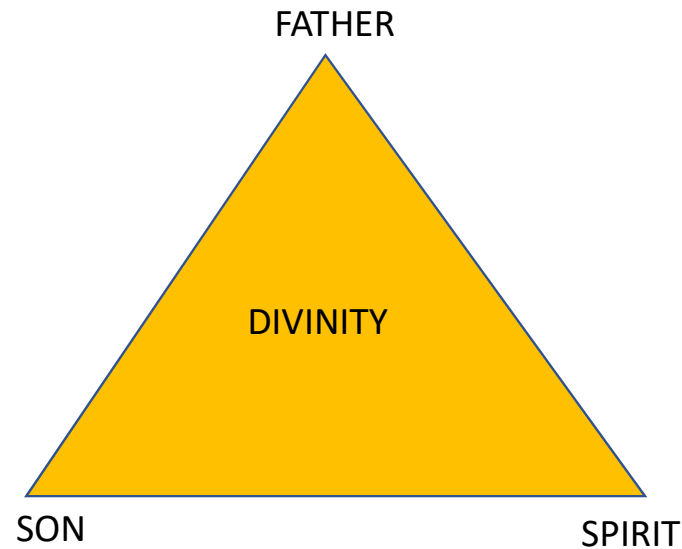
**DEACONS' MEETING – WINTER 2017 – Lecture1**

## ANALOGY



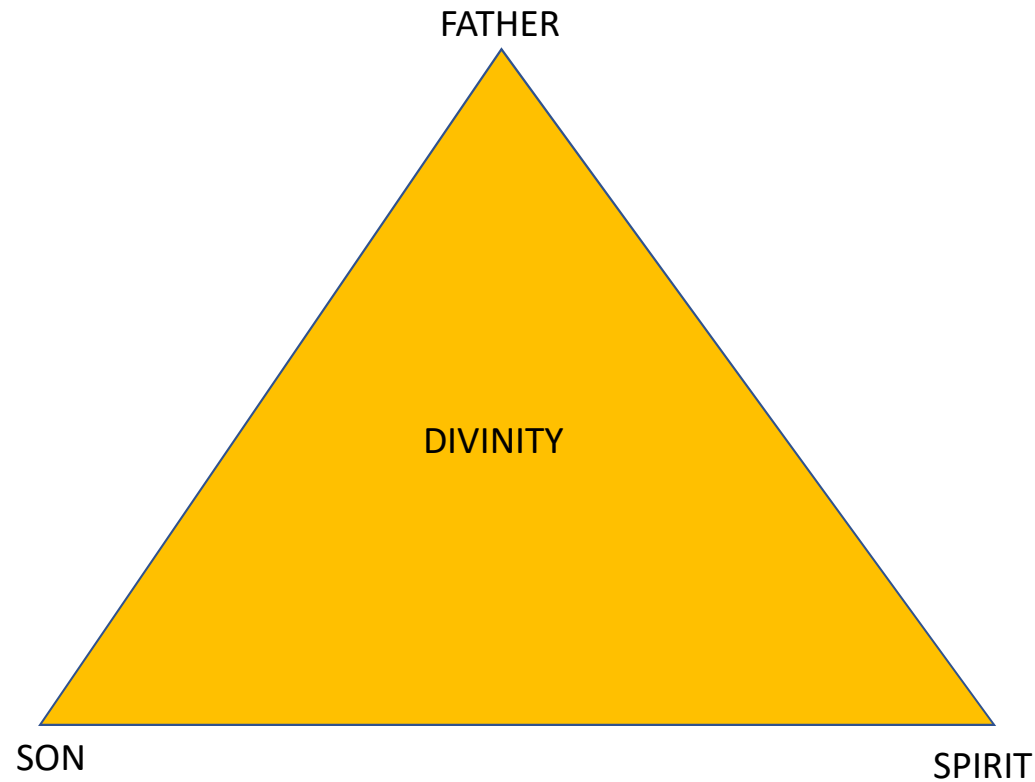
- All three vertices share the same **essence** and **attributes** of the triangle **material** (for example Gold). They would have the same melting point, hardness, strength, shiny color, etc.
- The **three points are not one and the same**, otherwise the triangle would collapse into one point.
- The **three points are not separated either**, or the triangle would cease to exist.
- If a steel bolt is fastened to corner B, it becomes one with vertex B and with the triangle material without becoming united to vertex A or C.

## ANALOGY (continued)



- All three Persons of the Trinity share the same **essence** and **attributes** of the **Divine Nature**. They are omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, everlasting, omnipotent, etc.
- The three Persons are not one and the same, otherwise they would be one Person.
- The three Persons are not mere personal attributes or manifestation of God, otherwise they would not be persons and there would be a fourth core person.
- The three Persons of the Trinity are not separated as they share the same nature. They are distinct yet in perfect unity without separation.
- When the Son was incarnated, he united his Body with His Divinity, which is the nature of the Trinity, yet the Father and Spirit did not unite with the Body of Christ.
- The distinction between the Persons are:
  - a) The FATHER is the source of Existence
  - b) The SON is begotten of the Father continuously and eternally
  - c) The SPIRIT proceeds from the Father continually and eternally

## THE TRINITY IS



- **GOD** as He revealed himself to be through:

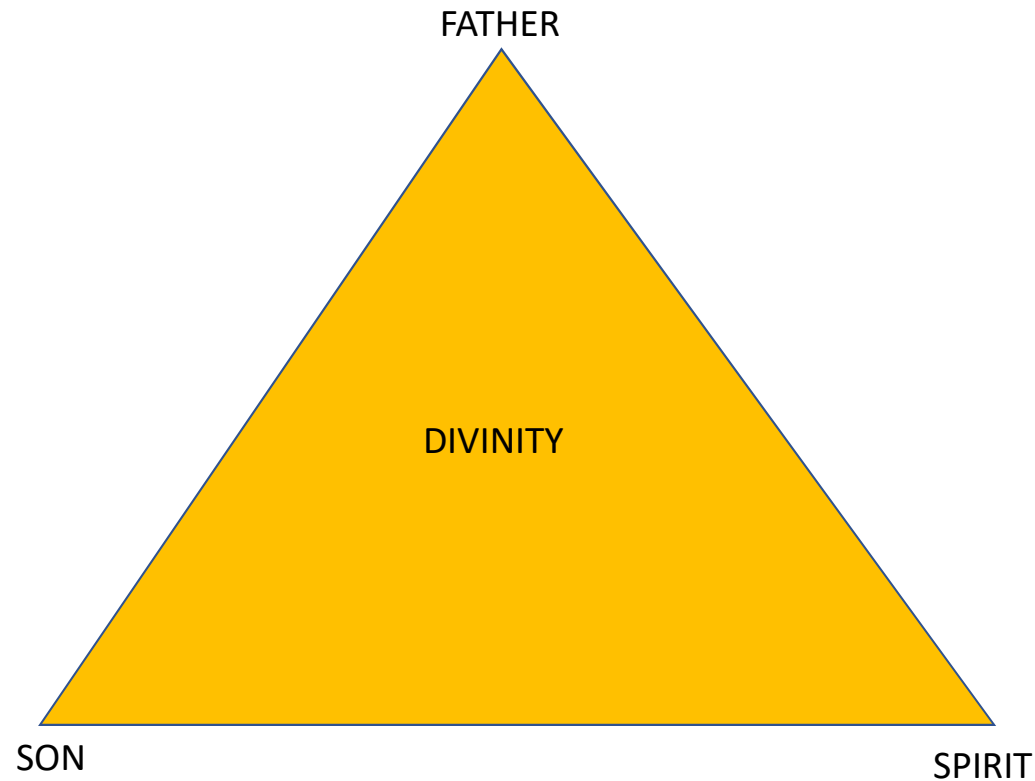
+ Tradition

- a) Scripture
- b) Rites
- c) Church Fathers

+ History

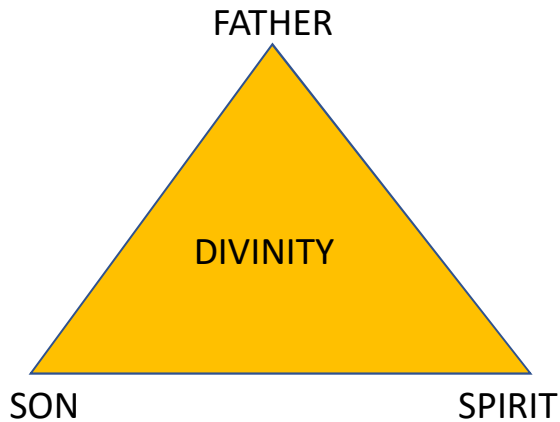
The New Testament record, and the life of the Orthodox Church is absolutely incomprehensible and meaningless without constant affirmation of the existence, interrelation and interaction of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit towards each other and towards man and the world.

## WHAT THE TRINITY IS NOT



- It is **NOT** the invention of scholars or intellectuals to explain the mysteries that transcend the human mind.
- It is **NOT** a philosophical approach to clarify attributes necessary for God to exist that is missing in Unitarian theology and Polytheism.
- It is **NOT** **merely** an “article of faith” which men are called to “believe.

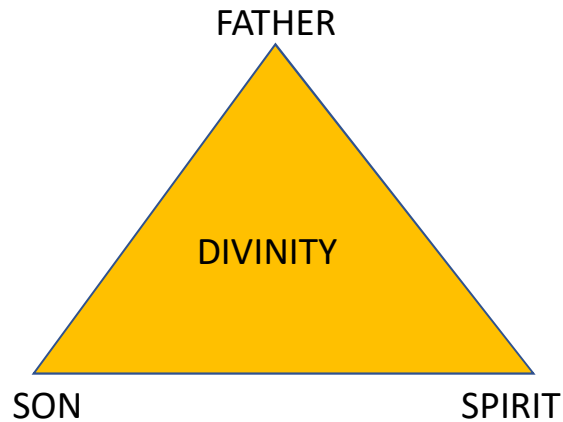
## THE TRINITY – THREE PERSONS IN ONE



In Orthodox terminology the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are called three divine persons. Person is defined here simply as the subject of existence and life—hypostasis in the traditional church language.

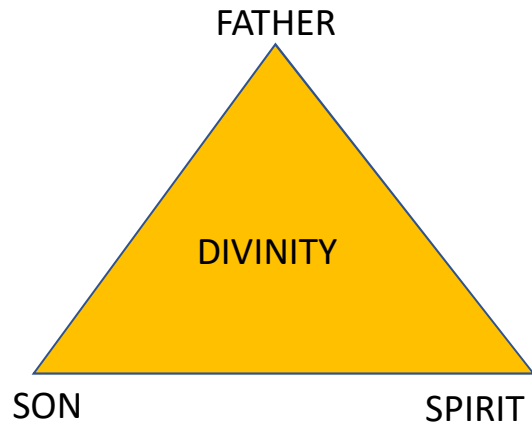
- As the being, essence or nature of a reality answers the question “what?”, the person of a reality answers the question “which one?” or “who?” Thus, when we ask “What is God?” we answer that God is the divine, perfect, eternal, absolute, ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing, and eternally the same.” . . . and when we ask “Who is God?” we answer that God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In who God is, there are three persons who are each absolutely unique and distinct. Each is not the other, though each is still divine with the same divine nature and form. Therefore, while being one in what they are; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are Three in who they are.
- Therefore, while being one in what they are; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are Three in who they are. And because of what and who they are—namely, uncreated, divine persons—they are undivided and perfectly united in their timeless, spaceless, sizeless, shapeless super-essential existence, as well as in their one divine life, knowledge, love, goodness, power, will, action, etc.
- The saints of the Church have explained this tri-unity of God by using such an example from worldly existence. We see three men. “What are they?” we ask. “They are human beings,” we answer. Each is man, possessing the same humanity and the same human nature defined in a certain way: created, temporal, physical, rational, etc. In what they are, the three men are one. But in who they are, they are three, each absolutely unique and distinct from the others. Each man in his own unique way is distinctly a man. One man is not the other, though each man is still human with one and the same human nature and form.

## THE TRINITY – ONE WILL



- The NATURE is the center of WILL and ACTION.
- Any being acts in a certain way because his actions are informed by his nature which underlies his will.
- Since the being of the Holy Trinity is one, whatever the Father wills, the Son and the Holy Spirit will.
- What the Father does, the Son and the Holy Spirit do also.
- There is no will and no action of God the Father which is not at the same time the will and action of the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- In Himself, in eternity, as well as towards the world in creation, revelation, incarnation, redemption, sanctification, and glorification—the will and action of the Trinity are one: from the divine Father, through the divine Son, in the divine Holy Spirit.
- Every action of God is the action of the Three. No one person of the Trinity acts independently of or in isolation from the others. The action of each is the action of all; the action of all is the action of each. And the divine action is essentially one.

## THE TRINITY – HIS ESSENCE IS LOVE



### GOD IS LOVE (1 JOHN 4:8 & 4:16)

- The language of the bible is clear that the very essence of God is love. St. John the Apostle makes no mistake in describing God as Love, not lover, or loving, equal to other attributes like merciful or just.
- Perfect Love is essential for God's existence, as it means the one will is maintained and the three Persons give each other the worth they deserve.
- Love is action and not theoretical and is expressed in mutual glorification.

*"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5)*

*"Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." (John 12:28)*

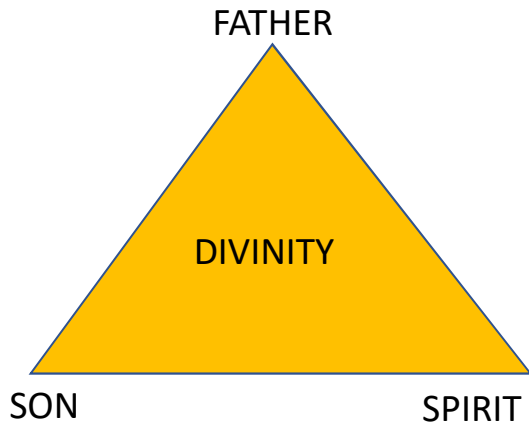
- Love is the essence of the **True** God. In its reflection on us, love exchanged and acted upon has to be founded in truth. The Lord did not call his disciples "beloved" until after the Eucharist. Therefore, we should not use the name of God, namely "Love", in vain.

*"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15)*



# THE TRINITY – HIS ESSENCE IS LOVE

LOVE NEVER FAILS (1 CORINTHIANS 13:8)



- This verse means that Love is ETERNAL. What does this mean except it is identified with God Himself?
- In Titus 1:2, Paul tells us that God promised eternal life "before the world began." This is one of many Scriptures that speak of relationships within the Trinity. Before there was anyone else, the Persons of the Godhead made promises to one another. The Gospel of John contains many verses indicting this.

## DISTINCT PERSONHOOD

First, the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons, capable of loving and communicating with one another. The Father loves the Son and gives Him commandments. The Son loves the Father, makes requests of Him, and obeys Him. The Father and Son both send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to glorify the Son and to testify to Him. We must leave no room for Sabellianism, that ancient heresy that makes "Father," "Son," and "Spirit" nothing more than titles that one person may in succession assume, or phases through which one person may, in succession, pass.

Second, the Father, Son, and Spirit love one another. We are expressly told of the love relationship between the Father and the Son. But what of the Spirit? Augustine argued that, of the Three, the Holy Spirit is preeminently to be called Love. For He is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son, and as such He is the divine Bond between the two.<sup>1</sup> He is the living Breath, exhaled from Father to Son and from Son to Father. He is the Love that is of God and is God (1 Jn. 4:7-16).<sup>2</sup> Given this, we don't have to wonder that He doesn't remind us of His own love for the other two Persons.

# THE TRINITY – HIS ESSENCE IS LOVE

LOVE NEVER FAILS (1 CORINTHIANS 13:8)

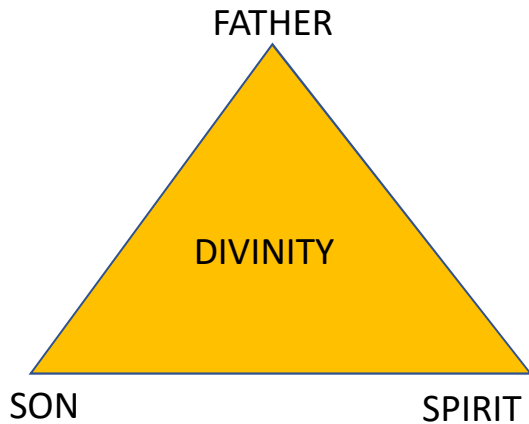
## Glory

Third, from eternity and in time each Person of the Trinity acts to glorify the others. The Father committed power and responsibility to the Son. He made Him the central, visible Actor in the drama of earth's redemption, and upon the completion of His work on earth, He exalted Him to His own right hand (Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:5-11; Ac. 2:33ff.). The Son wholly submitted Himself to the Father and took on His work. The Holy Spirit waited upon the Son's finished obedience (cf. Jn. 7:39), submitted Himself to the Father and the Son, and came, not to speak of or about Himself, but to testify of the Son.

## Sacrifice

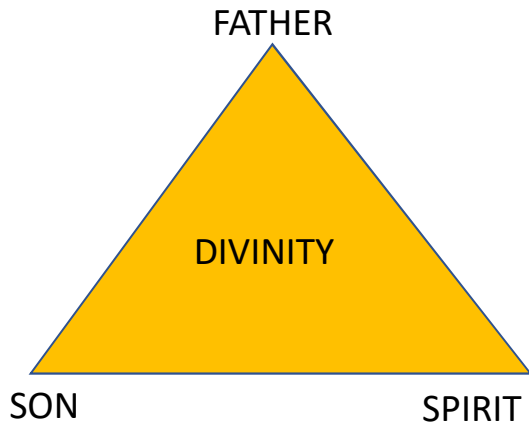
Fourth, each Person of the Trinity glorifies the other two at a cost to Himself. The Son humbled Himself to death on the cross. There, having become "sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), He suffered isolation from His Father and bore the wrath of God against sinners (Mt. 27:46; Ps. 22:1-21; Is. 53:5, 10-12).<sup>3</sup> The Father gave up His beloved Son to death on the cross (Jn. 3:16). The Holy Spirit, too, gave up the Son as He withdrew His comforts from the crucified Christ.<sup>4</sup> Remember the two-fold cry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There are mysteries here, for God's passions are not the passions of men. But we will err into Stoicism if we do not confess that God felt grief in His heart when Jesus was made sin in our place (cf. Gen. 6:5-7; Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30).

Fifth, the love within the Trinity is the ground of God's love for us. That love is first foundational, and archetypal. He loves us because They first of all love one another. His love is full and overflows. He does not need, yet He gives. He rejoices in the fullness of His love and reaches beyond Himself to share it with creatures who can profit Him nothing.



# THE TRINITY – HIS ESSENCE IS LOVE

LOVE NEVER FAILS (1 CORINTHIANS 13:8)



## Action

Sixth, divine love did not remain a matter of good intentions or hypothetical possibilities. The Persons of the Trinity did not merely tell stories to one another about what could be.<sup>5</sup> God acted into history. Divine love overflowed beyond the heart of God into the acts of God, and God created a world outside Himself in which that love could be manifest.

## Truth

Seventh, love functions in terms of truth. The Persons of the Godhead communicated their intentions and promises in a clear and faithful manner, and what each covenanted in eternity is precisely what He did on earth and in history. Jesus could speak in normal, propositional language about the Father's love and the Father's promises (Jn. 17). Written covenants, confessions, and creeds are the necessary corollary of Biblical love.

## Reality

Eighth, love is not an abstraction. In the love of the Trinity we have a living model of love and virtue at work. Within the Trinity each Person moves in love to seek the good of the other two. Each communicates honestly and openly with the others. Each operates with complete confidence (trust) in the others, and each is Himself absolutely faithful. Each humbles Himself, giving of Himself even to the point of grief and loss, so that the others may be glorified. Each rejoices and delights in the others (cf. Pr. 8:30; Mt. 3:17). The love of God and the glory of God are thus inextricably interwoven in God Himself.

## UNITARIAN THEOLOGY - THE RELIGION OF SATAN

- We believe God is Trinity because He has revealed Himself to be the Trinity through the incarnation of the Son, and not because we theorized it. Yet, it is important to examine the other view of the simpleton one god embraced by Jews and Muslims.
- If the simpleton god exists in eternity and before any creation, how did he interact with and who did he love? The question is NO ONE. A god who does not talk, think, interact and love others is an idol at best. It is not a surprise that those who claim to be monotheists have worshipped idols many times along their history (Jews) or have embraced an idol as the supreme deity.
- If the universe is necessary for this god to exist:
  - a) Creation is eternal and existed before the ages, and as such divine. This would lead to polytheism as there are many natures within the universe.
  - b) This god will cease to be divine as there is a necessity for the universe to exist to lend him his being.
- In leading men astray, Satan uses Polytheism (many divine natures) and monotheism (absolute oneness) to print his image into men.

Monotheism is in particular extremely satanic as it shows the vanity of Satan in one supreme head.

Orthodoxy is modeled after the Trinity as we all live a life of Kenonia without a head but the Lord Christ, exactly as the Three Persons in the Trinity live in total harmony and Kenonia.

## PRACTICAL ARIANS

The bottom line is this: if we are content to root love anywhere but in the eternal fellowship of the Trinity, we will be functioning as practical Arians. The implications of such Unitarian theology are profound and practical. The Arian god is lonely at best, impersonal at worst. If "it" has placed us here, it is because "it" needs us to complete itself. Imagine the human family shaped in the image of such a god! Or better, read the political history of Unitarianism in this country. It is no wonder that so many Caesars favored Arian theology. But such theology has its more homely implications as well.

Even in human life we have seen the passion to dominate, almost to digest, one's fellow; to make his whole intellectual and emotional life merely an extension of one's own — to hate one's hatreds and resent one's grievances and indulge one's egoism through him as well as through oneself. His own little store of passion must of course be suppressed to make room for ours. If he resists this suppression he is being very selfish.

We are loved. We are needed. We will be embraced, included, assimilated. Resistance is futile. Whether the threat comes from a would-be "friend" who knows what's best for us or from some Orwellian collective, we should not be impressed that it masquerades behind the banner of love. But we should recognize it for the Unitarian slavery that it is.

The love and community of the Triune God is modeled, revealed, and best of all enjoyed in the fellowship and worship of the believing and loving church. This is our greatest privilege and our greatest apology.<sup>11</sup> The world will know our Lord and us by our love. And so Jesus prayed:

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (Jn. 17:21-23).

## “FALSE” THEOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AROUND US

Theology (literally the "Study of God") is an academic field that attempts to describe or understand who and what God is, what God does, how God is related to the world and the human race, and other aspects of the divine or spiritual realms.

***Theism:*** any system of theology that believes in God as a force or being in or related to the universe.

***Deism:*** a system of theology that believes that God created the universe, but is no longer actively involved in the world; the creator set things in motion, but the universe is like a top, now continuing to spin on its own.

***Pantheism:*** a system of theology that believes that divinity is everywhere, that the absolute or spiritual reality exists within all of creation, but not in a "divine being" somehow above or separate from the created universe.

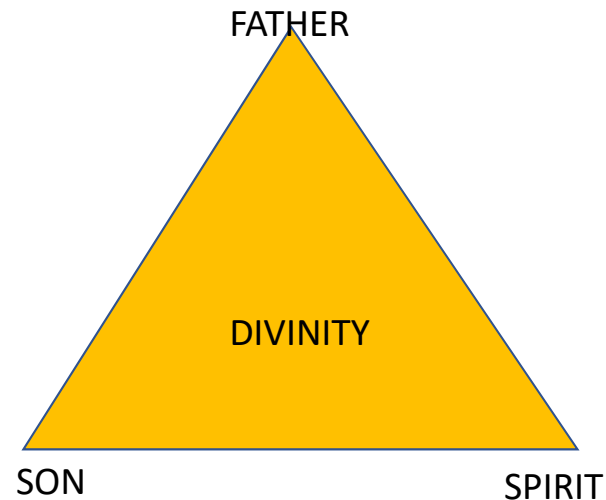
***Polytheism:*** a system of theology that believes in multiple gods, several divine beings, possibly inter-related (such as the families of gods on Mount Olympus in Greco-Roman mythology).

***Henotheism:*** a system of theology that believes that multiple gods exist, but that one's allegiance and worship is due only to one God; thus it is polytheistic in belief, but monotheistic in practice.

***Monotheism:*** a system of theology that believes that only One SIMPLE God truly exists, and what other people may call "gods" are really no more than spirits (angels or demons) or idols (human creations or wood, stone, or other materials).

**HERESIES:** a system of theology that was initiated by someone claiming to be Christian but has deviated from the Truth.

## WE MUST REJECT THE FOLLOWING HERESIES CONCERNING THE TRINITY



- ARIANISM (and its variants)

The Father alone is God and that the Son and the Holy Spirit are creatures, made “from nothing” like angels, men and the world.

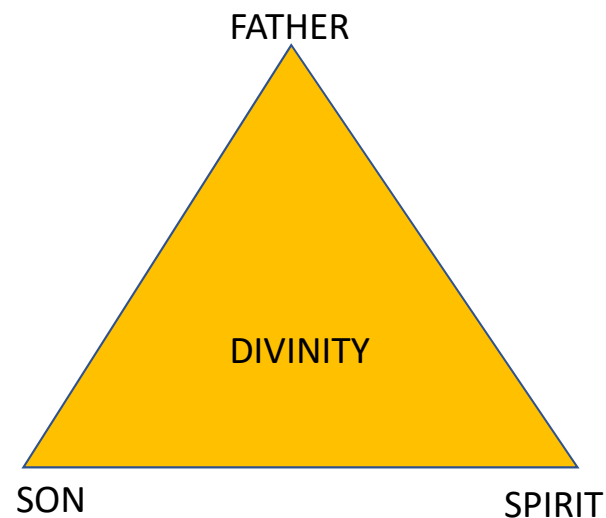
The Church answers that the Son and the Holy Spirit are not creatures, but are uncreated and divine with the Father, and they act with the Father in the divine act of creation of all that exists.

- MODALISM (SABELLIANISM)

The doctrine that the persons of the Trinity represent only three modes or aspects of the divine revelation, not distinct and coexisting persons in the divine nature.

The Church answers once more that the Son and Word is “in the beginning with God” (Jn 1.12) as is the Holy Spirit, and that the Three are eternally distinct. The Son is “of God” and the Spirit is “of God.” The Son and the Spirit are not merely aspects of God, without, so to speak, a life and existence of their own. How strange it would be to imagine, for example, that when the Son becomes man and prays to his Father and acts in obedience to Him, it is all an illusion with no reality in fact, a sort of divine presentation played before the world with no reason or truth for it at all!

## WE MUST REJECT THE FOLLOWING HERESIES CONCERNING THE TRINITY-cont.



- SECOND AND THIRD PERSON ARE ATTRIBUTES OR FACULTIES TO GOD THE FATHERS

A third wrong doctrine is that God is one, and that the Son and the Spirit are merely names for relations which God has with Himself. Thus, the Thought and Speech of God is called the Son, while the Life and Action of God is called the Spirit; but in fact—in genuine actuality—there are no such “realities in themselves” as the Son of God and the Spirit of God. Both are just metaphors for mere aspects of God. Again, however, in such a doctrine the Son and the Spirit have no existence and no life of their own. They are not real, but are mere illusions..

- POLYTHEISM

Still another wrong doctrine is that the Father is one God, the Son is another God, and the Holy Spirit still another God with separate natures. There cannot be “three gods,” says the Church, and certainly not “gods” who are created or made. Still less can there be “three gods” of whom the Father is “higher” and the others “lower.” For there to be more than one God, or “degrees of divinity” are both contradictions which cannot be defended, either by divine revelation or by logical thinking.