

of the use of this and other terms. Some theologians have opted for the term "three personal subsistences," but this reduces to the same thing -- three personalities. However, this raises the question, What are "persons"?

Permit me to suggest a definition. Persons are beings characterized by conceptual thought, the use of some form of language, emotions, deliberate choice and purposive action toward pre-selected goals, self-consciousness, and moral and religious attitudes and actions. Put another way, persons are moral and spiritual beings who have a distinct existence and the faculties of intellect, emotion, will and self-consciousness.

When we look into Scripture, we discover that persons are *spirits*. Human beings are spirits in union with bodies; and when they become disembodied spirits in the experience of physical death they are still persons (although they are not complete persons until physical resurrection). Satan is a person. The demons are persons. Angels are persons. And God is essentially personal. God is spirit.

A person is a being with a personal nature, personal faculties and powers, and distinct individual existence, or personality. The members of the godhead are Persons. They think, they feel, they will, they are conscious of themselves as distinct selves, and they interact with each other on a personal level.

But now we must safeguard the doctrine by putting fences around it. On the one hand, the plurality must not be understood in a modalistic sense, by viewing the three Persons as merely revelations of the one God in different characters, as that when God is creating He is the Father, and when He is redeeming He is the Son, and when He is communicating life and gifts He is the Spirit. On the other hand the plurality of God must not be understood in a tri-theistic sense, by viewing the Persons as three separate individuals, each of whom is a perfect mirror image of the other two, so that we come out with three Gods having precisely the same nature, essence, and attributes.

When we speak of finite persons, we mean distinct and separate individuals who have no essential connection with other individuals. When we speak of the Persons of the Trinity, we do not mean distinct and separate individuals who are exactly alike but are only externally related as three