

Negatively, the doctrine does not teach that God is one Person. God is three Persons.

The doctrine does not teach that God is three Gods. God is one God.

The doctrine does not teach that there are three divine essences. There is only one essence that is divine.

Positively, the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that there is one Being that is divine, but that three Persons participate in that one Being.

The doctrine teaches that there is only one God, but that there are three Persons who are that one God.

The doctrine teaches that there is one essence (combination of characteristics) that is fully divine, but that there are three divine Persons who fully share that essence.

Thus God is a "tri-unity", a "three-in-one," a trinity, because God is at the same time one and three (but in different senses). God is one in divine essence, and three in divine Persons.

The Trinity, therefore, is the doctrine that there are three Persons who are characterized, through and through, by a unique combination of divine attributes, qualities, and perfections, which combination is the same for all three.

However, although the Persons of the Trinity are equal in essence, they are subordinate in their working. This is the theological distinction between essential equality and economic subordination.

The three Persons of the Godhead are equal in essence (they all have the same essential qualities or attributes), but they are unequal in their working. They accomplish different functions in the outworking of God's Plan; and are involved in superordinate/ subordinate working relationships even while they are equal in essence.

It would appear that all three Persons are active in the divine works of creation, providence, redemption, and judgment, but that they do different things in carrying out these works. To take one of these divine works as an example, the Father initiates redemption by sending His Son into the world, the Son accomplishes redemption by becoming incarnate and by making an atonement for our sins, and the Spirit applies redemption by uniting us to Christ and to the benefits of His atoning work. While the three Persons of the Trinity are implementing the Plan of the Trinity, they are involved in unequal working relationships. Scripture teaches, for example, that the Father sends the Son. The Son does not send the Father. Here is a definite order in working relationships. And Scripture teaches that the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not send the Father or the Son. Again there is an order in their working.

However, even as we distinguish the plurality of Persons and