

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRINITY  
AMONG MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES OF  
CHRIST**

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A thesis for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
At  
Trinity Theological Seminary  
Newburgh, IN  
USA.

Submitted to Trinity Theological Seminary Faculty for Approval

June 2017

Word Count: 41851

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## **APPROVAL SHEET**

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRINITY AMONG  
MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Brian William Perkins

Read and Approved by:

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Prof. Johnathan Pritchett, Ph.D., Chair

## Dedication

To all those who love the Word of God as deeply as I do and desire to have a relationship with God which goes beyond doctrinal correctness, but one which stirs the soul and touches the heart because it is deeply personal. The Kingdom desperately needs more like minded persons.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .....	viii
<b>Abstract</b> .....	x
<b>Vita</b> .....	xi
Acknowledgments.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY .....	1
General Introduction.....	1
Problem Addressed by the Study.....	1
Background of the Study.....	1
Overview of the Study .....	4
<b>Assumptions</b> .....	4
<b>Delimitations</b> .....	4
<b>Limitations</b> .....	4
The Value of Doing Such a Study .....	5
Statement of the Problem .....	5
<b>The Research Question</b> .....	5
<b>The Uniqueness of the Study</b> .....	5
The Research Design .....	6
<b>The Form of Inquiry Being Chosen</b> .....	6
<b>The Sources of Data Collection</b> .....	6
<b>The Analysis of the Data</b> .....	6
<b>The Reporting of the Data</b> .....	6
Definition of Terms .....	7
CHAPTER TWO: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
Introduction .....	9
Past Trinitarian Perspectives.....	9
Modern Trinitarian Discussion.....	12
Related Trinitarian Studies.....	18
Interpretive Summary.....	20
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	21
Introduction Reviewing Purpose of the Study.....	21
Description of Methodology to be used .....	21

Design of Study .....	21
A. Interviews with Key Leaders .....	21
<b>Sample and Population</b> .....	22
<b>Data Collection</b> .....	24
<b>Data Analysis</b> .....	24
B. Questionnaire of Members.....	24
<b>Questions</b> .....	26
<b>Demographics</b> .....	31
<b>Limitations and Weaknesses</b> .....	34
<b>Population and Sample</b> .....	35
<b>Measures Used</b> .....	37
<b>Pilot Study</b> .....	37
<b>Data Collection Procedures</b> .....	38
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA .....	40
Presentation of Data .....	40
A. Interviews with Key Leaders .....	40
<b>Summary</b> .....	45
B. Questionnaire of members.....	45
Demographics .....	45
<b>Category of Respondents</b> .....	46
<b>Location of Respondents</b> .....	47
Survey Results .....	47
<b>Areas of Strengths</b> .....	62
<b>Areas of Weaknesses</b> .....	62
Analysis of Data by Demographics.....	63
<b>Survey Results by nationality</b> .....	63
<b>Survey Results by years in Church</b> .....	73
<b>Survey Results by current ministry</b> .....	78
<b>Survey Results by ministry experience</b> .....	83
<b>Further analysis of general weaknesses discovered</b> .....	89
<b>Areas of Strength Discovered</b> .....	92
<b>Areas of Weaknesses Uncovered</b> .....	94
Summary.....	95

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	97
Purpose of the Study.....	97
Significance of the Study.....	97
Review of the Related Literature .....	97
Research Methodology.....	97
Presentation and Analysis of Data.....	98
Conclusions.....	100
Recommendations from the Study.....	102
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>105</b>
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>115</b>
Questionnaire .....	115
An Essay on the History of the Trinity.....	116
<b>Biblical Conclusions</b> .....	<b>116</b>
One God.....	116
God as Father .....	118
Jesus as God.....	119
The Holy Spirit .....	123
Personhood.....	126
Trinity .....	127
<b>From the Ancient Church to ICOC</b> .....	<b>129</b>
<b>Contemporary Writings</b> .....	<b>134</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>135</b>
Trinity Research .....	136

## List of Tables

TABLE 1. RAW DATA QUESTION #1 .....	47
TABLE 2. RAW DATA QUESTION #2 .....	48
TABLE 3. RAW DATA QUESTION #3 .....	48
TABLE 4. RAW DATA QUESTION #4 .....	49
TABLE 5. RAW DATA QUESTION #5 .....	49
TABLE 6. RAW DATA QUESTION #6 .....	50
TABLE 7. RAW DATA QUESTION #7 .....	50
TABLE 8. RAW DATA QUESTION #8 .....	51
TABLE 9. RAW DATA QUESTION #9 .....	51
TABLE 10. RAW DATA QUESTION #10 .....	52
TABLE 11. RAW DATA QUESTION #11 .....	52
TABLE 12. RAW DATA QUESTION #12 .....	53
TABLE 13. RAW DATA QUESTION #13 .....	53
TABLE 14. RAW DATA QUESTION #14 .....	54
TABLE 15. RAW DATA QUESTION #15 .....	54
TABLE 16. RAW DATA QUESTION #16 .....	55
TABLE 17. RAW DATA QUESTION #17 .....	55
TABLE 18. RAW DATA QUESTION #18 .....	56
TABLE 19. RAW DATA QUESTION #19 .....	56
TABLE 20. RAW DATA QUESTION #20 .....	57
TABLE 21. RAW DATA QUESTION #21 .....	57
TABLE 22. RAW DATA QUESTION #22 .....	58
TABLE 23. US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 1.....	63
TABLE 24. US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 2.....	64
TABLE 25. US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 3.....	64
TABLE 26. US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 4.....	65
TABLE 27. US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 5.....	65
TABLE 28. NON-US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 1.....	66
TABLE 29. NON-US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 2.....	66
TABLE 30. NON-US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 3.....	66
TABLE 31. NON-US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 4.....	67
TABLE 32. NON-US VERSUS WORLDWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY 5.....	68
TABLE 33. US VERSUS NON-US CATEGORY 1.....	69
TABLE 34. US VERSUS NON-US CATEGORY 2.....	69
TABLE 35. US VERSUS NON-US CATEGORY 3.....	70
TABLE 36. US VERSUS NON-US CATEGORY 4.....	71
TABLE 37. US VERSUS NON-US CATEGORY 5.....	72
TABLE 38. COMPARISON BY LONGEVITY CATEGORY 1.....	73
TABLE 39. COMPARISON BY LONGEVITY CATEGORY 2.....	74
TABLE 40. COMPARISON BY LONGEVITY CATEGORY 3.....	75
TABLE 41. COMPARISON BY LONGEVITY CATEGORY 4.....	76
TABLE 42. COMPARISON BY LONGEVITY CATEGORY 5.....	77
TABLE 43. COMPARISON BY CURRENT MINISTRY CATEGORY 1.....	78
TABLE 44. COMPARISON BY CURRENT MINISTRY CATEGORY 2.....	79



TABLE 45. COMPARISON BY CURRENT MINISTRY CATEGORY 3 .....	80
TABLE 46. COMPARISON BY CURRENT MINISTRY CATEGORY 4 .....	81
TABLE 47. COMPARISON BY CURRENT MINISTRY CATEGORY 5 .....	82
TABLE 48. NON-MINISTRY VERSUS CURRENT & FORMER MINISTRY STAFF CATEGORY 1 .....	84
TABLE 49. NON-MINISTRY VERSUS CURRENT & FORMER MINISTRY STAFF CATEGORY 2 .....	84
TABLE 50. NON-MINISTRY VERSUS CURRENT & FORMER MINISTRY STAFF CATEGORY 3 .....	85
TABLE 51. NON-MINISTRY VERSUS CURRENT & FORMER MINISTRY STAFF CATEGORY 4 .....	87
TABLE 52. NON-MINISTRY VERSUS CURRENT & FORMER MINISTRY STAFF CATEGORY 5 .....	88
TABLE 53. UNDERSTANDS VS NOT UNDERSTAND THE TRINITY .....	89
TABLE 54. ALWAYS REFERENCES THE SPIRIT IN PRAYER VS NEVER.....	91
TABLE 1. ONTOLOGICAL TRINITY .....	136
TABLE 2. PERSONALITIES OF THE TRINITY .....	137
TABLE 3. TRINITY BENEFITS HUMANITY.....	137
TABLE 4. THE TRINITY AND SALVATION .....	138
TABLE 5. THE ECONOMIC ROLES OF THE TRINITY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS.....	138
TABLE 6. ECONOMIC WORKS OF THE TRINITY.....	139
TABLE 7. RELATIONSHIP OF THE FATHER & THE SON.....	140
TABLE 8. ADDITIONAL DIVINE ATTRIBUTES BELONGING TO BOTH THE FATHER & THE SON.....	140
TABLE 9. RELATIONSHIP OF THE FATHER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.....	140
TABLE 10. RELATIONSHIP OF THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT .....	141

## **Abstract**

### **AN INVESTIGATION OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRINITY AMONG MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

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Chair: Dr. Johnathan Pritchett

Keywords: International Church of Christ, ICOC, Trinity, Father, Son, Holy Spirit

In the family of churches called the International Churches of Christ (ICOC), there exists the need to understand their doctrinal stance towards orthodox Christian beliefs. Chief among this is their stance with the Holy Trinity. The following study was done to examine how the Trinity is understood among members of the ICOC and to find out how ICOC members understanding of the Trinity compares to the biblical picture drawn from the scriptures. This goal was to investigate, analyze, and critique where the need for corrective teaching and training may be required. This was done so that leaders and teachers of the ICOC will know how to best move forward in teaching the church this crucial aspect of the faith.

This study was done by conducting interviews with key teachers among the ICOC and by using a questionnaire survey of the membership. A sample of the membership, 419 members, was used to extrapolate a general consensus of the church.

The findings show that members of the ICOC in general have a correct view of the Trinity and hold to a Trinitarian view of God. There does exist a need to better educate their members on the deity and nature of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit as these were identified as weaker areas of conviction. This is especially true of their newest and youngest members.

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### **PERSONAL**

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## Acknowledgments

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my wife Shann Perkins and my kids Wynstin and Whitney Perkins who allowed me to sacrifice numerous hours in my pursuit of this degree.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### **General Introduction**

The doctrine of the Trinity is a hallmark of the Christian faith. Belief or unbelief in the trinity can distinguish orthodox ministries from heretical Christian groups. Currently many branches of Christianity have differing beliefs than those decided upon by the councils in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century. There is a need to classify what the International Churches of Christ believe in this crucial area.

### **Problem Addressed by the Study**

This study is being done to ascertain what are the beliefs and practices by members of the International Church of Christ (ICOC). In order to do this a survey was done by hundreds of members in the ICOC along with interviews by some of the top teachers in this family of Churches. The goal was to discover what does the average member know and believe about the 3 members of the Godhead and is this similar to what they proclaim. Does the average member's understanding of Trinity match what their leaders believe and what their teachers teach? Are there any areas of weakness among their beliefs and practices?

### **Background of the Study**

The ICOC has its background in the restoration movement in the 1800's. As a result, "The ICOC has inherited the core of its theology from the Churches of Christ."<sup>1</sup> A product of this movement started by Thomas and Alexander Campbell, along with Barton W. Stone was the

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<sup>1</sup> C. Foster Stanback, *Into All Nations: A History of the International Churches of Christ* (Newton Upper Falls, MA: IPI, 2005), 13.

traditional or ‘mainline’ Churches of Christ.<sup>2</sup> They were the fastest growing American church<sup>3</sup> from 1950 to 1965.<sup>4</sup> They were also the direct link to what would become the International Churches of Christ. The traditional Churches of Christ were seeing a slowdown in their growth and wanted to spark a revival by using campus ministries. Chuck Lucas in the Crossroads Church of Christ had great success with this in Gainesville, Florida at the University of Florida during the early 1970’s.<sup>5</sup> As ministers were send out from this ministry and from others around the United States, these ministers fell into disapproval over the differences in practice between the traditional Churches of Christ and these newer campus ministers. This reached its apex once the Boston Church of Christ founded by a Crossroads trained minister, Kip McKean in 1979<sup>6</sup>, began to grow and showed itself as a fast growing ministry. The break between both groups crystallized by the end of 1987 when both the ICOC stopped being listed in the traditional Church of Christ directory<sup>7</sup>. The new group that was formed went on to be called the International Churches of Christ in part because of their zeal to plant churches in countries all over the world and not just focus on the United States.

Many of the leaders of this young movement had their start in the traditional Church of Christ denomination which had strongly influenced many of their practices such as water

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>3</sup> An article by John Wilson in Robert Nelson’s book, *Understanding the Crossroads Controversy* (Gainesville, Florida: Nelson, 1981), pg. A p III-1 states that 1960 was the last year of rapid growth for this religious movement in the United States.

<sup>4</sup> Jeff W. Childers, Douglas A Foster, Jack R. Reese, *The Crux of the Matter: Crisis, Tradition, and the Future of Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2002), 5; Robert Nelson, *Understanding the Crossroads Controversy* (Gainesville, Florida: Nelson, 1981), 163.

<sup>5</sup> Stanback, 27-36.

<sup>6</sup> Kip McKean, “Revolution Through Restoration—From Jerusalem to Rome: From Boston to Moscow.” *Upside Down* 2 (Apr. 1992): 5.

<sup>7</sup> Stanback, 73.

baptism and male leadership as well as beliefs like baptism for the forgiveness of sins and a strong emphasis on non-denominationalism.

This new group had shifted in various ways also. They allowed instrumental music as a strong and vibrant point of worship. They have a very strong women's ministry allowing women to serve in roles that the more traditional Church of Christ did not<sup>8</sup>, such as on the ushering team, and being actively involved in the rites of Baptisms. They have also objected to the practice of church autonomy which is where each congregation is answerable only to the local membership with little or no outside authority.<sup>9</sup>

Many of these changes came about as the ICOC's overriding focus on spreading the gospel all over the world cause a change in the creed of the traditional Church of Christ, "Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." The traditional Church of Christ used this motto to ban anything not directly proscribed in the NT such as instrumental worship. The ICOC instead used the creed, "Be silent where the Bible speaks, and only speak where the Bible is silent."<sup>10</sup> This enabled them to follow the Bible without question yet be innovative as they seek to spread the gospel in different cultures all over the world.

Along with this shift of thought has come an influx of many people from different religious backgrounds. The group started small as one church in 1979 with 30 members<sup>11</sup> but by 2013 totals over 102,230 members in 650 Churches<sup>12</sup>. With such a large number of new members

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<sup>8</sup> McKean, 7.

<sup>9</sup> McKean, 12; A summary of many ICOC innovations with scriptural support are listed here.

<sup>10</sup> McKean, 5; Gordon Ferguson, *Prepared to Answer: Restoring Truth in an Age of Relativism 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Spring, Texas: IPI, 2009) 114.

<sup>11</sup> McKean, 14.

<sup>12</sup> 2015ICOCsurveySummaryandAnalysis, Roger Lamb to ICOC delegates, February 23, 2016. The number quoted represent the 2013 calendar year. By 2015 there is 104606 members in 667 churches.

coming in, there has been no studies of the affect this has had on the beliefs and practices of the church as a whole. This opens the door to many different lines of inquiry.

Due to the rapid expansion of this ministry and the lack of formalized seminary education by many leaders<sup>13</sup>, the question of their fundamental beliefs arises. The Trinity stands as a hallmark in Christian theology. It is a uniquely Christian belief and serves as a litmus test between true Christianity and its various sects.

## **Overview of the Study**

### **Assumptions**

For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that the beliefs of the ICOC are common across different churches. This family of churches had an official start in the Boston Church of Christ. From this one church, the entire group of churches expanded.<sup>14</sup> Every church included in this study has a history that charts back to this initial church in Boston.

### **Delimitations**

This study will not include an extensive look at the actual practices of the members of the ICOC. Participants were asked about their practices of prayer but no other specific practices were investigated. This would require a much different kind of study.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited only to the congregations that the researcher has access to. A more thorough study that contacts the majority of churches would have a much more accurate result. Since it was not possible to poll everyone in this family of churches, a sample was used to approximate the entire group. The results are not 100%, but have an accuracy which is strong

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<sup>13</sup> C. Foster Stanback, 58-59.

<sup>14</sup> Kip McKean, 14.



enough to draw general conclusions and make specific recommendations from which the ICOC can move forward.

### **The Value of Doing Such a Study**

It is important to know what members of the ICOC believe so that it can be known where they are going in the future. This family of churches has undergone many changes and much growth over the last 10-20 years. They are a different group now than what they were in the past. This study will reveal trends in the membership, what the ICOC believes and how they think about the nature of God in a comprehensive way. There has not been a study like this, to determine how the nature of God is understood by the ICOC, which the researcher is aware of.

### **Statement of the Problem**

#### **The Research Question**

The question this study is seeking to answer is, “What are the beliefs of the International Churches of Christ about the Trinity?” First, an understanding of the Trinity presented from the scriptures and ancient sources will be fleshed out. Then this will be compared to the view discovered by researching the members of the ICOC. The answer will reveal itself through this study. The questions which will be asked are: What do members of the ICOC believe about the Trinity as presented in the Bible and how does this manifest itself in the practice of prayer and beliefs of their membership? How does the typical member’s view of the Trinity agree or disagree with what the leaders teach and believe? What implications does this have for the future of the ICOC? Furthermore, what areas of teaching require correction and strengthening?

#### **The Uniqueness of the Study**

This study is unique because as a young and growing movement, the ICOC has been under pressure from negative voices in the Christian community. Their rapid growth can be attributed

to their differences in belief from the traditional Churches of Christ. There are many areas that should be studied to understand what changed in their beliefs, but there has been very little formal study. I have not found any careful analysis from members within the churches regarding their doctrinal beliefs. This study may stand as a benchmark from which future studies can draw. This study can also help leaders of the ICOC to determine areas of weakness in their doctrine and opportunities to teach and correct misunderstandings.

## **The Research Design**

### **The Form of Inquiry Being Chosen**

This study was done using survey data and expert interviews. The surveys were done over a period of six months, from June 2016 through to December. The interviews were all done by researcher from 2013 to 2016.

### **The Sources of Data Collection**

The surveys were collected from a number of different churches in the United States, India, Africa, Australia, Europe and Papua New Guinea. The survey was conducted by men and women. Most were collected in person, but a few were sent online. The study looked at various age groups, positions in life and surveyed ministry as well as non-ministry persons.

### **The Analysis of the Data**

The data was analyzed using statistical analysis. The results were also compared based on the demographic information collected, age in life, minister versus non-minister response, and comparative nationalities.

### **The Reporting of the Data**

The results of the analysis will be summarized. Overall trends and weaknesses will be discovered from the data. Recommendations will be made from these results.

## Definition of Terms

Trinity is a word used to describe the nature of God as revealed by a study of the Bible.

James White has a great definition. “Within the one being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>15</sup>

The Father is the first person of the Trinity revealed in the Old Testament and made clearer by the teachings of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He is shown to be the source, sender and planner of salvation.<sup>16</sup>

The Son is the second person of the Trinity, prophesied in the Old Testament but clearly made known as Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He is the means, Sent One and achiever of salvation.<sup>17</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, seen by His actions in the Old Testament, but revealed more clearly through the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament. He is the Effector and applier of salvation.<sup>18</sup>

The ontological Trinity (or immanent Trinity) is the aspect of the Trinity’s being which is equally shared by all three members of the Godhead. They are all eternal in time, unlimited in power and unbounded in space. They may all be worshipped as and called God.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity: Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief*, (Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 26.

<sup>16</sup> Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology vol 2*, (Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 2003), 290; Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit: Relationship, Roles & Relevance* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005) 41-59.

<sup>17</sup> Norman Geisler, 290; Bruce Ware, 69-98.

<sup>18</sup> Norman Geisler, 291; Bruce Ware, 101-127.

<sup>19</sup> James R. White, 172; R.C. Sproul, “What’s the Difference between the Ontological and Economic Trinity?” August 15, 2014, accessed April 23, 2016, <http://Ligonier.org/blog/whats-difference-between-ontological-and-economic-trinity>; Ernest W Dublin II, “What Is the Difference Between the Ontological Trinity and the Economic Trinity?” Headwaters church, November 30, 2004, accessed March 30, 2016, <http://headwaters.church/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/What-Is-the-Difference-Between-the-Ontological-Trinity-and-the-Economic-Trinity.pdf>.

The economical Trinity highlights the differences of the three persons as they work in creation and the redemption of mankind. Each person has a different role in the plan of salvation and the work of Jesus. Their relationships are defined by the roles they play.<sup>20</sup>

Subordination also called 'economic subordination' is "the teaching that certain members of the Trinity have roles or functions that are subject to the authority of other members."<sup>21</sup> The Son is subordinate to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son.

Perichoresis is "the notion of movement (dance), dynamic reciprocity and interpenetration. Thus the action of one Person of the Trinity implies the actions of the other two."<sup>22</sup> This means that even though the Trinity is made up of three separate persons, each are so internally connect that they always acts in unison.

Sabellianism is a "denial of the Trinity based upon a denial of the distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit... this position believes that Father is the Son, and the Son is the Spirit and Spirit is the Father."<sup>23</sup> Therefore there is only one God who appears in one of three different forms. It is also known as modalism or patripassionism.

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<sup>20</sup> James R. White, 172; Matt Slick, "The Ontological and Economic Trinity", accessed April 23, 2016, <http://CARM.org/ontological-and-economic-trinity>.

<sup>21</sup> Wayne Grudem, 483.

<sup>22</sup> Mark J. Cartledge, "Trinitarian Theology and Spirituality: An Empirical Study of Charismatic Christians," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 17, no. 1 (2004): 78.

<sup>23</sup> James R. White, 153.

## CHAPTER TWO: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction**

This literature review will trace the origin of the beliefs of the Trinity from the past to get an understanding of the church of Christ's background. Next, it will study the current beliefs of the church of Christ and the current evangelical debate. Finally, a comparison of other surveys of various churches that investigated similar theological questions will be made.

### **Past Trinitarian Perspectives**

The Doctrine of the Trinity came together by the 4<sup>th</sup> century from a sustained study of the scriptures. N.T. Wright has formulated an excellent analysis of the historical Jesus and how first century Jews could have easily come to appreciate through the life works and death of Jesus that God was working.<sup>24</sup> Wright explains that God's Spirit, God's Word, God's Torah, God's Presence and God's Wisdom were readily accepted by Jews of this time as divine. This would allow the earliest Christians to see Jesus and the work of the Spirit as divine.<sup>25</sup> The biggest weakness in Wright's work was his belief that Jesus only saw himself as the Messiah and not divine.<sup>26</sup> This seems incorrect because divinity was implicit in the role by the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In any case, accepting the divinity of Christ was the first major hurdle towards Trinitarian doctrine.

John Oakes charts the picture of Christianity from its earliest days through to Augustine of Hippo. He describes in detail the formation of Trinitarian doctrine from the Latin theologian

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<sup>24</sup> N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 629-631; N.T. Wright, "Jesus' Self-Understanding," in *The Incarnation*, ed. S.T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 55, 57.

<sup>25</sup> N.T. Wright, "Jesus and The Identity of God," in *Ex Auditu*, ed. Klyne R. Snodgrass (Milton, Ontario: Pickwick Publications, 1999), 42-56.

<sup>26</sup> N.T. Wright, 53.

Tertullian<sup>27</sup> to the first formal creed in Nicaea.<sup>28</sup> Oakes also describes the contribution of the three Cappadocian fathers and further developments until the Chalcedonian Definition of faith.<sup>29</sup> This definition solidified the doctrine of the Trinity and has stood as the test for Orthodoxy down till today. Oakes, as a teacher in the ICOC, has a history of the Trinity which lines up quite well with the Baptist Steven Harmon and his development.<sup>30</sup> The ICOC accepts a view of Trinitarian history which is clearly mainstream among Christendom.

After explaining the heresies and other issues that gave rise to the council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, Millard Erickson details all the challenges that arose within Incarnational Christology<sup>31</sup> in *The Word Became Flesh*. This book challenges the biblical view of Jesus and even the picture of the Trinity which is drawn from it. Of all the various criticism and issues posed against the Trinity, perhaps the most devastating was the coming of the age of Enlightenment. The doctrine of the Trinity withstood challenges over many years, but the enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century produced opponents which almost proved fatal to its acceptance.

Christopher Hall details how during the Enlightenment, when human reason and the scientific method prevailed over religious orthodoxy, men like German philosopher Immanuel Kant and American statesman, Thomas Jefferson poked doubt over the logic and value of the Trinity.<sup>32</sup> German Theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, who later went on to be called the

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<sup>27</sup> John Oakes, *The Christian Story: Finding the Church in Church History*, (Spring, Texas: Illumination Publishers, 2012), 109-111.

<sup>28</sup> John Oakes, 161.

<sup>29</sup> John Oakes, 181-235.

<sup>30</sup> Steven R. Harmon, "From Triadic Narrative to Narrating the Triune God: Development of Patristic Trinitarian Theology," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 305-322.

<sup>31</sup> Millard Ericson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 1991), 89-382.

<sup>32</sup> Christopher Hall, "Adding Up the Trinity: What is stimulating the renewed interest in what many consider the most enigmatic Christian doctrine," *Christianity Today*, April 28, 1997, page 26.

father of modern liberal theology further devalued the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>33</sup> Jason Smith details that Schleiermacher succeeded “in reconciling the inherited Reformed doctrine of election, sin, and grace with the principles and demands of the Enlightenment.”<sup>34</sup> He does this by basing his theology on a rational account of the ethical life of the church (i.e. religious experience) versus basing his theology on the truth of God and His word. The result has Schleiermacher placing the theology of the Trinity at the end of his book.<sup>35</sup> This seems to have been a huge mistake, as it led to others ignoring the value of the Trinity.

The foundation of the Church of Christ began during this time with the merger of two movements in 1832.<sup>36</sup> Even though both groups desired to restore New Testament Christianity they also had differences regarding the Holy Spirit. Thomas Campbell was a student of the Enlightenment philosopher John Locke.<sup>37</sup> Richard Hughes discussed the consequences of this thinking. The Campbell movement came to see the Bible as a book of facts that can easily be understood with common sense and by speaking only with the language of scripture.<sup>38</sup> They would reject all creeds as inventions of men. They also downplayed the spiritual aspects of the Holy Spirit and began to identify the work of the Spirit with the Bible itself.<sup>39</sup> Barton Stone, a preacher from the second Great Awakening, had a high view of the Holy Spirit but a strong

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<sup>33</sup> Brian Edgar, “The Message of the Trinity: Life in God,” in *The Bible Speaks Today Series*, ed John Stott, Alec Motyer, and Derek Tidball (Leicester: IVP Academic, 2004), introduction; Jason M Smith, “Must We Say Anything of an ‘Immanent’ Trinity?: Schleiermacher and Rowan Williams on an ‘Abstruse’ and ‘Fruitless’ Doctrine,” *Anglican Theological Review* 98, no. 3 (Summer 2016): 497.

<sup>34</sup> Jason M Smith, 496.

<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Steward (New York: T&T Clark Ltd, 1999), 738-751.

<sup>36</sup> C. Foster Stanback, 17-18.

<sup>37</sup> C. Foster Stanback, 16.

<sup>38</sup> Richard H. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of the Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 22-32.

<sup>39</sup> D. Newell Williams, “What I Learned about Churching of Christ and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 15, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 166-167.

problem with Trinitarian doctrine. He would reject even the word ‘Trinity’ because it was not in the Bible. Stone also argued against it saying, “Revelation nowhere declares that there are three persons of the same substance in the *one only* God; and it is universally acknowledged to be above reason.”<sup>40</sup> Though the Church of Christ never makes so strong an official stand, this history underlies the current beliefs of the Church of Christ.

Alister McGrath explains that Karl Barth led the resurgence of Trinitarian doctrine in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> Unlike Schleiermacher, Barth showed that the basis of Christian faith is the doctrine of the Trinity. It is closely tied to God’s self-revelation.<sup>42</sup> Barth put the Trinity at the start of his works on Church Dogmatics. While modern theologians celebrate the victory that Barth achieved, his explanation of God revealing Himself through Himself<sup>43</sup> is a bit confusing to the researcher.

### **Modern Trinitarian Discussion**

There has been a resurgence of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity in the last forty years.<sup>44</sup> John Thompson sums up many of the reasons for this in his book. He also explains the relationship between the Trinity and prayer.<sup>45</sup> This is of interest because this current study will investigate the connection between what ICOC members believe about the Trinity and their prayer patterns.

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<sup>40</sup> Barton Stone, *Address to the Christian Churches*, 1821, sec I, accessed January 27, 2017, [http://webfiles.acu.edu/departments/library/HR/restmov\\_nov11/www.mun.ca.rels/restmove/texts/bstone/ADDR-2ND.HTM](http://webfiles.acu.edu/departments/library/HR/restmov_nov11/www.mun.ca.rels/restmove/texts/bstone/ADDR-2ND.HTM).

<sup>41</sup> Alister E McGrath, *Theology: The Basics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 101.

<sup>42</sup> Brian Edgar, Introduction.

<sup>43</sup> Alister E McGrath, 101-102.

<sup>44</sup> John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>45</sup> John Thompson, 95-96. Jason Smith, 512 also adds some thoughts about prayer and the Trinity.



Both J. I. Packer and A. W. Tozer pen chapters in their books on theology proper about the Trinity.<sup>46</sup> They both paint majestic images of the Trinity and explain the importance of this doctrine in Christianity.<sup>47</sup> These men were both respected theologians in Evangelical thought.

Michael Reeves penned a history and description of the Trinity recently. Even though some of his ideas are more speculative and philosophical, he rightly identifies the growth of atheism as a cause for the decline in the prominence of the Trinity.<sup>48</sup> He added that Karl Barth appreciated the beauty of the Trinity<sup>49</sup> and expanded on this theme throughout the book.

James R. White wrote a great book on the history of the Trinity, detailing the three persons.<sup>50</sup> He draws up an excellent theology of the Trinity from scripture. The researcher agrees with his conclusions. This will prove useful for drawing up questions for the survey used in this study.

Even the liberal United Church of Christ with its long standing conviction against creeds seems to be moving collectively towards Trinitarian thought. Sarah Campbell laments that the use of the adjective “Triune” in this non-creedal denominations writings have now left the church slouching towards creedalism.<sup>51</sup> She even presents a six point plan to stir the UCC group in order to wake them up to this reality.<sup>52</sup>

Jurgen Moltmann differentiated himself in his discussion on the Trinity by parting with Karl Barth by beginning his theology by focusing on the three persons of the Trinity versus starting

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<sup>46</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, (Downers Grove, IL.: Intervarsity Press, 1973), 65-72; A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life*, (New York: Harpercollins Publishers, 1961), 17-24.

<sup>47</sup> J.I. Packer, 65-66; A.W. Tozer, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*, (Downers Grove, IL.: Intervarsity Press, 2012), 109-111.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Reeves, 111-112.

<sup>50</sup> James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity: Recovering the Heart of Christian belief*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 33-162.

<sup>51</sup> Sarah Campbell, “Slouching Toward’s Creedalism,” *Prism* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 9-30.

<sup>52</sup> Sarah Campbell, 22-24.

with the one true God.<sup>53</sup> Warren McWilliams notes that Moltmann starts with the three persons because that is how scripture presents them in history.<sup>54</sup> Moltmann then invokes the concept of perichoresis to avoid subordinationism and Sabellianism.<sup>55</sup> This is especially helpful since Moltmann's theology of the Trinity is closer to the researcher's than that of Barth. For example, Moltmann's use of the Trinity to inform theodicy or the theology of pain and suffering. This leads to a rejection of divine impassibility which the researcher also agrees.<sup>56</sup>

Stanley Grenz summarizes the resurgence of the Trinity in modern theology by sketching the leading voices from Karl Barth to Thomas F. Torrance.<sup>57</sup> He also, like Moltmann agrees that "all Trinitarian discourse must begin with the three Persons rather than the unity of the divine essence."<sup>58</sup> This book give credence to the need to study the Trinity and how it is practiced among the ICOC since it has various forms.

Despite it's past, the Church of Christ is now feeling a shift in their beliefs about the Trinity. Paul Riddle believes that the way God is viewed by a group of people affects how they view themselves and treat others.<sup>59</sup> A view also shared by the researcher. He suggests that the Eastern model of the Trinity, as captured by the Cappadocian fathers, can have a transformative impact

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<sup>53</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, "The Unity of the Triune God: Remarks on the Comprehensibility of the Doctrine of the Trinity and its Foundation in the History of Salvation," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 28, No. 3 (1984): 158-159.

<sup>54</sup> Warren McWilliams, "Trinitarian Doxology: Jürgen Moltmann on the relation of the economic and immanent Trinity," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 30; Jürgen Moltmann, 165.

<sup>55</sup> Warren McWilliams, "Only the Triune God Can Help the Relation of the Trinity to Theodicy," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 354; *ibid*, 31.

<sup>56</sup> Warren McWilliams, 28; God must feel simple emotions such as joy and pain to understand humankind in Jesus.

<sup>57</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*, (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress Press, 2004), 6-215.

<sup>58</sup> Ian Christopher Levy, "Review of Rediscover of the Triune God," *Lexington Theological Review Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (2005): 131.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Riddle, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Role of Women in Churches of Christ," *Restoration Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2001): 147.

on the role of women in the Churches of Christ.<sup>60</sup> The former view stresses equality among the persons of the Godhead versus the view of the later which is more hierarchical in nature.

Kelly Carter agrees that the history of the Stone-Campbell movement intentionally avoided Trinitarianism.<sup>61</sup> The impact of this resurgence has been minimal among the Churches of Christ.<sup>62</sup> This results in the need for the Stone-Campbell churches to teach the theology of the Trinity. This same dearth of knowledge may also impact the ICOC which has its roots in the Churches of Christ.

Carter also wrote a book detailing the history of neglecting Trinitarian doctrine among the Churches of Christ.<sup>63</sup> He realizes that Barton Stone had rejected the Trinity, but asserts that the Campbell's were committed to the truths but using only the language of the Bible. Carter gives a ten point proposal for how the Church of Christ can embrace a strong biblical Trinitarianism. It is the contention of the researcher that the same need may exist among the ICOC hence the need to do the current study.

Douglas Foster writes a great piece about the word-only view of the Holy Spirit among the Churches of Christ.<sup>64</sup> Throughout church history, people tend to fall along two camps, in regard to the Holy Spirit. On one side is the ecstatic and irrational and on the other side the calm and rational.<sup>65</sup> The Campbells were on the latter side of belief and the Church of Christ sided with their position. Foster points out that this view is currently changing as the body in general is

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<sup>60</sup> Paul Riddle, 149.

<sup>61</sup> Kelly D. Carter, "Resourcing the Influence of Trinitarian Theology for Stone-Campbell Churches," *Restoration Quarterly* 58, no. 2: 87.

<sup>62</sup> Kelly D. Carter, 91.

<sup>63</sup> Kelly D. Carter, *The Trinity in the Stone-Campbell Movement: Restoring the Hearts of Christian Faith*, (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2015), 1-288.

<sup>64</sup> Douglas A Foster, "Waves of the Spirit Against a Rational Rock: the Impact of the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Third Wave Movements on American Churches of Christ," *Restoration Quarterly* 45, no.1-2 (2003): 101

<sup>65</sup> Douglas A. Foster, 95-96.

moving towards a more moderate view as it considers the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian.<sup>66</sup> This pattern may also show itself in the current study as it will investigate the view of the Holy Spirit held by ICOC members.

The hottest area of Trinitarian theology in modern Evangelicalism is the current debate of subordination within the Godhead. Some Evangelical theologians view the subordination of the Son to the Father and the Holy Spirit to both the Father and the Son as eternal. This is drawn from the roles of the persons as presented in scripture. This group has a gradational authority view of the Trinity. The other camp views the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as having no order of subordination before the incarnation, and only having subordinate roles due to their efforts to bring salvation in human history. They see subordination within the Godhead as temporary and not eternal. This group has an equivalent authority view of the Trinity.<sup>67</sup>

Bruce Ware is a leading voice among the gradation view. He holds the authority-submission structure of the economic Trinity as a mark of the divine nature.<sup>68</sup> This theme runs all throughout his book. Ware goes on to use it as instructive to the roles of men and women in marriage and also in pastoral roles in the church.<sup>69</sup> Wayne Grudem also has the same view as he writes in his systematic theology, “The persons of the Trinity eternally existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”<sup>70</sup> He holds that since they have these roles eternally, they also have an eternal authority structure.

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<sup>66</sup> Douglas A. Foster, 109.

<sup>67</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Who's Tempering with the Trinity?: An assessment of the Subordination Debate*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Kregel Publications, 2009), 17-21.

<sup>68</sup> Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son & Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles & Relevance*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway Books, 2005), 21.

<sup>69</sup> Bruce A. Ware, 139-151

<sup>70</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1999), 116-118.

Millard Erickson is a leading voice of the equivalent authority view. He writes an entire book evaluating the debate in an effort to bring clarity to the issues.<sup>71</sup> He also lays out criteria for evaluating which view best represents the biblical picture.<sup>72</sup> This book is a great read and does an excellent job of being fair in considering both sides of the debate. Paul Ian has added recently to the debate arguing persuasively that the equivalent view best captures the spirit of the Nicene Creed.<sup>73</sup> He even adds that at the latest debate, Ware and Grudem were convinced that their view must allow for eternal generation of the Son which before they had rejected. The researcher agrees with the equivalent view, but for the sake of the study, asked open ended questions to ICOC teachers regarding their view.

Finally, Thomas McCall offers insights into the discussion on the Trinity from the area of philosophical theology. His book is a breath of fresh as it looks at Trinitarian debates and uses philosophy to better expose the issues and offer solutions. McCall looks at the current debate on subordination and concludes that the gradation view has some serious philosophical problems which the equivalent view does not have.<sup>74</sup> He examines the three leading ideas to explain the Threeness-Oneness problem which threatens to make the entire doctrine seem logically inconsistent.<sup>75</sup> McCall even questions Moltmann's perichoresis and adds a solution to avoid the two extremes many unwittingly surrender to.<sup>76</sup> This offers a whole new arena for future studies of the ICOC.

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<sup>71</sup> Millard J. Erckson, 27-81.

<sup>72</sup> Millard J. Erickson, 83-108.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Ian, "Evangelicals and the Trinity," *Biblical Studies* 32, (December 1, 2016), Accessed January 13, 2017, [http://www.Psephizo.com/biblical\\_studies/evangelical-and-the-trinity](http://www.Psephizo.com/biblical_studies/evangelical-and-the-trinity).

<sup>74</sup> Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Who's Monotheism?: Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 175-188.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas H. McCall, 11-55.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas H. McCall, 156-174.

## Related Trinitarian Studies

There were a number of comparative surveys done among Christian groups that intersected areas of interest in this study.

The first study was conducted by Lifeway Research for Ligonier Ministries in 2014. Of the 3000 initial response the report focuses on the 557 Protestants who identified themselves as Evangelical.<sup>77</sup> The study aimed to discern which heretical views they might hold onto. The poll taken has a margin of error of +1.8 percent with a confidence interval of 95 percent.

The study found that 96% of Evangelicals believe in the Trinity 96%. In regard to the Son, 88% hold that Jesus is fully human and fully divine. The current study asks the same questions of the ICOC. They also discovered that 22% believed that God the Father is more divine than Jesus. This question is also asked in the current study.

The study found that in regard to the Spirit, 51% believed the Holy Spirit is a force not a person and 9% agreed that the Holy Spirit is less divine than the Father. The current study also asks similar questions.

This study goes on to look at questions of salvation which are outside the scope of the current study, but the results are informative. Belief in the Trinity was generally very high even though respondents did not fully understand what this meant. This shows that Evangelicals believe this as truth but don't fully understand what they believe.

The second study polled 633 charismatic Christians from 29 different churches in the Merseyside area of the UK.<sup>78</sup> The study was designed to determine who this group views the

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<sup>77</sup> Kevin P. Emmert, "New Poll Finds Evangelical's Heresies," *Christianity Today* (October 2014), accessed January 13, 2017, <http://WWW.Christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/October-web-only/new-poll-finds-evangelicals-favor-heresies.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Mark J. Cartledge, "Trinitarian Theology and Spirituality: an Empirical Study of Charismatic Christians," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 17, no. 1 (2004): 76-84.

Trinity along a few different spectrums: The unity model versus plurality model; the nature of the Persons; equality of the Persons; and modes of the Trinity. The study also gathered demographics on gender, age range and socio-economic status.

This study found that 62.2% preferred to think about God in terms of three Persons versus one being, 87.5% understood the Persons were equal versus unequal, and 53.1% understood the Persons as operating as a community versus a hierarchy. This points to a view of the Trinity which the researcher also agrees and will determine if the ICOC shares.<sup>79</sup>

This study also found that the Father is the preferred Person to receive worship, prayer and thanksgiving, while the Holy Spirit comes last. The current study will also investigate this among members of the ICOC.

The third study was, “Conducted during the summer of 2011 at Lipscomb University’s IMPACT Camp.”<sup>80</sup> The study involved 1589 middle school and high school students in the Church of Christ. The goal was to investigate what do these youth believe? Do they hold hold traditional orthodox beliefs and hold the Church is doing in teaching faith to the next generation? This study also gather demographics on age, gender, ethnicity and parental education.

This study found that 97% believed in God. There was no difference in belief in God based on gender. There was however a percentage of females committed to God than males. The current study does not poll for gender. 71.1% of the youth reported that they prayed a few times or more a week. The study also found that 58.9% admit to reading the Bible a few times a week.<sup>81</sup> This older the students read the Bible more than the younger students. The current study

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<sup>79</sup> Mark J. Cartledge, 81.

<sup>80</sup> Walter Surdacki and Chris Gonzalez, “Faith as Language Acquisition: Findings of Faith, Faith Practices, and Orthodox Beliefs in Church of Christ Adolescents,” *The Journal of Youth Ministry* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 54.

<sup>81</sup> Walter Surdacki and Chris Gonzalez, 57-58.

did not poll the regularity of Bible reading but can discover if age correlate to Biblical knowledge.

This study concludes that the church of Christ has an opportunity to better pass on the faith to their youth by taking the time to better explain their rituals and by engaging their youth about particular beliefs.<sup>82</sup> This is not just the task of the parents or the leaders, but of the entire community of Faith.

### **Interpretive Summary**

This review of related literature has investigated the history of Trinitarian thought and its impact on Christianity in general and the Church of Christ specifically. Many areas are still being actively investigated in the wake of the Trinity's resurgence. It is noteworthy that the doctrine is pretty universal in acceptance even though not always clear to those who agree. There is much work left to be done in both understanding the Trinity and helping others to have unity of conviction in this area. The current study will investigate how the ICOC adds to the discussion of the Trinity and how its cosmopolitan makeup affects what the church believes and practices. Many of the areas uncovered by this review will be directly studied by this survey with the desire to find strengths and weaknesses in the ICOC.

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<sup>82</sup> Walter Surdacki and Chris Gonzalez, 60-62.



## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction Reviewing Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine how the Trinity is understood among members of the ICOC and to find out how their members understanding of the Trinity compares to the biblical picture drawn from the scriptures. The study will examine both beliefs and how this affects prayer. The plan to accomplish this study is drawn out below.

### **Description of Methodology to be used**

The research will be conducted using two types of cross-sectional surveys. A questionnaire will be drawn up and completed by various members in the ICOC along with interviews of some of the top teachers in their family of Churches. The goal is to discover what does the average member know and believe about the three members of the Godhead and is this similar to what the scriptures teach.

### **Design of Study**

Interviews with key leaders will be conducted to get their picture of the theological view of the ICOC and its weaknesses. The questionnaire will be given to members in various congregations worldwide to get a picture of their beliefs and practices. The results of these surveys will be evaluated to get a result.

#### **A. Interviews with Key Leaders**

After a review of the literature on the history of the ICOC, a short list of key leaders will be drawn up. These leaders will be contacted for interviews and to answer open ended questions. These interviews will be conducted by phone or online. The interview will look at four different areas.

First, to discern the understanding of the ICOC position or belief of the Holy Trinity, they will be asked, “Is there a recognized belief in the ICOC on the doctrine of the Trinity?” This is not simply a yes or no question so their responses will be compared.

In order to see if there is any bias to their response the next question asked is, “What is your personal view (of the Holy Trinity)?” It may be that a strong or weak conviction regarding this doctrine may impact their thoughts regarding the ICOC.

The next question is, “What aspect (of the Holy Trinity) do you think is most important to our members?” The goal here is to discern if one aspect of the Trinity is more important and dominate than the others. This aspect could be one of the persons or a specific set of beliefs.

The follow up question is, “What aspects (of the Holy Trinity) do you think require more teaching in our churches?” This is a key question because the member’s questionnaire will also reveal this weakness. The point here is to ascertain if the teachers also see this weakness among their membership and also to what degree does this shortcoming exist.

The final question is a follow up to the second question. “Do you have any opinion about the subordination of Christ to the Father, eternal versus temporary?” This is a heated discussion among current writers and teachers. This will also reveal what the teacher’s position on the Trinity is and if it has be affected by the wider discussion going on today in the evangelical world.

### **Sample and Population**

Five leaders were selected for interviews. Each comes from a different region of the ICOC in North America. They are all current members of the ICOC who have a history of teaching and leading churches.

Dr. John M. Oakes received his PhD in chemical physics from the University of Colorado. He serves as a teacher in the ICOC and lives in San Diego. He is also the President of the Apologetics Research Society. He is the author of 9 books and teaches on apologetics.<sup>83</sup>

Dr. G. Steve Kinnard has served the New York City Church of Christ as an evangelist and teacher for more than 20 years. He has preached and taught the Bible on every continent. He received his undergraduate degree at Freed-Hardman College and his Master of Divinity with Languages degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest. He then completed his Doctor of Ministry degree from Drew University. He serves as Chairman for the ICOC's teachers service team.<sup>84</sup>

Dr. Douglas Jacoby has served as an evangelist and teacher in the ICOC. He currently lives in Atlanta. He received his Doctorate in Ministry (Christian Education) from Drew University. He is currently a member of the ICOC's teachers service team. He has written 30 books over many diverse biblical topics and has an international teaching ministry. He is also director of the International Teachers' seminar and Biblical Study Tour.<sup>85</sup>

Ed Anton is the Lead Evangelist of the Hampton Roads Church of Christ and serves as a teacher and leader of the American Commonwealth Regional Family of Churches in the ICOC. He is the author of a book on repentance and has taught internationally. He is also member of the ICOC teachers service team.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> John M. Oakes, "About Dr. John Oakes," Evidence for Christianity, last modified in 2015, accessed April 27, 2016, <http://evidenceforchristianity.org/>

<sup>84</sup> G. Steve Kinnard, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Newton, Massachusetts: IPI 2001) back cover; G. Steve Kinnard, "2015 ICOC Teachers Service Team Report," International Churches of Christ Leadership, last modified May 14, 2015, accessed April 29, 2016, <http://icocco-op.org/2015/04/14/2015-icoc-teachers-service-team-report/>

<sup>85</sup> Douglas Jacoby, "About," International Teaching Ministry of Douglas Jacoby, last modified in 2016, accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.douglasjacoby.com/>

<sup>86</sup> G. Steve Kinnard, "2015 ICOC Teachers Service Team Report"; "Contact information," Hampton Roads Church of Christ, accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.hamptonroadschurch.com/contacts/>

A brief consult was given by Steven Staten, a former Elder and teacher in the Chicago Church of Christ. He has received his Master's in Conflict Management from Lipscomb University and Master's in New Testament Theology from Wheaton College. He is currently the founder and conflict specialist for Bridging International.<sup>87</sup> He is also member of the ICOC teachers service team.<sup>88</sup>

### **Data Collection**

Each interview will have written responses to the questions. There may also be additional comments given during the interview. Once all interviews are conducted the notes will be collated and analyzed.

### **Data Analysis**

All the answers will be examined to see if any patterns emerge. Since every teacher comes from a different region in the United States, any pattern will point to a general consensus that exists among the ICOC in regard to the Trinity.

### **B. Questionnaire of Members**

The next step was to construct a questionnaire and use it to get answers from the average member of the ICOC. The questionnaire will have four different sections.

In order to get an accurate picture of what members of the ICOC believe, a survey questionnaire was created and given to members in many different parts of the world. This allowed the researcher to hear from the average member on topics regarding the trinity and get a better picture of what they believe on this subject. Surveys of this type, if done well, can give a more accurate picture than a true-or-false type survey. This type of survey can also paint a more

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<sup>87</sup> Stephen F. Staten, "About," Stephen Staten, last modified in 2016, Accessed April 27, 2016, <http://stephenfstaten.com/about>.

<sup>88</sup> G. Steve Kinnard, "2015 ICOC Teachers Service Team Report."

consistent picture than asking open response questions. Though open response can give a picture of what the respondent believes, trying to summarize the results can be difficult and even confusing.

Leedy and Ormrod's section on "Constructing and Administering a Questionnaire", was consulted in order to construct a survey for this study.<sup>89</sup> It was necessary to review this and other material to learn about surveys and how to best design a questionnaire to gather the information required.

The survey needed to cover four different areas. First, a general section for self-assessment is included. This would allow the person taking the survey to reveal how confident they feel about this topic and its general overview. The second section gets more specific information regarding a person's general knowledge of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. This was accomplished by breaking up the section into three smaller units and asking the respondent to answer questions regarding the members of the Godhead one at a time. This step will help discover whether people were more knowledgeable on one person of the Trinity than the others. This will also show where weaknesses are in the respondents beliefs about the persons of the Trinity. The third section of the survey was more practical. It was designed to ascertain how an individual's beliefs in the Trinity affected their prayer life. The fourth section gathers the demographics of those who took the survey. Since those taking the survey were intended to remain anonymous, this section allows for a better study of the data in order to make general conclusions.

Surveys need to be simple and concise. The survey was made to cover the front of a single page. The purpose of the survey was listed on the first line. It reads, "This survey will be used to

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<sup>89</sup> Paul Leedy, and Jeanne Ormrod. *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. (Boston: Pearson, 2013), 196-216

evaluate how members of our church understand the Trinity & its implications.” Additional comments could be written on the back of the survey.

Ratings were used to answer the survey questions. This allowed for the respondents opinion to be captured in a measureable way. The ratings used were: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Finally the option, N/A was added for the respondent to use if they were unsure about their opinion.

The surveys were conducted after church gatherings when people had time to fill them out. Only members of the ICOC were needed to fill out the surveys, so each respondent was asked to write out which church they were a member of. This allowed any non-ICOC members to be separated out after the surveys were taken. It also permitted the surveys to be done without offending any guests that happened to be at the church event. In every case, the surveys were handed out with very little direction. This was done to insure the surveys were answered honestly without any bias being introduced.

### **Questions**

The following is a closer look at the questions asked on the survey, the basis for the questions being asked and the information being gathered from them.

First, a series of general questions were asked. Question 1 was, “I have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity.” This question is a self-assessment given at the start of the survey to judge the respondents personal opinion of their understanding of the topic. As shown above, this doctrine is clearly taught and illustrated by the scriptures. The goal was to see how well people ranked themselves in their understanding. It will be determined whether the respondent’s opinion was valid based on the results of the rest of the survey. Question 2 was, “I believe understanding the Trinity helps you better know God.” This question shows if the respondent

understands that the Trinity is a detailed picture of God. Some people may believe that their knowledge of the Trinity is irrelevant to understanding who God is, but it has been shown earlier that the Trinity is the best description of who God is based on what the scriptures have revealed. This question will show if the respondent finds the Trinity important to understanding God better. Question 3 was, “I believe there is only one God.” This question determines if the respondent holds to a monotheistic view of God as laid out in these scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; Mark 12:29, 32; John 10:30). This is also a fundamental part of the Trinity. It is expected that most respondents answer this question by strongly agreeing, but it seemed necessary to ask and not assume. Question 4 was, “God has revealed Himself through the Father, Son & Holy Spirit.” This question seems to ask a lot of the respondent, but it discovers if the respondent holds to a Trinitarian view of God as laid out in these verses (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2). Again it is expected that the answers to this question will predominantly be strongly agree, but the survey will bear out the truth. Questions 3 and 4 are a simple definition of the Trinity as described earlier. The answers given here will help to determine if the respondent understands the general overview of the Holy Trinity. This concept is not taught as a whole to the members of the ICOC during their initial study series so the results will be examined to see if a consistent conviction is evident.

Next, the first person of the Trinity, God the Father, was specifically looked at. Question 5 was, “I believe the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son.” This question finds if the respondent understands that there is a separation between the Father and the Son as taught in the Bible. In the book of Matthew alone Jesus prays to the father twice (Matthew 11:25-26, 26:39, 42) and over a dozen times speaks of the father in third person as referring to another individual (Matthew 7:21, 10:32-33, 11:27, 12:50, 15:13, 16:27, 18:10, 19, 35, 20:23, 24:36, 26:29, 26:53).

This question will determine if confusion exists in the respondent's understanding of the two persons. Question 6 was, "I believe the Father sent and directed Jesus actions on Earth." This question finds if the respondent understands that Jesus was sent by the father (John 3:16) and does the will of the father alone (John 5:19, 30, 8:28, 9:4, 12:49, 14:10, 31). This is primarily a question that determines if the respondent understands the subordination of the Son to the Father. The Economy of the Trinity says that the Father is the planner and sender of salvation and the Son executes the will of the Father. Question 7 was, "I believe the Father is the planner of salvation." This question discovers if the respondent understands that the Father is the primary agent of the plan of Salvation. He is the planner and sender of the Son and the Spirit. This may seem to be unclear to the casual reader of the Bible, but the NT makes this point very clear (John 3:16; Ephesians 1:3-12). This question will determine how deeply the respondent understands the role of the Father. Question 8 was, "I believe the Father is the source of God's Kingdom." This question looks at the bigger picture of the father as being the source or origin of all things (1 Corinthians 8:6) and even refers to the Kingdom as the Father's (Matthew 6:32-33, 13:43, 26:29). Again this question discovers how deeply the respondent understands the nature of the Father as a member of the Trinity.

Next, the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Son was examined. Question 9 was, "I believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man." This could have been asked as two separate questions, but it seemed to work fine as a multiple question. The answer showed that the respondent believes that Jesus was both fully human and fully God at the same time. (Romans 1:3-4; Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 2:14). This question will examine how well the respondent understands basic Christology. Question 10 was, "I believe that Jesus was active in creation." This answer showed that the respondent knows that Jesus shows divinity through His actions in



creation (John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:3, 10). Jesus is also eternal as the Father is. This question will show if the respondent understands this. Question 11 was, “I believe that Jesus was active in the Old Testament.” The answer indicates that the respondent understands that as God, Jesus was present in the Old Testament and the connection between Jesus and the Angel of the Lord<sup>90</sup> spoken about often in the OT (Genesis 16:7-11; Numbers 22:22-35; Judge 6:11-12; 13:3-21). This question will reveal how deeply theological the respondent understands the nature of Jesus and His connection to the Old Testament, since this concept is not immediately obvious from scripture. Question 12 was, “I believe Jesus is lesser than God the Father in power.” This answer shows if the respondent holds to a less than divine picture of Jesus (John 10:30, 17:11; Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 2:14). This is the same as the Arian heresy of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. In the flesh Jesus submitted to the Father and did not fully reveal all His power, but this did not negate who He was as God nor diminish His power. This question is a bit tricky because the correct answer is negative. This would also show if someone were simply agreeing to everything without truly understanding what was being asked. Question 13 was, “I believe the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God.” This was a tough question because if the respondent does not know what discipleship is, this question could become meaningless. This concern is unnecessary however, because every member of the ICOC is required to study out what biblical discipleship is (Mark 1:16-17; Luke 9:57-62, 11:1, 14:26-33; John 13:35) and commit to living this way (Matthew 28:19-20) in order to become a member. The answer to this question shows that the respondent understands Jesus came to help people live a life in the Kingdom that obeys and pleases God (Matthew 16:24-25; Luke 9:23-25;

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<sup>90</sup> See Appendix article “Trinity research: Old Testament Trinity”

John 10:10). The answer given here helps to discern if the respondent understands the focus of Jesus teaching is discipleship.

Next, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit was examined. Question 14 was, “I believe the Spirit of God is active in the world today.” The answer shows that the respondent understands the active role the Holy Spirit takes in this time, the church age (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7-15; Acts 2:17-18; Romans 8:26-27). This question will reveal if the respondent sees the Spirit as working only in the past and not currently as the scriptures teach. Question 15 was, “I believe the Spirit was active in creation.” The answer shows that the respondent knows that the Spirit shows divinity through His actions in creation (Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; Psalm 33:6). This is important because the Spirit worked with the Father during creation and the two persons cannot be separated in this work. The respondents answer to this question shows if they understand the ontology of the Trinity, that the Spirit shares the same being with the Father as creator. Question 16 was, “I believe the Spirit was active in the Old Testament.” The answer shows that the respondent understands that the Spirit was also mentioned in the OT (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 14:6). Again, the Spirit is God and cannot be divorced from the works of God in either testament. The respondent’s answer to this question shows they understand that the Spirit is God and was active in the Bible from the very beginning. Question 17 was, “I believe the Spirit has very little to do with salvation.” This question has a bit of a bias with the word ‘very’ in it. This would have changed if the study was to be repeated. This question requires a negative response since the statement is untrue. The answer to this question shows that the respondent understands the role of the Spirit in the salvation of mankind (Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2; Galatians 6:8; Titus 3:5). Question 18 was, “I believe that repentance is a primary role of the Spirit.” The answer determines if the respondent understands the central role the Spirit plays in repentance

(John 16:8-11; Zechariah 12:10). This is another work of the Spirit done during this age, but is rarely highlighted in churches today. The results of this question will show if the respondent knows the connection between the Holy Spirit and repentance. Question 19 was, “I believe the Church today is gifted as the Spirit directs.” The answer shows that the respondent understands that the Spirit gives gifts to the church today (1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 1 Peter 4). Again this is a major role of the Spirit at work in the church during this age. These last few questions will show how much the respondent understands how the Spirit is still at work in the church today to shape and direct it to do the will of the Father.

The next section of the survey looked at prayers including the three persons of the Trinity. These questions take a look at the prayer patterns of the respondent to the members of the Trinity. The following statements don’t ask if the prayers were directed to the Father, Son or Holy Spirit, but were they referenced in prayer. Each statement was given a few ways to respond: always, occasionally, rarely and never. Biblically the persons of the Trinity should be referenced regularly in prayer. The goal was to determine how much the persons of the Trinity were on the mind of most people. Question 20 says, “I reference God the Father in Prayer.” In Scripture this is the most common type of prayer found. The goal was to discover how significant Statement 21 was, “I reference Jesus Christ in Prayer.” Jesus is frequently cited in NT prayers. Statement 22 was, “I reference the Holy Spirit in Prayer.” The Holy Spirit is also cited often in NT prayers.

### **Demographics**

The following information was gathered so that the data could be further analyzed to discover any patterns or trends. This is the rationale for the information gathered.

The first task was to find out how many years the respondent has been a disciple in the church. This is important because over the years, the emphasis on teaching in the church has been different. Initially the ICOC was very much like the Church of Christ in its teaching with an emphasis on knowing the Bible and baptism. The focus also had an emphasis on the book of Acts and studies to convert potential members.<sup>91</sup> Over the years, the ICOC has tried to do a better job teaching the members and ministry staff deeper theology, though not in a systematic way.<sup>92</sup> Collecting this demographic also allows the researcher to determine how longevity in the church has affected the beliefs of the members in the church. Those under a year are considered baby Christians whose beliefs may be the least accurate, those who are 3-5 year members are spiritual adolescences, those who are 6-10 year members are spiritual teens and those who are 10-19 year members are spiritual adults. Anyone who has been in the church 20 years or more can date their conversions back to a time when the ICOC was a much smaller group and the teaching was more concentrated. It would be a surprise if this group was unable to identify the correct beliefs of Trinitarian doctrine. It is also a goal to see if the number of years a respondent has been a member of the ICOC is a better determinate of what their beliefs concerning the Trinity will ultimately be.

The next demographic classified which ministry does the respondent most closely identify themselves with. In the ICOC the four classic ministries are the Teens, Campus, Singles and Marrieds. It was decided to include a fifth category, Seniors, in order to see if that was also a factor in what the respondent believes. Seniors may be single or married but since they are separated from the other categories this will help clarify the results. Anyone self-identified as a

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<sup>91</sup> C. Foster Stanback, 50.

<sup>92</sup> Kip McKean, "Revolution Through Restoration II: The Twentieth Century Church." *Upside Down* 3, no 11 (Aug 1994): 21.

senior would have spent many years outside the ICOC and this might affect what they believe now about the Trinity. These five categories will allow the researcher to determine if any ministry has a better understanding of the Trinity than the others or if this factor does not affect that belief in any significant way.

Each respondent was then asked, “Which Church are you currently a member of?” This was done to sort out any non-ICOC members from the database. This was also done because the surveys were given during regular worship services. These services always have a number of guests and family members in attendance. It was unnecessary to alienate guests who might be present when the surveys were being conducted by asking them to not participate. This solution allowed them to feel included if they wanted to be. This question also helped to sort the data by churches when the surveys were given in assemblies where a number of different churches were represented.

The final two questions were asked to understand if the respondent was ever a minister in the ICOC or currently a minister in the ICOC. The ministry staff has been exposed to greater teaching due to minister retreats and classes. There is a great focus now in the ICOC in training ministers to have a deep grasp of scripture. This question allows the researcher to examine how the typical respondent compared to those who were in the ministry. This will also allow the researcher to discover if there is a difference in views between former and current ministers in the ICOC.

The decision was made to not look at the gender or ethnic background of the respondents because it was assumed that these demographics would have no bearing on the results gathered. While it is true that classes for men and women often occur during conferences and midweek classes, this does not impact the theology taught or accepted by these differences. The members

of the ICOC are never divided by ethnic backgrounds for teaching. This also factored into why these demographics were not asked or examined during this study.

The final line of the survey reads as follows, “Please provide any additional comments about the Trinity on the back.” It is understood that any other comments would only be written by a very motivated respondent. These comments were solicited to see what other comments would be mentioned by ICOC members. This was also asked because the survey had no open response questions and it was thought that this might generate additional ideas not included in the rest of the survey.

### **Limitations and Weaknesses**

The ICOC is an international fellowship of churches that stretches all around the world. Every year, new churches are being started mostly on foreign soil. Due to time and financial constraints, it was impossible to survey every member of the ICOC to get the accurate picture of what their membership believes and how they practice their faith in regard to the Holy Trinity. It is therefore necessary to sample the membership broadly in order to get a sense of what they believe. Due to sampling, the results will only be accurate to a degree.

The survey being used is a closed questionnaire. Though this will allow for easier analysis, an open questionnaire would allow for great freedom of response.<sup>93</sup> It was decided that an open survey may not be focused enough to make general conclusions of the ICOC and the topic being studied has some very clear portions that can be easily surveyed to discern what ICOC members believe and which areas are in need of greater teaching.

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<sup>93</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Edwin L. Simpson, *A Guide to Research for Educators and Trainers of Adults 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1995) 146.

## Population and Sample

The population size is needed to determine how many samples (returned surveys) are needed to make general conclusions about the data gathered from the surveys. The population of the ICOC membership in 2013 was about 102,230 members in 650 churches located in 151 countries.<sup>94</sup> To determine the number of samples needed, a sample size calculator was used. This is based on the following formula:<sup>95</sup>

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 * (p) * (1-p)}{C^2}$$

Where:

Z = Z value

(e.g. 1.96 for 95% confidence level)

p = percentage picking a choice, expressed as decimal  
(.5 used for sample size needed)

c = confidence interval, expressed as decimal  
(e.g., .04 = ±4)

The explanation of these terms was given as follows:

The **confidence interval** (also called margin of error) is the plus-or-minus figure usually reported in newspaper or television opinion poll results. For example, if you use a confidence interval of 4 and 47% percent of your sample picks an answer you can be "sure" that if you had asked the question of the entire relevant population between 43% (47-4) and 51% (47+4) would have picked that answer.

The **confidence level** tells you how sure you can be. It is expressed as a percentage and represents how often the true percentage of the population who would pick an answer lies within the confidence interval. The 95% confidence level means you can be 95% certain; the 99% confidence level means you can be 99% certain. Most researchers use the 95% confidence level.

When you put the confidence level and the confidence interval together, you can say that you are 95% sure that the true percentage of the population is between 43% and 51%.

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<sup>94</sup> 2015ICOC Survey Summary and Analysis, Roger Lamb to ICOC delegates, February 23, 2016.

<sup>95</sup> "Sample Size Formula," Creative Research Systems, Research Aids, last modified in 2012, accessed April 4, 2016, <http://www.surveysystem.com/sample-size-formula.htm>.

The wider the confidence interval you are willing to accept, the more certain you can be that the whole population answers would be within that range.<sup>96</sup>

The goal for this research was using a population of 102,230, to attain a confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 5. This results in a sample size of at least 383. The following churches were sampled in this study during the 2013 calendar year: The Louisville Church of Christ with a membership of 160, The Cincinnati Church of Christ in Ohio with a membership of 330, the Lexington Church of Christ with a membership of 50, The Kanawha Valley Church of Christ in Charleston, West Virginia with a membership of 30, the Columbus Church of Christ in Ohio with a membership of 129 and the Cleveland Church of Christ in Ohio with a membership of 117.<sup>97</sup> Non USA Churches sampled: The Sydney Church of Christ in Australia with a membership of 150 and the Port Moresby Church of Christ in Papua New Guinea with a membership of 90.

Comparisons of survey results will be made using the Chi-squared test from the excel spreadsheet:<sup>98</sup>

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(A_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

where:

$A_{ij}$  = actual frequency in the i-th row, j-th column

$E_{ij}$  = expected frequency in the i-th row, j-th column

r = number of rows

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<sup>96</sup> "Sample Size Calculator," Creative Research Systems, Research Aids, last modified in 2012, accessed April 4, 2016, [www.surveysystem.com/sscala.htm](http://www.surveysystem.com/sscala.htm).

<sup>97</sup> "ACR Membership," Google Doc, last Modified December 2015, accessed May 1, 2016, <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1QUYo9TfM4OyGPhPu5is1Kkw3OnjPQz4p1VX1OEJlca>.

<sup>98</sup> Excel Online, CHISQ.TEST function



$c$  = number of columns

The function is used to produce a value from 0% to 100%. Any value above 90% is considered to be strongly linked. The goal will be to make comparisons to determine if changes in demographics are strongly linked to changes in survey values.

### **Measures Used**

The survey developed was used in every case. Care was taken to not alter anything in the wording or presentation of the survey. The goal was to create a consistent process that did not vary even when the survey was taken by members in other countries who may be fluent in other languages. Care was taken not to translate the questions which could introduce bias in the survey nor to give background behind why the survey was being given or which results were favored. The survey was designed to have both negative and positive answers to avoid someone marking the same answer to each question.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted in June of 2013 in the city of Cincinnati. The group consisted of 2 singles and 13 campus students from the following churches: Cincinnati, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Roanoke, Virginia; Lexington, Kentucky; and NOVA, Virginia. This group was given the same directions that were later given to other churches, but in addition they were asked about the questions used on the survey to determine if they were clear and made sense to the reader. The returned surveys showed that the directions were easy to follow. No one asked any questions regarding how to fill them out. All the surveys were completely filled out by all the participants in less than 15 minutes. There were a few problems encountered. First, when people made corrections to their initial response, it required them marking out the wrong response. This meant that the correct answer needed to be interpreted if they filled in 2 or more circles. This

could be a problem, but did not seem important enough to change the survey. The correct answer was made clear by the respondent. Another problem was a respondent circling more than one ministry they were currently in. Again this required a simple solution. Many singles members currently serve in the campus or teen ministry. Given this option they are only counted as Singles. The same procedure would be used for a respondent who might circle Marrieds and Seniors. This is understood as many older married couples would like to reflect both their age and their marital status in this way. It was decided that these members will be counted as marrieds. One survey taker had a question about line 11 on the survey. This question could possibly be reworded. Upon reflection it was decided to keep the wording initially used because it would show if the respondent knows that Jesus was involved with Old Testament events or not. This type of confusion, showing a lack of understanding around the work and person of the Son, is exactly what the survey is looking to discover. Finally, one respondent added and filled in another option for how many years they had been a disciple. The survey listed >1 as an option, but they wrote <1 and filled it in. Again it was clearly understood what the respondent was trying to indicate and counted accordingly. <1 would indicate that the respondent had been a disciple for longer than a year. This meant they should be in the second category labeled 1-2 years. The survey received positive feedback regarding the topic of study and one person wrote this on the back of the survey. After conducting this test, the researcher felt confident that the survey could be presented to members and they could quickly fill it out and make their opinions known.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

For most of the sampling done, i.e. Louisville, Cincinnati, Lexington, Charleston, Sydney, Port Moresby, a worship setting after the entire church had gathered was chosen. This was typically done after a Wednesday midweek service, though on one occasion, Charleston, WV,

the surveys were taken after a Sunday service. The surveys were passed out to the members and only the slightest directions were given before having the members fill out the survey. No time limit was given and no general questions were fielded from the crowd. The finished surveys were then all turned back in. No one was asked for their name, nor was anyone allowed to find their survey and change any answers once the surveys were returned by the members. A few of the surveys were also given to members in congregations that could not be visited due to financial and time constraints. The surveys were made available at a conference in Orlando, Florida to be taken and filled out by members and later returned to the same place. Some surveys were emailed to members and later returned filled out. Again names were not collected nor were any surveys allowed to be tampered with.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

### Presentation of Data

#### A. Interviews with Key Leaders

The teachers were all very eager to answer questions on the Trinity. On the first question, “Is there a recognized belief in the ICOC on the doctrine of the Trinity?” Dr. Kinnard answered, “Yes.”<sup>99</sup> Dr. Oakes wrote,

No, there is not. There is an unstated assumption that the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds are accurate, but churches of Christ [CoC] generally do not acknowledge non-inspired creedal statements, so the CoC has tended to not take public positions on the details of the Trinity. This has been true of the ICOC as well. Add to this, there is the fact that ICOC/CoC are vastly more concerned with doctrinal than theological matters, which is why neither members of the CoC, nor members of the ICOC are generally clamoring for a statement on the Trinity.”<sup>100</sup>

Dr. Jacoby responded,

I represented the ICOC at the World Council of Church in 1998. Members have to be Trinitarian. We qualified, yet this is not to say that all members have a uniform view.<sup>101</sup>

Mr. Anton answered,

Although stated differently from church to church (and from teacher to teacher), the recognized belief can be summed up as one God of one essence/substance in three persons or personalities.<sup>102</sup>

Finally Mr. Staten responded,

There is not a statement about the Trinity in any formal document. However, the underlying tenets of the Trinity have been with the churches all along [i.e.] deity of Christ.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> G. Steve Kinnard, interview by author online, February 10, 2016.

<sup>100</sup> John M. Oakes, interview by author online, February 10, 2016.

<sup>101</sup> Douglas Jacoby, interview by author online, December 30, 2013.

<sup>102</sup> Edward Anton, interview by author online, October 29, 2013.

<sup>103</sup> Steve Staten, interview by author online, February 17, 2016.

Only Dr. Kinnard responded with an unqualified yes. All the others responded with explanations which suggest no formally binding acceptance of the doctrine by churches or members of the ICOC as a whole. Dr. Oakes links this to the CoC from which the ICOC has its roots. Dr. Jacoby further elaborates that the restoration movement which gave birth to the CoC has a general fear of the Pentecostal movement which is high on Holy Spirit theology. Because the restoration movement has what he calls a reactionary posture towards things of the Spirit. They don't use the word Trinity even going as far as editing the word from popular hymns like Holy, Holy, Holy.<sup>104</sup> These responses suggest the ICOC has no firm conviction in this area.

The second question was asked to see if there was any person bias from the teachers themselves. They were each asked what their personal view is. Dr. Kinnard responded, "I believe in the Trinity."<sup>105</sup> Dr. Oakes giving more detail wrote,

I believe that Jesus is fully God and fully human—that he is God-in-the-flesh (John 1:14), is uncreated, and that he became flesh, taking the nature of a man. I would use Philippians 2:6-8 and John 1:1-18 (and others, of course) to establish my view of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is also God. He can be grieved, so he is a "person." We are baptized in his name, as well as in the name of the Son and the Father. So, like the Son, the Holy Spirit is God/deity, yet is a person who can be separately identified from either the Son or the Father. It is when human beings try to logically work out all the details of exactly how this works that we get in trouble, so I prefer to leave the details, to some extent, as a mystery.<sup>106</sup>

Dr. Jacoby wrote, "I think the Trinity is a good model. [It] makes sense of the scriptures."<sup>107</sup> Mr. Anton responded, "I personally hold to this view, but I wrestle with the idea that there appears to be a first among equals in this unity of three persons."<sup>108</sup> It seems that the Father has a predominate place in his mind. Finally Mr. Staten wrote, "I don't like an over-reliance on a

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<sup>104</sup> Douglas Jacoby, "The Trinity," in *Our God is an Awesome God*.

<sup>105</sup> G. Steve Kinnard, interview by author.

<sup>106</sup> John M. Oakes, interview by author.

<sup>107</sup> Douglas Jacoby, interview by author.

<sup>108</sup> Edward Anton, interview by author.

word that has confused people. I prefer to focus on the tenets.”<sup>109</sup> It seems that every teacher has a conviction that the main points of Trinitarian doctrine are correct and they hold to this view personally even if some aspects are not fully settled in their minds.

The next question asked was, “What aspect (of the Trinity) do you think is most important to our members?” The follow up question was, “Which aspect do you think requires more teaching in our churches?” Dr. Kinnard answer the first question,

I believe our members are Christocentric in their thinking. Therefore, they enjoy the realization that God was willing to come to the earth in Jesus and demonstrate to humanity the character and nature of God. They look to Jesus in order to understand who God is.

His response to the follow up was,

I feel like we are inept in our teaching and focus on the Spirit, especially the positive aspects of the Spirit and how he helps us in our daily Christian walk. I also think that although most of our members would say they believe in the Trinity, few would be able to explain what that means or why it is important.<sup>110</sup>

Dr. Oakes answered both questions saying,

This is a hard question to answer. Different members have different needs.

1. We have fairly simple members who will not be affected in any way whatsoever by what we teach in the nature of the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit. They have simple faith and simple hearts (relatively) and they will do just fine even if we do not discuss the details of theology or the trinity at all.
2. We also have a small number of quite intellectual members who will be affected by the intellectual/theological/philosophical questions surrounding this question.
3. Then there is the vast majority who will be affected principally by how the idea of the trinity affects their concept of their personal relationship with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit.

No single answer to this question is sufficient ... I suggest that we be “prepared to answer” the questions of group #2, but we do not need to spend a large amount of time addressing this in sermons and classes (not zero, but also not a lot). The question which ... is most important to address are those for people in category #3. In other words, our people need to know who Jesus is. They need to know who the Holy Spirit is. What is the nature of our relationship with the Holy Spirit? What is the nature of our relationship to the Father and to his Son? ... The same can be said about Jesus. We just spent an entire year focusing on Jesus. Obviously, how Jesus fits in the trinity was not the first

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<sup>109</sup> Steve Staten, interview by author.

<sup>110</sup> G. Steve Kinnard, interview by author.

subject, but this was a time to talk about the meaning of sonship, the submission of the Son to the Father, the fact that God became flesh, and the fact that Jesus purposefully limited this power at least temporarily. We should present the Jesus of the gospels, but also the Jesus of Revelation.<sup>111</sup>

Dr. Jacoby was unsure how to answer the initial question but responded to the follow up question by writing, “Teaching on the trinity has so many implications, for relationships, appreciation of the uniqueness of the Christian God, etc.”<sup>112</sup> Mr. Anton’s answer to the aspect most important to our members was,

God is community; God loves and expects community (koinonia). Plus, Jesus sovereignly lowered himself to incarnation for his great rescue of us on earth (Phil 2). We should not confuse his temporary enfleshment (and the statement that he makes about his dependence on the Father while on earth) as rebuff against his divine nature.

When asked what aspect requires more teaching he responded, “Both an affirmation of the Holy Spirit’s divine nature as well clarifying Jesus’ temporary and sovereign humbling of himself for us on earth.”<sup>113</sup> Finally, Mr. Staten felt that the most important aspect is, “The deity of Christ and his role in creation.” Further, his response to which aspect required more teaching was, “The Holy Spirit is overlooked or often distorted.”<sup>114</sup> It seems that the teachers believe many aspects of the Trinity are important to members of the ICOC. The most consistent answer was the members understanding of Jesus as man and divine in their salvation and relationship to God. There was strong agreement that the aspect which requires more teaching was on the Holy Spirit and His work with secondary emphasis on Jesus nature and work. The role and work of the Father is conspicuously absent from all the responses.

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<sup>111</sup> John M. Oakes, interview by author.

<sup>112</sup> Douglas Jacoby, interview by author.

<sup>113</sup> Edward Anton, interview by author.

<sup>114</sup> Steve Staten, interview by author.

The final question was meant to be a follow up on the second question. They were asked if they had any opinion about the subordination of Christ to the Father, was it ether eternal or temporary. Dr. Kinnard responded,

I believe that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. I believe he was willing to take on human flesh and the weaknesses and limitations of the flesh for a time (as he lived in time on the earth) in order to demonstrate to the world the full nature of God's agape love for humanity.<sup>115</sup>

Dr. Oakes wrote,

My opinion is that the Bible is correct on this topic. Matthew 24:36, Philippians 2:6 (interpreted correctly), Hebrews 2:8-9 and 1 Cor 11:3 are good enough for me, although I could quote many more. The Son submits to the Father, both while here on the earth and in heaven. I believe that John 12:49 is true in heaven and on earth. The quantitative nature of this submission may change in heaven, for all I know, but the submission itself will remain in place. The level of his lowliness was greater while here on the earth, but the absolute position did not change. Like a wife to a husband (although not a perfect analogy.... Paul uses it in 1 Cor 11), the Son is equal to the Father (Phil 2:6), but is nevertheless in submission to him. The temple/tabernacle is a picture of the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit. The Father takes the preeminent position, with the Son on the right and the Holy Spirit on the left. I believe that in broad terms this is a picture of the reality in heaven (Hebrews 8:5).<sup>116</sup>

Dr. Jacoby responded, "Whatever subordination there may be, 1 Cor 15 and Phil 2 seem to teach that there will be none at the end of time."<sup>117</sup> Mr. Anton wrote,

I am still wrestling with the idea that the Trinitarian formula should allow for "a first among equals" distinction. I still see this "first among equals" in the glorified, risen Christ in relation to the Father."<sup>118</sup>

Finally, Mr. Staten responded, "Christ, while he was in the flesh, modeled submission to those of us who never experience equality with God." This seemed to suggest that submission is temporary. He followed up on this by adding, "[The] main passages of Jesus' divinity: John 1:1,

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<sup>115</sup> G. Steve Kinnard, interview by author.

<sup>116</sup> John M. Oakes, interview by author.

<sup>117</sup> Douglas Jacoby, interview by author.

<sup>118</sup> Edward Anton, interview by author.



chapters 8 and 10, Philippians 2:55, Colossians 2:9ff, Hebrews 1:8ff. This stresses Jesus as divine and one with the Father.”<sup>119</sup> These responses show that the majority of teachers believe that subordination is temporary. Dr. Oakes thinks that the submission continues with the possibility of change in some small way in heaven. Mr. Anton leaves room for the fuzzy concept of “first among equals” when speaking of the relationship between the Father and the Son. The answers to this question referenced scripture the most but seemed to suggest that this may be an area that requires further study.

### **Summary**

The teachers, for the most part, believe in the Trinity. Though the church has no binding conviction regarding this doctrine, it is considered an orthodox belief. The work and role of Jesus seems most important for the members to know. The nature and role of the Holy Spirit needs more teaching to correct error and educate the membership. They implicitly suggest that the teaching of the Father is not an area of major concern. The majority believe the subordination of the Son to the Father will cease in heaven.

### **B. Questionnaire of members**

The total number of surveys collected was 419. After collection, all of the results of the surveys were entered into an excel spreadsheet. Care was taken to enter each church into a separate page. The spreadsheet allowed for the data to be sorted by the demographics given. This was also done to make analysis easier.

### **Demographics**

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<sup>119</sup> Steve Staten, interview by author.

### Category of Respondents

With 419 total surveys submitted, 406 indicated how long they had been members of the ICOC. 62 respondents have been members less than a year. 53 respondents have been members from 1 through 2 years, 43 respondents have been members from 3 to 5 years. 34 respondents have been members from 5 to 10 years, 115 respondents have been members from 10 through 19 years. 99 respondents have been members 20 years or more. This also gives a breakdown for the percentage of members by length of membership in the ICOC. 15% were members for less than a year, 13% were members from 1 to 2 years, 11% were members from 3 to 5 years, 8% were members from 6 to 10 years, 28% were members from 11 to 19 years and 24% were members for 20 years or more.

With 419 surveys submitted, 405 indicated which ministry the respondents most identified themselves being. 80 respondents identified with the Teen or high school ministry. 64 respondents identified with the Campus ministry. 68 respondents identified with the Singles or unmarried ministry. 181 respondents identified with the Marrieds ministry. 12 respondents identified with the Seniors ministry. This gives a breakdown for the ministries of the ICOC as follows: 20% of the members are in the Teen ministry, 16% of the members are in the Campus ministry, 17% of the members are in the Singles ministry, 45% of the members are in the Marrieds ministry and 3% of the members are in the Seniors ministry.

With 419 total surveys, 47 respondents indicated that they had been a minister in the ICOC church at some point. This represents 11% of the respondents. 22 respondents indicated that they were current working in the church as ministers. This represents 5% of the respondents

## Location of Respondents

Data was collected from the following cities: Louisville, Kentucky (81); Columbus, Ohio (82); Sydney, Australia (105); Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (39); Charleston, West Virginia (18); Cleveland, Ohio (17); Cincinnati, Ohio (38); Dayton, Ohio (3); Detroit, Michigan (2); Indianapolis, Indiana (2); Roanoke, Virginia (3); Melbourne, Australia (2); Orlando, Florida (3); Hampton Roads, Virginia (2); Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1); Denver, Colorado (1); Coimbatore, India (3); Erode, India (1); NOVA, Virginia (3), New York, New York (1); Zagreb, Croatia (2); Lexington, Kentucky (7); Boston, Massachusetts (1). Only 2 of the 419 respondents did not indicate their location.

## Survey Results

The following numbers are the raw data from the surveys collected. The results to each question is listed in a table along with the number and percentage of respondents who answered each rating. This allows for general conclusions to be made regarding the entire ICOC. Later this data will be broken down by nationality and demographics.

*Table 1. Raw Data Question #1*

Question #1	Raw Data (410 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	125	30.49%
Agreed	211	51.46%
Undecided	33	8.05%
Disagreed	34	8.29%
Strongly Disagreed	7	1.71%

Question #1 was: I have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Of the 410 respondents who answered this question, 81.95% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 10% disagreed.

*Table 2. Raw Data Question #2*

Question #2	Raw Data (414 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	247	59.66%
Agreed	142	34.30%
Undecided	23	5.56%
Disagreed	2	0.48%
Strongly Disagreed	0	0.00%

Question #2 was: I believe understanding the Trinity helps you better know God. Of the 414 respondents who answered this question, 93.96% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 0.48% disagreed.

*Table 3. Raw Data Question #3*

Question #3	Raw Data (416 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	391	93.99%
Agreed	19	4.57%
Undecided	4	0.96%
Disagreed	1	0.24%
Strongly Disagreed	1	0.24%

Question #3 was: I believe there is only one God. Of the 416 respondents who answered this question, 98.56% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 0.48% disagreed.

Table 4. Raw Data Question #4

Question #4	Raw Data (415 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	369	88.92%
Agreed	38	9.16%
Undecided	7	1.69%
Disagreed	0	0.00%
Strongly Disagreed	1	0.24%

Question #4 was: God has revealed Himself through the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Of the 415 respondents who answered this question, 98.08% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 0.24% disagreed.

Table 5. Raw Data Question #5

Question #5	Raw Data (411 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	222	54.01%
Agreed	96	23.36%
Undecided	28	6.81%
Disagreed	33	8.03%
Strongly Disagreed	32	7.79%

Question #5 was: I believe the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son. Of the 410 respondents who answered this question, 77.37% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 15.82% disagreed.

Table 6. Raw Data Question #6

Question #6	Raw Data (415 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	309	74.46%
Agreed	82	19.76%
Undecided	13	3.13%
Disagreed	7	1.69%
Strongly Disagreed	4	0.96%

Question #6 was: I believe the Father sent and directed Jesus actions on Earth. Of the 415 respondents who answered this question, 94.22% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 2.65% disagreed.

Table 7. Raw Data Question #7

Question #7	Raw Data (414 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	343	82.85%
Agreed	55	13.29%
Undecided	10	2.42%
Disagreed	3	0.72%
Strongly Disagreed	3	0.72%

Question #7 was: I believe the Father is the planner of salvation. Of the 414 respondents who answered this question, 96.14% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 1.44% disagreed.

Table 8. Raw Data Question #8

Question #8	Raw Data (409 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	308	75.31%
Agreed	68	16.63%
Undecided	22	5.38%
Disagreed	8	1.96%
Strongly Disagreed	3	0.73%

Question #8 was: I believe the Father is the source of God’s Kingdom. Of the 409 respondents who answered this question, 91.94% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 2.69% disagreed.

Table 9. Raw Data Question #9

Question #9	Raw Data (414 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	308	74.40%
Agreed	65	15.70%
Undecided	27	6.52%
Disagreed	9	2.17%
Strongly Disagreed	5	1.21%

Question #9 was: I believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man. Of the 414 respondents who answered this question, 90.10% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 3.38% disagreed.

Table 10. Raw Data Question #10

Question #10	Raw Data (415 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	284	68.43%
Agreed	74	17.83%
Undecided	37	8.92%
Disagreed	14	3.37%
Strongly Disagreed	6	1.45%

Question #10 was: I believe that Jesus was active in creation. Of the 410 respondents who answered this question, 86.26% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 4.82% disagreed.

Table 11. Raw Data Question #11

Question #11	Raw Data (407 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	208	51.11%
Agreed	97	23.83%
Undecided	54	13.27%
Disagreed	32	7.86%
Strongly Disagreed	16	3.93%

Question #11 was: I believe that Jesus was active in the Old Testament. Of the 407 respondents who answered this question, 74.94% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 11.79% disagreed.



Table 12. Raw Data Question #12

Question #12	Raw Data (415 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	47	11.33%
Agreed	55	13.25%
Undecided	44	10.60%
Disagreed	126	30.36%
Strongly Disagreed	143	34.46%

Question #12 was: I believe Jesus is lesser than God the Father in power. Of the 415 respondents who answered this question, 24.58% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 64.86% disagreed.

Table 13. Raw Data Question #13

Question #13	Raw Data (402 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	194	48.26%
Agreed	116	28.86%
Undecided	65	16.17%
Disagreed	22	5.47%
Strongly Disagreed	5	1.24%

Question #13 was: I believe the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God. Of the 402 respondents who answered this question, 77.12% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 6.71% disagreed.

Table 14. Raw Data Question #14

Question #14	Raw Data (416 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	337	81.01%
Agreed	67	16.11%
Undecided	7	1.68%
Disagreed	4	0.96%
Strongly Disagreed	1	0.24%

Question #14 was: I believe the Spirit of God is active in the world today. Of the 416 respondents who answered this question, 97.12% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 1.2% disagreed.

Table 15. Raw Data Question #15

Question #15	Raw Data (414 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	293	70.77%
Agreed	70	16.91%
Undecided	35	8.45%
Disagreed	14	3.38%
Strongly Disagreed	2	0.48%

Question #15 was: I believe the Spirit was active in creation. Of the 414 respondents who answered this question, 87.68% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 3.86% disagreed.

Table 16. Raw Data Question #16

Question #16	Raw Data (414 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	301	72.71%
Agreed	73	17.63%
Undecided	20	4.83%
Disagreed	16	3.86%
Strongly Disagreed	4	0.97%

Question #16 was: I believe the Spirit was active in the Old Testament. Of the 414 respondents who answered this question, 90.34% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 4.83% disagreed.

Table 17. Raw Data Question #17

Question #17	Raw Data (407 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	11	2.70%
Agreed	10	2.46%
Undecided	16	3.93%
Disagreed	81	19.90%
Strongly Disagreed	289	71.01%

Question #17 was: I believe the Spirit has very little to do with salvation. Of the 407 respondents who answered this question, 5.16% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 90.91% disagreed.

Table 18. Raw Data Question #18

Question #18	Raw Data (407 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	122	29.98%
Agreed	135	33.17%
Undecided	63	15.48%
Disagreed	63	15.48%
Strongly Disagreed	24	5.90%

Question #18 was: I believe that repentance is a primary role of the Spirit. Of the 407 respondents who answered this question, 63.15% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 21.38% disagreed.

Table 19. Raw Data Question #19

Question #19	Raw Data (404 Responses)	Percent
Strongly Agreed	177	43.81%
Agreed	141	34.90%
Undecided	65	16.09%
Disagreed	17	4.21%
Strongly Disagreed	4	0.99%

Question #19 was: I believe the Church today is gifted as the Spirit directs. Of the 404 respondents who answered this question, 78.71% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 5.2% disagreed.

Table 20. Raw Data Question #20

Question #20	Raw Data (415 Responses)	Percent
Always	369	88.92%
Occasionally	39	9.40%
Rarely	6	1.45%
Never	1	0.24%

Question #20 was: I reference God the Father in Prayer. Of the 415 respondents who answered this question, 88.92% of the respondents always agreed with the statement compared with the 9.4% that occasionally agreed, 1.45% who rarely agreed and 0.24% who never agreed to the statement.

Table 21. Raw Data Question #21

Question #21	Raw Data (416 Responses)	Percent
Always	308	74.04%
Occasionally	89	21.39%
Rarely	17	4.09%
Never	2	0.48%

Question #21 was: I reference Jesus Christ in Prayer. Of the 416 respondents who answered this question, 74.04% of the respondents always agreed with the statement compared with the 21.39% that occasionally agreed, 4.095% who rarely agreed and 0.48% who never agreed to the statement.

Table 22. Raw Data Question #22

Question #22	Raw Data (412 Responses)	Percent
Always	96	23.30%
Occasionally	175	42.48%
Rarely	115	27.91%
Never	26	6.31%

Question #22 was: I reference the Holy Spirit in Prayer. Of the 412 respondents who answered this question, 23.30% of the respondents always agreed with the statement compared with the 42.48% that occasionally agreed, 27.91% who rarely agreed and 6.31% who never agreed to the statement.

#### Detailed Analysis

The confidence intervals calculated below come from the survey website.<sup>120</sup> The first category, the general questions, proved to be strongly supportive of the biblical truths behind them. Question #1 was agreed to by nearly 82% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $82\% \pm 3.7\%$  of ICOC members believe they have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. This is surprising since this doctrine is not taught systematically to the general membership.

Question #2 was agreed to by 94% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $94\% \pm 2.3\%$  of ICOC members believe that a better understanding of the Trinity helps a person to better know God. This shows they understand that the Trinity is the best

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<sup>120</sup> Creative Research Systems, Research Aids, "Sample Size Calculator," accessed April 4, 2016, [www.surveysystem.com/sscala.htm](http://www.surveysystem.com/sscala.htm)

description theologically of the nature of God. The deeper one can know and understand this doctrine, the more they can understand God Himself.

Question #3 was agreed to by 99% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $99\% \pm 1\%$  of ICOC members believe that there is only one God. This reflects the monotheism of Christianity in general and the ICOC specifically. This was also the strongest result of any of the questions.

Question #4 was agreed to by 98% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $98\% \pm 1.3\%$  of ICOC members believe that God has revealed Himself through the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is a very strong result for this question.

The second category of questions deal with beliefs regarding the Father. Question #5 was agreed to by 77% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $77\% \pm 4.1\%$  of ICOC members believe that the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son. This shows they understand that the Father and the Son are two different persons.

Question #6 was agreed to by 74% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $74\% \pm 4.2\%$  of ICOC members believe that the Father sent and directed Jesus actions while He was here on earth. Jesus shared this truth in the gospel of John.

Question #7 was agreed to by 96% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $96\% \pm 1.9\%$  of ICOC members believe that the Father is the planner of salvation. This is His economical role in the Trinity.

Question #8 was agreed to by 91% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $91\% \pm 2.8\%$  of ICOC members believe that the Father is the source of God's Kingdom. Again this is His economical role in the Trinity.

The third category of questions is pertaining to beliefs that relate with the Son, Jesus Christ. Question #9 was agreed to by 90% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $90\% \pm 2.9\%$  of ICOC members believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man. This is a key component of Christology.

Question #10 was agreed to by 86% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $86\% \pm 3.3\%$  of ICOC members believe that Jesus was active in the creation. This shows they understand that Jesus, as the Son, was an active agent in creation.

Question #11 was agreed to by 75% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $75\% \pm 4.2\%$  of ICOC members believe that Jesus was active in the Old Testament. This shows their members understand the concept of the pre-incarnate Christ.

Question #12 was disagreed to by 65% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $65\% \pm 4.6\%$  of ICOC members disagree that Jesus is lesser than God the Father in power. Though this is not so strong as other results, it shows a fundamental understanding of the ontological Trinity, that each person shares equally all the divine nature.

Question #13 was agreed to by 77% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $77\% \pm 4.1\%$  of ICOC members believe that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God. The concept of discipleship is strong in the ICOC, so this result is consistent.

The fourth category of questions dealt with beliefs about the Holy Spirit. Question #14 was agreed to by 97% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $97\% \pm 1.6\%$  of ICOC members believe that the Holy Spirit is active in the world today. This shows a strong belief in the Spirit being at work in the world today.



Question #15 was agreed to by 87% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $87\% \pm 3.2\%$  of ICOC members believe that the Spirit was active in the creation. This is clearly seen in Genesis 1 and shows that ICOC members agreed that the Spirit was at work with the Father during creation.

Question #16 was agreed to by 90% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $90\% \pm 2.9\%$  of ICOC members believe that the Spirit was active in the Old Testament. This shows that ICOC members understand the Spirit was working in both testaments.

Question #17 was disagreed to by 91% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $91\% \pm 2.8\%$  of ICOC members do not believe that the Spirit has little to do with salvation. ICOC members strongly believe the Spirit is a major player in the salvation of humankind.

Question #18 was agreed to by 63% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $63\% \pm 4.7\%$  of ICOC members believe that repentance is a primary role of the Spirit. This is the lowest majority of any question on the survey. This question does show that a majority of ICOC members understand that the economy of the Trinity has the Spirit linked most closely to repentance in humankind.

Question #19 was agreed to by 78% of the respondents. This means that with a confidence level of 95%,  $78\% \pm 4\%$  of ICOC members believe that the Church today is gifted as the Spirit directs. This understanding shows that ICOC members don't relegate the Spirit to past activities, but actively at work in the Church today.

The fifth category of questions deals with how often ICOC members independently reference the members of the Trinity in prayer. Question #20 finds that  $89\% \pm 3\%$  of ICOC members with a confidence level of 95%, always reference the Father in Prayer

Question #21 finds that  $74\% \pm 4.2\%$  of ICOC members with a confidence level of 95%, always reference the Son, Jesus Christ in Prayer.  $21\% \pm 4\%$  reference Jesus Christ in prayer occasionally.

Question #22 finds that  $23\% \pm 4.1\%$  of ICOC members with a confidence level of 95%, always reference the Holy Spirit in Prayer.  $42\% \pm 4.8\%$  only reference the Spirit in prayer occasionally. Finally,  $28\% \pm 4.3\%$  of ICOC members indicated they reference the Holy Spirit in prayer rarely.

### **Areas of Strengths**

A result to the questions by the respondents of 95% or better shows areas of strength. These are areas where the majority of survey takers (19 out of 20) agree. The following questions are in this group; question 3 the belief that there is only one God; question 4 that God has revealed Himself through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; question 7 that the Father is the planner of salvation; question 14 that the Spirit of God is active in the world today; question 20 that they always or occasionally reference God the Father in Prayer; question 21 that they reference Jesus Christ in Prayer. Two more questions are also strong showing 94% support; question 2 the belief that understanding the Trinity helps you to better know God and question 6 that the Father sent and directed Jesus actions on Earth.

### **Areas of Weaknesses**

A result to the questions by 75% or worse show areas of weakness. These are areas where a much smaller majority of survey takers (3 out of 4) agree. The following questions are in this

group; question 11 the belief that Jesus was active in the Old Testament; question 12 the disbelief that Jesus is lesser than the Father in power; question 18 the belief that repentance is a primary role of the Holy Spirit; question 22 that they reference the Holy Spirit in prayer always or occasionally. In addition, questions 12, 18 and 22 are agreed to by 65%, 63% and 66% respectively. These percentages are still majorities, but very low. Some of these areas of weakness were investigated further in the following section.

### **Analysis of Data by Demographics**

The survey results can also be analyzed according to the demographics. This study was done to determine whether these demographics impact the results in some measurable way. This may uncover areas of weakness within the ICOC and lead to further study in the future. The survey results will be separated according to the demographics and compared by  $\chi^2$  (pronounced chi squared) testing.

### **Survey Results by nationality**

The first area of comparison is how the US based members of the ICOC compare with the entire ICOC membership worldwide.

*Table 23. US versus worldwide membership Category 1*

General	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
US Agree	80%	93%	99%	98%
US Disagree	11%	0.4%	0.8%	0%
ICOC Agree	82%	94%	99%	98%
ICOC Disagree	10%	0.5%	0.5%	0.2%

The results of category 1, general questions, are all statistically similar. The percentage of US members who agreed to questions 1-4 were slightly lower than the worldwide membership, but not in any statistically relevant way.

*Table 24. US versus worldwide membership Category 2*

Father	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8
US Agree	78%	92%	96%	90%
US Disagree	14%	3%	1.5%	3%
ICOC Agree	77%	94%	96%	92%
ICOC Disagree	16%	3%	1.5%	3%

The results of category 2, questions about the Father, were also all statistically similar. The percentage of US members who agreed to questions 5-8 were similar to the worldwide membership. The values did not differ in any significant way.

*Table 25. US versus worldwide membership Category 3*

Son	Question 9	Question 10	Question 11	Question 12	Question 13
US Agree	88%	82%	72%	27%	76%
US Disagree	4%	6%	12%	63%	7%
ICOC Agree	90%	86%	75%	25%	77%
ICOC Disagree	3%	5%	12%	65%	7%

The results of category 3, questions about the Son, were all statistically similar. The percentage of US members who agreed to questions 9-13 were similar to the worldwide membership. The values did not differ in any significant way.

Table 26. US versus worldwide membership Category 4

Spirit	Question 14	Question 15	Question 16	Question 17	Question 18	Question 19
US Agree	96%	83%	90%	3%	59%	75%
US Disagree	1.5%	6%	5%	93%	25%	5%
ICOC Agree	97%	88%	90%	5%	63%	79%
ICOC Disagree	1.2%	4%	5%	91%	21%	5%

The results of category 4, questions about the Holy Spirit, were also all statistically similar. The percentage of US members who agree to questions 14-19 were similar or slightly lower than the worldwide membership but not different in any significant way.

Table 27. US versus worldwide membership Category 5

Prayer	Question 20 US	Question 20 ICOC	Question 21 US	Question 21 ICOC	Question 22 US	Question 22 ICOC
Always	88%	89%	71%	74%	17%	23%
Occasionally	11%	9%	23%	21%	43%	43%
Rarely	1.5%	1.5%	5%	4%	34%	27%
Never	0%	0.2%	0.8%	0.5%	6%	6%

The results of category 5, questions about prayer with the Trinity, were all statistically similar. The percentage of US members who agree to questions 20-21 were similar to the worldwide membership but not in a significant way. Question 22 does show a slight change as the US members tend to reference the Holy Spirit in their prayers less than the ICOC as a whole.

The next area of comparison is how the non-US based members of the ICOC compare with the entire ICOC membership worldwide.

Table 28. Non-US versus worldwide membership Category 1

General	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Non-US Agree	85%	97%	99%	99%
Non-US Disagree	8%	0.7%	0%	0%
ICOC Agree	82%	94%	99%	98%
ICOC Disagree	10%	0.5%	0.5%	0.2%

The results of category 1, general questions, are all statistically similar. The percentage of non-US members who agreed to questions 1-4 were similar or slightly higher than the worldwide membership, but not in any statistically relevant way.

Table 29. Non-US versus worldwide membership Category 2

Father	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8
Non-US Agree	77%	97%	97%	96%
Non-US Disagree	19%	1.3%	1.3%	2%
ICOC Agree	77%	94%	96%	92%
ICOC Disagree	16%	3%	1.5%	3%

The results of category 2, questions about the Father, were also all statistically similar. The percentage of non-US members who agreed to questions 5-8 were similar or slightly higher than the worldwide membership, but not in any significant way.

Table 30. Non-US versus worldwide membership Category 3

Son	Question 9	Question 10	Question 11	Question 12	Question 13
Non-US Agree	95%	94%	80%	21%	80%

Non-US Disagree	2%	3%	12%	68%	6%
ICOC Agree	90%	86%	75%	25%	77%
ICOC Disagree	3%	5%	12%	65%	7%

The results of category 3, questions about the Son, were all statistically similar except question 10. The worldwide membership has a much higher undecided group for question 10. The percentage of non-US members who agreed to questions 9-13 were similar to the worldwide membership, but in no statistically significant way.

*Table 31. Non-US versus worldwide membership Category 4*

Spirit	Question 14	Question 15	Question 16	Question 17	Question 18	Question 19
Non-US Agree	99%	96%	91%	10%	71%	86%
Non-US Disagree	0.7%	0.7%	4%	87%	15%	5%
ICOC Agree	97%	88%	90%	5%	63%	79%
ICOC Disagree	1.2%	4%	5%	91%	21%	5%

Half of the results for category 4, questions about the Holy Spirit, were statistically similar. The other half were statistically different. The percentage of non-US members who agree to questions 14, 16 and 19 were similar to the worldwide membership but not in any significant way.

In Question 15, the percent of non-US members who agree is 96% which is much larger than the general 88% of the average ICOC member. And the percent of non-US members who disagree is 0.7% which is a drop from the 4% of the typical ICOC member. These changes caused question 15 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 94%. This shows that the change in numbers can be

strongly linked to the different groups. Non-US members more strongly agree that the Holy Spirit was active in creation than the typical ICOC member.

In Question 17, the percent of non-US members who agree is 10% which is twice as large as the general 5% of the average ICOC member. And the percent of non-US members who disagree increases from 91% to 87%. These changes caused question 17 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 96%. This change in values is strongly linked to the two different groups. Non-US members more strongly agree that the Holy Spirit has very little to do with salvation than the typical ICOC member.

Finally, in Question 18, the percent of non-US members who agree is 71% which is larger than the 63% of the average ICOC member. The percentage of non-US members who disagree decreases from 21% to 15%. These changes caused question 18 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 91%. This shows that the change in numbers can be strongly linked to the different groups. Non-US members more strongly agree that repentance is a primary role of the Holy Spirit than the typical ICOC member.

*Table 32. Non-US versus worldwide membership Category 5*

Prayer	Question 20 Non-US	Question 20 ICOC	Question 21 Non-US	Question 21 ICOC	Question 22 Non-US	Question 22 ICOC
Always	91%	89%	79%	74%	35%	23%
Occasionally	7%	9%	18%	21%	41%	42%
Rarely	1.3%	1.5%	3%	4%	17%	28%
Never	0.7%	0.2%	0%	0.5%	7%	6%

The results of category 5, questions about prayer with the Trinity, were all statistically similar, except question 22. The percentage of non-US members who marked always,



occasionally, rarely and never to questions 20 and 21 were similar to the worldwide membership but not in a significant way. However in question 22, the percent of non-US members who indicated always is 35% which is larger than the 23% of the average ICOC member. And the percent of non-US members who indicated rarely increases from 17% to 28%. These changes caused question 22 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 98%. This shows that the change in numbers is strongly linked to the different groups. Non-US members are more likely to reference the Holy Spirit in their prayers than the typical ICOC member.

The next area of comparison is how the US based members of the ICOC compare with non-US based members.

*Table 33. US versus Non-US Category 1*

General	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
US Agree	80%	93%	99%	98%
US Disagree	11%	0.4%	0.8%	0%
Non-US Agree	82%	94%	99%	98%
Non-US Disagree	10%	0.5%	0.5%	0.2%

The results of category 1, general questions, are all statistically similar. The percentage of US members who agreed to questions 1-4 were nearly the same as the non-US membership. The differences were not statistically relevant.

*Table 34. US versus Non-US Category 2*

Father	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8
US Agree	78%	92%	96%	90%
US Disagree	14%	3%	1.5%	3%

Non-US Agree	77%	94%	96%	92%
Non-US Disagree	16%	3%	1.5%	3%

The results of category 2, questions about the Father, were also all statistically similar. The percentage of US members who agreed to questions 5-8 were similar to the non-US membership. Any differences found were not statistically relevant.

*Table 35. US versus Non-US Category 3*

Son	Question 9	Question 10	Question 11	Question 12	Question 13
US Agree	88%	82%	72%	27%	76%
US Disagree	4%	6%	12%	63%	7%
Non-US Agree	95%	94%	80%	21%	80%
Non-US Disagree	2%	3%	12%	68%	6%

The results of category 3, questions about the Son, were mostly similar, except for question 10. The percentage of US members who agreed to questions 9, 11-13 were similar to the non-US membership with no statistically significant differences. However in question 10, the percent of US members who agreed was 82% which is smaller than the 94% of non-US members, and the percent of US members who disagreed was 6% which is larger than the 3% of non-US members. In addition to this, the US members were more undecided on this question by a margin of over 10%. These changes caused question 10 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 90%. This shows that the change in numbers can be strongly linked to the different groups. Non-US members are more certain and agree more strongly that Jesus was active in creation than US members.

Table 36. US versus Non-US Category 4

Spirit	Question 14	Question 15	Question 16	Question 17	Question 18	Question 19
US Agree	96%	83%	90%	3%	59%	75%
US Disagree	1.5%	6%	5%	93%	25%	5%
Non-US Agree	99%	96%	91%	10%	71%	86%
Non-US Disagree	0.7%	0.7%	4%	87%	15%	5%

Half of results of category 4, questions about the Holy Spirit, were statistically similar. The other half were statistically different. The percentage of US members who agree to questions 14, 16 and 19 were slightly smaller or similar to non-US members, but not in any significant way.

In Question 15, the percent of US members who agree is 83% which is smaller than the 96% of the non-US members. The percent of US members who disagree is 6% which is larger than the 0.7% of non-US members. These changes caused question 15 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 99%. This shows that the change in numbers is strongly linked to the different groups. Non-US members more strongly agree that the Holy Spirit was active in creation than the US members.

In Question 17, the percent of US members who agree is 3% which is smaller the 10% of non-US members. Also, the percent of US members who disagree is 93% which is larger than the 87% of non-US members. These changes caused question 17 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 100%. This change in values is strongly linked to the two different groups. US members more strongly disagree that the Holy Spirit has very little to do with salvation than the non-US members.

Finally, in Question 18, the percent of US members who agree is 59% which is smaller than the 71% of the non-US members. Also, the percent of US members who disagree is 25% which is larger than the 15% of non-US members. These changes caused question 18 to have a  $\chi^2$  test

score of 99%. This shows that the change in numbers is strongly linked to the different groups. Non-US members more strongly agree that repentance is a primary role of the Holy Spirit than US members.

*Table 37. US versus Non-US Category 5*

Prayer	Question 20 US	Question 20 Non-US	Question 21 US	Question 21 Non-US	Question 22 US	Question 22 Non-US
Always	88%	91%	71%	79%	17%	35%
Occasionally	11%	7%	23%	18%	43%	41%
Rarely	1.5%	1.3%	5%	3%	34%	17%
Never	0%	0.7%	0.8%	0%	6%	7%

The results of category 5, questions about prayer with the Trinity, were statistically different, except question 21. The percentage of US members who marked always, occasionally, rarely and never to question 21 is similar to non-US members but not in a significant way. However in questions 20 and 22 the differences do matter.

In question 20, the percent of US members who indicated always is 88% which is smaller than the 91% of non-US members, and the percent of US members who indicated occasionally is 11% which is larger than 7% of non-US members. These changes caused question 20 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 100%. This shows that the change in numbers is strongly linked to the different groups. Non-US members are more likely to reference the Father in their prayers than US members.

In question 22, the percent of US members who indicated always is 16% which is smaller than the 35% of non-US members, and the percent of US members who indicated rarely is 34% which is twice as large as the 17% of non-US members. These changes caused question 22 to

have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 100%. This shows that the change in numbers is strongly linked to the different groups. Non-US members are more likely to reference the Holy Spirit in their prayers than US members.

### Survey Results by years in Church

The demographics taken during the survey allow for analysis of the data by the number of years the respondent has been a member of the ICOC. The relevant years will be; less than 1 year which indicates new members; 5 years or less which is still a young member, but long enough to grow in understanding; less than 10 years which shows a major investment of time in the ICOC; and 20 years or more which shows maturity and decades of experience in the ICOC.

*Table 38. Comparison by Longevity Category 1*

Years a Member	Less than a year	One to five years	Five to ten years	Ten to twenty years	More than 20 years
Question #1 agree/disagree	72%   15%	76%   12%	82%   12%	86%   10%	91%   5%
Question #2	85%   0%	95%   0%	94%   0%	96%   2%	98%   0%
Question #3	95%   2%	100%   0%	94%   3%	100%   0%	99%   0%
Question #4	97%   0%	98%   0%	100%   0%	98%   1%	98%   0%

The results for question 1 show a steady rise from 72% to 91% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more likely they assess themselves as understanding the doctrine of the Trinity.

The results for question 2 show an increase in the percent of those members that agree, from 85% to 98% however the low  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is not likely to be as strongly linked to their number of years as members.

The results for question 3 show an increase from 95% to 98% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more likely they believed there is only one God.

The results for question 4 show an increase in the percent of those members that agree, from 97% to 98% however the low  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is not likely to be as strongly linked to their number of years as members.

*Table 39. Comparison by Longevity Category 2*

Years a Member	Less than a year	One to five years	Five to ten years	Ten to twenty years	More than 20 years
Question #5 agree/disagree	65%   18%	72%   19%	75%   22%	76%   18%	91%   6%
Question #6	92%   2%	94%   1%	97%   3%	93%   4%	96%   3%
Question #7	94%   2%	97%   1%	97%   0%	94%   4%	99%   0%
Question #8	90%   2%	93%   2%	97%   0%	87%   6%	95%   1%

The results for question 5 show a steady rise from 65% to 91% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more likely they believe the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son.

The results for question 6 show an inconsistent increase in the percent of those members that agree, from 92% to 96%. The low  $\chi^2$  test score shows these changes are not likely to be as strongly linked to their number of years as members.

The results for question 7 show an increase from 95% to 99% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they believe the Father is the planner of salvation.

The results for question 8 show an unsteady increase in the percent of those members that agree, from 90% to 95% however the low  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is not likely to be as strongly linked to their number of years as members.

*Table 40. Comparison by Longevity Category 3*

Years a Member	Less than a year	One to five years	Five to ten years	Ten to twenty years	More than 20 years
Question #9 agree/disagree	76%   6%	86%   5%	93%   0%	95%   4%	98%   1%
Question #10	72%   11%	76%   6%	91%   0%	91%   4%	97%   2%
Question #11	60%   18%	64%   15%	81%   9%	83%   12%	86%   5%
Question #12	19%   66%	21%   67%	30%   61%	24%   66%	26%   64%
Question #13	66%   2%	74%   5%	85%   9%	79%   8%	82%   9%

The results for question 9 show a steady increase from 76% to 98% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

The results for question 10 show a steady increase from 72% to 97% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they believe that Jesus was active in creation.

The results for question 11 show a steady increase from 60% to 86% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they believe that Jesus was active in the Old Testament.

The results for question 12 show inconsistent changes in the percent of those members that agree and disagree. The low  $\chi^2$  test score shows that these changes are not likely to be linked to their number of years as members.

The results for question 13 show an increase from 66% to 82% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they believe the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God.

Table 41. Comparison by Longevity Category 4

Years a Member	Less than a year	One to five years	Five to ten years	Ten to twenty years	More than 20 years
Question #14 agree/disagree	95%   0%	96%   1%	100%   0%	96%   4%	99%   0%
Question #15	77%   6%	79%   6%	88%   0%	92%   4%	97%   1%
Question #16	81%   10%	85%   7%	85%   9%	96%   2%	97%   1%
Question #17	10%   77%	4%   94%	0%   100%	5%   92%	2%   97%
Question #18	61%   18%	71%   15%	52%   27%	61%   24%	63%   26%
Question #19	79%   2%	76%   6%	76%   0%	79%   9%	81%   4%

The results for question 14 show changes in the percent of those members that agree and disagree. The low  $\chi^2$  test score shows that these changes are not likely to be linked to their number of years as members.

The results for question 15 show a consistent increase from 77% to 97% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they believe the Spirit was active in creation.

The results for question 16 show an increase from 81% to 97% of the ICOC members by age that agree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they believe the Spirit was active in the Old Testament.

The results for question 17 show a decrease from 10% to 2% of the ICOC members by age that agree and an increase from 77% to 97% of those who disagree. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this



is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they are unlikely to believe the Spirit has very little to do with salvation.

The results for question 18 show inconsistent changes in the percent of those members that agree and disagree. The low  $\chi^2$  test score shows that these changes are not likely to be linked to their number of years as members.

The results for question 19 show inconsistent changes in the percent of those members that agree and disagree. The low  $\chi^2$  test score shows that these changes are not likely to be linked to their number of years as members.

*Table 42. Comparison by Longevity Category 5*

Years a Member	Less than a year	One to five years	Five to ten years	Ten to twenty years	More than 20 years
Question #20 Always/Occasion Rarely/Never	77%   21% 2%   0%	93%   5% 2%   0%	91%   6% 3%   0%	90%   9% 1%   1%	94%   5% 1%   0%
Question #21	67%   31% 2%   0%	71%   21% 8%   0%	77%   21% 0%   3%	80%   18% 2%   0%	74%   19% 6%   1%
Question #22	21%   22% 36%   10%	18%   39% 37%   6%	21%   53% 24%   3%	31%   40% 25%   4%	19%   54% 19%   8%

The results for question 20 show an increase from 77% to 94% of the ICOC members by age that indicated always and a decrease from 21% to 5% that indicated occasionally. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they reference God the Father in prayer.

The results for question 21 show an increase from 67% to 74% of the ICOC members by age that indicated always and a decrease from 31% to 19% that indicated occasionally. The  $\chi^2$  test

score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they reference Jesus Christ in prayer.

The results for question 22 show an increase from 22% to 54% of the ICOC members by age that indicated occasionally and a decrease from 36% to 19% that indicated rarely. The  $\chi^2$  test score shows this is significant. The longer members stay with the ICOC, the more they reference the Holy Spirit in prayer.

### **Survey Results by current ministry**

The following will show the results of the separate ministries: Teens, Campus, Singles, Marrieds, Seniors, compared to one another.

*Table 43. Comparison by Current Ministry Category 1*

General Category	Teens	Campus	Singles	Marrieds	Seniors
Question #1 agree/disagree	76%   12%	76%   13%	79%   12%	88%   8%	81%   0%
Question #2	81%   0%	100%   0%	91%   1%	98%   1%	100%   0%
Question #3	96%   0%	98%   2%	99%   0%	100%   0%	92%   8%
Question #4	95%   0%	100%   0%	99%   0%	98%   1%	100%   0%

The results for question 1 show that members in the Marrieds ministry believe they have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity with the highest percentage, while those in the Teen ministry agree with the lowest percentage.

The results for question 2 show that members of the Campus and Seniors ministries are tied at 100% for agreeing that understanding the Trinity helps you better know God. The Teen ministry has the lowest percentage of those that agreed, but none of them disagreed to the question.

The results for question 3 show that members in the Marrieds ministry believe 100% that there is only one God, while those in the Seniors ministry have the lowest percent in this area. Interestingly, the Teen and Singles ministries had no one who disagreed to this question.

The results for question 4 show that members of the Campus and Seniors ministries are tied at 100% for agreeing that God has revealed Himself through the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The Singles ministry also have no one who disagrees to this conviction. The Teen ministry had the lowest percentage of those who agreed.

Overall the Teens percentages in the general category were all lower than the typical ICOC response while the Marrieds percentages were all higher than the typical ICOC response.

*Table 44. Comparison by Current Ministry Category 2*

Father Category	Teens	Campus	Singles	Marrieds	Seniors
Question #5 agree/disagree	59%   24%	77%   15%	84%   13%	82%   14%	80%   0%
Question #6	90%   3%	95%   2%	99%   1%	94%   3%	92%   0%
Question #7	94%   0%	97%   3%	96%   1%	97%   2%	90%   0%
Question #8	90%   1%	94%   2%	87%   4%	94%   3%	91%   0%

The results for question 5 show that members in the Singles ministry believe the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son with the highest percentage, while those in the Teen ministry agree with the lowest percentage.

The results for question 6 show that members in the Singles ministry believe the Father sent and directed Jesus actions on Earth with the highest percentage, while those in the Teen ministry agree with the lowest percentage.

The results for question 7 show that members in the Marrieds and Campus ministries believe the Father is the planner of salvation with the highest percentage, while those in the Seniors

ministry agree with the lowest percentage. The Teen ministry also had no one who disagreed to this question.

The results for question 8 show that members in the Marrieds and Campus ministries believe the Father is the source of God’s Kingdom with the highest percentage, while those in the Singles ministry agree with the lowest percentage.

Overall the Teens percentages in the Father category were all lower than the typical ICOC response while the Campus and Marrieds percentages were all higher than the typical ICOC response.

*Table 45. Comparison by Current Ministry Category 3*

Son Category	Teens	Campus	Singles	Marrieds	Seniors
Question #9 agree/disagree	75%   8%	91%   2%	93%   4%	95%   2%	100%   0%
Question #10	73%   9%	83%   0%	87%   7%	91%   4%	100%   0%
Question #11	63%   17%	65%   8%	78%   15%	82%   9%	73%   18%
Question #12	24%   61%	20%   70%	34%   53%	22%   70%	27%   55%
Question #13	68%   3%	70%   8%	88%   5%	78%   9%	83%   0%

The results for question 9 show that members of the Seniors ministries agree 100% that Jesus is fully God and fully man with the highest percentage. The Teen ministry has the lowest percentage.

The results for question 10 show that members of the Seniors ministries agree 100% that Jesus was active in creation with the highest percentage. The Teen ministry agreed with the lowest percentage. The Campus ministry had no one who disagreed to this question.

The results for question 11 show that members in the Marrieds ministry believe that Jesus was active in the Old Testament with the highest percentage, while those in the Teen ministry agree with the lowest percentage.

The results for question 12 show that members of the Campus and Marrieds ministries are tied at 70% for disagreeing that Jesus is lesser than God the Father in power with the highest percentage. The Singles ministry had the lowest percentage.

The results for question 13 show that members in the Singles ministry believe that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God with the highest percentage, while those in the Teen ministry agree with the lowest percentage.

Overall the Teens percentages in the Son category were all lower than the typical ICOC response while the Marrieds percentages were all higher than the typical ICOC response.

*Table 46. Comparison by Current Ministry Category 4*

Holy Spirit Category	Teens	Campus	Singles	Marrieds	Seniors
Question #14 agree/disagree	95%   1%	98%   0%	96%   1%	98%   2%	100%   0%
Question #15	81%   10%	79%   3%	87%   3%	92%   2%	100%   0%
Question #16	85%   9%	81%   6%	88%   6%	96%   2%	91%   9%
Question #17	11%   77%	6%   94%	6%   91%	0%   98%	27%   63%
Question #18	68%   10%	64%   27%	65%   23%	59%   25%	80%   0%
Question #19	76%   1%	81%   3%	77%   9%	79%   6%	82%   9%

The results for question 14 show that members in the Seniors ministry agree 100% that the Spirit is God active in the world today. The Campus ministry also had no one who disagrees to this conviction. The Teen ministry also agrees but with the lowest percentage.

The results for question 15 show that members in the Seniors ministry agree 100% that the Spirit was active in creation with the highest percentage. The Campus ministry also agrees but with the lowest percentage.

The results for question 16 show that members in the Marrieds ministry believe that the Spirit was active in the Old Testament with the highest percentage, while those in the Campus ministry also agrees but with the lowest percentage.

The results for question 17 show that members in the Marrieds ministry disagree that the Spirit has very little to do with salvation with the highest percentage, with none who agreed. Those in the Seniors ministry also disagreed but with the lowest percentage.

The results for question 18 show that members in the Seniors ministry believe that repentance is a primary role of the Holy Spirit with the highest percentage, while those in the Marrieds ministry also agreed but with the lowest percentage.

The results for question 19 show that members in the Seniors ministry believe that the church today is gifted as the Spirit directs with the highest percentage, while those in the Teen ministry agree with the lowest percentage.

With exception of question 18, the Teens percentages in the Holy Spirit category were all lower than the typical ICOC response while the Marrieds percentages were all higher than the typical ICOC response.

*Table 47. Comparison by Current Ministry Category 5*

Prayer Category	Teens	Campus	Singles	Marrieds	Seniors
Question #20	81%   15%	89%   10%	88%   12%	93%   6%	83%   17%
Always/Occasion					
Rarely/Never	3%   0%	2%   0%	0%   0%	1%   1%	0%   0%
Question #21	60%   33%	75%   21%	74%   24%	80%   16%	83%   17%

	6%   0%	5%   0%	3%   0%	4%   1%	0%   0%
Question #22	19%   31%	19%   40%	27%   40%	23%   50%	42%   33%
	38%   12%	35%   5%	30%   1%	22%   6%	25%   0%

The results for question 20 show that members in the Marrieds & Seniors ministries reference God the Father in prayer with the highest percentage, while those in the Teen ministry do so with the lowest percentage. No one from the Teens, Campus, Singles or Seniors ministries marked never to this question, and no one from the Campus or Seniors ministry even marked rarely.

The results for question 21 show that members in the Seniors ministry reference Jesus Christ in prayer with the highest percentage, while those in the Teen ministry do so with the lowest percentage. No one from the Teens, Campus, Singles or Seniors ministries marked never to this question, nor did any Seniors mark rarely.

The results for question 22 show that members in the Seniors ministry reference the Holy Spirit in prayer with the highest percentage, while those in the Teen ministry do so with the lowest percentage. No one from the Seniors ministries marked never to this question.

Overall the Teens percentages in the prayer category were all lower than the typical ICOC response while the Marrieds percentages were all higher than the typical ICOC response. The Seniors ministry had the highest values in every category.

**Survey Results by ministry experience**

The last area of comparison is how the ICOC members worldwide who have never worked for the ministry staff compare with those who were past or who are current ministers.

Table 48. Non-Ministry versus Current & Former Ministry Staff Category 1

General	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Non-Ministry Agree	81%	93%	98%	98%
Non-Ministry Disagree	10%	1%	1%	0%
Ministry Agree	85%	98%	100%	98%
Ministry Disagree	10%	0%	0%	0%

The results of category 1, general questions, are all statistically similar. The percentage of non-ministry members who agreed to questions 1-4 were all similar or slightly lower than former and current ICOC ministers, but not in any statistically relevant way.

Table 49. Non-Ministry versus Current & Former Ministry Staff Category 2

Father	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8
Non-Ministry Agree	75%	94%	96%	92%
Non-Ministry Disagree	17%	2%	1%	2%
Ministry Agree	92%	96%	94%	92%
Ministry Disagree	6%	4%	4%	6%

The results of category 2, questions about the Father, were mostly statistically different. Only in question 6 was the percentage of non-ministry members who agreed similar to former and current ICOC ministers, and not different in any statistically relevant way.

In question 5, the percent of non-ministry members who agreed was 75% which is smaller than the 92% of former and current ICOC ministers, and the percent of non-ministry members who disagreed was 17% which is larger than the 6% of former and current ICOC ministers. In addition to this, the non-ministry members were more undecided on this question by a margin of



over 5%. These changes caused question 5 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 100%. This shows that the change in numbers are strongly linked to the different groups. former and current ICOC ministers are more certain and agree more strongly that the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son than non-ministry members.

In question 7, the percent of non-ministry members who agreed was 96% which is larger than the 94% of former and current ICOC ministers, and the percent of non-ministry members who disagreed was 1% which is smaller than the 4% of former and current ICOC ministers. These changes caused question 7 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 100%. This shows that the change in numbers are strongly linked to the different groups. Non-ministry members are slightly more likely to agree that the Father is the planner of salvation than former and current ICOC ministers.

In question 8, the percent of non-ministry members who agreed was 92% which is the same as the 92% of former and current ICOC ministers, but the percent of non-ministry members who disagreed was 2% which is three times smaller than the 6% of former and current ICOC ministers. This changes caused question 8 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 99%. This shows that the change in numbers are strongly linked to the different groups. Former and current ICOC ministers are more likely to disagree that the Father is the source of God’s Kingdom than non-ministry members.

*Table 50. Non-Ministry versus Current & Former Ministry Staff Category 3*

Son	Question 9	Question 10	Question 11	Question 12	Question 13
Non-Ministry Agree	90%	85%	74%	25%	77%
Non-Ministry Disagree	4%	5%	13%	64%	6%
Ministry Agree	94%	94%	80%	23%	73%
Ministry Disagree	2%	2%	7%	68%	13%

The results of category 3, questions about the Son, were mostly statistically different. Only in questions 9 and 12 were the percentage of non-ministry members who agreed were similar to former and current ICOC ministers, and not different in any statistically relevant way.

In question 10, the percent of non-ministry members who agreed was 85% which is smaller than the 94% of former and current ICOC ministers, and the percent of non-ministry members who disagreed was 5% which is larger than the 2% of former and current ICOC ministers. In addition, the non-ministry members were more undecided on this question by a margin of over 5%. These changes caused question 10 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 90%. This shows that the change in numbers can be strongly linked to the different groups. Former and current ICOC ministers are more certain and agree more strongly that Jesus was active in creation than non-ministry members.

In question 11, the percent of non-ministry members who agreed was 74% which is smaller than the 80% of former and current ICOC ministers, and the percent of non-ministry members who disagreed was 13% which is larger than the 7% of former and current ICOC ministers. These changes caused question 11 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 94%. This shows that the change in numbers can be strongly linked to the different groups. Former and current ICOC ministers agree more strongly that Jesus was active in the Old Testament than non-ministry members.

In question 13, the percent of non-ministry members who agreed was 78% which is larger than the 73% of former and current ICOC ministers, and the percent of non-ministry members who disagreed was 6% which is smaller than the 13% of former and current ICOC ministers. These changes caused question 13 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 100%. This shows that the change in numbers are strongly linked to the different groups. Non-ministry members are more likely to

agree that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God than former and current ICOC ministers.

*Table 51. Non-Ministry versus Current & Former Ministry Staff Category 4*

Spirit	Question 14	Question 15	Question 16	Question 17	Question 18	Question 19
Non-Ministry Agree	97%	87%	90%	5%	62%	79%
Non-Ministry Disagree	1%	4%	5%	90%	21%	5%
Ministry Agree	98%	89%	96%	4%	66%	79%
Ministry Disagree	0%	0%	2%	96%	23%	9%

The results of category 4, questions about the Holy Spirit, were mostly statistically similar except questions 15 and 19. The percentage of non-ministry members who agreed to questions 14, 16-18 were similar to former and current ICOC ministers, and not different in any statistically relevant way.

In question 15, the percent of non-ministry members who agreed was 87% which is smaller than the 89% of former and current ICOC ministers, and the percent of non-ministry members who disagreed was 4% which is larger than the 0% of former and current ICOC ministers. These changes caused question 15 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 96%. This shows that the change in numbers are strongly linked to the different groups. Former and current ICOC ministers agree more strongly that the Spirit was active in creation than non-ministry members.

In question 19, the percent of non-ministry members who agreed was 79% which is the same as the 79% of former and current ICOC ministers, but the percent of non-ministry members who disagreed was 5% which is smaller than the 9% of former and current ICOC ministers. This changes caused question 19 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 91%. This shows that the change in

numbers can be strongly linked to the different groups. Former and current ICOC ministers are more likely to disagree that the Church is gifted as the Spirit directs than Non-ministry members.

*Table 52. Non-Ministry versus Current & Former Ministry Staff Category 5*

Prayer	Question 20 Non-Ministry	Question 20 Ministry	Question 21 Non-Ministry	Question 21 Ministry	Question 22 Non-Ministry	Question 22 Ministry
Always	88%	96%	74%	70%	22%	35%
Occasionally	10%	4%	22%	17%	44%	30%
Rarely	2%	0%	3%	13%	28%	26%
Never	0%	0%	1%	0%	6%	9%

The results of category 5, questions about the Trinity and prayer, were mostly statistically different. Only in question 20 was the percentages of time indicated (Always, Occasionally, Rarely, Never) by non-ministry members similar to former and current ICOC ministers, and not different in any statistically relevant way.

The results for question 21 show the percent of non-ministry members who indicated always is 74% which is larger than the 70% of former and current ICOC ministers. And the percent of non-ministry members who indicated occasionally decreases from 22% to 17%, while the percent who marked rarely increases from 3% to 13%. These changes caused question 21 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 100%. This shows that the change in values is strongly linked to the different groups. Non-ministry members are more likely to reference Jesus in their prayers than former and current ICOC ministers.

The results for question 22 show the percent of non-ministry members who indicated always is 22% which is smaller than the 35% of former and current ICOC ministers. The percent of non-ministry members who indicated occasionally decreases from 44% to 30%, while the percent

who marked rarely decreases from 28% to 26%. These changes caused question 21 to have a  $\chi^2$  test score of 100%. This shows that the change in values is strongly linked to the different groups. Former and current ICOC ministers are more likely to always reference the Holy Spirit in their prayers than Non-ministry members.

### **Further analysis of general weaknesses discovered**

The first area for further analysis was to examine the results of those respondents who self-identified in question 1 as having a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity versus those who disagreed to this question. In categories 1, 2 and 5, all the values for those who have a good understanding of the Trinity were higher than those who did not. In category 4, two questions 17 & 18 were slightly higher. The other questions show significant differences.

*Table 53. Understands vs not Understand the Trinity*

Understands the Trinity	Question 2 General	Question 11 Jesus	Question 12 Jesus	Question 13 Jesus	Question 22 Prayer
Understands Agree	97%	77%	24%	80%	67%
Disagree	1%	10%	66%	7%	33%
Not Understand Agree	85%	56%	17%	68%	46%
Disagree	0%	23%	76%	8%	54%

Question 2 shows that those who claim to have a good understanding of the Trinity agree by 97% that understanding the Trinity helps you better know God. This is 12 points more than the 85% given by those who say they don't have a good understanding of the Trinity. This result shows that those who understand the Trinity realize the value it gives them to know God better.

Question 11 reveals that those who claim to have a good understanding of the Trinity agree by 77% that Jesus was active in the Old Testament. This is 21 points higher than the 56% indicated by those who say they don't have a good understanding of the Trinity. This shows that

almost half of those who don't understand the Trinity don't believe that the Son of God was involved in Old Testament events.

Question 12 shows that those who claim to have a good understanding of the Trinity disagree by 66% that Jesus is lesser than God the Father in power. This is 10 points lower than the 76% given by those who say they don't have a good understanding to the Trinity. This result is surprising because it suggests that those who don't have a good understand of the Trinity realize better that Jesus is not less powerful than the Father.

Question 13 reveals that those who claim to have a good understanding of the Trinity agree by 80% that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God. This is twelve points higher than the 68% indicated by those who say they don't have a good understanding of the Trinity. This shows a link between belief in the Trinity and better understanding of Jesus' ministry.

Question 22, dealing with the practice of prayer, shows that those who claim to have a good understanding of the Trinity pray always or occasionally by 67%. This is twenty-one points higher than the 46% who say they don't have a good understanding of the Trinity. The majority of those who claim they don't have a good understanding of the Trinity either rarely or never reference the Spirit in prayer by 54% versus 33% for the other group. This shows that those who have a good understanding of the Trinity more consistently reference the Spirit in prayer.

It has already been shown that the longer respondents were members of the ICOC, the more likely and more certain that they believed they had a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The general survey shows there is an apparent lack of consistent referencing of the Holy Spirit in prayer. Only 23% of ICOC members indicated that they always referenced the Holy Spirit in prayer while 28% said they rarely did and 6% admitted to never referencing Him in

prayer. When comparing the differences of those who indicated they always reference the Holy Spirit in prayer versus those who never did, the results of the survey show some interesting results.

*Table 54. Always References the Spirit in Prayer vs Never*

Reference the Sprit	Question 1 General	Question 5 Father	Question 10 Jesus	Question 13 Jesus	Question 15 Holy Spirit	Question 21 Holy Spirit
Always Agree	86%	75%	90%	82%	97%	100%
Disagree	8%	21%	4%	6%	0%	0%
Never Agree	73%	81%	77%	50%	77%	54%
Disagree	23%	12%	12%	15%	12%	46%

Question 1 shows that those who always reference the Holy Spirit more strongly agreed, 86% to 73%, they had a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. And less than half disagreed, 8% compared to 23% for those who never reference the Spirit, to the same question. This shows that those who always reference the Holy Spirit in prayer more strongly claim to understand the Trinity.

Question 5 reveals that those who never reference the Spirit in prayer more strongly agree that the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son. Among those who disagree, those who always reference the Spirit in prayer disagree by 21% as compared to 12% of those who never reference the Spirit in prayer. Perhaps not recognizing the distinction of person within the Trinity promotes prayer to all three, namely the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Question 10 shows that those who always reference the Spirit in prayer more strongly agreed that Jesus was active in creation. The agreement jumped from 77% for the never group to 90% of the always group. Those who disagreed tripled from 4% for the always people to 12% with those who never reference the Spirit in prayer.

Similarly, question 15 shows the same trend as question 10 discovered. Those who always reference the Spirit in prayer more strongly agreed that the Holy Spirit was active in creation. The agreement jumped from 77% for the never group to 97% of the always group. Those who disagreed went from 0% for the always people to 12% with those who never reference the Spirit in prayer.

Question 13 shows a larger percentage (82%) for those always referencing the Holy Spirit than the (50%) of those who never reference the Holy Spirit believe that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God. The difference in these groups is more pronounced by those who disagree, with those who always referencing the Spirit at 6% compared to that of those who never reference the Spirit being at 15%. Those who always reference the Spirit in prayer are much more likely to understand this function of Jesus teaching, to make disciples.

Question 21 revealed that 100% of those who always reference the Holy Spirit in prayer also always reference Jesus the Christ in prayer. This is significant because those who never reference the Spirit in prayer only referenced Jesus at a rate of 54%. These two groups have different prayer patterns.

These changes show that a person's prayer patterns can be strongly indicative of what they believe.

### **Areas of Strength Discovered**

When the data was sorted and compared by nationality, it was shown that non-US ICOC members more strongly agree that the Holy Spirit was active in creation (question 15) and has as one primary role, the work of repentance (question 18) than the typical and US members of the ICOC. The non-US members also more strongly disagree that the Holy Spirit has little to do with salvation (question 17) than the typical ICOC and US ICOC member, non-US members also



more strongly agree that Jesus was active in creation (question 10) and are more likely to reference both the Father (question 20) and the Holy Spirit (question 22) in prayer than US members.

When the data was sorted and compared by years in the Church, 21 of the 22 questions showed as the respondents time in the ICOC increased, the more certain and the stronger the member tended to agree. The results of fourteen questions (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22) increased in a statistically significant way.

When the data was sorted and compared by current ministry, each question had the highest percent of agreeance by the following ministries: question 1 – Marrieds; question 2 – Campus & Seniors; question 3 – Marrieds; question 4 – Campus & Seniors; question 5 – Singles; question 6 – Singles; question 7 – Marrieds & Campus; question 8 – Marrieds & Campus; question 9 – Seniors; question 10 – Seniors; question 11 – Marrieds; question 12 – Marrieds & Campus; question 13 – Singles; question 14 – Seniors; question 15 – Seniors; question 16 – Marrieds; question 17 – Marrieds; question 18 – Seniors; question 19 – Seniors; question 20 – Marrieds; question 21 – Seniors; question 22 – Seniors. In every question, the Marrieds agreed more than the average ICOC member.

When the data was sorted and compared by current and former ministry staff vs non-ministry staff, the following results were found. Current and former staff members more strongly agreed to the following questions than non-staff members: the Father is distinct from Jesus (question 5); That Jesus was active in creation (question 10) & in the Old Testament (question 11); and they were more likely to reference the Holy Spirit in prayer (question 22). Questions 10, 11, 15 & 19 were also more favored by current and former staff, but the differences were within the margin of error. Non-staff members more strongly agreed to the following questions than current and

former staff members: that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God (question 13) and they were more likely to reference Jesus in prayer (question 21).

When the data was sorted and compared by perceived understanding of the Trinity, those who claimed to have a good understand of the doctrine more strongly agreed that this helps them better know God (question 2); that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God (question 13); more consistently referenced the Holy Spirit in prayer (question 22) and overwhelmingly agreed that Jesus was active in the Old Testament (question 11).

When the data was sorted and compared by those who always referenced the Spirit in prayer were examined alongside those who never referenced the Holy Spirit in prayer and the following patterns were discovered. Those who always reference the Holy Spirit in prayer more strongly claim to: have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity (question 1); agree that Jesus was active in creation (question 10) & that the Holy Spirit was active in creation (question 15); agree that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God (question 13); and they overwhelmingly reference Jesus in prayer (question 21).

### **Areas of Weaknesses Uncovered**

The weakness discovered when comparing the data by nationality i.e. US vs non-US was that US members seemed to answer the questions at a lower percentage than non-US members. The results seemed to suggest that members outside the US in general have a better understanding of the Trinity than US members have.

The weakness discovered when comparing the data by years in the Church was that the youngest members consistently had percentages of agreeance lower that the typical ICOC members. Also, the results to question 12 have no change regardless of the age group asked. This may be the result of a question that confused the respondents.

The weakness discovered when comparing the data by current ministry was that the teen ministry consistently had percentages of agreeance lower than the typical ICOC members.

The weakness discovered when comparing the data by current and former ministry staff vs non-ministry staff was that non-ministry members more consistently reference Jesus in their prayers.

The weakness discovered when comparing the data by perceived understanding of the Trinity was that those who claimed to not understand the doctrine more strongly disagreed that Jesus has less power than the Father. This unexpected result may be a result of question 12 being confusing to the respondents.

The weakness discovered when comparing the data by those who always referenced the Spirit in prayer was that those who always referenced the Spirit in prayer were less likely to agree that the Father is distinct from Jesus.

### **Summary**

The ICOC Teachers' belief in the Trinity, though not in any systematic and binding way, is seen through the data collected from the members. There seems to be a strong agreeance to the Trinity in general, though not in a consistent formula. Although many members claimed to not have a good understanding of the doctrine, they strongly agreed to its definition. This result held across all demographics.

The ICOC Teachers also said that the work and role of Jesus is the most important aspect of the Trinity to understand. The questionnaire shows a deep and consistent understanding of the role of the father. Again, these results held strong across all demographics. The work and role of Jesus is more complex than that of the Father and there is room for ICOC members to improve in

this area. The level of understanding Jesus' role in the Trinity varies greatly depending on the groups examined.

The ICOC Teachers agreed that the nature and role of the Holy Spirit needs more teaching. This is indeed verified by the questionnaire. The results show that ICOC members understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity varies depending on the demographics that are being examined. There seems to be some misunderstanding regarding the Spirit which needs to be made clear.

Finally the practical application of the Trinity and how that plays a role in the practice of prayer among members of the ICOC also shows a lack of consistency.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to assess the general awareness of the role of the Trinity among members of the ICOC. Also to discover areas of general understanding of the Trinity among their members. And finally, to discover areas of misunderstanding regarding the Trinity from Biblical standard.

### **Significance of the Study**

The goal of this study is to guide church teachers and ministry leaders to areas where more teaching is needed. The doctrine of the Trinity is essential to the life of all Christians therefore any error in understanding can be detrimental to a person's discipleship and faith. Christians are called to mature in their faith therefore a proper understanding of the triune nature of God is key. As a mission-minded group of believers, it is essential that the message they spread is fully informed in this area.

### **Review of the Related Literature**

The greatest source of knowledge regarding the doctrine of the Trinity comes directly from the Bible. The Scriptures make clear that there is only one God and He has revealed Himself in three persons namely the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The history of the formation, understanding and wide acceptance of this doctrine can be clearly drawn from a number of sources. The best of these sources discuss the various creeds which document the expansion and understanding of the doctrine over time.

### **Research Methodology**

In order to draw a picture of what the ICOC believes and practices regarding the Trinity, the first goal was to study what leaders and teachers of this family of churches believe. A group of

five teachers were identified and surveyed. The goal was to get a general sense of what ICOC members believe and say about the doctrine of the Trinity. In addition to this, a questionnaire was drawn up and filled out by a statistically significant number of members. This questionnaire was sent to churches all over the world to remove any bias. The results were later analyzed.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

The teachers surveyed believe in the Trinity in general, though the church has no binding conviction. They pointed out that the work and role of Jesus seems most important to the ICOC members, while the nature and role of the Holy Spirit needs more teaching. The questionnaire was broken into six sections with the final section used to collect demographic information.

Section one showed that ICOC members in general believe in the crux of the Trinity. 82% of the respondents agree they have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. 94% of the respondents agree that understanding the Trinity helps you better know God. 99% of the respondents agree that there is only one God. 98% of the respondents agree that God has revealed Himself through the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. These values were all consistently strong.

Section two showed a strong conviction and understanding of the role of the Father. 77% of the respondents agree that the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son. 74% of the respondents agree that the Father sent and directed Jesus' actions on Earth. 96% of the respondents agree that the Father is the planner of salvation. 91% of the respondents agree that the Father is the source of the God's Kingdom. These values were consistent regardless of demographics.

Section three showed a lesser understanding on the role and teaching about Jesus Christ, the Son. 90% of the respondents agree that Jesus is fully God and fully man. 86% of the respondents agree that Jesus was active in creation. 75% of the respondents agree that Jesus was active in the

Old Testament. 65% of the respondents disagree that Jesus is lesser than God the Father in power. 77% of the respondents agree that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God. Many different demographics showed a difference of conviction with regard to the Son.

Section four also showed a lesser understanding in role of the Holy Spirit. 97% of the respondents agree that the Spirit is God active in the world today. 87% of the respondents agree that the Spirit was active in creation. 90% of the respondents agree that the Spirit was active in the Old Testament. 91% of the respondents disagree that the Spirit has very little to do with salvation. 63% of the respondents agree that repentance is a primary role of the Spirit. 78% of the respondents agree that the Church today is gifted as the Spirit directs. These results change based on the demographics being studied showing a lack of consistent understanding among the ICOC members.

The fifth section showed that various groups have different patterns of referencing the Trinity in their prayers. 89% of ICOC members always reference the Father in Prayer. 74% of ICOC members always reference the Son, Jesus Christ in Prayer and 21% only reference Jesus in prayer occasionally. 23% of ICOC members always reference the Holy Spirit in Prayer, 42% only reference the Spirit in prayer occasionally, and 28% only reference the Spirit in prayer rarely. These values also change based on the demographics studied.

Non-US members had stronger percentages with Jesus and the Holy Spirit being active in creation, with repentance being a primary role of the Spirit and with referencing both the Father and the Holy Spirit in prayer. They were only weaker in disagreeing that the Holy Spirit has little to do with salvation.

It is noteworthy that as the number of years the respondent was a member of the ICOC increase from less than one year, through one to five, to ten, to twenty years and beyond, the percentage of the values consistently and significantly increased.

It also stood out that ICOC members in the teen ministry consistently agreed less than the average ICOC member and those in the Marrieds ministry consistently agreed more than the average ICOC member.

ICOC members who had served at any time as full-time ministers more strongly agreed that the Father is distinct from Jesus; that Jesus was active in creation and the Old Testament; and they were more likely to reference the Spirit in prayer. These members were less likely to agree that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God and less likely to reference Jesus in prayer.

Those who claimed to have a good understand of the Trinity more strongly agreed that understanding the Trinity helps them better know God; that Jesus was active in the Old Testament; that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God and they more consistently referenced the Holy Spirit in prayer. They were less likely to disagree that Jesus is lesser than God the Father in power.

Those who always referenced the Holy Spirit in prayer more strongly agreed to have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity; that Jesus and the Holy Spirit were active in creation; that the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God and they overwhelmingly reference Jesus more in prayer. They were less likely to agree that the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son.

## **Conclusions**



The ICOC has done a great job in teaching their membership the fundamentals about the doctrine of the Trinity. This is a great result because the traditional church usually downplayed the Trinity and role of the Holy Spirit. In every question the majority of members answered correctly. This shows a strong dependence on scripture to justify their beliefs versus the church's heritage. It also seems that the older the members are (i.e. Marrieds versus Teens) and the longer they have been members, the better this conviction grows. There were a few issues that were discovered. First, regarding Jesus, ICOC members are hesitant to associate Old Testament events directly to Jesus, the Son. His power compared to that of the Father seems to confuse them. Jesus' teaching leading to discipleship was also not very clear. The teachers made it clear that teaching about Jesus was most important. They seemed to understand that this need to better explain Jesus work and role still exists. ICOC members understanding of the Holy Spirit also needs work. They were not strongly aware that He is the key to Biblical repentance and there was also confusion regarding His work in gifting the church today. It is surprising that non-US members understood many of these concepts better than US members. This may be a result of a higher percentage of staff being surveyed from overseas than those done domestically, but it may also suggest that some bias against the Trinity exists in the US. There still remains a great need for the older members to teach the younger. This can help the Teens and those younger in the faith to better grasp these deep truths. Former and present ministers also seem to have a better understanding of this doctrine. This is perhaps because they have had more time to study the Bible and may have even taken classes to better help lead and teach their people. There were clear benefits to having a good understanding of the Trinity and having more specific prayers to the persons of the Trinity. This supports both teaching the doctrine widely and allowing this to teaching to inform the prayer lives of ICOC members.

## **Recommendations from the Study**

The results of this study lead to some recommendations for the ICOC. There seems to be the need for some clear teaching on the role and work of Jesus and especially for the role of the Holy Spirit. The teaching should review the fundamentals of the Trinity. There should be an emphasis on the distinction of the Father from the Son as discussed in the gospel of John, John also shows that the Father directed Jesus during His time on earth. Jesus only spoke what the Father said and did only what the Father directed. This level of obedience shows Christians how they should also be obedient to the Father. They should be taught in detail about the pre-incarnate Christ, which is the work of Christ before the incarnation of the New Testament. This will help them understand that the Son was involved in both creation and the events of the Old Testament. They need to understand that even though the Son and the Father are two different persons with different functions in the salvation of humankind, they are both deity and therefore are equal in power. Finally a look at the teachings of Christ and His Kingdom theology will help them to see that Christians are meant to be Kingdom citizens subject to the rule of God their king. Discipleship to God is key to living as members of God's Kingdom and it is the goal of Jesus instruction.

This teaching on the Trinity should also emphasize many aspects of the Holy Spirit which ICOC members need to understand. The Spirit has been a subject of the Bible since Genesis chapter one and therefore was involved in the creation of the World. They should be taught that we live in the age of the Spirit. This is the time where the Spirit is intimately involved in directing the work of the church and all Christians. As such, He begins and directs the work of repentance in all people both lost and saved. He also gifts the members of the church for the purpose of strengthening the church and bringing everyone to maturity. The Spirit's work drives

evangelism. This work of outreach and conversion of the lost which the ICOC is very committed to continuing.

The groups that are most concerning are the most recent converts, those under one to two years spiritually, and those in the Teen ministry. These groups have the greatest need for the teaching of the Trinity. This need can be easily met by have a new members class where this teaching is readily available. In addition, the Teens should have both an extra study about the Trinity doing their conversion, and a regular class at Teen Camp or in the Teen ministry where this instruction can be given.

Understanding the Trinity helps Christians to better understand God. This study has upheld this belief as those who showed a better understanding of the Trinity had higher percentages of understanding about the work and role of Christ. The Bible is clear that better you know God, they better you can serve God. The lack of depth regarding the Spirit is seen by the lack of prayers referencing the Spirit which is wide spread throughout the ICOC. This has a negative impact on their members. This study has also verified that those who have the Spirit on their mind daily by referencing Him in their prayers also show a higher percentage of understanding the work and role of the Son. Teaching this can be made practical by having more prayers from the pulpit which reference both the Son and the Holy Spirit. This will help as people tend to imitate what they see lived out before them.

Further study of the ICOC will yield even more exciting results. In the current study, no attempt was made to see if gender had any impact on what the members believe. This may be an area explored in the future. Also, not attempt was made to discover if race had any impact on what members believe. This study looked only at the practice of prayer. It might also be beneficial to explore other areas of religious practice such as evangelism, Bible study and peer

mentoring which ICOC members call 'discipling'. These areas are all connected to what ICOC members believe.

To any who wish to follow up on the results of the current study, a few recommendations are worth mentioning. Question 12 seems to have been a bit confusing to some. It would be better to rework this question expecting a positive answer. The study may also have benefitted from surveying many of the larger congregations, which are those having 1000 or more members such as New York, Chicago or L.A. It would be interesting to see what the results of a large congregation compared to a smaller one would look like. It would also be valuable to compare different parts of the US such as the west, southeast and Midwest. People in different parts of the country may have differing convictions in regard to the Trinity. Finally, similar studies can be done on other areas of theology. The goal would be to discover a systematic theology of the ICOC.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire

This survey will be used to evaluate how members of our church understand the Trinity & its implications

	Strongly Agree	Agree	N/A	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
<b>General</b>						
1. I have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
2. I believe understanding the Trinity helps you better know God.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
3. I believe there is only one God.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
4. God has revealed Himself through the Father, Son & Holy Spirit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<hr/>						
<b>Father</b>						
5. I believe the Father is distinct from Jesus, the Son.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
6. I believe the Father sent and directed Jesus actions on Earth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
7. I believe the Father is the planner of salvation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
8. I believe the Father is the source of the God's Kingdom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<hr/>						
<b>Son</b>						
9. I believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
10. I believe that Jesus was active in creation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
11. I believe that Jesus was active in the Old Testament.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
12. I believe Jesus is lesser than God the Father in power.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
13. I believe the end result of Jesus teaching was discipleship to God.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<hr/>						
<b>Holy Spirit</b>						
14. I believe the Spirit is God active in the world today.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
15. I believe the Spirit was active in creation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
16. I believe the Spirit was active in the Old Testament.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
17. I believe the Spirit has very little to do with salvation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
18. I believe that repentance is a primary role of the Spirit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
19. I believe the Church today is gifted as the Spirit directs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<hr/>						
<b>Practical</b>						
20. I reference God the Father in Prayer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
21. I reference Jesus Christ in Prayer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
22. I reference the Holy Spirit in Prayer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<hr/>						
<b>Information</b>						
How many years have you been a disciple?	>1	1-2	3-5	5-10	10-19	20 +
Which ministry are you currently with?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Which Church are you currently a member of?	Teens	Campus	Singles	Marrieds	Seniors	
Have you ever been a minister in the church?	Yes	No				
Are you currently a minister in the church?	Yes	No				

Please provide any additional comments about the Trinity them on the back. Thank you for your response

## **An Essay on the History of the Trinity**

### **Biblical Conclusions**

The nature and role of the Trinity is very misunderstood by church people. First a study of God the Father must be made to show His divinity and personality. This will be followed by similar studies of the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. It must also be shown that these three persons are separate though somehow connected as the one true God.

#### *One God*

The history of the Trinity starts with understanding how the Old Testament Jews understood the nature of God. Though they lived among many different polytheistic societies<sup>121</sup>, they had a strong belief in only one true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Kings 8:60; Isaiah 44:6). This one God was referred to as the creator of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1-2:3). He is always considered to be a singular being. This one God also created mankind in His image (Genesis 1:27). The Law required the Jews to serve Him as the only true God (Deuteronomy 6:13). This belief in monotheism clearly separated Judaism from all other religions practiced in those ancient times; Egyptian<sup>122</sup>, Hittite<sup>123</sup>, Canaanite<sup>124</sup>, Assyrian<sup>125</sup>, Babylonian<sup>126</sup>, Persian<sup>127</sup>, Greek and

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<sup>121</sup> J. I. Packer and M. C. Tenny, *Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), 106-117.

<sup>122</sup> D. C. Browning, Egypt In: *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991) 402-403; W. A. Elwell, Egypt, Egyptians In: *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1988) 982.

<sup>123</sup> W. A. Elwell, 982.

<sup>124</sup> W. A. Elwell, 409; F. E. Eakin, Canaan, History and Religion In: *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991) 227-230.

<sup>125</sup> D. C. Browning, 124.

<sup>126</sup> D. C. Browning, 143-144.

<sup>127</sup> J. I. Packer and M. C. Tenny, 161.



Roman<sup>128</sup>. This God of the Israelites gave His name as Yahweh to Moses (Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3) which was also connected with the phrase ‘I Am’ (Exodus 3:13-14).

The one true creator God was also a way for the Jews to judge false teachers and false beliefs (Leviticus 20:1-5). Believing in or following other ‘gods’ was considered as turning away from the one God of Israel (Psalm 40:4; Jeremiah 13:25; Amos 2:4). The Old Testament law condemned such actions (Deuteronomy 12:13; Joshua 23:7). The Law also condemned anyone who followed other Gods (Deuteronomy 8:19; 17:2-7; 18:9-13). These convictions were summed up in the first and second commands of the Ten Commandments,

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.<sup>129</sup>

The Old Testament also describes many characteristics of the one true God. In addition to His name and work of creation, the Jewish God is considered Eternal (Psalm 90:2). He is before time (Genesis 1:1) and is not affected by time (Psalm 90:4). His power is absolute and without limit (Jeremiah 32:17, 27). He has knowledge of all things (Psalm 130:2-6) and is present at all times and in all places (Psalm 139:7-10, Amos 9:2-4). In Character, God is completely holy (Isaiah 6:3), that is without sin. He is the source of all truth (Isaiah 45:19; 65:16) and He is righteous and loving towards all He has made (Psalm 145:17).

The Jewish God was not a distant God who had little or no relationship with His creation. He not only was the creator of mankind (Genesis 1:26-27), but also searches the hearts of men

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<sup>128</sup> J. I. Packer and M. C. Tenny, 106-107

<sup>129</sup> Deuteronomy 5:7-10 (NIV84)

(Jeremiah 17:10; Psalm 7:9). He brings life to men (Deuteronomy 32:39), fellowships with humankind and teaches them how to live (Exodus 18:20).

Much is made about Him being able to forgive sins (Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18). This is a reason He should be respected and obeyed (Psalm 130:3-4). David reflects on this saying his sins were against God only (Psalm 51:3-5). Indeed all sins are ultimately against God so only He can forgive them. Yet God is praised precisely because He does forgive sins against Him (Micah 7:18-19).

Christianity spawned off from these early Jewish roots. Jesus came teaching about the kingdom of the same Jewish God. He did not ask His followers to follow a different God or live in a way contrary to what is spelled out in the OT. Instead He upheld the OT God and OT teachings to follow Him (Matthew 5:17-20). Jesus taught the need to follow the one true God (Mark 12:29-30). Other teachers in the NT also had a strong belief in one God only (Romans 3:30; Ephesians 4:6; James 2:19). This seemed to allow early Christians to be simply a sect of Judaism (Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22). But their understanding of God grew based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

### *God as Father*

Jesus spoke of the God of the Hebrews often using the term “Father”. He taught His disciples that forgiveness of sins came from their Father in heaven (Mark 11:25). He spoke of coming in the Father’s Glory with His angels (Luke 9:26). This especially seen during His sermon on the mount where Jesus repeatedly refers to God as the Father (Matthew 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8, 14, 15, 19, 26, 32; 7:11). Even their prayers were to be directed to the Father (Matthew 6:9). The Jews seemed to accept this way of talking about God. In John 8:41, they say, “The only Father

we have is God himself.” Jesus clearly identifies the Father as the God of the Hebrews. This also means that the Father bears all the hallmarks of personality and deity.

Jesus takes this one step forward and speaks of God as his literal Father in many places. These references to God as his own Father allowed Jesus to speak of God in a very personal way. He prayed to God as His Father in Gethsemane (Luke 22:42) and from the cross (Luke 23:46). He said that only those who did the will of His father in heaven could enter the kingdom (Matthew 7:21) and that the temple was His father house (Luke 2:49). He used the Aramaic term ‘Abba’ when He prayed directly to the Father in Mark 14:36. In fact most references to the Father that Jesus makes He says “my Father”. Two passages in particular make this clear:

Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.”<sup>130</sup>

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”<sup>131</sup>

Finally, Jesus claimed to do only what His Father does (John 5:30) and say only what His Father tells Him to say (John 8:28, 12:49-50). These claims show Jesus piety but also reveal His deity.

### *Jesus as God*

Jesus identifies completely with the Father. Saying He and the Father are one (John 10:30, 17:11). He is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38, 14:10-11, 17:21), and to see and know Himself is the same as seeing (John 14:9) and knowing the Father (John 8:19, 14:7). His teaching here shows that Jesus can also be identified with the God of the Hebrews. His

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<sup>130</sup> John 8:54, (NIV84)

<sup>131</sup> John 20:7, (NIV84)

contemporary Jews were shocked by this teaching calling it blasphemy and tried to kill Jesus because these claims clearly showed that Jesus was calling Himself God (John 10:31-33, 39)

Jesus identified himself as the Messiah who was to come (John 4:25-26; 9:37; Matthew 26:64). He was asked several times if he was the Messiah or the Christ. Messiah is a Hebrew word for the 'Anointed One' and Christ is the 'Anointed One' in Greek. The title 'Messiah' had many beliefs in connection with it. N.T. Wright adds, "Messiahship ... included leading the victorious battle against Israel's enemies."<sup>132</sup> The Jews of Jesus' day wanted him to be a type of military leader like King David who would overthrow the Roman occupation. Jesus, wanting to avoid this, was very careful to not let Himself be known as the Messiah, even warning His twelve disciples to not tell anyone who He was (Matthew 16:20).

Jesus' actions show marks of divinity. Luke records Him forgiving people's sins. The Paralytic in Luke 5:20 and the sinful woman in Luke 9:48. As discussed earlier, only God Himself had the authority to do this. On one occasion he healed a man as proof of His authority to forgive sins (Luke 5:23-25). His actively working to forgive sins caused the religious leaders to look on Him with suspicion (Luke 5:21). In addition to this we also see several times where Jesus accepted worship from people. He accepted it from His disciples (Matthew 14:33; 28:17), the women at the tomb (Matthew 28:9) and from the blind man He healed (John 9:38). Jesus taught that worship should only be granted to God above (Matthew 4:10), yet he accepted it when given to Himself. Even in John 14:14, when Jesus says, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." seems to imply that He would have prayers directed to Himself in addition to the Father.

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<sup>132</sup> N.T. Wright, *Jesus: and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1996) 485

Jesus teaching as recorded in the gospel of John show His claims about Himself. In seven different ways, He described Himself in terms that were greater than just that of an ordinary man. He was the bread of life (John 6:35), the light of the world (John 8:12), the gate for the sheep (John 10:7), the good shepherd (John 10:11), the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), the way the truth and the life (John 14:6), and the true vine (John 15:1). Each term is introduced using the phrase 'I Am'. His final claim comes in John 8:58 where He says, "Before Abraham was, I Am!" This is a clear reference to Yahweh God as recorded in Exodus. Jesus is identifying Himself with Yahweh<sup>133</sup>.

The most brilliant exposition on the divinity of Jesus is written in the first chapter of John's Gospel. Using the term 'Word' which he later equates with the flesh and blood (v14) Jesus Christ (v17), He gives a developed discussion on who Jesus is. He was in existence since the beginning (v1a), He was with God (v1b) who is later identified as the Father (v14, 18), and He Himself was God in the flesh (v1c). It is restated that Jesus and the Father are distinct persons (v2). All things were made through Him (v3, 10). He had in Him a life that gave light to all humankind (v4, 9). He holds the authority to bring divine rebirth (v13) and adoption (v12). He came from the Father full of grace and truth (v14) and gives grace and truth to others (v17). He alone has seen the Father (v18a) and makes the Father known (v18b).<sup>134</sup>

The final areas where Jesus' divinity is made clear are concerning things that were written and said about Jesus. He claimed to not be guilty of sin. In John 8:46, He asks His accusers, "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" Yet no one of them is able to respond with a single

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<sup>133</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh – A contemporary incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker books, 1991) 27-29.

<sup>134</sup> Millard J. Erickson, 26-27; James R. White, 47-64. There is so much more that could be written about the prologue of John. It is truly a work of art and very high Christology.

charge. Even when He is condemned at his trial of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65), it is not because of any act of sin but by convenience from His confession (Matthew 26:64).<sup>135</sup> Paul states that Christ “had no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Peter says “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found on his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). The writer to the Hebrews says that Christ is “holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26); he calls Jesus our high priest “yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). John affirms that “in him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5). This is significant because Romans 5:12 states that all people sin, but if Jesus does not sin, he is unique among humankind. 1 John 1:5 says, “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all”. If Jesus is also without sin, this is making Him equivalent with God.

The Son also speaks of Himself as existing before the man Jesus, even before Abraham (John 8:58). This is called the pre-incarnate Christ. If the Son existed before the man Jesus, He was able to work and have an impact before the events of the New Testament. John writes that Jesus as the Word existed at the very beginning of creation (John 1:1-2) who became flesh for our benefit (John 1:14). Paul writes that the Father sent His already existent Son at just the right time to come and redeem humankind (Galatians 4:4). Paul further elaborates Jesus was “before all things” and that “all things were created by him and for him” (Colossians 1:15-19). In Philippians 2:6-8, the pre-existence and divine eternal nature of the Son are described:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> W. A. Elwell, and P. W. Comfort, *Tyndale Bible dictionary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001) 1205. The follow argument is developed from this source

<sup>136</sup> Philippians 2:6-8 (NIV84)

These passages show that Jesus, like the Father, has the nature of God and was actively working in creation and the redemption of humankind.

Space prohibits from going into detail about the virgin birth, the resurrection, His predicted 2<sup>nd</sup> coming or His fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic prophecies. These are written to show that much was said about Jesus' divinity outside of the gospels.

Biblically, Jesus shares the attributes of God discussed earlier. He was the Creator of all things (Colossians 1:16), eternal in existence (Colossians 1:17), absolute in power (Matthew 28:18), All knowing (John 21:17), ever present (Matthew 28:20), Holy (Acts 3:14) and giver of truth (John 1:17).

Very early in the movement, belief in Jesus as the Messiah or Christ became the standard of faith (Matthew 16:16). Without faith in Jesus no one could have a true relationship with God (John 3:16). Larry Hurtado writes,

Consequently the Christians of the very early years understood their worship of Jesus as obedience to the express will of God, who had exalted Jesus and had designated him as rightful recipient of devotion ... Worshipping Jesus, thus, was for them actually a requisite demonstration of their reverence for God 'the Father.'"<sup>137</sup>

Jesus became identified with God the Father often by the New Testament writers (2 Corinthians 8:6). The exact explanation of this identity became a question in the early church. This will be further discussed later in this study.

### *The Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is introduced very early in the Bible (Genesis 1:2). He is shown being present and an agent of creation. Later, He is shown as being present everywhere (Psalm 139:7-10). He is primarily seen in the Old Testament as a helper or auxiliary of God to enable people to

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<sup>137</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2003) 641.

do great things (Exodus 31:3; Numbers 11:17). But when we get to the New Testament, the teaching showed that the Holy Spirit was more than once believed.

Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit in the Gospels. Jesus is lead by the Spirit into the desert to be tested by the Devil (Matthew 4:11). He was full of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1). He drove out demons by the power of the Spirit (Matthew 12:28). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). He taught that blaspheming the Holy Spirit is unforgiveable (Luke 12:10). The Holy Spirit would also teach us what to say (Luke 12:12). Jesus promised to send His disciples another advocate or counselor to be with them in John 14:16-17. “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.” The word ‘another’ in this passage is key to understanding what Jesus is saying here. The Greek language has two words to express another. *Heteros* which means, “Another of a different kind” and *allos* which means, “Another of the same kind”. The above passage says that the Father will give them another, *allos*, advocate to be with them. He points out that the Spirit is this other person of the same kind as Jesus. This suggests that the Spirit is more like Jesus than was first believed.

J.I. Packer notes,

In the Old Testament, God’s word and God’s Spirit are parallel figures. God’s word is his almighty speech; God’s Spirit is his almighty breath. Both phrases convey the thought of his power in action. The speech and the breath of God appear together in the record of creation. “The Spirit [breath] of God was hovering over the waters. And God said ... and there was ...” (Gen 1:2-3). “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath [Spirit] of his mouth” (Ps 33:6)<sup>138</sup>

The New Testament identifies the word of God and the person of Christ. If the word of God has divinity so must the Spirit of God. Again a parallel of the two can be shown in Ephesians 5:18 where Paul exhorts us to be “filled with the Spirit” and in Colossians 3:15 where he says “Let the

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<sup>138</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973) 67.



word of Christ dwell in you richly.” In both passages he goes one to give the same directions; speak in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; have gratitude towards God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ; and specific direction to wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves and masters. Jesus says in John 14:26 that “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit ... will remind you of everything I have said to you.” The words of the Old Testament were given to men by the power of the Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). The Word and the Spirit indeed have a deep connection.

The Spirit does many divine works for humankind to help in their relationship with God. Some of these works are; Illumination, where spiritual truths are revealed only by the working of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-14); Conviction, when the Spirit works to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-8); Regeneration, when sinners are spiritually reborn by the working of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11); Indwelling, where the Spirit lives inside of believers and is a source of power & connection to God (1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 2:22; John 7:38-39); Guidance, when the Spirit guides and directs believers way (Acts 8:29; 16:6-7); Sanctification, the continual process of being transformed into the likeness of Christ (Romans 15:16; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2); Fruits of the Spirit, which are character traits of people controlled by the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23); Gifts of the Spirit, which are specific abilities given to believers by God, to serve one another and build up the church (1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Romans 12:6-8); and Intercession, where the Holy Spirit works to help believers communicate with God (Romans 8:26-27).

In addition to this, the Spirit has shown all the hallmarks of divinity.<sup>139</sup> He was called God (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16-18), The Creator (Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13), Eternal (Romans

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<sup>139</sup> Francis Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (Colorado Springs, Co: David C. Cook, 2009) 83-77. The following is an expansion of ideas drawn from this chapter

8:11; Hebrews 9:14), All powerful (Romans 15:19), All knowing (1 Corinthians 2:10-11), present everywhere (Psalm 139:7-10), Holy (John 16:7-14), True (1 John 5:6) and benevolent (Nehemiah 9:20).

### *Personhood*

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit share the attributes of God equally yet they each show unique characteristics of personality. They are often shown working together in Scripture as separate persons. Dr. Norman Geisler writes, “Each individual member of the Trinity is a person, since each is referred to as a person (I, Who). Each has all the basic elements or powers of personhood: mind, will, and feeling.”<sup>140</sup> This shows that a person has individual will or desire, has a mind that thinks and knows, and can express emotions. Dr. Geisler later highlights other personal traits such as the ability to communicate and teach.<sup>141</sup>

The person of the Father is illustrated from the Bible in many ways. Jesus spoke about the will of the father in the sermon of the mount (Matthew 6:9-10) and prayed to do the Father’s will in Gethsemane (Luke 22:42). The Father knows what we need (Matthew 6:32). He loves His son and the world (John 3:16, 35), and has grieved over people (Genesis 6:6-7; 1 Samuel 15:11). He has been lied to (Genesis 18:15; Acts 5:4), blasphemed (Leviticus 24:11; 2 Kings 19:22) and insulted (Isaiah 37:17, 23-24), yet speaks for Himself (Matthew 3:17; Luke 9:35) and has His own identity (Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 3:1).

The person of the Son can also be clearly shown from scripture through the life of Jesus Christ. He consciously made the decision to ignore His own will to follow the will of the Father (Luke 22:42; John 6:38). He knew what was in the hearts of men (John 2:25). Jesus loved His

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<sup>140</sup> Norman Geisler, 287

<sup>141</sup> Norman Geisler, 287

Father (John 14:31) and other people also (Mark 10:21; John 11:5). He was seen as joyful (Luke 10:21), yet also grieving over the death of His friend (John 11:35) and the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). He also had been lied against (Matthew 26:59-60), blasphemed (Luke 12:10) and insulted (Matthew 26:67-68; 1 Peter 2:23), yet He often speaks to others (Luke 5:20; 7:48) and has His own identity (1 John 3:16).

The Holy Spirit also shows all the signs of personhood throughout the scriptures. His will is shown through His gifting of Christians (1 Corinthians 12:11). The Spirit has His own mind (Romans 8:27) and will teach and remind us of what Jesus has said (John 14:26). He loves us (Romans 15:30) and can be grieved by our actions (Isaiah 63:10; Ephesians 4:30). Just as the Father and the Son, He has been lied to (Acts 5:3), blasphemed (Luke 12:10) and insulted (Hebrews 10:29). He also speaks for Himself (Acts 8:29; 13:2) and has His own identity (Acts 15:28; Romans 8:26).

### *Trinity*

The scriptures clearly show there is only one God, yet this God has shown Himself through the three persons known as the Father, often referred to simply as God in the NT; the Son, that is Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit. Each are fully God, yet each maintain a unique identity (Ephesians 4:4-6) and person.

The three persons also collaborate and work together for the purpose of benefiting mankind. This can be seen in the creation of mankind (Isaiah 64:8; Colossians 1:16; Psalm 104:30), the giving of physical and spiritual life (Genesis 2:7; John 5:21; 2 Corinthians 3:6, Romans 8:10-11), giving us strength (Psalm 138:3; Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 3:16), revealing truth (Matthew 16:17; 11:27; Luke 2:26) and giving us direction (Acts 16:6-7; 17:26; Luke 22:10-11).

The three persons work together for the purpose of bringing salvation to mankind. They are each involved in bringing sanctification to the world (1 Thessalonians 5:23; John 17:19; 1 Peter 1:2). They are connected with mankind being justified from sin (Romans 3:23-30; 1 Corinthians 6:11). They give eternal life to all who believe (Romans 6:23; John 10:28; Galatians 6:8) and have actively worked to send ministers to the nations (Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 13:2; 20:28).

There are many passages that name the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together. In speaking about baptism, Matthew 28:19-20 says,

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**. [Emphasis mine]

This verse teaches that all three persons are connected to baptism yet baptism is in the name, which is a singular noun, of one authority. The three persons all share the one authority of God.

In Revelation 1:4-5, a prayer for grace and peace is given.

John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from **him** who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the sevenfold **Spirit** before his throne, and from **Jesus Christ**, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. [Emphasis mine]

They are each connected with the spiritual gifts given to God's people for the purpose of service in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6,

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same **Spirit**.<sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same **Lord**.<sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but the same **God** works all of them in all men. [Emphasis mine]

They are listed together in a similar way, though each has a different focus in the benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14,

May the grace of the Lord **Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all. [Emphasis mine]

They are also contrasted in the various ways they work together to help God's people, called the elect, in 1 Peter 1:1-2,

to God's elect, strangers in the world ...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, through the sanctifying work of the **Spirit**, for obedience to **Jesus Christ** and sprinkling by his blood. [Emphasis mine]

Finally in describing the great salvation that we share, Paul goes into detail regarding how each person of the Trinity works to bring about salvation for mankind in Titus 3:4-7,

But when the kindness and love of **God** our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the **Holy Spirit**, whom he poured out on us generously through **Jesus Christ** our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. [Emphasis mine]

All these passages taken together paint a picture of the one true God operating as three persons to bring salvation to those who follow Him.

Finally, we see the three persons of the Trinity working as one in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, in His Incarnation (Luke 1:35; John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8; Luke 1:35), His Baptism (Matthew 3:16-17), His anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18), in His death (Hebrews 9:14), and in His resurrection (1 Thessalonians 1:10; Galatians 1:1; John 2:19; 10:17-18; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 8:11).

### **From the Ancient Church to ICOC**

Even though the theology of the Trinity is clearly taught in the scriptures, some groups believed that Jesus was a great man but not God. Erickson notes, "To a strong monotheist, the deity of Jesus seems polytheistic."<sup>142</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> century Ebionites<sup>143</sup> for example believed that he

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<sup>142</sup> Millard J. Erickson, 42

<sup>143</sup> Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, 3.27. This ancient source writes the most about this mysterious group that denied the divinity of Jesus.

was a man, but not God. On the other side was the belief in Docetism.<sup>144</sup> This group believed that Jesus was truly divine, but denied His humanity. Both these groups were clearly out of mainstream Christianity. Among those who believed that Jesus was physically a man yet also God, one of the first attempts to explain this was a belief called Modalism also named Sabellism after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century teacher who popularized this belief.<sup>145</sup> This belief states that God can appear as either the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit. He can become whatever mode needed. This belief cannot explain the appearance of all three during Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:16-17. A belief that became popular in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century was Arianism after Arius bishop on Antioch.<sup>146</sup> This belief states that Jesus is an exalted man above all others but is not God like the Father. Scriptures were used to justify this doctrine and it threatened the unity of the faith during a time when Roman hostility to Christianity was softening. During the reign of Emperor Constantine in 325 AD, the first of the so called ecumenical councils was held in Nicea.<sup>147</sup> The bishops met in part to decide how to unite Christianity in this matter. They decided to use the greek term "homoousios" to define the nature of Jesus and the Father as having the same nature. The result was Arianism was condemned and Arius was excommunicated. The Creed that was formalized through this process came to be known as the Nicene Creed.

We believe in one God, the Father All-sovereign, maker of all thing visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one substance [homoousios] with the Father, through whom all things were made, things in heaven and things on the earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and became man, suffered, and rose on the third day, ascended into the heavens, and is coming to judge the living and the dead;

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<sup>144</sup> Millard J. Erickson, 44-47. Norman Geisler, 295. "Docetism affirms the deity of Christ but denies His humanity, claiming it was only an apparent, but not real, humanity."

<sup>145</sup> Norman Geisler, 295. "Modalism holds that God is only one person who appears in different modes."

<sup>146</sup> <sup>146</sup> Millard J. Erickson, 50-53. Norman Geisler, 295.

<sup>147</sup> John M. Oakes, *The Christian Story: Finding the Church in Church History* (Spring, Texas: Illuminations Publishers, 2012) 158.

And in the Holy Spirit.<sup>148</sup>

This decision was far from final and over the next fifty-six years Arianism became popular and again threatened the truth of orthodox beliefs. The three Cappadocian fathers<sup>149</sup>, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa added a new component to the discussion about the Trinity, the greek term ‘hypostasis’<sup>150</sup>. They could now speak of Jesus and the Father and the Spirit being one essence [homoousios] and three persons [hypostasis]. They along with other bishops met again at Constantinople in 381 and reaffirmed the Nicene Creed as well as defeating Arianism.<sup>151</sup> A new creed was drawn up explaining these decisions.

We 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 the Son of God, begotten from the Father, before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into existence, Who, because of us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended to heaven, and, sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of Whose kingdom there will be no end;  
And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who, with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.<sup>152</sup>

The nature of who Jesus is was also a question which many discussed. The council of Chalcedon in 451 finally answered these questions by the bishops affirming the nature of Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man. This mystery called hypostatic union<sup>153</sup>, could not be fully described but was the result of careful Biblical study.

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<sup>148</sup> John M. Oakes, 161

<sup>149</sup> John N. Oakes, 181-189.

<sup>150</sup> John N. Oakes, 182.

<sup>151</sup> John N. Oakes, 189-192.

<sup>152</sup> John M. Oakes, 190-191.

<sup>153</sup> John M. Oakes, 234.

In agreement, therefore, with the holy fathers we all unanimously teach that we should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son; the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same of a rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father in Godhead, and the same consubstantial [homoousios] with us in manhood; like us in all things except sin; begotten of the Father before all ages as regards his Godhead and in the last days the same, for us and for our salvation, begotten of the Virgin Mary the *Theotokos* as regards his manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union but the properties of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one person (*prosopon*) and one substance (hypostasis), not parted or divided into two persons but one and the same Son, only-begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets of old and Jesus Christ himself have taught us about him, and the creed of our fathers has handed down.<sup>154</sup>

These creeds formed what became the test of Christian orthodoxy for many years to come. In fact most Christian groups through the Byzantine Period<sup>155</sup> and into the Reformation<sup>156</sup> affirmed the doctrine of Trinity as laid out in these creeds.

In addition to the ecumenical councils and the Creeds they drew up, there is a trail of Trinitarian thought that was captured in the letters written by Christian leaders from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century through till the 5<sup>th</sup> century. These show that while there was debate regarding the exact wording of this doctrine, there was a strong conviction that always existed. Some of these leaders are: 1<sup>st</sup> century Clement of Rome (c. 96);<sup>157</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> century Justin Martyr (c. 160),<sup>158</sup> Athenagoras (c. 175),<sup>159</sup> Irenaeus (c. 180),<sup>160</sup> Clement of Alexandria (c. 195);<sup>161</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> century Tertullian (c. 212),<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> John M. Oakes, 233.

<sup>155</sup> John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham Press, 1979) 180.

<sup>156</sup> Norman Geisler, 303-306.

<sup>157</sup> Clement, "The Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians", in *The Apostolic Fathers*, edited by Micheal W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999) 95.

<sup>158</sup> Justin Martyr, 1.164.

<sup>159</sup> Athenagorus, 2.133-134.

<sup>160</sup> Irenaeus, 1.446.

<sup>161</sup> Clement of Alexandria, 2.220, 2.295.

<sup>162</sup> Tertullian, 4.99, 3.598, 3.603-604, 3.621.



Hippolytus (c. 205),<sup>163</sup> Origen (c. 225),<sup>164</sup> Cyprian (c. 250);<sup>165</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> century Augustine (426),<sup>166</sup> and many more through the Reformation period. This doctrine along with the creeds stayed prominent during this period.<sup>167</sup>

By the time of the Restoration Movement started by Thomas & Alexander Campbell, there was a rejection of all creeds. Jacoby notes that “In the Restoration movement, especially in the 19th century, there was a reaction against trinitarian language.”<sup>168</sup> Mattox writes that “the Campbells rejected all creeds as anti-christian and a hindrance to unity on the basis of the Bible alone.”<sup>169</sup> Oakes writes that the Restoration Movement churches (Church of Christ, Christian Church) believe “the Creeds in general are nonbiblical, and the decisions of the councils carry absolutely no authority whatsoever.”<sup>170</sup>

Against this background of the traditional Church of Christ, the ICOC was formed. On March 11, 2006 a document called the Plan for Unified Cooperation was written up and accepted today by 96% of ICOC churches.<sup>171</sup> It included a section of stated shared beliefs. The following was written:

***GOD: Father, Son and Holy Spirit***

We believe in and we surrender our lives to the one God who made the heavens and earth and who breathed life into humanity. We worship and praise the Father who spoke the world into existence. We worship and praise Jesus, the Son, who died upon the cross to redeem us from sin. We worship and praise the Holy Spirit who is the seal of our salvation.

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<sup>163</sup> Hippolytus, 5.226, 5.228,

<sup>164</sup> Origen, 4.252, 4.255, 4.380

<sup>165</sup> Cyprian, 5.323, 5.380, 5.423; David W Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs: A Reference Guide to More Than 700 Topics Discussed by the Early Church Fathers* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998) 652-656. All the dates have been taken from Bercot’s book.

<sup>166</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 11.10, 11.28.

<sup>167</sup> Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988) 430.

<sup>168</sup> Douglas Jacoby, “The Trinity,” in *Our God is an Awesome God* (Boston, MA: 1999)

<sup>169</sup> F. W. Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom: A History of the Church* (Lubbock, Texas: Gospel light publishing, 1961) 336.

<sup>170</sup> John M. Oakes, 235.

<sup>171</sup> 2015ICOCSurveySummaryandAnalysis, Roger Lamb to ICOC delegates, February 23, 2016

1. **Our eternal purpose** is to know God and to glorify him as God, and let our life shine so others will see God. Our devotion and ultimate loyalties are to the Father, who is over all and in all and through all; to Jesus the Son, who has been declared both Lord and Christ; and to the Holy Spirit, who lives in us and empowers us to overcome the workings of the sinful nature (Acts 2:22-36, Romans 8:12-28).<sup>172</sup>

This is the closest statement written and agreed to by a majority of ICOC churches that addresses their belief regarding the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without using the word Trinity.

### **Contemporary Writings**

In the last 40 years there has been a renewed interest in the Trinity as taught in the Bible and described by the early creedal statements.<sup>173</sup> Most have upheld the orthodoxy of this belief understanding that it is a mystery of the faith which can't be fully fathomed. The biggest issue concerning the Trinity today is how the three persons relate to one another in eternity. Some say that the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father and the Holy Spirit eternally subordinate to both the Father and the Son.<sup>174</sup> Others suggest this subordination is temporary for the purpose of bringing salvation to humankind.<sup>175</sup> Another issue, with origins in the nineteenth century, is Kenotic Christology.<sup>176</sup> This theology tries to explain the Incarnation of Christ through Jesus emptying himself of His divine attributes in various ways.<sup>177</sup> Theologians then use the various Kenotic theory to better inform their version of Trinity. A final area of much discussion deals with looking at Trinitarian theology with the tools of analytic philosophical theology.<sup>178</sup> The key

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<sup>172</sup> Plan for Unified Cooperation, Unity Proposal Group to ICOC church leaders, March 11, 2006

<sup>173</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Who's Tampering with the Trinity: an Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 2009) 22.

<sup>174</sup> Millard J. Erickson, 27-54.

<sup>175</sup> Millard J. Erickson, 55-81.

<sup>176</sup> Millard J. Erickson, 78

<sup>177</sup> H. Wayne House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992) 57-58

<sup>178</sup> Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism: Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010) 4

here is to have “dialogue between Christian philosophers in the analytic tradition and Christian theologians.”<sup>179</sup> They have often been enemies and this work seeks to strengthen the results of both by having them work together. None of these contemporary concerns will be considered for this study.

### **Summary**

The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly laid out in scripture and has a rich heritage from the first century until today. The belief in one God consisting of three coequal, coeternal persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has been discussed and analyzed from many angles, but the heart of the matter has not been disputed. Even today, much of the discussion on the Trinity is nuanced on finer points not at the fundamentals. However the foundations on which the ICOC was built were openly hostile to the doctrine. This gives us a lack of clarity into what the current members of the ICOC believe about the Trinity and how this affects them in prayer. This study seeks to bring clarity on these issues.

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<sup>179</sup> Dean Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” in *persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 3.

## Trinity Research

This appendix is a chapter that goes deeper into the Biblical underpinnings of the Trinity.

The focus is to use only scripture to define and make classifications regarding the Trinity.

Eastmon's Bible dictionary has an entry for the Trinity which reads as follows:

A word not found in Scripture, but used to express the doctrine of the unity of God as subsisting in three distinct Persons. This word is derived from the Grk. trias, first used by Theophilus (A.D. 168-183), or from the Lat. trinitas, first used by Tertullian (A.D. 220), to express this doctrine.

- The propositions involved in the doctrine are these:
  1. That God is one, and that there is but one God (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:10; 44:6, 8; 45:5; Mark 12:29, 32; John 10:30).
  2. That the Father is a distinct divine Person (hypostasis, subsistentia, persona, suppositum intellectuale), distinct from the Son and the Holy Spirit.
  3. That Jesus Christ was truly God, and yet was a Person distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit.
  4. That the Holy Spirit is also a distinct divine Person. <sup>180</sup>

God has one essence but has revealed three personalities (Deuteronomy 6:4, Matthew 28:19).

*Table 55. Ontological Trinity*

(Deity)	<b>Father</b>	<b>Son</b>	<b>Holy Spirit</b>
<b>Called God</b>	1 Corinthians 1:3, 8:6; Philippians 1:2	John 1:1, 14, 18; Titus 2:13	1 Corinthians 3:16-18; Acts 5:3-4
<b>Creator</b>	Isaiah 44:24; Psalm 102:25	John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17	Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13
<b>Eternal</b>	Psalm 90:2	John 1:2; Revelation 1:8, 17	Romans 8:11; Hebrews 9:14
<b>Power</b>	1 Peter 1:5	2 Corinthians 12:9; Matthew 28:18	Romans 15:19
<b>All knowing</b>	1 John 3:20	John 16:30, 21:17	1 Cor. 2:10-11
<b>Everywhere</b>	1 Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:24	Matthew 28:20	Psalm 139:7-10
<b>Holiness</b>	Revelation 15:4	Acts 3:14	John 16:7-14
<b>Truth</b>	John 7:28	Revelation 3:7	1 John 5:6
<b>Benevolence</b>	Rom. 2:4	Ephesians 5:25	Nehemiah 9:20
<b>Source of Scripture</b>	2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21	John 1:1, 14; 5:39	2 Peter 1:21; Acts 1:16

<sup>180</sup>M.G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996) c1897

Each person of the Trinity fully shares the attributes of God yet each person has been described independently by scripture. Table 1 can be used to reference how each person of the Trinity is also divine.

*Table 56. Personalities of the Trinity*

(Person)	<b>Father</b>	<b>Son</b>	<b>Holy Spirit</b>
<b>A Will</b>	Luke 22:42; Matthew 6:9-10	Luke 22:42; John 6:38	1 Corinthians 12:11
<b>An Intellect</b>	Matthew 6:32	John 2:25	Romans 8:27; John 14:26
<b>Loves</b>	John 3:16	Mark 10:21; John 11:5	Romans 15:30
<b>Joy</b>	Isaiah 65:19; Zephaniah 3:17	Luke 10:21; Hebrews 12:2	(1 Thessalonians 1:6; Galatians 5:22)
<b>Grieves</b>	Genesis 6:6-7; 1 Samuel 15:11	John 11:35; Luke 19:41	Isaiah 63:10; Ephesians 4:30
<b>Speaks</b>	Matthew 3:17; Luke 9:35	Luke 5:20, 7:48	Acts 8:29, 13:2
<b>Integrity (uniqueness)</b>	Ephesians 4:6	Ephesians 4:5	Ephesians 4:4
<b>Identity</b>	Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 3:1	1 John 3:16	Acts 15:28; Romans 8:26
<b>Lied to</b>	Genesis 18:15; Acts 5:4	Matthew 26:59-60	Acts 5:3
<b>Blasphemed</b>	Leviticus 24:11; 2 Kings 19:22	Luke 12:10	Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10
<b>Insulted</b>	Isaiah 37:17, 23-24	Matthew 26:67-68; 1 Peter 2:23	Hebrews 10:29

Each person of the Trinity has all the characteristics of unique personality. Although the Trinity is one essence, each Person is distinct from the others.

*Table 57. Trinity Benefits Humanity*

(Actions with mankind)	<b>Father</b>	<b>Son</b>	<b>Holy Spirit</b>
<b>Creator of Man</b>	Isaiah 64:8	Colossians 1:16	Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30
<b>Searches the Heart</b>	Jeremiah 17:10	Revelation 2:23	1 Corinthians 2:10
<b>Life giver</b>	Genesis 2:7; John 5:21	John 1:3-4, 5:21	2 Corinthians 3:6; Romans 8:10-11
<b>Fellowship</b>	1 John 1:3	1 Corinthians 1:9	2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 2:1
<b>Teaches Men</b>	Isaiah 54:13, 48:17	Luke 21:15	John 14:26

<b>Strengthens Believers</b>	Psalm 138:3	Philippians 4:13	Ephesians 3:16
<b>Reveals Truth</b>	Matthew 11:25, 16:17	Matthew 11:27	Luke 2:26; Ephesians 3:5; 1Corinthians 2:10
<b>Directs Men</b>	Genesis 12:1; Acts 17:26	Mark 11:16; Luke 22:10-11	Acts 8:29, 16:6-7
<b>Prayer for Grace &amp; Peace</b>	Revelation 1:4-5	Revelation 1:4-5	Revelation 1:4-5
<b>Work through the Gifts</b>	1 Corinthians 12:6	1 Corinthians 12:5	1 Corinthians 12:4

Each person of the Trinity works with humanity for their benefit. Table 3 shows some of the specific ways humankind benefits from the work of the members of the Trinity.

*Table 58. The Trinity and Salvation*

(Salvation)	<b>Father</b>	<b>Son</b>	<b>Holy Spirit</b>
<b>Baptism</b>	Matthew 28:19-20	Matthew 28:19-20	Matthew 28:19-20
<b>Sanctifies</b>	1 Thessalonians 5:23	Hebrews 10:29; John 17:19	1 Peter 1:2
<b>Justified</b>	Romans 3:23-30	Romans 5:9; Galatians 2:16	1 Corinthians 6:11
<b>Adoption</b>	Galatians 4:4-7	Galatians 4:4-7	Galatians 4:4-7
<b>Gives Eternal Life</b>	Romans 6:23	John 10:28	Galatians 6:8; Jude 21
<b>Sends Ministers</b>	Jeremiah 26:5; Galatians 1:1	Ephesians 4:11; Matthew 10:5	Acts 20:28; 13:2
<b>Salvation of Man</b>	1 Peter 1:2; Titus 3:4-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13	1 Peter 1:2; Titus 3:4-6	2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Titus 3:4-6

Each person of the Trinity works to achieve salvation for humanity. Table 4 highlights how each person of the Trinity works to achieve this.

*Table 59. The Economic Roles of the Trinity in the Life of Jesus*

(Roles)	<b>Father</b>	<b>Son</b>	<b>Holy Spirit</b>
<b>The Incarnation</b>	Luke 1:35	John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-8	Luke 1:35
<b>Baptism of Christ</b>	Matthew 3:17	Matthew 3:16	Matthew 3:16
<b>Anointing of Christ</b>	Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18	Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18	Acts 10:38
<b>Testifies to Christ</b>	John 5:37, 8:18	John 5:36, 8:18	John 15:26; Hebrews 10:15-17

<b>Death of Christ</b>	Hebrews 9:14	Hebrews 9:14	Hebrews 9:14
<b>Resurrects Jesus</b>	1 Thessalonians 1:10; Galatians 1:1	John 2:19, 10:17-18	1 Peter 3:18; Romans 8:11
<b>Session of Christ</b>	Acts 2:33, 7:55	Acts 2:33, 7:55; 1 Peter 3:22	Acts 2:33, 7:55

Each person of the Trinity has a unique role in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The Trinity was working throughout His life. Table 5 show how each person worked through each event.

*Table 60. Economic Works of the Trinity*

(Topic)	<b>Father</b>	<b>Son</b>	<b>Holy Spirit</b>
Acts 10:38 (Jesus' Anointing)	Anointer	Anointed	Anointing
Romans 14:17-18 (Kingdom Living)	Pleasing to	Serving	By righteousness, peace and joy in
Romans 15:15-16 (Ministers)	Make offerings acceptable to	Ministers of	Sanctified by
2 Corinthians 13:14 (Benediction)	Love for us	Grace for us	Fellowship with us
Galatians 4:4-7 (Adoption)	Sender	To redeem	Build intimate relationship
Ephesians 2:18 (Relationship)	Access to	Through His work	By way of
Ephesians 3:14-17 (Prayer for Strength)	Strengthened by	To have heart dwell on	Through the inner being of
2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 (Saved)	Being chosen from the beginning	To share in His glory	through sanctifying work of
Titus 3:4-7 (Salvation)	Kindness & Love (Planner)	Poured out through (Accomplish)	Rebirth & renewal (Agent)
Hebrews 9:14 (Jesus Death)	Offered unto	Offered His blood	Offered by means of
1 Peter 1:2 (Chosen)	by Foreknowledge	for Obedience	through Sanctification

Table 6 shows the unique role of each person in their working for us. Even though the Trinity is the existence of one being. This shows that each person of the Trinity has specific tasks in that work.

## Relationships

Each member of the Trinity relates uniquely to the others. The following charts seek to highlight the various ways each member of the Trinity relates to the others.

*Table 61. Relationship of the Father & the Son*

(Relationship)	Father	Son
Father sends the Son	Galatians 4:4; 1 John 4:14; Romans 8:3	
Father directs the Son	Mark 12:36	
Son speaks for the Father		John 8:28, 12:49
Son is advocate to Father		1 John 2:1
Son intercedes to Father		Romans 8:34
Son makes Father known		John 17:26
They love each other	John 3:35, 5:20	John 14:31
They glorify each other	John 17:1, 5	John 17:1, 4
They know each other	John 7:29, 8:55	Matthew 11:26; John 10:15

The person of the Son and the Father have distinct roles and yet they also love, glorify and know each other. The Father sent the Son and directed His life. The Son made the Father's will known and spoke for Him.

*Table 62. Additional divine attributes belonging to both the Father & the Son*

(Divine Equity)	Father	Son
Unchanging Nature	James 1:7; Malachi 3:6	Hebrews 13:8; John 8:58
Forgiving Sins	Psalms 130:4; Mark 11:25	Luke 5:24, 7:48
Received Prayer	John 17:1, Ephesians 3:14	Acts 7:59; 2 Corinthians 12:8; (John 14:14)
Received Worship	Matthew 10:4; John 4:21	Matthew 2:11, 14:33, 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52; John 9:38; Hebrews 1:6
Has a Judgment Seat	Romans 14:10	2 Corinthians 5:10
Honor Son as Father	John 5:23	John 5:23

These are additional divine attributes given in scripture that are shared by the Father and the Son. Both are able to forgive sins and have an unchanging nature. Both are have received prayer and are worshipped as God. They are to be equally honored.

*Table 63. Relationship of the Father and the Holy Spirit*

(Relationship)	Father	Holy Spirit
Father sends the Spirit	John 14:26; Galatians 4:6	



Spirit is advocate to Father		John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7
Spirit intercedes to Father		Romans 8:26-27
Knows the Father's mind		1 Corinthians 2:11
Spirit makes Father known		1 Corinthians 2:10-12

The Father and the Spirit have unique roles. The Old Testament testifies to their partnership from the very beginning (Genesis 1). In the New Testament, the Father has sent the Spirit to work on His behalf. The Spirit makes the Father and His will known. The Spirit also works as an intermediary between the Father and God's people.

*Table 64. Relationship of the Son and the Holy Spirit*

(Relationship)	Son	Holy Spirit
Son sends the Spirit	John 15:26, 16:7	
Spirit speaks for the Son		John 16:13-15
Spirit glorifies the Son		John 16:14
Spirit makes Son Known		John 16:14-15
Spirit empowered Jesus		Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38
Spirit lead Son into testing		Matt 4:11; Mark 1:9; Luke 4:1
Jesus is the living word	John 1:1, 14	
Spirit directs the word		2 Peter 2:21; Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:16

The Son and the Spirit have different roles. Jesus sent the Spirit to be our advocate to the Father. The Spirit worked to empower Jesus ministry. Both have a role in delivering us Scripture. Jesus is the living word, while the Spirit worked to get the written word to us.

The following scriptures also mention the three persons of the trinity but have not been used in any of the discussions above: Matthew 12:18; Mark 12:36; Luke 1:15-17; Luke 4:18; Luke 10:21; John 3:34; John 14:16-17,26; John 15:26-27; John 16:13-15; Acts 1:4-5; Acts 7:55; Acts 11:15, 17; Romans 8:9; Romans 14:17-18; Romans 15:15-16; Romans 15:30; 1 Corinthians 6:17-20; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 2 Corinthians 3:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 2:13, 18; Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 1:6-8; 2 Timothy 1:7-8; 1 Peter 3:18; Jude 20-21.

## Summary

The Father is the Source of all things visible and invisible. He is the Sender of the Son and the Spirit and the Planner of salvation as we have received it. He is the ultimate provider of all things to His people.

The Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the Achiever of salvation. He actually did the work to secure forgiveness from God and a place for His people in the Kingdom by His death burial and resurrection. He is the Accomplisher of the faith. Also called the Author and Perfecter of the faithful. Jesus modeled for His people what a life live for God looks like and has become both Lord and Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the Applier of Salvation. He does the work of getting God's word down as scripture, then uses that scripture to convicts the hearts of people. He is instrumental in bring about repentance to the contrite. He indwells those who are saved, gifts them with abilities to serve the church and works the process of sanctification to continually transform them into the image of Christ. He is the Agent of God by dispensing His power. He is an Advocate who intercedes to the Father on behalf of God's people. He is a divine counselor who convicts hearts, convinces minds and converts souls.

### Old Testament Trinity

There are a few passages written in the Old Testament that seem to suggest a plurality of persons within the Godhead. These would not have been immediately obvious to the ancient Jewish reader, but after the life and ministry of Jesus, they stand out as veiled hints to a Trinitarian God.

Genesis 1:26 *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

- Genesis 3:22 *And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.*
- Genesis 11:7 *Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”*
- Isaiah 6:8 *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”*

\*The underlines are added for emphasis

These passages show a plurality of God is self-expressed in many places. While these usages could be considered majestic plurals or non-monotheistic references, they are only seen in this light by non-Christians.

There are also passages in the book of Isaiah that show a trinity of persons in the Godhead.

- Isaiah 11:2-3 ***The Spirit of the LORD** will rest on **him**—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—<sup>3</sup> and **he** will delight in the fear of the LORD.*
- Isaiah 42:1 *“Here is **my servant**, whom I uphold, my **chosen one** in whom I delight; I will put my **Spirit** on **him** and **he** will bring justice to the nations. (Matt. 12:18)*
- Isaiah 48:16 *“Come near **me** and listen to this: “From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there.” And now the Sovereign LORD has sent **me**, with his **Spirit**.*
- Isaiah 61:1 ***The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD** is on **me**, because the LORD has anointed **me** to preach good news to the poor. He has sent **me** to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, (Luke 4:18)*
- Isaiah 63:9-10 *In all their distress he too was distressed, and **the angel of his presence** saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. <sup>10</sup> Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.*

\* Old Testament references to the Trinity: **The Spirit**, the LORD (Father) and **He** (Jesus)

These passages show that the ministry of the Messiah is deeply connected to God himself.

The Messiah seems to be an extension of the Old Testament God. The Messiah and the Spirit will work to fulfill the will of God.

#### Angel of the Lord

The physical manifestation of the Son in the Old Testament has been seen in the Angel of the Lord. No one has ever seen God the Father (John 1:18) but The Angel of the Lord operated as

God in the Old Testament being praised and revered as God. Logic leads to the conclusion that this was none other than Old Testament manifestation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity since the Spirit and the Father are always unseen.

In Genesis 16:7-14, Hagar refers to the angel of the LORD who visited her as Yahweh God. He also promised to increase her descendants (16:10) which only God can do.

In Genesis 18 & 19, Abraham is visited by three men (18:2) who ate (18:8), walked (18:16) and spoke face to face with him (18:22-33). Yet when two of them walked away (18:22), they are called angels in Genesis 19:1, 15, who had the power to strike men with blindness (19:11). The one visitor who remained with Abraham was referred to as Yahweh (18:17, 19, 18, 20, 22, 26, 33), claimed to have chosen Abraham (18:19) and claimed power over the lives of Sodom and Gomorrah which only God had. Again this Angel of the Lord called out to Abraham in Genesis 22:11, 15, to save Isaac and restate the promises given by Yahweh.

In Exodus 3:2, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush and addressed him as the God of his ancestors and by the name ‘Yahweh’ (3:14). He gave Moses his calling and the staff to work signs.

In Numbers 22:22-35, the Angel of the Lord physically visited Balaam to warn him before meeting with Balak. When the Angel of the Lord tells Balaam to speak only what He says (22:35), Balaam tells Balak that he can only speak what God says (22:38), equating the Angel of the Lord with God Himself.

In Judges 6:11-23, the Angel of the Lord physically visited Gideon and spoke with him. He is also referred to as Yahweh (6:14, 16, 18) and He sends Gideon to go against the Midianites (6:14). Later, Gideon makes an offering to the Angel of the Lord and when the Angel disappears,

Gideon realizes who He is and fears that he will die (6:22-23). This is based on God telling Moses, in Exodus 33:20, that no one may see the face of the Lord and live.

Finally in Judges 13:3-21, Samson's parents are visited by the Angel of the Lord. He appears to them as a man yet ascended in the flames of altar fire. Manoah and his wife were afraid when they realized that He was the Angel of the Lord (13:21). He believed this was the same as seeing God Himself (13:22).<sup>181</sup>

The Angel of the Lord is a different person than the Lord.<sup>182</sup> In Zechariah 1:12-13, a conversation takes place between the Angel of the Lord and God Almighty. They are seen here conversing as two individuals would. This is very similar to the conversation between the Father and the Son in Psalm 110:1. Here is an Old Testament example of two persons in Yahweh.

Geisler brings these strands together as a proof that the Angel of the Lord is in fact Christ.<sup>183</sup> "First, the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament serves the same role as does Christ in the New Testament." The Father plans and sends the redeemer, while the Son is the redeemer.

Isaiah 63:7-9 (NIV84)

I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD [the Father], the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us—yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. He said, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me"; and so he became their Savior. In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence [the Son] saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

"Second, once the Son (Christ) came in permanent incarnate form (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 4:2), never again does the Angel of the Lord appear... No Angel that commands or accepts worship or claims to be God ever appears again." These observations are strong proofs.

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<sup>181</sup> H. Wayne House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992) 59.

<sup>182</sup> Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology, vol. 2* (Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2003) 600.

<sup>183</sup> Norman Geisler, 600.

The Angel of the Lord as the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity, shows that the Son was actively involved in the events of the Old Testament along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This shows that the concept of the Trinity does exist in the Old Testament though not as clearly as in the New Testament.