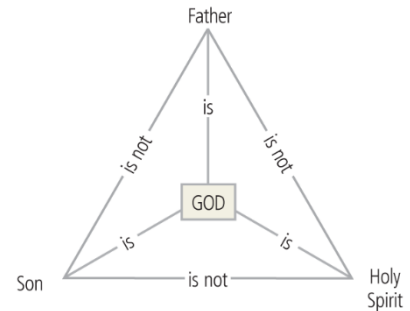


The Triune God of the Bible

The “God” the reader of Genesis meets after the words “In the beginning” is triune. Triune is preferred over Trinity because the “u-n-e” reminds the reader of God’s unity; while the “t-r-i” directs the focus on three. Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, perfectly united as the One true and living God of the Universe and beyond. The first hint of “tri” is seen in the Hebrew word Elohim which is a plural masculine noun. One would expect the word to be singular like Yahweh (the LORD) in Genesis 2:4. Next, the reader hears God say, “Let us make...”, the plural pronoun doesn’t seem to fit. Is this another hint? We use the word hint because we cannot be dogmatic this early in the Bible. An Orthodox Jew would not agree that the “us” and “our” image of 1:26 points to plurality or tri-unity. Is the “Spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2 the third Person of the Triune God?



The triunity of God becomes much clearer in the NT. In Matthew 28:19, baptisms are to be done in the name (singular) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Notice the command isn’t “baptize in the names” (plural). God is one, yet believers are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At the baptism of Christ, Jesus is standing in the Jordan River, the heavens open and the Spirit of God descends like a dove and rests on Christ, while simultaneously a voice from heaven says, “This is my beloved Son” (Matt 3:13-17). The voice is in heaven, calling the man in the water His Son—this must be His Father. Paul ends his second letter to the church at Corinth with this benediction: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2Co 3:14). In John 14:10, Jesus says, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” The unity in the Godhead is so connected that both Paul and Peter refer to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9, 1Pe 1:11). The Trinity makes this possible (see the diagram above and the Triune God chart from the ESV Study Bible, Crossway, 2008).

Four Tenants of Truth Concerning the Triune God	
1.	There is one and only One true and living God.
2.	This one God eternally exists in 3 persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
3.	These three Persons are completely equal in attributes, each with the same divine nature.
4.	While each Person is fully and completely God, the three Persons are not identical.

The words Father and Son speak to how the Persons of the Triune God relate to one another. The Son is not the Father or the Spirit. The same can be said for the Spirit—who is not the Son or the Father. Throughout John, Jesus emphasizes that the Father sent Him (5:27). The Father anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:28). The Son does the will of His Father even to the point of the cross (Luke 22:42). Yet, sometimes the Bible blurs these lines of division. In Romans 8, Paul says the Holy Spirit raised Christ from the dead, but in Galatians 1:1, Paul says God did it. Yet in John 2, Jesus says, He will raise up the temple of His body (2:19). Only Christ died for the sins of the whole world, yet Paul speaks of God as the Savior. Consider 1 Timothy 1:1: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.” We are not expecting God to be the Savior, yet Paul can call the “Father our Savior” because of the unity in Being, purpose, objectives, will, and intent.

The God of the Bible, the God of Christianity, is monotheistic. The prefix mono means one, while theism deals with belief in the existence of a God or gods. (See the chart below as it relates to three major views of God). Deuteronomy 6:4 plainly states “Hear, O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one!” (LSB). Yet Islam and Judaism charge Christianity with not being monotheistic. This is because others do not understand the unity, the oneness, of the Triune God of the Bible. In 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul agrees that there is one God, yet he separates the Son of God from the Father as the one mediator between God and man. Paul affirms monotheism while presenting distinctions found in roles and responsibilities—like Jesus is the one mediator between God and man. The Father is not the mediator, and the Spirit is not the mediator. Christ is the one making intercession (Heb 7:25). Is He interceding for you before His Father?

Religious Worldviews*	God	Creation	Major Religions
Theism	A Person God	God Made it All	Christianity, Judaism, Islam
Pantheism	Impersonal God	God is All	Zen, Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age
Atheism	No God	No God at All	Religious Humanism

*Geisler, Norman L., Frank Turek, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, Wheaton, Ill, Crossway, 2004.