

Three Essentials of the Trinity

Summary: Theologians distinguish between Who God is as Trinity (essentially) and how this same Trinity operates in history (missional).

- A. Immanence (ontological/essence)**: describes Whom the Trinity is apart from the created order (the nature of the Trinity). The eternal relations distinguish the persons of the Trinity without separation: Father (paternity/unbegotten), Son (filiation/begotten), and Spirit (spiration). God exists as one being, one essence, with one power, nature, and will. His essence does not increase or diminish by anything outside Himself, including anything or anyone created.
- B. Economic (missional/appropriations)**: how this Triune God behaves towards creation and the created order in time. How each person of the Trinity “acts” in time is consistent, though not constituting, eternal relations. All of God’s work are inseparable, for God is one. He does not have parts and is not compounded by anything.

*How God acts in history, among His creatures, does not constitute Who He is essentially. However, each person of the indivisible Triune God acts “appropriately” according to Their eternal relations. The missional acts of God are not to be imputed back to the immanence (essence). While how God acts reflects Who He is, it does not constitute Him.

Who, then, is He essentially?