

Scholars Who Affirm the Working Together of the Three of the Divine Trinity

But in the case of the Divine nature we do not similarly learn that the Father does anything by Himself in which the Son does not work conjointly, or again that the Son has any special operation apart from the Holy Spirit; but every operation which extends from God to the Creation, and is named according to our variable conceptions of it, has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit. - Gregory of Nyssa, "On Not Three Gods," *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, Volume 5*, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1892, 1979), p. 334

[T]he will of the Father and the Son is one, and their working indivisible. In like manner, then, let him understand the incarnation and nativity of the Virgin, wherein the Son is understood as sent, to have been wrought by one and the same operation of the Father and of the Son indivisibly; the Holy Spirit certainly not being thence excluded, of whom it is expressly said, "She was found with child by the Holy Ghost." - Augustine, "On the Holy Trinity," *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I, Volume 3*, Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887, 1978), p. 41

The Son indeed and not the Father was born of the Virgin Mary; but this very birth of the Son, not of the Father, was the work both of the Father and the Son. The Father indeed suffered not, but the Son, yet the suffering of the Son was the work of the Father and the Son. The Father did not rise again, but the Son, yet the resurrection of the Son was the work of the Father and the Son. - Augustine, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I, Volume 6*, "Sermon II: Of the words of St. Matthew's Gospel, Chap. iii. 13, 'Then Jesus cometh from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.' Concerning the Trinity.", Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887, 1979), p. 261

I say not this as though one person succeeded unto another in their operation, or as though where one ceased and gave over a work, the other took it up and carried it on; for every divine work, and every part of every divine work, is the work of God, that is, of the whole Trinity, inseparably and undividedly... - John Owen, *Pneumatologia*, p. 94, available at www.ccel.org/cCEL/owen/pneum.i.v.iv.html

Perichoresis means that not only do the three members of the Trinity interpenetrate one another, but all three are involved in all the works of God. While certain works are primarily or more centrally the doing of one of these rather than the others, all participate to some degree in what is done. Thus, while redemption is obviously the work of the incarnate Son, the Father and the Spirit are also involved. - Millard J. Erickson, *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), p. 235

When Scripture ascribes certain works specifically to the Father, others specifically to the Son, and still others specifically to the Holy Spirit, we are compelled to presuppose a genuine distinction within the Godhead back of that ascription. On the other hand, the work ascribed to any of the persons is the work of one absolute person. - Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1961), p. 228

When believers complain that they cannot distinguish between the separate activities in their lives of the Father, the Risen Lord, and the Holy Spirit, the matter is sometimes phrased in a way that obscures God's unity, a fundamental doctrine of both the Old and New Testament. Every action of any of the persons of the Trinity is an action of God, although in many actions the persons of the Godhead may be active in different ways. All authentic spiritual experience is an experience of the one God. - Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, VI:2 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), p. 400

Yet by virtue of the common essence, what one divine person performs each may be said to perform (the principle of *perichoresis*). Accordingly, the Son creates (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16) and the Spirit creates (cf. Job 33:4; Ps. 33:6); the Father redeems (2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:4-5, 8) and the Spirit redeems (Rom. 8:4; Titus 3:5); and the Father sanctifies (Eph. 1:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:23) and the Son sanctifies (Eph. 4:15-16; 5:25-27). - Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis, *Integrative Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), p. 267

The ancient doctrine of perichoresis, championed by the Greek Church Fathers, expresses the timeless interaction of the persons of the Godhead. According to that doctrine, there is a complete interpenetration of the persons of the Trinity, such that each is intimately bound up in the activities of the other. Thus, what the Father wills, the Son and Spirit also will; what the Son loves, the Father and Spirit also love, and so forth. - William Lane Craig, "Divine Timelessness and Personhood," *International Journal for Philosophy and Religion*, 43:2, April 1998, p. 122

Since the three Persons of the Trinity possess the same identical, numerical substance and essence, and since the attributes are inherent and inseparable from the substance or essence, it follows that all of the Divine attributes must be possessed alike by each of the three Persons and that the three Persons must be consubstantial, co-equal and co-eternal. Each is truly God, exercising the same power, partaking equally of the Divine glory, and entitled to the same worship. When the word "Father" is used in our prayers, as for example in the Lord's prayer, it does not refer exclusively to the first person of the Trinity, but to the three Persons as one God. The Triune God is our Father. - Loraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1947), p. 107

This chapter will argue, in part, that the "success" of the atonement depends on the identity of Christ as the theanthropic person, the One who is both fully God and fully man in the incarnation. But adding to the importance of seeing the atonement as the accomplishment of the God-man is the realization that the atonement's accomplishment depends just as much on the work of the Father and the Spirit in conjunction with the Son. - Bruce Ware, "Christ's Atonement: A Work of the Trinity," *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, eds. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), p. 156

All actions carried out through the omnipotence of the divine essence necessarily involve all three divine persons, for each of them fully possesses that divine essence. Thus, any physical action which God undertakes in the material creation should be understood to be the action of all three divine persons. - Michael L. Chiavone, *The One God: A Critically Developed Evangelical Doctrine of Trinitarian Unity* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), p. 214

The co-working of the three of the Divine Trinity based on Their coinherence (or mutual indwelling) is a particularly strong emphasis in the teaching of the distinguished Scottish reformed theologian Thomas F. Torrance, from whose books the following selections are excerpted:

It was, of course, not the Godhead or the Being of God as such who became incarnate, but the Son of God, not the Father or the Spirit, who came among us, certainly from the Being of the Father and as completely *homousios* with him, yet because in him the fullness of the Godhead dwells, the whole undivided Trinity must be recognised as participating in the incarnate Life and Work of Christ. - Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (London: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 108

Since God's Being and Activity completely interpenetrate each other, we must think of his Being and his Activity not separately but as one Being-in-Activity and one Activity-in-Being. In other words, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit always act together in every divine operation whether in creation or redemption, yet in such a way that the distinctive activities of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are always maintained, in accordance with the propriety and otherness of their Persons as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This may be called the 'perichoretic coactivity of the Holy Trinity'.

...The primary distinction was made there, of course, for it was the Son or Word of God who became incarnate, was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose again from the grave, and *not* the Father or the Holy Spirit, although the whole life and activity of Jesus from his birth to his death and resurrection did not take place apart from the presence and coactivity of the Father and the Spirit. - Ibid., pp. 197-198

...Thus the atonement is to be regarded as the act of God in his being and his being in his act. That is not to say, of course, that it was the Father who was crucified, for it was the Son in his distinction from the Father who died on the cross, but it is to say that the suffering of Christ on the cross was not just human, it was divine as well as human, and in fact is to be regarded as the suffering of God himself, that is, as the being of God in his redeeming act, and the passion of God in his very being as God... While the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are personally distinct from one another, they are nevertheless of one and the same being with one another in God, and their acts interpenetrate one another in the indivisibility of the one Godhead. - Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992), p. 113

It was not of course the Father but the Son who was incarnate and suffered on the cross, but the distinctiveness of the Persons of the Father and of the Son, does not imply any division in the oneness of their being, or in the oneness of their activity, for God's being and act are inseparable. - Ibid., p. 118