

OpenTheo

The Trinity and Evangelicalism, with Dr. Scott Swain

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this episode of Life and Books and Everything, Dr. Scott Swain—Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary—joins Kevin, Justin, and Collin to discuss his book, *The Trinity: An Introduction*. Listen in to hear about recent controversies surrounding the doctrine of the trinity, if the Holy Spirit is indeed forgotten in our discussions about the trinity, why analogies for the trinity are unhelpful, and why Orlando is the most magical place on earth.

This episode of Life and Books and Everything is brought to you by Crossway. The Crossway book we want to highlight this week is *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* by the faculty at Reformed Theological Seminary. Join a host of twenty-six scholars, including O. Palmer Robertson, Michael J. Kruger, and Scott R. Swain, as they explore how the concept of covenant is clearly taught in Scripture and how it lays the foundation for other doctrines of salvation.

LBE is also excited to announce that listeners of the show can receive 30% off Crossway books, bibles, tracts, audiobooks, and ebooks by signing up for a free Crossway+ membership. Crossway+ is a new membership program designed to provide you with gospel-centered resources aimed at strengthening your faith and serving the church. Registering for a free Crossway+ membership makes it more convenient and affordable than ever to purchase directly from Crossway.

Timestamps:

Who is Scott Swain and why is Orlando the greatest and most magical place on earth?
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Analogies and the trinity [8:40 - 12:10]

20th Century evangelicalism and the doctrine of the trinity [12:10 - 20:45]

What is biblicism? [20:45 - 23:53]

Relations of origin and the persons of the trinity [23:53 - 29:30]

Why we should reject social trinitarianism [29:30 - 31:31] Is it true that we often forget the Holy Spirit in our discussions of the trinity? [31:31 - 34:55]

The work of the Holy Spirit and revivalistic-charismatic movements [34:55 - 38:21]

A tool-kit of systematic theology categories and terms [38:21 - 49:12]

The drama behind the filioque [49:12 - 50:50]

How should pastors communicate these orthodox categories to their congregations? [50:50 - 57:35]

Resources on the Doctrine of the Trinity:

St. Patrick's Bad Analogies

The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything by Fred Sanders

The Wonderful Works of God by Herman Bavinck

The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance by Carl Trueman and Brandon Crowe

On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations by Gregory of Nazianzus

Transcript

[MUSIC] Greetings and salutations, our loyal listeners. I think we can put it in the plural even now. Listeners, we're glad to have you back with us on life and books and everything.

We have the band back together, Justin Taylor, Colin Hanson, and I am Kevin DeYoung. Good to have you with us. We also have a special guest interview with a great new book out.

We will be introducing him in just a moment, but let me thank, as always, our sponsor Crossway. They put out lots of good books, including the one that we're going to be talking about today. I have neglected to mention that you should look at crossway.org/LBE as in life and books and everything.

We want to get those letters correct, crossway.org/LBE. If you go on there, Justin, you can sign up for some stuff and get some discounts. I think that's the exact wording of the promo.

I'm not an author. Get some stuff and give them discounts. Yeah, it reminds me of that

most Midwestern of traits.

You can never tell somebody you got something unless you also tell them how much of a discount you got on it. So you sign up for Crossway Plus through as listeners of life and books and everything. I believe you get 30% off books.

Isn't that the idea through that program? Yes, that is the idea, I believe. You're right. I remember when we moved to Iowa in particular, everyone, especially if they had a nice house.

Wow, that's a great house. That's a crazy story. We got this thing.

Dirt cheap. It was someone died in it or something. Just everyone was getting a great deal.

You'd rather be cheap than look like your avarice. All right, so what? Oh, a book. We want to mention a crossway book, Covenant Theology, Biblical, Theological and Historical Perspectives.

This is a big volume of wonderful essays and chapters from the faculty that have performed theological seminary. I have a smallish chapter. It is the least among the chapters.

It's not false humility. They're really good. As it says, Biblical, Theological, Historical Perspectives on Covenant Theology.

If you think you know a ton about Covenant Theology, I'm sure you can learn something from this book. If you don't know anything, there will be some chapters here that will help you begin to learn something about it. And one of the contributors in this book, "Uncoincident Theology," published by Crossway, is our special guest for today, Scott Swain.

Scott, welcome to the program. Great. Thanks for having me.

I did not do my adequate research to list all of your many titles, but your president of something and professor of stuff and junk and written a lot of books. So Scott, now he's the president of RTS Orlando and teaches systematic theology there and has authored a number of really good books. We're going to talk about his book, "The Trinity" today.

But Scott, give us a little bit of introduction about yourself, where you're from, what you do, tell us about your family as well. Yeah, thanks. I've been married to my wife, Lee, for now, just over 23 years.

And we have four kids ranging from age 20. I've got a second year college student down to 13. And they keep us very busy and bring us a lot of joy.

And my day job is to work and teach at RTS Orlando and love doing that. And what do you teach there as well as representing? I teach systematic theology. Same subject to you.

Yeah, I've listened to. Yours are on the RTS app. Mine are not.

So I can crib off of yours. We'll have to change that. Do you, are you from Florida? Do you like the weather in Orlando? Do you like Orlando? It seems like almost everyone I know who lives in Orlando wishes they didn't live in Orlando.

Kevin, that's a terrible thing for you to say. I'd sign up for RTS Orlando everybody. This is just like bold-faced RTS Charlotte recruiting.

I didn't come here for this. Yeah, no, I grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, which is a couple of hours north of here. And it is surprisingly a different kind of seasonal and everything else.

My dad used to say it's really South Georgia. But you get to Orlando, you're truly in Central Florida. We're surrounded by lakes and alligators and you make the wrong turn.

You could be facing either one of those. But no, it's a wonderful place to live, Kevin. And I'm told that anyone who visits wants to stay here forever, it's some caught the most wonderful place on earth, the most magical place on earth or stuff like that.

Yeah, I'm truly offended. I didn't realize we're going this way. I thought this could be kind of a peaceful, friendly interaction today.

No, let me try a better question there, Scott. Orlando's changed a lot in the last 20 years. It used to be known very much as a Christian capital.

So many headquarters of Christian ministries there. Camps Crusade for Christ being one of them, like a near. I mean, you could keep naming them, but it's become a very progressive international city, I think in the last 20 years or so.

Can you describe how that's happened? And maybe how that's affected your ministry at RTS Orlando. Yeah, I think that's right. It's one of the fastest growing cities we've got.

I think what is now the largest university with UCF here, and that's promoted a lot of the growth here probably says something about it becoming an international city. I do think Florida is kind of a funny state. The further south you go, probably the more international you get.

And so in many ways Orlando is more like a Chicago, more like LA or New York or whatever than it is a Jacksonville where I grew up. And so a lot of people come and go. Meet people at church, meet people out in the workplace, and there are very few people who were born here.

There's very few people who've been here more than 10 years. And just to be clear, I wasn't meaning to throw the hammer down. I was thinking mainly about the weather that it seems like I often, being from Michigan, here's what I'm getting, being from Michigan, Orlando is always where you wanted to go.

Great weather. You go there, it's warm. And then I would meet people from there and they say, oh, it's humid all the time and no seasons never change.

And I thought, well, at least you got a good season sort of. Yeah, that's right. All of our little sub communities are Winter Park, Winter Garden, named by Midwesterners who wanted to move down here because they liked it so much better than living in the Midwest, Kevin.

Well, you could just kind of stop and Charlotte halfway, I guess. All right. Scott, the Trinity.

This really is a great series that I'm sure Justin had his hand in. And this is a great contribution to it. Short studies in systematic theology edited by Graham Cole and Oren Martin.

And this is Scott's new volume that just came out, the Trinity and introduction. I want to start with this. Okay, I have two questions before we dive into the book and we'll see what Colin and Justin want to ask at the outset.

Here's my first question. Say I'm 10 years old. Scott, explain the Trinity to me.

Yeah, I think for 10 year old, the best way to explain it is in the songs that we sing, right? We praise one God from whom all blessings flow. All creatures and heaven earth and unto the earth. But in praising one God, we praise three persons, father, son and Holy Spirit.

That doesn't give us three gods. And that's a great mystery how one God could be three distinct persons and not being three gods, but we can't expect to understand the mystery. We adore it.

So our songs, our catechisms, the baptismal command of Matthew 28, 19, baptized them in the name of the father, son and Holy Spirit. Those are all very good places to start with a 10 year old. That's good.

So is this my second question then, is there an analogy you would use with a 10 year old for the Trinity? No, I think all analogies end up kind of becoming good analogies for Trinitarian heresies, right? So we either end up thinking of the persons as maybe being three different phases of God's life like ice, water, vapor, or we end up thinking of the three persons as different parts of a whole. And thanks to the cartoon Voltron, we can now explain what that heresy is. But the problem with all the analogies, right, is that

we're using things with which we're very familiar in terms of creaturely reality.

And we're trying to describe a God who transcends creatures and that's where we get into problems. We are made in God's image, but God is not made in ours. That's good.

So we find this all the time in well-meaning churches and Sunday schools, teachers want to help kids get it. And so they go to clovers or water ice vapor or an apple, parts of an apple. And it's just important to say, just stay away from the analogies.

Justin, did we miss an analogy that you use? Well, Scott did Augustine get us off on the wrong foot with Trinitarian analogies? What was he doing in his great work on the Trinity where he's thinking of psychological analogies? To explain it? That's a great question. No, I don't think so. And sometimes Augustine gets kind of a bad rap on this, but the first major sections of Augustine's book on the Trinity are devoted to exegetical arguments for the Trinity, to talking about Jesus' baptism and how that isn't a revelation of the Trinity.

And only towards the end of that work does he then say, well, we're made in the image of the Trinity. Are there vestiges of the Trinity in the human soul, for example? And he does play around with those, but he actually concludes his argument saying none of these really work. There's not a good one-to-one correspondence.

And so Augustine ends, as I said earlier, with just praising the Triune God for revealing himself to us. Justin, you had a good church history question that you mentioned earlier that would get us going into perhaps the reason Scott wrote this book or one of them. Yeah, what do you think about 20th century evangelicalism when it comes to the Trinity? What were some good contributions that were made in the 20th century, obviously extending into 21st century? And perhaps what were some of the missteps that got us off course? Was it a good century? We tend to assume each century is building upon the knowledge of previous generations, if we're increasing our knowledge, is that the case with Trinitarianism or was it not a great century for that doctrine? Great question.

I mean, so the 20th century, in terms of broader academic theology, was a time of trying to revive the doctrine of the Trinity. Carl Roddar, who is a Catholic theologian, described, I think, what is probably true of many Christians as mere monotheists. They knew it was important to affirm that God was a Trinity, but they had no idea of the practical meaning of the doctrine.

And so following that kind of insight, Roddar, Bart, and others, wanted to restore the importance of the Trinity for theology, for piety. And a number of evangelicals followed as well. But I think there are some kind of positive examples in that regard.

Packers knowing God has some very rich, I think, Trinitarian reflections, especially talking about adoption and so forth. R.C. Sproul actually wrote something of a Trinitarian

trilogy with the holiness of God and then a work on Christology and numerology. I read those early on in seminary got really excited about things.

So there's some positive signs. There were probably some not so positive developments as well. And those are not necessarily unique to evangelical theology, but in all the excitement about kind of reviving Trinitarian theology, one of the things that theologians wanted to do was demonstrate its relevance for every area of life.

And then in the late 20th century evangelical theologians found themselves often trying to show the relevance of the Trinity for certain issues related to anthropology. So gender debates. And I remember, especially in the 90s, conversations got really hot with different sides of evangelicalism, debating certain gender issues and bringing the Trinity into those debates.

But unfortunately, sometimes the way the Trinity was used in those debates pretty radically distorted the doctrine. And some ways left us with a kind of problematic approach to the Trinity in a number of our churches. R.C. So that leads into the beginning of your book.

You say in the acknowledgments, the proximate cause for the book is the Trinitarian controversy of 2016. I read the whole book and that's explicit in a few places, but it's certainly not. I mean, it's just a broad, it's a great book about the Trinity.

But that's the proximate cause. Can you explain for our listeners what was the Trinitarian controversy of 2016 and how that served as a proximate cause for the book? Yeah, sure. So one of the views of the Trinity that came out of the gender debates was a view specifically about the son, but implications for the spirit as well.

It's a view that sometimes goes under the label, eternal functional subordination, or I think the more preferred title by its expo exponents is eternal relations of authority and submission. And that view of the Trinity is when we talk about the Trinity, we have to talk about God as one God, but we also have to talk about God as three distinct persons. And the question is, how do we distinguish those persons? And so according to this view, the way we distinguish the persons is that certain persons stand in a relationship of authority to other persons.

And corresponding to that, those other persons stand in a relationship of subordination or submission to those persons. And the argument was is not that they're ontologically inferior. So there's definitely a desire to avoid arianism, but the argument is that the way they are distinguished personally from each other is by these relations of authority and submission.

And I think what happened in 2016 was several folks are saying, well, hey, I think that might be problematic in a number of ways. It seems like for one thing, that's not how the

church historically has distinguished the persons from each other. And secondly, the reason they didn't distinguish them that way is because distinguishing them from each other in that way seems to divide the Godhead in a way that is problematic.

Because if you have a person who's in authority, another person who submits, it suggests perhaps that they have different wills. And historically, the church has confessed one will in God, one power, one wisdom, one goodness and so forth. And so a few people started kind of rearing the bell on that.

And I think that evangelical Christians as a whole kind of realized we might have some work to do in terms of this doctrine. Colin, it's probably, well, I know that it's not fair, Scott, for me to ask you to explain how this broke down along Baptist and Presbyterian lines because I don't think it'd be fair to all Baptists to say that they necessarily agreed with eternal functional subordinationism. But could you talk perhaps about some of the distinguishing theological methodologies that may have led to some of that dispute along the lines of Presbyterian critiques and Baptist advocacy of eternal functional subordinationism? Yeah, yeah, I would be really reticent to distinguish the sides along to the nomination of the lives because I do think you could find proponents of eternal functional functional subordination on both sides.

I think you could find proponents of what is sometimes called pro-nysine Trinitarianism on both sides as well. I think one of the telling distinctions and Christopher Cleveland wrote an article about this and I think he was dead on. One place you could find the difference is almost generationally in terms of when somebody got their theological training.

And there was perhaps a tendency toward a biblicism in Trinitarian theology among advocates of eternal functional subordination and among those who were opposing it, there was probably more of a sense of not only, yes, is scripture the supreme source and norm for Trinitarian theology, but there was probably a greater appreciation and a greater desire to recognize that we're not the first ones who've read scripture when it comes to this doctrine and that because it's such a great and profound doctrine that we want to be patient and listen to what the church has said and confessed about this doctrine in attempting to understand scripture. And so there was a little bit of a generational divide and I think that it breaks down almost into theological training and yes theological method. I find, no go ahead Justin.

I'm just going to ask some, thinking of some listeners who may not have gone to seminary or that the word biblicism may be a new word for them or may be confusing. You don't mean biblical, but what is biblicism and is that over reliance on exegesis or is it reading into scripture? What do you mean exactly by that? Yeah, biblicism is something that sometimes hard to define and it is hard to debate. But one way I would say is like this, in fact without defining it, let me put the issue like this, the debate in 2016 was not

about whether our Trinitarian theology needs to be derived from scripture.

It's not a debate about whether it needs to be normed by scripture. But there was probably debate about a relative degree of confidence about whether the best method for deriving the doctrine of the Trinity from scripture is me and my Bible. Me is a baby a well trained scholar with a PhD who's taking Greek and Hebrew.

Or is it me within the context of the communion of saints, me with a kind of an ear to the tradition, attention to the churches, creeds and confessions and deriving my doctrine from scripture with those aides ready to hand. And so both sides are saying absolutely our doctrine must be derived from scripture. But I think there is a relative degree of what weight do we give to our own individual powers of interpretation? What degree of deference do we give to the church in its tradition? That's a really good point because we often in maybe I'm tipping my hand here talking to another systematic theology professor and we affirm all the appropriate disciplines.

But one of the things that systematic theology can do to help us is provide us with the churches historic grammar and vocabulary for discussing these things. And so I sometimes start in teaching the Trinity on just laying out from scripture seven very simple biblical conclusions. There's one God, the father is God, the son is God, the spirit is God, the father is not the son, the son is not the spirit, the spirit is not the father.

You make those seven statements and say, okay, now the grammar that we learn from the best of the history of the church is not an imposition of philosophical categories. Yes, it has its own philosophical grammar and origin, but it's to help us safeguard each one of those seven statements in relation to the other one, which is why we talk about some of these seemingly heady or esoteric topics, which are really to protect our worship and our orthodoxy. And I really appreciate in the book you start chapter one is the Bible and Trinity, the basic grammar.

And then in the back you have a glossary, which is a great way to look up about a dozen different terms. So if the reader is saying, wait a minute, I'm hearing that again, paternity, personal property, what is Scott talking about? You have a paragraph or so in the back. It's really helpful.

One of the phrases that you've already mentioned. So I just want you to define it and unpack in a little bit is relations of origin, because you said that throughout history, and you can trace this certainly in the Reformed tradition, but even before that, in distinguishing among the persons of the Trinity, they're distinguished by the relations of origin. What does that mean? Why is that important? Yeah, that's a great question.

So if you think back to Matthew 28, 19, we baptize into the name singular, but it's a name that belongs to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Well, relations of origin is just an attempt to describe what those personal names mean. So the first person is Father to

the Son.

The second person is Son of the Father. The third person is Spirit of the Father and the Son. In each case, I'm saying of, of, of, right? The Son is somehow of the Father.

He originates from the Father. That's who He is. The Spirit is somehow of the Father and of the Son.

And that is who He is. The Father is not of anyone. And so at the end of the day, it's a very basic point, but Trinity, and theology is about saying, okay, well, what does that mean or more likely? What does it not mean? And making sure to piggyback on the point you just made.

Orthodoxy oftentimes is about just making sure we're taking in to account everything scripture says on these things. And really, heresy is sometimes about latching on to one of the truths, right, rather than letting the whole council of God inform. And so relations of origin, yeah, they describe how the persons are distinct from each other.

Eternal generation is sometimes the fancier way of describing the Son's distinct personhood, the idea that the Son is eternal and that He exists personally, eternally from the Father. And we can say the same thing about the Spirit and His eternal procession from the Father and the Son. Would you say, is there a distinction to be made between the language relations of origin and the language of inter-Trinitarian relationships? And if so, is one safer than the other? I mean, relations is probably safer than the relationships.

The trick is there really are no terms of art and theology in the sense that if you define something the right way, there are many terms that can become legitimate, including relationships. But I think what relations is less prone to do than relationships is not to present to us a picture of the three persons of the Trinity as three independent human beings who like to hang out together and perhaps each do their own different part in creation and salvation. You three have this podcast relationship where Justin doesn't get to say very much because Kevin usually speaks over to him, things like that.

We shouldn't think of Trinity in that way. So all of all is maybe not the right word, but the payoff that people often want from the Trinity is something about the diversity of human relationships reflects the diversity of persons in the Godhead or this great mysterious dance or we're relational beings because God exists in relationship. Probably all of that can be helpful and unhelpful.

You want to parse out how you think of that? Yeah, it's interesting. When you look at the way scripture relates the Trinity to us, in almost every case, the relationship is filtered through Christology. So you think about marriage.

It's not just strictly Father-son relationship that usually is in view. It's the son's relationship to the church is a model for the husband's relationship with the wife and so

forth. And that does a couple of things.

One, it means, well, we can't read the Trinity straight off of Christology because Jesus, while he is the second person of the Trinity, he's also a human being and he's engaged in the work of redemption and not everything that he's engaged in the work of redemption says something about God's eternal nature, at least not in a direct way. But then also, because of his humanity, there's going to be many things that accompany his person and work which say something about us as human beings, not something about the God had. And so, yes, there are applications that we can make, but they might be there in a way that is more indirect, no less rich, no less wonderful, but we have to kind of be patient.

We have to listen to scripture. We have to follow the way it describes these things. So social Trinitarianism, what is that the development of it and is it to be embraced or is it a danger? Yeah, social Trinitarianism is not to be embraced.

Social Trinitarianism is an approach to the Trinity that became popular again, late 20th century after this initial revival of interest in the Trinity. And such a Trinitarianism is essentially a way of viewing the persons of the Trinity as very, very analogous to human persons. In some cases, having independent self-consciousness, independent will, the unity of the Godhead on this view becomes very similar to the unity of the human race.

We say the persons are the same kind of being, but there's less comfort with saying they're the same being. And yeah, the worry about social Trinitarianism is that essentially we're modeling the divine persons after the pattern of human persons rather than going in the reverse direction, which is what I think scripture requires us to do. It certainly lies behind a lot of the approaches to eternal functional subordination that we were describing earlier.

There's definitely kind of a social Trinitarian approach there. The worry is that it compromises things like divine simplicity, the idea that God is not composed of parts, that God is one in every way and is being and his mind, his will, his power and so forth. Social Trinitarianism, it kind of sounds like if not three beings, three minds, three wills, and yeah, at the end of the day, it's really hard to see how social Trinitarianism is preserving what both Old Testament and New Testament treat as the fundamental principle of theology that the Lord has won.

That's well said. Colin, Scott, it seems to be a standard part of evangelical discourse, broadly speaking, about the Trinity that one person named with a spirit has been forgotten. So you think about Francis Chan's book from a few years ago, *Forgotten God*, but I really appreciated what you did in this book to explain some of the biblical evidence of who we know the spirit to be, of why that might be the case.

She explained a little bit of why we seem to often forget the spirit in relation to his

particular role within the Trinity. Yeah, thanks. Yeah, I hear that objection a lot and while there's something to it, I also, I think it's a bit exaggerated.

Sometimes it just means, you know, we like the way this group over here talks about the Holy Spirit and you're not talking about the Holy Spirit the way this group is, therefore you don't care about the Holy Spirit. Whereas if you actually attend to the way this other tradition treats the Trinity, you say, actually, there's a lot there about the Holy Spirit. It's just they're not talking about the spirit in the way this group is and they see the spirits work in our lives and in our ministries in a different way.

I think that there is something historical, in theological, though, that is behind this kind of common observation. Certainly the person of the spirit was a subject of later controversy in the kind of development of Trinitarian doctrine and never the source of as intense controversy as was debate regarding the person of the son, right? So we've got several centuries of just heated debate about the person of the son and while there are debates about the spirit, they're definitely they're not as extended and they're not as intense. And so there's something about the nature of the church's need to defend the deity of the son that has given the second person a place of prominence and theology that the spirit has perhaps not enjoyed.

But theologically, and this is where I wouldn't want to even put too much weight on the historical point, there is something about the spirit's mission that is going to may we say deflect from emphasis on his work. Jesus says in the farewell discourse that the spirit when when he sends the spirit, the spirit's mission will be to glorify the son to cause the son to be acknowledged in his person and in his work and in his glory. And so what that suggests is when the spirit's active, Jesus will be magnified.

Jesus name will be glorified. And so there's something maybe counterintuitive about this, but the more attention that's given to the son, we might say the more reason we have for believing that the spirit is active in causing the word to be received and confessed by his people. That's great.

Follow up on that Scott years ago, closer to your neck, the woods, I was studying the so-called Lakeland revival and rather typical among charismatic movements, but there was a lot of emphasis about recovering the work of the spirit. But I noticed that it was utterly detached from many biblical evidence about the spirit and certainly detached from the specific biblical evidence of the spirit's role to be able to point to the son. In fact, there was very little reference to the finished work of Christ or even to Jesus himself.

Is that fairly typical for what you see of problems or was that a standout incident? No, I think that's true and a number of the kind of big, I don't know how to describe them, but the revivalistic charismatic movements we see in the last 20 years where you have this kind of language of a new age of the spirit, a new work of the spirit. You see a similar thing, right? The Bible often gets short shrift and the finished work of Christ, the present

reign of Christ, these are not things that are as front and center. And the danger of course, and this is where relations of origin becomes so helpful in a very practical context, right? The spirit that the Bible talks about is the spirit who proceeds from the father and the son.

And who from all eternity is the crowning glory that the father gives to the son and in time is the one who crowns the son in our hearts. And so other spirits and the Bible acknowledges the existence of other spirits. There may be other spirits who can even perform miraculous signs.

But if those spirits are not drawing our attention to the glory of Christ and to his finished work, then we should raise our eyebrows because they may not be the Holy Spirit. They may not be the spirit of the father and the son. Yeah, there's a great quote from J.I. Packer's *Keeping in Step with the Spirit* where he talks about walking in the evening and seeing floodlights illuminating a church building and thinking that that's a perfect illustration of the spirit's role that the point of a floodlight is never to say, look at me, observe me.

I'm doing, but it's always to cast the light upon its object and for the spirit to continually be saying, look at him, look at his glory, listen to him, listen to his word. It's a memorable Packer illustration that's always stuck with me. Yeah, I think that's exactly right.

And you think of the language Paul uses in Saint Corinthians 13, 14, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. And if the spirit stands out in the work of redemption in bringing us into fellowship with the father and the son, then again, his activity is going to be about highlighting the fellowship that we have with the other persons of the Trinity. It's not going to be isolated from the knowledge and from the faith and obedience of these other persons.

Scott, you're a teacher, a very good teacher. I'm going to just mention some terms and we're going to go quickly. You can do these in a sentence or two, just somebody who's listening and trying to understand, especially some of the systematic theology terms and categories.

So here's in your chapter on God the Father, the basic grammar. You distinguish between common predication, predicate is what can be said of something. So common predication, you say, refers to what the three persons hold in common.

And then proper predication refers to what each person of the Trinity holds in distinction from the other two. So give us what are some of the common predicates and the proper predicates for the persons of the Trinity? Yeah. So common predicates of the Trinity, the divine name itself.

So all three persons are described in Scripture as Yahweh, the Lord. When we baptize in

the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the name there is likely a kind of reference to God's proper name. All three persons are given the title God in our God.

All three persons are described in terms of various divine attributes, various divine actions of creation, redemption. And that's actually one of the things I think folks are most commonly miss in thinking about the Trinity. I think, okay, I understand the Trinity, the Father creates the Son, redeems the Spirit, sanctifies.

But actually, Scripture ascribes creation to all three persons. It ascribes redemption to all three persons. It ascribes sanctification to all three persons.

In terms of personal predicates or personal properties, the personal names themselves, Father, Son, Spirit, generally are used distinctly of the persons, although the second person is described as everlasting Father in Isaiah. But I don't think that's describing him in terms of his distinct personhood. I think that's describing him as the author of time.

In that sense, it's a common predication. But other distinct titles, the Son is also described as the word. I think of John 1. He's described as the image of God and Colossians 1. He's described as the radiance of God's glory.

And then the Spirit is described in a number of different ways as well to emphasize his distinct personhood. So inseparable operations is a key term. You just alluded to it there that all three persons work inseparably in their external operations.

So help us understand that because on the face of it, someone's going to say, "Wait a minute, the Father didn't die on the cross. The Son didn't descend as a dove at his own baptism. How can you say that they're all three doing the same thing all the time? What do we mean by inseparable operations? And how does that really work biblically?" Yeah.

So inseparable operations is just an application of biblical monotheism to the question of how the one God acts. And so because God is one, God exercises one divine power, one divine wisdom, one divine goodness in all that he does. And so this doesn't take away the distinction of the persons, but what it says is the distinction between the persons is the distinction we see within God's singular operations, not between different operations.

So for example, creation is the work of the one God. How does the one God create? Well, the Father speaks the world into existence through his word and by his spirit. So Psalm 33, by the word of the Lord, the heavens were made and all the story hosts by the breath of his mouth.

So one divine work, but we see the three persons operative in it. So how does understand, and then I'll throw back to these guys, but whenever you talk about the Trinity, people sometimes get nervous. Like, if I say anything more than one God three persons, I'm probably saying a heresy and then I'm going to be condemned.

Well, there's a difference between someone uninformed or not quite taught all the distinctions slipping up. So we don't want people to be so fearful about the doctrine of the Trinity and someone who sees what's at stake and then affirms something that the church has found to be heretical. But tell us what modalism is, what's the problem with it, and subordinationism and what's the problem? Yeah.

So modalism affirms that God has won, but it cannot affirm a real distinction between the persons. So it affirms merely kind of a superficial distinction. We do see different persons in the work of redemption, but those are just different phases of God's life.

They're not really distinct persons. Waterized vapor. Waterized vapor is modalism.

Yes. And then what was the second subordinationism? Spordinationism in the strict sense of Arianism. Arius could affirm, Arius was a fourth century heretic condemned by various church councils.

Arius could affirm the existence of a Trinity and he uses the term Trinity by which he means three distinct persons. So what Arius can't affirm is that the three distinct persons are one God. And specifically, he can't affirm that the son is to use the technical language, conceptual with the father.

He believes the son was the first and most special creature of God through whom God created and redeemed the rest of the world. Okay. Last one.

Talk about the distinction. And I don't remember if you did, you mentioned it here, but it wasn't a separate section that I recall between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity and how does that relate to our earlier discussion about eternal relations of authority and submission? Because I could imagine a listener saying, well, what's the big deal about authority and submission? Clearly, the son says to the father, not my will, but yours be done. He obeys the father.

But there's some important distinctions there with the eternal relations of authority and submission and how it relates to the inner life of the Trinity and the out working of the Trinity's operations in time. So what's the distinction there? Yeah. I actually don't think I use those terms in the book.

And that's partly for reasons that would bore people to hear right now. That was a very popular way of talking about it in the 20th century, but I think it actually implied a certain way of distinguishing God from God's acts. That's not that helpful.

But nevertheless, we do have to say there's a relationship between who God is and how God acts. And the clearest way we see it is the relations of origin that distinguish the three persons. Also shine forth in the way God reaches out specifically to save us.

So Galatians 4, 4 through 7 says at the fullness of time, God sent forth his son that

sending language is language we sometimes use to describe the mission of the son. He was sent. And then it also says after describing the son's incarnation, his work of redemption, and his acquiring the right of adoption, it says, "And God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts." So there's two sendings, there's two missions.

The father sent the son and the father and the son sent the spirit. Well, what Augustine argued and really the majority of certainly Trinitarian theology in the West argued was that the missions of the persons in time. So the mission of the son to become incarnate redeemers, the mission of the spirit to indwell us to sanctify us, those missions reflect those eternal relations of origin.

So as the son is eternally from the father, so in time he is sent by the father of redeemers. As the spirit is eternally from the father and the son, so in time he is sent by the father and the son to indwell us. And so at the end of the day for someone like Thomas Aquinas, those missions are about how the Triune God embraces us in fellowship in his Triune life.

So the mission of the son is to do what? To make sons and daughters of the living God, making the son's father our father. The mission of the spirit is to enable us to express on our lips the same cry that Jesus had on his lips during the gospel, Abba Father. And so the missions of the son and the spirit both reflect the eternal relations of origin, but they also embrace us in some sense within those relations.

So you think the Latin phrases add extra, add into are better than economic trinity and imminent trinity? I think so because the economic imminent sign like we're talking about two trinities. It can also sound like we're only talking about, for example, eternal generation when we're talking about the trinity before time, which is wrong. In the son's temporal mission, we're seeing before our eyes, the eyes of faith at least, what it means for him to be the son of the father.

And yes, that doesn't begin to be in time, but that is what's being presented to us. And so imminent economic, it doesn't quite capture the reality that the missions bring those very person-constituting relations, if I can say like this, that the missions bring those to us and present them to us. So when we hear the father at Jesus baptism saying, "This is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased." We're seeing something that's eternally true of the trinity.

It's really good. We're going to go to Colin, then to Justin, and then we're going to talk about some books. Colin.

I do have something you can start to think about this, God. I would like to also hear in the end the best trinity songs to sing. Holy, holy, holy be a good one just as a layup there, but you can think about some other ones as well.

Okay, kind of a short question, but obviously a big topic. The biggest church split in all of history actually happened over a trinity debate about the procession of the spirit, whether from the father or father and the son, or was there something else going on? Well, that certainly was the presenting cause, I think a doctor would say. There were also some deeper issues in terms of church polity related to the Bishop of Rome and his authority.

There was an issue related to what we might call creedal integrity, whether a phrase should be added to the Nicene creed or not with the West saying, "Yeah, it's okay. We can update things." And the East saying, "No, don't update things." But the presenting issue was whether the spirit proceeds from the father only or also from the son, the West holding the latter view, the East holding the former view. And roughly the year 1000.

Yes. Yeah. Philly, okay.

Yes. All right. Good.

That was a smart seminary in question, Colin. We had a represent Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, one of the thoughts on my mother as well. Justin.

Yes, Scott. I'm curious. Not everybody who's listening to this is a pastor, but I assume we have at least a few pastors listening.

And they may be hearing this conversation. Hopefully they're motivated to pick up your new book and to either get a refresher to be corrected, to be challenged, to be instructed. But I can imagine somebody listening and feeling somewhat overwhelmed all these terms.

We haven't even talked about cross-opological exegesis and relations of origin and active spirations versus passive spirations. Secondly, I can imagine a feeling of being frozen or a feeling of despair of how do we actually communicate this to my congregation? Blue collar folks, they've got busy jobs. They're anxious about COVID and about children.

Do you have some suggestions of what a pastor should do in terms of leading a congregation to be more informed about Trinitarianism? Should they work it into their sermons? Should they do catechesis in their church? Should they teach a special class on Sunday school? Should it be part of a larger program with systematic theology? Are there any suggestions that you have for pastors to help their people grow in their refinement and knowledge without necessarily having to go and roll at RTS? So that would not be a bad thing. Yes, thanks. I think there are a lot of resources out there that can help us because the Trinity is central to our faith.

Historically, pastors have come up with a lot of wonderful tools to help our people to imbibe that reality. So you mentioned catechisms. I think catechisms are a wonderful

way of not only getting the basic grammar right.

One of the things I said, coming out of 2016, if only people had paid attention to the Westminster short of catechism, Westminster large of catechism, which explicitly rules out a kind of eternal functional subordination, we wouldn't have gotten to this mass. One of my favorite catechisms, the Heidelberg catechism. And one reason I love it is that after giving the short summary of the gospel and the first several questions, what's the fullness of the gospel? What are all the things that God has promised us? It then uses the Apostles' Creed, which is a creed that has a Trinitarian framework following the baptismal command of Matthew 28:19.

It uses a Trinitarian framework to expound the gospel. But one thing pastors can do, because we're constantly talking about the gospel, right? I hope we are, is to make sure that when we're summarizing the gospel, our summary reflects our baptism, right? And we start to see how the creed is just so helpful there. Other examples are, you know, one of the things that Herman Bovink loves, Herman Bovink is one of my favorite theologians, and I imagine one of y'all is as well.

He can't help talking about baptism without citing some of the historic-reformed liturgies, which are robustly Trinitarian, talking about baptism. God seals it to us that He is our Father, and that Christ is our Redeemer, and that the Spirit it dwells us. These kind of shorthand ways of talking about the Trinity are very useful.

And then to get to Colin's question about songs, we can learn to sing about the Trinity. He mentioned holy, holy, holy, and certainly a wonderful one. Wesley, isn't it, of the Father's love begotten? That's one of my favorites as well.

Even the glory of poetry, the doxology, these are often sung every week in our churches, and they're wonderful summaries of the Trinity. I think part of the thing, Justin, is maybe adjusting our expectations of what we're trying to do. Sometimes we worry because we can't explain these terms, we can't explain how the Trinity works, and we just said, don't use any of those analogies, or you get you in trouble.

And people say, oh, what can I do? But the goal in really sound to Trinity and theology is not to be able to explain it. But if I can use the metaphor, it's to be able to follow the tune, right? It's to be able to follow, as Kevin said earlier, to follow the grammar. And the illustration that I like to give sometimes is this, kids age 4, 5, 6, they can go out and enjoy the soccer team.

They can play baseball. Kids walk around the house singing songs at even younger ages than that. Now those kids don't actually have to know anything about the laws of physics that underlie baseball, to play baseball, right? They don't have to understand the laws of mathematics that lie behind musical scales and everything else to sing a tune.

What do they have to do? They have to learn how to catch the tune. They have to learn how to follow the rules of the game. And that's really what we're trying to do in Trinitarian theology is follow the rules of the game, which are laid out in the way the prophets and apostles speak about our God.

And all of the kind of fancy Trinitarian grammar is just about helping people make sure they can follow along, right? They don't have to necessarily explain how it all works. None of us can do that. Augustine says, you know, if you can understand it, it's not God that you're talking about.

And that's certainly true when it comes to the Trinity. So I think finding different ways to familiarize people with the grammar, to help them see how central it really is to so many aspects of our faith. Those are the best things to do.

And again, we've got a number of resources, rich liturgy, liturgical resources as well. But yeah, I made a Sunday school class on the Trinity. That wouldn't hurt along the way.

So let me segue into the next section, but Fred Sanders' book on the deep things of God, our conversations almost been presupposing a rich, liturgical, historical awareness. But Fred comes at it from more of a low-term perspective. And I don't know that he exactly puts it this way, but my summary of the book would be even Jokell's become who you are.

You are Trinitarian. As you talk about your testimony, as you experience God, as you sing your hymns, you are Trinitarian. You just don't realize it.

Now, let's put some teeth on that and I'll flesh that out because you are a Trinitarian people. So, that's a great segue. We've already mentioned some hymns and katakeesis.

Scott, other resources. You do have a helpful section in the back of the book listing some other resources. So feel free to mention a couple of those or other ones.

Books, articles, chapters, hymns, songs, schoolhouse rock, three is a magic number. What resources would you recommend for learning the Trinity and developing our sense of the tune? Yeah, well, I'm assuming most listeners have seen the spin if they haven't. They need to see the Luther and satire video.

Yeah. St. Patrick's Bad Trinitarian Analogies. That's the one my kids have always loved.

And in fact, they still to this day will point out if someone's committing the error of partialism, Patrick. Oh, come on, Patrick. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. But yeah, that's a great resource.

Yeah. In terms of books, Justin mentioned Fred Sanders, the deep things of God. That is a wonderful introduction to the Trinity that tries to begin with our practical experience of

just being converted, but also things like prayer and Bible study and how if we reflect upon these basic Christian practices, we're already engaging the Trinity.

And so thinking about the Trinity just only helps us better appreciate what we're doing there. A number of other helpful resources, Herman Bovinks, the wonderful works of God, which has just been released in a new edition. I really like his chapter on the Trinity.

And that's a shorter piece that's just going to give you very sound biblical summary of the doctrine. Brandon Crow and Carl Truman edited a book a few years back called the essential Trinity, which has chapters on the Trinity in the Old Testament, but then also the Trinity in each New Testament book, along with some other summary practical chapters. That's a really nice resource for really seeing how integral the Trinity is to Scripture.

And if I were, one way to come back to Justin's question from earlier, if I were preaching on any book in the New Testament, part of my preparation for preaching would be to read whatever chapter from the Crow and Truman book deals with the Trinity in that book of the Bible. So I'm preaching the Gospel of Mark. I'm going to read the chapter on the Trinity in Mark.

And that will help me think, okay, well, how does this gospel as a whole present the Trinity? And maybe I can just weave it into my sermons without having a distinct sermon on the Trinity. Beyond that, I think that C.S. Lewis's advice of reading older works is good advice. And I think that folks will find with some of them, they might not be as challenging as one first suspect.

So Gregory of Nazianzis, five theological orations. This is a series of sermons published right around the time of the Council of Constantinople, which is the Council will really get what we call the Nicene Creed. And these sermons are on the Trinity.

They're rich. They're wonderful. And what Lewis is how the fathers aren't just kind of philosophizing about God, but they're engaging in exegesis and they're defending our common salvation.

And that's why they care about talking about the Trinity. Yeah, there are a lot of good works out there. I can keep going.

Yeah. I mean, a few others. I just named a couple of your other ones, Scott, that you were a part of retrieving eternal generation that's specifically on that doctrine, but that was really helpful from a couple of years ago, the book.

This was one of the ones you did with with coast and burger on Trinity and John. Yep. So I just finished preaching through John for a couple of years.

And that was one of the books that I would always look in. What did you two say about

this particular passage to find the rich Trinitarian tapestry? Any sermons that anyone can find by Sinclair Ferguson on the Trinity? I don't know anyone in our day who's better at preaching, bringing you into the throne room, as it were, than Sinclair. I know a lot of people like Michael Reeves' book, Robert Latham's book on the Trinity at a more sophisticated, because those are sophisticated guys, but I found William Shedd's dogmatic theology particularly good on the Trinity.

It's going to be very finely nuanced and defined, but for someone wanting to, that's not even 201, but maybe wanting to go to 301, I found that really helpful. Other suggestions, Justin? Another one that hasn't been mentioned is Phil Reichen and Michael Lefavory's "Our Triune God" that Crossway publishes. I think Fred said that if he had to give somebody the most basic introduction to Trinitarianism, you have an older student at home or child or somebody in your church who just wants to jump in, he thinks that would be his first recommendation.

So that's one that comes to mind. And then there are other books. Ferguson's book on the Holy Spirit or Greg Lanier's new book on Jesus Truly God, looking at the specific personhood and work of, so that's obviously related to the Trinity and is Trinitarian in nature, but focuses more specifically on person work, ministry of the persons.

It's great. Scott, you have been generous to give us more than an hour of your time. And we don't have people on here.

Just, Scott didn't say, "Hey, can I come on and talk about your book?" We said, "Scott, we're going to like your book and we do like it, so can we talk to you?" So it's a genuine recommendation to get the Trinity an introduction. And it's, although it has a lot in there, it's only a hundred and it's less than 150 pages, so really commend that to our audience. And perhaps a fitting way to close, you mentioned to him, this is anonymous, but I'm sure you all know, "Come Thou Almighty King, help us thy name to sing, help us to praise Father, all glorious, or all victorious, come and reign over us ancient of days." Verse 2, "Come Thou in Carnot Word, gird on thy mighty sword, scatter thy foes, let thine Almighty aid, our sure defense be made, our souls on thee be stayed, thy wonders show." And verse 3, "Come holy comforter, thy sacred witness bear, in this glad hour, Thou who Almighty art, now rule in every heart, and nare from us to part spirit of power." And then a final verse, "To the great one in three eternal praises be, hence evermore, his sovereign majesty, may we in glory see, and to eternity love and adore." 2 12 in the Trinity, Walter Hymnall, to the Italian who him, very strong Hymn tune and wonderful Trinitarian hymn.

Scott, thank you for being with us, Colin and Justin. Great to be with you guys. Lord willing, we'll be back next week and we're hoping to come midweek with a special post-election podcast.

If we know what has happened by midweek, stay tuned and we'll see. But until then,

glorify God and enjoy him forever and read a good book.

[Music]

(buzzing)