

I am a Trinitarian kind of guy. "The dance" metaphor of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit might seem a little trite, but I think it is a good reminder that *relationship is everything*. There are many Christian groups who reject the Trinity as a theology. Big, growing Pentecostal streams (Church of God, many independent Pentecostals); Jehovah's Witness; Mormons and a baker's dozen of denominations that you've never heard of -- reject "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Along those lines, I challenge you to find explicit references to the Trinity in the Bible. There are lots of hints, especially in the beginning of Genesis and when people get baptized. The most explicit verse is at the end of Matthew. *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.* There is also a metaphorical reference in 1st John - *For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.* It's a bit of a stretch to build the Trinity upon these and other oblique references, but that is exactly what the church in history has asked us to do.

So, as you can tell, it's going to get thick today. I want to get into some heavy-duty theology; but my primary goal is to give you a reason to care about the Trinity. Or to know more clearly why it does not make sense to you. When I worked with college kids, one particularly bright kid introduced himself with "what's your favorite heresy?" It was Rice University, so that should give you some context for the nerd quotient on campus. I have come to love this question, because it forces me give reasons for what I think. Here are some historical "heresies" around the Trinity. I am willing to bet that one of them is your favorite.

Sabellianism, Noetianism and Patripassianism Trinity is expressed in different "modes." Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not distinct, but rather different faces God. For example -- I am priest to the church, a husband to my wife, and father to my kids. Stemming from Modalism, Patripassianism believed that the Father suffered as the Son.

Tritheism Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct Gods. Muslims think this is us.

Arianism The preexistent Christ was the best of God's creation but not fully divine. The Arian controversy was huge in the 4th Century both politically and theologically. It precipitated the Nicene Creed.

Docetism Jesus is only divine with the "skin" of humans. Think Arnold before he was governor in 1994 with the Terminator. Some versions taught that Jesus' divinity left him, with only a shell of skin and bones on the cross.

Ebionitism Purely human Jesus, but a really great preacher and miracle worker.

Macedonianism The Holy Spirit is something God made for us to enjoy.

Adoptionism Jesus was born human and "adopted" as divine. This happened at baptism or at his resurrection.

Partialism Puzzle pieces. Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are components of the one God.

What's my favorite you ask? I really like adoptionism and partialism. I hate doing puzzles, but partialism is easy to understand. And I really like the idea of adoptionism, because it's how I came be part of the church. **But** the mystery of relationship doesn't settle onto easy solutions; therefore, I am compelled to reject these "heresies" as the resolution of the mystery. The real mystery is how we live in and represent God. John in Bible asks, how can you say that you love God when you hate your brother and sister. The Austin Lounge Lizards put it best with their song "Jesus loves me, but he can't stand you". The song is worth googling.

My life long journey is to explore the mystery of love through the challenge of being part of the human family. The Trinity is a living mystery that defines this goal. My understanding of the Trinity right now is kind of simplistic. "God loves God." Jesus love the Father, the Father loves Jesus, The Spirit loves Jesus, etc. But unlike "Tritheism" they choose to relate to each other freely and yet somehow connected. So, in good Episcopalian style when you ask me to define the Trinity, I will get a glassy far off look and intone that "it's a mysterious dance."

I don't have much more than that...it's a dance, and it's a mystery. A mystery to be discovered in day-to-day life, loving our brothers and sisters. Let's keep dancing with and loving the "Body of Christ", the Church -- the people next to us in the pews and offices-- while we take our cue from the great dancers -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who are deeply in love with each other and us.