

Constituting an efficient conceptual model for teaching the doctrine of the Trinity in Korean churches

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Dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Theology in Dogmatics* at the North West University

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Graduation: October 2019

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ABSTRACT

Even though the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, it has not always been well understood. The misunderstanding of the doctrine has been one of the major causes of conflicts in the church and has resulted in splits into sects and cults. Many scholars have tried to expand human comprehension on the Trinity with diversified symbols, signs, illustrations and analogies, but human understanding of the doctrine is still not enough.

Under the situation, one of the key questions is why the doctrine of the Trinity has not been well taught in Korean churches. To answer this question, there is a need to research the reasons for the insufficient understanding of the Trinity and an adequate model of the doctrine for teaching it in Korean churches. This study is conducted from the perspective of the Reformed theology by means of a literature study in order to make a recommendation for an efficient model of teaching the doctrine of the Trinity in Korean churches.

The first chapter is the overall introduction of the study. The second chapter indicates the fundamental problems as to why the doctrine of the Trinity has not been well understood and taught in Korean churches. The third chapter deals with the parts in the doctrine of the Trinity that is difficult to understand. The fourth chapter shows how the doctrine has previously been understood by scholars and what would be an adequate formula for the teaching of the doctrine in Korean churches.

The reasons why many Korean Church members do not understand the doctrine of the Trinity: The Trinity itself is not dealt with in the church. Church leaders have had little opportunity to learn the doctrine of the Trinity in their theological study and thus failed to explain it clearly and confidently to their members. Liberalism, the faith that pursues earthly blessings, and previous misunderstandings, such as Arianism and Modalism, are influencing the church. The religious tendency of the Korean people, which is more emotional than logical, could also be a cause.

Korean church members experience a difficulty to comprehend key terms used in the description of the Trinity. One of the key questions regarding the relationship among the three Persons is how the three Persons can be one God. The word "Trinity" is not in the Bible and is difficult to church members to explain it to others.

The Trinity is a mystery but the doctrine of the Trinity can be understood as God has revealed Himself in His Word and history as the Triune God.

A suggestion for a more comprehensible definition of the Trinity in the Korean translation can be “세 신격 동일 본질의 한 하나님” which means “One being of God in three Persons of Godhead with one Essence.”

The love of God is the foundation of the unity of the three Persons. Each of the Persons possesses the same divine essence, and is equal in glory, honour and power. There are not three Gods, but one God, three Persons in the Godhead.

Key words: The Trinity, Triune God, Conceptual model of the Trinity

OPSOMMING

Alhoewel die leer van die Drie-eenheid een van die sentrale leerstellings van die Christelike geloof is, is dit nie altyd goed verstaan nie. Die misverstand van die leerstelling was een van die hooforsake van konflikte in die kerk en het gelei tot splitsing in sektes en kultusse. Baie geleerdes het probeer om die menslike begrip daarvan uit te brei met gediversifiseerde simbole, tekens, illustrasies en analogieë vir die Drie-eenheid. Maar die menslike begrip van die leerstelling is nog steeds gedeeltelik.

In die stand van sake is een van die sleutelvrae waarom die leer van die Drie-eenheid nie goed genoeg in Koreaanse kerke geleer is nie. Om hierdie vraag te beantwoord is navorsing nodig van die redes vir die onvoldoende begrip van die Drie-eenheid en wat 'n voldoende model sou wees vir die onderrig van die leerstelling in Koreaanse kerke. Hierdie studie word vanuit die perspektief van die Gereformeerde Teologie gedoen deur middel van 'n literatuurstudie om 'n aanbeveling te maak vir 'n doeltreffende model om die leer van die Drie-eenheid in Koreaanse kerke te leer.

Die eerste hoofstuk is die inleiding tot die studie. Die tweede hoofstuk bespreek die fundamentele probleme waarom die leer van die Drie-eenheid nie goed verstaan en geleer is in Koreaanse kerke nie. Die derde hoofstuk handel oor die dele in die leer van die Drie-eenheid wat moeilik is om te verstaan. Die vierde hoofstuk wys hoe die leerstelling voorheen deur geleerdes verstaan is en wat 'n voldoende formule vir die onderrig van die leerstelling in Koreaanse kerke sou wees.

Die redes waarom baie Koreaanse lidmate nie die leer van die Drie-eenheid verstaan nie, is die volgende: die Drie-eenheid self word nie in die kerk behandel nie. Kerkleiers het min geleentheid gehad om die leer van die Drie-eenheid in hulle teologiese studie te bestudeer en het dit dus nie duidelik en met selfvertroue aan hulle lede verduidelik nie. Liberalisme, die geloof wat aardse seënige verkondig en vorige misverstande soos Arianisme en Modalisme volg, beïnvloed die kerk. Die godsdienstige neiging van die Koreaanse volk, wat meer emosioneel as logies is, kan ook 'n oorsaak wees.

Koreaanse kerklede ervaar probleme om sleutel terme in die beskrywing van die Drie-eenheid te verstaan. Een van die sleutelvrae oor die verhouding tussen die drie Persone is hoe die drie Persone een God kan wees. Die woord “Drie-eenheid” is nie in die Bybel nie en dit is vir kerklidmate moeilik om dit aan ander te verduidelik.

Die Drie-eenheid is 'n geheimenis, maar die leer van die Drie-eenheid kan verstaan word soos God Homself in sy Woord en geskiedenis as die Drie-enige God geopenbaar het.

'N Voorstel vir 'n meer verstaanbare omskrywing van die Drie-eenheid in die Koreaanse vertaling kan "세 신격 동일 본질의 한 하나님" wees.

Die liefde van God is die grondslag van die eenheid van die drie Persone. Elkeen van die Persone beskik oor dieselfde goddelike wese en is gelyk in heerlijkheid, eer en krag. Daar is nie drie gode nie, maar een God, drie Persone in een Godheid.

Sleutelwoorde: Die Drie-eenheid, Drie-enige God, Konseptuele model van die Drie-eenheid
Drie-eenheid as 'n geheimenis

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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Title and key words

1.1.1 Title

Constituting an efficient conceptual model for teaching the doctrine of the Trinity in Korean churches

1.1.2 Key words

The Trinity, Triune God, Conceptual model of the Trinity, Korean churches

1.2 Background and Problem Statement

1.2.1 Background

The belief in the Trinity is very central to Christianity, but it has been rejected by a great deal of the world and misunderstood even by many in the church. Berkhof (1996:82) points out that “the doctrine of the Trinity had always been bristled with difficulties, and the attempts to do justice to the scriptural data often failed.” Pieper (1950:381) mentions that “the Christian Church has been struggling not only to fight against Anti-Trinitarians outside the church, against heathens, Jews, Mohammedans, but also against those within their own borders who disturbed and disrupted the church by teaching a doctrine of God that was nothing but the result of their own speculation.” Unitarianism, also known as Monarchianism, and Anti-Trinitarianism has appeared in various forms throughout human history, while the unity of God has been denied by Tritheists, the Subordinationists and Modalism.

Many Christian sects and cults are deprived from the doctrine of the Trinity. They constitute a growing trend which is a long way off from the established Christian churches and the historic teachings of the Bible. The Korean church especially has been divided into so many different denominations and many of its members have turned to other cults and sects. One of key reasons for the splits into cults and sects was related to the understanding of doctrines. At the heart of the separation is the misunderstanding of doctrines, and at the core of it is trinitarianism.

It is very rare for a regular worshipper to hear sermons on the Trinity in Korean churches and many of the church leaders who mention the Trinity, merely give the definition of the term instead of explaining the Triune God with a proper model and delivering enough knowledge of this doctrine. It is generally observed that teaching and learning of the doctrines, including that of the Trinity, is not enough in Korean churches, and the majority of church members feel that it is difficult to comprehend. Park (2017:1) mentions that textbooks for Bible Study in the major Presbyterian churches in Korea cover very little about doctrines, including that of the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Triune God was already expressed a long time ago and the church has successfully overcome the oppositions to the doctrine with Scriptural proofs, as mentioned by Pieper (1950:381). However, it is a challenge within the church to show that the average Christian's understanding of the Trinity is minimal or even heterodox due to the disappearance of biblical literacy in the current age (Copan, 2009:205). Another reason for the misunderstanding of the Trinity could also be that the church does not teach enough the doctrine of the Trinity through an efficient model.

1.2.2 Problem Statement

In light of the above, the problem that arises is that the doctrine of the Trinity has not been well understood, both inside and outside Korean churches because it has not been well taught or presented through an efficient conceptual model.

1.3 Research questions

1.3.1 Central research question

The central research question arising from the problem statement is: What would be an efficient conceptual model for teaching the doctrine of the Trinity in Korean churches?

1.3.2 Secondary questions

Secondary questions from the subdivisions of the problem are ...

- 1) Why is the doctrine of the Trinity rejected or misunderstood by many of Korean churches?

- 2) Which aspect of the doctrine can be identified as difficult part to comprehend?
- 3) How can the doctrine of the Trinity be constituted in a simple model for better teaching and understanding it in Korean churches?

1.4 Aim and objectives

1.4.1 Aim

The main aim of this study is to propose an efficient conceptual model for teaching the doctrine of the Trinity in Korean churches.

1.4.2 Objectives

- 1) To investigate why the doctrine of the Trinity is misunderstood by Korean churches
- 2) To analyse the aspect of the doctrine identified as difficult to comprehend for Korean churches
- 3) To constitute the doctrine of the Trinity in a simple model for better teaching and understanding it in Korean churches.

1.5 The central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that the doctrine of the Triune God has not been well translated and explained to Korean churches and the Trinity can be explained and taught well in Korean churches with a more comprehensible conceptual model.

1.6 Research design and methodology

1.6.1 Nature

A literature study on the work of previous scholars has been conducted in order to examine how people understand the doctrine of the Trinity and what the reasons are for either misunderstanding or poor understanding of the doctrine. This study also shows the areas in the doctrine identified as difficult to comprehend and how the church leaders are teaching the doctrine at present.

The theoretical research or comparative literature research has been conducted to review the answers to the misunderstandings of the doctrine of the Trinity and what would be a

suggestion for a better understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. This study examines whether the Korean translation of the Trinity reflects the original concept, and conceives a conceptual model that is reflected more in that respect. For this purpose, this research refines the clear concept of the Trinity revealed in the Bible and Reformed confessions of the Church, answers to the misunderstandings of the doctrine, as well as defines the value of teaching the doctrine of the Trinity. This also including study on the exact meaning of the terms used in the concept of the Trinity, such as “Person” and “Essence” etc. Literature from previous scholars focused on the subject and accredited journals were the sources for this study. In order to locate Scriptural evidence about the doctrine, the applicable passages of Scripture were identified and exegesis of them done.

Some theological ideas are required to present a proper model of the Trinity into the Korean translation and to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity in a simple model for better teaching it based on Reformed theology.

1.6.2 The Strategy and Approach

This study was done from the perspective of Reformed theology by a comparative literature research. Some of the recommendations suggested are practical in order to answer the research questions and to fulfil the objectives of the study.

1.6.3 Scope and Criteria

The focus of the study is especially on the Korean Christian churches and therefore other religions were not included in this research.

The literature survey on previous studies on the subject been done to evaluate past and present viewpoints on the reasons why the doctrine of the Trinity has been misunderstood by many people and what would be a proper model for teaching the doctrine of the Trinity in Korean churches.

The doctrine of the Trinity is related to the subject of the Deity of Jesus Christ and the Personality of the Spirit. It is too broad to cover these subjects in depth and this research has accordingly focused on the doctrine of the Trinity itself, including the exact meaning of terms utilized in the discussion on the concept of the Triune God, such as “Person,” “Essence (or Substance)” and “Unity (or Oneness)”.

1.6.4 Limitation

The original design of this study was to go through an empirical survey (questionnaires and interviews) about key questions. It has been changed to focus on the literature study by following a recommendation of the ethics committee of the University. Hence, the survey data relies mostly on previous surveys and studies of other scholars instead of the Researcher's own findings.

1.7 Concept clarification

1.7.1 The Trinity

The language used in describing and defining the Trinity is taken from Platonic and Greek philosophy. The Platonic term *trias*, from the word for three, was Latinized as *trinitas*— the latter giving the English word trinity. The word Trinity from the Latin *trinitas* meaning “triad” or *trinus* meaning “three-fold” is not found in the Bible (Rohr, 2016:48). The basic definition of the Trinity is one God exists in three Persons. Grudem (2000:226) mentions the word *trinity* means “tri-unity” or “three-in-oneness.” It is used to summarize the teaching of Scripture that God is three Persons yet one God.

The basic concept of the Trinity is that the Lord is one God in three Persons and three Persons in one God. “The Persons are distinct but not separate and are all equally of the same essence or nature” (Mock, 1989: 75).

The Athanasian Creed suggests that “we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance.”

The Westminster Confession mentions about the Trinity that “in the unity of the Godhead, there are three Persons of one substance, power and eternity. The Father was neither begotten nor preceded by anyone. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father and the Holy Spirit is eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”

Christians profess that there are three necessarily inseparable Persons who share one divine nature and substance (Copan, 2009:210).

The doctrine of the Trinity is based on three propositional truths of Scripture. First, there is only one God. Secondly, there are three Persons called God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, each of these three Persons is distinct from the other two but same in essence (Hindson & Caner, 2008:473).

1.7.2 Godhead

Oxford Dictionary (1965: 808) mentions meaning of the word “Godhead” as 1) the quality of being God, and 2) divine nature or essence; deity.

1.7.3 Person, *Hypostasis*, Being, *Ousia*, *Essentia* & Analogy of being

Various definitions have been given to the word “Person.” According to Thomas Aquinas (1993:58), the word *Person* is “individual beings with a rational nature.” Some theologians including K. Barth state that it is a “manner of being” or “mode of being.” Garderen and Velema (2008:153) agree with Calvin who says: “In God’s being I call Person a Subsistence, which, while related to the others, is distinguished by an incommunicable quality.” *Hypostasis* is a Greek term for “Person.” Applied to the Trinity, it came to designate the distinctness of Persons (Toom, 2007:38). Bray (1993:179) recommends that Person should be understood as “a substantial reality” not merely as an aspect or mode of the divine being.

Grammatically, the word “being” is the noun form of the verb “to be.” Therefore, “being” is “to be” or “to exist.” Being is attributed to everything that currently, actually exists. The “analogy of being” is a concept in philosophy that states that everything exists has its own unique existence, there are some facets of that existence that are similar to all other existing things. As an analogy, being is applied to existing things in a way that is similar, but different (Hindson & Caner, 2008:19).

Essentia is a Latin word for “essence, being” and *Ousia* is a Greek word for “essence, being, reality, substance, nature, property.” *Ousia* designates the irreducible being of some kind of thing (Toom, 2007:38).

1.7.4 Cults & Sects

The term “Cult” for modern form was originally used by Ernst Troeltsch in his classic *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1921) and the more important usage has been the development of evangelical polemics against groups seen as heretical. The classic work, which probably gave modern usage of the word, is Jan Van Baalen’s *Chaos of Cults* (1938). Van Baalen expounds the beliefs of various religious groups such as theosophy, Christian Science, Mormonism, and Jehovah’s Witnesses, subjecting them to rigorous theological critique from an evangelical perspective (Treier & Elwell, 2017: 225).

A cult espouses radically new religious beliefs and practices that are frequently seen as threatening the basic values and cultural norms of society at large. In recent times, Orthodox Christians have used the term to describe those religious groups that deny the Trinity and specifically the deity of Jesus Christ. Their teachings are contrary to historic Orthodoxy. The three dynamics of a cult are sociological, psychological (behavioural), and theological (Mather & Nichols, 1993:86).

Religious cults are schismatic deviations of established religious bodies. They are generally led by a powerful individual who is convinced that he or she has the only true message of God. They differ from denominations in that they are heretical schisms from Orthodox beliefs and practice. Unlike Christian denominations, which differ from one another in doctrinal views and policy practices, cults exclude all other religious groups as false, and teach that they alone are going to heaven (Hindson & Caner, 2008:158).

The term *sect* may be used pejoratively of bodies regarded as heretical. A sect denotes a body with certain characteristics, such as extreme emphasis on some aspects or doctrines of the Christian tradition at the expense of others; personal conversion as a condition of membership; and condemnation of the values and institutions of ordinary society. This is contrasted with the 'church' type of Christianity (Hinnells, 1984: 289).

1.7.5 Heresy, Heretic

"Heresy" derives from Greek *hairesis*, which originally referred to an action or belief chosen from several options but later came to an unorthodox opinion led by a group within the church. The concept of heresy is grounded in the conviction that exists one revealed truth, and other opinions are intentional distortions or denials of that truth. Christian belief in revealed truth means that heresy becomes not merely another opinion, but false teaching that leads people away from God's revelation (Treier, 2017: 378).

"Heretic" means one who maintains a heresy or heresies. Hence, one who maintains opinions or any subject at variance with those generally received (Onions, 1965: 894)

1.7.6 Monotheism, Polytheism, Tritheism, Modalism & Pantheism

Polytheism is derived from two Greek words; *-poly*, meaning "many," and *theos*, meaning "God." Polytheism is the belief in and adherence to a religious or philosophical system that worship a plurality of deities. *Monotheism*, on the other hand, is the belief that there is one and only one God (Hindson & Caner, 2008:396).

Tritheism is the belief that there are three gods. *Modalism* is the belief that God is only one person who appears in different modes at different times (Gordon, 2010:179). The word was introduced by a German scholar Harnack when he was trying to mention the common elements of the heresies of the doctrine of the Trinity (McGrath,2010:109). In the view of modalism, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were only successive modes of revelation of the one God (Giles, 2002:12). It defended the absolute unity of God (often known as "Monarchianism," derived from the Greek word "the only authoritative principle"), and eventually claimed that the only one God revealed Himself in different ways in different times. Pantheism is the belief in many or all gods, or the belief that God exists in, and is the same as, all things, animals, and people within the universe (Cambridge English Dictionary).

1.7.7 Immanent/ontological Trinity, economic Trinity

The *immanent* means present as a natural and permanent part of something. The eternal triune God exists as He is in Himself that no human can ever fully comprehend. Garvie (1925:370) expresses the *Economic Trinity* of God as He has made Himself known and given Himself to humanity in history, and the *Ontological Trinity* of God as He is in Himself. Giles (2002:17) says the *Economic Trinity* is the triune God as He has revealed Himself in history. Baik (2011:1) refers the immanent Trinity as the inner relationships within the Trinity and economic Trinity as the Trinity active and revealed in creation, redemption and consummation.

1.7.8 Arianism

Arianism wrongly infers that the Father alone is God, contrary to Scripture. The Logos is not consubstantial with the Father but a perfect creature who became a God. Arianism deny the unity of the three Persons in order to preserve their Threeness (Bavinck, 2011:228).

1.8 Ethical considerations

This research has no ethical risk and no other aspect of potentially ethically sensitive nature is included. This study complies with the ethical requirements of the Department of Higher Education and of the North West University. The risk level as far as ethical implications are concerned, is minimal.

Chapter 2 THE REASONS FOR NOT UNDERSTANDING THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY WELL

2.1 Introduction

Although the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important doctrines in the Christian faith, the Korean church does not handle it much *per se* or understand it well. This chapter deals with some of the main reasons why the doctrine of the Trinity is not well understood in the Korean churches.

One of the main reasons why Korean churches have difficulties in understanding the doctrine of the Trinity is that the churches do not pay much attention to this doctrine. The present situation is driven by the fact that church ministers and leaders have had little opportunity to study the doctrine of the Trinity thoroughly during their theological study and hence fail to explain it clearly and confidently to their members. On the other hand, church members do not actively need the doctrine of the Trinity, because liberalism and the faith which pursues earthly blessings are affecting the church to neglect doctrines. In this situation, the preachers are trying to meet the needs of church members who do not want their leaders to deal with difficult doctrines, but only with plain and easy teachings. Thus, rather than teaching an intricate doctrine, teachers or learners want to remain at the level of something easy and uncomplicated.

Another reason for the absence of trinitarianism in the Korean churches is insufficient Catechesis Education that produces immature church members. The influence of liberalism also leads to a free humanistic reinterpretation of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and the Bible.

A structural problem in many Korean churches is the separation of the pastoral ministry and educational functions. Pastors are mostly focusing on the ministry for adult members such as visiting families, sermons and counselling rather than catechesis education. Seminary students who are called as Education Evangelists cover the education only for children rather than professional education for members. Therefore, the catechesis for all church members is very weak.

Another problem in understanding the doctrine of the Trinity is the translation of the word Trinity into an understandable Korean expression. This issue will be fully dealt with in 2.5 of this chapter under the subject "miscommunication by improper translation of the term."

In addition, historic misunderstandings, such as Arianism and Modalism, are affecting the understanding of the Trinity and thus misleading metaphors are being used. Therefore, many churches misunderstand the Scriptures related to the doctrine of the Trinity. This issue is discussed in the chapter 2.6 with many references to heresies that arose in the Christian church.

One of the fundamental reasons the doctrine of the Trinity is not fully understood is the religious tendencies of Korean people. The religious tendencies of the Korean Christians are more emotional than logical and hence church members think the doctrine of the Trinity is too difficult to understand. The features of Korean religions are actually influencing the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity negatively. Those are 1) enthusiastic emotionalism, 2) temporal utilitarianism or faith for earthly blessings, 3) harmonic pluralism and 4) the traditional Confucian thought.

The limit that modern Korean theology does not deal with trinitarian theology in depth and less communion with the Triune God can also be pointed out as some of the reasons that the Korean churches have misunderstandings and less comprehension of the doctrine of the Trinity.

2.2 Absence of Trinitarianism

2.2.1 The current generational phenomenon in the Korean churches

It is very rare for Korean churches to teach the doctrine of the Trinity to their members. The Korean church experiences a big change since the gospel was introduced to the country in the year 1884. The current problem is that many church members do not feel the need to deal with the difficult doctrine of the Trinity. They are satisfied with easy teachings. As a result, the prevailing sermons tends to meet the needs of church members. Church leaders are inclined to stay away from the Christian doctrines and spend more time satisfying the demands of the members. A doctrinal sermon is generally considered to be far from real life, and accordingly preachers do not often deal with it. Sometimes, the preachers do not have enough time to teach the doctrine efficiently while preaching and church members find it difficult to hear and follow a sermon about the Trinity. According to Lee (2011:7) one of the issues in Korean churches is that a large section of the church members is not interest in the Christian doctrines and the Reformed Confessions.

The faith of the Korean church is characterized by the pursuit of earthly possessions and success, blessings and prosperity. Lee (2011:7) points out that these trends cause a serious crisis in the identity of Korean churches today, which means that to Korean Christians, faith has become a temporal, subjective and materialistic object, which does not even have to do with doctrinal teachings. Present day, Christians in Korea see faith as a means for cultivating the innerness and godliness of the individuals.

Many Korean churches have focused on the growth of the church members rather than on the core of the gospel. There are not many Christians who are interested in traditional Christian doctrines and professions of faith. Many of churches in Korea have a tendency that promises earthly blessings and prosperity. This tendency was influenced by Korean traditional religions, and reflection of this tendency appeared as so-called Prayer House and Revival Meetings which emerged from material deprivation and mental emptiness after the Korean war and reached its peak after 1970s. There is also a tendency to see the Holy Spirit as God's power to bring blessings and prosperity rather than understanding it as a Person in the Godhead. This view is spread not only in the heretical groups but also in the main stream churches.

2.2.2 The explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity is not in the Bible

One of the reasons why the Korean church leaders do not focus on the doctrine concerning the Trinity in the churches is that they tend to think there is not a clear explanation of the Trinity in the Bible. Although the whole Bible is a testimony about God and His ministry, the Bible passages presented by many scholars about each subject or concept of the Trinity do not adequately emphasize that "the three Persons are One." Many verses of Scripture testify that God is One, and that there are Three Persons with the same essence of deity. However, the Bible passages presented to prove the fact that "the Three Persons are One God" do not clearly explain the concept (This issue will be covered further in chapter 3). Thus, rather than teaching ambiguous doctrines for both of the church leaders and members, church leaders remain at the level of the basic gospel to teach church members something easy and clear. That is one of the reasons why a model of the Trinity which can be briefly explained to Korean church members is required.

2.2.3 Expansion of the Liberal Theology

One of the eminent trends in the Korean church has been the expansion of Liberal Theology which tends to consider human experience or reason as the final determinant, and thereby attenuates the interpretation and teaching of the Bible as to human experience or reasons. This trend, in general, was promoted by the improving of living conditions, the enormous expansion of human knowledge, the advance of science in Western countries and the notion of scientists (cited by Moltmann, 1971:200) that the religion of the first century does not fit with science in the 20th century. Reardon (1968:9) defines Liberal Protestantism as nothing like a closed system of doctrine that has been formulated in a confession. Indeed, its attitude to dogma is apt to be detached and critical, and its general approach to Christianity, is rather historical than schematic. When the word "liberal" is applied to Christianity, it covers a wide variety of opinion as to the actual truth and value of traditional teachings.

In Korea, Protestantism was introduced in 1884 by Western missionaries from conservative denominations (Kim, 2009:73). However, the increasing number of pastors and theologians studied abroad have led to the disappearance of the traditional doctrine and teaching on the Trinity in quite a large part of the Korean church due to the negative effect of liberated Western theology. Many Korean pastors went to study in America in whatever school they got scholarship. Liberalism tend to reinterpreted the fundamental doctrines of the Bible and Christianity with reason, emotion, and experience from their belief in the autonomy of humanity. Their method of theology started from human experience. Kang (2009:1) says that many liberal scholars from the Western world such as Kant, Hegel, Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf Von Harnack, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer, Harvey Cox, Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, Schweitzer etc. attracted the interest of Korean pastors and theologians, and introduced individual subjective, psychological, and experiential methods into the study of theology. The theological trend of the Korean Church, which was conservative up to the 1930's, has been divided into two lines; 1) Conservative and 2) Progressive. It became four lines when these two lines each divided into two in the 1960's, and now it comprises of 1) Ultra Conservative Fundamentalism, 2) Mild Conservative Evangelicalism, 3) Participative Activism, and 4) Religious Liberalism.

Some of other influences in the Korean church were the social participation of the church, a dialogue with other religions and liberalization of American churches. Kang (2009:1) mentions that the Korean Church has begun to make efforts in the social participation movement since late 1960's, and those who developed this movement were not tied to conservative theology. On the other hand, Korean churches have had a problem to start a dialogue with other religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism. Religion-cultural

liberalism is an attempt to form an indigenous theology through the encounter between the Christian gospel and indigenous religions.

Yu (2018:20) points out that the liberalization of the Korean church is experiencing the pros and cons of the American church formed for 400 years in a short period of Korean church history. Yu (2018:15) explains that many of the American churches had a reluctant attitude toward doctrines because of a strong tendency to appeal to emotion and with pursuing a practical aspect after experiencing two revival movements in 19 centuries. The trend in the American churches influenced on the Korean churches.

2.3 Lack of Catechesis in the Seminary and the Korean Church

2.3.1 Insufficient Catechesis Education produces immature church members

The root cause that the doctrine of the Trinity is not being taught enough in the Korean churches starts from the fact that most of the pastors had not been taught enough at the school of theology, and accordingly, the pastors cannot teach their church members well enough. As Carle and House (2003:13) mentions, the reasons why the essential Orthodox doctrines are distorted came from a lack of accurate information, which could be the consequence of being poorly schooled in the biblical truth. Carle and House insist that this is why the Christian should be educated not only in biblical knowledge but also in systematic theology, apologetics, hermeneutics and logic. The theological immaturity of the preachers in Korean churches has resulted immaturity of church members.

2.3.2 Catechesis Education in Seminary

It is fairly certain that the Church leaders and pastors who are in charge of church education do not receive enough education corresponding to their important roles. Na (2013:185) points out that the Christian education course and curriculum in the theological seminary of seven major denominations in South Korea needs to be improved. He mentions that a system so called a pastor or director for Christian Education is necessary and the unified standard textbooks related to Christian education needs to be introduced in order to cultivate professionals of church education.

Park (2012:51, 54) mentions that it is quite certain that the catechism in the curriculum of the Presbyterian seminaries, and the teaching of the catechism in the Sunday school textbooks

published in each denomination are both less than 10% of the total volume. Teaching of Catechism in the curriculum for ministerial candidates in the seminaries of the five major Presbyterian churches are limited to 5-15% of the entire curriculum. The curriculum of the post graduate school of theology does not include the study of the first doctrines, such as the Westminster catechism and the Heidelberg Confession which are officially adopted by the Presbyterian Church. One could therefore imagine that the doctrine of the Trinity in the education of the theological seminary and the church would be very minimal. Yu (2018:17) points out that this trend of the theological education in the theological seminary and the church is seen as the influence of the United States, which focuses on practical subjects rather than theoretical and supportive subjects like Bible language, Bible commentary and systematic theology.

2.3.3 Education in the Church

There are several causes behind the gradual disappearance of catechesis in Korean churches. The first reason is the structural problem of the church organization, and the second is that some of the causes already mentioned are correlated. Korean churches have to a certain extent been focused on quantitative growth and there is little demand for the doctrinal education. The deficiency of expertise of pastors, inadequate and lack of textbooks and programs in catechesis are correlated. Na (2010:4) mentions that Korean Presbyterian churches have traditionally admitted Westminster's Confession of Faith as a standard profession of faith, but the translations contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church has been used for several decades without proper revision and no one can understand it well.

One of major issues of Korean churches is the divided functions cause structural problems: Those are so-called "Pastoral Ministry," which is an adult-oriented ministry and the "Sunday Church School," which is centred on the under-age class. Pastoral care for adults does not pay much attention to education and pastors are busy with preaching and church administration. Many churches have specialist ministers, named an Educational Evangelist, in charge of teaching, yet most of them are seminary students who teach underage Sunday School children. Lee (2017:1) points out that the operating system of secular institutions, by an unprofessional manner, has made the church lose the dynamic educational power of the faith community, and the number of Sunday School students has been decreasing significantly every year.

Another problem in the Korean church is that churches are losing its members to the invasion of heretical teachings and the ideas of cults. The situation is not a problem in one or two churches, but of the entire Korean church. The major cause of the problems is that the truth of Christianity is not properly being taught in the church. Although Christian truths are being taught through sermons and Bible studies, churches do not provide a detained comprehensive systematic teaching of the Bible. Not many Korean churches educate a catechism which systematically and clearly summarizes the truths of the Bible.

The American missionaries, who came from the background of American Evangelicalism in the early stages of missions in Korea, placed more emphasis on private spiritual experience and salvation, rather than on an effort to teach the Bible systematically. Japanese Imperialism left no place for catechism. In the 1960's, the country adopted economic growth as its national value, and growth and revival became the supreme target within the Church as well. The Korean church achieved great growth during this period but many important values were set aside from being prioritized, and catechism, which does not show immediate results, was not properly carried out. In the 1980's, Korea achieved amazing economic growth and people began to pursue a culture of enjoyment. In order to attract people, the church began to offer various cultural programmes. These programs did not allocate any room for teaching the catechism (Lee, 2017:1).

In the meantime, teaching methods and materials are not accurate. It is difficult the accurate teaching methods are to be found. The old members of the Korean churches, however, accepted the doctrine of the Trinity with respect and faith, even though the confessions only covered the definition of the Trinity in general. But new generations are becoming more rational and logical. Therefore, as the doctrine of the Trinity is in a sense difficult to understand, church leaders should not be circumventing it, but the doctrine of the Trinity should rather be well explained to the new generations so that they will understand it reasonably.

It seems that there are not many Korean churches that teach the catechism to their members. Because there is no fence, the heretics come into the church. The Korean churches are not keeping the legacy given to the church that seniors of the church have devoted themselves to. Church members feel uncomfortable when the Reformed Confessions of faith, a legacy of noble faith, are introduced to the church. Yu (2018:19) points out that this trend was influenced by American Christianity that ignores the doctrine and the tradition of the church.

Members of the churches where the catechism is being taught have a fairly good definition of the Trinity at least, but they do not have enough knowledge about its concrete contents. Church leaders need to explain about some important definitions or questions related to the Trinity thoroughly.

2.4 Preconception that doctrines are difficult

Korean Christians tend not to love things they consider very complicated, obtuse, or just downright difficult. It is generally said that Korean people are more open to feeling and emotion rather than to logical and thoughtful study. In other words, Korean people are much more sensitive to how they feel in their hearts than to be curious about how they can understand God in their thoughts. It can be said that this national ethnic sentiment contributed to the poor understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Hodgson (1946:94) mentions that “one often meets people who seem to think that the doctrine of the Trinity is an encumbrance to the simple faith of the Christian believer, thinking this because they assume that the unities of experience are of the simple type and the complex unity of the Trinity a figment of the ecclesiastical imagination.”

The concept of the Trinity could be difficult to explain by human understanding and accordingly, people are not trying to teach and learn it. The reason why people have this preconception that the doctrine of the Trinity is difficult seems to be because the term is not in the Bible and even theologians say that they have difficulty in understanding it and cannot be fully explained by human logic. This awareness that the doctrine of the Trinity is beyond human comprehension is widespread and even many people who accept the Trinity tend to think the same way. Berkhof (2000: 287) says that “the church confesses the Trinity to be a mystery beyond the comprehension of man.” It is of course a statement about our limitedness against the greatness of God’s being.

Many church leaders say that God is one, and God is three. People can hardly understand it because there is no such form of being among the creatures, but they just accept it. White (1998:13) mentions that most Christians do not understand what the term *the Trinity* means and have only a vague idea of the reality it presents. As White (1998:13) points out, the doctrine of the Trinity is rarely the topic of sermons and Bible studies even in Korean churches. Instead, the doctrine is misunderstood, as well as ignored. The majority of

Christians, when asked, give incorrect and at times downright heretical definitions of the Trinity.

2.5 Miscommunication caused by improper translation of the term

Another aspect of the reason why the doctrine of the Trinity is not fully understood or communicated in Korean churches is the problem of the translation of the words into the Korean language. As White (1998:23) mentions, it is basic to human communication to define terms. Yet so many people have so much emotional energy invested in the Trinity that they often skip right past the “definition” stage and charge into the “tooth and claw” stage. As tedious as it may seem at first, one must resist the temptation to bypass the necessary “groundwork” and insist that everyone define what they believe the Trinity to be, and how they are going to be using many of the key terms that come into play. Without this first step, little else will be accomplished.

The Korean church has struggled for centuries to translate the unique revelation God makes of His mode of existence. The shift of the terminology “The Trinity” from English to the Korean language has contributed to the confusion and misunderstanding of the concept of the doctrine (Kim, 2016:1).

The term *Trinity* translated in Korean actually originated from the Chinese language. The term translated in Korean is a combination of four Chinese characters and each character has its own original meaning. In order to understand the meaning of the word that originated from the Chinese, the history of the Korean language that adopted a lot of its vocabulary from China needs to be explained. More than half of the vocabulary of the Korean language came from the Chinese. As Lin (2017:177) explains, the long historic of affiliation between China and Korea is well known. The friendly neighbor-ship between the two countries had been built up since ancient times and Korea has been greatly influenced by China, including both of culture and language. The Koreans adopted the Chinese language as their official language long time back and the Korean king Sejong and Korean scholars in the Chosun Dynasty finally created their own language. The Korean alphabet recorded most of the Chinese vocabulary in Korean pronunciation. The Chinese language accounts for over half of the Korean vocabulary until now, in common conversation intentionally or inadvertently.

The combination of the term *Trinity* translated in Korean language as 삼위일체, pronounced as SamWillChe, originated from the Chinese language. The word translated in Korean,

written in Chinese as “三位一體,” is a combination of four Chinese characters, and each of the four letters has its own meaning. Firstly, the Chinese “位” means 1) Position; Location. The letter itself also as a combination of two letters of 人(Person) and 立(Standing). Therefore, Position means “the location where a Person is Standing” (New Practical Chinese Korean Dictionary, 1993:23). This letter also has other meanings as 2) Title; official position, 3) Seat; seating or throne; royal seat, 4) Rank; grade; status, 5) Standard; rule, 6) (honorific) people or 7) Digit etc.

Secondly, “體” means 1) Body, 2) Body itself, 3) Image, 4) Base, 5) Form or 6) Material (New Practical Chinese Korean Dictionary, 1993:612). “三” means “Three” and “一” means “One.” Thus, the word 삼위일체 (三位一體) could be understood as “three Positions one Body” or “three Titles or seats in one Body” literally. The term could accordingly be understood as three Positions or three Titles in One Body and hence the fact that God exists as a triune God could be understood as “God exist with Three Positions/Titles/seats in One Body.” It seems that the word itself means the only God has three Positions or three Titles. In reality, the meaning of this Korean translation is not representing the exact meaning of the Trinity. Some of the heresies in Korea understand the Trinity in this way as the word Trinity is actually translated a little bit differently from its original meaning. The words “Person,” “Essence” and “Oneness” are to be translated properly in Korean words reflecting the original content.

The Triune God is three Persons and one Essence as One being. In other words, personally, mutual interchange is possible and the three Persons are distinguished, but the divine essence is one, existing in one God. Therefore, *the Trinity* could be interpreted correctly in Korean and the concept could not be misunderstood. As Blamires (1956:62) mentions, Christian doctrines are not generally rejected because they express unacceptable propositions, but they are rejected because they are misunderstood. And the question of proper understanding is clearly in part a linguistic one. One should rightly welcome sound interpretation of Christian dogma which reflects the vocabulary and environment of the contemporary world. So that one can return to the recitation of the creeds with increased awareness of the comprehensive doctrines they proclaim.

Although the term *the Trinity* is not expressing the full meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity, it is generally understood that the term refers to three Persons in one God and one God exists in three Persons when the term is mentioned as a theological term, as Berkhof (2000:281) mentions.

Meanwhile, the word *the Trinity* in Korean is used not only as a term to express the Christian God, but also in everyday life for other uses. The most commonly used case is, for example, a language reference book for secondary school students, dealing with grammar, reading and composition, named “the Trinity(삼위일체) English (Medley, 1968).” There are a lot of cases using the word Trinity such as “the Trinity English Camp: Speaking Grammar Composition (Shin, 2013),” “the Trinity Chinese grammar (Park & Lee, 2008),” “the Trinity Health Rules (Ann, 2017)” etc. Especially, “the Trinity English” was for a long time famous among Korean middle school students and the three areas of Grammar, Reading Comprehension and Composing were integrated into one book, widely used as an essential reference. The word *the Trinity* in this sense might mean that the three different areas are combined in one book and the three functions make up the completion of the language study. It is not known whether the word *the Trinity* was first used in Christian society or the commercial daily life, but the fact that the word is often used in different contexts in Korea, provides confusion and misunderstanding to the Christians who do not have an exact concept of the Trinity.

The responsibility of Christian theologians is to choose the right words which express the meaning of doctrines logically and rationally rooted in experience.

2.6 Preceding misunderstandings are affecting the understanding of the Trinity

2.6.1 The influence of unorthodox doctrine on the understanding of the Trinity

Formulation and doctrines from unorthodox groups, which are clearly out of harmony with the teachings of the Bible and Orthodox doctrines, are influencing the understanding of the Trinity in the Korean church. These unorthodox groups are those who, as Carle and House (2003:10) mentions, believe in many gods, or reject the deity of the Son or the Spirit, or deny the plurality of the Persons of the Godhead, or reject the personal nature of God in favour of pantheism.

2.6.2 Heresies with regard to the Trinity

Many scholars divide historical heresies concerning the Trinity into two or three broad groups. Kim (2005:267) categorizes the historical heresies of the Trinity into two groups; the first group shows an error that emphasizes the three Persons, sacrificing the unity in the

essence, while the other group errors by emphasizing the unity of the essence, sacrificing the three Persons.

The heresies that emphasize the three Persons, thereby sacrificing the unity of the essence are, for example, Arianism, Subordinationism/inferiorism Unitarianism. The pioneers of these views are Ebionites, Alogaph, Theodotos, Melchizedek, Arte Monpá, Beryllos, and Paul of Samosata. They deny or weaken the divinity of Christ in order to defend the monotheistic faith. They deny that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one and of the same nature and essence. Arius's error was to think that the incarnation clearly differentiated the Father from the Son. For him, the Son's servant role in the incarnation and his suffering proved that he was eternally subordinated in being and function to the Father. The Son cannot share the same being with the Father and is ontologically hierarchical ordered (Kim, 2005:267).

There are foreign and local heresies in Korea that support these views or are derived from them. One of the categories of Korean heresies is firstly Monarchianism which is a group who accepts only the Father as God and deny the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit or weaken the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Shinchonji (Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony) deny the Son of God as the Lord and think of the Holy Spirit as a mere power. Another category is Tritheism which is the heresy not only to distinguish the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but even to believe the three "separate" gods (Lee, 1999:5). Mormonism claims that there are many gods in the world. Meanwhile, one of the most striking features of the Korean heretical groups is that the founder takes the place of God or second coming Jesus Christ.

An error that emphasizes the unity of the essence, and sacrifices the three Persons in the process, are Sabellianism, Modalism, Pantheistic Succession, Moralistic Family theory, Pantheism Course theory, Revelational Modalism and so forth. The pioneers of these views are Noetus, Sabellius, Paraxeas, Hermogenes, Epigonos, Kleomenes, Callist, developed by Marcellus of Ancyra, Photinus of Sirmium, and Servetus. Sabellianism arose during the third century, focused on the belief that the Father suffered as the Son. The suffering of Jesus on the cross is to be regarded as the suffering of the Father (Kim,2005:284). There are heresies and cults spread widely in Korea that hold these views, derived from these views or very far from the Orthodox Trinitarianism such as Berea and Salvation Church.

One of the heretic views prevailing in Korea, which is easily misunderstood among the many heresies surrounding the Trinity, is modalism. Modalism is also monotheism, which is the belief that God exists in three "modes" but is only one person. This modalism is very prevalent in Korean churches. Modalism is the claim of heretics of extreme generationists

such as Berea, Salvation Church and Local Church from Watchman Nee. The generationists say that the God of the Old Testament, was incarnated and came to this world as Jesus Christ, and after Jesus was resurrected, the Holy Spirit came in this world (Tak, 2000:119). Some of analogies to express modalism are being mentioned in Korean churches when they explain the Trinity. In addition, there are cases of denying heaven in the afterlife and insisting that there is only the present earthly heaven, as ChunBuKyo (天父教) shows the case in building villages in several areas. They say the religious villages they built are the earthly heaven.

Common features of the Korean heresies are mixed above mentioned heretical views. Those are to deny the deity of Christ and substitute the founder himself in the place of second coming of Jesus, or the founder himself becoming God the Father. Heo (2012:150) mentions one of the characteristics of many heresies in Korea is related to the Trinity, which denies the deity of Jesus or trinitarianism. This can be confirmed by looking at some representative heretical groups in Korea as shown below.

2.6.2.1 Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witness is one of old heretics that came to Korea. Their Kingdom Halls spread throughout the country. Jehovah's Witness started their evangelism in Korea in 1912 by the American Missionary Hallist (Kang,1987:196) and their Kingdom Halls expanded to up to 640 places in 1985 (Nam, 1986:39). 'Watchtower' had been registered in the Booklet Association in Korea in 1957 (Kang, 1987:196) However, the Jehovah's Witnesses gradually became known to mainline Christian denominations as a heresy through the effort of Korean church leaders.

Specific doctrines that have caused traditional Protestant denominations to label the Watchtower as being heterodox include the rejection of the Trinity and the accompanying denial of the deity and eternity of Jesus Christ (Kang, 1987:193). Jehovah's Witnesses argue that the word Trinity does not appear in the Bible, but traditional Christianity responds by pointing out that the basis of this concept does exist. It is true with respect to any verses of Scripture a Trinitarian Christian uses to attempt to defend the doctrine of the Trinity or the deity of Jesus Christ do not mention the word *the Trinity*. The Watchtower teaches a subordinationism Christology that parallels the teaching of Arius (AD250-336). They teach that the Holy Spirit is not a divine person within the triune Godhead (Holden, 2002:25).

Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Trinity and they saying that Jehovah is the only God. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not God. Jesus is the first creature and a divine person. Jesus he himself has clearly distinguished himself from God and did not equal himself with God. The Holy Spirit is God's active force, not a personal being. Through this force God accomplishes His purposes. Jehovah's Witnesses say the reason that it is so difficult for them to understand the doctrine of the Trinity is that the Trinity is a doctrine formed centuries after the completion of the Bible and that the Bible does not speak about it clearly. The doctrine of the Trinity came from a pagan religion like the religion of ancient Babylon (Nam, 1986:15).

The reason why the Watchtower Society continued to grow in Korea during its first stage was that many new converters were not aware of their history, organization and the fact that their teaching of the doctrines were against orthodox faith. Most who consider themselves Christians are ignorant and helpless to defend traditional Christian doctrines such as the Trinity. Nam (1986: 36) mentions the background of the growth of Jehovah's Witnesses in Korea. The first reason is that the Jehovah's Witnesses regard the religion they believe as the best and are proclaiming it earnestly. The second is that they proclaim their belief in a very realistic way. The end of the world and the judgment are imminent, and the way to survive from the judgment is to join the Kingdom Hall. The third reason is their active evangelism through written documents. They are growing by distributing a Korean translation of "Watch Tower", "This means everlasting life", "What has religion done for mankind?", and "New heavens and a new earth" etc. The fourth reason is that their Biblical knowledge seems very abundant and presents a realistic interpretation. On the other hand, one of the religious climates of Korean people is Shamanistic which shows the faithfulness to believe in anything.

The influence of Jehovah's Witnesses on Korean society has been regarded as largely negative because of their avoidance of military service and study, rejection of blood transferees, other religions and Orthodox denominations etc.

2.6.2.2 Mormonism, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Mormons, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has also spread in Korea. Their image when delivering their gospel in Korea is usually characterized by well-dressed and smart looking foreign missionaries that contact the younger generation. Their 23-24 years old young evangelists are attracting students with the Bible in one hand and the Book of Mormon in the other to teach a foreign language (Kang, 1987:178). Kim-Hojik started Mormonism in Korea. He became a Mormon in American in 1951. He returned to Korea and

started meetings with American troops in Busan during the Korean war. Missions and organizations of Mormon in Korea expanded after US missionaries continued to visit Korea, their provincial government was established in 1956, and the first church district was established in 1973 (Kang, 1987:187).

Mormonism became known to the mainline Christian community as teaching their own doctrine and revelations in addition to the Bible. Rho (2015:27) says that the Mormon Church in Korea was born in the time when they were trying to leap into the world religion after they experiencing 180 years of history in America with trial and errors. The Korean Public Affairs Committee of the Mormon Church has continued to promote the faith publicity through its public relations strategy, which emphasizes family values, integrity, and morality.

As Hartman (2013:137) mentions, their theology has been changing and moving. Throughout the Book of Mormon, numerous superficially orthodox descriptions of God are present. Elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, there appears to be a modalistic understanding of God (Hartman, 2013:139). However, the founder of the Mormons, Joseph Smith, re-translated and modified the book of Genesis under the title, The Book of Moses. Portions of this translation was eventually incorporated in one of their documents Pearl of Great Price, in this early translation, Smith translates references to God in the singular at least fifty times in chapters two and three of The Book of Moses. However, Smith's view of God took an explicitly plural turn at some point later. It was during this period that Joseph Smith began teaching that human beings themselves can become gods (Hartman, 2013:141). Throughout the history of the Mormons church, Mormon prophets, apostles, and scholars sought to clarify, explain, and expound the doctrine of God put forth by Joseph Smith and have been successful in reaffirming central elements of Joseph Smith's theology. Some of these core tenants are firstly, there are many gods, but Mormons worship one group of three gods who act as a single God. Secondly, these gods progressed to their state as deities from a previously mortal condition (Hartman, 2013:148).

Mormons teach Jesus is "a god" or a godlike being. There are many gods who inhabit the universe. The Mormons insist that they are Christians because they follow Jesus Christ. Yet Jesus deity is understood to mean that he is but one god among literally millions. They teach that Jesus Christ once existed as a spirit child of God the Father and the most faithful and most godlike of all sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father in the spirit world. Among the spirit children of Elohim, the first born was and is Jesus Christ (House & Carle, 2003:70).

Mormons make distinctions between the nature and function of "the holy Ghost" and those of "the Holy Spirit." The Holy Ghost is a spirit-man, the third god of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is

an impersonal influence that proceeds from the Father (House & Carle, 2003:111). Kang (1987:178) mentions that the Mormons in Korea teach that the Holy Spirit is a power without Godhead, and God was a human being but became the person sitting on the throne. Mather and Nichols (1993:193) point out that from the outset Mormonism departed from historical Christian Orthodoxy in its teachings of the doctrine of God.

Mormonism can be said to have mainly influenced the consciousness of the younger generation with the idea that this world has many gods, recognition of polygamy, and salvation through acts etc.

2.6.2.3 Tong-Il Kyo (統一教, Unification Church, World Christian Unity Spiritual Society)

Korea produced no significant heretics before 1920's. Some of the spiritual movements arisen in 1920~1930's became active from 1950's after the Korean war. The Tong-Il Kyo started in 1954 and achieved a native growth until 1970's. The Church spread throughout the country and other countries on a big scale.

The word Tong-Il Kyo means the Unification Church and its official name is World Christian Unity Spiritual Society (Oh, 2002:21) or The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (Kang, 1987:137). The founder Moon Sun-Myung, who was born 1920, started studying in the Israeli monastery in Paju Gyeonggi Province from 1945 after his marriage. In 1951, he began to teach their principles in Busan and entered Daegu and Seoul. SM Moon founded the World Christian Unity Spiritual Society in 1954 and engaged in full-scale missionary activities. Not long after SM Moon began his career in the name of a formal denomination, the Church has run dozens of corporations and schools. A lot of Christian students, politicians and economists have joined the Church and its organizations. In 1974, a statement of support for the Church was published in daily newspapers in the name of 99 professors. Meanwhile, mainline Christian denominations proclaimed the heresy of this Church in the following year. The Tong-Il Kyo has been expanding its corporate and education partnerships by raising public awareness (Oh, 2002:21).

Moon Sun-Myung insists that he met Jesus in person on the Easter morning of 17th April 1935, at the age of 16, received his revelation and he himself came as the second coming Jesus. He is called by many names, such as "the second son of God", "the Son of God", "the Lamb of God", "the prophet", "the Holy Spirit of the Comforter" "the last servant of God" "the new God" and is also called "the true deity of mankind instead of Adam". The church members end their prayer: "In the name of True Parents. Amen."

Tong-Il Kyo is saying that Jesus failed on the cross and the true Messiah is not Christ but the second coming son of God SM Moon who came back to earth through a woman's body (Oh, 2002:24; Kang, 1987:150). Their principal discourse says that God, is Yin and Yang(陰陽) has a unified image and form. He is the Parent, and SM Moon is the true Parent (Kang,1987:144). Bray (1993:135) mentions that “the best-known system of Dualism of the Oriental type is Sun Myung Moon, who has tried to graft the Buddhist concept of yin and yang onto Christianity.” Tong-Il Kyo is the wealthiest organization among the Korean heretics and is widely circulated around the world, and the number of people visiting the Unification Church is more than 500,000 every year. The influence of the Unification Church has greater influence not only on the religious world but also on politics, the media, and the education sector.

2.6.2.4 ChunBuKyo (天父教)

ChunBuKyo, which means in English Heavenly Father's Church, is a strong nationwide heretic in Korea from 1955 by the name of the Evangelism Church (傳導館). 30 years after its inception 17 sects of the same line separated from the Evangelism Church (Kang,1987:162). ChunBuKyo was started by Park Tae-Sun, who was born in 1917. ChunBuKyo proclaims that the Church is founded by the earthly God Father Park Tae-Sun and the founder Park Tae-Sun is an incarnation of the triune God. This is a typical feature of Korean heretics that is the founder himself replace God.

Kim (1999:10) reports the foundation and history of the Church in detail. After Park Tae-Sun returned from Japan to Korea upon liberation of the country in 1945, he attended Namdaemun Presbyterian church and Changdong Church, where he had various spiritual experiences and remedies. As he got the gift of healing, he became an elderly evangelist touring the country. People who experienced miracles and healing through him started to follow Park Tae-Sun. Park Tae-sun founded an organization named 'the Korean Society for the Promotion of the Church of Jesus Christ' on April 8, 1955. Regarding his unexpected movements and remarks, the Presbyterian denomination denounced him as a heretic. However, in December of that year, he built a church building for 2,500 members and named it the Evangelism Church. The following year, 22 ChunBuKyo churches were established throughout the country, and ChunBuKyo expanded fast. In order to realize the earthly paradise in this world, the founder Park Tae-sun gathered the believers and established so called Faith Villages to achieve the Millennial kingdoms. The first Faith Village started in

1962 in Sosa, the 2nd village in Deokso in 1962 and the 3rd village in Yangsan in 1970. On April 5, 1980, he made a remarkable declaration by turning the name of his denomination to Heavenly Father's Church. He declared that Jesus is the devil and 98% of the Bible is false. Jesus also has original sin and is not the savior. There was a confusion among the ChunBuKyo church members who recognized and believed in Jesus Christ, but Park Tae-Sun proclaimed Himself as the God of the earth and devised a new doctrine. In 1984, Park Tae-Sun proclaimed himself as a Trinity God, the God who came to this earth in the flesh for the salvation of the people. On February 17, 1990, Park Tae-Sun passed away at the age of 73 and the number of members in the church was counted at 280,000. The number of followers has declined since that time. After Park Tae-Sun's death, his third son Park Yoon-Myeong took over the position and rebuilt the doctrine and the church. The remaining members are proud of their religion and follow their own desire and faith. The doctrine of the ChunBuKyo is far from the orthodox doctrine of the mainstream churches, but many believers are still bound to their Village and suffering mental and economic damage due to the isolation from their family and relatives.

2.6.2.5 Shinchonji (新天地, Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony)

Recently, a heretic church that is the most threatening and worrying the Korean church is Shinchonji. The Korean name, 新天地, means "New Heaven and Earth" and they use the name "Shinchenji, Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony." Shinchonji is threatening other mainline churches by the acquisition of a lot of churches through their members penetrating the mainline churches. Park (2015:96) mentions that the evils of Shinchonji causes various problems not only in the doctrines but also on the social level.

Lee Man-Hee, the founder, was born in 1931 and experienced several heretics until he founded the Church in 1984. The number of the Church had only been about 50,000 people for 20 years since its foundation, but it is estimated that the number of people has increased rapidly since 2007 and has reached more than 110,000 at the end of 2013 (Park, 2015:8).

One of their doctrines is about creation and recreation, and in each of these processes a new covenant is made through the shepherds of that age, and once a new covenant is made, and the covenant of the previous age becomes an old covenant. This covenant extends to the 'new covenant' of the new land of Lee Man-Hee (Park, 2015:21).

Shinchonji denies that Jesus is God. They argue that Jesus was a human, the Holy Spirit came to Jesus, and Jesus also became capable through God. In other words, they deny that Jesus and God are of the same substance, and they say that the Spirit of God came into the flesh of the innocent human being, Jesus, and performed his mission as a saviour. Jesus was the Comforter, and the "other Comforter" promised by Jesus is the Spirit sent from heaven. It is their logic that the Spirit is the "Promised Shepherd" and the Shepherd is the Comforter of this land. Eventually, Lee Man-Hee, a self-proclaimed "shepherd of promise," claims to be a helper (Park, 2015:66).

Shinchonji does not understand the Holy Spirit as a Person of the Trinity but understands it according to the Korean translation written in Chinese characters 聖靈 and interprets it as a holy spirit (Park,2015:61).

Shinchonji regards the doctrine of the Trinity as "a union of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." When the Father and the Holy Spirit are in the "one flesh" of the Son, they can be called Trinity, but when Jesus ascended the three Persons are in each Spirit (Shinchonji regards the resurrection of Jesus as the Resurrection of the Soul, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the same holy spirit, their positions are different, and the spirits are separated), so it cannot be called a 'trinity.' Unfounded they mention "three gods" and make the members misunderstood the doctrine of the Trinity as a tritheism (Park, 2015:69).

Shinchonji interprets the Trinity from the Korean translation, as indicated above, written in Chinese as "the 三 says Three, 一 says One, 位 says Position, 體 says the Body." Three names, the name of the new Jerusalem, the name of God and Jesus, are recorded in one body called "the winner", it is the Trinity. The winner is the title of Lee Man-Hee. The Trinity claimed by Lee Man-Hee is not a trinity formed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit but is a trinity formed by the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Winner, and sometimes the Father, the Son, and the New Jerusalem in the flesh of the Winner (Park, 2015:70).

The Old Testament prophesies that Jesus would come, and the New Testament prophesies that the promised Shepherd would come. The shepherd promised to the New Testament is Lee Man-Hee. He is the saviour, the comforter, and the new name of Jesus of this age. Sinchonji, Temple of Evangelism, is the place of salvation promised in the New Testament. Anyone who wants to have salvation and eternal life should find, learn, and believe in a promised shepherd and a promised temple. Lee Man-Hee is convinced that all the existing institutional churches that have been prepared and waiting for the second coming of Jesus are apostates on the path of destruction, but he himself appears as "the Winner" and pursues 144,000 of the new Israel (Park, 2015:95).

Sometimes, the doctrine of the Shinchonji is not consistent as Ki (2008:39) mentions. The founder Lee Man-Hee, identifies the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit and claims the Holy Spirit monotheist or a Holy Spirit monotheistic modalism, and Jesus as the Holy Spirit is "Jesus ", where the Comforter refers to the Holy Spirit as another Comforter (John 14:16). In the book of Revelation 19:10, Lee Man-Hee distinguished "spirit of proverbs" from Jesus and the Holy Spirit. After all, Lee Man-Hee identify himself with the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. Shinchonji is not only increasing the number of its members but also systematically threatening the existing churches, and many mainstream churches are warning and paying attention to the access of the heretic.

2.6.2.6 The Church of God, The World Mission Society Church

The interpretation of Genesis 1:26 by the heretical "The Church of God" is that the Triune God created man and woman in the image of God the Father and God the Mother, not in the image of the Triune God.

The founder Ahn Sang-Hong was born in 1918 and went to Japan in 1937 and returned to Korea in October 1946. He joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Sabbath Church) in 1947, the following year. "The Church of God" began on December 16, 1948, when Ahn Sang-Hong was baptized at the Incheon Nak island. In 1956, he claimed that the truth of the early church to be restored through himself against the Sabbath minister's preaching that there would be a second coming of Jesus in ten years (Tak, 1995:336).

The Church of God denies the Trine God and the Son Jesus Christ. They also deny the personality of the Holy Spirit. They believe Ahn Sang-Hong is the Holy Spirit of God, the Comforter. They claim there is a God the Mother as well as God the Father (Lee, 2008:634). Ahn Sang-Hong designated Jang Kil-Ja as God the Mother before his death. People in the age of the Father was saved in the name of the Lord God (Isaiah 43: 10-13), and people in the days of the Son were saved in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). In this age of the Holy Spirit, people are saved in the name of God, Ahn Sang-Hong, who came by the Holy Spirit of the Comforter (1 Peter 2: 4, Revelation 2: 7) and their church is the refuge of salvation (Lee, 2012:1). The church is expanding its membership with similar organizations and activities in many ways with the existing church. Currently there are more than 400 temples in Korea and expanding to worldwide. About 400 pastors are being released each year from their theological school and many activities such as video, publishing, music, education and relief are being systematically conducted by global partnership in more than 40 languages.

2.6.2.7 DongBangKyo (東方教)

DongBangKyo, which means Eastern or Oriental Church, was established in Daegu province in the mid of 1953 and expanded to 72 churches across the country (Oh, 2002:19).

The founder of DongBangKyo, NoKwangGong is called Doosan. He was born in Pyongyang in 1914 and served as the chief of the Japanese police in the Japanese colonial rule.

In 1953, following the rally of the ChunBuKyo, Park Tae-Sun group sweeping the province of Gyeongbuk, he played a role of drumming and learned how to create a religion from Park Tae-seon. And he organized an organization called the Korean Gospel Fellowship. In 1956, he organized a denomination called the Oriental Church in Daegu province and advertised himself as a "worldly revivalist pastor," proclaiming that he would heal illness and save the dead. When the rumours were circulated that he had cured the disease and resurrected the dead, a large number of believers departed from the existing church and the denomination joined DongBangKyo rapidly. He once worked as an evangelist for the Methodist church but was expelled. He also had a funeral ceremony as if he was dead, reported his death in his family register, and then appeared again as a twin brother and called his name NohDoosan. According to DongBangKyo's secret scripture "KyeonghwaRock", he was born as the main creator, and disguised as having performed various miracles. He was deified by his followers to Jehovah Ire, Ire Grandfather, Ire bright god, Judge, Creator, and Second Coming Messiah. After his death on July 26, 1967, his son Roh Yong-koo was appointed to the ministry of the Church and registered in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism under the name "Christian Korea Reformer Presbyterian". They published a newspaper named "Weekly Christianity". On July 13, 1976, their registration was cancelled and their mission organization 'Milal Evangelism Mission' was renamed to 'the Korea Christ Mission Foundation' (Heo, 2012).

According to their doctrine, people must not believe in Jesus alone for salvation, but must obey the commands from Doosan since he came as the Second Savior. Their own Commandments, which include a lot of traditional Korean beliefs, were considered to be a far more powerful rule than the Christian Ten Commandments. Most of the believers were wives and youths, and they bought real estate for their own money, and operated a few companies such as Choil Taxi, Taepyeong Transportation and Cheongha Publishing House. Even after the cancellation of their registration, they continued to do missionary work. In 1980's, there were 45 churches, 45 teachers, and 1,870 deacons but became underground church (Yoon, 1997:1).

Their influence on beliefs and social activities of members were temporary but gave chaotic effect on Christians who escaped from established churches by using similar names as established Christianity, giving healings and miracles.

2.6.2.8 Local Church, Watchman Nee (守望者, 1903-1972)

The founder of the Local Church is a Chinese, Watchman Nee (1903-1972). Watchman Nee began with a small unit movement called Little Flock Movement, and 17 years after he started the house church at the age of 21 in Shanghai, the number of churches were already about 1,000 with 90,000 members, which was 10% of the national Christian population in China at that time (Jeon, 2018:4). These small groups of Bible study were very effective and became a model for some of Korean heretics. Watchman Nee was arrested by the Chinese Communist government in 1952 and imprisoned until his death in 1972, after which the Local Church was succeeded by Witness Lee (1905-1997).

Watchman Nee's books has several times been introduced to Korea, and of his ways have been introduced to pastors who studied theology in the 1970's. The Local Church also spread in Korea and there are many positive evaluations of Watchman Nee about his contribution in the Chinese church history. However, his theology had been criticized because of problems such as the modalism and the economical trinitarianism.

Witness Lee also consistently accused of propounding modalistic view of the Trinity as he affirmed the scriptural identifications of the Son with the Father and the Spirit. Some early critics of his ministry charged him with heresy, or at least heterodoxy, claiming that the identifications destroy the eternal distinctions in the Godhead.

Local Church Korea insists that Witness Lee held firm position of the orthodox Trinity. They explain that Witness Lee used the word "one Person" when he mentions about the "same essence of Godhead." They mention that the identification of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is aspect of immanent Trinity, and the three are distinct in the economic Trinity.

2.6.2.9 Daesung Church

Daesung Church says Jesus died on this earth because he is not the Spirit of God and is different in nature and essence from God. Daesung Church says the founder, Park Yoon-Sik, had been praying for 3 years and 6 months in Mountain Jiri and has received the secret

word. Park Yoon-sik calls himself the father of the Word, singing it as a poem or hymn, and Daesung Church deified Park.

The argument between Tak Myeong-Hwan, the head of the Research Institute of Heresy, and the Daesung Church was started in the middle of the 1960. Tak had published series of articles since 1979 that showed the Church was heretic. After 30 years of fighting, the doctrine of Daesung Church was finally branded as a heresy by mainstream churches. The incident that Tak Myeong-Hwan was murdered by Daesung Church could not be eradicated in the Korean Christian history (Oh, 2002: 34).

2.6.3 The Korean church accepts false parables, models and heretic understanding of the Bible

Korean churches accept false parables and models from various erroneous understandings and theories. One of common illustration of this is to understand the Trinity to be like the three states of H²O (ice, water and steam); ice turns into water after warmed up and then vaporizes and becomes steam. Some explain the Trinity as like an egg, where there is the shell, the yolk and the white. Some say the Trinity is more like Shamrock leaf, some are trying to explain it as streaky bacon, a three headed giant, the solar light analogy, a tree with roots, stem and fruit, as flowers with body, color and scent, a human being with a spirit, soul and body, a logical union with a definite, half and sum, etc. These images are by no means unique to Korean churches but give false understanding for Korean church members to understand the Trinity as modalism or the three parts united one God. Many church leaders and members commonly using these images when they explain the Trinity to others.

Reeves (2013:35) points out that these pictures make God out to be an impersonal thing. Not personal, not loving, not like the Father, Son and Spirit at all. Another aspect of the limit of the understanding of the Trinity is to reason analogically from humankind to God, as Giles (2002:109) mentions. Unconvincing illustrations from the natural world or the working of the mind are also accepted in Korean churches.

On the other hand, many cultic heretics understand many verses in the Bible that relate to the Trinity differently or having a partial understanding of the Bible verses that support other views. This is one of the most common phenomena that the understandings, which are too far away from the doctrine of the Trinity are also quite abundant among well-established churches.

2.6.4 Why are Korean church members influenced by heresies?

Since the Christianity does not have long history in Korea, there are many Christians who became Christian in their generation by attending various churches rather than being Christians from their birth. There are many members in the Korean Church who do not have basic knowledge about Christian doctrines and beliefs, including Trinitarianism. It is commonly estimated that 80% among 13 million Christians of the Korean church (8million of Protestants and 4million of Catholics: The Korean National Association of Christian Pastors, 2013:479) are nominal believers. One of the reasons for the nominal Christians being mass produced is the openness of the churches and church members. Christians of Korean churches freely move to and from churches in different denominations (The Korean National Association of Christian Pastors, 2018:79). The difference between the denominations became meaningless. The development of a leisure culture is reducing the participation of new generations in worship and church. The growth of the economy of the country has driven Korean churches to produce many nominal believers. At the same time, they are not well trained to perform doctrinal education and cultural missions in their everyday life.

Ki (2008:28) mentions some of the reasons why the established mainline churches are influenced by heresies. Firstly, there are many people who are hurt by many established religions or churches and who have a critical attitude toward established churches. In many cases, this is the result of the corruption in the mainline churches. Secondly, it is caused by liberal theology, which has a tendency to emphasize secular humanism. If the church leaders are interested in solving worldly problems rather than preaching words of God, church members could be open to false doctrines and may experience conflicts between God's absolute truth and liberal theology. Heresies occur in the churches where the emotional, psychological, and social needs of members are not met. The heretics approach the intricate verses of the Bible as mysteries and with interest in their own interpretations. Kang (1987:10) adds some reasons why the mainline churches are influenced by heresies. Those are the excessive curiosity about new teachings or methods, the activation of heroism and pride in being revealed, blind obedience or become difficult to escape from the heretic organization after being absorbed into the new community.

Heo (2007:79) summarizes the background of false teachings that are occurring and growing. Firstly, there are many false prophets who deceive people (Matthew 24:11). There are two categories of misinterpretation of the Bible. The first one is a person who deliberately speaks lies, while the second one is a person who does not know any better. Secondly, the heretic person speaks falsely of revelation in the name of God in the name of 'the angel of

light' (II Corinthians 11: 4). People can be paralyzed by and addicted to a lie and rather enjoy it. Thirdly, false prophets show great wonders (Mark 13:32). People often become deceived because they are more dazzled by miracles than by knowing the Word and obeying it thoroughly. Jesus said, this generation required miracles (Matthew 12:39). A further reason is that there are 'many troubled and wandering flocks like sheep without shepherds' (Matthew 9:36) and the evil spirit is 'to look for those who will devour and devour like a crying lion' (1 Peter 5: 8).

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, the traditional religions, especially Confucianism, influenced the understanding of the concept of the Trinity. Many Koreans are influenced by the thought of Unitarianism, which regards the Father as God, Jesus as divine but somehow inferior to God, and the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force. Because the majority of Koreans think the son is subordinate to the father in their traditional philosophy and school education, the son begotten from the father must respect his father and be subordinate to him.

But above all, the key reason why the Korean church members are influenced by heretical ideas would be that they do not have conceptual frameworks about the Trinity in their mind. It has become easy for Christians to access information on religious issues on the internet due to the development of technology. The Jehovah's Witnesses and heretical editorials are very sincere about the doctrinal parts compared to those of the mainstream denominations and churches. They clearly state that the Bible does not refer to the Trinity, but rather states that God is one. They are very kind, detailed and explained. On the other hand, it is rather difficult to find well-organized homepage at the mainstream Christian churches or seminary schools. They tend to be dealing mainly with administrative content and denominational constitutions.

2.7 The features of Korean religions are against Trinitarianism

It can be said that some of the features of the Korean traditional religions have influenced the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. The character of Korean people and religions can be said to be 1) enthusiastic emotionalism, 2) temporal utilitarianism or faith for earthly blessings, 3) harmonic pluralism and 4) the traditional Confucian thought. Ki (2008:18) points out that some of the ideological character of the Korean people are embracing tolerance, enthusiastic emotionalism, temporal utilitarianism, harmonic mixture and atheistic relief.

Firstly, it is not hard to find the spiritual enthusiasm in Korean churches and the prayer, the so-called Everybody's Voice Prayer, in which everyone prays in a loud voice with praise and applause. This reflects the religious sentiment of Koreans. Korean Christians are very emotional rather than logical. They tend to accept the Trinity, one of the most difficult doctrines, emotionally not logically. For them, the Holy Spirit seems to be the power of God rather than a Person. Secondly, Korean Christians tend to deal with the world to come from the viewpoint of the temporal world. For them, a good life means a life in which there is no worry in this world, with a healthy body and mind. Korean people prayed to gods in heaven and earth, prayed to nature for their earthly blessings, prayed to Buddha, and are now praying to God for their earthly blessings in the same way. People are less interested in the knowledge of God. God is the Father as long as He gives them what they need. Thirdly, the Korean culture is very harmonious and mixed. The problem is that this tendency is often expressed as religious pluralism. There were various religions in Korea before Christianity's spread. These religions were mixed and influenced the understanding of the Trinity. One of the effects is that many people think at first glance that the doctrines of various religions seem to be different, but eventually they say the same or similar truths. According to Ki (2008:18) 74.6% of Koreans responded "yes" when they were asked about this kind of pluralism position. The percentage of the response who agreed on this position was very high from Buddhist, non-religious, and Catholic respondents, which ranged from 82% to 74%. In the case of Protestantism, although the rate is the lowest, more than half (53.1%) are very tolerant to this position. The reason why there is no big conflicts under the religious pluralistic environment is that religious sentiments are very tolerant. One of the problems in the Korean church is that churches are accepting anybody irrespective of their heretical views. It is regrettable that people who deny the deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit are in Korean churches, and it is a pitifully generous phenomenon that the church is willing to tolerate such people spreading their views in the church. Fourthly, traditional Confucian ideas have until recently had a profound influence on Korean customs and ideology. In Korean society, the relationship between father and son has been understood as an extreme subordinate hierarchy. The concept of "the Son is the same as the Father" is not easy for Korean Christians to understand and accept. One of the tasks in the Korean church is to overcome the gap between the traditional concept of the father-son relations and the Trinitarian concept of the Father-Son-Holy Spirit relations.

2.8 The Limits of modern Trinitarian Theology in Korea

When speaking of the present state of the Trinitarian theology in Korea, there is no substantial development.

Kim (2010:1) points out that the modern Trinitarian theology in Korea has only reconstructed Orthodox doctrine through the theological methodologies and premises, and did not develop a proper Trinitarian theology. This attitude of modern Trinitarian theology has resulted in accepting indifference or false models of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the Korean Church is enthusiastic about the Trinitarian model of modern theologians and is wrongly approaching the matter of human salvation as a matter of social salvation and human relations.

Some of theologians mention the balance between the ontological trinity and the economic Trinity, and its proper linguistic expression as a task of trinitarian theology in Korea. They argue that the modern theological position that sees the Trinity as a symbolic understanding of reality may not have any dynamics with regard to language as the original possibility of God's self-revelation. They say the desirable direction is not only the doctrinal statement about God's being itself, but also the ultimate self-transmission of God Himself in history. The reconstruction of the symbolic language that presents the image of God is one of the tasks of testifying to the essence of theology which is distorted by the progress of history (Kim, 2003:1).

King (2015:155) mentions that the current theology is standing at the point of view that biblical and dogmatic authority is fundamentally questionable as to how God will be known. With a new emphasis on experience, there is widespread diffusion of naturalistic views, a practice-oriented theology that acknowledges only theological reflection by practice.

On the other side, the claim that the promises of grace and salvation are present and experienced in other religions is accepted by many, which is causing a change in the discussion about the Triune God.

2.9 Less communion with the Triune God

Many of the reasons why the Trinity is misunderstood in the Korean church has largely been described above as not having sufficient knowledge of the Triune God. Another aspect is that even when there is knowledge about God, there is not enough communion and

interaction with the Triune God in the life of Christians, and it would be difficult for them to understand the concept of the Trinity. Many scholars pointed out that other religions outside of Christianity, such as Islam and Judaism, have some knowledge of God, but they do not understand the Trinity because they do not have communication with the Triune God. Accordingly, the doctrine of the Trinity distinguishes other similar religions from Christianity. Bray (1993:119) points out that the Trinity belongs to the inner life of God and can be known only by those who share in that life. An outside observer will never detect the inner reality of God and will never have the communion with Him which is promised to people in Christ. Jews may recognize God's existence and know His law, but without Christ they cannot penetrate the mystery of that divine fellowship that Christians call the Holy Trinity.

On the contrary, the problem is that many members within Christianity do not fully understand the concept of the Trinity unless there is enough communication with the Triune God in their lives. As long as people look at God from the outside and superficially, they will never see the Trinity, even from within the church. This can especially be mentioned the Korean church members who have pointed out that the life in the church and everyday life are not consistent. In conclusion, a sufficient understanding of the Trinity can be summarized as having sufficient knowledge of the Triune God and sufficient interactions with the Triune God in the Christian life.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the reasons have been examined as to why Korean churches misunderstand or do not fully understand the doctrine of the Trinity, the core doctrine of the Christian faith. It is pointed out, first of all, that the phenomenon of this age does not deal with the doctrine of the Trinity in the church. Church leaders tend not to deal with the difficult doctrine of the Trinity, which is not explicitly stated in the Bible, because they have not duly studied the doctrine in the theological seminaries, and on the other hand, the liberalized theological tides and the limitations of modern theology can also be pointed out as causes. In addition, the church members have the preconceptions that the doctrine of the Trinity, including the terms that are not actually used in everyday life, is difficult.

The church members also misunderstand the doctrine of the Trinity by the influence from heresies, wrong parables and previous misunderstandings. Especially, the false images and models are exemplified as easy and understandable models. The most common characteristics of indigenous Korean heresies are they insist that the founder received a direct revelation from God, and sometimes the founder replaces God the Father or the

second coming Jesus Christ. The sermons from the founder are all true, emphasizing to believe only his word faithfully, and consequently the churches are forced to believe only their false doctrines as the truth, that deviate from the right truth and the right doctrine of the Trinity. The numerous heresies manifesting the gifts of healing, the pursuit of healing and miracles, blessings on the earth, and prosperity of success has widely influenced the established churches.

Furthermore, considering the religious tendencies of Korean people that are more emotional than logical, it is necessary that an efficient model of the Trinity be formulated with a proper vocabulary and concepts to be explained in Korean churches. And, if possible, it should be adopted as a unified document in Korean churches along with the Apostles' Creed and the Reformed Confessions of faith. The development and elaboration of the commentary on the Catechism can be considered a way to do that.

Chapter 3 THE ASPECTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY THAT IS DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND

3.1 Introduction

The reasons why Korean churches misunderstand or do not fully understand the doctrine of the Trinity, the core doctrine of the Christian faith, have been examined in the previous chapter. This chapter deals with the aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity that is difficult to comprehend for Korean churches.

There are not many Korean churches handling the doctrine of the Trinity in its theological or historical documents. The Apostles' Creed, confessing the belief in the triune God, is adopted by most of the Christian denominations but it's too brief to show the doctrine of the Trinity in detail. Some of the denominations adopted the Reformed Confessions as their standard of confession of faith. The Westminster Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism have been widely used in the Korean churches, particularly by Presbyterian churches, as their basic and standard confessions of faith. As Dale (1986:107) mentions, the Bible is a complex volume of books and the churches adopt the Reformed Confessions as a summary of the doctrines which the Bible teaches, set down in logical and orderly form, so that what the church believes is made known in an adequate compass.

These Reformed Confessions, containing a fixed formula defining or summarizing the doctrine of the Trinity, are almost the only documents that some of the Korean churches are uniformly using. However, there are some aspects that are difficult for the Korean church members to comprehend. Probably the doctrine of the Trinity is the most difficult section in all of the Confessions.

The difficult aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity is firstly that the concept of the terms used in the doctrine do not come easily for church members to understand. The second is the difficulty in understanding the relationship among the three Persons in the Godhead. Third, there are difficulties in understanding the verses of the Bible that reveal the Triune God, or some of the scriptural passages recommended for the relevant passages are not proper. Finally, although the Confessions are defining the Trinity, it is not easy for Korean church members to explain it to others.

This chapter will cover the specific difficulties with regard to each of these issues, looking at how the Reformed Confessions, used by Korean churches as a basis for their profession of

faith, define and explain each of these issues. In addition, it will also provide suggestions as to how these areas can be understood more easily when explained to Korean churches.

3.2 Concept of the Terms in the doctrine of the Trinity are difficult

3.2.1 The theological words translated in Korean are not used in everyday life

The first thing that many Korean church members find difficult in understanding concerning the doctrine of the Trinity is that the terms themselves and the concept expressed by each term is difficult. In the doctrine of the Trinity, some difficult terms are used. Some of these terms that appeared in the Reformed Confessions are for example: Person, Essence, Substance, Begotten, Proceeding, eternally Distinct and unity of the Godhead.

The Westminster Confession (Na, 2010:29) defines the Trinity as “In the unity of the Godhead, there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.” Each word and concept of “Person,” “substance,” “unity of the Godhead,” “begotten and proceeding” are difficult and need an explanation for the church members of the modern generations. However, in most Reformed Confessions, the statement of the doctrine of the Trinity does not explain the mystery. The statements are very decisive and declarative rather than giving a logical explanation. Many study guides and commentaries on the Confessions do not mention much from the definitions.

It has been said that those who deny the Trinity are in danger of losing their salvation, but those who try to understand the Trinity are in danger of losing their mind (Toom, 2007:9). However, it should be distinguished between the Trinity and the doctrine of the Trinity. God the Trinity may be incomprehensible yet the doctrine of the Trinity, which are human statements in human language, are meant to be understood and to make sense.

In the meantime, these terms and concepts translated in Korean are not used much in everyday life, and what is more difficult is that each word is used differently from its original meaning in the concept of the Trinity. Due to these reasons, the concept of the terms in the doctrine of the Trinity may be difficult to the church members who have not studied the Reformed Confessions enough. The church members who studied the Confessions of Faith can also be seen to understand only the definition of the Trinity. The current situation is that there are not many documents describing the doctrine of the Trinity in the Korean church,

and the Reformed Confessions are adopted only in some part of the Korean church. The size of the church that confronted the Reformed Confessions of faith can be estimated through the history of the Presbyterian Church in Korea.

It is known that the foreign missionaries arrived in Korea during the late nineteenth century were mainly from America, Canada and Australia. Their denominational background was Presbyterian and Methodist (Lim, 2007:11). Presbyterian missionaries were the most active and succeeded to establish Pyongyang Union Theological Seminary in 1901 in the northern part of the country and the background of the theology was conservative and Calvinistic. The school included a required course entitled "The Creed" which taught the Westminster Confession. The adoption of the Westminster Confessions by three major Presbyterian denominations were from 1963 to 1972 when the American United Presbyterian church devised a new confession. The new confession adopted in 1967 was in fact a representative confession of faith replacing the Westminster creed rather than formally recognizes traditional creeds (Hong, 2005:406).

The reformed churches that the Orthodox Church had preserved almost disappeared in United States from that time, and liberal beliefs have taken its place. Due to the influence of the United States Presbyterian church, the Korean Presbyterian church also divided into two parts in adopting the Confessions. The denominations in the first group are conservative groups who adopt the first version of Westminster Confession (1647 version) such as the *Hapdong* group, *Koryo*, *Hapshin* and the *Daeshin* group. The denominations in the second group are *Tonghap*, *Gijang* and the *Baeksuk* group who adopt the modified chapter 35 of the Presbyterian Church (USA), which was influenced by liberalism in 1903. In the second group of churches, the Confession of faith began to gradually disappear (Shin, 2015: 1).

According to a statistic mentioned by Park (1982: 67), about 20% of the total population of 37million in Korea in 1980's were Christians (7 million Protestants and 1.5 million Catholics). Of the 7 million Protestants, 60% were Presbyterians sharing the Reformed tradition. Although these denominations adopted the Reformed Confessions as the basis of the confession of their faith, the reality is that there are not many churches dealing with the Reformed Confessions.

Under the situation, the theological words are still difficult for the Korean church members to grasp the meaning because the words themselves are difficult, the concept is difficult, and the translated language is difficult. Moreover, the terms are not been defined or explained theologically in the Apostles' Creed and the Reformed Confessions of Faith.

3.2.2 Person (位格, 位)

“Three Persons” seems to mean “three separate beings” or “three human being” or “three people” and hence “Three Persons” already gives a nuance that God is three. When the three equal persons are involved, there is inevitably a danger of tritheism, because it is difficult to see how the three persons can be equally in control of a single nature.

In this regard, people may question the term “Person” as the right expression to represent the Godhead because the people have less knowledge of the etymology and background of adopting the word.

When the word “Person” is used, people think of a physical body, an individual, separate from everyone else. People think of a spatial location, physical attributes like height, weight, age—all things associated with the common use of the word “person.” Many people, upon hearing the word “person” used of the Father, for example, conjure up an image of a kind old grandfatherly figure who is the Person of the Father (White, 1998:26).

For the average people, a person is an individual and a conscious centre of memory and choice, of action, reflection and decision. Therefore, the three Persons would still be three people. Lash (1992:32) points out that to say “God is three Persons in one nature” is telling no more about God than would “God is three things in one thing” or than does “God is three and God is one.” Lash (1992:32) mentions that the concept of Person not only misleadingly give the impression of something about God which people would not otherwise have known, but the information that it seems to give is false.

Although many theologians have tried to describe the term Person in their languages, such technical expressions of the Trinity mentioned by theologians maybe difficult to ordinary Christians who do not have a background in philosophy or theology. Bray (1993:183) mentions that Aquinas defined the Person as “an aspect of a nature which signified what was distinct in that nature” and *the divine Person* is defined as “a subsistent relation in the being of God.” Malcolm (2012:15) explains that for Tertullian persons are “distinct individuals existing within the substance.” Augustine (2002:24) described Persons as “the modes of being within the Godhead.” For Calvin (1560:152), the Person means “subsistence in God’s essence.” Rahner (2001:110) proposes “distinct manner of subsisting.” Regarding the concept of the Trinity, Rahner (2001:110) explains that there are three realities which share the same essence, but each has a different property by which it could be distinguished. The definition by Berkhof (2010:68) is “the three modes in which the same divine essence exists.” Sproul (2006:67) explains that “there are three Persons in the Trinity—one essence or

substance, but three Persons. But when people speak of Christ, they meet one person with two natures (or essences), and that complicates matters. When people use the formula “One in nature, three in Person,” people tend to stumble over this word Person because people bring to it the common understanding of personhood and their own everyday use of the term. Sproul (2006:67) further explains that Person comes from the Latin *persona*, and originally it did not have exactly the same connotation as the word has today. Hebblethwaite (1996:60) mentions that the Latin *persona* was a mask worn by an actor on the stage when representing a particular character. Greek theologians (cited by Plantinga, Thompson & Lundberg, 2010:124) used a term to designate the three Persons of the Trinity: *hypostasis*. The theological concept represented by *hypostasis* was that of “subsistence” which has something in common with our everyday word “existence.” These kinds of technical expressions of the Trinity mentioned by theologians seem to express the terms of the doctrine of the Trinity well. However, it still will be difficult to ordinary Christians as they do not have a background in philosophy or theology and because the “subsistence” or “Persons” are more than modes, more than manners, more than masks or ways of appearing. In this sense, the church may say that they can hardly understand how One God exist in Three Persons.

Meanwhile, the word “Person” in Korean translation, written as “位格(위격)” or “位(위)” pronounced “*we or wi*”, corresponds to “Position” or “Seats” in English (New Practical Chinese Korean Dictionary, 1993:23), which is not the word being used in daily life and considered an unappropriated translation to understand the concept of Person.

3.2.3 Essence (本質, 本體)

The word “essence” does not seem relatively difficult. But as to what the nature of the essence is, it would be helpful for the church members to read the Confessions of faith and its explanations. Velde (2013:121) defines the essence of God with some distinct components. The formula of his statement identifies God as the “spiritual essence”, endowed with a series of attributes including his eternity, infinity, his being different from all creatures, incomprehensible, perfect in himself, and so on.

The Council of Nicaea (cited by Percival, 1988:4) said in A.D. 325 that Christ is consubstantial and coeternal with the Father. At that time the great threat to the church was the Arian heresy. Arius (cited by Athanasius, 1877:94) argued that if Christ was born, even as the first born, then there was a time before he was born. The struggle over Arianism led

to the Council of Nicaea. Although Arianism had rejected by that ecumenical council, Arianism remained powerful for much of the fourth century and in our day the Jehovah's Witnesses make the same arguments as the Arians (Holden, 2002:25)

On the other hand, one of question regarding the essence of God that can be raised by Christians on this part is "God Himself is already Spirit, and then what 'His Spirit' mean?"

3.2.4 The difference between Person and Essence

In expounding the key terms of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity, Ursinus (cited by Velde, 2015:126), the author of the Heidelberg Catechism, accepts and employs the basic expression of "one essence in three Persons." The "essence" is "a thing that exists on itself, or something that has its own being and does not have its being from something else, although it may be held in common." A "person" is a unique entity that exists individually, is living, rational, and cannot be held in common, nor be the part of another entity." As a synonym of "person", Ursinus uses the expression "mode of existence," and he states the one divine essence exists in and consists of the three "modes or existence" or Persons. In this way, the common essence does not exist apart from, but only in the Persons. The three Persons, in turn, are related by their individual characteristics, or incommunicable properties. "Incommunicable" does not mean that the divine Persons have no communion; it is precisely the relations between the Persons that makes the unique Trinitarian community. It means there is a specific way of existing and a specific way in which the one person relates to the others, and this particularity is not shared with the others (Velde, 2015:126).

While, Ursinus confess his ignorance as to the precise nature of the distinction of these relations between Father, Son, and Spirit, he firmly insists on the importance of describing the essence and existence of God in terms of "one essence in three Persons." The lack of further explanation or analogies for God's Triune existence is consistent with the lapidary statement of the Heidelberg Confession 25. Velde (2015:126) says that one can hardly say any more, but this is the least that should be said.

The one thing to be clarified in this passage is that when one says the Unity of the three Persons referred to by the Heidelberg Catechism in the Korean Expression "The only God", it is not clear whether the three Persons of Godhead are "one body" or "one essence" or "one essence and one body."

3.2.5 Begotten (出生), Proceeding (發出)

The vocabulary “Begotten” is considered to have been a time when the Son was not present as the Arian (cited by Athanasius, 1877:195) formula mentioned. When one understands the notion of the concept as a Korean Christian, it is understood that the Father has a son since the Son was born from the Father and therefore there was a time when the Son Jesus did not exist. How could the Son be begotten outside of time? There had to have been a time when the Son had not existed.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (Leith, 1963:33) says Jesus Christ as the only-Begotten Son of God, was begotten of the Father before all time. It also confesses that the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life Giver, proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoken by the prophets. Westminster Confession (Na, 2010:29) says the Son is eternally begotten of the Father and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. The word “Begotten” could be understood as “born from”, “Proceeding” as “came from.”

A difficult concept in the creed is what the difference between “Begotten” and “Proceeding” is. Many scholars do not give clear explanations about that part. Kim (2015:3) states that there is no way to differentiate between begotten and proceeding. Some medieval theologians tried to explain the term ‘begotten’ in accordance to the *modus intellectus*, the Son as the wisdom of God, and ‘proceeding’ in accordance to the *modus voluntatis*, the Spirit is love, but Kim (2015:3) points out that there is no basis for this explanation in the Bible.

3.2.6 Oneness (一體)

The meaning of the Trinity in the Korean translation can be understood at a glance that the three Persons form one God. Meanwhile, most of the Reformed confessions (Belgic Confession, 1561: article 8, Second Helvetic Confession, 1566: chapter 3, Westminster Confession, 1647: Larger catechism 9, The Scottish Confession of Faith, 1560: chapter 1) say that “the Three Persons have the same Essence.” The fact that three divine Persons have one essence and that the three Persons constitute one body are completely different. When one says that three different divinities have one essence, and they also form one body, the question that still remains is what does it mean that the three distinct God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit form one God? Some misunderstand it like the old heresy that the one God appears in different modes. The story then gets complicated.

The Korean translation for “Oneness” sometimes means ‘a body,’ sometimes ‘a main body,’ sometimes ‘one.’ The word needs to be clarified about which concept is actually correct. What the One exactly means? One what?

3.3 Relations among the three Persons are not experienced

3.3.1 The relationship does not exist in the human world

In the concept of the Trinity, it is difficult to understand the relationship between the Father and the Son, among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Two things to think about when people refer to the relationship of the three Persons is firstly that the divine relationships are different from those of human relationships, the second is that the relationships mentioned in the doctrine do not exist in the human world. The questions are:

- 1) In God, what is the relationship between the Father and the Son? Is it the same as someone who a human father is?
- 2) How is the Father, Son and Spirit related to one another, how are the three Persons united and distinct?
- 3) What does His Spirit or Holy Spirit mean as God the Father is already spirit?

The Bible teaches that there is only one God. At the same time, it teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully God. For this reason, the church has always affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity, which teaches that God has one substance but eternally and fully exists as three distinct Persons. But a question still left unanswered is how people are to understand the relationship between the substantial unity and personal plurality within the Godhead.

In regard to the Trinity, the four premises that are often mentioned are 1) God is one, 2) God exists in three Persons, 3) the three Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all of divine nature and 4) God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one God. In this section, the parts that are considered to be difficult are the third and the fourth parts. Especially, the fourth part is considered to be difficult to understand. The relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as one God and one body is different from all relations of human experience and conceptual forms.

The point of the doctrine of the Trinity is that the doctrine reaffirms that God is one against polytheism, declares the divinity of the Son against the situation that mankind acknowledges as the God of creation but they do not acknowledge the divine origin of the Son. The doctrine of the Trinity declares that the Holy Spirit also exists as a divine God against the thought of the Holy Spirit as a mere power of God, and finally declares that the one God exists as the three Godheads of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the declaration people could question why the one God seems to become three Gods, as it is difficult to see what it is and how such a relationship can exist.

3.3.2 Is the Son and the Holy Spirit dependent on the Father?

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (Leith, 1963:33) confesses “Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten from the Father before all times and the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father.” It seems that the Son and the Holy Spirit are less than the Father. In this formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, it looks like the origin or cause of the Son and the Holy Spirit is the Father, because the Son is begotten from the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father. If the Son was incarnate of the Holy Spirit, his existence could be somewhat dependent on the Holy Spirit. The word “begotten” seems that the Father is the origin of the Son and the Son owed his beginning to the Father.

Sproul (2006:71) explains that there is the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father - not that the Son is of less value, power, eternity or dignity than the Father on the statement of “the Father is none, neither begotten, nor proceeding.” It was an economic subordination.

According to Giles (2002:31) Athanasius postulates two basic theological presuppositions: the eternal oneness of being of the Father and the Son and the temporal subordination of the Son in becoming man. The subordination of the Son in the incarnation is voluntary and temporal. The eternal subordination of the Son to the Father speaks of their unity.

But this concept of subordination and super ordination is difficult for Korean people to grasp in their culture where the father is still “superior” and son is “inferior” to the father. When Korean Christians try to understand the concept and relationship, the questions could be raised as to why the Begotten and Proceeding of the Son and Holy Spirit are equal to our Heavenly Father who is the origin. How does there exist a relationship that is equivalent to sending out if the three Persons are equal? People may think there is a logical flaw in the doctrine.

In the meantime, some passages can be found in the Bible that support the development of the subordination of the Son and the Holy Spirit to the Father as well as the equality of the three Persons. When Jesus prays to the Father, in John 17:3, it is mentioned: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." It could be understood that the Father is the only true God and Jesus was sent by God.

When Christians pray to God, the prayers are directed to God through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. Jesus and Spirit seems to become God's invisible power and might come from God the Father as helpers of prayers rather than to be understood as subjects of the prayer, the same as the Father.

3.3.3 How the One God could be three Gods, or three Gods could be one God?

The most difficult part to comprehend on the doctrine of the Trinity would be the Unity of the three Persons. How can the three Persons be one God? How is the one eternal God eternally both singular and plural?

In this regard, people firstly can ask how on earth it could be possibly mean to say Jesus is of the same essence or substance as God. Is there one God in three parts, or is it three Gods in one? How is the Threeness and Oneness of God related?

Christians are struggling to understand this part, namely that three Persons can be one God. How are the Divine Three really one? If the Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, how can there be only one God, not three Gods? Many believers have found it to be confusing, contrary to normal reasoning, not equal to anything they have experienced. Some Koreans would say it is understandable that the Heavenly Father and Son are one essence, but how can the Father and the Son become one body as the Korean translation says?

This statement that the three Persons are one God could be understood to show an entire internal contradiction. Chamberlain (2011: 85) says that people might admit this is not an easy teaching to understand and it is the first thing that should be clear. He also mentioned that the Trinity ought to be the stumbling block it appears to be to some people.

The Korean people has been under a long tradition of Confucian culture. It is hard for them to understand that the Father and the Son are equal and both are united in one. Some would say they do not understand the comments of Jesus that "the Father knows it" (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32), if the Father and the Son are one. The most important questions in this passage are: 1) whether the three Persons are one only in the divine essence, or 2) whether the three Persons have one body as well, or 3) does the Triune God inwardly maintain three

separate divinities and form an integral unity at their external ministry? It is necessary to define and summarize exactly what it means. It is therefore necessary to give a sufficient explanation and biblical basis for it.

3.3.4 Explanation the relations of the three Persons by the Reformed Confessions

3.3.4.1 The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is commonly used in the Korean church as a creed that confesses faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Even those churches that do not deal with the Reformed Confessions of Faith use this form of creed at least in their worship.

The Apostles' Creed is a profession of faith that most Korean churches are using in their worship services, so that they faithfully summarize their faith in the Triune God. The Creed confesses the belief in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit respectively in a Trinitarian shape, but it does not mention the three Persons to be one God and does not explain the relationship among the three Persons. It would be natural that no explicit three-in-one formulations of the being of God are found in Christian literature until the third and fourth centuries. As Bray (1993:164) points out, the earlier models of the Trinity look unfinished in some important respects especially regarding how the three Persons could be One God. Kung (1993:7) mentions that the Creed has held its place down to the present day in both the Catholic Church and the churches of the Reformation as a simple narrative summary of Christian faith on the basis of the apostolic preaching and it also has an important ecumenical function.

3.3.4.2 The Belgic Confession (1561)

The Reformed Confessions strongly stress that there is One Only God, the deity of the Son and the deity of the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile, the confessions express God is one in Essence, yet distinguished in Three Persons.

The Belgic Confession (1561) Article 1 expresses that there is only One God and Article 8 expresses God is One in Essence yet distinguished in Three Persons. These three Persons are the one single essence. In other words, the Article 1 expresses belief in the existence of God and says what God is and not who. The Article 8 expresses who this God is. The Deity of the Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned in the Article 9 and 10.

Article 8

According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, who is the one single essence,¹ in which are three persons,² really, truly, and eternally distinct, according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost ³. The Father is the cause, origin and beginning of all things visible and invisible⁴; the Son is the words⁵, wisdom, and image of the Father⁶; the Holy Ghost is the eternal power and might⁷, proceeding from the Father and the Son⁹. Nevertheless, God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have each his personality, distinguished by their properties; but in such wise that these three Persons are but one only God. Hence then, it is evident, that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and likewise the Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son. Nevertheless, these Persons thus distinguished are not divided, nor intermixed: for the Father has not assumed the flesh, nor has the Holy Ghost, but the Son only. The Father has never been without his Son⁹, or without his Holy Ghost. For they are all three coeternal and co-essential. There is neither first nor last: for they are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy (cited by Beeke, 1999:20).

1. Isa. 43:10, 1 Cor. 8:4-6.

2. 1John 5:7, Heb. 1:3

3. Mat. 3:16-17; Mat. 28:19.

4. 1Cor. 8:6, Col. 1:16

5. John 1:1-2, Rev. 19:13, Prov. 8:12

6. Prov. 8:12,22,

7. Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:3

8. Mat. 12:28, John 15:26, Gal. 4:6

9. Phi. 2:6-7, Gal. 4:4, John 1:14

In this article, the confession says “the three Persons are but One only God with the same Essence. They are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy.” It is clear that the three Persons have the same essence in truth, power, goodness and mercy. The difficult aspect to comprehend is that “God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have each his personality, distinguished by their properties; but in such wise that these three Persons are but one only God.” God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit each have a personality

and are distinguished by their properties in three Persons but have the same essence. The three Persons are not divided into three but not mixed in one but still are One only God. What does this statement mean? As Osterhaven (1964:53) mentions, this statement concerns one of the most difficult and mysterious articles of the Christian faith. It seems that the doctrine of the Trinity is confusing.

Meanwhile, one can see some of the biblical references added later as related Bible passages are not properly mentioned. The passages 1 John 5:7 and Hebrews 1:3 are not rightly related references. The Bible passages mentioned above are saying that “God is One” and “God exists in three Persons” respectively, but there is no reference to say that “the Triune God exists in one Body” as the Korean translation versions are saying. There are some difficult parts in the Confession for the Korean believers to understand the concept of the Trinity because it is the faith confessed, rather than logically organizing the doctrine of the Trinity.

Article 9 mentions about the proof of the Trinity of Persons in one God:

- 1) It says that the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures that teach to believe the Holy Trinity are written in many places of the Old Testament such as Genesis chap. 1:26, 27 and 3:22. It appears that there are more Persons than one in the Godhead; and when it is said, *God created*, it signifies the unity.
- 2) It mentions that appears somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New Testament. When Jesus was baptized in Jordan, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost appeared in the same place. The form is also instituted by Christ in the baptism of all believers. In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord, the Son of God. Likewise, Pauline benediction is mentioned.
- 3) The article says that the doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless, Christians now believe it by means of the Word of God, and must observe the particular offices and operations of these three Persons towards believers. The Father is called the Creator, by his power; the Son is the Saviour and Redeemer, by his blood; the Holy Ghost is the Sanctifier, by his dwelling in the believer's hearts.
- 4) The article points out that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, has always been defended and maintained by the true Church, since the time of the apostles, to this day, against the Jews, Mohammedans, and some false Christians and heretics.

Meanwhile, a further question in this section is the relation between the internal relations of the three Persons and the external operations in which the Triune God is manifested. Velde (2015:124) explains that the confession sticks to the Augustinians rule that the outward

works of the Trinity are undivided, but the immanent order of origin among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is maintained and expressed in the external works.

Article 9 confesses that the three Persons in one God is possibly expressed through several verses in the Bible, and Christians become aware of this from the testimonies of Holy Spirit, from the Triune God's work in the hearts of believers and from spiritual experience. Therefore, it could be difficult for the ordinary Christians to understand the definition that one God exists as three Persons because of the nature of the Confession which can only provide firm definition instead of logical explanation and it says Christians could experience the three Persons in One God spiritually in themselves.

3.3.4.3 The Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

The Heidelberg Catechism is one of the most trusted and widely adopted Confessions of Faith in the Korean church together with the Westminster Confession. As Spijker (2009:92) mentions, it contains the message of the Reformation and continues to attract a great deal of attention in our time as it has played an important role in educating the church and representing key elements of Christian doctrine.

Question 24 in the Lord's Day 8 asks how the articles are divided. It answers "into three parts; the first is of God the Father and our creation; the second, of God the Son and our redemption; the third, of God the Holy Ghost and our sanctification."

The statement itself is quite brief and is occasioned by the structure of the Apostles' Creed, which was introduced as the summary of all Christians have to believe (Velde, 2015:119).

Question 25 asks "since there is only one God, one divine being,¹ why do you speak of three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?" It answers "God has revealed himself in his Word: ² that these three distinct Persons are the one, true, eternal God."

Velde (2015:121) mentions that Ursinus, one of the authors of the Catechism, describes God in Trinitarian terms and differ from the false gods in the Person: only the Church believes in God who is one essence in three Persons. In the works of creation, redemption, and sanctification are unique to the Triune God revealed in Scripture. Nowhere else a god is found who performs these works. God reveals His nature in His works. "The Father is the origin, not only in creation, but also in redemption and sanctification. Every work of God is from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit."

The statement from the Heidelberg Catechism provides a very brief definition saying that the three Persons are the one God instead of explaining why and how it could be.

Williamson (1993:41) recommends Scripture readings Hebrews 1:1-4, John 1:1-18, Genesis 18 and Matthew 28:18-20 in the study guide of the Heidelberg Catechism. These verses refer to the three Persons but do not say that three distinct Persons are One or the relationship among the three Persons.

A Firm Foundation by Olevianus (1995:17) also mentions the same questions in the Lord's Day 8. Q20 asks "why do you speak of three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?" It is answered that in order that we might know and regard God in the way that He has revealed Himself in His Word and made Himself known. God has made Himself known in no other way than that these three distinct Persons are the one, true, eternal God. Q21 asks to show from Scripture that the one divine Being has revealed Himself as three distinct Persons in this one being. It is answered Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one God." Present at creation are the Father, the Word (which is the Son, John 1:1-3), and the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:2). Likewise, in Mark 1:10-11, the Father bears witness from heaven to His Son, and the Holy Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove. Or again, Matthew 28:19 "Go forth and teach all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Now we are never baptized in the name of a creature, that is, in order to believe in a creature (1 Cor. 1:13). Thus, we should be certain from our baptism that these three Persons are the one true God.

Bible passages recommended in the articles, names Matthew 3:16-17; 28:18-19; Luke 4:18 (Isa. 61:1); John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galathians 4:6 and Titus 3:5-6 are referring to the true, eternal God but do not say that the three distinct Persons are One.

3.3.4.4 The Second Helvetic Confession (1566)

In the Second Helvetic Confession Chapter 3 (Niesel, cited by Cochrane, 1952:226) mentions of God, His Unity and Trinity.

- 1) The chapter starts from the statement that God is One in essence or nature.
- 2) After that, the chapter mentions that God is Three. The same immense, one and indivisible God is in person inseparably and without confusion distinguished as Father, Son and Holy Spirit so, as the Father has begotten the Son from eternity, the Son is begotten by an ineffable generation, and the Holy Spirit truly proceeds from them both, and the same from eternity and is to be worshipped with both. For according to the

nature or essence they are so joined together that they are one God, and the divine nature is common to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- 3) The chapter mentions that the Scripture has delivered a manifest distinction of Persons in Luke 1:35, Matt. 3:17, John 1:32, Matt. 28:19, John 15:26 etc.
- 4) The chapter also mentions about Heresies. "We condemn the Jews and Mohammedans, and all those who blaspheme that sacred and adorable Trinity."

The Confession (cited by Cochrane, 1952:226) says that God is one in essence or nature, subsisting in Himself, all sufficient in Himself, invisible, incorporeal, immense, eternal, the Creator of all things both visible and invisible, the greatest good, living, quickening and preserving all things, omnipotent and supremely wise, kind and merciful, just and true. The chapter also says that according to the nature or essence the three Persons are so joined together that they are one God. The Father is God, The Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, but there are not three Gods, but three Persons. Although the chapter contains definition and key statements of the doctrine of the Trinity, the concept of God, Godhead and Person are difficult and these terms need to be explained further. The relationship among the three Persons are mentioned as the Father and the Son, begotten and proceeding. Schaff (1919:233) mentions in his critical note that the Confession seems a more theological treatise than a popular creed.

3.3.4.5 The Westminster Confession (1647)

The Westminster Confession of Faith expresses the Trinity with balance throughout the whole chapters. Westminster Confession article 1 of chapter 2 clearly writes about one God and the Holy Trinity. The Confession (Kim, 2011:30) says in the article 3 "there are three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."

Chapter 2 of the Westminster Confession (Na, 2010:29) mentions of God, and of the Holy Trinity. The statements in the chapter are well based on the Bible passages. God Almighty speaks directly to Abraham; heavenly beings are also confessing Almighty God. The next article of the chapter (Na, 2010:29) mentions that there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity in the Godhead. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

The logical development of the Confession of Faith is that it firstly expresses strongly in the Article 1 that God is One. That is what comes to Article 3 and declares that God is three. Article 3 also provides a strong statement that there are three Persons. Three Persons can wrongly be understood there are three Gods because it says God the Father, God the Son and the God Holy Spirit. People may think at a glance that the Trinity is conflicting and contradictory in content as the Confession declares there is one God and it declares the Father, who is God, and that the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. All of these difficulties arise from the fact that the confession of faith does not accurately define the concept of God and Person, and is not communicated to the church with well-organized documents. One of reasons of this chaos is because the common noun "God" used in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the pronoun "God" used in the one God, and the "God" used as an Essence and divinity of God are commonly used by the same word.

Sproul (2006:66) points out that the Article 3 provides a brief statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, a formula that is actually not self-contradictory, but that does not penetrate the depths of the mystery of God's nature. The Confession states the ancient formula that God is one in essence and three in Person.

One of the Korean translations (Na, 2010:29) expresses the term "substance" as "本體" which literally means "main body" rather than "essence." Na explains that three Persons united in one God with the same essence and same body. The Korean translation of Godhead, Persons and Substance are difficult concepts to comprehend.

Another difficult part in Section 3 is how the three Gods, called God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, could be one God, not only in essence but in one being.

Question 6 in the shorter catechism and the Westminster Larger Catechism 9 are asking how many Persons are there in the Godhead? And answering there are three Persons in the Godhead: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Larger Catechism 10 asks what the individual properties of the three Persons are in the Godhead, and answers that it is proper to the Father to beget his Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son, from all eternity. Catechism 11 asks how it appears that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father and answers that the Scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father, ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works, and worship, as are proper to God only.

Torrance (1986:50) mentions the weakness of the Westminster Confession in the doctrine of God is that it seems to stress the Will of God as Sovereign and Free rather than the Being of God. What is God in His Being? (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). He is in all His acts, and what He is in His acts, He is eternally and antecedently in His Being. The weakness in the Confession is not so much in what it says, but in what it does not say as Torrance (1986:50) points out.

Hodge (2017:64) explains that there is one indivisible and inalienable spiritual essence, which is common to the three Persons, and since they have in common one infinite intelligence, power, will, etc., when it is said they are distinct Persons it does not mean that one is as separate from the other as one human person is from every other. Their mode of substance must ever continue to be a profound mystery to people, as it transcends all analogy. All that is revealed to people is, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost stand so distinguished and that they are eternally mutually related as the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

3.3.4.6 The Scottish Confession of Faith (1560)

The Scottish Confession (Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1995:1) is the first profession of faith in the Scottish Church (Presbyterian Church of Scotland). The theology is Calvinist and written by John Knox and five ministers (John Winram, John Spottiswoode, John Willock, John Douglas, John Row). It was approved by the Scottish Parliament in 1560 and was the creed of the Scottish Church until the Westminster Confession of Faith was adopted in 1647. Chapter 1 “Of God” gives a very brief definition of the Trinity.

In the chapter 6, “Of the Incarnation of Christ Jesus” and chapter 12 (Lee, 2015:21) “Faith in the Holy Ghost,” the word “God” is used to refer to the one God in three Persons, God as the Father, God as the Son, God as the Holy Spirit and God as the divine essence. It is written with the same word *God* for different objects or concepts.

Chapter 16 “Of the Kirk” also confesses one God in three Persons, and the belief that from the beginning there has been, now is, and to the end of the world shall be, a kirk: who has communion and society with God the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus, through the sanctification of his Holy Spirit. It is an uniformed tendency that the Reformed Confessions declaratively confess faith in the Trinity rather than explaining the doctrine of the Trinity.

3.4 The word is not in the Bible

3.4.1 The Trinity

The Heidelberg Catechism answers God has revealed Himself in His Word that three distinct Persons are the one, true, eternal God. But the word “the Trinity” is not in the Bible and there is not a single passage in the New Testament in which it is said that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of one Essence or Substance or one Body. Some are troubled by words used in the doctrine which are not found in Scripture.

The uniformly shared documents in the Korean churches are the Reformed Confessions, nature or spirituality of the Reformed confessions is firstly that believers or churches openly confess and profess their faith in unison with one another as it is confined in the Confessions (Fesko, 2014:12) against heresies and the persecutions (Gootjes, 2007:15). Therefore, the Reformed Confessions contain very compact definitions of the Trinity which is not in the Bible. Although the words such as the Trinity and Persons are not in the Bible, but the concept of the words are absolutely biblical and the whole Bible reveals God exist and act as a Triune God by providing numerous evidences. This doctrinal standard can give the church better understanding the faith once delivered to the saints (Hoeksema, 1970: 3) and edify the church (Bierma, 2005:51).

Many Bible verses related to the doctrine of the Trinity are presented later on the Reformed Confessions. However, what people would like to see is the word and terms of the doctrine are well displayed through the Bible instead of collecting Bible verses to fit the doctrine or concepts.

God has made it possible for mankind to know Him by revealing Himself by His Word and in history. Revelation had been given to human beings in the Bible and in Jesus Christ, both being called the Word of God. But the Christians in this generation, who have not seen Jesus Christ, understand that the Bible is the clearest source of our knowledge about God and the way to explain God to other believers and to people who do not share Christian beliefs. When people are asked to explain how God has spoken about Himself, it can be said that God exist in three Persons and Jesus is the true God and the Holy Spirit is a Person. It also can be said that three Persons are one essence. The most difficult part is the fact that these three Persons are one God and it is not easy to find any Bible passage to say this directly. As Kung (1993:151) mentioned, Jesus himself does not say a single word about a “central mystery” or “basic dogma” according to which “three divine Persons” (hypostases, relations, mode of being ...), Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have ‘one divine nature’ in

common. Furthermore, it is not easy for Christians to catch and understand the doctrine which is not mentioned in the Bible, even though they have the Bible in their hands. It is difficult for them to see the doctrine of the Trinity without clearly well-organized Bible passages.

3.4.2 The Bible says God is not three but one

One of the key doctrines of Christianity is concerned about “Who God is” and “What is God like?” Regarding these questions, it is generally recognized that God is one being. Few Christians have any doubts about how their religion differs from pantheism.

Deuteronomy 6:4 which says “the Lord our God, the Lord is one”, Isaiah 44:6 says “apart from me there is no God”, 1 Corinthians 8:4 also says there is no God but one. Throughout the Bible, without a doubt, God is mentioned as one. “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of the slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:2-3). I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God (Isa. 45:5). Let them know that you, whose name is the Lord—that you alone are the Most High over all the earth (Ps. 83:18). For many Christians, it seems that the Bible says God is but one rather than saying the only God exists in the three Persons and the three Persons are one God.

3.4.3 God is not one Person but three

The Belgic Confession Article 9 mentions that the Holy Trinity are referred to in many places of the Old Testament. In Genesis 1:26-27, “God says: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” So, God created man in his own image, male and female. And Gen. 3:22, “Behold the man is become as one of us.” From this saying, let us make man in our image, it appears that there are more Persons than one in the Godhead; and when it says, God created, it signifies the unity. It is true that these Bible verses do not say how many Persons there are, but that, which appears somewhat obscure in the Old Testament, is very plain in the New Testament. For when the Lord Jesus was baptized in Jordan, the voice of the Father was heard, “this is my beloved Son: The Son was seen in the water, and the Holy Ghost appeared in the shape of a dove” (Matthew 3:16-17, Luke 3:21-22). This form is also instituted by Christ in the baptism of all believers. “Baptize all nations, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” There is no doubt that this formula of Matthew 28:19 represents the earliest specific expression of a Trinitarian faith. In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel thus addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord, “the Holy Ghost

shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Likewise, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you" (2 Cor. 13:13). Bray (1993:144) explained this famous verse that Paul adopted a Trinitarian framework not in order to teach a doctrine of the Trinity, but in order to express the pattern of God's active involvement with his people.

3.4.4 Equality of the three Persons

Mutual Glorification of the Father and the Son was mentioned in the prayer of Jesus in John 17:5, expressing the glory which Jesus had with the Father before the world was.

Some of the Bible passages say the following about equality of the Son with the Father. John 10:38 "The Father is in me and I in Him", John 14:9~11 "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is: or at the least believe on the evidence of the works themselves." Kim (2008:195) says that it is noticeable that there is a repeated mentioning of the unity between the Father and the Son in John 17:11 and 21 - 23; "They may be one as we-Father and Son-are one." Theologically, it can be said that God's eternal or inner relationship is revealed in this testimony of Jesus. Kim (2008:195) further mentions that the unity of the Father and the Son in being and life has its fundamental meaning and reality in their unity in works. Their unity is so firm that it cannot be known and believed in any other way other than "the Father is in Me, and I in the Father (John 14:10)" or "We-I and the Father-are one." Kim (2008:195) adds that on the basis of the unity of the Father and the Son, Jesus praying for the unity of believers and the unity of the Father and the Son and the unity of the church cannot be accomplished without work of the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures Matthew 28:18-20 and 12:31 are mentioned about the equality of the three Persons. The wording of Christ's Commission underscores the fact that the Holy Spirit is God and is equal to the Father and the Son. People are to be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the formula, each of the three Persons of the Trinity is treated equally.

The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son is based on John 15:26. In procession there is communication of whole of the divine essence so that Holy Spirit is on an equality with the Father and the Son (Berkhof, 1996:97).

3.4.5 Three Persons are One

Na (2010:29) mentions Matthew 28:9, 2 Corinthians 13:13 and Matthew 3:16-17 as related scriptures. But these passages are not clearly stating that the three Persons are One.

The Reformed Confessions were added by some of the Bible passages which prove the doctrine of the Trinity. Most of the passages show the fact that there are three Persons. In regard to the Three are One God, no passage is described. The Heidelberg Catechism Question 25 asks that since there is only one God, one Divine being, why do you speak of three of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? The Confession answers that God has revealed Himself in His Word: that these three distinct Persons are the one, true, eternal God. The Scripture references added later by different churches are Matthew 3:16-17; 28:18-19; Luke 4:18 (Isa. 61:1); John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:6; and Titus 3:5-6. The scriptures are actually referring to the three Persons but do not say that three distinct Persons are One. It is already said that God is one. Some of passages say that the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God. It is speculated that the theologians combined the Bible passages to fit the statement that the three Persons are one God, instead of the Bible passage itself saying that the three Persons are one God. On the other hand, some of the Scripture references recommended by theologians in study guides and commentaries in order to prove this statement that the three Persons are one are inadequate to prove the doctrinal statements.

The materials that expressing the equality of the three Persons can be found. However, many theological scholars think that the doctrine of the Trinity to say that the three Persons are one God is not well formulated in the Bible. Bacon (2009:53) agrees that the doctrine of the trinity is certainly not formulated or systematized in the Scripture, but people can detect traces of the Trinity or Trinitarian pattern within the Bible.

3.5 It is difficult to explain the doctrine of the Trinity to others

3.5.1 Is there any true analogy, illustration or framework to express the Triune God?

Various analogies, illustrations, or frameworks have been presented to help people to understand the Triune God, but they mostly made mistakes rather than express the reality of God directly. Some Christians can say that God is expressed in the Bible as “God who is looking with eyes like fire” or “God's helping hands” and trying to express God by various

pictures and shapes, and also introduce God the Trinity in various models. Some tries to express God in a figure in order to follow God's command not to make an image.

Statements of faith do not have the character of mathematical or physical laws. Their content cannot necessarily be demonstrated by direct evidence or by an experiment that can be seen. But the reality of God seems to be so visible, tangible and empirically detectable as if it could be verified by experiments or deduced by mathematical logic. For God, understood most deeply and ultimately, cannot simply be an object. If God is that, He is not God and be the idol of human beings. God cannot be defined precisely, cannot be limited: a literally invisible, unfathomable, incomprehensible, infinite reality (Kung, 1993:10).

God is the dimension of the infinite and cannot be proved rationally, however many theologians and even scientists have tried to do so (those are seen in the chapter 4). Therefore, rather than attempting to comprehend the Trinity by analogy with some creature in the world, it is recommendable to understand God as He speaks through the Bible and to confess the Triune God as He is.

3.5.2 The Church documents do not fully explain the concepts

It would be quite true for the Korean Christians that it is not easy to explain the Trinity to others when they are questioned about the concept. Bray (1993:125) mentions that even many preachers and church leaders scarcely know what to say about the Trinity when the subject is raised. All Christians would accept that intellectual formulations or conceptual frameworks are not enough to explain an infinite God and our knowledge of God remains fundamentally mysterious, especially in regards to the Trinity. It would be difficult for ordinary Christians to digest the doctrine in their mind and express it in their own words.

The documents of the Church, including the Reformed Confessions of the Faith, clearly mention the definition of the doctrine of the Trinity, but those are confessions of our faith and not a logical explanation and accountability, it is difficult for the Christians to fully explain the concept with those documents. The reason could be that the terms are not used in order to serve as means for the introduction of new dogmas but in order to defend the truth of Scripture against all errors. The terms in the doctrine of the Trinity indicate the boundary lines of the sphere of Christian thought, beyond which it is not safe to venture forth, lest one should sacrifice revealed truth. It is very reasonable for the ordinary Christians not to be able to easily explain the Trinity because it is seen that even theologians often mention that "God is the object of faith, not the object of explanation."

But on the other hand, it is the Christian's responsibility to more clearly reveal and explain faith within a given boundary. God does not reveal Himself only to one person in a way which is incompatible with His self-disclosure to others. What cannot be explained, can nevertheless be understood through personal experience. 13 million people in Korea believe in God (The Korean National Association of Christian Pastors, 2013:479) but when those same people are asked to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, it should not happen that far fewer people are prepared to go along with what the church has traditionally taught in the confessions (Park, 2018:6).

3.5.3 Explain an incomprehensible God in apprehensive knowledge

Klooster (1951: 39) mentions that incomprehensibility is confessed in the Reformed creeds as an attribute of God; it must not be considered as an attribute essential to the being and knowledge of God. When it is said that God is incomprehensible, it does not mean that He is so obscure that people can know nothing of significance about Him. Luther (cited by Sproul, 2006:41) said that God is not only "the hidden God," but also "the revealed God," who has been pleased to unveil things about Himself. Sproul (2006:41) says that theology distinguishes between a comprehensive knowledge of God which people cannot have, and an apprehensive knowledge which is the limited, finite, human, creaturely knowledge that one can have. Therefore, it is possible for His creatures to apprehend Him to whatever degree. The theological object is not irrational in the sense that its basis can be found in the truth of God both in Himself and in His making Himself known in the world as Gunton (2003:176) mentioned. From the same viewpoint, Toom (2007:9) says that people should distinguish between the Triune God and the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity, the triune God, is incomprehensible but the doctrine of the Trinity is comprehensible.

The issue is that anyone who has ever tried to explain the concept of the Trinity to other people, especially to new comers to the church and unbelievers, will agree that it can hardly be explained enough. God who is one in His essential being, but the divine essence exists in three Persons to be explained by comprehensible human knowledge.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the parts that Korean church members feel difficult to comprehend in the doctrine of the Trinity. Firstly, the concepts of the terms translated in Korean are difficult. The difference in terminology between the Korean and other languages occasion misunderstanding and difficulties. Secondly, the relations among the three Persons are difficult to understand by human experience. Thirdly, the word *Trinity* is not in the Bible, and the Apostles' Creed and the Reformed Confessions, the uniformly shared documents in the Korean churches, are mostly mentioning the definition of the doctrine of the Trinity. The nature of the Reformed Confessions is mainly confessional unity in the church to profess their faith in unison with one another. Therefore, the Reformed Confessions contain very compact definitions of the Trinity which is not in the Bible. The word the Trinity is not in the Bible, but the concept of the words is absolutely biblical and many verses are presented later on the Reformed Confession to prove the Trinity. Fourthly, it is not easy for church members to explain the doctrine of the Trinity to others.

Therefore, in order to correctly understand and explain the doctrine of the Trinity, it is necessary to present a more exact terminology corresponding to the terms in the doctrine of the Trinity and to constitute an efficient conceptual model of the Trinity for teaching it in Korean churches.

Chapter 4 CONSTITUTING AN UNDERSTANDABLE MODEL OF THE TRINITY FOR A BETTER TEACHING OF THE DOCTRINE

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 has dealt with the difficult aspects that Korean church members experience regarding the doctrine of the Trinity.

This chapter firstly shows how theologians explain the key concepts and relationships that the Korean church members find difficult to comprehend. The focus is on the concept of each terms and the formula of the Trinity suggested by previous theologians historically and topically. As each theologian has a variety of subjects and has own way of explaining the doctrine of the Trinity, this chapter touches on the issues mentioned in the previous chapter including how theologians define and explain the important concepts in the doctrine of the Trinity: Person, Essence, Distinction, Begotten, Proceeding and Unity of the three Persons, etc. The research will also show how theologians describe the relationship among the divine three Persons.

This research includes explanations by the Early Fathers such as Justine, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen and Athanasius, the three classical theologians namely Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin, contemporary mainline protestant Trinitarians such as Herman Bavinck, Louis Berkhof, Karl Barth, and also include contemporary Roman Catholic Trinitarian Karl Rahner and Eastern Orthodox Trinitarian Vladimir Lossky.

The next part of the research looks at how the concepts of the Trinity and relationships among the three Persons of the Godhead are explained in the Bible, and presents ideas how to explain the concept of the Trinity to Korean churches. Finally, this chapter includes a suggestion a model which is appropriate for Korean church members based on the explanation of the preceding scholars.

4.2 Understanding the Trinity from historical scholars

4.2.1 The formulation of the doctrine from the Early Fathers and early councils

The doctrine of the Trinity was not fully developed in the early ages of the church but made gradual progress through the contributions of many Early Fathers, theologians and ecumenical councils. According to La Due (2003:48) the practice of baptism in the name of

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit based on Matthew 28:19 propelled the development of Trinitarian theology during the second century.

The early church Fathers contributed to part of the trinitarian theology but were partially incomplete. As La Due (2003:48) mentions, Justin and Tertullian tended to subordinate the Son and the Holy Spirit to the Father, and even Irenaeus never clearly articulated the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Origen has been accused by some of having inserted subordinationism into his portrayal of the Trinity.

During the third century, the approaches to the Trinity were mostly tinged with either modalism or subordinationism. Arius, who lived from 250AD to 336 (Marmion, 2011:56), preached what has been called an intolerable subordinationism and this precipitated the Council of Nicaea (325). At this first ecumenical council of the entire Catholic Church, the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son was defined and the second ecumenical council proclaimed that the Holy Spirit be worshipped and glorified with the Father. The Spirit, however, was not explicitly called "God", nor termed "consubstantial" with the Father. Gregory of Nyssa gives the clearest description of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father through the Son (La Due, 2003:48). Through the Council of Nicaea in 325 and the second ecumenical council held at Constantinople in 381, the doctrine of the Trinity had been formulated precisely.

During the first two centuries before the doctrine of the Trinity was affirmed by Councils, it seems that there was little attempt to wrestle with the theological issues that people now term the doctrine of the Trinity. God the Father was understood as the only God, Jesus Christ was the Son of God who came to the earth in the flesh, the Holy Spirit was understood as the Spirit of God the Father and Jesus Christ. There was no definite concept of the one God in three Persons, having the same essence of being and working as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Among the Early Fathers, Justine Martyr (103-165 AD) emphasized the pre-existence of the Son in order to protect the divinity of the Son and also insisted on the unity of essence between the Son and the Father. When Justine stressed the unity of essence between the Word and the Father, he used the imagery of the impossibility of separating light from its source, the sun. Justine (2012:195) says in his *Dialogue with Trypho* that Scripture declares the Son was the first begotten of the Father before all creatures and the Son is distinct from the Father. Justine (2008:248) mentions that "He who did all things (God the Father) testified

that He (Jesus) is to be worshipped both as God and Christ.” Justine (2008:328) reports a trinitarian formula for baptism and point out that the Eucharistic prayers are hymns of praise to the Father through the Son and of the Holy Spirit. However, it seems that to Justin the Son is subordinate to the Father (Justine, 2008:44).

Irenaeus (130-202 AD) argues that there is one God and one Christ the Son of God. To Irenaeus, the Son and the Holy Spirit are two hands God uses within creation. Although the divinity of the Son is set forth clearly again and again, the Spirit is not expressly designated as God. Irenaeus (2012:56, 63) argues that nobody has been called God and Lord except the God of the Father and the Son. The Spirit is expressed as the Spirit of the Lord (Irenaeus, 2012:62) and the governing power (Irenaeus, 2012:63). It is clear from his writings that Irenaeus considered the Spirit as divine. Irenaeus speaks of God the Father and Jesus the Son who gave the gift of the Holy Spirit. Although his articulation of the identity and mission of the Son is much more complete, the identity of the Holy Spirit is never lucidly set forth. It is the Spirit who works, the Son who administers, and the Father who approves the task of the ongoing salvation of humankind. The same God the Father achieves his purposes in the world through his Son and Spirit from creation to the end of the history.

Tertullian (145-220 AD) had most fully formulated the doctrine of the Trinity in *Against Praxeas*, which exposes the errors of a teacher named Praxeas who came from Asia to Rome to join a number of others who were teaching a doctrine of modalism. This modalism, or the Monarchians, opposed the existence in God of a triad of Persons and it is said that it was the Father who was born of Mary and who personally experienced the passion and death. According to La Due (2003:35) Modalism was taught by Sabellius, who came to Rome from North Africa. He taught that the one God operated under three modalities, that of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Apparently, there was no distinction of Persons but only different modes of operation - creation, redemption, and sanctification - that were attributed to the one God. Tertullian (1885:1042) writes that “the devil says the Father Himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, indeed was Himself Jesus Christ.” In the process of refuting the modalism of Praxeas, Tertullian provides the most complete exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity that the early church produced up to that point.

In *Against Praxeas*, Tertullian focuses on the distinction of the three Persons. Tertullian (1885:1055) says the very names of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit prove the Personal Distinction. Tertullian (1885:1052) refers to the Son as emanating from the Father. It is the Son who proceeds from the Father and became man and are both man and God. The Holy

Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son and is the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Word of God incarnated gives life and works fellowship between God and human beings and the Holy Spirit is poured out in new ways to man to renew saints. These three Persons who are distinguished in the three aspects of salvation.

While Tertullian provided new terms, Origen (185-254 AD) laid the conceptual groundwork for the late Nicene debates. In *On First Principles*, Origen (cited by Malcolm, 2012:19) maintained that a “simple intellectual nature” is characterized by unity and oneness, God is incomprehensible and immeasurable, God exists in three coeternal and divine *hypostases*. The Son is eternally generated from the Father and thus uncreated: “There never was a time when he was not.” Likewise, the Spirit is divine and coeternal with the Father and the Son. The Spirit is not merely a force or energy, the Spirit is a distinct hypostasis who sanctifies believers and endows them with charismatic gifts.

Athanasius (295-373 AD) was Nicaea’s main defender and one of the foremost architects of Trinitarian orthodoxy. Athanasius overcame the subordinationism. The Father and the Son and Holy Spirit are one being and action. Athanasius (1877:203) says that the Son is begotten of the Father but that does not mean the Son was created by, derived from or caused by the Father, but is of the same essence and one with the Father. Athanasius (1877:212) further says that the Son is the Son of the Father and can never be the Father as the Father is the Father of the Son and can never be a son. The Council of Nicene (AD 325) proclaimed belief in Jesus Christ, “the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. In this Trinity none is afore or after other; none is greater or less than another; the whole three Persons are co-equal”

Although Athanasius died in 373, his arguments that the Son and the Holy Spirit are “one in substance” (Athanasius, 1877:6) influenced the Council of Constantinople, which affirmed the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Council of Constantinople (held in 381) clarified the divinity of the Holy Spirit, defining the third Person as “the Lord. The giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, with the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.”

The Athanasian Creed (cited by Park, 1998:61) says “one God in trinity and the trinity in unity.” The three Persons exist in one being. “The Son and the Holy Spirit are Almighty God Lord as the Father, yet not three Almighty God Lord but one. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither

made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. None is greater or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal and coequal.”

The Cappadocian Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus) settled the trinitarian question confessional for the church. The Cappadocians defined that the economy of salvation reveals distinctions among the Trinitarian Persons even though all three share the same divine nature. What distinguishes the Son and the Holy Spirit is their unique mode of being generated (begetting versus preceding). These relations express the dynamic way the three Persons participate in one another toward unity and it also expresses well the Cappadocian understanding of how the three Persons interpenetrate one another in mutual relations (Malcolm, 2012:20).

The Cappadocian Fathers (cited by Plantinga, Thompson & Lundberg, 2010:124) clarified the essential logic and terminology for the doctrine of the Trinity as below.

Table 4.1 *Trinitarian terminology*

Threeness term		
<u>Greek</u>	<u>Latin</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Prosopon</i>	<i>Persona</i>	Person; distinguishes them individually
<i>Hypostasis</i>	<i>Substantia</i>	Subsistence; each of the three persons
Oneness term		
<i>Ousia</i>	<i>Substantia</i>	Essence/Substance; divine nature
<i>Physis</i>	<i>Natura</i>	Nature

McGrath (2010:106) mentions that the theology of the Eastern Church started by emphasizing the unique character of the three Persons and advocated the unity of the three Persons. The formula was “one *ousia* in the three *hypostases*.” On the other hand, the Western Church tends to start from the unity of God, and so it was in the ministry of revelation and salvation, and continue with the interpretation of the relationship of these three Persons in terms of their mutual interacting.

4.2.2 Three classical expositions: Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin

Augustine (354-430 AD) insisted on the equality of the three Persons and developed the approach to the distinction among the divine Persons based on the concept of relation. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) improved the notion of the three divine Persons as three subsistent relations within one divine essence. The reformers in the sixteenth century did not

alter the scholastic approaches to the Trinity. Calvin (1509-1564 AD) begins his discussion on the Trinity with what to call “the three.” Calvin (2004:145) prefers the Greek word, *hypostasis*, or its Latin translation, *subsistentia* (subsistence), to be used as alternatives to the term *Person*. How the term *Person* is understood was the key issue for Calvin (1958:39).

Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, begins his explanation of the Trinity with the substantial unity and equality of the three Persons, each of whom possesses the whole substance of the Godhead. He then explains how the three divine Persons are distinct from one another.

Augustine (1884:21) mentions that the Son is uncreated, equal with the Godhead in the very Substance of the Father in nature, but emptied himself receiving the form of a servant to save His people as a temporal human dispensation. Augustine (1884:26) mentions that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial and coeternal, not of an inferior nature to the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is God as the Father and the Son are God, yet the Trinity is one God and nobody should think that three Gods are worshipped. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not one Person but one Substance. Augustine (1884:30) argues that as an expression of their mutual love, the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost is called the Love of the Father and the Son.

Augustine (2002:24, 28) defines the Persons as “the modes of being within the Godhead” : The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God, the Creator, and the ruler of all creation; the Father is not the Son, nor is the Holy Spirit the Father or the Son, but there is a trinity of inter-related Persons, and the unity of an equal substance. The Trinity is equal in all things, and is also equally unchangeable in its nature, invisible, and present everywhere, and works inseparably.

Meanwhile, Augustine (2002:28) proposed a series of analogies. He repeats the point that in each human the analogous trinity exists in one person. An image of the divine Trinity is to be found in the human soul when that soul engages in the purely intellectual activity of self-knowledge. The most revealing could be that of memory, understanding and will - that is, the mind’s remembering, understanding, and willing itself. He remarks that all love involves the trinity of lover, the loved and the love. The lover of Father, the loved Son and the love Holy Spirit unites in between. The Trinity itself is love, since one cannot contradict the most certain faith and the most weightily authority of Scripture which says “God is Love” (1 John 4:16). Augustine (2012:381) also mentions that the mind, its knowledge and its love as a kind of Trinity. Augustine verifies the Trinity from his faith in the Bible, not from psychological

or other methods. Augustine (2012:376) says he can find the Trinity in the first three verses of Genesis Creator, Spirit and Word.

Thomas Aquinas developed Augustine's theology of the Trinity in a scholastic and somewhat more metaphysical mode. He advances beyond Augustine in that he distinguishes more clearly between the two "processions." According to Aquinas (1993:55), processions in God remain within the divine being and the procession of the Word reproduces the likeness of its originator. This procession is therefore called "generation," and the proceeding Word is called the Son. In the spiritual world, only two kinds of actions remain within the agent, that is, those of the intellect and those of the will. While the Word's procession corresponds to the action of the intellect, the procession of love is the other inward procession and corresponds to the act of the will. This second procession is not envisaged in terms of likeness, but rather of motion toward something. What proceeds as love "spiration," is the procession of the Holy Spirit. Aquinas (1933:55) further explains that nature and relation in God are not two things but one and the same. Both Fatherhood and sonship are really identified with the divine nature, their proper meanings imply opposite relationships. Such opposition implies distinction.

In the meaning of the word *Persons*, "individual beings with a rational nature" are called Persons. But it is not in the same sense as used of creatures. Regarding the number of persons in God, no real distinctions are drawn between the attributes of God (e.g. goodness, wisdom), however, the relative attributes of God (e.g. fatherhood, sonship) are both subsistent and distinct from one another. Hence, it follows that there are several subsistent figures which are the three persons, in the divine nature. It can be concluded therefore that *spiration* belongs both to the Father and to the Son; consequently, procession must belong to another person who is called the Holy Spirit, who proceeds as love from the other two. Thus, there are precisely three Persons in God. Each of them subsists in the divine nature and is distinct from the other two. The "Person", then, is common to all three divine figures (Aquinas, 1993:58).

Aquinas (1993:57,65) says the relationship of the three Persons is the essence of God itself, and the processions among the three Persons are related to the law among the three Persons, not saying about the time or capability. Distinction among the three Persons can be done from their origin and relations, not from the same essence.

For the medieval church, the doctrine of the Trinity was rearranged in 1215 by the Fourth Lateran Council and the Florence Council (1438-1445).

John Calvin begins his study of the Trinity with a discussion of what to call “the three.” He is aware that some have objected to the term *Person*. For this reason, he allows the Greek equivalent word, *hypostasis*, or its Latin translation, *subsistentia* (subsistence), to be used as alternatives. How the term *person* is understood is the key issue for Calvin. Calvin (2014:145) says God declares Himself to be the One God, while at the same time He presents Himself to be the three Persons, and therefore one needs to find a simple and easy definition so that God is not regarded as a triple being or that a single essence is divided into three.

Calvin (2014:152) makes three points explicit. First, the word “Person” means “subsistence” in God’s essence. Second, each of the three in their individual subsistence is distinguished from the others, which is an “incommunicable quality.” Third, the three subsistence share one divine being or essence.

Calvin (2014:146) says in his *Institute* (1.13.2) that the same logic applies in the case of the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is necessary to think that both the Son and the Holy Spirit are God in essence but a different Person from the Father. But this is not a distinction of essence, and there are three *hypostases* in God. Calvin further points out that the Latin Fathers also used the word *person* to express the same concept and it is an unfairness and stubbornness if anybody makes a problem about this clear issue.

Meanwhile, two passages Ephesians 4:5 and Matthew 28:19 taken together are enough to prove for Calvin the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. Hodgson (1946:175) says that true unity exists only in God and people must be content to learn its nature by scrutinizing the evidences that He gives us, and in the light of them must criticize.

4.2.3 Contemporary mainline Protestant Trinitarianism

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) expresses the unity of the Trinity in detail *Reformation Dogmatics, Magnalia Dei* (Our Reasonable Faith) and the *Doctrine of God*. God is revealed in His Word and He is known as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The reason people speak of three Persons is that He has revealed Himself by the Word and the Holy Spirit. His revelation in one Being three Persons is back to His existence. Unity and diversity in his ministry are based on unity and diversity in divine essence. The Trinity is simultaneous in His personality, revelation and activity. God contains the highest distinctions within one divine essence, the infinite fullness, evidently in the work of creation. Elohim created by means of Word and Spirit. The word spoken by God is not a mere sound but a personalized power so

great that the universe is thereby created and uphold. Through His Word He makes Himself known and delivers His people (Bavinck, 1977:256).

Bavinck (1978:147) mentions that it is necessary that the revelation begins with an emphasis upon the unity of God. For the Israelites who were surrounded on all sides by heathen and where great parts of the people were attracted to pagan idolatry and unfaithful to the Lord, God Himself placed the emphasis on the fact that there is only one God. Despite the fact that the oneness of God is so strongly emphasized, the distinction within that unity of the Godhead comes to light also as in that revelation His fullness of Being progresses. The very name Elohim is in plural form and designates the three Persons of the divine Being. God sometimes refers to Himself using a plural referent. He brings everything in His creation and providence into being by His Word and Spirit. The threefold distinction within the divine being comes to expression in the history of God's leading of Israel. Thus, the Old Testament itself points out that the full revelation of God consists of the revelation of His triune being. This promise and announcement are fulfilled in the New Testament.

God, who emphasized that He was the only one, promises the Messiah through the prophets, and eventually saves Israel through the Messiah, and gradually exposes the Holy Spirit, gradually revealing the Triune God. And through the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles, it is said that God and Jesus Christ himself are one, God is sending himself back to the Father, and he will pour out the Holy Spirit. The unity in God's revelation refers to the unity of being behind it.

Bavinck (2011:234) further explains the distinction between *Being* and *Person*, and among the Persons themselves it becomes clear when one considers the relations that produce this differentiation in the divine being. Being God and personhood are coincided in God. The generation of the Son is spiritual; it does not create division and separation. The most striking human analogy is thought and speech. "Generation" should not be seen as an actual work, a performance; one should ascribe to the Father "a generative nature". The personal property of the Holy Spirit is "procession". Without the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit, there is no true unity of the Father and the Son.

Louis Berkhof (1873-1957) starts explanation the doctrine of the Trinity from the one God. There is a unique indivisible *ousia* in the divine being. God is one in His being and essence. The definition of the Trinity by Berkhof (2010:68) is "the three modes in which the same divine essence exists" and the true mystery of the Trinity is that "the three Persons of the Trinity is one in the essential being."

Berkhof (2000: 281) points out that the word *Trinity* is not an adequate expression because there is no implication about the unity of the three Persons, the term only says that there are three Persons. Berkhof (2000: 284) described the Trinity as follows.

1. Essence is the “stuff of God summing up infinite attributes.” God’s being is not limited by time and space but is eternal and without bounds, omnipresent.
2. In this one divine being, there are three Persons or individual substances, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When speaking of the Trinity the term “person” should not be thought of all sorts of physical limitations which visualize three men standing side by side. The three Persons are distinguished from one another, and yet these distinctions do not lead to a division in the one being that is God.
3. The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three Persons. The three are not three different essences nor is the one essence divided equally into thirds. Each divine Person is in full possession of the entirety of the divine nature. His being is infinite and unlimited and hence can be shared fully by three Persons not like human beings.
4. The subsistence and operation of the three Persons in the divine Being is marked by a certain definite order. It is not an order in time nor an order subordinate to one another. The first is not bigger than the second or the third. The order is one of relationship. When one speaks of relationship, the terms begotten and procession are used. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father. It has been likened to a book that is lying on top of another. One should not think of the terms in human terms but divine in an eternal, unlimited, timeless sense.
5. There are certain personal attributes by which the three Persons are distinguished. These actions would be “generation” for the Father, “filiation” for the Son, “procession” for the Holy Spirit. Because of the relationships the persons bear to one another.
6. The church confesses the Trinity to be a mystery beyond the comprehension of man. It is a statement about our limitedness against the greatness of God’s being.

Berkhof (2000: 287) also mentions that various analogies were proposed to reveal the subject. Most of those analogies had a defect to fully express the triune God but Berkhof did not deny that those have some value in discussing the Trinity.

Karl Barth (1886-1968) defines the Trinity as “the Being of God in Act.” Barth (1964:55) mentions that God is exactly, completely, and exclusively what He has revealed Himself to be in His Word: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. According to Barth (1991:87), the content of

revelation is God alone, wholly God, God Himself. But God makes Himself known in the three Persons of His one essence. The revealing subject is the God who reveals Himself as Father, in the Father as the Son, and in the Father and the Son as the Spirit.

For Barth, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are identical with God the Father. Barth (1991:100) says that the revelation in the Son would not be the revelation of God if the subject and object of the revelation, the Son, were not of one substance with the Father. The Spirit would not be the Holy Spirit if he was only power or potency and not himself God. Only as God by Himself can God be known.

Barth prefers to use the term “mode of being or exist” in God to express the same thing expressed by the term Person. Barth (1949:412) says the term “mode of being” is relatively better, simple and clear. Barth sees “modes of being” as a continuation of the word hypostasis, which the Greek Fathers used to designate the three. It does not mean Tritheism as Barth (1949:413) mentions that the statement “God is one in three modes of being, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” means the one God, the one Lord, the one personal God is what He is not in one mode only but exists as the mode of Father, the mode of the Son and the mode of the Holy Spirit. Barth (1949:431) writes that “the Person as used in the Church doctrine is not that there are three personalities in God. It is speaking not of three divine I’s, but three of the one divine I.”

For Thomas F. Torrance (1913-2007) everything to be known about the Christian God is given by revelation, and the revelation is centred in Christ. The formulation of the Trinity moves from an understanding of economic Trinity to an understanding of ontological Trinity. Torrance (1996:1,13) mentions that “in Christ alone, the only-begotten Son of God, who is of one and the same Being as God the Father, is God’s self-revelation perfectly identical with himself. In Christ people meet with the one being of God, and in Christ the Triune God as he is in Himself is revealed. God may be known only through God, and is known only as He makes Himself known to people through the revealing and saving agency of His Word and Spirit.” Torrance further explains that there can be no separation between the being and acts of God, between the one divine nature of the three Persons and their functions. Torrance also says that “the economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity overlap with one another and belong to one another, and can no more be separated than the Act of God can be separated from his Being or his Being from his Act.”

Regarding the relationship among the three Persons, Torrance (1996:29) express it the same way as Calvin, namely that “the three divine Persons are related to one another and to the whole Trinity in a co-indwelling way. Without losing their distinctive differences they

interrelate with one another and in the one Being of God so that the whole Being of God belongs to each of them as it belongs to all of them, and belongs to all of them as it belongs to each of them. This means the 'whole' and the 'parts' mutually contain and interpenetrate one another in an incomparable and ineffable way. It is ultimately the mutual co-inherent relation between the Father and the incarnate Son that constitute the ontological axis grounded both in the eternal Being of God and in the incarnation of His Son upon which through the Spirit all trinitarian formulations of Christian doctrine turn and from which they take their true configuration." Torrance (1996:168) explains the concept of perichoresis from Athanasius in order to express that the eternal relations of the three Persons exist and dwell in one another as one God, three Persons. This concept provided the theological basis for the doctrine of coinherence. For Athanasius, this had to do with a completely mutual indwelling in which each Person, while remaining what he is by himself as Father, Son or Holy Spirit, is wholly in the others as the others are wholly in him. It is explained as mutual indwelling, coexisting in one another, mutual containing, permanently enveloped, undivided, dynamic, inter-penetrating, onto-relational, wholly coinhering, eternally grounded, essentially and eternal movement in the love for one another, indivisible wholeness with real distinction between the divine Persons. Torrance (1996:34) defines the Trinity that it does not have to do merely with three faces or modal self-presentation of the Godhead, but inexplicably with one God and one divine Being who is yet three Persons, and with three distinct Persons who are yet one indivisible God.

Jürgen Moltmann stresses that the unity of the Triune God is found from the inner relationships of the three Persons. Moltmann (2016:62) says the three divine Persons are indwelling and the relationships are not closed but wide open. According to Moltmann (2016:64) the Trinity should be no longer understood in the same divine substance or divine subject, but in the Perichoresis of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He does not understand the unity of the Triune God as a divine subject - three other forms of existence. The three Persons of the Trinity all share the divine essence of divine reign. The Triune God forms a perfect trinitarian unity by themselves and this unity must be declared as "koinonia." Moltmann (2016:65) points out that the purpose of the doctrine of the Trinity is to interpret the history of Jesus Christ as the history of God. The history of Jesus Christ is the trinitarian history of God in the co-working of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Wolfhart Pannenberg (1977: VIII) expresses his belief that Christian faith grew out of historical experiences and reflection on their implications. The questions Pannenberg dealt with about the truth of God in history especially revealed in the Trinity are 1) How is the unity

of God's eternal "essence" related to the specific manifestations of God's "existence" in salvation history - especially as revealed in the Trinity, 2) How is the multiplicity of the attributes identified with the biblical God? and 3) How are the immanent and economic Trinity related? Malcolm (2012:302) mentions that Pannenberg has answered these questions by relating two Biblical statements: "God is love" (1John 4:8,16) and "I am who I am" (Exod. 3:14). Together, they tell that God's self-identity is revealed in His actions. God's unity is not a numerical unity but the self-identity demonstrated in the Father's reconciling love through the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Scripture, the "essence" of this self-identity is defined as "holiness" and "true-infinite." The immanent Trinity and economic Trinity are related in the unfolding of divine love in the world, a love that can only be grounded in and enacted by the true infinite, the Trinitarian God manifest in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pannenberg (2017:485) concludes that the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity must be rooted in God's historical revelation in Jesus Christ, according to which the Father is the loving creator and Lord of the eschatological kingdom, the Son distinguishes himself in loving obedience from the Father to establish the kingdom, and the Spirit is the bond of love between Father and Son that enables their reciprocal fellowship (Pannenberg, 2017:510). Pannenberg (2017:449) further explains that mutual self-identification of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the concrete form of the relationship of the Trinity, and the monarchy of the Father is the manifestation of the unity of the three Persons and the result of the joint ministry rather than the cause of the ministries (Pannenberg, 2017:525).

Emil Brunner (1889-1966) says the three names - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - in their unity and in their difference, are the content and the meaning of the New Testament. Brunner (1949:207) states that there is one who reveals and one who is revealed. They are identical, they are one and the same one God. Yet there are distinctions (Brunner, 1952: 275).

4.2.4 Contemporary Roman Catholic Trinitarianism: Karl Rahner (1904~1984)

According to Karl Rahner (2001:44), it is the Father who expresses Himself in truth (by *Logos*) and love (in Spirit). The Son is deriving from the Father's essence in total since the Father communicates everything with the Son (Rahner, 2001:61) and the gift from the Father through the Son, in which He "communicate Himself" to us in immediate proximity and through which He causes us to accept this self-communication, is the Spirit of the Father and the Son (Rahner, 2001:66).

Rahner (2001:43, 56, 104) does not like the term *person* because it could suggest that there are three independent subjects or distinctive personalities in God who dwell together in mutual love. He rejects this picture on the grounds that it creates plurality and distinctions within the simple being of God. At most, he is prepared to admit that the persons symbolize three different functions of the Godhead, which cannot be confused with one another. Rahner (2001:110) proposes a “distinct manner of subsisting” and refers to the three divine Persons as “three distinct manners of subsisting.” He also understands that one God exists individually in three distinct ways. The Trinity is the communion of three distinct divine Persons who interpenetrate one another and work as one, none being set over or under the others. Rahner (2001:73) explains the relationship of the three Persons by the identity of essence which has perfection in total and are “relatively” distinct from one another.

Meanwhile, Rahner (2001:22) states that “The *economic* Trinity is the *immanent* Trinity and the *immanent* Trinity is the *economic* Trinity.” Gerrish (2015: 302) says this statement has become known as “Rahner’s Rule” which has been accepted as a virtue in the trinitarian debate. Almost all theologians agree that the image of the Triune God revealed in the historical economy and the immanent Trinity in eternity are the same. The Immanent Trinity is the Trinity in the nature of God in eternity, before God’s outward act of creation or providence. On the other hand, Rahner (2001:65) says that the transition from the economic Trinity to immanent Trinity, which is the understanding of the immanent Trinity, comes from the economic Trinity. The key to the Trinity is that through the incarnation and the historical activity of the Holy Spirit the mystery of the triune God is made available to us. The economic Trinity is the Trinity revealed in the historical economy that created, dispensed, redeemed, and completed the world. It follows that the God who is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the economic Trinity) is God as He is in Himself (the immanent Trinity). Without the actual presence of the Trinity in revelation, there could be no true self-communication of God. For Rahner (1969:16) Christianity is the faith in God through Jesus Christ in one Spirit.

4.2.5 Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Trinitarian: Vladimir Lossky (1903-1958)

The Eastern Orthodox maintains the issue of the proceeding of the Holy Spirit that separated East-West theology in the past. According to La Due (2003:185) Lossky understands that the Father is the cause of the Persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This unique cause is not prior to His effect. He is not superior to His effect. One has to confess not only the unity of the one nature in the Three, but also the unity of the three Persons of the one identical

nature. For him the Father is the unoriginated One, the Son is generated by the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. Christians that accept the filioque believes that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, Orthodox Christians believe that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son.

4.3 The understanding of each term in the doctrine of the Trinity

4.3.1 Person (位: *wi*, 位格: *wi-gyuk*)

The divine personhood has been one of the most difficult issues in the doctrine of the Trinity. What is meant by “Person” in the Reformed Confessions which says there are three Persons in one God? The word *person* could be used to describe a being who has intellect, emotion, will and act. This level description of personhood is quite simple to be applied to a human person. However, when such a description is applied to each member of the Triune God, it has been controversial as the Person in the doctrine of the Trinity is something different from the human person. Little (2008:47) explains that there are not three individuals but three personal self-distinctions within one divine essence. The word *person* used in human terms implies *independence*, not oneness of will, actions and feelings as is true of the Trinity. The divine Trinity is “one self-conscious, self-directing being, yet no part ever acts *independently* or in *opposition* to the others. God is an entity; He is one in essence, personality and will.” Augustine (2002:24) described Persons as “the modes of being within the Godhead” but Bray (1993:179) recommends the Person to be understood as a “substantial reality” not merely as an aspect or mode of the divine being. Each Person in fact becomes identical to the one simple thing that God is.

Calvin defines “Person” as the “non-communal attribute, the reality/subsistence in the nature of God.” Calvin (2014:146) mentions that there are some differences in the use of words both in the Latin and in the Greek, but it is completely in agreement with the fundamental content.

The direct translation of the word *Person* in Korean, that is 人(人), means person of a human being. Therefore, the word *Person* in the doctrine of the Trinity is translated as 위(位, *wi*) but it is not used in daily life. The original meaning of the Chinese character 位(*wi*) is more like describing “position” or “seat” (*New Practical Chinese Korean Dictionary*, 1993:23). The more appropriate expression for the word *Person* in the Trinity could be translated into Korean as “신격(神格)” pronounced “Sinkyuk” which indicates “each Person of the Godhead”

or “the divine Person of the Godhead or Godhood.” It does not mean human person but a substantial reality in the nature of God.

4.3.2 Substance/Essence (本質: *bon-jil*)

The word the Greek Fathers used for *Essence* was “*ousia*.” Torrance (1996:116) mentions it as “being of God” and explains that the term *ousia* was familiar in the schools of Greek philosophy, but used in Christian theology in a different way governed by the revelation of God’s redemptive activity, that is not as static but as a “living being.” Moreover, it is understood that the Son and the Spirit are each of one and the same being with God the Father.

It is not difficult to understand the word itself in the Korean translation, the question is what it means in *Essence*. The word *essence* was used in an appropriate way to speak of the truth that God’s transcendent being is “almighty,” “infinite,” “unlimited,” “omnipresent,” “unoriginated,” and wholly grounded in Himself. The Athanasian Creed (Jung, 2011:205) says that the Glory is equal, the Majesty is coeternal, the three Persons are uncreated, eternal, infinite, almighty God and Lord. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. And yet there are not three God’s but one God. According to Bavinck (2011:175) the essence of God is identical with all God’s attributes and Choi (2008:16) mentions the attributes of God as 1) Spirituality, which is explained that the spiritual reality is an individual and invisible entity with personality, where there is action and activity, and is not restricted by material laws or conditions, 2) Self-existence, He himself has the basis of existence, 3) Immutability, 4) Unity, 5) Omniscience, 6) Omnipotence, 7) Full of Holiness, Righteousness, Goodness, Love and Veracity. Bavinck (2011:186) mentions God’s incommunicable attributes as aseity/independence, immutability, infinity, eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, unity and simplicity, and communicable attributes with spirituality, invisibility, knowledge, wisdom, trustworthiness, goodness, holiness, righteousness, sovereign will, perfection, blessedness and glory. Moltmann (2016:57) mentions God’s Unity as its own attribute and Rahner (2001:71) mentions the essence of God as “the same Perfection in total.”

Because of essence and attributes of the triune God, two or three Persons of the Trinity are not greater than one alone, the Father and the Son together are not truer than the Father singly or the Son singly as Augustine (2002:5) mentions. All three Persons are already

equally unchangeably eternal, infinite, omnipresent and omnipotent, full of holiness, righteousness, goodness, love and truth.

The Korean translation for the term *essence*, written in Chinese 本體 (본체, pronounced *Bonchae*), originally means “main body.” The translation of the word *essence* to 本質 (본질, pronounced *Bonjil*) and the term “One in Essence” translated to 一本質 (한 본질, pronounced Hanbonjil) would be a proper expression to describe the correct meaning of the terms.

4.3.3 The distinction between “Person” and “Essence”

The understanding of the term “person” and “essence or substance” from Basil, the father of the Cappadocians, helps to understand the Trinity. He understands the term Person as “a unique characteristic within reality.” The distinction between “substance” and “person” is like distinguishing between “essential or commonality” and “individual.” Divinity is common and fatherhood is individual. Therefore, as Basil (cited by Kim, 2006: 37) mentions, Christians must confess commonality and individuality at the same time. Just as one confesses God the Father, one must confess “God Jesus, God the Son” and “God the Holy Spirit” instead of saying just “Jesus, the Son” and “Holy Spirit” in order to avoid error of modalism. In the Korean churches, it is important to confess as “God the Son Jesus Christ” and “God the Holy Spirit” instead of mentioning just “Jesus” and the “Holy Spirit.” Therefore, when speaking of the divinity of the only God, it must be singular, and when referring to a distinct Person, it should be plural.

Tertullian (1885:1044) distinguishes between Person and Substance that there are the three Persons (*persona*, presentation of a face) not in condition but in degree, not in substance but in form, not in power but in aspect. God is one in substance (*substantia*), condition and power as He is one God, from whom these degrees, forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The substance, attributes or essence of God that the Athanasian Creed (cited by Park, 1998:65) confesses are uncreated, eternal, infinites and almighty. The Person Father is Almighty, the Person Son is Almighty, the Person Holy Spirit is Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties but one Almighty. So, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. And yet there are not three Gods but one God. Likewise, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord. And yet there are not three Lord’s but one Lord. That is the

reason why God the Father is called God and Lord, God the Son and the Holy Spirit also are called God and Lord.

Athanasius (1877:211) mentions that Substance (*usia, ousia*) in the strict sense should be used properly for the one Being of God, while Person (hypostasis) should be used to speak of the distinct objective reality of each of the three divine Persons. The three Persons are not individuals but the one in Substance. When the Athanasian Creed says the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, the word God represents the Essence or Substance of God. Therefore, the triune God has the same Essence each other and it can be said God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Torrance (1996:202) mentions that the language Calvin used about what the Father shares with the Son “in common” points to the Athanasian statement that the Deity flows unbrokenly and ineffably among the three Persons. In this way Calvin used the concept of *in solidum* to fill out the Nicene and Athanasian conception of *ousia* as a self-existent being considered in its internal relations and of *hypostasis* as a subsistent being considered in its objective otherness. This concept enabled Calvin to give firm expression to the intrinsically interpersonal cohesion of the Three in One and One in Three, in which there is no confusion or separation between the Persons.

One of issues in this part is the confusion to use the same word “God” representing different meanings or objects. Those are, 1) God the Father as an individual Person, 2) God as the triune God who is one being of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and 3) God as the Divinity, as an Essence. When people say the Triune God, they can refer to the word “God”, and when people say God the Father, it can be said “God” and when people say the three Persons have the same essence, it also can be called God as an essence. The same word is being used in the cases for God as the Father, God as the Triune God and God as an essence. Although the same word (God) is being used to refer to a different content in the Bible and the Confessions, it would not be confusing if God as “the essence of God,” God as “the triune God,” and “God as the Father of Heaven” be used properly by the church leaders when talking to the members. Moreover, in the Korean translation, there is no distinction between plural and singular in the word *God*. Therefore, the word *God* to be used in combination with the Person and Essence as “God the Father,” “the Triune God” and “God the Son” and “God the Holy Spirit.”

Hank Hanegraff (cited by White, 1998:27) expresses the Essence and Person in a simple and clear way: when speaking of the Trinity, one needs to realize that it is talking about One What and Three Who’s. The one what is the Being or Essence of God; the three who’s are the Father, Son, and Spirit. Three Persons never say that there are three gods.

4.3.4 Begotten, Proceeding (發生, 發出)

It is not so difficult to understand the words “Begotten” and “Proceeding.” The point is that the relationships of the three Persons do not effect the qualities, essence or equality of the three Persons.

The Westminster Confession says the Son is eternally begotten of the Father and the Holy Spirit is eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. The Korean translation 發生, which is corresponding to the word Begotten, indicates the meaning “born from,” and the meaning of the Korean translation 發出, which is not commonly used but corresponding to the word Proceeding, means “came from” or “derived from.”

The word *begotten* seems to imply that the Father is the origin of the Son and the Father was unbegotten as an attribute of His existence. The Son owes his beginning to the Father. The Nicene Creed says that Christ is begotten, not made. When people and other creatures are begotten, they are made, but Christ is begotten in eternity in a unique way that did not involve being made. The “only begotten” is that Christ is uniquely begotten of the Father, that he is the one and only, and once for all. Christ is uniquely begotten, not in time as a creature, but in eternity as the Son of God, and was God from the beginning. If the Logos is eternally begotten by the Father, there never was a time in history when Christ was not begotten of the Father.

According to Berkhof (2010:71), the doctrine of the begotten Son is naturally presented by describing the fact that the Bible mentions the relationship between the first and second Person of the Trinity as the relationship between the Father and the Son. Berkhof (2010:71) mentions Psalm 2:7, Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:5 as its base.

Berkhof (2010:73) further explains that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son is based on the fact that the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of the Father and the Son (Rom. 8:9, Gal. 4:6) and sent by the Father and the Son (Joh. 15:26, 16:7).

4.3.5 Unity (一體)

First, the words “one” and “unity” themselves are not difficult to understand. Hodgson (1946:90) mentions that the idea of unity in our mind is primarily an arithmetical idea: the criterion of unity is the absence of multiplicity. Here one is one and three is three; what is one is not three and what are three is not one. Lee (1979:112) points out that our way of thinking, the “either-or” way is fundamentally responsible for the countless controversies on the doctrine of the Trinity. By this “either-or” logic, God must be either one or three. Lee

insists that the “both-and” way of thinking may be able to resolve some of the problems in the doctrine of the Trinity. The one God can exist in three Persons in this logic.

But the issue is what is the one when it is said the three Persons are one? Is the essence of three Persons the same or is it that the three Persons are one God? The Korean translation **一體** means “One Body” or “One” which implies a combination of parts and does not say exactly what the One means. As mentioned above, if we distinguish one What from three Who, this issue can be solved somewhat.

The Trinity is like a communion of the three Persons, three centres of consciousness, who always exist in union with one another and in dependence on one another. Each is essential in the life of the others, and in the life of the Trinity. The relationship with one another is love, agape love, which unites them in the most intimate of relationships. There is a mutual submission of each to each of the others and a mutual glorifying of one another. There is complete equality among the three (Millard Erickson, 1995:331).

When speaking of the oneness of God, the focus can be on the infinite in being. His being has no boundaries. He is omnipresent because He is infinite in being. The universe has no room for more than one infinite being. If there is a second infinite being, then the first one would have a boundary to its essence, in which case His essence would not be infinite. God is such a being. White’s comments (1998:45) are more understandable: God’s being is not limited since God is omnipresent. Another important truth is that God’s being cannot be divided. What is half of omnipresence? How can the infinite be divided into parts? The fullness of the being of God is shared completely by each of the Divine Persons of the Trinity. There is no one else. No other God, no other deity, no other Saviour. One God, absolute, eternal, Creator of all things. The doctrine of the Trinity is based upon this firm foundation. The Trinity in no way, shape, or form compromises this fundamental truth - it does fulfil it, bring it to full realization, and reveals how this one true and eternal God exists as three coequal and coeternal Persons.

Unfortunately, the terms being used in the doctrine of the Trinity are difficult to understand. But it does not mean that the doctrine of the Trinity is not comprehensible. As Calvin (1560:149) says, if one agrees on this fundamental truth that one true and eternal God exists as the three coequal and coeternal Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and these three Persons who have the same godly essence are distinctive, the terms are better to be buried rather than fighting vigorously with word problems. Bavinck (2004:186) says that the human words are far less than the ideas contained therein and far less than expressing the reality of God, but what is important is the content of the substance that the words are

intending to express. The Trinity can be defined as “God is one in the essential being, but there are three Persons within the One.” The Trinity is the way one God exists as three Persons who are distinct but never separated. Its position and power of the triune God are equal, and each personality is individual. It is not the three gods that have three Persons, but it is divided into the first place, second place and the third place, in relation to the order of existence which is not of rank. The Son begotten from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son.

4.4 The understanding of the relationship among the three Persons

4.4.1 Subordinate not inferior

The problem in constructing a statement of the doctrine of the Trinity is not merely to understand the terminology. It is more difficult to understand the interrelationships among the three Persons.

The Son and the Spirit are sometimes said to be “subordinate” to the Father. But it does not mean that they are inferior to the Father. This subordination is a matter of relationship and function but not of nature. The Son and the Holy Spirit obey the Father, the will of the Heavenly Father functionally and temporary.

The Belgic Confession article 8 (cited by Beeke, 1999:20) and the Westminster Confession chapter 2 (Na, 2010:29) mention that the Father is originating, the Son eternally begotten from the Father, the Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son in their mutual relationships, yet the three Persons are in one essence of equality.

The large portion of arguments against the Trinity makes one major false assumption that the three Persons have to do the exact same works in the exact same way. The different role of the Son does not make him inferior to the Father but distinguishes him from the Father. In the same way, the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son, but this only makes the Holy Spirit different from the Father and the Son, not less than the Father and the Son. The difference in function does not indicate inferiority of nature but is complementary. On the basic theological presuppositions mentioned by Giles in the previous chapter that the subordination of the Son in the incarnation is voluntary and temporal, and the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father speaks of their unity, McGrath (2010:112) says this view was expecting the development that distinguishes between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity. When Scripture discusses the way that God relates to the world in creation and redemption, the Persons of the Trinity are said to have different functions or

primary activities. Sometimes this has been called “economy of the Trinity” which means the different ways the three Persons act as they relate to the world and to each other for all eternity (Grudem, 2000:248). The subordination of the Son in the incarnation does not mean the subordination in the ontological Trinity. Giles (2002:55) says Calvin was opposed to subordinationism of every kind known to him, insisting that texts that spoke of the subordination of the Son alluded only to his work as the mediator of salvation. Calvin holds that the whole Trinity is involved in creation, redemption and sanctification, although each of the three makes a distinctive contribution.

4.4.2 Distinct and unified relationships in existing and acting

The traditional teaching of the church is that God is triune both in His eternal divine or inner being and in His action. The point of this discussion is how to understand the core of the relationship that exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in one God.

It seems that the three Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are interacting in many different ways and theologians try to define or explain the relationship in different patterns and models such as a relationship between a father and son, a relationship of begotten and proceeding, a relationship of mutually indwelling and communion, etc.

One of the basic patterns of the relationship among the three Persons is the definition in the Reformed Confessions (The Belgic Confession article 8-9, The Westminster Confession Large Catechism 9-11). There are three Persons in the Trinity, and there exists between them two types of relation, begotten and procession, and that the names Father, Son and Spirit may be used of the Persons who are substantially one, but distinguished through being related to one another in this way. God the Father is His fatherhood, God the Son is his sonship, God the Holy Spirit is his givenness. The Son is begotten from the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son and the Father. When the personal name “Father” is mentioned by Jesus Christ, it is indicating the special relationship between God the Father and God the Son.

When the three Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together by its name, they refer to each other’s relations. When the Father is mentioned with the Son, the relationship between the two is assumed. However, there is an order within each of them because there are unique characteristics of each one. The unity of the essence is maintained and the order is kept, and yet it is not influenced by the divine nature of the Son and the Holy Spirit (Calvin, 1560:173).

Some scholars like Rahner and Torrance explain the relationship among the three Persons as “the unity in being and acting,” which implies the immanent Trinity and economic Trinity are not different and not separated. The concept was explained by the Cappadocian Fathers with the concept of *perichoresis*.

Although the Cappadocian Fathers did not use this term at first, it is a theorized system that can effectively respond to the doctrine of tritheism as this theory explains identity of the divine Essence (*ousia*) and its co-inherence without deviating to one side. The Greek term *perichoresis* (περιχώρησις) means “dancing around in chorus” and is described in English as “mutual interpenetration”. It means *koinonia* (relationship) while sharing each other’s divinity and maintaining one’s infiltrating relationship (Kim, 2007: 65).

Torrance (1996:168) explains the concept of perichoresis used by Athanasius in order to express the eternal relations of the three Persons that exist in one another and dwell in one another as one God, three Persons. To Athanasius, this had to do not merely with a linking or intercommunication of the distinctive properties of the three divine Persons, which became known as *communicatio idiomatum*, but with a completely mutual indwelling in which each Person, while remaining what he is by himself as Father, Son or Holy Spirit, is wholly in the others as the others are wholly in him. This concept provided the theological basis for the doctrine of coinherence which is explained as mutual indwelling and containing, coexisting in one another, permanently enveloped, undivided, dynamic, inter-penetrating, onto-relational, wholly coinhering, eternally grounded, essentially and eternal movement in the love for one another, indivisible wholeness with real distinction between the divine Persons.

Torrance (1996:197) further explains that the concept of *perichoresis* is a dynamic three-way reciprocity. This is the Trinity of God both in terms of the mutual containing of the particular divine Persons in one another, and in terms of the reciprocal interpenetration of their distinctive activities, or in perichoretic circularity and wholeness. Since God’s being and activity completely interpenetrate each other, His being and activity are not separated. The three Persons always act together in every divine operation in creation or redemption, yet in such a way that the distinctive activities of each Person are always maintained, in accordance with the properties and otherness of their Persons. This may be called the perichoretic coactivity of the Holy Trinity.

Plantinga, Thompson and Lundberg (2010:138) explain the forms of unity in three forms. The classic trinitarian formula is three Persons in one divine Essence. The first is “essential divine unity.” The divine essence is that which the three Persons have in common and which

makes them divine, and is typically described in terms of attributes, as in the Athanasian Creed, where various attributes (e.g. eternal, almighty) are each ascribed to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The second form of unity, quasi-genetic unity, captures the deeper sense of the Nicene homoousios - that of a relationship of derivation. The third form of unity is the perichoretic unity of Persons in community.

The divine revelation had been given in the divine action, in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, in the coming of the Spirit and the adoption of Christians to share in the sonship of the Lord.

4.5 The passages of the Bible on which the doctrine of the Trinity based

4.5.1 The Biblical basis of the doctrine of the Trinity

Most of scholars say that the Bible does not contain the doctrine of the Trinity in any explicit fashion, but the Bible provides materials to develop the concept of the Trinity. According to Plantinga, Thompson and Lundberg (2010:111), the Bible implies the trinitarian concept of the Trinity and the vectors are systematized by the church's confessions. Torrance (1996:9) says that "the Holy Scripture presents definite witnesses to the oneness and differentiation between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, under the constraint of which the early Church allowed the pattern and order of God's Triune life to impose themselves upon its mind."

When the biblical materials related to the doctrine of the Trinity are given, the concept of the Trinity shows the distinctive Christian understanding of God, just as the early church confessed and taught: the three divine Persons in one God. This section of this chapter explores the Bible passages mentioned in the Reformed Confessions, and some additional passages mentioned by theologians. Previous theologians, in many cases, refer to Bible passages about the assertions of 1) there is one God, 2) there are three Persons and 3) the three Persons are equally God. However, this research refers to the passages providing the key materials for the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the following order, beginning with 1) there is one God, 2) there are three Persons, and 3) the three Persons are One God. There is difference in some respect between the two approaches that the way in which "God is one and there are three Persons who are God," and the way in which "the three Persons are one God." And hence God's oneness and Threeness seems not contradictory. God must be understood as three-in-one or Triune.

On the other hand, the testimony of the Bible about the divinity of Jesus Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit, can be found in many places and briefly summarized in the first part of this chapter. Many scholars refer to different Bible verses and hence this chapter focuses on the commonly presented verses.

4.5.2 Scriptural passages indicating the deity of Jesus Christ

There are numerous verses about the divinity of Christ in the New Testament. Matthew chapter 1 starts from the announcement that Jesus is the Messiah promised by God and he is called Immanuel, God with us. Two of key verses as to the deity of Christ are John 1:1-3 and Philippians 2:5~11.

Christ is a mirror that fully reflects the nature of the Heavenly Father, and at the same time God's wisdom, possessed by the infinite nature of God in him reveals it. The Son is the Word of God, the only begotten of the Father, equal to the Father in all things, not the Father. The Old Testament provides material to identify the second Person of the Trinity as wisdom. The representative text that describes the Son of God is "God created heaven and earth by the Word." It is acknowledged as an enlightened fact that the Word implies the second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God (John 1:14, 18). John 1:1 says that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He who is God was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being (John 1:1~3).

White (1998:49) explains that Genesis 1:1 introduces God's work of creation in the beginning, so John 1:1 introduces God's work of redeeming the people. John uses the Word as a name, not merely a description. John fills the impersonal logos with personality and life, and presents the living and personal Logos, the Word who was in the beginning. How long has the Logos existed? The Word has eternally been with God and has eternally had a relationship with God. The third clause of John 1:1 says "the Word was God." The Word was completely identical "with God" in the nature and being of God. In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. Jesus says that he was with God the Father before the creation of the world (John 17:5, 24). White (1998:51) explains that "in the beginning" the tense of the verb 'en' (the form of Greek *eimi*) expresses continuous action in the past that the Word was already there. John's point is that the Word is eternal. John 1:3 introduces another piece of evidence regarding the deity of the Logos through his role in creation which is always God's work. If the Logos created all things, then the Logos is fully divine. John continues to introduce the Word that in Him was life and that life was the light of

men and about what the Logos does by coming into the world and who the Logos is. In John 1:14, he writes “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John insists that he and his companions observed the glory of the only begotten from the Father. John differentiates the Father from the Logos, the “One and Only” clearly pointing to two Persons. John (Jn.1:18) wrote: No one has seen God any time; the only begotten God (NASB) who is in the bosom of the Father.

Philippians 2:6 reveals that Christ Jesus is of the same nature as the Father by declaring, “Who, being in very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.” Paul says Christ was equal with God “but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Phil 2:5-11).

Except these two verses, there are several verses stating the deity of Christ and his equality with God the Father. Jesus mentioned himself equal with God the Father (John 5:18) and there is an awareness of Jesus’ oneness with, and simultaneous distinctness from his Father: “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30) and “anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Colossians 2:9 refers to all the fullness of the deity of the Christ. Thomas called Jesus “my Lord and my God (John 20:28).”

Berkhof (2011:293) mentions that the names that apply to God are applied to Jesus Christ (Jer. 23:5-6; Isa. 9:6, 40:3; 1Tim. 3:16; Acts 2:21), divine attributes are mentioned to him (Isa. 9:6; Rev. 1:8; Mat. 18:20, 28:20; John 2:24-25, 21:17; Phi. 3:21), divine ministries are done by Jesus Christ (Mat.9:2-7; Luke 10:22; John 1:3 1:10, 3:35; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:10-12; John 5:22, 5:25-30), and the honour equal to God is returned to him (John 5:22-23, 14:1; 1Cor. 15:19; 2Cor. 13:13; Heb. 1:6).

Reymond (1998:212) mentions a few verses that identifies the Messiah as God’s unique Son, a title in the texts with implications of his deity. In Psalm 2:7, 45:6-7, 102:25-27, 110:1, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, Daniel 7:14, Malachi 3:1, evidence for the coming of a Messiah who will be divine in nature.

4.5.3 Scriptural passages indicating the divine personality of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, is exactly the same as the Father in essence and nature. He comes from the Father and the Son, and the Son and the Father have sent the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is equal to the Son and the Father (John 15:26, 16:13).

Choi (2008:155) mentions that the personality of the Holy Spirit has been expressed in his knowledge (1 Cor. 2:10-11), will (1 Cor.12:11), way of thinking (Rom. 8:27), love (Rom. 15:30), grieve (Isa 63:10, Eph. 4:30), searching all things of God (1 Cor. 2:10), saying (Rev. 2:7), interceding (Rom. 8:26), testifying about Jesus (John 15:26), teaching and reminding (John 14:26, 16:13), guiding (Rom. 8:14), being insulted (Heb.10:29) and being lied to (Acts 5:3). God has revealed what He has prepared for those who love Him through His Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10-11).

Calvin (1560:165) offers innumerable proofs about the divinity of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. The evidence of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, which are referred as “the Spirit” or “the Spirit of God”, in the five books of the Law in the history of creation is clear. The report that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (NIV, Gen 1:2) shows that the beauty of the universe is not only strongly preserved by the power of the Holy Spirit but also that the Holy Spirit has been involved in the chaos before the universe is decorated with such beauty. Choi (2008:161) mentioned that the divinity of the Holy Spirit has been expressed in his eternity (Heb.9:14), omnipresence (Psa. 139:7-10), omnipotence (Rom. 8:11) and its ministries (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13, 33:4; Psa. 33:6, 104:30; Rom. 8:11, John 3:5-6, 1 Cor. 3:16; Tit. 3:5).

The best assurance is obtained in the daily lives of believers. The Holy Spirit is the cause for future regeneration, and all good gifts come from Him (1 Cor. 12:11). If the Holy Spirit is not in God, Paul would not say that the Holy Spirit has the choice and will, and Paul clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit has divine authority and dwells in God. Calvin (1560:167) also mentions that the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit with the title of God. Paul concludes that the believers are the temple of God, based on the fact that the Spirit of God dwells upon the believers (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).

Meanwhile, it is the personality of the Holy Spirit, not the divine nature of the Holy Spirit, that matters to many (Berkhof, 2010:72). Berkhof (2011:294) mentions that proper names to call a person are used for the Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit is called a person (John 14:16-17, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7-15; Eph. 1:14; Rom. 8:26), and the characteristics of the Person are mentioned in many places (John 14:26,15:26; Rom. 8:16; Acts 16:7; 1 Cor. 12:11; Isa 63:10; Eph. 4:30) and the Holy Spirit performs acts appropriate to the personality of God (Chang, 1998:74).

In concluding this section: Jesus Christ is called “Lord” as a divine title. He is claimed to be equal with God, to be a person in whom the fulness of the Godhead lodges. And also, the Spirit is a person distinct from the Son and the Father (1Cor. 8:4~7; Eph. 4:4) and surely

God, a divine being. Berkhof (2010:73) mentions the name of God is being used for the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16, 2 Tim. 3:16), the perfection of God is attributed to the Holy Spirit (Psa. 139:7-10; Isa. 40:13-15, 1 Cor. 2:10-11, 12:11; Rome 15:19; Heb. 9:14) and the honour of God is also turned to the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 13:13).

4.5.4 Scriptural passages indicating that there is one God

When the Reformed Confessions and most of theologians mention the statements, which summarize the Biblical teaching of the Trinity, the starting point is that there is one God. The unity of God was mentioned several times in various ways. "The Lord your God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2-3). "I am the Lord, and there is no other god besides me. Am I not the Lord, and there is no other God beside me? A righteous God and a Saviour; there is none besides me" (Isa. 45:5, 21).

The teaching regarding the oneness of God is not restricted to the Old Testament. James 2:19 reads as follows: "You believe that there is one God! Even the demons believe that and shudder." There is no God but one (1 Cor. 8:4; Eph. 4:5-6). Jesus says people know the only true God the Father (John17:3).

But the key question in this section is: how does one interpret the fact that the God who says that there is no other god is the Heavenly Father, not the Triune God? Are the Son and Holy Spirit excluded? Lee (2009:9) says that Moltmann answers to this question. Above mentioned statement, that there is one God, is not meant to suggest that there is only one Person as an individual, but it reveals that only God is true and unique in the world. Lee (2009:9) insists that the declaration of one God to Israel is not to make it impossible to claim that God exists in the Trinity, but to reveal that only God is true, and all other gods are false, no matter how God exists. In other words, it is not a stumbling block in claiming the Trinity of God.

Torrance (1996:114) explains that God reveals Himself to us as the Triune God and makes Himself known to us as a whole and not in a partitive way so that one needs to think in the conjunctive. The Bible begins with the work of the Triune God to create all things. But for Israel, it could be seen that only God the Father is revealed, when the Father says to Israel that there is no god except Himself. But the Father originally exists in the inseparable relation of the three Persons and the mentioning of the Father is a relational concept applied to the form of relationship among the triune God. To the Israelites who were surrounded by

heathen and tried to make and serve idols and be unfaithful to the Lord, God Himself placed the emphasis on the fact that there is only one God. Meanwhile, the Word who was God became flesh and revealed God through the Son of the Father and sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in the church. However, when the triune God is witnessed by the apostles, God's elected people accept it, but there is still the unbelief of the people who fail to understand it. Calvin (1560:168) says the declaration of Christ "to make disciples of all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mat. 28:19) is the solemn declaration that baptism should be done in the name of the One who has manifested Himself fully in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Just as faith is one, one baptism confirms faith in one God, the one God revealed in the trinity, is also revealing the light of the true faith in one Lord God.

4.5.5 Scriptural passages indicating that there are Three who are God

About the question why are there three Persons since there is only one God, one divine being, the Heidelberg Catechism answers that God has revealed Himself in His Word that there are three Persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit because He exists in such a way.

"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth by the word, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Gen. 1:1-3). After creating all things in heaven and earth, God creates man in the image of God. Then God said "Let *us* make mankind in *our* image, in *our* likeness" (Gen. 1:26). The plurals suggest that there were more than one Person who created the world (Gorder, 1990:3). The God of Creation is not alone but is already a triune God. When God created mankind, He made them in the likeness of God. In Genesis 3:22, the Lord God said "The man has now become like one of *us*, knowing good and evil."

It is not distinguished in the Korean translated Bible in what way the word "God" is used here in Genesis, and which God it is indicating. As God was mentioned with His Word and Spirit, it seems that the word God indicating God the Father but the word itself does not say whether it refers to God the Father or the Triune God. Even if the word is singular, it is still open to mean God the Father or the Triune God, because the three Persons in one God could be used in singular form. The plural form "Elohim" is used for Israel's singular God. Gunton (2003:180) says that creation is the action of God the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit: made through the Son and directed to its perfection by the Holy Spirit who refers it back to the Father through the Son.

In Genesis chapter 11:6-7, God is again speaking in plural. The Lord said “If as one people speaking the same language, they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let **us** go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” God is sometimes spoken of in plural, sometimes in singular, because He is sometimes referred to as the Father and sometimes as the triune God of Three Persons. Isaiah 6:8 mentioned that Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for **us**?”

In many places in the Old Testament, God uses the phrase introducing Himself as “we.” The plural form of God is interpreted by many theologians as an early revelation of the Triune God revealed throughout the entire Bible.

Not only does God refer to Himself in plural, but more meaningful is the teaching of the Old Testament that God makes everything in His creation and providence exists in His Word and Spirit (Bavinck, 2004:173). Bavinck mentions many texts showing that there are three Persons of the Godhead (e.g. Ps. 33:6; Isa. 40:13; Jud. 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 14:6; Ex. 31:3-5, 35:31-35; Num. 11:17, 25; Ps. 51:12-13, 143:10; Isa. 63:9, 11:2, 42:1, 61:1, 32:15, 44:3, Eze. 36:26, 11:19, 36:26; Zec. 2:10; Jer. 31:31, 32:38-41).

In several texts in the New Testament, the three Persons are linked together in unity and apparent equality. One of the scenes where the three Persons of the triune God appears simultaneously is mentioned in the baptism of Jesus: As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (Mat. 3:16-17). In this scene, as Crowe (2017:41) points out, there is no modalism.

Another is the dominical baptismal formula prescribed in the Great Commission: baptizing in the *name* of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19-20). Crowe (2017:42) says this is one of the clearest texts that explicitly coordinates the three Persons as the singular *name* shared by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit of the three Persons.

In Paul’s letters, there are at least three places that can be described as explicitly trinitarian (Rosner, 2017:118). One example of direct linking of the three names is the Pauline benediction which blesses by grace, love, and fellowship of the Triune God: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Cor. 13:14). The influential text is 1 Cor. 12:4-6: “There are varieties gifts, but the same Spirit. There are a variety of service, but the same Lord. There are varieties of activity, but it is the same God who is active in all of them and in everyone.” Torrance (1996:71) mentions it as

the economic formula, when the time had fully come and God sent forth His Son and God has sent the Spirit of His Son into believers' hearts, crying "Abba, Father" (Rom.8:15). The verses that were so important for the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, Ephesians 4:4-6 says "There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope held out in God's call to you, one Lord, one faith, one baptism: one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Berkhof (2010:69) mentions that it is natural that the testimony of the New Testament is clearer than the testimony of the Old Testament as the New Testament evidences the incarnation of the Son of God and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Meanwhile, his king with God is described in Psalm 45: 6-7, compared to His Son in Hebrews 1: 8-9. The Lord spoke to his Lord (Psalm 110: 1) mentioned in Mark 12:35-37. Also, the Messiah was the speaker, and he said that he was the Son of God (Psa. 2: 7, Acts 13:33).

It is Isaiah 48:16 and 61:1 that speaks of God and His Holy Spirit. Those verses are showing that the Holy Spirit is mentioned as a distinct Person (Berkhof, 2010:69).

Calvin (1560:171) suggests Rome 8:11 as the most obvious text about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It says "and if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you."

Bavinck (2004:177) mentions some texts such as John 3:16, 6:38, 20:17, 5:18, 5:20, 5:26; Mat. 6:13, 11:27, Mark 12:6, Heb. 9:14; Rome 1:3 and Eph. 1:3.

4.5.6 Scriptural passages indicating that the Three Persons are One

The text which is documenting the Trinity is 1 John 5:7 in the King James Version, inserted in Western Latin texts from the 6th century, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Here is a very clear statement of the three-in-oneness. However, Erickson (2001:110) mentions the textual base on this passage is so weak and the Biblical basis for the Trinity is to be sought elsewhere. Some recent translations include this statement only in an italicized footnote, and others such as NIV and RSV omit it altogether. Based on the oldest Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, it is certain that this passage was inserted in Greek translations. This verse is not included in Korean translations that are currently being used. Jesus himself says he is one with the Father (John 17:11) and the apostle Paul makes frequent use of the triadic pattern. From Matthew to Revelation, triadic references are abounding.

“Now there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone” (1 Cor. 12:4-6). In this text, it is the diversity-in-unity of God that unifies the diversity of spiritual gifts. The well-known Pauline benediction also refers to the triadic pattern as well as that there are three Persons. Several of the triadic references suggest that the Christian experience of God bears a distinct trinitarian imprint, an irreducible triadic pattern. The Son cannot be reduced to God the Father as he is Christ the Lord. Nor can the Spirit be reduced to the mere power of the Son or of the Father as the Spirit is another Advocate. God’s movement toward humanity both in creation and redemption is “from the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit,” while the response of the saints to God is, “in the power of the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father.” The Christian experience of God is a relationship with a God whose name is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Plantinga, Thompson & Lundberg, 2010:117).

Although the doctrine of the Trinity is not expressly asserted, the Scripture and particularly the New Testament contains so many suggestions of the unity of the three Persons that it is clear why the church formulated the doctrine. Berkhof (2011:296) says that just as the ministry of the Son is based on the unity of the Son in agreement with the Father (John 10:26), the work of the Holy Spirit is also based on the unity of the Father and the Son (John 16:14-15).

According to the Bible, God, who exists in the Trinity, never worked alone. But the three Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct and work together in different roles. The three Persons exist as one God.

4.6 The explanation of the Trinity

4.6.1 The search for analogies

The problem in constructing a statement of the doctrine of the Trinity is not merely to understand the terminology. It is more difficult to understand the interrelationships among the three Persons. The human mind seeks analogies which help to understand difficult concepts such as the doctrine of the Trinity. Many people have tried to find an analogy in physical nature, creatures including man which have been drawn from human experience. Erickson (2003:114) says that most of these attempts, however, failed by being tritheistic or modalistic in their implications. Berkhof (2000: 287) also mentions that various analogies proposed to reveal the subject have a defect to fully express the triune God while Berkhof

does not deny that those are worth a little bit in discussing the Trinity. Many theologians point out that the analogies are always limited within human knowledge as God remains greater than anything the human being can say about Him. The Bible uses many analogies from nature and life to teach various aspects of God's characters but nowhere does Scripture use any analogies to teach the doctrine of the Trinity. Grudem (2000:241) says the closest analogy is the titles "Father" and "Son" themselves that clearly speak of distinct Persons and of the close relationship between them, but human beings are entirely separate beings, not one being comprised of three distinct Persons.

Hodgson (1946:90) says that the unities people have long been acquainted with are not so simple and the higher one goes in the world of living creatures, the more complex does the organization become. The Divine unity is a dynamic unity actively unifying in the one Divine life the lives of the three Divine Persons. It is a mystery, but it is not as irrational mystery. In the Godhead there is the only perfect instance of unity and it is through the revelation of God in Christ that one finds the unity of God to be of such a kind as to cast light upon all our lesser unities.

The great love of the Triune God and the united ministry of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to save His people is the image of God is shown to us.

4.6.2 Understanding the doctrine of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity can be defined as "God eternally exists as three Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each Person is fully God with the same essence and the three Persons are one God." Grudem (2000:231) says the doctrine of the Trinity is progressively revealed in Scripture and this statement summarizes the Biblical teaching. As Grudem (2000:256) says, the Bible does not ask people to believe in a contradiction. A contradiction would be "there is one God and there is not one God" or "God is three Persons and God is not three Persons." To say that there is one God in three Person is not a contradiction. As Gunton (2003:175) mentions, theology's object is not irrational or separational but rational in the sense that its basis is to be found in the truth of God both in Himself and in His making Himself known in the world.

The doctrine of the Trinity requires of Christians a confession of faith and to accept what God said in His Word and history. The Trinity is proved by the work of the Triune God in Christians and proved by spiritual experiences of believers. Nevertheless, there will always be something that can hardly be understood by finite human beings. Even though God

reveals Himself clearly as the Triune God through His Word and history, there are some who do not understand it. As Torrance (1996:18) mentions, people cannot enjoy the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God the Father apart from the Communion of the Holy Spirit.

4.7 Conclusion

The difficult aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity for the Korean Church members have been answered in this chapter. The subjects were 1) concept of the terms, 2) relationships among the three Persons, 3) Biblical evidence for the doctrine and 4) how to explain the doctrine of the Trinity to others with a simple model of Korean translation.

The focus of the first subject is how to properly translate the key terms of the doctrine of the Trinity in Korean. It is important to agree on what has been said in the terms rather than the word itself, but it is clear that proper translations of the terms are also essential to understand their meaning and concept.

The first one is the word *Person* which has been controversial in the doctrine of the Trinity and open to misunderstanding. Since the word *person* refers to a human being when it is translated literally into Korean, it is desirable to translate it into a better word equivalent to the term which has an original meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity. The word 位(位) translated for the term *Person* is unusual in real life, and the meaning of the Chinese character do not correspond to the term *Person* in the doctrine of the Trinity. To translate the term *Person* into 신격(神格), which indicates “each Person of the Godhead” or “the divine Person of the Godhead or Godhood,” can be considered a right term that the Korean churches can accept without misunderstanding. The word 神格 does not mean human person but a substantial reality in the nature of God.

Regarding the conceptual model of the Trinity in Korean translations, a suggestion of a more comprehensible and proper formula can be “세 신격(神格) 동일 본질(本質)의 한 하나님” which means “One being of God in three Persons of Godhead with one Essence.” The expression which correctly interprets the word *Trinity* in Korean language would be “세 신격 동일 본질(三神格 一本質)” or “세 신격 한 하나님” which represents God who exists in three Persons of Godhead. Within the one being that is God, there exists eternally the three coequal and coeternal Persons of the Godhead, namely the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is the unity of the three Persons of Godhead. Each of the Persons possesses the same divine essence, and are equal in glory, honour and power. There is not three Gods,

but one God in three Persons of the Godhead who is complete and infinite in the whole universe.

The second subject is how to understand the relationship of the Triune God. Theologians have tried to explain the relationship of the Triune God in various ways. The Bible and the Reformed Confessions of Faith speak about the relationships between the Father and the Son, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, and accordingly the relation of the Father, the Son and the Spirit expressed as Begotten and Proceeding to reflect those relationships. On the other hand, the relations among the three Persons are often described by theologians as “divine unity in being and acting,” “mutual indwelling and communion,” and “sharing the divinity and deep fellowship of love.” The relationships among the three Persons are not a one-way relation but a three-way dynamic relationship.

The third subject regarding the Biblical evidence for the Triune God, the term *Trinity* and the doctrine of the Trinity is not clearly expressed in a single verse of Scripture alone. However, the whole Bible testifies to the Trinity and the doctrine of the Trinity is thoroughly rooted in the Biblical revelation. The Bible provides the empirical evidence for the Trinity and is the revelation of God Himself. The ontological Trinity, of the being and relationship of the Triune God, has been revealed in history as an economic Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The final issue is how to explain the Triune God to others. This will depend on a unified church document that can adequately describe and explain the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Reformed Confessions already defined the Trinity well, even though they failed to define certain key Trinitarian terms, and if the unified documents explaining the doctrine of the Trinity precisely can be supplemented, it would be the solution.

Chapter 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The doctrine of the Trinity is the most important and foundational doctrine of the entire Christian belief, a distinguishing feature of Christianity as it clarifies what is most unique and fundamental to the Christian understanding of God.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the special revelation that God has shown of Himself to human beings through the Bible. All salvation and blessings for human beings are the result of the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. The church must have better understanding of the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity in order to avoid Biblical errors and contradictions, and to defend the church from heresies.

Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Trinity has not been well understood in Korean churches and this research has tried to find answers for some of the key questions, namely 1) why the doctrine of the Trinity has been misunderstood by Korean churches, 2) what are aspects in the doctrine of the Trinity defined as difficult to comprehend and 3) what would be a simple model for better understanding and teaching the doctrine of the Trinity in Korean churches?

The first objective of this research, which is to answer the question why the doctrine of the Trinity has not been well understood in Korean churches, has been addressed in chapter 2. The reasons that the doctrine of the Trinity is rejected or misunderstood by Korean churches are firstly that Trinitarianism is absent in the Korean churches because Catechesis in the Seminary and in the Korean churches is not adequate. Secondly, the church members have preconceptions that the Christian doctrines, including the doctrine of the Trinity, are difficult. Thirdly, miscommunication is also caused by improper translation of the terms in the doctrine of the Trinity. Fourthly, the preceding misunderstandings regarding the Trinity are affecting the understanding of the Trinity and the Korean churches accept false parables, models and heretic understandings of the Bible. In addition to those reasons, the features of indigenous Korean religions that are against Trinitarianism, the limitations of the Trinitarian Theology of Modern Theology in Korea as well as poor communion with the Triune God caused the church members not to understand the doctrine well.

The second objective of this research was to answer the question which areas are difficult to comprehend in the doctrine of the Trinity, which has been discussed in chapter 3. Firstly, the difficulty of parts of the doctrine of the Trinity are defined. Secondly, the relations among the three Persons of the Godhead are not experienced. Thirdly, the word *Trinity* is not in the Bible and it is difficult for Korean church members to explain the doctrine to others.

The last goal of this study was to explain the difficult aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity and constitute an effective conceptual model for teaching it to Korean churches, which has been covered in chapter 4.

The focus on the concept of the terms is how to translate the key terms of the doctrine of the Trinity into Korean. To translate the term *Person* as “신격(神格)” which indicates “each Person of the Godhead” or “the divine Person of the Godhead or Godhood” and to translate *the Trinity* into 세 신격(神格) 동일 본질(本質), or 세 신격 한 하나님, which means One being of God in Three Persons of Godhead (Divine entity) with One Essence, can be recommended as a proper formula for Korean churches.

The next subject in the Trinity is how to understand the relationship of the Triune God. The Bible, the Apostles' Creed and the Reformed Confessions of Faith speak about the relationships between the Father and the Son, and of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. Accordingly, the relations of the Son with the Father and of the Spirit with the Father and the Son are expressed as eternally Begotten and Proceeding. On the other hand, the relationship of the Triune God is manifested in the being (existence) and acting (ministry) of the Trinity as the mutual indwelling and communion of the three Persons by sharing the divinity in a deep fellowship of love.

Regarding the Biblical evidence for the Triune God, the whole Bible testifies to the Trinity, and the doctrine of the Trinity is thoroughly rooted in the Biblical revelation. The early Fathers of the church had concretely confirmed God while they were reading the Bible. Therefore, it would be the right attitude for the generation in this age to respect the content already confessed on the Trinity through the Bible.

The doctrine of the Trinity describes three truths clearly. The first statement is that there is only one God. The declaration does not only assert that there is only one God, but it also insists that God's being is one, unique, undivided and indivisible.

The second statement is that there are three divine Persons. It is not saying that there are three beings that are one Being. The clause speaks of three divine Persons, not three divine beings. It does not talk about finite, self-contained human beings but about the divine Persons in the Trinity identified as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The third statement is that the three Persons are one with the same essence. Each Person fully shares the one being that is God. Each is fully God, coequal with the others, and that eternally. One being, God, exists in three Persons that fully participate in the divine being with one and the same nature, reciprocally exist in each other yet distinct individually and

collectively. These three key statements provide the grounds upon which the doctrine of the Trinity is based and they explain why Christians believe in God as the Trinity.

Most of the Christians and mankind who generally recognizes that there is God, yet deny the divine origin of the Son, or regards the Holy Spirit a mere power of God, and in a pluralistic society, the doctrine of the Trinity declares that there is one God, one ultimate being and one God exists as the three divine Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God, expressed in various places in the Old Testament, is specifically expressed in the New Testament by introducing the scenes where the three Persons of the Triune God is revealed simultaneously and publicly.

The correlation of the three Persons has been affirmed in the Councils based on the Bible, and hence Christians confess God according to the Bible, according to correct reasoning and according to the faith of the church. Therefore, the core profession of faith is to be explained as believing in the holy Triune God of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit because mentioning simply to believe in God is insufficient.

Meanwhile, God 's being and acting are already revealed to human beings through His Word and in history, and the Triune God must be explained and understood by the church of the present generation. Although the Trinity can hardly be adequately expressed by the limited knowledge of human beings, the doctrine of the Trinity still needs to be explained in the Church. In particular, a well-described model should be presented to Korean churches with an official document to be uniformly used. This could be an extension of the Reformed Confessions.

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