

Miguel Robaina

UNITAS DEI

– a hermeneutical model for the language of the Trinity

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Foreword

This work, *Unitas Dei*, is not presented as a new dogma or a finished theological system. It is neither a confession nor a final solution to the complex questions raised by the hermeneutics of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Instead, the intention is to offer a systematic and coherent hermeneutical alternative – a model that challenges the classical Trinitarian dogma's self-evident status as a normative interpretive framework for Scripture. *Unitas Dei* is an attempt to show how central biblical texts and Christian experience can be understood differently as logically sound, strictly monotheistic, and with a high Christology, without necessarily presupposing an ontological Trinity in God's transcendent essence.

The work takes its starting point in an identified hermeneutical circle within traditional Trinitarian theology, where the dogma both shapes and is shaped by the reading of Scripture. Against this background, *Unitas Dei* is introduced as an axiom – a fundamental starting point for interpretation. This axiom suggests that the language of "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" is primarily an expression of the human, psychological, and relational experience of God, culminating in Jesus's consciousness, rather than a direct description of God's inner, eternal structure.

The model's value is assessed not primarily based on its conformity with post-Nicene dogmatic history, but on its internal coherence. It integrates philosophical, exegetical, and psychological perspectives in an attempt to illuminate questions that often lie behind the more obvious dogmatic debates.

The perspective constitutes a real break with the established Nicene and post-Nicene tradition. This is openly acknowledged. The purpose, however, is not to reject this tradition, but to problematize its hermeneutical dominance and show that other paths exist – paths that may better unite a radical monotheism with a fully realistic understanding of the incarnation and humanity's way of experiencing the divine.

Unitas Dei is to be seen as a contribution to the discussion, a basis for further reflection and critical examination. It is addressed to those willing to temporarily suspend the dogmatic reading in order to investigate whether a different hermeneutical axiom can lead to a no less biblically faithful, spiritually meaningful, and intellectually satisfying understanding of the God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ. All criticism, scrutiny, and constructive further development is not only welcome – it is necessary for any theological thinking that wishes to remain alive.

Miguel Robaina

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UNITAS DEI

I – Introduction

The question of the hermeneutical status of the doctrine of the Trinity has significant consequences for how biblical texts are understood and systematized theologically. The classical Trinitarian dogma has historically functioned as a normative interpretive framework, where both the Old and New Testaments are read in light of a metaphysical Trinitarian paradigm. This has meant that central concepts, such as the Logos in the prologue of John's Gospel, are traditionally understood through the ontological distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit established in the Nicene and post-Nicene tradition.

However, such a hermeneutical order risks becoming circular. The dogma is motivated by Scripture, while Scripture is interpreted through the dogma, making alternative exegetical frameworks difficult to consider without being preemptively excluded as insufficient. This relationship does not mean that the Trinitarian dogma is necessarily exegetically untenable, but it shows that its status as a self-evident and normative starting point can and should be problematized in a theologically honest investigation.

Against this background, *Unitas Dei* emerges not as a competing dogmatic system or an attempt to replace the classical doctrine of the Trinity. Instead, the model constitutes a hermeneutical alternative that becomes visible only when the dogmatic reading of Scripture is no longer assumed to be the only legitimate one. *Unitas Dei* seeks to maintain the central theological purpose behind the classical Trinitarian dogma – namely, to safeguard God's unity while simultaneously affirming the full divine value in the biblical expressions Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – but does this through a more ontologically restrained and phenomenological framework of understanding.

Thus, *Unitas Dei* does not presuppose an elaborate Trinitarian ontology, nor does it advocate an ontological retreat. On the contrary, it recognizes that some ontology is logically unavoidable. For God to be comprehensible and truly active, at least two things are required: divine identity and divine presence. Identity without presence becomes meaningless to us, while presence without identity leads to a logical paradox – what is it that is present if nothing exists that is present? These two aspects are therefore inseparable and constitute the ontological minimum of *Unitas Dei*. All further metaphysical distinctions must be justified, not presumed.

Unitas Dei makes a conscious distinction between what can be said ontologically with necessity, what cannot be ontologically determined, and what epistemologically appears as reasonable assumptions given the conditions of incarnation and human cognition.

Beyond this minimum, *Unitas Dei* makes no positive ontological claims about God's inner life. Questions concerning eternal relations, hypostatic distinctions, or relational self-consciousness in God before the incarnation are considered ontologically open. They can neither be proven nor excluded, but should not be presumed as interpretive prerequisites.

The relational and Trinitarian structures described in the model are therefore not ontological statements about how God is in himself, but epistemological and hermeneutical explanations for why the language of revelation in Scripture assumes its concrete form.

Based on this, *Unitas Dei* offers a possibility to understand the biblical Trinitarian terminology as immanent, experience-based, and relationally conditioned, where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit designate the same God without constituting ontologically distinct hypostases. The model is thus not in opposition to the original intention of the classical dogma, but in a critical and constructive dialogue with its hermeneutical prerequisites.

The difference in perspective: transcendence and immanence

The transcendent divine perspective

Unitas Dei seeks to explain the relationship between God's transcendent unity and the biblical experience of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit without assuming ontologically distinct hypostases within God's eternal essence according to the classical Trinitarian doctrine. The model is based on two central premises:

- (1) that God in his absolute, transcendent divine perspective is an indivisible essence without internal division.
- (2) that Jesus's understanding of God always occurs within the human conditions allowed by time, space, language, psychology, and relationships, and that human understanding follows his teaching based on this understanding.

Thus, the Trinitarian concepts can be understood as immanent, relational, and pedagogical "translations" of an essentially unitary divine essence. Seen from a divine perspective, there is: neither need nor basis for distinctions such as "Father," "Son," or "Holy Spirit." According to Unitas Dei, these concepts do not exist as internal realities in God, but as a human way of relating to God's identity and God's presence.

This does not mean that God is isolated or incapable of relation, but that relation does not belong to God's identity in itself. Relation arises only where creation, differentiation, and human experience exist.

Unitas Dei distinguishes between relation as an actualized structure and relationality as ontological compatibility. Relation, in the strict sense, always presupposes differentiation, reference points, and coordinates in space and time. For this reason, relation cannot belong to God's transcendental essence in itself. In God's absolute perspective, before and independent of creation, there are no external references, temporal succession, or spatial differentiation. Attributing relation to God in this dimension therefore means projecting created categories onto the uncreated. This, however, does not mean that God is isolated, static, or incapable of relation. Instead, it means that relation is not an ontological necessity in God, but something that is actualized only when something other than God exists. Relationality thus does not denote an additional property in God, but the fact that God's identity and presence do not exclude relation but enable relation when space, time, and differentiation are present. God is therefore not relational by ontological necessity in himself, but neither is he relationally closed. Relation does not arise from an inner need in God, but from the encounter between God and creation.

The immanent human perspective

Humanity lacks the ability to directly perceive this transcendent unity. Our understanding is dependent on space, time, relation, and language. Abstract or absolute concepts such as infinity, eternity, all-encompassing, and pure existence lack intuitive meaning without relational structures. This also applies to God's name "I AM" (Exodus 3:14), which in its pure ontological content is impossible to fully grasp: in human immanence, the question becomes inevitable – "I AM... what?"

For this reason, the divine "I AM" manifests in various ways in history and human experience, especially in Jesus's own human experience. Thus, Unitas Dei stands in a panentheistic tradition where God is greater than and independent of his creation, but manifests himself in it. In the biblical narrative, God's presence is often more explicit than God's identity, and it is in and through Jesus that both identity and presence become embodied in a way that is comprehensible within humanity's relational and existential structures: "I am

... the Way (the Son/Son of Man), the Truth (the Father), and the Life (the Holy Spirit)" as an example of Jesus's human relational understanding of his divine "I AM." This becomes the starting point for his disciples' teaching. (cf. John 14:6).

The incarnation as translation

The incarnation appears in Unitas Dei as the most perfect translation of God's incomprehensible transcendence into human immanence. When God becomes human, the divine identity assumes the corporeal, psychological, and spiritual limitations of human nature.

In this human nature, Jesus experiences his divine identity and presence through the categories provided by human psychology. The relational dimension expressed by Trinitarian language is thus not a result of internal distinctions in God's essence, but of how his own divinity is experienced from within human existence.

In this model, the Trinitarian terms function as the following translations of one and the same divine reality:

- **The Father** – the divine identity as such, experienced from within Jesus's human consciousness, the "I" in "I AM," which Jesus relates to as a person in his soul.
- **The Holy Spirit** – God's living and active presence, the "AM" in "I AM," which Jesus relates to as a person in his spirit.
- **The Son/Son of Man** – the immanently visible, corporeal, and historical holistic manifestation of the divine "I AM" in human history.

These three concepts do not describe three concrete divine subjects ontologically, but how God's indivisible essence becomes experienced, expressed, and concretized in Jesus's human consciousness and existence.

Passive kenosis

A central aspect in Unitas Dei is the understanding of kenosis (Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus's self-emptying is not seen in this model in the traditional way, as an active relinquishing of divine attributes, but as an inherent consequence of God assuming human nature. The divine essence remains unchanged; the limitation arises through the human conditions that incarnation entails. It follows that:

- the limitations belong to human nature, not to God himself,
- Jesus gradually grows in insight into his divine identity,
- this gradual development is a natural part of a human being's psychological and conscious structure.

This duality – a divine identity within a human psychology – creates a unique existential structure. A person can experience their own identity as complex or multifaceted, and sometimes speak to themselves as if speaking to another. In extreme cases, due to trauma, this can go so far that some develop distinct personalities within the same essence. This human experience is used as an analogy to illuminate the complexity in Jesus's consciousness, which is an inevitable consequence of the union between divine and human nature. Unlike pathological conditions, Jesus's inner complexity is perfectly harmonious and expresses the unique integration of his two natures. (Read more about this in Chapter II.)

Relational expressions and inner dialogue

In light of this, the biblical relational expressions between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are understood not as descriptions of interactions between distinct hypostases within God's transcendent essence, but as expressions of Jesus's human experience in his consciousness of God's identity and presence.

These phenomena are theologically comprehensible as human ways of articulating complex inner experiences. Human beings have the capacity for inner dialogue, the feeling of being in relation to one's own inner life, and conceptualizing this relationally. For Jesus, whose consciousness contains both divine identity and human experience, this phenomenology becomes particularly clear.

In this light, Jesus's baptism emerges as a holistic revelation and self-insight moment, where Jesus experiences a cohesive perception of his divine identity, presence, and mission – which in the Gospels is expressed in clear Trinitarian form (Matthew 3:13-17).

Jesus's prayer and inner dialogue are thus not psychological fiction, but genuine human expressions of an asymmetrical reality: the form is human, the content is divinely real.

Functional Trinity in immanence

Unitas Dei regards the Trinity as functional in immanence, not ontological in transcendence. The Trinitarian concepts are grounded in how Jesus himself experienced and expressed the divine in a relational way, seen from his human perspective.

This gives the doctrine of the Trinity pedagogical, existential, and phenomenological clarity without multiplying God's essence or postulating three eternal divine subjects. God's essence remains absolutely unitary; the Trinity arises as a concept only in the domain of human understanding.

Theological deviation and positioning

The model differs from classical Trinitarianism on two central points:

- (1) It denies the ontological distinction between Father, Son, and Spirit as three eternal hypostases in God's essence.
- (2) It places the Trinity exclusively in the immanent perspective, as human expressions of how God is experienced, not as structures within God's transcendent reality.

Due to these deviations, the model risks being associated with modalism or functionalism. However, Unitas Dei differs from classical modalism by not claiming that God assumes alternating roles in history, but rather that the relational expressions belong to humanity's epistemological and psychological perspective, not to God's ontology.

All New Testament testimonies and texts by Jesus's disciples and followers, such as their understanding of the Trinitarian concepts, must be understood in light of Jesus's teaching, which in turn is based on his own understanding of his divine identity and presence, his "I AM."

II – Psychological perspective

Modern neuropsychological research shows that human self-consciousness is highly dialogical. What we call the "inner voice" is not a poetic metaphor, but a neurologically identifiable phenomenon. It has been shown that the same area of the brain is activated during inner as during outer speech, especially Broca's area. Researchers can with high accuracy determine which words test subjects "say to themselves." The inner voice is described as

crucial for self-reflection, identity formation, and meaning-making. Without inner dialogue, the ability to understand oneself is impaired.¹

This means that human self-consciousness is not monological but relational. A person perceives their self through a form of inner relation: I speak to myself, answer myself, test myself. Research also notes that the psyche often organizes this dialogue as inner "voices" – for example, the supportive, the critical, the vulnerable – without this in itself being pathological. On the contrary, it is a normal way to handle complex inner experience.

In extreme cases, especially with trauma, this differentiation can become so strong that it is experienced as different personalities.² Then it is a matter of pathology, since a single human nature fragments into competing selves. Yet, even in these cases, the mechanism is the same as in everyday rumination: the psyche attempts to create comprehensibility through personification.

This psychological framework becomes crucial when approaching Jesus's self-consciousness. Jesus fully shares the psychological conditions of human nature. His psyche is not a divine shortcut around human cognition, but develops in time, language, relation, and experience. At the same time, Jesus's person is not merely a bearer of human nature, but also of divine nature. Here arises a unique psychological situation that has no exact equivalent in other human beings: a fully human psyche that must relate to a genuine divine identity and presence.

For Jesus, incarnation meant that the full divine reality – God's identity and presence – would be experienced and lived out through a complete human psyche and nervous system. His brain was a human brain, built to process information sequentially, learn over time, and organize complex reality through internal models and dialogue.

When we apply neuropsychological understanding to Jesus, a conceivable scenario follows, considering that the emergence and localization of consciousness, as well as the subjective experience (qualia) of one's own "self's" presence, remain scientifically unexplained. Within the framework of the incarnation, Jesus's human self-consciousness was faced with the unfathomable task of relating to two full realities: a human one and a divine one. To make the unfathomable divine presence and identity comprehensible within human cognition, his psyche, according to this understanding, would therefore have developed a stable, relational model through which the divine reality could be experienced and articulated within the framework of human consciousness. In this way, Jesus's unique psychological situation can be understood:

- God's identity, experienced in his soul as the absolute origin of his "I," became the inner "voice" he experienced as "the Father." This was not a real distinct person, but his psyche's way of relating to its own divine identity.
- God's presence, experienced in his spirit as the living, active presence and power, he experienced as "the Holy Spirit." This was also not a real distinct person, but his psyche's way of understanding and channeling the divine reality that worked through him.

In other words: The Trinitarian terms we encounter in the Gospels – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – are not a description of a conversation between three heavenly persons. They are the natural and necessary result of how a fully human consciousness, with the structures of a human brain, must perceive and articulate the experience of being the full deity incarnate. The form is human and psychological; the content is divine and real.

The interaction of Jesus's two natures in consciousness

Human identity is formed in a dynamic process. When a person faces a question like "what do I want?" or a temptation, the psyche responds based on a complex network of needs, emotions, social impressions, and past experiences. Every choice and reaction contributes to shaping the "self" – identity is a result of these processes, constantly in negotiation and change. In the moment of temptation, a person weighs impulses against principles; victory is a triumph over parts of oneself.

For Jesus, according to Unitas Dei's psychological model, this functioned radically differently. Through incarnation, his human psyche and nervous system were permeated by a complete, unchangeable divine identity and presence. This created a unique existential reflex.

When Jesus's human consciousness was faced with questions of will or ethics – as in the temptations in the wilderness – a conventional inner struggle did not occur (Matthew 4:1-11). Instead, the constantly present divine "self" functioned as an impenetrable formative center. His reaction appears as an immediate congruence check. The temptations (to satisfy hunger in a selfish way, to challenge God, to shift the center of worship) did not primarily collide with a moral rule, but with his innermost being. Acting against this identity was not an ethical wrong that could be committed after deliberation; it was psychologically and existentially impossible, an action that would have required the abolition of his own self. His human feelings (hunger, fatigue, the desire to avoid suffering) were present and authentic, as shown by the agony in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39). But they could not initiate action. They presented themselves as suggestions that were instinctively, based on an inner structural ground, rejected as incompatible.

In the inner dialogue that his psyche organized, this process was articulated as an interaction between "the Son" (with bodily experiences and feelings) and "the Father" (the divine identity). The inevitable conclusion was therefore – "not what I will, but what you will."

Thus, Jesus's life was the constant answer to the question "What do I want?": an integration where human desire was constantly adjusted against the fixed divine reference point. His "no" in the wilderness was more than a moral choice; it was an existential expression of "This is not me, and therefore I cannot do it." This is the practical mechanism that shows how the union of two natures was realized not only as metaphysics, but as a lived, psychological reality.

Psychological development and access to divine capacity

A central consequence of Unitas Dei taking Jesus's full humanity seriously is the understanding of how his consciousness gradually grew into insight into and mastery of his divine identity. To understand this, we can think of a person with an innate, exceptional talent – like music or mathematics. The talent is there from the beginning as a deep potential, but it takes years of growing self-awareness, practice, and experience for the person to become fully aware of their ability and learn to express it freely and intentionally. So it was also for Jesus's human psyche. His full divine capacity was a given reality, but his human understanding of this reality developed over time, from an unconscious feeling to a clear and integrated self-insight.

As a twelve-year-old in the temple, he spoke intimately of God as "my Father" (Luke 2:49). This was a very intimate language, a sign of an early, particular feeling of a special bond. But the deep understanding of why this relationship was so unique, of what it meant to actually be a bodily vehicle for God in an absolute sense, we must assume emerged gradually in his human consciousness. It was an insight that matured as he grew "in wisdom and stature" as the Bible says (Luke 2:52).

Jesus's baptism became the decisive turning point in this psychological development, a confirmation that his self-consciousness had reached a holistic experience – a clear and cohesive understanding of both his divine identity (the voice: "You are my Son") and the feeling of divine presence that filled him. After this self-insight, he could consciously and intentionally utilize the divine capacities that had always been in him and begin his call and service. This explains why Jesus thereafter performed miracles such as calming storms, healing the sick, and raising the dead, etc. The Gospels thus describe not a Jesus who becomes increasingly divine, but a Jesus whose human consciousness successively and fully grows into awareness of the divinity that had always constituted his innermost core.

¹⁾ The psychological and neuroscientific description of inner dialogue, personified inner voices, and their significance for self-awareness is based on established research, popular-science summarized in *Illustrated Science*, No. 3, 2025. Researchers mentioned in the article include Johanna Nedergård, Malgorzata M. Puchalska-Wasył, Charles Fernyhough, Anna Borghi, Sarah Wandelt, and Antonio Chella. The theological Unitas Dei interpretation and its application in relation to the person and natures of Jesus are attributed to the author of this text and are carried out within the framework of a holistic Christological understanding.

- **Fernyhough, C.** (2016). *The Voices Within: The History and Science of How We Talk to Ourselves*. Basic Books.
- **Alderson-Day, B., & Fernyhough, C.** (2015). Inner Speech: Development, Cognitive Functions, Phenomenology, and Neurobiology. *Psychological Bulletin*, 141(5), 931–965.
- **Puchalska-Wasył, M.** (2022). The Dialogical Self: Research and Applications. In *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory* (Ed. H. J. M. Hermans). Cambridge University Press.
- **Nedergaard, J. S., et al.** (2021). Decoding inner speech from fMRI signals using machine learning: Towards a brain–computer interface for communication. *NeuroImage*, 237, 118182.

²⁾ **DSM-5** (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. American Psychiatric Association.

III – The Hermeneutical axiom of Unitas Dei

All New Testament language about "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" originates, according to Unitas Dei, from Jesus's unique, human, psychological experience of his own divine identity, which then became normative for his followers' theology.

This hermeneutical axiom effectively resolves challenges that Unitas Dei faces in biblical texts. Let us see with a few examples how this can work:

The Son's preexistence

"In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

"You loved me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

These are not necessarily accounts of ontology according to the classical Trinitarian model. Unitas Dei maintains that the text describes retrospective and projected interpretations. Jesus's followers, who through his teaching experienced him as the full manifestation of God, come to understand his origin in this way. "In the beginning" and "before" are temporal perspectives that humans must use to speak of the eternal. The Word (Logos) that is "with God" can be understood as God's eternal self-consciousness and identity (the Father), which then becomes fully manifested in Jesus (the Son). It is not a separate hypostasis, but a way to describe the manifestation of the only divine essence in history.

The Holy Spirit as person

(Acts 8:29, Romans 8:14, Ephesians 4:30)

Jesus's psychological experience of divine presence (the Holy Spirit) was personal and relational. He experienced it as a person he could send, a "presence" that comforted and guided. His followers, taught in this language use, inherit it. When they themselves experience the divine presence as directed and communicative, it is natural to use the same personifying language that Jesus taught them. It is not proof of a distinct hypostasis, but of the continuity in human experiential terminology.

Trinitarian formulas

"Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

(Matthew 28:19)

This formula is a summary of the Christian revelation experience. It captures the three ways the one God (I AM) has become fully comprehensible to humanity through incarnation: as "Identity" or "Source" (Father), as "Historical Manifestation" (Son), and as "Presence" or "Power" in life (Holy Spirit). The formula is a mapping of the encounter with God, not a description of God's essence in itself. It should be noted that the Greek term for 'name' in the original text appears in the singular form.

The act of salvation and distinct roles

(John 3:16; Philippians 2:6-8; Romans 8:11)

The Father sends, the Son sacrifices himself, the Holy Spirit applies. This is not proof of three cooperating subjects. It is a description of how the one God's unitary act of salvation is experienced and broken down into causal steps within time and space. For human understanding, the action must be divided: there is a source of the initiative (metaphorically "the Father"), a historical manifestation of the action (the Son in the flesh), and a continuing, applying power (the Holy Spirit). God is the actor in all three, but our perspective requires that we distinguish these "roles" or "phases" in his unitary work.

The real debate, therefore, is not about biblical texts. It is about which hermeneutical axiom we begin with.

- The classical Trinitarian axiom: The Bible's Trinitarian language mirrors an eternal, objective reality in God's inner life that is revealed to us. The texts are windows to transcendence.
- The Unitas Dei axiom: The Bible's Trinitarian language mirrors the human, psychological experience of God, which culminates in Jesus's consciousness. The texts are windows to the experience of the divine.

Both axioms can create coherent systems that explain the same texts. The choice between them is not determined by which is most biblical – both can claim that – but by deeper philosophical and theological priorities:

- Do we prioritize God's unchangeable fullness independent of creation?
→ *We choose the classical axiom.*
- Do we prioritize the psychological and existential authenticity of the incarnation?
→ *We choose the Unitas Dei axiom.*

This insight reveals that the debate is epistemological (how we can know) and hermeneutical (how we should interpret), not merely exegetical (what the text says). All challenges to Unitas

Dei presuppose that one has not already accepted its basic axiom. Once one accepts that "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" are terms for a human experiential category rather than a divine ontological category, the biblical text's "challenges" transform from counterevidence to confirmations of how consistently and elegantly the axiom explains precisely why the Bible looks the way it does.

IV – Unitas Dei in a historical-theological perspective

To correctly understand Unitas Dei's theological position, it is necessary to clarify how the model relates both to the teachings that the classical Trinitarian dogma historically sought to address and to certain main theological lines in the continued tradition. Such clarification is crucial to avoid Unitas Dei being incorrectly identified as a return to pre-Nicene heresies or as an ontological counter-proposal to Nicaea.

The classical Trinitarian dogma was formulated in a context where concrete ontological claims about God's inner life were at stake. Arianism, adoptionism, modalism, and subordinationism all represented attempts to describe what God is, how the divine essence is structured, or how the relationship between the Father and the Son relates in God's eternal reality. The Council of Nicaea therefore responded with ontological clarifications: essence, nature, hypostasis, eternal generation, and consubstantiality. The dogma was in this regard an ontological answer to ontological problems.

Unitas Dei operates on a different level. The model makes no claim to describe God's inner, eternal structure at all, other than establishing an ontological minimum: that God must have identity and presence in order to be God at all. This minimum does not constitute an alternative to classical Trinitarian ontology, but marks the point beyond which Unitas Dei refrains from further metaphysical specifications. Where the historical heresies attempted to replace or correct the classical Trinitarian ontology, Unitas Dei refuses to compete on the same level. The question of God's innermost being is left open, and Trinitarian language is instead placed in the domain of human experience and revelation.

For this reason, it is misleading to understand Unitas Dei as a variant of classical modalism. Modalism claimed that God, in his essence, is one and the same person who assumes different roles or appears in different forms throughout history. Unitas Dei makes no such ontological claim. It does not assert that God shifts between identities. The Trinitarian terms do not describe roles that God plays, but rather perspectives through which the revelation of the one God becomes intelligible in human language.

The difference from adoptionism and dynamic monarchianism is equally clear. These teachings tended to weaken or deny Jesus's divinity by understanding him as a human who at a certain point was elevated or equipped with divine power. Unitas Dei does the opposite. Jesus's full divine identity is taken as given. What is problematized is not whether Jesus is God, but how this divine identity can be experienced and expressed within the framework of a truly human life. The model thus does not aim to lower Christology, but to take incarnation more seriously than some ontologically heavy models allow.

Nor does Arianism offer any real parallel. Arius claimed that the Son was created, subordinate, and ontologically distinct from the Father. Nicaea responded by affirming the Son's eternity and consubstantiality with the Father. Unitas Dei is outside this conflict, because the model postulates no ontological hierarchy between Father, Son, and Spirit. On the contrary, it is assumed that it is the same divine identity and presence expressed through all three terms, without this requiring distinct hypostases in God's essence.

Even in relation to later historical alternatives, such as Socinianism and classical Unitarianism, Unitas Dei marks a clear distance. These traditions often sought to preserve monotheism by dissolving or relativizing Jesus's divinity. Unitas Dei, instead, attempts to

show that strict monotheism and high Christology are not necessarily in conflict, as long as one refrains from ontological claims that go beyond what revelation actually requires.

At the same time, there are historical theologians and traditions that in method and theological stance are closer to *Unitas Dei* than the above comparisons suggest. In Gregory of Nyssa, we find a strong emphasis on God's incomprehensibility and language's limited ability to express God's innermost reality. Although Gregory accepts hypostatic distinctions as ontologically real, there is in him a clear awareness that relational language primarily belongs together with revelation and human understanding. *Unitas Dei* shares this restraint, but goes a step further by refraining from translating the relational language of revelation into positive ontological structures in God's inner life.

In a similar way, Augustine can be mentioned as a proximate, but not coinciding, reference point. His psychological analogies – memory, understanding, and will – are used to make Trinitarian language comprehensible, while he himself underscores the inadequacy of the analogies. The difference is that Augustine uses these analogies to illuminate and confirm an already accepted Trinitarian ontology, while *Unitas Dei* uses the experience- and cognition-based perspective hermeneutically to explain why Trinitarian language arises at all, without drawing ontological conclusions about God's essence.

Even Karl Barth's theology exhibits points of contact with *Unitas Dei* through its strong emphasis on the priority of revelation and its resistance to speculative metaphysics. However, Barth largely identifies the structure of revelation with God's inner ontology and understands the Trinity as God's self-revelation of his own essence. *Unitas Dei* shares Barth's focus on revelation, but differs by consistently refraining from identifying the form of revelation with God's inner being.

Finally, *Unitas Dei* can be understood in relation to the apophatic tradition, represented by, for example, Pseudo-Dionysius. Like this tradition, *Unitas Dei* emphasizes God's transcendence and language's limitation. The difference is that apophatic theology is primarily mystical and liturgical in character, while *Unitas Dei* uses apophatic restraint as a basis for an analytical and hermeneutical reflection on the emergence and function of Trinitarian language.

Against this background, it is misleading to read *Unitas Dei* as a return of some pre-Nicene heresy in modern packaging. The model is neither an ontological counter-proposal to Nicaea nor an attempt to correct the church's dogmatic conclusions through new metaphysical speculations. It can rather be understood as a meta-theological reflection on the emergence and function of the doctrine of the Trinity. *Unitas Dei* recognizes why Nicaea responded as it did in its historical context, but questions whether the ontological clarifications must necessarily function as normative interpretive axioms for all later Bible reading and mission.

In short, the doctrines addressed at Nicaea made ontological claims that the Church found incompatible with the gospel. *Unitas Dei* makes no such claims. Instead, it shifts the primary question from ontology to hermeneutics, and from the being of God to the human way of experiencing and speaking about God. This is precisely why the model can be misunderstood as heretical by those who assume that all theological alternatives must operate on the same ontological playing field. Yet this is also why *Unitas Dei* cannot be identified with the doctrines that the Nicene Council once rejected.

Reflection on ontological precision and humanity's thirst for knowledge

When one looks at why historical theologians prioritized ontological precision, it becomes clear that it often was not about what revelation actually required, but about humanity's almost compulsive need to understand and systematize the incomprehensible. The pursuit of detailed ontology is in a way the tree of knowledge in paradise: tempting, intellectually stimulating, but with the risk of drowning in the question of how God is rather than

experiencing God. The classical Trinitarian dogma's careful formulations provided security and unity, but can be seen as an expression of humanity's intellectual will to "capture" God in logical concepts – rather than an absolute demand from revelation.

Unitas Dei takes a step aside from this compulsive drive for knowledge. The model shows that it is possible to preserve high Christology and strict monotheism without filling every ontological detail requirement. It is enough that God has identity and presence, which makes experience, revelation, and relation possible. Everything else, including the classical detail precision, is fundamentally a human project – a striving for understanding that can be both fruitful and dangerous, but is not necessary for faith or experience of God. Unitas Dei therefore offers a freedom to focus on how God becomes experienced and revealed, rather than on defining every aspect of God's innermost essence.

V – Questions and answers

How can God then be love without the need to relate?

When humans speak of God's essence, it must always be in relational terms, because our experience of reality is relational. This does not mean, however, that God's essence is structured according to the categories of creation. Our understanding of love is based on distinction, reciprocity, and temporality between separate subjects, but God is not bound by the limits of creation. God is therefore not dependent on "others" or "something else" to define His own essence. When Scripture says that God is love, it does not express a need within God, but rather how God has revealed Himself in history — reflected in creation and most clearly in the incarnation in Jesus.

If the Trinity only describes our experience of God, is it still true?

Yes, absolutely. It is important to distinguish between ontological truth and epistemological truth. The Trinity is true on the epistemological level. The Trinitarian concepts are the result of how Jesus's human psyche must structure the experience of handling the full divine nature in time, space, and relation, while living in a full human nature. This does not mean that God in himself is tripartite or that God's fullness is dependent on human perception; it is an epistemological, experiential reality, not an ontological one. Truth here becomes relational and perceptual, real in experience, but does not establish with certainty how God is in himself. That something is epistemologically true does not make it less real; it merely explains that the divine is encountered through relation and perception rather than through intellectual complete insight.

But does this not deny the Trinity as dogma?

No. Unitas Dei does not deny the purpose of the Trinitarian dogma – to preserve a unity between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and protect faith against heresies. What is questioned is not the dogma's function, but its ontological claim. Classical Trinitarian dogmatics claims that we can understand God ontologically as three distinct hypostases (persons) in one and the same essence. Unitas Dei argues that this assertion exceeds humanity's epistemological capacity.

If God is not three persons, how can Jesus speak with the Father?

Relation in the incarnation is possible because God assumes human conditions – body, soul, and spirit. Through these conditions, time, space, consciousness, and language arise. When Jesus speaks with the Father, it occurs within the framework of his human consciousness, where God's identity (the Father) and presence (the Holy Spirit) are experienced as relating persons in relation to the human person Jesus (the Son). The relation is thus truly experienced

by Jesus from a human perspective, but it does not imply that God is ontologically divided into three distinct hypostases. The relation's reality is created by perception and formation, not by need or lack in God.

Is this not modalism – God in three roles?

No. Modalism thinks sequentially – the Father becomes the Son, who then becomes the Holy Spirit. Unitas Dei says instead that God is one, but is experienced in three different ways because human perception requires relational categories.

How does Unitas Dei relate to creation?

Creation is a reflection of God's essence (Ousia), not God himself. Creation is God's transcendent word manifested through God's energies (Energia). Everything exists in God, but God is more than creation.

Is this not pantheism, where God and creation blend so that creation can be said to be God?

Unitas Dei is a panentheistic model: all is in God, but God is more than all. Creation is not God, but bears God within itself through God's presence. Creation is dependent on God for its being, but God's essence is eternal and independent. This clear distinction also separates Unitas Dei from pantheism.

How does God uphold creation when His "Ousia" is fully in Jesus during his time on earth?

From Unitas Dei's perspective, this question builds on an implicit assumption: that if God's identity and presence – God's "Ousia" – is fully in Jesus, then God must thereby be exhausted from everything else and therefore incapable of simultaneously upholding creation. Unitas Dei argues that this assumption is incorrect, because it presupposes a spatial and quantitative understanding of God, as if God were an object that can be localized, distributed, or concentrated in the same way as created things. In Unitas Dei, God's identity is not understood as something spatially distributable. God's identity is not a substance that occupies space or can be moved from the cosmos to Jesus. That God's identity is fully present in Jesus therefore does not mean that it is simultaneously absent elsewhere. God is not a part of creation, but the foundation of creation, and that which is the foundation of all reality cannot itself be limited by spatial locality. Here it is crucial to distinguish between presence and locality. Jesus's presence is local, corporeal, and human. God's presence, on the other hand, is ontological and upholding. When Unitas Dei says that God's "Ousia" is fully in Jesus, it refers to God's self-revelation and saving action, not a spatial concentration of God's essence. God is fully revealed in Jesus without thereby ceasing to be the one who upholds all that exists. Creation is upheld not by God constantly directing cognitive attention towards every part of the universe, but by the whole reality ultimately being grounded in God's "Ousia," through God's "Energia." That the world continues to exist is not because God actively "does something" every moment, but because it is anchored in God's being. Therefore, Jesus's human consciousness does not need to simultaneously bear the universe's total cognitive burden for creation to persist. Incarnation thus does not imply a competition situation where God must choose between being present in Jesus or upholding the cosmos. God does not cease to be the foundation of creation by becoming human. Incarnation adds something new – a human life where God becomes visible and tangible – but it does not replace God's constant relation to creation. The problem the question tries to solve arises only if one assumes that God must be locally or cognitively present to be able to uphold the world. When this assumption is let go, the need to postulate several simultaneously active divine subjects to explain incarnation also falls away.

How does Unitas Dei view the Johannine Prologue where Jesus as God's Word (Logos) is declared eternal?

Unitas Dei takes the Johannine Prologue fully seriously, but reads it without preemptively introducing Nicene Trinitarian ontology. The personification of LOGOS is understood within Unitas Dei as retrospective. After encountering Jesus as the full and decisive manifestation of God, the first Christians look back on creation and conclude that what became visible in Jesus must have been true about God from the beginning. LOGOS, according to Unitas Dei, is not a distinct, eternally existing divine person, but God's eternal "Ousia" that becomes fully personal and present in incarnation. When LOGOS "becomes flesh," it means that God through his word chooses to enter human existence himself, not that an already existing divine person changes form. In this way, Unitas Dei preserves both John's Gospel's high Christology and a strict monotheism, while taking the reality of incarnation seriously.

What is the difference between God's word in creation and God's Word in Christ?

God's word in creation is an expression of God's presence (the Holy Spirit) – a manifestation, and indirectly a bearer of God's "Ousia" through God's "Energia." Logos – God's Word in Christ – IS the whole of God's "Ousia" directly manifested in human form, not only indirectly borne by God's "Energia." It becomes a complete encounter between the eternal and the temporal, between the invisible and the visible, which enables relation and perception.

What is meant by "the Son" from an eternal perspective? That "the Word (the Son, Logos) was with God and the Word WAS God" (in the beginning) and that "the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world"?

If I think of a word, the word is within me and part of my being. When I then breathe out, the word becomes concrete as exhaled air so others can experience what I thought. The word is manifested. In the same way, God's word (Logos) becomes concrete in creation and especially in Jesus, historically explained as God's Word personified (Logos, with a capital letter), which has its basis in Jesus' own human and relational experience of his divine identity. Our understanding of the Trinitarian concepts therefore builds on Jesus' teaching about his perception of his eternal being. The Trinitarian concepts and words such as "before" and "in the beginning" are all examples of spatio-temporal concepts, necessary for our reality, but they are not descriptions from God's eternal perspective. From the divine perspective, there is no need for relation — God IS in himself. But from the human perspective, Jesus experiences himself as the Son in a present, loving relationship with his own "I," which he perceives as "the Father."

Why is the Holy Spirit personified in the New Testament?

Because Jesus's followers were originally taught in this way by Jesus himself. It is his own understanding of his divine nature seen from the conditions of his human nature. The Bible is further written from a human perspective based on the teaching of Jesus.

Is the Holy Spirit then just an experience?

The Holy Spirit is not "just" an experience, but God's real presence as it allows itself to be experienced. In this presence, God's identity becomes revealed to us in time and space. We can experience and relate to God in this presence and therefore gain the possibility to act in divine harmony.

Is God not omnipotent? If Jesus is God, how can He be limited?

This objection builds on a specific definition of omnipotence, where omnipotence is understood as the inability to exist under limiting conditions. Unitas Dei argues that this is a philosophically problematic understanding of omnipotence. In classical theology,

omnipotence is defined as the ability to do all that is not logically contradictory. To live under self-chosen, self-consistent conditions is not a lack of power, but an expression of the power's reach. If God cannot live a truly human life with its inherent limitations without ceasing to be God, then God is in practice limited to a single way of existing. Such a concept of God makes God smaller, not greater. Incarnation does not mean that God ceases to be God, but that God truly lives a human life. A human life is by nature limited: it is corporeal, time-bound, local, and cognitively finite. If Jesus in his earthly life always and continuously actualized all divine function, his humanity would be reduced to an external appearance and cease to be real. Unitas Dei therefore claims that God's omnipotence is not threatened by incarnation, but on the contrary manifested in that God can assume a limited form of existence without losing his identity. That Jesus lives within human limits therefore does not mean he is less God, but that he is truly human. Divine identity remains full and unchanged, but it is lived within a human form of existence that sets real boundaries for how this identity can be expressed. God does not cease to be omnipotent by living as a human; he shows his omnipotence precisely in being able to do this without ceasing to be God.

How is the implied Trinitarian distinction in connection with Jesus's baptism explained?

In Jesus's baptism, his human psyche experiences his inner divine identity – in his soul – as the person "the Father" and his divine presence – in his spirit – as the person "Holy Spirit." In baptism, Jesus gains sufficient clarity about his divinity, a holistic present awareness of his divine "I AM." This enables him to begin his special call.

How can Jesus perform the miracles he does, and why do these occur only after baptism?

With the holistic awareness of his divinity that Jesus experiences at baptism, access to much of the divine capacities he always possessed is released and can thus be successively practiced (turning water to wine, healing the sick, raising the dead, walking on water, calming storms, etc.). The awareness of his divinity gives Jesus access to his entire palette of divine powers. In a similar way, God – through our spiritual awareness, through faith and the conviction that we are God's children – can call us into service and let us mediate his Holy Spirit to our surroundings through, among other things, similar works of power. But since Jesus was God, he did all such things by his own power, in his own divine name, while we do it in His name, as it is not our own works of power that act.

If Unitas Dei describes the Trinitarian concepts epistemologically, can we then know anything about God at all?

Yes – but only what God chooses to reveal. All theology is interpretation of revelation, not discovery of God's inner essence. Unitas Dei shows that we can know and experience God through relation, formation, and perception. That knowledge is received, real, and sufficient for faith, worship, and salvation, even if it can never reveal God's ontological depth. Our understanding is always limited, but it is authentically related to the eternal "I AM."

Is this teaching not very dangerous and leads away from salvation?

The claim that this understanding would lead away from salvation presupposes that salvation is conditioned on acceptance of Nicene Trinitarian ontology. Unitas Dei questions this assumption. In the New Testament, salvation is consistently linked to Jesus Christ – to who he is and what God has done through him – not to later metaphysical clarifications of God's inner life. Historically, the gospel was proclaimed, received in faith, and lived out long before the Nicene and post-Nicene dogmatic formulations were developed. These formulations had the task of defending the faith against certain interpretations, not of retroactively defining the boundaries of salvation. Unitas Dei denies neither that God reveals himself as Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit, nor that God himself acts salvifically in Jesus Christ. What is questioned is whether these relational expressions must necessarily be understood as three eternally distinct divine hypostases. To call this position dangerous is therefore not a theological counterargument, but a boundary-drawing statement that identifies a specific dogmatic model with the gospel's core. Unitas Dei argues that these risks shifting the center of faith from Christ himself to correct ontological terminology.

Can we experience God without the Trinitarian concept?

Yes, but the Trinity functions as a human language for this experience. Without these perspectives, our relationship with God risks becoming more diffuse and abstract. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit function, in the light of Jesus' revelation, as epistemological tools necessary for us: they make it possible to experience and interpret God's "I Am" within time and space in a way that is sufficiently intelligible for the reality of salvation.

Can this be reconciled with classical Christian faith in Christ's divine nature?

Yes, fully. Incarnation does not mean that God ceases to be God, but that God experiences his own divinity in human conditions.

How does this affect our view of salvation?

Relation, perception, and experience are necessary for conscious faith and the decision to receive the gift of salvation. The incarnation, Christ's life, death, and resurrection manifest God's essence in a way we can understand. We do not need to know everything about God's innermost essence to be saved; we need to experience and relate to God – and that is exactly what Unitas Dei focuses on. Salvation is thus not an intellectual insight, but an existential response to God's presence and call.

VI – How should Unitas Dei be used?

Unitas Dei is not intended to be read as a new dogma. The model makes no claim to establish how God is in himself beyond revelation. It does not wish to replace classical Trinitarian doctrine with a competing ontology, but to show that Trinitarian language can be understood in more ways than as a necessary description of God's inner essence.

Unitas Dei also does not deny that the Bible consistently speaks in terms of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What is questioned is not the language, but the conclusion that this language must correspond to three ontologically distinct, eternal subjects in God.

Nor does the model aim to reduce Christ's divinity or "explain away" Jesus's divinity. On the contrary, it aims to preserve both strict monotheism and high Christology. Jesus's full divine identity is taken for granted; what is examined is how this identity can be experienced, expressed, and communicated within human conditions.

The psychological perspectives in Unitas Dei are used not to describe God's essence, but to understand the consequences of incarnation for Jesus's human consciousness and for the language that arises from this experience. In short: Unitas Dei is a hermeneutical and epistemological proposal, not an ontological replacement doctrine. It offers an alternative way to understand why the Bible speaks as it does – not a final answer to how God is beyond revelation.

Interreligious dialogue

Unitas Dei emerged as a reflection on how the classical Trinitarian dogma can sometimes become an obstacle for people to embrace the Christian faith, especially for those from strictly monotheistic traditions, for example within Islam. Already in the 16th century, the Spanish

physician and theologian Michael Servetus (who happens to share the first name with the author of *Unitas Dei*) raised a similar question: he believed that the then established Trinitarian doctrine had no clear basis in the Bible and rather complicated the encounter with Jewish and Muslim monotheism, because it was perceived as a violation of God's absolute unity. Although Servetus's theology differs on several points from *Unitas Dei*, and he was classified as a heretic resulting in his execution, a common starting point is shared – a striving to preserve the integrity of monotheism and to understand the Bible's language without necessarily interpreting the language about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a division of God's essence.

Unitas Dei does not aim to "adapt" Christian faith to these traditions, but shows that it is possible to understand this language as an expression of how the one God reveals himself and is experienced in relation to humanity, especially through incarnation, without assuming three eternal divine subjects.

In this perspective, Christian faith can be presented as strictly monotheistic in ontological terms, high-Christological in the understanding of Jesus, and relationally expressed in its language about God. This does not mean that all theological differences are resolved – incarnation remains the decisive dividing line. But by distinguishing between God's essence and humanity's way of experiencing and speaking about God, dialogue can be conducted without Christian faith being immediately rejected due to a perceived incompatibility with monotheism's basic axiom.

Unitas Dei thus offers a missiological tool that does not compromise the content of the gospel, but removes unnecessary metaphysical obstacles. It makes it possible to present Christian faith as faith in one God, who in Jesus became human, rather than as a system of numerical distinctions in the divine – a presentation that can open doors to understanding even among those whose theological starting point makes the classical Trinitarian formulation an insurmountable obstacle.

VII – Summary

Unitas Dei presents an ambitious and systematically developed hermeneutical alternative to the classical Nicene Trinitarian dogma. Rather than functioning as a competing dogmatic system, the model aims to problematize the Trinitarian doctrine's normative role as an interpretive framework for Scripture and to offer a more ontologically restrained, incarnationally consistent, and epistemologically aware framework of understanding for the Trinitarian concepts Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The starting point for *Unitas Dei* is the identification of a circular reasoning in traditional Trinitarian hermeneutics: Scripture is interpreted through the Trinitarian dogma while the dogma is legitimized through Scripture. The model does not claim that the classical Trinitarian doctrine is exegetically untenable, but questions its status as a self-evident interpretive norm. Against this background, *Unitas Dei* is introduced as an alternative hermeneutical axiom, where Trinitarian language is understood primarily as an expression of human experience of God rather than as a direct ontological description of God's inner essence.

Central to the model is its ontological minimalism. *Unitas Dei* reduces the divine ontological content to two necessary and mutually dependent aspects: divine identity and divine presence. Identity without presence becomes epistemologically empty, while presence without identity leads to logical incoherence. All further ontological distinctions – such as three eternal hypostases – are considered theologically possible but not necessary and must therefore be justified rather than presumed.

Incarnation plays a crucial role in the model's structure. Unitas Dei understands incarnation as a real translation of God's transcendence into human immanence, where God lives a genuine human life under the conditions belonging to human existence: corporeality, temporality, local presence, and cognitive finitude. In this framework, kenosis is understood not as an active relinquishing of divine attributes, but as a passive and necessary consequence of divine identity being assumed within a human nature. This understanding enables a psychologically and existentially credible interpretation of Jesus's gradual growth in wisdom and self-insight without compromising his full divinity.

A particularly innovative element in Unitas Dei is the integration of modern neuropsychological research on inner dialogue and self-consciousness. By viewing human consciousness as dialogical, the model can offer a phenomenologically plausible explanation for Jesus's relational language about the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus's human psyche bears two natures: divine and human. To be able to understand and relate to both natures, his psyche organizes the experience into two perspectives, expressed as two distinct "persons": "the Father" (God's "I," identity) and "the Holy Spirit" (God's "AM," presence). These "persons" are epistemological, i.e., ways for the psyche to handle complexity, and not ontological hypostases. In a human being with only a human nature, the same division in the form of "persons" would be pathological, because there is no additional nature to integrate. In Jesus, however, it is a sign of complete integration between human and divine, a functional structure that enables self-consciousness and relational experience without compromising his unity.

Exegetically, Unitas Dei offers a coherent interpretation of central Trinitarian texts, including the Johannine Prologue. Logos is here understood not as an eternal distinct person in relation to the Father, but as God's self-expression and identity that retrospectively, in light of incarnation, is personified in the Christian tradition. The model takes seriously the historical development of text interpretation, including editorial and graphic factors such as practices regarding verse division and use of capital letters, and shows how these may have influenced dogmatic reading.

Theologically, Unitas Dei clearly differs from classical Trinitarianism by its rejection of eternal hypostases and its localization of the Trinity to the domain of immanence and experience. This implies a real break with Nicene ontology, which the model openly acknowledges. At the same time, it defends itself against accusations of modalism by emphasizing that Trinitarian language does not describe alternating divine roles, but simultaneous relational perspectives that arise in the encounter between God and humanity.

The strength of Unitas Dei lies in its internal coherence, incarnational consistency, and ability to unite strict monotheism with high Christology. The model shifts the focus from metaphysical speculation about God's inner life to the actual revelation through which God has become known in Jesus Christ. Salvation is thus not tied to acceptance of a specific ontological model, but to the encounter with God himself in Christ.

At the same time, it is clear that Unitas Dei challenges established dogmatic boundaries and will likely meet resistance within confessionally bound theological contexts. The model's dependence on psychological analogies requires continued precision to avoid misunderstandings or reductionist interpretations. These objections, however, do not affect the model's logical soundness, but rather concern its relation to traditional orthodoxy.

In summary, Unitas Dei constitutes an original, well-argued, and theologically serious contribution to contemporary discussions on Trinity, incarnation, and hermeneutics. The model offers a well-considered alternative to classical Trinitarian dogma as a normative interpretive framework and deserves continued critical testing and academic discussion within systematic theology and Christological research.

Glossary

- **Apophatic** – A way of speaking about God by saying what God is NOT, instead of what God is, to emphasize his infinity and mystery.
- **Axiom** – A fundamental principle or starting point that is not proven but assumed to build upon. In theology: basic understanding for how to interpret God.
- **Cognition** – Thinking or the ability to perceive, understand, and process information.
- **Council** – An official church meeting where bishops gather to discuss and decide important questions of faith and doctrine.
- **Congruence** – When something completely agrees with something else, fits together, or is in harmony. In psychological meaning: when a person's actions, feelings, and thoughts are genuine expressions of their innermost identity.
- **Consubstantiality** – That something has the same essence or nature as something else.
- **Energia** – Greek word for energy. God's presence, activity, or power; how God works and manifests God's essence (see Ousia) – in and through creation.
- **Epistemological** – Concerns how we can know things; the theory of knowledge and understanding.
- **Hermeneutics** – The theory of interpretation. How one understands and explains texts, especially old, complex, or symbolic texts.
- **Holistic** – That which sees or understands something as a whole, where all parts are interconnected and affect each other. The opposite of breaking something down into isolated parts.
- **Hypostasis** – Theological term for a "person" or "subject" within God, often used in classical Trinitarian doctrine.
- **Immanent** – Something that is experienced, perceived, or manifested within creation or in human experience.
- **Incarnation** – God's assumption of human nature in Jesus Christ, so that God becomes human without losing his identity.
- **Kenosis** – Self-emptying; in theology often how Jesus "empties" himself of certain divine privileges to become human.
- **Liturgy** – The words, actions, and ceremonies used in worship and church celebrations.
- **Logos** – God's word
- **Metaphysics** – Philosophical field dealing with that which lies beyond the material, e.g., questions about God, the soul, and the fundamental nature of reality.
- **Metatheology** – Reflection on theology itself, i.e., thoughts about how we think and speak about God.
- **Neuropsychology** – Science that studies the brain's and nervous system's connection to psychological functions, e.g., self-consciousness and inner dialogue.
- **Ontology** – The theory of the nature of being. In theology: God's essence and what God is in himself.
- **Ousia** – Greek word for "Essence," that which God is in himself, his absolute, unchangeable reality.
- **Panentheism** – Theological view that God is greater than creation and includes it, but that God is simultaneously distinct from it.

- **Pantheism** – The idea that God and creation are the same thing; God is the world and the world is God.
- **Passive kenosis** – Theological term in Unitas Dei describing that the limitations in Jesus arise from his human nature, not as an active relinquishing of divine attributes. (See Kenosis above)
- **Personification** – When something abstract is experienced or expressed as a "person" in consciousness, e.g., inner voices or God's presence.
- **Phenomenological** – Concerns how things are experienced, rather than how they are in themselves.
- **Post-Nicene tradition** – Theological developments after the First Council of Nicaea (year 325), which formulated the classical Trinitarian doctrine and normative dogma.
- **Preexistence** – The idea that Jesus (the Son) existed before his birth in time and space.
- **Relationality** – The ability of something to be in relation, without the relation being a necessary property in itself.
- **Retrospective** – Looking back; interpreting something in light of later events.
- **Transcendent** – Something that exists beyond time, space, and human experience.