

ABSTRACT

This article addresses Christian discipleship and the biblical Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), with emphasis on the work of the third Person. Using theological description and analytical investigation, and with the doctrine of the Trinity as a framework, it examines the concept of μαθητής and Trinity's ontological identity in the Great Commission of Matt 28:19-20, then analyzes key elements found in Jesus' teachings on discipleship. It highlights the Holy Spirit's role in sustaining humanity's connection with the triune God, expressed in four essential aspects for the follower of Jesus: justification, sanctification, missionary capacities (spiritual gifts), and missionary action in fulfilling the Son's commission. It concludes that all three Persons of the Trinity play a vital role in forming disciples for God's kingdom, establishing the link between the divine Persons and the disciple, a bond promoted by the Holy Spirit through the disciple-making ministry.

Key words: Discipleship. Trinity. Holy Spirit. Teaching. Mission. Spiritual Gifts.

RESUMEN

Este artículo aborda el discipulado cristiano y la Trinidad bíblica (Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo), con énfasis en la obra de la tercera Persona. Mediante descripción teológica e investigación analítica, y con la doctrina de la Trinidad como marco, examina el concepto de μαθητής y la identidad ontológica de la Trinidad en la Gran Comisión (Mt 28:19-20), para luego analizar elementos clave de las enseñanzas de Jesús sobre el discipulado. Destaca el papel del Espíritu Santo en sostener la relación de la humanidad con el Dios trino, expresada en cuatro aspectos esenciales para el seguidor de Jesús: justificación, santificación, capacidades misioneras (dones espirituales) y acción misionera en el cumplimiento de la comisión del Hijo. Concluye que las tres Personas de la Trinidad desempeñan un papel vital en la formación de discípulos para el reino de Dios, estableciendo el vínculo entre las Personas divinas y el discípulo, un lazo promovido por el Espíritu Santo mediante el ministerio de hacer discípulos.

Palabras clave: Discipulado. Trinidad. Espíritu Santo. Enseñanza. Misión. Dones espirituales.

DISCIPLESHIP AND TRINITY

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Introduction

The New Testament writings show that the three Persons of the Trinity play a fundamental role in the formation of disciples for the kingdom of God. Christ's command to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20) is fundamental to understanding the relationship between discipleship and the Trinity. The one God exists in His eternal being as three Persons, described in Scripture as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, where each Person is fully God (monotheism).¹ The disciple is an intimate follower of Christ and His teachings, and is to reproduce His character in their own life. The reproduction of the character of Jesus in the disciple is a work of the Holy Spirit, where, in the Trinitarian economic action, God the Father applies the merits of God the Son (imputed righteousness) to the repentant sinner (gift of the Spirit) and God the Spirit is responsible for continuing the process through communicated righteousness (sanctification) so that the convert solidifies himself as a true disciple of Christ.²

When developing the concept of discipleship, the first challenge is to define it according to the perspective and teachings of Christ and how this relates to the doctrine of God. This article provides an investigation of the New Testament biblical evidence that demonstrates the relationship between discipleship and the three Persons of the Trinity. This is a qualitative and bibliographical study that uses the method of theological description (systematic observation) to conduct an analytical investigation, using as a framework the doctrine of the Trinity—the nature and reality of God (ontology)—and its relationship with Christ's teachings (epistemology) on Christian discipleship. It is, therefore, a structurally descriptive and theologically analytical work

1. Wayne Grudem, *Teologia Sistemática: Atual. e Exhaustiva*, 2ª ed., trad. (São Paulo, SP: Vida Nova, 1999), 165.

2. On the relation between justification and sanctification, see Ivan T. Blazen, "The Grace That Justifies and Sanctifies," in *Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology*, eds. Martin F. Hanna, Darius W. Jankiewicz and John Reeve (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 301-313.

that aims to connect the two main themes discussed here: discipleship and the Trinity. However, by way of delimitation, this investigation will be limited to analyzing the pericope of Matthew 28:19-20 and its correlation with the formation of Jesus' disciples and the action of the Persons of the Trinity. The fundamental rule is a detailed analysis of the terms διδάσκαλος ("master", "instructor"), μαθητής ("disciple"), and διδάσκω ("teaching") and their Trinitarian implications, since this text is the thematic center of gravity and the structuring axis of our theological reflection.

Conceptualizing Trinity

The Christian conception of the Trinity basically regards God as a unity with a distinction of three fully divine Persons. Thus, the Trinity consists of three divine Persons, self-existent and coeternal, where each Person is called God in Scripture and they relate to each other in intimate communion of love.

The term Trinity refers to a plurality of Persons within the Godhead, or to God as one Being in three distinct Persons—a unity of Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)—coeternal and coequal, united without separate existence, without (ontological) subordination among them in mode of subsistence, and who interrelate in a *sui generis* manner and mutually offer themselves to one another in love (1 John 4:8). In this coexistence of divine Persons there is unity of purpose, mind, and character, without obliterating the distinct personalities of the three divine Persons.³

From a biblical perspective, the Christian concept of God is directly related to monotheism—God as one (Rom 3:30; 1 Tim 1:17). However, God is also identified as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (compound unit),⁴ without this meaning that they are a single person. This monotheistic concept is reaffirmed by Jesus in Mark 12:29, where

3. A more complete study on the personal relationship between the three divine Persons can be found in the following works: Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *God As Trinity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), 43-53, 140-155; John C. Peckham, *Doctrine of God: Introducing the Big Questions* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2020), 199-237; Agenilton M. Corrêa, "Why is God Sometimes Described as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and Sometimes Simply as 'One God'?", in *Exploring the Trinity*, vol. 2, *Questions and Answers*, eds. Clinton Wahlen and John C. Peckham (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2025), 385-391.

4. Three Persons: Matt. 28:19; John 14:16; 15:26; 2 Cor. 13:14; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; 7:14; 9:6; Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11.

He directly quotes the *שמע* of Deut 6:4, recognizing God as *יהוה אחד* (“one God”),⁵ when He says: “The first of all the commandments is: Hear, O Israel: “The Lord our God [Κύριος ὁ Θεός], the Lord is one [Κύριος εἷς ἐστίν]!” On another occasion He also stated, “And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent” (John 17:3), and then went on to identify Himself as a divine Being and as having equality with the Father.⁶ In addition, Jesus identifies the Holy Spirit as a divine Being on equality with Himself.⁷

In the OT the prophet Isaiah describes God as being one, and that there is no other God besides Him.⁸ At the same time, he stated in Isa 48:16 that *יהוה אדני* (“the Lord God”) sent the divine Messiah and the Holy Spirit for a particular mission. In this context, in Luke 4:16-21 Jesus assumed the identity of the divine messenger referred to by the prophet Isaiah (Isa 6:1-2, 21; 48:16; cf. John 5:36-38; Gal 4:4-6).⁹ Therefore, the one who speaks (the divine Servant of *Yahweh*—the Messiah) is distinguished from the Holy Spirit and the one who sends them (God the Father), which leads us to conclude that there is a diversity of persons in God (*יהוה אדני*, the divine Servant and the Spirit) which the NT calls Father, Son and Holy Spirit, described by Christ himself in Matt 28:19. The description of the unity (monotheism) and plurality of God (compound unit) transcends the limits of human reason.¹⁰ What remains is that God becomes logically and rationally known through His self-revelation¹¹ and His essential and incommunicable

5. And its equivalent *μόνος Θεός* (“one Deus”, 1 Tim 1:17; Mark 12:29, 32, cf. John 5:44; Rom 3:30; 9:5; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; Js 2:19) in the NT.

6. John 10:30-33; 12:45; cf. 8:51-59; 14:9-11, 20; 16:15, 28.

7. John 14:16-17, 26; 16:5, 7-14.

8. Cf. Isa 45:5, 15, 18; 42:8; 44:6, 8; 48:11.

9. If we consider that in Matt 22:41-46 the Pharisees approached Jesus with questions about the Messiah and that, in response, Jesus highlighted the unity and plurality of persons in God, admitting that God is one (Matt 22:37, cf. Deut 6:4-5; Luke 4:8, 12) and at the same time quoting (in Matt 22:44-45) Ps 110:1 to refer to two distinct persons as “Lord,” inferring His divinity, then we can assure that in Isa. 48:16 there is a plurality in God. This same distinction of persons in God also appears in Isa. 63:7-14.

10. A brief approach of the incomprehensibility of God in His nature by human reason can be seen in Robert Morey, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues* (Iowa Fall, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1996), 73-84.

11. A relationship between divine revelation and human experience is described by Peter Jensen, *The Revelation of God*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Lisle, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 95-144.

attributes.¹² Thus, God is eternally existent (self-existent and essentially unchanging), all-powerful (omnipotence), and capable of doing anything, which is why He is the creator of the universe. He is also able to know all His creation (omniscience), especially humans, and to relate personally to them (omnipresence). In Scripture, each person of the Trinity separately possesses these attributes.¹³

It is worth noting that in light of the above discussion, it is not possible to conceive of God as being a single and indivisible person who manifests himself in the Scriptures in different ways and names such as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Modalistic Monarchianism), since God is described in the Bible as unique and tripersonal, a unity of distinct Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit); nor as multiple gods (Tritheism or Polytheism), since the Bible speaks of God as a unity of Persons, united without separate existence; nor that God the Father created the Son and shared with this great creature some of his divine attributes, nor that His impersonal power is His Spirit (Arianism), since the Bible speaks of the three persons of the Trinity as coeternal and coequal. God is, therefore, a unity in three distinct persons (or three individual centers of intelligence) who interrelate in a unique and mysterious way (Deut 6:4; Isa 45:15; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1-2; 8:38).¹⁴ This unity of the tripersonality in God includes, in the economic process, the human being, the target of divine grace. With this, the disciple has a bond with

12. A concise analysis of the main divine attributes can be found in John C. Peckham, *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Backer Academic, 2021); Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Backer Academic, 2013), 272-788.

13. Eternity (Father, Rom. 16:26; Son, Col. 1:17; Holy Spirit, Heb. 9:14), omnipotence (Father, Rev. 19:6; Son, Matt. 28:18; Holy Spirit, Rom. 15:19), creator (Father, Isa 45:18; Son, John 1:3; Holy Spirit, Job 33:4), omniscience (Father, Prov 15:3; Son, Col 2:3-4; Holy Spirit, 1 Cor 2:10-11), and omnipresence (Father, Ps 139:1-4; Son, Matt 18:20; Holy Spirit, Ps 139:7-10, 16). Therefore, the three Persons are described in Scripture as God (Father, Exod 20:2; Son, 1 John 5:20; Holy Spirit, Acts 5:3-4).

14. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 29. "When God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, a knowledge of the trinitarian nature of God became necessary for the Christian church . . . it brought with it knowledge about the Father and the Holy Spirit" . . . "The NT deepens the dynamic concept of divine plurality already present in the OT while at the same time affirming the oneness of God." Fernando L. Canale, "Doctrine of God", in *Handbook of Seventh Day Adventists Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herold Publishing Association, 2000), 12:120, 123.

the three Persons of the Trinity (Matt 28:19). In this economic process, the second Person stands out, by virtue of His incarnation, sacrifice, and resurrection. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer rightly pointed out, a “Christianity in which there is only God the Father, but no Christ as the living Son, excludes discipleship.”¹⁵ Thus, the three Persons of the Trinity are directly involved in the work of salvation and the abiding in the disciple (John 14:16-17, 22-23, 26). This work involves turning those converted into true disciples—reproducing the character of Christ in their lives. And this leads us to the description and definition of discipleship.

Conceptualizing Christian Discipleship

The term *disciple* is quite democratic and accepts various definitions. However, to better understand this term, perhaps the most appropriate thing to do is to try to attribute some concept to it, taking as a reference the role of master exercised by Jesus, as well as the content of His teachings. In general, a disciple is identified as one who learns the words, deeds, and lifestyle of his teacher (διδάσκαλος) in order to teach others. In the NT context, the word disciple (μαθητής) refers to a “follower who serves as an apprentice under the tutelage of a master.”¹⁶ Although μαθητής was used in classical Greek to mean “apprentice,” “a diligent student of the subject matter under consideration,” “adept,” “institutional student,”¹⁷ in the Hellenistic context there was a tendency to use this word “in the sense of an adherent of a philosopher, a great thinker of the past, or a religious figure.”¹⁸ However, when it comes to a disciple as a follower of Jesus, called by Him, these definitions do not fully satisfy the meaning of this term. It seems that the call to the apostles as disciples,¹⁹

15. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, rev. ed., trans. R. H. Fuller (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1963), 63-64.

16. George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2001), 17. For an analysis of the educational and discipling process in the Jewish environment, see Birger Garhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity with Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity*, rev. ed., The Biblical Resource Series BRS (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

17. Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel as Reflected in the Use of the Term μαθητή*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum in Library Binding 59 (New York, NY: E. J. Brill, 1989), 11-32.

18. Júlio Fontana, “Discipulado: o relacionamento entre Jesus e seus seguidores mais próximos”, <https://ciberteologia.com.br/assets/pdf/post/discipulado-o-relacionamento-entre-jesus-e-seus-seguidores-mais-proximos.pdf>.

19. Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-16; Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:13.

to leave everything behind and follow Him (Matt 4:18-22), even in a relationship of διδάσκαλος and μαθητής, places Jesus' discipleship further away from the Jewish διδάσκαλος of His time.²⁰ Being a disciple, in this case, is characterized more by someone in the condition of a new convert who is taught to be a follower of Jesus and who grows in Him in faith and obedience, not limiting himself only to His teachings in a kind of proto-rabbinical school.²¹ Baptism (Matt 28:19) is a significant element in this process, it is a practical act that harmonizes with the profession of faith in Jesus. "Discipleship is a commitment to Christ . . . Christianity without the living Jesus Christ necessarily remains Christianity without discipleship; and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Jesus Christ; it is an idea, a myth."²² The term Christian discipleship therefore incorporates the idea of spiritual and moral guidance, but which becomes practical around Someone who is unique, having no full equivalent among his contemporaries.

Jesus as "Master"

Education is at the heart of discipleship in the Gospels.²³ The way Jesus transmitted His teachings and the way He related to His followers differentiated Him from the διδάσκαλος ("master", "instructor") of His time.²⁴ Apparently, in both Jewish and Hellenistic cultures of the first century, a disciple was a follower of a master who was committed to

20. Dunn recalls that "there are no equivalent stories of 'calling' and 'following' in the rabbinic tradition," and that "there is no evidence that recruits who joined the Qumran community were responding to any calling. . . . the element of personal calling for targeted individuals was distinct from that of the group around Jesus." James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, vol. 1, *Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 556.

21. Denis Fortin, "Growing Up in Christ: Ellen G. White's Concept of Discipleship," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): 60, 66. Cf. Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005).

22. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 63-64.

23. Cedric Vine e Nilton Aguiar, "Discipulado en el Nuevo Testamento – Parte 1", in *Discipulado: Reflexiones Bíblicas, Teológicas y Prácticas*, eds. Alvaro F. Rodriguez e Roy E. Graf (Lima, Peru: Fondo Editorial de la Universidad Peruana Unión, 2019), 32.

24. Cf. W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 3, *Commentary on Matthew 18-28*, ICC (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1997), 275; D. Müller, "μαθητής", in *Dicionário Internacional de Teologia do Novo Testamento*, eds. Lothar Coenen e Colin Brown (São Paulo, SP: Vida Nova, 2000), 1:583-584.

his teachings and devoted all his time to the teacher.²⁵ In the case of the model of discipleship established by Jesus, a disciple is not just an apprentice, someone who is with another person learning from him; but someone who must believe in Him as the One who is more than a teacher, who is *κύριος* (“Lord”),²⁶ and who must be able, through the lordship of Jesus and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, to be like Christ, to reproduce His character (sanctification)²⁷ and live according to His identity.²⁸ By this, Jesus intended his teaching to provide the framework for discipleship.²⁹ In the quality of *διδάσκαλος-κύριος*, Jesus is the One who is interested in His followers reproducing His character and teaching others about Him not just with words, but with (transformative) actions.³⁰

Jesus’ words in the disciple-making teaching process were always associated with His actions, because He wanted His teachings to transcend words so that His actions could be imitated by His disciples (John 14:12). The actions of Jesus Christ were led by the Holy Spirit.³¹ In

25. Ed Christian, “Hate Your Family and Carry Your Cross: A Doctrine of Discipleship”, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society (JATS)* 10, no. 1-2 (1999): 259. Cf. Nathan Dranzin, *History of Jewish Education From 515 B.C.E. To 220 C.E.* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins Press, 1940), 105-116.

26. For a broad and consistent explanation of Jesus as *Kyrios*, see Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008); Robert Morey, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues* (Iowa Fall, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1996), 174-187.

27. Christian, “Hate Your Family and Carry Your Cross”, 259. This means that the relationship between the disciple and Jesus is not limited to that of a “student and teacher, but that of a disciple and *kyrios*, Jesus.” Müller, “*μαθητής*”, 1:584.

28. Creig S. Keener, *Comentário Histórico-Cultural da Bíblia: Novo Testamento*, ed. amp., trad. José G. Said e Thomas N. de Lima (São Paulo, SP: Vida Nova, 2017), 57.

29. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 557.

30. An excellent approach to the relationship between words and deeds in the ministry and life of Jesus and in the process of discipleship was employed by Cedric Vine e Nilton Aguiar, “Discipulado en el Nuevo Testamento – Parte 1”, in *Discipulado: Reflexiones Bíblicas, Teológicas y Prácticas*, eds. Alvaro F. Rodriguez e Roy E. Graf (Lima, Peru: Fondo Editorial de la Universidad Peruana Unión, 2019), 35-40.

31. In the fullness of His divinity, Jesus became a human person (Cl 2:9), the “God with us” (Matt 1:23), which implies a union of both deity and humanity simultaneously (hypostatic union). Gulley rightly observes that “Christ had the power of God in His life, not because He was the Son of God (Phil 2:6-8), but because He was the Son of Man, totally dependent on the power of God, just as every other Christian is.” Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Creation, Christ, Salvation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 660. During this process of the union of two natures in one person, the Holy Spirit had a special role. According

the same way, the actions of His followers must be guided by the Spirit, since He is responsible, as we will see later, for reproducing the actions of Christ in the interior life of the disciple. The basic characteristics that identify a disciple of Jesus are linked to the practical actions carried out by Christ Himself, such as love for God and neighbor³², intimate connection with the Word of God³³, full submission (obedience) to the will of the Father³⁴, unreserved surrender³⁵, personal sacrifice³⁶, among others. These actions, first performed by Jesus and reproduced by His disciples, indicate that there is a process of inner transformation, possible only through the direct action of the Spirit.³⁷ These changes are slow and gradual, and since the sanctifying transformation of human actions is a lifelong process,³⁸ discipleship is equally long-term.³⁹ Jesus needed to live alongside His disciples for a few years, showing them what to do through His words and actions. And the Holy Spirit gave “continuity” to the inner transformation of Jesus’ disciples beyond His resurrection and ascension, reminding them of their Lord’s teachings (John 14:25-26) and being within them (John 14:16-17) leading them to act as Christ acted (1 Thess 1:4-7).

to Matt 1:18-21, Jesus was conceived by the Spirit, who formed a body for Him (Heb 10:5). He “brought Him into the flesh to become God-Man.” Gulley, *Creation, Christ, Salvation*, 393. Luke 1:35 addresses this miraculous conception and calls Jesus “a holy being” and “the Son of God the Father.” During His earthly ministry, Jesus was anointed by the Spirit (Luke 4:16-21; 3:16; Matt 3:16), “baptized by the Spirit (Mark 1:9, 10), led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1), executed His thousands by the Spirit (Matt 12:24-32), offered Himself on Calvary by the Spirit (Heb 9:14, 15), and was, in part, raised from the dead by the Spirit (Rom 8:11).” Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 73.

32. John 14:31; 15:9-10, 12; 1 John 4:19.

33. Luke 4:21-24; John 8:31-32.

34. Heb. 10:9; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 15:14; Matt. 10:24; Jas 4:7.

35. Matt 26:39, 42; Luke 14:33.

36. John 15:13, 18-20; Mark 8:31; 9:30-32; Matt. 10:38. “Discipleship is union with the suffering Christ.” Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 101.

37. John 14:26; Eph. 3:16-17.

38. Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, Conflict of the Ages Series 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 560-561.

39. Cf. Adolfo A. Suárez, *Nos Passos do Mestre: A Essência do Discipulado Bíblico* (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2014), 10.

The Teachings of Jesus

The Scriptures make it clear that Jesus' instructions were different from the content transmitted by the scribes and the Pharisaic rabbinism of His time.⁴⁰ A proper understanding of Jesus' teaching must be linked to His relationship with the disciples, which was one of transmission of character and not merely of the oral tradition of the law or of wise counsel. There seems to be a clear difference between a student of a rabbi and a disciple of Jesus.⁴¹ It is also clear that the act of making disciples was practiced by the rabbis, but Jesus' followers were to "make disciples of Jesus, not of themselves."⁴² As Leonhard Goppelt rightly observes, "Jesus accepts the designation of rabbi and acts, in principle, in the same way as the scribes. But He gives this action a new content."⁴³ There is, therefore, an evident redefinition of this term and its function by Jesus.

Christ Himself was the object of the content of His teaching (Eph 4:21; Col 2:7).⁴⁴ He not only expounded scriptural text after reading, in the Jewish style (Mark 1:21-22), but as *κύριος* He also sought to expound in His teaching "what was said in all the Scriptures about Himself" (Luke 24:27; cf. John 5:39).⁴⁵ His attempt was to present Himself as a model to be imitated, challenging His disciples to exceed the legalistic righteousness of rabbinic interpretation (Matt. 5:20). He presents Himself as a superior righteousness that results in salvation.

It is worth noting that Jesus' teachings also include the teachings of the Holy Spirit, the inner *διδάσκαλος*—"All that the Father has is mine. That is why I said that the Spirit will take from what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:15). As noted, Christ was the object of the content of His teaching (Eph. 4:21), and learning and instruction about Christ (v. 20, 22) has to do with changing "the old way of life" (v. 22), and once linked to Christ, the disciples "were instructed to put off the

40. Cf. Leonhard Goppelt, *Teologia do Novo Testamento*, 3ª ed., trad. Martin Dreher e Ilson Kayaser, (São Paulo, SP: Teológica, 2002), 181.

41. Cf. J. Oswald Sanders, *Discipulado Espiritual*, trad. Elma G. Barreto (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Juerp, 1995), 8, 25.

42. Keener, *Comentário Histórico-Cultural da Bíblia*, 140-141.

43. Goppelt, *Teologia do Novo Testamento*, 182.

44. Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1969), 126-138.

45. There is a good exposition of the way Jesus interpreted the Scriptures in Adolfo S. Suárez, *Como Jesus Lia a Bíblia: Uma Leitura Transformadora da Bíblia a Partir da Hermenêutica de Cristo* (Engenheiro Coelho, SP: Unaspress, 2018), 34-106.

old nature” (v. 22). This requires a renewal “in the spirit of the mind” (v. 22) of the disciple, a transformation “by the renewing of the mind” (Rom 12:2), where he or she must put on “the new nature, created according to God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:22-23). Since Christ taught through the Scriptures “the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27), the content of these instructions has relevance for the disciple today through the action of the “Spirit of truth” who “dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:17),⁴⁶ for He “will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I [Jesus] said to you” (v. 26, cf. Luke 12:12)⁴⁷ so that through this teaching and personal relationship there may be a transformation of the disciple’s mind and character into the image of Christ. Only the Spirit can clothe the disciple with a new nature. That is why he is “created after the likeness of God” (Eph 4:24)—or “the Holy Spirit of God” (v. 30).

It can be said, therefore, that being a disciple of Jesus is not limited to assimilating His teachings, but suggests the assimilation of His life and character, with the direct help of the Holy Spirit. Thus, *disciple* and *Christian* are equivalent terms.⁴⁸

Relationship Between Discipleship and Trinity

Christ’s gospel commission, “go and make *disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20), establishes the relationship between discipleship and the Trinity.⁴⁹ The two ideas are connected in the pericope and are

46. The word is the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17),

47. Paul points out that the believers in Ephesus “learned of Christ” and “heard about him and were taught by him, just as the *truth* is in Jesus” (Eph. 4:21), and the Spirit is responsible for guiding (instructing) the disciples “into all truth” (John 16:13). The reason is that, as God, the Spirit “knows the things of God” (1 Cor 2:11), and “we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God” (v. 12), “being taught by the Spirit” (v. 13). Only in this way is it possible for the disciple to have “the mind of Christ” (v. 16), for “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom 8:14). Thus, “the Spirit himself confirms with our spirit that we are children of God” and “joint heirs with Christ” (vv. 16-17).

48. Sanders, *Discipulado Espiritual*, 26.

49. This relationship was recently addressed by Don J. Payne, *Trinitarian Formation: A Theology of Discipleship in Light of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021); Stephen R. Woodrow, *Relational God: A Discipleship Journey into the Fellowship of the Trinity* (Dallas, TX: Independently Published, 2020).

indissolubly linked. As previously stated, in the unity of the tripersonality of God, with regard to the economy of the Trinity,⁵⁰ divine grace is dispensed to the human being and the process of forming a disciple depends on the transforming action of the three Persons of the Trinity. This is what causes the disciple to be united with the three Persons of the Trinity (Matt 28:19) through the actions of the Father⁵¹, the Son⁵², and the Holy Spirit.⁵³

Trinitarian Implications in Matthew 28:19-20

In Matt 28:19-20, Jesus' command has some Trinitarian implications. The first, "make disciples [μαθητεύσατε]" (v. 19), involves calling men and women to follow Jesus⁵⁴ so that they may be "one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28) and have a relationship of communion with the Triune God. Christ's disciples "are people for whom a life has been given as a ransom and who are committed to the service of the Master, who not only took the time to teach his disciples but who died for them and was raised again."⁵⁵ Since being a disciple of Jesus involves following Him by assimilating His character, one way to achieve this is by recognizing His authority in the disciple's life. Jesus' proposal to follow Him suggests a lifelong walk with Him in sanctification. No one else can offer this; it is exclusive to Jesus, because only He has the power to truly transform lives. The transformation that occurs in the disciple makes him similar to his master. Therefore, love for Christ, which transcends everything, and love for one's neighbor⁵⁶, belief

50. "Economic Trinity refers to the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in carrying out in time the plan known in eternity. . . it is the life of God *ad intra* being freely poured out *ad extra* in redemptive activity. . . The economy—the works of the triune God in world history—corresponds to the immanent being of God." Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Autoridade Bíblica Pós-reforma: Resgatando os Solas Segundo a Essência do Cristianismo Protestante Puro e Simples* (São Paulo, SP: Vida Nova, 2017), 83-84

51. John 3:16; Rom 5:8-10; 8:32.

52. John 12:32; Rom 5:11, 15-19; 2 Cor. 5:21.

53. John 16:7-8; Rom 5:1-2, 5; 8:26-27.

54. Rafael L. Monteiro, *Discipulado: Caminho de Renovação e Crescimento para a Igreja*, Séries Teses Doutoriais – Religião 4 (Engenheiro Coelho, SP: Unaspress, 2004), 25.

55. Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 746.

56. Luke 14:25-26; Matt 10:38; John 13:35.

in Him as the resurrected Lord⁵⁷, abiding in His word⁵⁸, personal sacrifice and willingness to suffer hardships to do what was taught by Jesus⁵⁹, complete submission to His will⁶⁰, renunciation of everything that hinders a more intimate relationship with Christ, unreserved surrender⁶¹ and production of fruit⁶² provided by the Holy Spirit⁶³, are characteristics that confirm the identity of a disciple of Jesus, indicating that there is a process of sanctification, possible only through the direct action of the Spirit of God. Therefore, making disciples goes beyond multiplying the number of followers of Jesus. It has to do with the idea of leading people to Christ, so that they may be profoundly transformed by Him, who is responsible for ensuring an intimate relationship with each Person of the Trinity. Secondly, the use of the Trinitarian formula is associated with the institution of baptism as a rite of initiation for the disciple.⁶⁴ It is important for Jesus that His follower be baptized, because submission to this rite confers on the disciple communion with the three divine Persons.⁶⁵ The person baptized in the name of the Son expresses his belief in Him and, consequently, his desire to be His disciple. Baptism has a profound relationship with the death and resurrection of Jesus and with the *death* to sin and new life of the disciple (Rom 6:1-11). However, baptism also has a profound relationship with the action of the Holy Spirit in the disciple himself. The name of the Spirit used in connection with baptism is significant because it is in baptism that the believer receives “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38), also identified as “the gift of God” (8:20). Thus, this part of the commission: “Baptizing them [βαπτίζοντες αὐτούς]” (Matt 28:19), in the name of the Trinity, presupposes conversion, a real change within that leads the disciple to the death of the old man (Rom 6:1-10) and renews his life in Christ,⁶⁶ through the action of the

57. John 20:8.

58. John 8:31-32; 15:7; cf. Luke 24:27.

59. Matt 10:38; 8:21-22; Luke 14:27.

60. Matt 21:6; 10:24; 26:17-19.

61. Luke 14:33; Gal 5:24.

62. John 15:8.

63. Gal 5:22-23.

64. A recent discussion of the relationship between baptism, discipleship, and the Trinity can be seen in Riaan Engelbrecht, *The Trinity and the Baptism: Foundational Stones of the Disciple* (Beltsville, MD: Riaan Engelbrecht, 2022).

65. Cf. Matt 28:19; Rom 5:10; 3:22-26; 1 John 1:3; 3:23-24.

66. “Adventists understand justification to be God’s forgiveness of the penalty for sins because Christ’s sacrifice paid that penalty and changes the sinner’s status

Holy Spirit in human consciousness producing repentance and a desire for real change,⁶⁷ necessary for discipleship.⁶⁸ The disciple's justification involves all three Persons. In the death of the Son, the Father presented Christ as an atoning sacrifice (Rom 3:25) to justify "him who has faith in Jesus" (v. 26; cf. 1:16-17; 4:25),⁶⁹ reconciling the believer with God⁷⁰ The giving of the Son, therefore, is an expression of the Father's love, which is "poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5).⁷¹

Christ, however, did not remain in death, but was resurrected.⁷²

from sinner to righteous because of Christ's righteousness that is imputed to the forgiven sinner when he or she believes this promise of God. This is Paul's thought in Romans 3:21–4:8, where he explicitly links together the concepts of justification, faith, forgiveness, and the imputation (or crediting) of Christ's righteousness. . . . justification is a divine declaration of forgiveness, graciously granted to repentant sinners on the basis of the imputation of Christ's righteousness." Denis Fortin, "Sanctification and Perfection Are the Work of a Lifetime", in *God's Character and the Last Generation*, ed. Jiri Moskala and John Packham (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2018), 106-107.

67. See John 16:7-9; 6:44; Acts 5:31; 2:38; Rom 2:4.

68. We cannot "repent without the Spirit of Christ awakening our conscience." Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1892), 26.

69. Faith (πίστις) in the sense of belief as personal trust in Someone—"he who believes in him" (Acts 10:43), or "those who believe in his name" (John 1:12). Cf. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Backer Academic, 1998), 952.

70. See Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:21-22. "Reconciliation is the process by which enmity is removed and fellowship restored." Ivan T. Blazen, "Salvation", in *Handbook of Seventh Day Adventists Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 12:323.

71. "In our present day, the Holy Spirit directs our minds to the Father's greatest gift of love, manifested in His Son." Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 76-77. "When love is implanted in the heart, and man is transformed into the image of Him who created him, the promise in the new concept becomes real: 'I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.'" White, *Steps to Christ*, 60.

72. A consistent historical-theological study, which demonstrates the resurrection of Christ as a historical event, can be found in N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, vol. 3, *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003). Pannenberg also admits that "The event of the resurrection of Jesus shares the uniqueness of his person and history." Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London, UK: T & T Clark, 2004), 3:579. On the possibility of speaking historically about the resurrection of Christ, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London, UK: T & T Clark, 2004), 2:285-293.

The resurrection of the Son had the participation of the Father⁷³ and the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴ The believer in Jesus (Rom 4:24-25) participates, through the glory of the Father, in this resurrection (Rom 6:4-5; 4:17). Put another way, through baptism the disciple identifies himself, by the power of God (Col 2:12), with the resurrection of the Son.⁷⁵ As Wolfhart Pannenberg rightly observed, the resurrection of Jesus involves His capacity as Mediator of God's lordship and Redeemer of humanity, and so "it is possible even now for those who are united to Jesus by baptism and faith to participate in the reality of the new life that has burst forth in Him. And this participation, belonging to the mystery of God's salvation in Christ and therefore 'sacramental,' is not destroyed by the death of the faithful. Therefore, they belong to Jesus Christ not only in life, but also in His death (Rom 14:8)."⁷⁶

Thirdly, another part of the commission is "teaching them [διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς]" (Matt 28:20), which implies, among other things, the relationship with Jesus—sanctification, subsequent to justification⁷⁷—, a walk with Him in newness of life (Rom 6:4). Far beyond mere intellectual understanding, the disciple "learns to walk in harmony with His [Christ's] will."⁷⁸ It is the teaching of "the full knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph 4:13; cf. 2 Cor 4:6; 2 Pet 1:3, 5-8) and of the things commanded by Christ, which requires an understanding of God's revealed will and continued growth (cf. 2 Pet 3:18; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess 4:1-8).⁷⁹ The apostle Paul assures (1 Thess 4:1-8) that in order to "please God" (v. 1), doing His will (v. 3) in a life of continual holiness (v. 1, 10), it is necessary for the disciple to assimilate the teachings of Jesus (v. 2-3, 9) and to allow himself to be led by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (v. 4-8). The continual action of the Spirit within the disciple causes his "inner being to be renewed day

73. Rom 6:4; Gal 1:1; 1 Pet 1:21; Acts 2:29-36; 10:14.

74. Rom 8:11.

75. Col 2:12-13; Rom 6:3-11; 8:9-16.

76. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:579.

77. Cf. Ivan T. Blazen, "Salvation," in *Handbook of Seventh Day Adventists Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 12:295-295; Sigfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (SDABD)*, rev. ed. (1979), s.v. "justification." Both justification and sanctification occur through the active work of the Holy Spirit within man. (1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:10, 29; 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 1:2-3)

78. Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. "justification."

79. Cf. "Teaching them" [Matt 28:20], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1980), 5:557.

by day” (2 Cor 4:16, cf. John 14:23; Gal 2:20).⁸⁰

In dying to sin, during the rite of baptism (Rom 6:3-4, 10), the disciple offers his members to God as instruments of righteousness, which Paul identifies as sanctification⁸¹—it is the being born “of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). Sanctification in the relational and moral sense,⁸² that is, the disciple belongs to God as His property (in baptism) and acts, throughout his life (after baptism), in a process of transformation provided by the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 3:18). The “resurrection” of the sinner is therefore related to a new life in Christ (Rom 6:4), which is the same as a new way of life in the Holy Spirit (Rom 7:6). Therefore, baptism should not be interpreted only as a sign of the believer’s union with the soteriological events of Christ’s death and resurrection by which complete redemption was obtained⁸³, but it also involves the “Christian’s commitment to Christ, accepting Him as his Lord”⁸⁴, as well as a moral transformation provided by the Spirit. “This new life, made available by the Spirit, is the foundation of ethical transformation, for the life generated by the Spirit must be lived under the guidance of the Spirit and must produce His fruits (Gal 5:22-25).”⁸⁵ The person baptized in the name of the Son expresses his belief in Him and his desire to be His disciple, entering “into a state of fidelity to Him and of communion with Him.”⁸⁶ It is from this communion,

80. See Agenilton M. Corrêa, “El rol del Espíritu Santo em el Processo de Discipulado em el Contexto del Conflicto Cómico”, in *Discipulado: Teoria y Práxis em el Siglo Veintiuno*, eds. Benjamín Rojas, Joel Iparraguirre y Ronald Aquije (Lima, Peru: Ediciones Theologika, Universidad Periana Unión, 2024), 141-162.

81. Rom 6:13, 18-19, 22; 7:23; 12:1-2; 2 Cor 4:11.

82. Sanctification in the moral (ethical) sense is linked to a process of behavioral actions that lasts a lifetime, while sanctification in the relational sense links the disciple to God, making him His property, and to His people. This distinction is presented by Ivan T. Blazen, “The Grace That Justifies and Sanctifies,” in *Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology*, eds. Martin F. Hanna, Darius W. Jankiewicz and John Reeve (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 309-310. See also Ivan T. Blazen, “Salvation”, in *Handbook of Seventh Day Adventists Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 12:284. Cf. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Backer Academic, 2013), 898-900; Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Sin, Salvation* (Minneapolis, MS: Bethany House Publishers, 2004), 237-238.

83. Blazen, “The Grace That Justifies and Sanctifies,” 311.

84. Blazen, “The Grace That Justifies and Sanctifies,” 311.

85. Blazen, “Salvation”, 12:283.

86. Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (New York, NY: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 306.

where the lordship of Christ prevails, that the fruit of sanctification emerges through the direct action of the Spirit.⁸⁷ This is a process in which the Trinity is deeply involved.⁸⁸ Sanctification is the work of God's grace in the repentant sinner, it is "the Holy Spirit's application in the believer's life of the finished work of Jesus Christ."⁸⁹ According to the apostle Paul (Titus 3:3-7), the goodness and love of God the Father were manifested in the salvation of the believer "through Jesus Christ our Savior" (v. 6) and "through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (v. 5). Thus it is the Father who leads the sinner to the Son that he may believe in Him⁹⁰, and the Holy Spirit produces conviction of sin, faith, and repentance in the sinful heart⁹¹ that he may believe in Jesus and His name⁹² and thus be justified by God and sanctified by the Spirit of grace.⁹³ Only after the Holy Spirit "awakens the conscience and draws it to the cross of Christ by the love of God can a person then respond with repentance and confession."⁹⁴ All this so that there may be a personal relationship between the new disciple and the Trinity (Matt 28:19-20), since the new convert "through baptism is led into the possession of the Great God and places himself under new sovereignty"⁹⁵, which communicates His special attributes and gifts to Him.

In the justification of the disciple, Christ plays a preponderant role, for He is the "active agent of reconciliation."⁹⁶ In legal union with

87. "Justification, in the full Pauline sense, presupposes the concept of sanctification as moral growth that is based on the transfer of the believer to the dominion of Christ." Blazen, "Salvation", 12:283.

88. Cf. 1 Pet 1:2-3.

89. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed., 898. Cf. White, *Steps to Christ*, 28.

90. John 6:37, 44-45.

91. John 16:8; Rom. 2:4; John 16:8; Acts 5:31-32; 19:2; Jam 4:5-6.

92. Acts 10:43; John 1:12.

93. Heb 10:29; 2 Cor. 9:14.

94. Fortin, "Growing Up in Christ", 63. "The Holy Spirit initiates the first steps of salvation by bringing a conviction of sin, then a response of repentance and faith—all of these are gifts of God's grace and in no way meritorious human works." Denis Fortin, "Sanctification and Perfection Are the Work of a Lifetime", in *God's Character and the Last Generation*, eds. Jiří Moskala and John Packham (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2018), 103. On repentance as a necessity for the disciple, see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, rev. ed., trans. R. H. Fuller (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1963), 45-47; Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989).

95. F. D. Bruner, *Matthew: The Churchbook Matthew 13-28* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 2:1099.

96. George Knight, "Atonement," in *Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology*,

Christ, the disciple is considered righteous by the Father.⁹⁷ However, the disciple, united to his Master through His internal saving work, “bears the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), which is ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (Col 1:27).”⁹⁸ This righteousness of Christ is credited to the repentant sinner. Justification occurs through the merits of His perfect obedience (Heb 5:7-9).⁹⁹ The Father declares the repentant disciple righteous, imputing to him His righteousness (Rom 4:22), thanks to the Son (acts of obedience, cf. Rom 5:18), for in Him the demands of God’s Law have been fulfilled.¹⁰⁰ In virtue of his depraved nature and sinful acts, man finds himself separated from God and is seen as an enemy of God (Rom 5:10) and a slave to sin (John 8:34). However, Christ’s victory over the world is the guarantee of “deliverance from the slavery of sin.”¹⁰¹ This deliverance is maintained through daily victories provided by the Holy Spirit. God’s righteousness is “imputed in justification and communicated in daily living.”¹⁰² Sanctification makes possible the restoration of man’s personal relationship with God (Rom 5:8-11), broken by sin (breaking the Law), and the Spirit leads him to put on Jesus Christ (Rom 13:12-14).

The sanctification of the disciple through the Holy Spirit has profound ethical (moral) implications. God the Father is the source of our ethical guidance (1 Thess 5:23), and Christ is the Trinitarian reference for doing good. All Christological ethics is grounded in

eds. Martin F. Hanna, Darius W. Jankiewicz and John Reeve (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 197.

97. Rom 5:10-11; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Col 1:27.

98. Gulley, *Creation, Christ, Salvation*, 588.

99. Cf. White, *Steps to Christ*, 62.

100. Law as an expression of God’s justice and reflection of His righteous character. Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. “justification.” Law as “an expression of His own nature”. White, *Steps to Christ*, 60. The apostle Paul declares that “the law became our guardian to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). “Christ’s life and teachings were completely in harmony with the moral law. He vindicated this law, established it, upheld it, and honored it by perfect obedience to its requirements.” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, rev. ed. (1976), s.v. “Law.”

101. Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine*, 3rd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 139.

102. Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 83. This righteousness of Christ is “produced by the Holy Spirit.” Thus “the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us.” White, *Steps to Christ*, 63.

Trinitarian ethics.¹⁰³ When Christ lived here on earth, He revealed that the basis of His righteous conduct was found in the Father (John 5:30). As a man, His moral acts were also guided by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁴ Doing what was right for Jesus was the same as fully obeying the Father's Moral Law, it was a work of character development.¹⁰⁵ that is why Christological ethics is at the same time an entirely Trinitarian ethics.¹⁰⁶ The man, in disharmony with God's Law, is a slave to sin.¹⁰⁷ Christ, the surety of the divine covenant, is the One who is in conformity with the law (Rom 10:4)¹⁰⁸ and through His perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice¹⁰⁹ He provides man with harmony with the Law ("of liberty," Jam 1:25) and true freedom.¹¹⁰ Thus, in Jesus, and only through Him, the justice of the law is fulfilled in the disciple.¹¹¹ Through the Spirit, the disciple stops being a slave to sin and becomes a slave of obedience

103. Roderick T. Leupp, *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology: Themes, Patterns and Explorations* (Downers Grover, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 147.

104. Cf. "And Jesus increased" [Luke 2:52], *SDABC*, 5:711-712.

105. Kyungho Song, *THST 831 Distinctive Doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Silang, Cavite, Philippines: Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2012), 36-37.

106. Leupp, *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, 153.

107. John 8:34; Rom. 7:23; 6:20. "Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey a holy law. We have no righteousness in ourselves with which to satisfy the demands of God's law." White, *Steps to Christ*, 62.

108. For a consistent explanation of Rom 10:4, of Christ as the *end* (purpose) of the Law, see Roberto Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective*, JSNT Supplement Series (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1985); Francis D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections: An Examination of the Major Objections Raised Against the Teachings of Seventh-Day Adventists* (Calhoun, GA: Teach Services, 2014), 81-84.

109. Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8-9.

110. See John 8:36; Rom 6:14. Jesus "became obedient, even unto death, that He might reveal His true humanity and present to the Father the perfect obedience which humanity owed Him." Raoul Dederen, "Christ: His Person and Work", in *Handbook of Seventh Day Adventists Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 12:170.

111. "The person who accepts Christ no longer struggles to *obtain* righteousness by observing the law. In view of their acceptance of Christ, the righteousness of the Savior is imputed to them [...] the righteousness of God can be obtained apart from the law," with Christ as the purpose of the law (Rom 10:4). Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 82. "When we are placed under the yoke of Christ, it is He who bears the heavy burden and makes obedience possible. He enables us to endeavor successfully what was previously impossible." Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine*, 3rd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 269.

to righteousness (Rom 6:16).¹¹² The Holy Spirit provides this freedom, for in liberation from sin the Spirit leads man to obedience to the moral Law¹¹³ because it determines the disciple's lifestyle.¹¹⁴ It is from Him that "we receive divine power for obedience to this law,"¹¹⁵ the written form of the moral code. Thus, "now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you reap leads to holiness" (Rom 6:22). It is therefore God the Father who completes the disciple "in every good work to do His will" and works "in you what is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb 13:21), and since the "moral law provides the standards of behavior required for the believer to live in harmony with God and with their neighbor"¹¹⁶, It is the Spirit who develops this improvement of character (sanctification).¹¹⁷

Obedience to the moral law is directly linked to the theme of the new covenant (Heb 8:6, 10),¹¹⁸ where the Holy Spirit is deeply involved. Mário Veloso correctly points to two determining elements in the nature of the covenant: (1) the time of its ratifying sacrifice and (2) the presence of the Spirit.¹¹⁹ In the first element, the ratifying sacrifice of the new covenant was carried out on Calvary, ratified by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Heb 9:15), while the second element is the covenant of the "Spirit", as He imprints the Law of God within the disciple through faith (Heb. 8:10; 9:14).¹²⁰ Thus, "obedience becomes a full reality in heart, mind, and actions . . . without falling into legalism [of the Israelites, cf. Exod 24:7-8; Rom 9:30-32; 10:30]."¹²¹ The law of the ten commandments is the expression of God's will,¹²² and God the Father wants the disciple to obey His will by faithfully fulfilling His

112. Righteousness is "correct procedure, the just living—a condition of the heart opposed to sinfulness or lawlessness" provided to man only by "the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 82.

113. See 2 Cor 3:17; Rom 8:1-4, 9-11; 6:17-18. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rm 8:2).

114. "Obedience—our service and covenant of love—is the sign of discipleship. . . But obedience is the fruit of faith." White, *Steps to Christ*, 60, 61.

115. Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 82.

116. Mario Veloso, "The Law of God", in *Handbook of Seventh Day Adventists Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 12:464.

117. Cf. White, *Steps to Christ*, 62, 24.

118. Veloso, "The Law of God", 12:482.

119. Veloso, "The Law of God", 12:482.

120. Veloso, "The Law of God", 12:482.

121. Veloso, "The Law of God", 12:482.

122. Veloso, "The Law of God", 12:464.

commandments.¹²³ Yet it is He who enables disciples “to do His will” (Heb 13:21; cf. John 1:12-13), as Christ did (John 5:30; 6:38; Ps 40:8), for it is He who works in us “what is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ” (v. 21). This enabling is affected by the Holy Spirit.¹²⁴ The Spirit worked the Father’s will in Jesus Christ, just as He works His will in the disciple (1 Cor 12:3). In light of these facts, as indicated in Matt 28:19-20, it can be seen that the three Persons of the Trinity are entirely involved in the transformation and identity of the disciple of Jesus Christ.

Trinity, Discipleship, Mission and Spiritual Gifts

Jesus’ command, “go and make disciples” (Matt 28:19), also implies that He gives special gifts to His followers,¹²⁵ because Jesus’ plan is to reach people from “all nations” (Matt 28:19). This establishes a relationship between the Trinity, discipleship, and spiritual gifts for the exercise of the mission given by Jesus. These gifts, promoted by Christ (Eph 4:8), will always be present, playing their relevant role in the missionary activity of the church, because the one who determines their operation is the Holy Spirit Himself. He is interested in Jesus Christ being proclaimed so that more disciples can be formed (John 15:26).¹²⁶

Trinity Action in the Mission

Mission is an outworking of the triune God in a missiological movement where He makes Himself known to save.¹²⁷ The theme

123. Keeping the law in the context of the covenant between God and His people, a covenantal relationship (1 Chr 16:14-17; Jm. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-10) “means adhering to Yahweh . . . to His instructions and His will . . . The law and the covenant reveal God’s will to His covenant people—His people.” Veloso, “The Law of God”, 12:480. Cf. Skip MacCarty, *In Granite or Ingrained? What the Old and New Testaments Reveal about the Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2007).

124. 1 Thess 4:3; Rom 2:18; Eph. 1:9; 5:17; Phil 2:19; Heb 10:36.

125. The apostle Paul makes this connection by expanding the concept of baptism to the union of the body of Christ (church) according to 1Co 12:13, and as members of the body of Christ (12:11) the Holy Spirit grants them different spiritual gifts (12:28, 31) for the mission of making new disciples.

126. Cf. George E. Rice, “Spiritual Gifts”, in *Handbook of Seventh Day Adventists Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herold Publishing Association, 2000), 12:617-618.

127. Cf. John R. W. Stott. “O Deus Vivo é um Deus Missionário”, in *Perspectivas no Movimento Cristão Mundial*, eds. Ralph D. Winter, Steven C. Hawthorne e Kevin D. Bradford, trad. Andrea Meznar (São Paulo, SP: Vida Nova, 2009), 33-40; Russell

of mission cannot be seen as separate from the theme of discipleship and the saving action of the Trinity in the world. Consequently, the mission of disciples must be shaped by the mission of God based on the understanding of the Trinity and God's self-communion and immanent relationship in the world.

The biblical concept of mission is basically associated with "sending" or "being sent."¹²⁸ In order to put the plan of redemption into practice, the first Person of the Trinity sends the second Person into the world¹²⁹ to save the sinner¹³⁰, and after the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, both send the third Person¹³¹, whose mission is the internal restoration of the sinner. Then, the Church is sent by Them into the world.

The mission of Jesus is the mission of the Trinity; the action of one Person signifies the coordinated action of the other Persons of the Godhead.¹³² The immanent manifestation of God with the salvation of the sinner has been characterized by missiologists as *missio Dei*.¹³³ It is the missionary nature of God that must also be identified as a holistic (integral) mission.¹³⁴ Through the great cosmic controversy, sin has become universal¹³⁵, and therefore, an equally universal divine action is needed to combat it. God's missionary vision is broad and inclusive, encompassing all peoples of planet Earth¹³⁶, and God the

P. Shedd, "Missão: A Prioridade de Deus", in *Perspectivas no Movimento Cristão Mundial*, eds. Ralph D. Winter, Steven C. Hawthorne e Kevin D. Bradford, trad. Andrea Meznar (São Paulo, SP: Vida Nova, 2009), 26-32.

128. Gordon R. Doss, *Introduction to Adventist Mission* (Silver Spring, MD: Institute of World Mission General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2018), 3.

129. John 5:37; 6:38-39; 8:29, 42; 14:24; 16:27; 1 John 4:14.

130. Matt 1:21; 1 Tim 1:15.

131. John 14:16, 26; 16:13; Rev 5:6.

132. Cf. John 14:10-11; 10:38.

133. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1991) 8, 389-395. This Latin expression *missio Dei* literally means "the sending of God", which communicates salvation to the world. Jirí Moskala "The Mission of God's People in the Old Testament," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, vol. 19, no. 1-2 (2008): 42; John A. McIntosh, "Missio Dei," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 631-632.

134. Not to be confused with one of the two main Latin American theologies known as Integral Mission Theology, which, like Liberation Theology, defends an evangelistic context of liberation from oppression and which is "marked by the historical problem of domination and dependence." Regina Fernandes, *Introduções às Teologias Latino-Americanas* (Campinas, SP: Saber Criativo, 2019), 19.

135. Cf. Ezek 28:17; Isa 14:13-14.

136. John 3:16; Mark 16:15.

Father, through His salvific plan, invites unbelievers, through the powerful operation of the third Person of the Trinity, to accept the loving lordship of Jesus Christ.

Disciple's Action in the Mission

Just as the Father sent the Son to share His forgiveness, so the incarnate Christ sends his disciples¹³⁷ to share the gospel in the formation of new disciples (Matt 28:19-20). Disciples are to be “fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). Jesus’ command to “make disciples” (Matt 28:19) implies the endowing of special gifts of the Spirit¹³⁸ for the exercise of the evangelistic activity of the Great Commission. Thus, the bestowal of spiritual gifts on disciples has its origin in the first and second Persons of the Trinity¹³⁹, and the third Person, the “agent of all spiritual activities.”¹⁴⁰ in the Church, he distributes “to each one individually as He wills” (1 Cor 12:11).

Spiritual Gifts and the Gift of the Spirit

In planning the salvation of all who accept Him, Jesus Christ also provided means for them to respond favorably to His invitation by giving them “the gift of God [τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ]” (Acts 8:20). The Holy Spirit is therefore the first gift (δωρεά) that the disciples receive. In the context of the Great Commission, the baptism of new converts is only possible through the action of the Spirit, whose main function is to transform the character of the disciple into the likeness of His Master Jesus. With this in mind, we turn our attention to the way in which the Spirit, as a special “gift,” distributes the main gifts with the aim of forming new disciples for Christ.

The Gift of Teaching in the Discipleship Process

The charismas in the community of believers in Christ come from the action of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:11), who is the “agent of all spiritual activities”¹⁴¹ in the Church. Making new disciples involves the gift of teaching in Matt. 28:20 (“teaching them”). This gift (διδάσκων,

137. John 15:16; 20:21-22.

138. Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28-31.

139. Eph 4:8, 11; 1 Thess 4:8.

140. Lucien Cerfaux, *Cristo na Teologia de Paulo* (Santo André, SP: Academia Cristã, 2015), 225.

141. Cerfaux, *Cristo na Teologia de Paulo*, 225.

Rom 12:7)¹⁴² is most notably given by the Spirit (1 Cor 12:28). He knows “the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10), “the mind of the Lord” (v. 16), and it is He who makes known to us “the things freely given to us by God” (v. 12). Therefore, the act of teaching the new convert, as found primarily in the Great Commission, is a Spirit-directed task. The activity of teaching is not a “merely intellectual enterprise.”¹⁴³ For this reason the apostle Paul argues that his teaching about the gospel was not transmitted to men “in words taught by *human wisdom* [ἄνθρωπίνης σοφίας], but taught by the Spirit” (v. 13. cf. 3:18-21).¹⁴⁴ The disciple-maker cannot base his teaching on a system of his own reason. Any system constructed outside of the Scriptures is irrational, no matter how coherent its argumentative construction may be. The Holy Spirit is the infallible revealer of divine truths that the new disciple needs to obtain for his knowledge and transformation (sanctification).

For the disciple-maker to transmit God’s message to men in fulfillment of the *go* (πορεύομαι) of Mat 28:19, experimental knowledge of the One who is to be proclaimed is necessary. Proclaiming Jesus requires of the one who does so an intimate knowledge of Him, of which the “natural man [ψυχικὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος]” (1 Cor 2:14) is not able to obtain, because it is discernible only with the help of God the Spirit (Rom 8:16). The proclamation of Jesus also demands from the disciple-maker a transformed life, a character similar to that of Jesus; otherwise, his preaching will not have a transforming effect. And only the Comforter is responsible for developing the character of Jesus within the nature of the disciple¹⁴⁵ teaching him “all things” (John 14:26)¹⁴⁶; aiming at obedience to the will of God (1 Cor 2:13). After all, Christ’s command to make disciples includes teaching and observing what He commanded (Matt 28:20).¹⁴⁷

142. Cf. Matt 28:19; 22:16; 9:35, 37; 26:1; Mark 4:34; Luke 8:9-11; 6:4; 10:39; 20:21; Acts 11:26; 1 Cor 2:13; 1 Tim 3:10, 14.

143. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 67.

144. The gift of *teaching* (διδάσκω, Rom. 12:7. cf. 1 Cor. 12:28) has, in a way, a relationship with the gifts of *wisdom* (σοφία, 1 Cor 12:8) and of *knowledge* (γνώσις, 1 Cor. 12:8). Cf. Col. 1:28. See Rice, “Spiritual Gifts”, 616-617.

145. John 14:16-17, 20-21, 23, 26.

146. Cf. John 15:26; Luke 12:12.

147. Klaus Wegenast, “διδάσκω”, in *DITNT*, 1:636.

The Gift of Love

The gift of Love (ἀγάπη, 1 Cor 13:8)¹⁴⁸ is seen in Scripture as having prominence in the life of the disciple.¹⁴⁹ Here two things emerge for consideration. First, God's love is both a gift and a definition of Himself (1 John 4:8). We can affirm that this divine attribute¹⁵⁰ constitutes His essence, "a transcript of His character."¹⁵¹ Love is therefore a very basic characterization of the triune God.¹⁵² Perfect (exercised between equals)¹⁵³ and infinite love is identified as belonging to the Trinitarian essence of God and has always been present among the members of the Trinity (1 John 4:8). The triune nature of the Godhead "makes 'one' the persons identified in the Bible as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."¹⁵⁴ Thus, in God's self-communion, love is also considered "the bond that unites, in the depths of the Divinity, each person with the others."¹⁵⁵ Secondly, as a spiritual gift, Scripture reveals that God's love "has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5; cf. Gal 4:6). The Comforter is responsible for developing Jesus' character of love within the disciple's nature.¹⁵⁶ Love is given to

148. "Agapē is a love that shows affection for something that is highly esteemed, considered very valuable." Franklin Ferreira e Alan Myatt, *Teologia Sistemática: Uma Análise Histórica, Bíblica e Apologética Para o Contexto Atual* (São Paulo, SP: Vida Nova, 2007), 213. It also means "sacrificial love", "altruistic". Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Sin, Salvation* (Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2004), 111.

149. The reason for this is that it is considered an eternal gift, for "whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease" (1 Cor. 13:8), whereas "love never fails" (v. 8).

150. I understand that God's attributes cannot be separated from His nature or essence. However, we can interpret—without falling into a dualism between God's being and His actions—His *transcendent love*, as that existing between the Persons of the Trinity, and His *immanent love*, as that manifested between His children. However, the two are correspondent, for God's attributes reflect His love. For a similar discussion, see Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *God As Trinity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), 51, 53, 60-62.

151. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Conflict of the Ages Series 1 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), 52. Cf. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed., 616.

152. Woodrow Whidden, Jerry A. Moon and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God's love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 114.

153. Bruce Matzger, *The Jewish Witnesses and Jesus* (Princeton, NJ: Theological Book Agency, 1953), 83.

154. Whidden, Moon and Reeve, *The Trinity*, 113.

155. Whidden, Moon and Reeve, *The Trinity*, 114.

156. John 14:16-17, 20-21, 23, 26; 1 John 3:24.

Jesus' followers in order to relate to God and to their neighbors. Jesus was very clear when He said that "by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). After all, the main characteristics that identify a disciple of Jesus are love for Christ, which transcends everything, and love for one's neighbor.¹⁵⁷ Love is a special gift, the bond that unites us to the Trinity, for it is "the essence of humanity's existence."¹⁵⁸ The disciple of Christ is baptized in the name of the three Persons of the Godhead (Matt 28:19); just as They are united among themselves, the disciple who allows himself to be led by the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18) will be united to the Trinity by the same bond of love that unites the three divine Persons.¹⁵⁹ The love of God is manifested in the disciple (1 John 4:9) as proceeding from God (v. 7) through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5; 1 John 4:13). If the disciple of Christ develops this love for his neighbor, he ensures the abiding of God in him (1 John 4:12, 16-17). Love causes the disciple to look at his neighbor as Jesus did: with tolerance and without discrimination. Love is also the fulfillment of God's law. The task of the Spirit is, in addition to manifesting the grace of Christ in the life of man (Jam 4:5-6),¹⁶⁰ to restore his character, and to do so He must influence him to obey the Law of God (with its double principle of love). God's permanence in the disciple has as its "criterion" obedience to the commandments (John 15:9-10), possible only through the action of the Holy Spirit in the disciple's heart (John 14:16-17, 21, 23). Thus, by receiving the gift of love, the disciple will be qualified to make new disciples.

The Motive for Mission

The disciple's motivation for mission—in obedience to "go and make *disciples* of all nations" (Matt 28:19)—must be found in the second Person of the Trinity, who has an identity with the human race and who can provide elements that motivate man's action in favor of others. Compassion, that "pious feeling of sympathy for the personal tragedy of another, accompanied by the desire to alleviate it",¹⁶¹ is the basis for

157. Luke 14:25-26; Matt. 10:38; 1 John 4:11.

158. Whidden, Moon and Reeve, *The Trinity*, 115.

159. See John 17:10, 20-21, 24, 26; 15:9. See John C. Peckham, *God with Us: An Introduction to Adventist Theology* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2023), 166-172, 185.

160. Cf. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 45-60.

161. *Dicio: Dicionário Online de Língua Portuguesa*, s.v. "compaixão," <https://www.dicio.com.br/compaixao/>.

passion for the mission. It accurately portrays the feelings and actions of Jesus. Agreeing with Arthur Schopenhauer, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche mistakenly stated, in his scathing criticism of the Leader of Christianity and His moral system, that compassion is the negation of life and is responsible for the multiplication of human suffering, and that “love is the state in which man sees things most decidedly as they are not.”¹⁶² However, it is exactly the opposite. The “altruistic spirit of Christ,”¹⁶³ marked by love, compassion and service to others (Matt 20:28), is the only thing capable of transforming man and leading him to a higher level. When the disciple becomes a disciple-maker through love, he reflects the action of the Trinity itself (cf. John 15:8-17), and replicating the actions of Jesus.

Since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are involved in saving humanity, the same must happen with Christ’s disciples. Love is the bond that unites the Trinity, it is the reason for His missionary action in favor of creatures; it must also be the vehicle that unites disciples (John 13:35), the reason for the cause of empathy and unity of feeling of tolerance among disciples of the everlasting gospel (Phil 2:1-4), as well as the motivating factor in carrying out the mission entrusted by Christ. If, as disciples, God’s mission does not become a passion, then the focus of discipleship is lost. The suffering of the lost sheep and eternal death as the certainty of their destiny must be enough for the disciple to maintain the passion for God’s mission, in obedience to Jesus’ commission to make new disciples.

Final Considerations

In Christian theology, the doctrine of God occupies a central position in the set of biblical doctrines that underpin the Christian faith, and the doctrine of the Trinity is the center of Christian theology. This doctrine is directly related to other biblical themes, including Christian discipleship. These two theological themes present considerable epistemological concordance and are presented as being intrinsically related. The New Testament passage in Matt 28:19-20, where Jesus’ gospel commission is found, demonstrates this relationship between the Trinity and discipleship.

The doctrine of God primarily encompasses the study of the nature,

162. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, trans. H. L. Mencken (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), 77, se also pages 47-49.

163. White, *Steps to Christ*, 77.

or ontological identity, of God, which is absolutely multipersonal. God is therefore a unity composed of coeternal and self-existent divine Persons identified in the NT as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This unity of tripersonality in God involves immanent economic actions on behalf of fallen human beings. The dynamic intratrinitarian relationship of the three Persons in perfect unity is extended to men, whose moral actions should seek to reflect the perfect character of the incarnate Son. This unity of the Trinity is manifested in the disciples when the Father and the Son dwell in them through the Holy Spirit (John 14:20, 23, 10-11). Divine economic action encompasses the incarnational identity of the Son (the “God with us,” Matt 1:23), His death and resurrection, and the activities of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the disciple.

According to the discipleship model instituted by Jesus, the disciple is identified as someone who, by faith, accepts Jesus as the *κύριος* of his life, and allows the Holy Spirit to transform them throughout their existence. More than reproducing the teachings of their Master, the disciple, through the power of the Spirit, reproduces His character as the Spirit acts within them.

This study allowed us to conclude that Jesus’ evangelical commission (Matt. 28:19-20) establishes the relationship between the Trinity and discipleship, and the relationship between the *διδάσκαλος* and His *μαθητής* is characterized by the bond of love, which is the ontological identity of the Trinity (1 John 4:8). The disciple is united with God through the actions of the three Persons of the Trinity. The Father is the One who gives the Son to die and guarantee the salvation of the disciples (John 3:16) and leads them to Jesus. They are drawn to their Master when they become aware of His identity and atoning sacrifice and, through the action of the Holy Spirit, they develop genuine faith in Jesus, accepting Him as their Lord, so that all who believe in the Son are justified by the Father. The Father also, together with the Son, sends the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the disciples to sanctify them. The Son (the center of discipleship) is the One who, through His acts of perfect obedience to God’s law, guarantees the merits used by the Father to impute to the disciple, declaring them righteous and reconciling them with God. He is the model to be imitated by the disciple. The Holy Spirit is the “gift of God” (Acts 8:20) sent by the Father and the Son to the heart of the disciple (John 14:16, 26) producing faith in Christ, repentance, the desire for change and legal union with Christ (justification), generating new life. This relationship with the Spirit is marked by the total change of the disciple, who, as

a result, offers his members to God as instruments of righteousness, and the Spirit continues His economic action through the process of sanctification (Rom 6:19). The Spirit unites the disciple to God by acting on his intellect and “subduing” his will, thus leading him to act (with loving ethical acts) according to God’s moral law. In this way, it is the Spirit who makes disciples “partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14) by causing them to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14). Thus, this brief study demonstrates, among other things, that the three Persons of the Trinity play a fundamental role in the formation of disciples for the kingdom of God according to Christ’s missionary command to make disciples of all nations.

Thus, only when the disciple has the action of the Trinity in his life will he be able to fulfill the commission given by Jesus to make new disciples. Connected to Christ and the other Persons of the Trinity, the disciple will inevitably be connected to their neighbor in a bond of love. The Spirit will endow him with charismatic missionary abilities to fulfill the commission established by the Son. Empowered with special gifts by the Spirit, the disciple will be able to teach about the life, work and character of Jesus Christ. The disciple will then be able to put into practice Jesus’ command: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). Consequently, the Spirit uses the disciples’ ministry of discipleship to form other new disciples.

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Recibido: 26 de Febrero de 2025

Aceptado: 23 de mayo de 2025