



The Trinity and cyber culture: Crafting theologically responsible analogies in the digital age



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This article examines the use of cyber culture as a contemporary context for Trinitarian analogy within the discipline of systematic theology. Grounded in Scripture, the Nicene Creed, and classical Trinitarian doctrine, the study investigates whether and under what conditions phenomena such as algorithmic governance, digital identity, and online community may function as illustrative analogies without compromising doctrinal integrity. By employing a rule-governed dogmatic methodology, the article critically evaluates these analogies according to explicit criteria: fidelity to biblical revelation, consistency with Nicene orthodoxy, adherence to the inseparability of divine operations [*opera ad extra indivisa sunt*], and disciplined application of the *via negationis*. The analysis demonstrates that cyber-cultural analogies cannot function as ontological models or theological sources, but may serve a limited, contrastive, and pedagogical role when subordinated to the *regula fidei*. In doing so, the article contributes to contemporary debates on theological contextualisation by clarifying a responsible framework for engaging digital culture in Trinitarian theology.

Contribution: This article advances systematic and digital theology by proposing four criteria for Trinitarian analogies, distinguishing illustrative from ontological analogies, and refining Trinitarian appropriation to prevent reductionist readings, offering a concise, methodologically responsible model for contextualising doctrine in the digital age.

Keywords: Trinity; cyber culture; theological analogy; digital theology; contextual theology.

Introduction

The doctrine of the Trinity occupies a central and non-negotiable position within Christian theology. It articulates the Church's confession that the one God exists eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and thus provides the fundamental grammar through which revelation, salvation, and divine action are understood. Trinitarian doctrine does not function as one theme among others, but as the rule that governs Christian theological discourse as a whole. As Lewis Ayres emphasises, Trinitarian faith is learned and inhabited within the Church's worship and theological practice, rather than abstracted as a detachable conceptual theory (Ayres 2011).

Beyond its formal doctrinal articulation, the Trinity constitutes the very identity of the Christian faith. Christianity is not defined merely by belief in a monotheistic deity, but by confession of the triune God revealed in Scripture and encountered in the liturgical life of the Church. From the patristic period onward, Trinitarian confession distinguished Christian faith from both pagan polytheism and unitarian monotheism. Nevertheless, in many contemporary contexts, the Trinity is perceived as marginal to daily faith and practice, often regarded as speculative or impractical. As Colin Gunton observes, this marginalisation reflects a failure to integrate Trinitarian doctrine into the lived and conceptual framework of Christian belief rather than a deficiency in the doctrine itself (Gunton 2003:31).

A persistent challenge in Trinitarian theology concerns the limits of human language when speaking of God. The doctrine addresses the divine life, which transcends finite categories of thought and expression. Concepts such as person, relation, and unity therefore function analogically rather than univocally, and must be disciplined by revelation. Thomas F. Torrance underscores that theological language is genuinely referential while remaining intrinsically inadequate to exhaust the mystery of God. Trinitarian doctrine thus resists both rational reduction and speculative excess, holding together divine self-disclosure and irreducible mystery (Holmes 2012; Torrance 2006:1).

Within this doctrinal horizon, analogy has long played a significant but contested role in Trinitarian reflection. Analogies drawn from psychological, social, or natural realities have been

used to illuminate aspects of Trinitarian unity and distinction. Yet contemporary Trinitarian scholarship has raised sustained cautions against the uncritical use of analogy. Karen Kilby has demonstrated that many modern approaches risk projecting human relational ideals onto God, thereby transforming analogy into a constructive model rather than a disciplined theological aid. Such a projection threatens to obscure the doctrinal grammar of the Trinity rather than clarify it (Kilby 2000). As Stephen Holmes likewise argues, Trinitarian doctrine resists being treated as an explanatory framework for other realities, including cultural or social systems (Holmes 2012).

These methodological concerns become especially acute in the context of cyber culture. Digital technologies have introduced new forms of mediation, power, and relationality that shape contemporary imagination. Rather than referring generically to 'digital culture', this study focuses on two specific phenomena: Algorithmic governance, through which recommendation systems shape perception, agency, and visibility, and digitally mediated community formation, characterised by networked, disembodied, and often fragmented modes of belonging. As Zhang (Zhang 2025: 25–41) observes, digitally mediated relationships are increasingly structured by information flows rather than embodied presence, with significant implications for religious belief and practice. At the same time, such phenomena operate within technological logics that risk promoting determinism and impersonal power if they are uncritically appropriated (Skinner 2019:25).

Against this background, this article undertakes a systematic-dogmatic investigation into the analogical use of cyber-cultural phenomena in Trinitarian theology. Its primary audience is scholars of systematic and Trinitarian theology rather than educators or pastoral practitioners. The aim is not pedagogical simplification or the construction of new Trinitarian models, but a critical evaluation of analogy itself: under what conditions, and with what limits, may analogies drawn from algorithmic systems and digital communities function as illustrative tools without compromising Nicene orthodoxy? Drawing on contemporary Trinitarian scholarship while remaining attentive to the tradition of doctrinal continuity emphasised by Oden and Kärkkäinen, this study seeks to contribute to ongoing debates on theological contextualisation by clarifying how cultural analogies may be employed responsibly under the normative authority of Scripture, creed, and the *regula fidei* (Kärkkäinen 2007:110; Oden 2009:93).

Research methods and design

This article adopts a conceptual systematic–theological methodology situated within the retrieval of Nicene Trinitarian theology. It is neither an empirical qualitative study nor an interdisciplinary cultural analysis, but a dogmatic investigation of analogical reasoning in Trinitarian discourse. The study explicitly rejects the vague designation 'qualitative descriptive–theological', replacing it with a

rule-governed doctrinal approach in which theological claims are normed by Scripture, the Nicene Creed, and classical Trinitarian principles. Key biblical texts central to Trinitarian confession – such as the baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:16–17), the Johannine Logos and Spirit discourse (Jn 1; Jn 14–16), the baptismal formula (Mt 28:19), and the Pauline benediction (2 Cor 13:13) – function as normative reference points that establish the grammar of Trinitarian language. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed serves as a doctrinal test, particularly with regard to unity of essence, distinction of persons, and the inseparability of divine operations.

Analytically, the study proceeds by: (1) clarifying core Trinitarian doctrines on the basis of Scripture and Nicene theology; (2) identifying specific cyber-cultural phenomena – namely algorithmic governance and digitally mediated community formation – as contextual sites for analogical reflection; and (3) proposing analogical correspondences strictly as illustrative hypotheses, not ontological models. Each proposed analogy is then evaluated according to explicit indicators of doctrinal coherence: fidelity to biblical revelation, consistency with Nicene orthodoxy, respect for inseparable operations, preservation of personal distinction, and resistance to technomorphic projection. Where an analogy tends towards determinism, impersonality, or functional reduction – such as construing divine action in terms of technological 'power' or system control – these elements are methodologically rejected through *via negationis*. In this way, cyber-cultural analogies are critically delimited and subordinated to the *regula fidei*, ensuring that cultural imagination serves, rather than reshapes, Trinitarian doctrine.

Theological framework analogy and Trinitarian doctrine

Theological language about God necessarily operates within the limits of human cognition and expression, because God transcends all created categories of being and understanding. For this reason, Christian theology has consistently resisted both univocal and purely equivocal modes of speech. Univocal language risks collapsing divine transcendence into creaturely categories, while equivocal language renders revelation unintelligible and deprives theology of cognitive content. Analogy therefore functions as a necessary mode of theological discourse, enabling meaningful speech about God while preserving the ontological distinction between Creator and creation (Berkhof 1993:42–44; Collins 2008:9).

Within systematic theology, analogy is not merely a pedagogical aid but a disciplined epistemological posture governed by revelation and confession. As early Trinitarian theology demonstrates, doctrinal language emerged from the Church's effort to articulate faithfully what had been revealed in Scripture while resisting conceptual reduction and speculative excess (eds. Beeley & Weedman 2018:3–5). Analogy thus preserves both divine mystery and genuine theological knowledge, functioning under doctrinal constraint rather than metaphysical freedom.

This disciplined use of analogy is closely related to the classical debate between *analogia entis* and *analogia fidei*. The *analogia entis* affirms a limited continuity between God and creation grounded in God's creative act, allowing created realities to reflect divine attributes analogically (Geisler 2002:333). By contrast, the *analogia fidei* insists that knowledge of God arises from God's self-revelation and is apprehended through faith rather than inferred from ontology. Contemporary evangelical and Nicene-oriented Trinitarian theology has increasingly emphasised the *analogia fidei* in order to safeguard the primacy of Scripture, Christ, and the Church's confession as the norm of theological knowledge (Bird 2013:155; Torrance 2006:8).

This debate exposes a persistent methodological tension within Trinitarian theology. While some continuity between God and creation is unavoidable, grounding Trinitarian doctrine primarily in metaphysical reasoning risks displacing theology from its evangelical and doxological centre. Torrance (2006:8–10) argues that Trinitarian doctrine arises from God's self-disclosure in salvation history rather than from abstract speculation about being. Theology, therefore, must remain accountable to revelation when employing analogies drawn from human experience or cultural phenomena.

The responsible use of analogy is further shaped by classical apophatic and kataphatic principles, particularly the *via negationis* and the *via eminentiae*. The *via negationis* reminds theologians that every affirmative statement about God must deny the creaturely limitations associated with that predicate. When God is described as powerful, relational, or personal, such terms must be understood as transcending all finite modes of power, relation, and personality (Dister 2004:67). The *via eminentiae* complements this by affirming that whatever perfections are found in creation exist in God in an infinitely superior and unsurpassable manner (Oden 2009:253). Together, these principles guard against naïve anthropomorphism and theological projection.

Failure to observe such doctrinal discipline has often resulted in distortion, particularly in popular or schematic Trinitarian analogies. Simplistic illustrations frequently collapse the distinction between the divine persons or divide the unity of the divine essence by privileging either unity or plurality in isolation. For this reason, theological analogies must be tested against the full witness of Scripture and the ecumenical creeds of the Church (ed. Horton 2007:161). Trinitarian theology thus demands doctrinal accountability rather than pedagogical convenience or cultural immediacy.

At the heart of Trinitarian doctrine lies the confession that God is one in essence and three in distinct persons. This confession did not emerge from philosophical abstraction but from sustained exegetical engagement with the biblical witness to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Scripture presents divine unity and plurality without resolving the tension conceptually, thereby compelling the Church to confess mystery rather than eliminate it. As Archer (2020:35–36)

observes, such doctrinal tensions are not contradictions to be solved but mysteries to be faithfully articulated. The Trinity must therefore be confessed as a doctrine grounded in revelation rather than speculative reasoning (Evan 2008:43–44).

From a redemptive-historical perspective, Trinitarian relations are disclosed within God's saving action towards humanity. Father, Son, and Spirit are revealed as acting inseparably yet distinctly in the economy of salvation. Fesko (2016:12–14) emphasises that the intra-Trinitarian relations are known through God's covenantal self-giving rather than abstract metaphysical speculation. This soteriological grounding cautions against analogies that detach Trinitarian reflection from salvation history and relocate it within purely conceptual or cultural frameworks.

The mystery of the Trinity is further articulated through the concept of *perichoresis*, which describes the mutual indwelling and interpenetration of the divine persons. Perichoresis affirms that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in perfect communion without confusion, division, or mediation. As Emery (2009:105) explains, this concept safeguards both divine unity and personal distinction by emphasising communion rather than functional coordination. Augustine's *De Trinitate* remains formative in this regard, demonstrating how analogy may be employed without claiming conceptual mastery over divine mystery (Wisse 2011:89–90).

Contemporary Trinitarian theology continues to wrestle with how this mystery may be articulated within changing cultural contexts. Relational and social models of the Trinity have highlighted important dimensions of communion and love (Boff 1988:23), yet they have also drawn criticism for projecting creaturely social structures onto the divine life. Kärkkäinen (2007:110) rightly notes that no single model can exhaust the richness of Trinitarian doctrine without distortion. Analogy therefore remains both necessary and perilous, requiring theological humility and doctrinal vigilance. This disciplined use of analogy provides the theological foundation for engaging contemporary cultural phenomena, including digital and cyber contexts, without allowing cultural frameworks to redefine or domesticate the confession of the triune God (McDermott & Netland 2014:52–53).

Cyber culture as a context for theological analogy

Cyber culture refers not merely to the widespread use of digital technologies but to a structured cultural environment constituted by data-driven systems that shape perception, agency, and social relations. Contemporary digital culture is marked by processes of datafication, in which human actions, interactions, and identities are continuously translated into quantifiable data for purposes of prediction, optimisation, and control. Meaning is increasingly mediated by platforms, algorithms, and networked infrastructures rather than by direct, embodied interpersonal encounter. As Skinner observes, digital technology no longer functions as an

external instrument but as a formative ecology that reconfigures how human beings understand themselves and the world they inhabit (Skinner 2019:21–23). From a theological perspective, cyber culture must therefore be approached as a cultural system with its own internal logic, values, and power relations that implicitly shape contemporary imagination.

One of the defining dynamics of cyber culture is platform capitalism, in which digital platforms mediate social interaction while simultaneously extracting economic value from user data. Visibility, participation, and influence are governed by proprietary algorithms that determine what is amplified, obscured, or excluded. This form of algorithmic governance introduces an asymmetry of power that is largely opaque to users, operating not through coercion but through personalisation, predictive modelling, and automated decision-making. Such dynamics generate implicit analogical pressures, as technological systems come to be perceived as quasi-omniscient mechanisms capable of ordering reality, managing risk, and promising efficiency and security. Theologically, however, these analogies require critical restraint. Technological power is impersonal, contingent, and economically motivated, whereas divine sovereignty is personal, relational, and covenantal, disclosed concretely in God's saving action rather than abstract systemic control (Gunton 2003:31–33; Torrance 2006:8–10).

Cyber culture also reshapes human identity through processes of digital abstraction and representation. In online environments, persons are encountered primarily as profiles, data traces, images, and linguistic performances rather than as embodied subjects. Chandra and Dwiraharjo observe that this shift subtly detaches Christian self-understanding from embodied relationality, encouraging a view of identity that is fluid, modular, and performative (Chandra & Dwiraharjo 2022:115–117). While such flexibility enables experimentation and self-expression, it also risks fragmentation of the self and erosion of stable moral and relational commitments. From a Trinitarian perspective, this raises critical questions about personhood and the *imago Dei*. As Ayres emphasises, Christian identity is not constructed through self-projection but formed through participation in the revealed life of Father, Son, and Spirit within the ecclesial practices of prayer, confession, and discipleship (Ayres 2011:6–9; Putrawan & Tandana 2025:34–50). Cyber culture thus provides an ambiguous context for analogical reflection on relational identity, one that must remain normed by revelation rather than cultural projection.

The formation of community within cyber culture further illustrates both the possibilities and limits of digital mediation. Online communities are constituted through shared narratives, affective engagement, and symbolic participation rather than physical co-presence. Blythe and Wolpert acknowledge that digital environments can facilitate genuine spiritual practices and forms of communal belonging, particularly under conditions of geographical or social constraint (Blythe & Wolpert 2004:7–8). Nevertheless,

such communities remain dependent on technological infrastructures and are vulnerable to fragmentation, commodification, and surveillance. This tension invites theological reflection on communion while cautioning against collapsing ecclesial *koinonia* or Trinitarian *perichoresis* into mere network connectivity. As Kilby warns, social or relational models of the Trinity easily become projections of human ideals unless rigorously disciplined by doctrinal criteria (Holmes 2012:142–145; Kilby 2000:434–436).

Cyber culture also normalises regimes of digital surveillance, in which continuous monitoring of behaviour, preferences, and relationships becomes a condition of participation. Such environments reshape moral agency by encouraging self-regulation and performative conformity. Theologically, this risks distorting concepts such as knowledge, presence, and accountability if technological surveillance is unconsciously mapped onto divine attributes. Divine knowledge, by contrast, is not a form of detached observation but a mode of relational presence grounded in God's covenantal faithfulness (Oden 2009:93; Sokolowski 2006:63–65). As Putrawan cautions, when theological imagination is absorbed into digital logic, faith risks being reduced to informational exchange rather than lived communion with the living God (Putrawan & Ayuk 2025a:58–77).

For these reasons, cyber culture cannot function as a theological norm or source of revelation. Rather, it must be understood as a contextual medium that shapes contemporary perception and discourse. As Fontala et al. argue, digital environments increasingly structure how meaning is produced and interpreted, rendering them unavoidable contexts for intellectual engagement (Fontala et al. 2025:3). Theology that ignores this reality risks communicative irrelevance, while theology that uncritically adopts digital metaphors risks doctrinal distortion. Following Ayres, cyber culture may therefore serve only a secondary and pedagogical function, redirecting attention towards the grammar of faith already established by Scripture and the *regula fidei*, rather than generating independent Trinitarian insight (Ayres 2011:10–12). Within these methodological boundaries, cyber culture provides the cultural horizon for examining contemporary Trinitarian analogies, which will be critically evaluated in the following section.

The Trinity in cyber culture: Analogical interpretation

The Father: Power and creative authority in digital technology

Contemporary cyber culture frequently attributes creative and ordering power to technological systems, particularly algorithms and digital infrastructures that structure access, visibility, and interaction. Such systems are often perceived as quasi-transcendent forces capable of shaping reality, managing complexity, and providing security. This cultural imagination creates analogical pressure when theological language about divine creation is articulated in digital contexts (Skinner 2019:21–23).

However, Trinitarian doctrine requires careful qualification of any such analogy. In Nicene theology, creation is the inseparable work of the triune God [*opera ad extra indivisa sunt*], not the exclusive activity of the Father alone (Emery 2009:67–70; Torrance 2006:94–97). Classical theology permits the *appropriation* of creation to the Father only in a pedagogical sense, insofar as the Father is confessed as the *principium* or source of divine life, not as an isolated agent (Ayres 2011: 8–10; Holmes 2012:141–144).

This distinction is crucial in a technological context. Algorithmic power is impersonal, opaque, and economically driven, operating through control and prediction rather than relational intention. By contrast, divine creatorship is personal, relational, and oriented towards communion. As Kilby warns, projecting creaturely power structures onto God risks collapsing theological language into cultural metaphors (Kilby 2000:438–440). Therefore, technological power can function only as a negative or contrastive analogy, clarifying what divine creatorship is not, rather than providing a positive model of the Father as Creator.

The Son: Identity formation and transformation in cyberspace

Cyber culture reshapes identity through abstraction and representation. In digital environments, persons are encountered primarily as data, images, and performative narratives rather than as embodied subjects. This tendency encourages a view of identity as fluid, editable, and detachable from bodily existence (Chandra & Dwiraharjo 2022:115–117). Earlier interpretations risked aligning this phenomenon too closely with Christological categories of identity restoration.

A more theologically precise analogy must instead be grounded in the doctrine of incarnation. Christology is centred not on identity formation but on the confession that the eternal Word became flesh (*sarx*), assuming embodied, historical, and vulnerable human existence (Jn 1:14; Torrance 2006:149–152). As Ayres emphasises, the incarnation establishes embodiment as constitutive of salvation rather than incidental to it (Ayres 2011:11–13).

From this perspective, digital identity functions primarily as a critical contrast. Virtual identities lack bodily continuity, suffering, and accountability, whereas the Son's redemptive work unfolds through embodied obedience, suffering, death, and resurrection (Holmes 2012:175–178). The disembodied tendencies of cyber culture thus expose the theological insufficiency of digital representations when measured against the incarnational grammar of Christian faith (Ryrie 1999:249–251).

The Holy Spirit: Community and communion in digital space

Digitally mediated communities are often described in terms of connection, participation, and shared experience. Online platforms can facilitate communication and even spiritual

interaction, particularly in contexts of geographic limitation (Blythe & Wolpert 2004:10–12; Putrawan & Ayuk 2025:57–76). Yet equating such connectivity with pneumatological communion risks reducing the Holy Spirit to a functional mediator of relationships.

In classical Trinitarian theology, the Spirit is confessed as the giver of life, the agent of sanctification, and the one who constitutes the Church through Word and sacrament (Berkhof 1993:95–98; Kärkkäinen 2007:110–113). The Latin tradition's description of the Spirit as the *vinculum caritatis* does not refer to relational connectivity as such, but to the personal and sanctifying bond that unites believers to Christ in embodied practices of faith (Emery 2009:131–134).

Here, the limitations of digital community become theologically illuminating. Online networks are structurally prone to fragmentation, polarisation, and algorithmic manipulation, lacking the embodied accountability and sacramental depth of ecclesial koinonia (Holmes 2012:203–205; Kilby 2000:441–443). These deficiencies underscore the categorical difference between technological networks and Spirit-formed communion. Cyber culture therefore serves not as a positive analogue of pneumatology but as a context that clarifies, by contrast, the irreducibility of the Spirit's work in forming the Church.

Critical reflection on the use of cyber culture analogy

The use of cyber culture as an analogical framework for Trinitarian theology offers contextual and pedagogical relevance, yet it also entails serious doctrinal risks that must be critically examined. Analogical reasoning, as Thiselton emphasises, does not provide a direct description of divine reality but guides theological imagination in a disciplined and provisional manner (Thiselton 2015:124). Without explicit theological controls, analogies drawn from digital culture risk projecting technological logic onto God rather than illuminating the mystery of the Trinity as confessed by the Church.

This risk becomes evident in the analogy between technological power and divine creatorship. In cyber culture, power is exercised through algorithmic governance, infrastructural control, and opaque systems that regulate visibility and access. When such power is analogically associated with the Father as Creator, the *via negationis* must explicitly deny that divine power operates as impersonal control, automation, or system management. According to the Nicene confession, the Father is confessed as 'Maker of heaven and earth', yet this creative act is inseparable from the Son and the Spirit [*opera ad extra indivisa sunt*] and is grounded in personal, relational, and loving self-giving rather than technological domination (Gunton 2003:31; Torrance 2006:8–9). Tested against this creedal norm, the analogy of technological power fails positively and functions only contrastively: It clarifies what divine creatorship is not.

A similar critical function appears in the analogy between digital identity and the Son. Digital identity is marked by abstraction, disembodiment, and performativity, where the self is mediated through data, images, and linguistic representation (Skinner 2019:21–23). When this phenomenon is placed in relation to Christology, the decisive doctrinal test is the confession that ‘the Word became flesh’ (Jn 1:14), as articulated in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The incarnation affirms embodiment, historical particularity, suffering, and resurrection as constitutive of salvation (Letham 2011:103–105). Measured against this confession, digital identity cannot function as a positive Christological analogy. Instead, it exposes by negation the theological deficit of disembodied identity and underscores the irreducibility of embodiment in Christological doctrine (Ayes 2011:6–8). The result of this test is not rejection of the analogy altogether, but its reclassification as a critical mirror rather than a constructive model.

The analogy between online community and the work of the Holy Spirit requires even greater theological restraint. Digital communities are constituted through platforms and networks characterised by fragmentation, algorithmic polarisation, and the absence of embodied accountability (Chandra & Dwiraharjo 2022:115–117). When such communities are analogically related to the Spirit as the bond of love [*vinculum caritatis*], the *via negationis* must deny any equivalence between network connectivity and ecclesial *koinonia*. According to the Nicene confession, the Spirit is ‘the Lord and giver of life’, who constitutes the Church through Word and sacrament, sanctifies believers, and sustains unity across time and space (Kärkkäinen 2007:110; Williams 1992:19–20). Evaluated against this pneumatological framework, online communities fail to account for sacramentality, embodied discipline, and enduring communion. Their inadequacy, however, serves a theological purpose by sharpening the distinction between platform-based networks and Spirit-formed communion (Kilby 2000:438–440).

These concrete evaluations demonstrate that cyber culture analogies cannot function as theological norms or sources of doctrine. Scripture and the faith of the Church operate not merely as background assumptions but as active instruments of critique. The Nicene Creed, in particular, functions as a doctrinal ‘test’ that exposes where analogies illuminate by contrast and where they must be decisively negated (Sokolowski 2006:47–49). As Berkhof argues, doctrine must arise from divine self-revelation rather than cultural imagination, regardless of how compelling contemporary metaphors may appear (Berkhof 1993:29).

If properly constrained, cyber culture analogies do not domesticate the mystery of the Trinity but instead reveal, through their limits, the radical otherness of the triune God. When subordinated to Scripture, creed, and the *regula fidei*, such analogies can serve a critical and pedagogical function, leading theology not towards technological fascination but

towards renewed doctrinal clarity and doxological humility (McDermott & Netland 2014:52–53).

Conclusion

This study has argued that cyber culture can serve as a limited and disciplined analogical context for Trinitarian theology, provided that such analogies are rigorously controlled by Scripture, the *regula fidei*, and classical Trinitarian doctrine. Rather than proposing cyber culture as a new theological source, the article has demonstrated how contemporary digital phenomena may function as pedagogical and heuristic tools that illuminate Trinitarian faith precisely by exposing their own limitations.

The primary contribution of this article lies in the articulation of four criteria for evaluating theological analogies drawn from cyber culture: (1) coherence with biblical revelation; (2) consistency with Nicene Trinitarian doctrine; (3) conformity to the principle of *opera ad extra indivisa sunt*; and (4) critical application of the *via negationis* to prevent technological projection onto God. These criteria provide a concrete evaluative framework for distinguishing responsible analogical use from doctrinal distortion.

The second contribution is the clarification between illustrative analogies and ontological claims. The analysis shows that cyber analogies – such as technological power, digital identity, and online community – must remain illustrative and contrastive rather than ontological. When treated ontologically, such analogies risk reducing divine action to impersonal systems, disembodied identity, or network connectivity. When treated illustratively and critically, however, they can sharpen theological understanding by negation and differentiation.

In the third contribution, the article offers a refined model of Trinitarian appropriation that explicitly safeguards inseparable divine operations. By clarifying that any association of particular digital phenomena with the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit operates within a non-exclusive framework of appropriation, the study avoids technocratic, anthropological, and functionalist reductions of Trinitarian persons.

In sum, this article contributes not merely a contextual application of Trinitarian doctrine, but a methodologically accountable model for engaging contemporary culture theologically. It demonstrates that cyber culture, when critically subordinated to revelation and doctrine, can function as a testing ground that clarifies – not redefines – the confession of the triune God in a digital age.

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CRedit authorship contribution

Susanto Dwiraharjo: Conceptualisation, Funding acquisition, Resources, Writing – original draft. Bobby Kurnia Putrawan: Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. All authors reviewed the article, contributed to the discussion of results, approved the final version for submission and publication, and take responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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Data availability

The authors declare that all data that support this research article and findings are available in the article and its references.

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