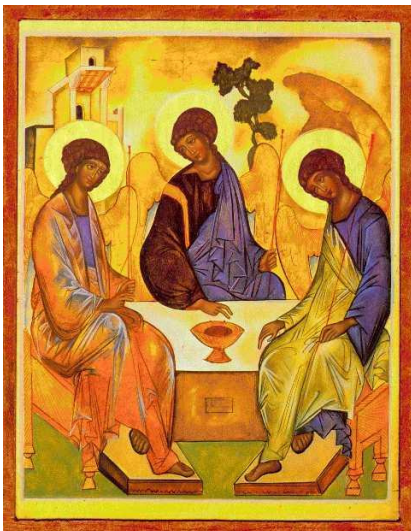
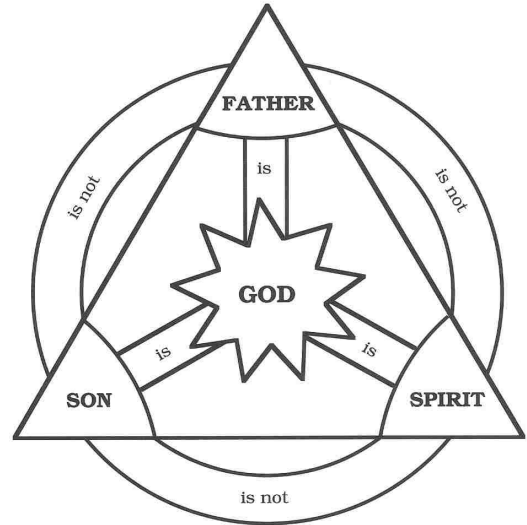


2. The Trinity

Introduction

Definition: ¹God is undivided unity expressed in the threefold and equal nature of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Being so far beyond our normal human experience, it is and will likely ever be a great and incomprehensible mystery.

What is the point of studying the Scriptures, particularly concerning as deep a subject as the Trinity? (1 Corinthians 8:1-3)



²What do the following passages teach us concerning Elohim?
Deuteronomy 6:4

Isaiah 45:1

Galatians 3:20

James 2:19

Another mistake is to so emphasize the unity of the Godhead that that we begin teaching Unitarianism. Unitarianism ends up contradicting the clear teaching of the Scriptures by saying that

only the Father is God and that Christ and the Holy Spirit are lesser and servile beings. That is a complete heresy. What light do the following passages shed on the matter?

John 10:30

John 14:8-9

John 14:16

Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22

¹ Idea for this image comes originally from W. J. and G. Audsley, *Handbook of Christian Symbolism*; London: Day and Son; 1865; plate III; p. 50

² *Trinity*; by Andrey Rublyov; ca. 1411

What do the following passages teach concerning the role of each individual in the Trinity in the origin of things?

Father

Genesis 1:1

Psalms 33:6

Psalms 33:9

Psalms 148:5

Proverbs 3:19

Son

John 1:1-3

Colossians 1:15-17

Holy Spirit

Job 26:13

Job 33:4

Proverbs 8:27-31

Because the idea of a community of Persons forming one Person is so foreign to us, the concept was revealed to humanity progressively over time. Thus, the idea is far more clearly expressed in the New Covenant than in the Old. However, we get intimations of the Trinity from the very beginning of the Holy Scriptures.

What clues can we glean from this passage?

Genesis 1:26-27

How are the three Persons identified in the following passages?

The Father

Exodus 20:2

The Son

John 20:28

The Spirit
Acts 5:3-4

What common trait do we see in the following passages?

1. _____
Father
Romans 16:26

Son
Revelation 22:13

Holy Spirit
Hebrews 9:14

2. _____
Father
Revelation 4:8

Son
Acts 3:13-14

Revelation 15:3-4

Holy Spirit
1 John 2:20

3. _____
Father
Psalms 31:5

John 7:28

Son
Revelation 3:7

Holy Spirit

John 14:16-17

John 15:26

John 16:13

1 John 4:5-6

1 John 5:6

4. _____

Father

1 Corinthians 6:14

Son

John 2:19

Holy Spirit

1 Peter 3:18

5. _____

Father

Romans 6:23

Son

John 10:27-30

Holy Spirit

Galatians 6:7-8

6. _____

Father

Psalms 107:19-20

John 6:44

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

Son

1 Timothy 2:3-6

Titus 3:4-6

1 Peter 1:12

7. _____

Father

Romans 8:28-31

Son

Hebrews 2:11

Holy Spirit

2 Thessalonians 2:13

1 Peter 1:2

8. _____

Father

Hebrews 13:20-21

Son

Colossians 1:28-29

Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:11

9. _____

Father

John 6:45

Isaiah 48:17-18

Isaiah 54:13

Son

Luke 21:12-15

Galatians 1:11-12

Holy Spirit

Zechariah 4:4-6

John 14:26

1 John 2:20

10. _____

Father

Hebrews 1:1

Son

2 Corinthians 13:3

Holy Spirit

Mark 13:11

2 Peter 1:21

11. _____

Father

Jeremiah 3:15

Jeremiah 26:4-6

Son

Ephesians 4:10-13

Matthew 10:5-7

Holy Spirit

Acts 20:28

Acts 13:2

Sabellianism³

Modern counterparts to this heresy is a theology called “Oneness Pentecostalism”. Two well-known adherents of this theology are T.D. Jakes and the music group “Philips, Craig, and Dean.”

The following three passages describe the baptism of the Messiah. In what way do the descriptions of the apostles repudiate Sabellianism?
Matthew 3:16-17

Mark 1:9-11

Luke 3:21-22

The Sabellians distinguished between the Son’s role in redemption and the Holy Spirit’s in sanctification. What does Peter have to say to that? (1 Peter 1:2)

In what way does the Great Commission demonstrate the equality and continuous working of all three Persons? (Matthew 28:19)

Jesus said that He would ask the Father to give the disciples the Spirit to act as their counselor. What does John teach concerning the role of the Trinity in our continued spiritual well-being? (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:13-15)

Each Person has a separate role at times. They are distinct and different yet not diminished by their differences. What does Paul have to say about these different functions or roles? (1 Corinthians 12:3-6)

What does Paul’s grateful prayer reveal about the process of salvation, sanctification and glorification of the saint? (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

Compare that to Paul’s description in Galatians. (Galatians 4:4-6)

How about in this admonition to Titus? (Titus 3:4-6)

What about this blessing Paul gave to the Corinthians? (2 Corinthians 13:14)

The concept of “three in one” or “trinity” has important applications to our daily walk. How does Paul apply this type of thinking when writing to the Ephesian church? (Ephesians 4:4-6)



³ Image of Sabellius listed in the Nuremburg chronicles. Found at www.wikimedia.org.

What does Jude teach us about the relationship between our understanding of the Trinity and our prayer life? (Jude 1:20-21)

Section Glossary

Analogy – a similarity between two things that is purposely pointed out. A type of reasoning (see middot) in which (because one thing is considered to be similar to another) a conclusion may be drawn.

Hafokh' ba, v'hafokh' ba k'kula ba – A Hebrew phrase that could be translated “turn it, and turn it because everything is in it.” I apply it to the need to study the Holy Word deeply and to use Scripture to comment on Scripture.

Immanence – God's pervasive presence in and throughout His creation. Closely related to the concept of omnipresence but more typically used in conversations on the process by which God the Son took form and created the universe (John 1:1-3), appeared from time to time as a “theophany” or “christophany” and ultimately was born of a virgin and dwelt among us. The immanent aspect of the Son allowed Him to become the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15) so that to see Him is to see the Father (John 14:8-9).

Midrash (pl. Midrashim) – (MID-rahsh; MID-rah-SHEEM); From *darash*, “to inquire,” whence it comes to mean “exposition” (of scripture). When used as a verb “midrash” refers to a form of Biblical exegesis. Explaining a Scripture passage's simple meaning (*peshat*), its application (*derash*) and possibly its deeper, symbolic or metaphorical meaning (*sod*). Also used in the sense of a healthy devotion to study. Written interpretations or explanations of Scripture. Literary Midrash may focus either on *halakha*, directing believers to specific patterns of religious practice, or on (*h*)*aggada*, dealing with theological ideas, ethical teachings, popular philosophy, imaginative exposition, legend, allegory, animal fables—that is, whatever is not *halaka*.

Modalism – An overemphasis of the unity of God that says that the one divine person appears at different times in different manners. Since they refer to these different “masks” of God as “modes of appearance”, this heresy is called “modalism”. See also Sabellianism, Tritheism and Unitarianism.

Polytheism - The teaching that there are many gods. In the Ancient Near East the nation of Israel was faced with the problem of the gods of other nations creeping into the theology of Judaism and corrupting the true revelation of God. The Bible does recognize the existence of other gods, but only as false gods (1 Corinthians 8:5; Galatians 4:8) and clearly teaches that there is only one true God (Isaiah 43:10; 44:6, 8; 45:5, 18, 21-22; 46:9).

Prevenient – (pri-veen-yuh nt) to come before; to antecede; to anticipate. In doctrine this refers to God's prevenient grace. Adonists hold that before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man. God reached out to us while we were still rebellious sinners (Romans 5:8). No one can come to the Son unless the Father first draws them (John 6:44).

Sabellianism - According to Sabellius God wears his Father hat, his Son hat, and his Spirit hat, successively; one at a time; not simultaneously. Sabellianism is often called modalism. According to them the Son is the Father is the Spirit - but one at a time; in modes of being, not distinct Persons. So for example, Sabellians insisted that God the Father was active in creation, God the Son was involved in redemption and God the Holy Spirit is presently involved in sanctification. See also Modalism, Tritheism, and Unitarianism.

Transcendence - A theological term referring to the relation of God to creation. God is "other," "different" from His creation. He is independent and different from His creatures (Isaiah 55:8-9). He transcends His creation. He is beyond it and not limited by it or to it. Will God indeed live on earth? Even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain Him, much less any temples we may build (1 Kings 8:27). "For in Him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28a). See also Immanence.

Trinity – Though the word "trinity" does not appear anywhere in the Bible the concept pervades God's Word. For a summary of the Biblical evidence for the Trinity see the appendix. Briefly, the Trinity may be defined as "God is undivided unity expressed in the threefold and equal nature of Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Being so far beyond our normal human experience, it is and will likely ever be a great and incomprehensible mystery.

Tritheism – An over-emphasis of the distinctiveness of each person of the Trinity to the point where it becomes polytheism, or belief in three separate gods. See also Modalism, Sabellianism, and Unitarianism.

Triunity - The word "Trinity" as such does not appear in the Bible. It is a name that humans have applied to identify the concept that is clearly taught in the Scriptures. A recent preference is to refer to the Trinity as the "Triunity" in order to hopefully avoid common misconceptions such as tritheism or modalism.

Unitarianism - A theological error that holds to the unity of God by denying the Trinity, the deity of Jesus, and the deity of the Holy Spirit. An over-emphasis of the unity of the Godhead that ends up contradicting the clear teaching of the Scriptures by saying that only the Father is God and that Christ and the Holy Spirit are lesser and servile beings. Though Unitarians often profess to have no dogma, they teach the unity of God and hold to a common system of believing as you will about God, salvation, sin, etc. Unitarians also hold to the universal redemption of all mankind. Unitarianism is a complete heresy. See also Modalism, Sabellianism, and Tritheism.