

***Supplemental Notes:***

# **The Trinity**

## **One God or Three?**

How does one reconcile the “One God” of the Sh’ma with the three “Persons” of the Trinity?

What does God reveal to us of Himself in His Word?

How does one deal with the ostensible tensions between the Old and New Testament revelation of the Ultimate Mystery of the Godhead?

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## The Trinity

The doctrine of the trinity has been at the heart of much theological controversy. The routine objection is that the doctrine sacrifices monotheism to “tritheism.” But this objection thrives on a misconception of divine personality in the image of disparate, individual, human selves.

This type of rationalistic apologetics, promotive of trinitarianism on speculative rather than revelational grounds, regrettably encourages this misunderstanding.

One of the reasons we suffer such misunderstanding is due to our relying on “models.”

### Conceptual Models

Power, intellect, will?  
Body, soul, and spirit?  
Motion, light, heat? (The sun, for example.)  
Three tones blending into one chord?  
Single ray of light, of three primary colors?  
Water: solid (ice), liquid, gas (steam)?  
Infinite Series (mathematics)?  
Hyperspace: Hilbert Space [See our *Beyond Perception* briefing package.]

These models sound good on the surface, but each has its own inherent problems that tend to confuse, rather than clarify, our understanding of the trinity.

After wading through a lot of commentaries on the subject, I'm reminded of a poem that impressed me as a child...

### The Blind Men and The Elephant

It was six men of Indostan  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the elephant  
(Though all of them were blind),  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the elephant,  
And, happening to fall  
Against his broad and sturdy side,  
At once began to bawl,  
"God bless me! but the elephant  
Is nothing but a wall!"

The Second, feeling of the tusk,  
Cried: "Ho! What have we here  
So very round and smooth and sharp?  
To me 'tis mighty clear  
This wonder of an elephant  
Is very like a spear!"

The Third approached the animal,  
And, happening to take  
The squirming trunk within his hands,  
Thus boldly up and spake:  
"I see," quoth he, "the elephant  
Is very like a snake!"

The Fourth reached out his eager hand,  
And felt about the knee:  
"What most this wondrous beast is like  
Is mighty plain," quoth he  
" 'Tis clear enough the elephant  
Is very like a tree."

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,  
Said: "E'en the blindest man  
Can tell what this resembles most;  
Deny the fact who can,  
This marvel of an elephant  
Is very like a fan!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun  
About the beast to grope,  
Than, seizing on the swinging tail  
That fell within his scope,  
"I see," quoth he, "the elephant  
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion

Exceeding stiff and strong,  
Though each was partly in the right,  
And all were in the wrong!

So, oft in theologic wars  
The disputants, I ween,  
Rail on in utter ignorance  
Of what each other mean,  
*And prate about an elephant  
Not one of them has seen!*

John Godfrey Saxe

My favorite model is one of a corporation consisting of three perfectly communicating partner-shareholders.

These illustrations may be said to "darken counsel" with misleading analogies.

How do you communicate to an aborigine at TV set? Or a 747 jet?[Any explanation is inherently incomplete.]

Even if we're dealing solely with physical properties (see *Beyond Perception* briefing package), we find ourselves at the boundaries of reality itself. But we're dealing with something "one step beyond," when we talk of the Godhead. It can only be known by revelation—not reason alone. Divine rev-

elation is a matter of sovereign freedom. We know only what He has revealed to us.

There is no absurdity involved when it is contended that plurality can (and does) co-exist with unity. [Adam + Eve = "One Flesh."]

### The Sh'ma: Deuteronomy 6:4-5

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God [is] one Lord:

5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Also quoted by our Lord, Matthew 22:37-38:

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

Also emphasized by God Himself in Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Cf. Verse 5.)

See also Isaiah 45:5:

5 I [am] the Lord, and [there is] none else,

[there is] no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that [there is] none beside me. I [am] the Lord, and [there is] none else.

God is unique, singular, one, and very jealous of that position.

### One

Hebrew words for "one":

*yahidh* = "unique"

*'ehadh* אֶחָד, = does not preclude distinguishable entities (i.e., Gen 2:24, where Adam and Eve are said to be one flesh.)

The Sh'ma, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, uses *'ehadh*. Within the linguistic structure, the fact that unity, or "oneness" is expressed as *'ehadh* does not exclude having plurality within it.

### Plurality

*Elohim* = plural (as in cherubim, seraphim, et al.). [Plural vowelizing of the word *Adonai* also.]

## Old Testament

In Genesis 1:1, *Elohim* is plural, but used with a singular verb *bara*. This is also used by Paul as a grammatical solecism in 1 Thess 3:11 (in the Greek).

Every place where *Elohim* is written in the Bible it is a grammatical error--the noun doesn't agree with the verb. We are given a subtle clue of "more than one within the one."

This "error" isn't confined to the original Hebrew, either. In many cases it is carried through to our English translation.

Gen 1:26

Let us make man in **our** own image...

Gen 3:22

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of **us**, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Gen 11:7

Go to, let **us** go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

[This cannot be associated with just angels because they were not associated with God in the creation.]

References to the "Angel of YHWH": Gen 18:2, 17; 28:22 with 19:1; Josh 5:13-15 with 6:32; Judg 13:8-21; Zech 13:7.

"Spirit of the Lord": Gen 1:2; Isa 40:13; 48:16,17; 59:19; 63:10f.

Psalm 2: Dialogue among the three... Distinction between YHWH and His Messiah (v.2); Son, King (v.6).

Psalm 22: Christ, "My God..." (v.1; v.15).

Three primary names (Elohim, YHWH, Adonai) ascribed to *each* of the three persons:

- Father—obvious.
- Son: El, Isaiah 9:6; YHWH, Psalm 68:18; Isaiah 6:1-3; 45:21.
- Spirit: YHWH, Isaiah 11:2 ("Spirit of YHWH"); Cf. Judges 15:14; Elohim, Exodus 31:3.

## Isaiah 6

In the famous vision of the throne of God in Isaiah 6, we have the scene in the “holy place of the holy ones,” celebrated by the seraphim who veiled their faces before them: “Holy, Holy, Holy.” (Note: There are three declarations. This is reconfirmed in the similar scene in Revelation 4:8.)

In Isaiah 6:8 we again see the hint of the plural: “Who shall go for *us*?”

Who is the “Lord of Hosts”? All sources acknowledge its applicability to the Father. Yet it is provocative to notice that John attributes this passage to Christ (John 12:41), and Paul attributes it to the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25). Thus, all three persons are included.

## Jacob’s Blessing: Genesis 48:15-16

15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them

grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

The “God before whom my fathers did walk,” plus “The God who fed me,” plus “the Angel who redeemed me,” = three persons. They are all mentioned as objects of divine worship and the source of blessing: God the Father (the Leader and Teacher), God the source of illumination and comfort, and the *Goel*, the Redeemer.

Also: 2 Sam 23:2,3; Isa 48:16,17; Isa 63:7-10; Ps 29:3-5.

Ecclesiastes 12:1:

Remember now thy Creator(s) in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

Isaiah 54:5:

For thy Maker(s) [is] thine husband; the Lord of hosts [is] his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

### **OT Benediction: Numbers 6:24-27**

24 The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:  
The benevolent “love of God,” the father  
of mercies and fountain of all good;

25 The Lord make his face shine upon thee,  
and be gracious unto thee:  
The redeeming and reconciling “grace  
of our Lord Jesus Christ”;

26 The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee,  
and give thee peace.  
The purity, consolation, and joy, re-  
ceived by “the communion of the Holy  
Spirit.”

[From J. Pye Smith's *Person of Christ*, q. Chafer, Vol 1, page 299.]

Cf. 2 Cor 13:14:  
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and  
the love of God, and the communion of  
the Holy Ghost, [be] with you all. Amen.

### **The First and the Last**

Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12;  
Rev 1:11; 1:17; 22:1; then ... 2:8.

Zech 12:10, “they shall look upon me...(Aleph  
and Tau)...whom they have pierced.” Cf.  
Gen 1:1, et al.

One God but in Three Persons. Plurality  
does indeed exist in Unity.

### **Tape 2: The Trinity**

We have in our laps 66 books written by 40  
authors over thousands of years; yet it is  
demonstrably a single unified message sys-  
tem, written by God from outside our time  
domain. Distinctions between Father, Son,  
and Holy Spirit appear; Trinity assumed  
throughout.

### **Names of God**

We discover in the Scriptures that there are  
different names for God. *Elohim*, for ex-  
ample, is used 2700 times in the Bible.  
(*Elohim* is a *plural* noun, yet it is always  
used with a *singular* verb.)

The names for God are used for each of the  
persons in the Trinity in different places  
throughout the Bible. The different names  
for God are used to reflect relationship, not  
specifically the person. Examples include:

Father: without question.  
Son: called God (John 1:10, the true  
God (1 John 5:20), the blessed

God (Rom 9:5), the great God (Titus 2:13).  
Holy Spirit: called God (Acts 5:3-9), and Lord (2 Cor 3:17).

*Elohim* אֱלֹהִים Creator

*El* Beth-El; Immanu-El

*Eloah* Living God to be worshipped

*Elyon* Possessor of Heaven and Earth

*El Shaddai* Almighty; giver of all strength; supplier of every need. Gen 17:1; 2 Cor 6:18.

*YHWH* יְהוָה "Jehovah," or "Yahweh"  
(Always refers to the covenant relationship.)

*Jah* ("Yah"): Hallelujah (49X) Is, was, is to come.

- Jehovah Jireh - Jehovah will provide, Gen 22:14.
- Jehovah Ropheka - Jehovah healeth thee, Ex 15:26.
- Jehovah Nissi - Jehovah my banner, Ex 17:15.
- Jehovah Mekaddiskem - Jehovah that doth satisfy you, Ex 31:13; Lev 20:8; 21:8; 22:32; Ezek 20:12.
- Jehovah Shalom - Jehovah peace, Judg 6:24.

- Jehovah Zebaoth - Jehovah of Hosts, 1 Sam 1:3, et al.
- Jehovah Zidkenu - Jehovah Our Righteousness, Jer 23:6; 33:16.
- Jehovah Shammah - Jehovah is there, Exodus 48:35.
- Jehovah Elyon - Jehovah Most High, Psalm 7:17; 47:2.

*Adon*, Ruler in the earth

*Adonai*, (converted from Adon by associating vowel points from YHWH; used 134 times in Massorah.) Blesser.

*Adonim*, owner, proprietor.

Also, inherent in the New Testament:

Great Commission: Matthew 28:19. ("Name" is singular! i.e., threefold unity.)

Christ's baptism: all three were present.

## Works of God

Each declared to be wrought wholly, and independently, by each person:



### **1) Creation of the Universe**

Father: Psalm 102:25

Son: Colossians 1:16; John 1:1-3

Spirit: Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13.

[All three gathered into *Elohim*, Gen 1:1.]

### **2) Creation of Man**

Father: Genesis 2:7

Son: Colossians 1:16

Spirit: Job 33:4.

[Plurals: Ecclesiastes 12:1; Isaiah 54:5]

### **3) The Incarnation**

Father: Hebrews 10:5

Son: Philippians 2:7

Spirit: Luke 1:35

Spirit generates the Son, but in such a manner that the Son ever addresses the First Person as Father (Except on the cross: "My God").

### **4) The Life and Ministry of Christ**

The Son always did the will of the Father, and to this end the Spirit was given to the Son without measure.

### **5) The Death of Christ**

Father: Psalm 22:15; Romans 8:32

John 3:16

Son: John 10:18; Galatians 2:20

Spirit: Hebrews 9:14

### **6) The Atonement**

Father: Isaiah 53:6, 10

Son: Ephesians 5:2

Spirit: Hebrews 9:14

### **7) The Resurrection of Christ**

Father: Acts 2:24; Romans 6:4

Son: John 10:17, 18; John 2:19

Spirit: 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 8:11

### **8) The Resurrection of All Mankind**

Father: John 5:21

Son: John 5:21

Spirit: Romans 8:11

### **9) The Inspiration of the Scriptures**

Father: 2 Timothy 3:16

Son: 1 Peter 1:10,11

Spirit: 2 Peter 1:21

### 10) Minister's Authority

Father: 2 Corinthians 3:5-6  
Son: 1 Timothy 1:12  
Spirit: Acts 20:28

### 11) The Indwelling Presence [Surprised?]

Father: Ephesians 4:6  
Son: Colossians 1:27  
Spirit: 1 Corinthians 6:19

### 12) The Work of Sanctification

Father: Jude 1:1  
Son: Hebrews 2:11  
Spirit: 1 Corinthians 6:11

### 13) The Believer's Safekeeping

Father: John 10:29  
Son: John 10:28; Romans 8:34 (4 ways!)  
Spirit: Ephesians 4:30

### 14) Others

Wisdom, cf. 1 Corinthians 1:24 with Psalm 8, Logos of John 1:1-18...et al.

## Attributes of God

All attributes are ascribed to each of the three.

### • Eternal Existence

Father: Psalm 90:2  
Son: Alpha and Omega, First and Last, etc.; Rev 1:8, 17; John 1:2; Micah 5:2; cf. Zech 12:10 (Hebrew); Gen 1:1, et al.  
[Also Isa 41:4.]  
Spirit: Hebrews 9:14.

### • Infinite Power

Father: 1 Peter 1:5  
Son: 2 Corinthians 12:9  
Spirit: Romans 15:19

### • Omniscience

Father: Jeremiah 17:10  
Son: Revelation 2:23  
Spirit: 1 Corinthians 2:11

### • Omnipresence

Father: Jeremiah 23:24

Son: Matthew 18:20  
Spirit: Psalm 139:7

- **Holiness**

Father: Revelation 15:4  
Son: Acts 3:14  
Spirit: (everywhere: "Holy Spirit")  
Thus, "Holy, Holy, Holy"—Isaiah 6:3

- **Truth**

Father: John 7:28  
Son: Revelation 3:7  
Spirit: 1 John 5:6

- **Benevolence**

Father: Romans 2:4  
Son: Ephesians 5:25  
Spirit: Nehemiah 9:20

- **Disposition for Communion**

Father: 1 John 1:3  
Son: 1 John 1:3  
Spirit: 2 Corinthians 13:14

There is no intimation that any one person of the Godhead sustains these attributes in respect to the other two persons; or that they are held in partnership;

Each is predicated of each as though no others existed;

The peculiar relationship of One in Three, and Three in One, is upheld apart from those usual interdependent sharing which characterize human combinations and manifestations.

"The fact that each person possesses all the divine characteristics and so completely that it would seem that no other need to possess them, speaks of the distinction between the Persons as such. On the other hand, the fact that they all manifest these characteristics in identically the same ways and to the same measure, speaks of the unity from which their mode of existence springs."

— Chafer, Vol 1, p. 305.

### **Worship of God**

- 1) By angels: Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8
- 2) By saints: John 16:23,24; Ephesians 6:18
- 3) The Benedictions: Numbers 6:24-26; 2 Corinthians 13:14

## Other New Testament References

The entire Gospel of John...

Matthew 28:19: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”;

2 Corinthians 13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, [be] with you all. Amen”;

John 14:16-26; John 15:26; John 16:5ff; also Titus 3:4ff.

## Other Common Attributions

1 Thess 1:2-5; 2 Thess 2:13ff; 1 Cor 12:4ff; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 2:18; Eph 3:2ff; Eph 4:4ff; Eph 5:18ff; 2 Tim 1:3, 13ff. Also: Heb 2:3ff; 6:4ff; 10:29ff; 1 Pet 1:2; 2:3ff; 4:13ff; 1 Jn 5:4; Jude 20ff; Rev 1:4ff.

The Bible teaches:

- the invisible Father, from whom all revelations proceeds;

- the Son, who mediates and objectively incarnates that revelation as an historical revelation;
- the Holy Spirit, who is divinely outpoured and subjectively applies that revelation to man.

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