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## The Trinity as explained in different Faiths

*"It is said that once John of Chrysostom was walking along the seashore thinking over the question of the trinity and trying to reconcile it with finite reason; his attention was attracted to a boy sitting on the shore putting water into a cup. Approaching him, he said, "My child, what art thou doing?" "I am trying to put the sea into this cup," was the answer. "How foolish art thou," said John, "in trying to do the impossible". The child replied, "Thy work is stranger than mine, for thou art laboring to bring within the grasp of human intellect the conception of the trinity."*

*Let us, free from past tradition, investigate the reality of this matter. What is the meaning of the father and the son?*

*This fatherhood and sonship are allegorical and symbolical. The Messianic reality is like unto a mirror through which the sun of divinity has become resplendent. If this mirror expresses "The light is in me" it is sincere in its claim; therefore Jesus was truthful when he said, "The Father is in me"*

*The sun in the sky and the sun in the mirror are one, are they not? - and yet we see there are apparently two suns."*

**(Abdu'l-Baha, Divine Philosophy, p. 152)**

Yes indeed! The Trinity is hard to grasp! Frankly, it is beyond human capacity to understand. This fact has led to endless debate on the subject. No one can agree for no one knows. Thus, this enduring enigma has been a source of confused abuse and a deep source of contention for literally thousands of years.

Scriptures are explored addressing two fundamental issues:

1. Is God, in essence, indivisible, or is there some sort of plurality?
2. How is the idea of a Trinity expressed? Is the Trinity indicative of the Reality within God or is it better understood as a relationship or covenant between God and mankind?

Beginning with the first question:

There are Scriptural passages from different Faiths that use terms such as 'WE', 'Us' 'My', 'He' or 'I' in relation to the creative force of God. In other words it would seem God is beyond numbers such as "three" or "one" yet there is a force from God that *"Descends into space from the mansions of eternity,"*

Baha'u'llah, Tablet of the Holy Mariner.

Genesis: 1: 26-27 reads, *"Then God said," Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness. - So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him".* (Here God is referred to as "Us" "Our" and "He".)

**Baha'u'llah addresses:**

**68." O CHILDREN OF MEN!**

*Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory"*

**(Baha'u'llah, The Arabic Hidden Words)**

Note the use of "We" and "My".

*"The whole creation hath been made the recipient of the revelation of the All-Merciful, and the earth the repository of things inscrutable to all except God, the Truth, the Knower of things unseen. The time is approaching when every created thing will have cast its burden. Glorified be God Who hath vouchsafed this grace that encompasseth all things, whether seen or unseen! Thus have We created the whole earth anew in this day, yet most of the people have failed to perceive it. Say: The grace of God can never be adequately understood; how much less can His own Self, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, be comprehended!"*

**(Baha'u'llah, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 25)**

"We" and "Who" are used in the above passage. God has vouchsafed this grace... Thus have We created... Is Grace somehow related to some incomprehensible partnership of creation?

As has been shown, scriptures use plural and singular designations for God on a regular basis. Now let's explore the concept of "Trinity" as described in different Faiths.

**"Hindus not only believe in the divinity of Lord Krishna but in being "born again". The Trinity is central to their doctrine.**

**"The Brahmin caste of the Hindus are said to be "twice-born" and have a ritual in which they are "born in the spirit." Could this be the ultimate source of the Christian "born again" concept (John 3:3)?**

**The deification of Christ is a phenomenon often attributed to the apotheosis of emperors and heroes in the Greco-Roman world. These, however, were cases of men becoming gods. In the Jesus story, the Divinity takes human form, god becoming man. This is a familiar occurrence in Hinduism and in other theologies of the region. Indeed, one obstacle to the spread of Christianity in India, which was attempted as early as the first**

century, was the frustrating tendency of the Hindus to understand Jesus as the latest avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu.

It is in the doctrine of the **Trinity** that the Hindu influence may be most clearly felt. Unknown to most Christians, Hinduism has a Trinity (or Trimurti) too: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, who have the appellations the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer (and Regenerator). This corresponds to the Christian Trinity in which God created the heavens and the earth, Jesus saves, and the Holy Spirit is referred to as a regenerator (Titus 3:5). It is interesting to note, furthermore, that the Holy Spirit is sometimes depicted as a dove, while the Hebrew language uses the same term for both "dove" and "destroyer"!

In the **Bhagavad-Gita Gait**, a story of the second person of the Hindu Trinity, (Vishnu) who took human form as Krishna. Some have considered him a model for the Christ, and it's hard to argue against that when he says things like, **"I am the beginning, the middle, and the end" (BG 10:20 vs. Rev 1:8).**"

A Tribute To Hinduism (source :<http://www.infidels.org/library/magazines/tsr/1994/3/3hare94.html> - By Stephen Van Eck)

Looking up **Rev; 1:8** it says, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega" says the Lord God," Who is, and Who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."*

In old Testament times, long before Jesus was on earth, **Isaiah in 48: 12-13** is recorded as saying, *"Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them they all stand up together."*

In the **Bhagavad-gita in 10:19-20** it says, *"The Blessed Lord said: Yes, I will tell you of My splendid manifestations, but only of those which are prominent, O Arjuna, for My opulence is limitless. I am the Self, O Gudakesa, seated in the hearts of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings."*

#### **Buddhism:**

Mahayanists developed a theology of Buddha called the doctrine of "The Three Bodies," or Trikaya. The Buddha was not a human being, as he was in Theravada Buddhism, but the manifestation of a universal, spiritual Being. This Being had three bodies. When it occupied the earth in the form of Siddhartha Gautama, it took on the Body of Magical Transformation (nirmanakaya). This Body of Magical Transformation was an emanation of the Body of Bliss (sambhogakaya), which occupies the heavens in the form of a ruling and governing God of the universe. There are many forms of the Body of Bliss, but the one that rules over our world is Amithaba who lives in a paradise in the western heavens called Sukhavati, or "Land of Pure Bliss." Finally, the Body of Bliss is an emanation of the Body of Essence (dharmakaya), which is the principle underlying the whole of the universe. This Body of Essence, the principle and rule of the universe,

became synonymous with Nirvana. It was a kind of universal soul, and Nirvana became the transcendent joining with this universal soul.

#### **A Biblical view:**

John introduces his Gospel with words concerning the WORD of God.

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."*

**John 1: 1-5**

John goes on to express, *"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,"* John clarifies this to mean, *"born of God,"*

**John 1:10-13**

#### **A Baha'i explanation of the Word and the Trinity**

*Abdul-Baha: "Our belief in regard to Christ is exactly what is recorded in the New Testament; however, we elucidate this matter and do not speak literally or in a manner based merely on blind belief. For instance, it is recorded in the Gospel of St. John, in the beginning was the word, the word was with God and the word was God. The majority of Christians accept this matter literally, but we give a logical explanation that no one need find occasion to reject.*

*The Christians have made this statement about the word, the foundation of the trinity; but philosophers state that the trinity as regards the identity of divinity is impossible.*

*We explain this subject as follows: By the word we mean that creation with its infinite forms is like unto letters and the individual members of humanity are likewise like unto letters. A letter individually has no meaning, no independent significance, but the station of Christ is the station of the word. That is why we say Christ is the word - a complete significance. The universal bestowal of divinity is manifest in Christ. It is obvious that the evolution of other souls is approximate, or only a part of the whole, but the perfections of the Christ are universal, or the whole. The reality of Christ is the collective center of all the independent virtues and infinite significances."*

**(Abdu'l-Baha, Divine Philosophy, p. 147)**

*In his letter to the Colossians Paul writes, "He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things*

*were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things are held together."*

**Colossians 1:1-15-17**

Yet in other documents in the Bible Jesus talks of his true reality, that we are not to worship him but rather God who sent him. *"Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."*

**John 12: 44-49**

**"The Great Commission"** is often used by Christians to "prove" the divinity of Christ. Many Christians see Jesus as fully God and yet fully man. The disciples come to Jesus to worship him, and he tells them, *" All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

**Matthew 28: 16-20**

The following scripture is pivotal to orthodox Christian belief. They see **John 12: 44-49** (see above) referring to the time when Jesus was still in the flesh, while the following scripture is a direct result of the "Great Commission".

**Revelation 22: 12-13** says, *" Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."*

**John** records Jesus talking of his relationship to the Father (God) many times.

*"Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."*

**John 16: 25-30**

**Islam:** Sura 4 in the Quran admonishes:

*171" O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word, which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three" - Cease! (It is) better for you! - Allah is only One God. Far is it removed from His Transcendent Majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender."*

(The Qur'an (Pickthall tr), Sura 4 - Women)

Surah 5 in the Quran also says:

*72 "They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers.*

*73 They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the One God. If they desist not from so saying a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve.*

*74 Will they not rather turn unto Allah and seek forgiveness of Him? For Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."*

Normally I try to stay away from explanations by Faith followers but this elucidation by author Marcia Gail is exemplary. She writes, " **The angel Gabriel is the Holy Ghost, the intermediary between God and Muhammad; in Christianity it is symbolized by a dove; in the Baha'i Dispensation, the spirit of God within Baha'u'llah is personified by a Maiden.**

As the Guardian [Shoghi Effendi] explains in the book "God Passes By" (p. 118, 121, etc.). **The Trinity according to our Teachings is the unknowable Lord, the Perfect Man, and the Holy Spirit."**

(Islamic Miscellaneous, Gail - Six Lessons on Islam, p. 18)

Abdul-Baha responds to a question concerning the Trinity:

*,"But as to the question of the Trinity, know, O advancer unto God, that in each one of the cycles wherein the Lights have shone forth upon the horizons (I. e., in each prophetic dispensation) and the Forgiving Lord hath revealed Himself on Mount Paran (see Habbakkuk 3:3, etc.) or Mount Sinai, or Mount Seir (see Ezekiel 35), there are necessarily three things: The Giver of Grace, and the Grace, and the Recipient of the Grace; the Source of the Effulgence, and the Effulgence, and the Recipient of the Effulgence; the Illuminator, and the Illumination, and Illuminated. Look at the Mosaic cycle: The Lord, and Moses, and the Fire (i.e., the burning bush), the Intermediary; and [at] the Messianic cycle: The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost the Intermediary; and in the Mohammedan cycle: The Lord, the Apostle (or Messenger, Mohammed), and Gabriel (for, as the Mohammedans believe, Gabriel brought the Revelation from God to Mohammed). Look at the sun and its rays and the heat which results from its rays; the rays and the heat are but two effects of*

*the sun, but inseparable from it; yet the sun is one in its essence, unique in its real identity, single in its attributes, neither is it possible that anything should resemble it. Such is the essence of the Truth concerning the Unity, the real doctrine of Singularity, the undiluted reality as to the (Divine) Sanctity."*

**(Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha v1, p. 117)**

*"As to the Holy Manifestations [messengers or prophets] of God, They are the focal points where the signs, tokens and perfections of that sacred, pre-existent Reality appear in all their splendour. They are an eternal grace, a heavenly glory, and on Them dependeth the everlasting life of humankind. To illustrate: the Sun of Truth dwelleth in a sky to which no soul hath any access, and which no mind can reach, and He is far beyond the comprehension of all creatures. Yet the Holy Manifestations of God are even as a looking-glass, burnished and without stain, which gathereth streams of light out of that Sun, and then scattereth the glory over the rest of creation. In that polished surface, the Sun with all its majesty standeth clearly revealed. Thus, should the mirrored Sun proclaim, "I am the Sun!" this is but truth; and should It cry, "I am not the Sun!" this is the truth as well. And although the Day-Star, with all Its glory, Its beauty, Its perfections, be clearly visible in that mirror without stain, still It hath not come down from Its own lofty station in the realms above, It hath not made Its way into the mirror; rather doth It continue to abide, as It will forever, in the supernal heights of Its own holiness.*

*And further, all the earth's creatures require the bounty of the sun, for their very existence is dependent upon solar light and heat. Should they be deprived of the sun, they would be wiped out. This is the being with God, as referred to in the Holy Books: man must be with his Lord.*

*It is clear, then, that the essential reality of God is revealed in His perfections; and the sun, with its perfections, reflected in a mirror, is a visible thing, an entity clearly expressing the bounty of God.*

*My hope is that thou wilt acquire a perceptive eye, a hearing ear, and that the veils will be removed from thy sight."*

**(Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 50)**

The following verses end this compilation on a positive note of the awe, wonder and majesty of God.

Here are verses from **Baha'i Writings**. They give us a hint of the depth of the Covenant between God and Man.

**3." O SON OF MAN!**

*Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.*

**4. O SON OF MAN!**

*I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life."*

**(Baha'u'llah, The Arabic Hidden Words)**

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