

Aspects of Trinity: Of “one” and “two”, “We” and “My”; Three in One; One or a Sum?

“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 some plural 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 expressed in (John 3:3)?

Hinduism has a Trinity (or Trimurti): Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, who have the appellations the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer (and Regenerator).

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.

"Trinity" is seen in traditional instrumental Japanese Shinto Gagaku music.

Sounds of antiquity, Elegance enduring

1. Sho ... The light that penetrates from the Heavens
2. Ryuteki ... The dragon that ascends dancing in the Sky
3. Hichiriki ... The voices echoing on the Earth

When all sound together a Cosmos can be heard
Imagined by those now distant Elegant in the flickering candle of time

1. Sho is a bamboo mouth organ. A metal reed is fitted in each pipe, and vibrates when air is blown over it. The sho plays sustained clusters of pitches and has an organ-like timbre

2. Hichiriki is a double-reed instrument with loud volume and a clear timbre. It plays a heterophonic version of the melody.

3. Ryuteki is a side-blown bamboo flute with a high, somewhat breathy timbre. It also plays a version of the melody.

Trinity and spiritual meaning is central to Native American Pow-wow Drum music.

The song is in three parts.

1. Lead: The high pitched lead (A) melody is sung by a solo voice and then is joined in and repeated by the group. This is a "calling" to/or by the Great Spirit or Word of Enlightenment. The joining in of the group portrays opening the heart in acceptance to the Message from on High.

2. Chorus: The Chorus represents knowledge given and partaken. The relationship between God and Man, good and evil, temporal and eternal, is reflected as the (B) melodic pitch descends from high to low. The chorus is sung twice.

3. A Coda or Tail: is symbolic of meditation on the above truths and personal life meaning. A lower pitched (C) melody symbolizes earthly existence.

This representation and thinking of Trinity by Native Americans suggests much the same concepts as found in the Baha'i ring stone symbol. Three horizontal lines (upper, middle and lower) represent

1. The world of God
2. The world of and station of Revelation.
3. Humanity and the world of creation.

A vertical line connects all three. This shows the Primal Will or Holy Spirit proceeding from God through the Manifestations to humanity.

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

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."

As the Guardian [Shogi 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)

Aspects of Trinity are expressed and reflected within the matrix of the material temporal world as well. Indeed; the spiritual, phenomenal, temporal and eternal are components of but one Reality.

Here is a list I came up with. Can you think of more?

1. Beginning, existence, ending: (birth, life, death.)
2. Positive, negative, neutral: (as found in protons, electrons, neutrons). Also attraction, repulsion in world perception and thought.
3. The three primary colors of red, yellow and blue used in combination to produce all different colors.
4. The three dimensions of length, width and depth.
5. Three fundamental states of matter as seen in our environment: solid, liquid and gaseous.
6. A structure, such as a table, requires at least three legs for support.

7. Dissonance, consonance and unison: (revealed in cooperation, discord or blind obedience found in relationships of friends and family. It can also be seen in elements of harmony, counterpoint or unison as found in music.)

In conclusion:

Much effort and time seems to have been devoted to thinking in terms of the nature of God: Is He three in one? of a plural or singular nature, a combination of the above or something else? Does gender apply? Does position, boundary or definition apply? How about attributes; such as All-Knowing, All-Wise, the Beneficent or Most-Merciful?...the Doer- the Creator= the Prime Mover?

It seems self evident that any attempt to define God is, by definition, a fruitless endeavor born of error. How can the created one understand the Creator or the imperfect grasp perfection? Indeed; a stone understanding a bird in flight is infinitely more feasible than any hope of those of greatest understanding and achievement ever remotely discerning the "Most Hidden of the Most Hidden", and yet, the "Most Manifest of the Manifest"

Praised be to God! The Inscrutable Lord of all the worlds!

PS. As to a question asked," Why do people believe in or think about Trinity or plurality concerning God?" That answer is left to discussion and the mind of the seeker.

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