

Triune God

Week 2

September 1, 2013

The Doctrine of the Trinity



References to the Trinity

- Augsburg Confession Article I Sections 1-4

“Our Churches, with common consent, do teach that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting; [2\]](#) that is to say, there is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and [3\]](#) yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the term "person" [4\]](#) they use as the Fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.”

References to the Trinity

- Luther

“And although I have, on other occasions, taught and written on this article fully and frequently enough, still I must say a few words in general concerning it here. True, it is not choice German, nor has it a pleasing sound, when we designate God by the word "Dreifaltigkeit" (nor is the Latin, Trinitas, more elegant); **but since we have no better term, we must employ these.** For, as I have said, this article is so far above the power of the human mind to grasp, or the tongue to express, that God, as the Father of his children, will pardon us when we stammer and lisp as best we can, if only our faith be pure and right. By this term, however, we would say that we believe the divine majesty to be three distinct persons of one true essence.”
[Complete Sermons of Martin Luther Volume 4.2, pp. 7-8]

References to the Trinity

- Athanasian Creed

“And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.”

References to the Trinity

- Nicene Creed and the Apostle's Creed.
- The word Trinity does not appear, but the teaching is present.

Non-Trinintarian Objections

- Have you ever heard someone claim the the word Trinity does not appear in the Bible?
- True or false?

• TRUE

Non-Trinintarian Objections

- But, does the fact that the word Trinity does not appear in Scripture mean that the Scripture does not contain the Trinity?

• NO!

Origin of the Word Trinity

- Comes from the Latin word Trinitas.
- The earliest use in Christian literature appears to be by Theophilus of Antioch in his letter to Autolytus. (Around 180 A.D.)
- He uses the Greek word *Triad*.

Origin of the Word Trinity

- Regarding the creation Theophilus writes:
“In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His wisdom.”

Origin of the Word Trinity

- Tertullian (About 197-220 A.D.) used the Latinized trinitas in his *Against Praxeas*:

“while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded, which distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three Persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

Evidence in the Tenach (Old Testament)

- The Shema Deut 6:4
- $\text{dj a hwby wnyhl a hwby l arcy [mv}$
- *Sh'ma Yisra'el YHWH Eloheinu YHWH Ehad*
“Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.”

Shema

- d j a

- Echad: a numeral from 'achad aw-khad'
- Strong's defines echad as:

"A numeral from [H258](#); properly *united*, that is, *one*; or (as an ordinal) *first*: - a, alike, alone, altogether, and, any (-thing), apiece, a certain [dai-] ly, each (one), + eleven, every, few, first, + highway, a man, once, one, only, other, some, together."

Shema

- The root word achad is defined as:

"Perhaps a primitive root; to *unify*, that is, (figuratively) *collect* (one's thoughts): - go one way or other."

Gesenius also adds that echad has the sense of united.

- We also see this word with the sense of composite unity elsewhere in Scripture
- Genesis 2:24
- “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall join to his wife: and they shall be **one** flesh.”

- We see echad again in Genesis 34:16
- “Then will we give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become **one** people.”

- Additionally we see echad again in Genesis 3:22:
- “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as **one** of us, to know good and evil:”

- The Hebrew word that would give more the sense of solitary oneness is:

- dyj y

yâchîyd

- Brown Driver and Briggs Definition:
- 1) only, only one, solitary, one (adjective)
 - 1a) only, unique, one
 - 1b) solitary
 - 1c) (TWOT) only begotten son
 - 2) one (substantive)

- Albert Barnes comments on the usage of this word in reference to Psalm 68:6

“**God setteth the solitary in families** - Margin, as in Hebrew, in a house. The word rendered solitary means properly one alone, as an only child; [Gen 22:2](#), [Gen 22:12](#), [Gen 22:16](#)”

Elohiym

- myhl a
- Elohiym is the masculine plural form of
- hwl a Elowahh
- This is the most common word translated as God in the Tenach.

- God often refers to himself using plural pronouns in the Tenach.
- Genesis 1:26
- “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- The word translated as make is the Hebrew word *ashaw* $h\upsilon$ [] which means to make or fashion.
- The precise form in which it appears is:
 - $h\upsilon$ [n
- The addition of the prefix \aleph makes the verb plural, hence “Let us make”

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- The word image is the Hebrew word מִלְּךָ tslehem.
- The actual form is וּמִלְּךָ
- ב at the beginning of the word is the preposition meaning “in”.
- וּמִן at the end for the word is a plural pronominal suffix making it literally “in the image

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- The word for likeness is the Hebrew word תְּמוּנָה
- Demooth means likeness or resemblance
- The form is וּתְמוּנָתִי
- כ is the preposition “like”.
- וּמִן First person plural pronominal suffix.

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- Verse 27 “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- Again we have the Hebrew word מִלְּךָ (ml'x) for image.
- This time the form is וּמִלְּךָ (wm'lx)
- וּ (w) is the third person singular masculine pronominal rendered as his.

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- Genesis 3:19
- “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us”,
- We have the Hebrew word *min* with the pronominal suffix *ִנִּי* hence the rendering of “Us”.

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- Genesis 11:7
- “Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- Go down is the Hebrew word *dry* Yarad
- The form is *hdrn*
- The addition of the prefix *ן* makes the verb plural.
- So we have the rendering of “Us go down.”

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- Isaiah 6:8
- “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying,
Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?
Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- The Hebrew word שׁוּׁלַח Shalach is the word for send.
- The form is שׁוּׁלַח־אֲנִי
- The first person singular is indicated by the pronominal prefix אֲנִי

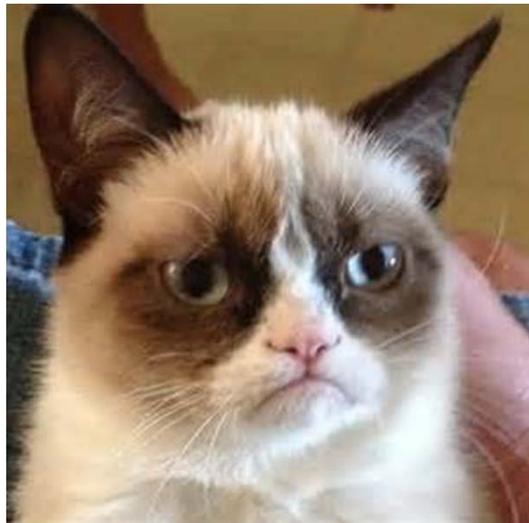
Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- Following the word for go (יָצָא) is the Hebrew
- לְ
- לְ The preposition meaning “for”
- נִי Pronominal suffix for the first person plural
“Us”

Pronominal prefixes and suffixes

- In all these verses where the plural pronoun occurs, even the Jewish Publication Society's English translation of the Tenach renders the pronouns in the plural.
- So, how do opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity, tap dance around these grammatical forms?

Pluralis Majesticus



We are not amused!

Plural of Majesty

- Grammarians such as Gesenius express the view that the plural when applied to God is the plural of majesty.
- Others such as Rabbi Tzvi Nassi refute this idea.

Plural of Majesty

“Everyone who is acquainted with the rudiments of the Hebrew and Chaldee languages, must know that God, in the holy writings, very often spoke of Himself in the plural. The passages are numerous, in which, instead of a grammatical agreement between the subject and predicate, we meet with a construction, which some modern grammarians, who possess more of the so-called philosophical than of the real knowledge of the Oriental languages, call a pluralis excellentiae. This helps them out of every apparent difficulty.”

Plural of Majesty

“Such a pluralis excellentiae was, however, a thing unknown to Moses and the prophets. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, David, and all the other kings throughout kynyt (Tenach) speak in the singular, and not as modern kings in the plural. They do not say we, but I, command as in Gen xli 41; Dan iii, 29, Ezra i. 2, etc.”

Plural of Majesty

- In his *Systematic Theology*, renowned theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer also weighs in:
- “The term Elohim is plural in form. For centuries many believers therefore assumed that this implied the Trinity. Opposition from Jews, who who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, and from some theologians however, has led to the alternate concept that Elohim is the plural of majesty and is not numerical.

Plural of Majesty

Though liberal theologians generally deny the trinitarian significance, it is probable that Elohim is a genuine plural though not always with the connotation of the Trinity in every passage.”

Plural of Majesty

“Hence Genesis 1:26 states the work of the Trinity: “

“The use of plural pronouns with Elohim in some cases and singular in others indicates that Elohim may be used both as a singular in which cases it refers to the essence of God, and in referring to the Trinity in which cases it indicates the three Persons.”

Plural of Majesty

“In the last analysis there is no sound argument prohibiting the concept of plurality in the title.”