

INSPIRATION AND THE TRINITY

William D. Barrick, Th.D.
Professor of Old Testament
The Master's Seminary

The inspired Scriptures identify a plurality of divine Persons associated with Yahweh. The First Person (God the Father) gives revelation to His Messenger (the Second Person or Son of God), who is the main Revelator in the OT. According to both OT and NT, the Holy Spirit superintends the writing (inspiration) of inspired (God-given) Scripture.

Introduction

Being an enthusiastic fan of William G. T. Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology*, I delight in his occasional citations from old sermons which he has either read or heard. With regard to the Trinity, Shedd quotes from such a sermon by an otherwise unidentified Dr. South: "as he that denies this fundamental article of the Christian religion may lose his soul, so he that much strives to understand it may lose his wits."¹ With this witticism embedded firmly in our minds, we shall pursue the topic no matter the risks.

Definitions for Trinitarian Terms

First of all, we must define key trinitarian terms in order to provide continuity for our examination of the subject itself. *Person* refers to the individual members of the Godhead. However, the term does not mean that *personhood* consists of completely distinct beings like Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel. Therefore, a *person* does not consist solely of individual interests, activities, or manifestations cohering in one *Person*, namely God. The writers of Scripture attribute the characteristics of *personality* or *personhood* to the different divine *Persons*. Each has emotions, intellect, and will.

¹ William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (1888; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 1:250.

With a little help from Shedd himself, we can also lay out two basic principles of Trinitarianism:

- (1) The great mystery of the Trinity is that “The one essence is simultaneously three persons, and the three persons are one essence.”²
- (2) Biblical Trinitarianism holds that “God is not a *unit*, but a *unity*.”³

This, in brief, defines what the Trinity is. Christian theology identifies the three Persons as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.⁴

The Significance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

Does the doctrine of the Trinity matter? Can the church afford to neglect it or alter it? Millard Erickson issues a warning to his readers that, “The position we take on the Trinity will have profound bearing on our Christology.”⁵ Since Christ Himself comprises the very core of the Christian faith, this factor alone should impress us with the high significance of Trinitarianism.

Augustine identified a weakness in Trinitarian doctrine as the likely result of a weak spirituality and recommended a remedy for those who struggle with the Trinitarian implications of the incarnation of Christ (*De Trinitate* 4:21, 31).⁶ That early church father comprehended that a person of faith understands the Trinity as a result of the work of God Himself in his or her heart and mind. Therefore, at the outset of our exploration of the Trinity in the Old Testament (OT) we ought to exam our own spiritual condition to ensure our spiritual capacity for rightly understanding the Scriptures’ testimony.

The Meaning of Inspiration

My assigned topic in this article addresses the role of the three Persons of the triune God in the inspiration of Scripture. Just as important as it is to define terms describing the Trinity, so also we must define what we mean by inspiration.

Inspiration identifies the work of God in giving written revelation to mankind. The key biblical text regarding inspiration is 2 Tim 3:16—“All Scripture [πᾶσα γραφή] is inspired by God [θεόπνευστος] and profitable [καὶ ὠφέλιμος] . . .”⁷ Note

² Ibid., 1:253.

³ Ibid., 1:254.

⁴ Using the numeric titles (first, second, and third persons) provides greater accuracy and consistency for distinctions in the eternal godhead. As Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:300 indicates, “The terms first, second, and third, applied to the persons, are terms of *order* and *relationship* only” (emphasis his).

⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 322.

⁶ Philip Schaff, ed., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, St. Augustine: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 3:86: “And if this is understood with difficulty, the mind must be purged by faith, by more and more abstaining from sins, and by doing good works, and by praying with the groaning of holy desires; that by profiting through the divine help, it may both understand and love.”

⁷ All Scripture references are from New American Standard Updated (NASU) unless noted.

that the phrase “inspired by God” is but one word in Greek and that word is an adjective modifying “Scripture.” In fact, please note that the next adjective (“profitable”) also modifies “Scripture.” Biblically, Scripture possesses the quality of being “inspired” or “God-breathed,” not the writers⁸—just as “profitable” is not a quality of the writers. The point of the word for “God-breathed” is that the Scriptures owe their “origin and contents to the divine breath, the Spirit of God.”⁹ Thus, Paul by the superintending work of the Spirit of God writes to Timothy that inspiration relates directly to inscripturation (the writing of Scripture). The apostle emphasizes written revelation rather than unwritten (merely spoken) revelation.¹⁰

In regard to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, the involvement of the members of the Trinity may overlap and simultaneously be distinct for each Person. The Bible reveals that the Persons of the Godhead act as both the authors and the subjects of the Scriptures. Thus, this study first looks at the involvement of the Trinity in the production of the Scriptures. Afterwards, we will turn to the examination of what the inspired Scriptures reveal concerning the multiplicity of divine Persons in the Godhead.

Persons of the Godhead Involved in Inspiration

The Third Person of the Godhead guided, directed, and superintended the human authors of Scripture,¹¹ as the following biblical texts demonstrate (**bold print** highlights references to the Persons of the Godhead):

- **“The Spirit of Yahweh**¹² spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2).
- “However, You bore with them for many years, And admonished them by

⁸ René Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*, trans. by Helen I. Needham (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 47: “*It is the Scripture, the text itself, which, according to Paul, is inspired*” (emphasis his).

⁹ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 302.

¹⁰ For more about the nature and role of unwritten revelation, see my 2011 national ETS presentation, “Conscience, Oral Tradition, Natural Religion, or Later Insertion?: Unwritten Revelation in Genesis 1–11” (ETS Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 2011).

¹¹ Some theological studies concerning the Holy Spirit in the OT fail to give adequate attention to this aspect of His work. E.g., Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995) spends much time on the relationship of the Spirit to prophecy in the OT, but neglects the topic of inspiration itself. Due to his charismatic theology Hildebrandt is more intent on dealing with the ecstatic nature of providing divine revelation than on explaining the Spirit’s role in superintending its inscripturation (ibid., 151–92).

¹² For the sake of accuracy, the writer has converted NASU’s “LORD” to “Yahweh,” which is the preferred transliteration of the Hebrew for this significant title of deity. In this fashion we can keep the two Hebrew titles, *Adonai* (= “Master” or “Lord”) and *Yahweh* (= the self-existent, eternal, covenant God) properly separate and distinct. For discussion of the meaning and form of *Yahweh*, see Terence Fretheim, “Yahweh,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:1295–1300 and R. Laird Harris, “The Pronunciation of the Tetragram,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. by John H. Skilton (n.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), 215–24.

Your Spirit through Your prophets” (Neh 9:30).

- “Then **the word of Yahweh**¹³ came to Jeremiah from **Yahweh**, saying, . . .” (Jer 34:12).
- “Then **the Spirit of Yahweh** fell upon me, and He said to me, ‘Say, “Thus says **Yahweh**, . . .”’” (Ezek 11:5).
- ““They made their hearts *like* flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which **Yahweh of hosts** had sent by **His Spirit** through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from Yahweh of hosts” (Zech 7:12).

From these passages readers of the OT can deduce that the Holy Spirit took a key role in inspiration. He initiated and superintended the writing (i.e., the inscripturation) of divine revelation. Note that David’s statement follows the archived text of Psalm 18 in 2 Samuel 22; the prayer of Nehemiah 9 follows on the heels of the public reading of the law of Moses in Nehemiah 8; God instructed both Jeremiah and Ezekiel to write the revelations He gave to them (Jer 30:2; 36:2; Ezek 2:7–3:11); and, the text of Zech 7:12 specifically mentions the written law. R. C. Sproul concludes that “The Spirit is not divorced from the Word in such a way as to reduce revelation to an exercise in subjectivism. The Spirit works *with* the word (*cum verbo*) and *through* the Word (*per verbum*), not *without* or *apart* from the Word (*sine verbo*).”¹⁴ The Word consists of that which has been written.

Theophanies or Huiophanies/Christophanies?

The Second Person of the Godhead also fulfilled a vital role in the production of the Bible. OT writers speak often of the appearance of God in some manifestation to His people for the purpose of delivering them, leading them, or communicating with them. One of the primary examples of this phenomenon involves the presence of God at Mt. Sinai (Exod 19). Other instances of divine manifestation arise with the ministry of “the angel of Yahweh” in passages like the following:

- **Genesis 16:7–13.** In this passage the narrator (Moses) himself (not Hagar) identifies the Messenger of Yahweh as Yahweh (“Then she called the name of Yahweh who spoke to her, . . .”; v. 13).
- **Exodus 3:2.** Later in history, the Messenger of Yahweh appears to Moses in a burning bush at Mt. Horeb in the Sinai. The narrator (again, Moses) declares that “God called to him from the midst of the bush.”
- **Judges 6:11–23.** The writer of the Book of Judges (not Gideon, nor the

¹³ Some biblical scholars take this as a title for the Second Person of the Godhead; e.g., Michael S. Heiser, “Theophany in the Old Testament,” in *Faithlife Study Bible*, by John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012), s.v. “Yahweh as the Word”; R. Todd Stanton, “Numbers 12:6-8: Its Contribution to the Study of Revelation and Theophany in the Old Testament” (ThM thesis, The Master’s Seminary, 2000). Cp. John 1:1–3 and J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols., ed. by Alan Hugh McNeile, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1929), 1:cxxxix.

¹⁴ R. C. Sproul, “The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. by Norman L. Geisler, 335–54 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 338.

Messenger of Yahweh) reports that “Yahweh looked at him and said” (v. 14).

Such theophanies seem to possess one significant feature: all of them “reveal, at least in a partial manner, something about [God] Himself, or His will, to the recipient.”¹⁵ Should we identify the divine Person in such appearances as the pre-incarnate Son of God (i.e., a Christophany)? James Borland’s definition of “Christophany” runs as follows: “those unsought, intermittent and temporary, visible and audible manifestations of God the Son in human form, by which God communicated something to certain conscious human beings on earth prior to the birth of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ When the biblical account associates “the Angel of Yahweh” with a theophany, “Messenger” is a better translation than “Angel,” because this title denotes the function or office of the individual, not His nature.¹⁷ In addition, He is spoken of as actually being God, He bears the name Yahweh, He speaks as God, He displays divine attributes and authority. Most significantly, however, He receives worship.¹⁸

The title “Son” appears to be a description of the temporary submission of the Second Person to the First Person (in His Fatherhood) for the purpose of the program of redemption, as determined within the counsel of the Godhead in eternity past. Shedd explains it this way: “It is a *trinitarian*, or *filial* subordination; that is, subordination in respect to order and relationship. As a relation, sonship is subordinate to fatherhood.”¹⁹ In actuality, the identification of the Second Person of the Godhead with the Angel (Messenger) of Yahweh²⁰ expresses the temporary submission of the Second Person to the First Person. It reflects the same concepts as Father and Son. The Messenger becomes the Servant of the One who sends Him. As Jesus explains, “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:18). This temporary, functional subordination likewise accounts for the title “Servant of Yahweh” in the prophetic books of the OT. In other words, the OT already reveals the order of the Persons of the Godhead by such titles. The New Testament (NT), therefore, does not comprise the first revelation of the interrelationships between the Persons of the triune God.

¹⁵ James A. Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Fearn, UK: Mentor, 1999), 24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37–42.

¹⁹ Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:301. Such a concept is not in any way related to the heresy of Arian subordinationism, in which some Persons of the Godhead are inferior to others. See, also, Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 338: “The function of one member of the Trinity may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members, but that does not mean he is in any way inferior in essence.”

²⁰ Surprisingly, Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 83–84 appears to deny deity to the Angel of Yahweh: “The angel of the Lord, while representing God almost to the point of identifying with him, is not God but only His agent, albeit one with supernatural power and a typological role that for Christians, at least, finds antitypical fulfillment in Jesus Christ.”

The Roles of the Divine Persons in Inspiration

This is just the point at which we may now understand the role of the First Person of the Godhead in the production of Scripture. He sends His Word by His Messenger. The Son Himself clarifies the Father's role in John 12:49, "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak." In 14:10 Jesus yet again reveals that role when He says, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works." In His high priestly prayer (John 17), the Son of God declares the faithfulness with which He passed the words of His Father to His own disciples:

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and **they have kept Your word**. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for **the words which You gave Me I have given to them**; and they received *them* and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. . . . I have given them **Your word**; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. . . . Sanctify them in the truth; **Your word** is truth."

As we consider the matter of the interrelationship between the Father and the Son, we also need to observe a degree of theological caution. Bruce Ware asks that we *beware* of reducing the immanent (or, essential) Trinity to the economic (or, functional) Trinity. The former must always be understood as logically, temporally, and theologically prior to the latter.²¹

The NT addresses the matter with clarity. The apostle John states that no human being had ever seen God the Father at any time in history (John 1:18, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*"). "Explained" in the Greek (ἐξηγήσατο, from ἐξηγέομαι) is the word from which we derive the verb "exegete" and its noun, "exegesis." Literally, the Son of God "exegeted" the Father to mankind. That "exegesis" also occurs in the Christophanies of the OT. Jeffrey Niehaus stresses the fact that "God is not silent when he appears as Savior or as Judge."²² As another scholar, Millar Burrows, words it, "God appears in order to speak."²³ That divine Spokesman is the Son of God Himself, the very One whom the apostle John describes in the opening to his gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Yes, the God who speaks is the Second Person of the Godhead, the pre-

²¹ Bruce A. Ware, "How Shall We Think About the Trinity?" in *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, ed. by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 253–77 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 256–59.

²² Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East*, SOTBT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 29.

²³ Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946), 28.

incarnate Messiah—the same who spoke the world into existence in Genesis 1 (cp. John 1:2–3, 10).

Thus, the Revelator in both testaments is the same Person of the Godhead—the Second Person. This consists of a personal presence (theophany) at the time of imparting revelation to a prophet. E. J. Young declares that the prophet was one who “believed that he had been the recipient of an objective revelation. . . . that he had received a message which God had given to him.”²⁴ Indeed, Young makes the point even more emphatically when he says, “they actually were the recipients of Divine revelation.”²⁵ In agreement with this view of prophetic revelation, Pieter Verhoef observes that a “classical definition of a prophecy was given by Micaiah . . . when he responded . . . : ‘As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me’ (1 Kgs 22:14; cf. 2 Chron 18:13).”²⁶ He even goes so far as to declare that in the schools of the prophets in Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho “the subject matter could not have been to teach the prophets how to become a prophet, how to receive the revelation of God, because the content of their messages as prophets could not be learned, but could only be received.”²⁷ In most situations in the OT the pre-incarnate Son gives that revelation directly to the prophet. The Spirit normally plays a secondary role in the prophets’ recording of that revelation.²⁸ Therefore, we may summarize the divine Persons’ individual roles in inspiration as follows: the Father sends His Messenger (the pre-incarnate Son) to His people with the divine message and the Holy Spirit superintends the inscripturation of that message. While this structure of trinitarian involvement in inspiration seems to faithfully represent core functions for each Person, there yet remain some areas in which their functions overlap. For example, David says, “The Spirit of Yahweh spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2). There are times when the Spirit’s role is very near to that of the Son’s.

The Inspired Scriptures’ Testimony Concerning the Trinity

Since God gave (inspired) the Scriptures, they are profitable for doctrine or teaching (2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, we can depend upon the God-given Scriptures to teach us accurately concerning the nature of the Godhead and the identification of its Persons. Throughout the Scriptures of the OT and NT, the writers make reference to distinctions between the Persons in the Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit appear as separate Persons with their own individual operations. In addition, the biblical

²⁴ Edward J. Young, *My Servants the Prophets* (1952; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 175. Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, 155 makes the same observation.

²⁵ Young, *My Servants the Prophets*, 176.

²⁶ P. A. Verhoef, “Prophecy,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren, 4:1067–78 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1071–72.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1073.

²⁸ In his chapter on “The Trinity and Revelation,” Tim Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity: Why Father, Son and Spirit are Good News*, rev. 2nd ed. (2010; repr., Purcellville, VA: Good Book Company, 2013), 119–31 misses this distinction between revelation and inscripturation. The triune God participates in revelation, inspiration, and inscripturation, not in revelation alone.

writers ascribe divine attributes to those Persons, including the involvement of all three in the process of revelation and inscription.²⁹ Based upon such evidence, it is this writer's firm conviction that *the unprejudiced mind cannot doubt the existence of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead without impugning the clarity, the inerrancy, and the inspiration of the Scriptures*. Any discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity must begin and end with what the Bible declares. It must be the sole court of appeal.

Some theologians, however, express extreme skepticism regarding any concept of the Trinity in the OT and even question its existence in the gospel narratives.³⁰ A popular pamphlet on the Trinity only refers to OT texts to demonstrate the deity of Christ, but provides no indication at all that the OT itself testifies clearly to a plurality of Persons in the Godhead.³¹ Have they correctly understood the biblical witness? Scripture alone contains the revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity—natural revelation provides no key or clue to this major article of Christian faith. Perhaps Lewis Sperry Chafer's observation summarizes the reason why some theologians fail to see the Trinity in the OT: "No argument has been advanced against the Trinitarian conception other than that it does not conform to the limitations of the mind of man."³² In other words, rejection of the Trinity in the OT stems from the fact that some theologians have difficulty allowing the writers of the OT (within their supposedly very primitive ancient Near Eastern environment) the ability to write of sophisticated theological concepts supposedly originating with Christianity in the NT. Usually, these theologians buttress their line of reasoning with constant appeals to a history of religion and to a documentary view of multiple editors for individual books of the OT.³³

First of all, the reader of Scripture must face the reality that any denial of plurality of divine Persons impugns the integrity of Jesus Himself with regard to His knowledge and His words. John 17 records the high priestly prayer of Jesus in which He says to the First Person, "Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (v. 5). By the phrase "with You," Jesus implies "life in the bosom of the Godhead" in contrast to His incarnation ("on the

²⁹ Cf. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (1947; repr., Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1969), 1:273.

³⁰ E.g., R. W. L. Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus*, CSIC (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 236, "a trinitarian theology must remember always to keep the Old Testament and gospel narratives in the foreground. Trinitarian theology always tends to locate in eternity that which was achieved in time." Although Broughton Knox, *The Everlasting God* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009), 67 believes that the Gospels do reveal the Trinity, he is convinced that the doctrine of the Trinity "arose from the Christian experience of God in Jesus Christ and which was taught indeed by Christ himself." In other words, Knox seems to deny that the OT reveals the plurality of divine Persons.

³¹ Robert M. Bowman, Jr., et al., *The Trinity* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 1999).

³² Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:274.

³³ Examples of this mode of thinking can be seen in extensive entries on רוּחַ (*rûah*, "S/spirit") in the less evangelical theological dictionaries: S. Tengström and H. J. Fabry, "רוּחַ *rûah*," in *TDOT*, ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. by David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 13:365–402; R. Albertz and C. Westermann, "רוּחַ *rûah* spirit," in *TLOT*, ed. by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. by Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1202–20.

earth,” v. 4).³⁴ Jesus openly claims to have been present before creation³⁵ and to have possessed a pre-incarnate glory equivalent to the Father’s glory. He asks that the Father restore His former state of being and position³⁶—that which He possessed prior to creation. If no plurality of Persons exists in the Godhead, then Jesus spoke falsely and could be accused of blasphemy. In verse 24 He says, “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” With this statement Jesus once again refers to His existence before the creation of the world, to His glory, and to the love which the Father had for Him in their interpersonal relationship within the Godhead. An additional factor makes its appearance: the divine authority of the Second Person. “I desire” comprises a majestic expression of Jesus’ divine will.³⁷

Jesus’ prayer alone should settle the issue regarding multiple divine Persons in the Godhead. As Chafer points out, denial of the existence of the Trinity dishonors Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Scriptures themselves.³⁸ Richard Watson declared that, “[T]he importance of the doctrine of the holy trinity may be finally argued from the manner in which the denial of it would affect *the credit of the Holy Scriptures* themselves; for if this doctrine be not contained in them, their tendency to mislead is obvious.”³⁹ A rejection of the Trinity must, of necessity, involve the denial of Christ’s deity. The same may be said regarding the deity of the Holy Spirit and His identification as a Person of the Godhead—not to mention impugning the Spirit’s superintending work in the production of the Scriptures.

NT Citation of OT Texts Regarding Plurality of Divine Persons

Both the OT and the NT are Scripture and, thus, the inspired Word of God. How does the inspired NT use the inspired OT? The NT frequently appeals to the OT in order to declare the identity of the Messiah as one of the Persons of the Godhead. Such passages reveal a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, as the following passages demonstrate (note the **bold font**):

³⁴ Thus observes Bernard, *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2:563.

³⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII–XXI): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AYB 20A (1974; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 742 takes the verse as a reference to “pre-creational glory in the fellowship of the Father and the Son.”

³⁶ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, rev. ed., Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 234 uses the phrase “former status.”

³⁷ Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII–XXI)*, 772. Cf. Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 3:148–49 (emphasis is Pink’s), “Here for the first time in this prayer Christ says ‘I will.’ It was a word of authority, becoming Him who was God as well as man. He speaks of this as His right, on account of His *purchase* and of the *covenant* transaction between the Father and the Son concerning those given to Him. ‘I will’ comported with the *authority* (17:2) which the Father has given Him over all flesh and the *glory* into which He has entered (17:5, 22).”

³⁸ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:278–82.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:281. Richard Watson, *Institutes*, 1:462–63.

- Mark 12:35–37 cites Ps 110:1.
And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, “How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in **the Holy Spirit**, ‘**THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD**, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.”’ David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son?” And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.
- Luke 4:14–21 cites Isa 61:1–2.
And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, **THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME**, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF **THE LORD**.” And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”
- Heb 1:8–9 cites Ps 45:6 and 8.
But of **the Son** *He says*, “YOUR THRONE, O **GOD**, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE **GOD, YOUR GOD**, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.”
- Heb 5:5–6 cites Ps 2:7 and 110:4.
So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, “YOU ARE **MY SON**, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”; just as He says also in another *passage*, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.”

If the NT writers skew the words of the OT to make them mean something else, their words are not to be trusted. If the NT is “God-breathed” Scripture, then that inspiration guarantees their accuracy and integrity. If there is no plurality of Persons in the Godhead, the NT writers have misinterpreted the OT and deceived its readers. But, God cannot lie and He is the ultimate Author of the Scriptures. He is trustworthy, so His Word is trustworthy. He is without error, so His Word must be without error.

Inspired Grammar: Plural Nouns and Pronouns

The Hebrew title *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) does not suffice as proof of the Trinity. Biblical writers make the case far more emphatically by the use of plural pronouns and by the multiple identifications of distinct Persons. Two first-person plurals punctuate the accounts of the creation and the fall of mankind in the Genesis account (1:26 and 3:22; see also 11:7). Whether these plurals are taken as plurals of majesty, plurals of

self-address (deliberation⁴⁰), trinitarian plurals, or references to a council of spirit beings, the references draw attention to the significance of the events with which the text associates them.⁴¹ The account indicates that the creation and fall of mankind comprise notable events pertinent to a proper theological understanding of who God is, what deeds God has performed (both in creation and in setting about to redeem fallen mankind), who man is, and what man has caused by his disobedience to his Creator. Such plural pronouns also occur outside Genesis (e.g., Isa 6:8, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”). These OT occurrences might be more accurately compared with the use of the first person-plural in NT passages like John 14:23, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We** will come to him and make Our abode with him.’”

Specific Texts in the OT

Having seen the involvement of a plurality of divine Persons in the inspiration of Scripture, we may now look at what that inspired Scripture reveals about the Trinity itself. Various texts within the OT teach a plurality of Persons in the Godhead. Some passages mention all three Persons;⁴² others merely attribute deity to the Persons individually. Since the NT is replete with examples of both types of texts, most theologians lean heavily on the NT for the biblical evidence. However, one should never neglect the clarity with which the OT speaks on this doctrinal issue.

⁴⁰ William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 50, explain that this involves a speaker “conferring or consulting with himself.”

⁴¹ S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis, with Introduction and Notes* (New York: Edwin S. Gorham, 1904), 14, remarks that God adopts “this unusual and significant mode of expression” in order to introduce the account of man’s creation with solemnity. Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, NCBC (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 44, agrees that the “lofty words of v. 26 make this event distinctive” John Peter Lange, *Genesis or, the First Book of Moses*, trans. by Tayler Lewis and A. Gosman, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, electronic ed. (1864; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 173 lists five different ways to understand these first-person plurals, but concludes that the carrying of the plural into “our image” might more accurately point to “a distinction in the divine personality.” Hebraists point out that the so-called “plural of majesty” applies primarily to nouns and that it is uncertain whether that applies also to plural verbs or pronouns; cf. James McKeown, *Genesis*, THOTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 26; Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. and rev. by T. Muraoka, *Subsidia Biblica* 14/I–II (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993), 2:376 (§114e n. 1). See Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, with Charles Yu (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 212–13 for an example of a treatment of this issue by a theologian who rejects any association of “the Spirit of God” in the OT with a Person of the Godhead. Waltke takes references to “the spirit of God/Yahweh” as references to God’s power which He did not reveal as the Holy Spirit (as a divine Person) until the coming of Christ (*ibid.*, 619).

⁴² In the NT: Matt 3:16–17; 28:19; John 14:16; 15:26; 1 Cor 12:4–6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 2:18; 4:4–6; 1 Pet 1:2; Jude 20–21; Rev 1:4–5.

Passages that Identify Three Distinct Divine Persons by Name or by Deed

Interestingly, the OT never seems to speak of more than three distinct divine Persons. Most texts refer to two Persons when multiple Persons are present. A few, however, include all three:

Isaiah 42:1. “Behold, **My Servant**, whom **I** uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put **My Spirit** upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.”

Three separate divine Persons (highlighted in **bold font**—my emphasis): the Servant of Yahweh (= Messiah, the incarnate Son of God), Yahweh Himself (the First Person, God the Father), and Yahweh’s Spirit (the Third Person).⁴³

Isaiah 63:7–10. “I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of **Yahweh**, the praises of **Yahweh**, According to all that **Yahweh** has granted us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, Which He has granted them according to His compassion And according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, ‘Surely, they are My people, Sons who will not deal falsely.’ So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, And **the angel of His presence** saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved **His Holy Spirit**; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.”

Note the presence of three separate divine Persons: Yahweh, the Angel (= Messenger) of His presence, and His Holy Spirit. These are the First, Second, and Third Persons of the Trinity respectively.⁴⁴

Inter-relationships between Divine Persons

Shedd identifies twelve actions and relations that serve as proof that there are three Persons of the trinitarian Godhead. These twelve demonstrate that one Person

⁴³ See the following for similar interpretations of this text as Trinitarian: Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols., NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 3:108–11; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, NAC 15B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 160–62; Geoffrey W. Grogan, “Isaiah,” in *EBC*, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin, 6:3–354 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 254–55.

⁴⁴ See the following: Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:483; Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 669–73; Grogan, “Isaiah,” 342. Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. and ed. by William Hendriksen (1977; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 258: “The clearest threefold distinction within the Divine Being is found in Ps. 33:6; Is. 61:1; 63:9–12; and Hag. 2:5–6.” Bavinck’s defense of the revealed plurality of divine Persons in the OT provides readers with his explanation of the progressive revelation of biblical teaching regarding the Trinity as well as a catalog of numerous OT passages that contribute to the discussion (*ibid.*, 255–63). Subsequent to this section, Bavinck also looks at the NT, a variety of aspects contributing to the biblical teaching, the history of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, and a discussion of the distinction between the divine essence and divine Persons (*ibid.*, 263–334).

may do or experience something personally which is not personal to another Person of the Godhead:

One divine Person loves another, John 3:35; dwells in another, John 14:10, 11; suffers from another, Zach. 13:7; knows another, Matt. 11:27; addresses another, Heb. 1:8; is the way to another, John 14:6; speaks of another, Luke 3:22; glorifies another, John 17:5; confers with another, Gen. 1:26, 11:7; plans with another, Isa. 9:6; sends another, Gen. 16:7, John 14:26; rewards another, Phil. 2:5–11; Heb. 2:9.⁴⁵

In addition to Shedd's examples, there are a number of OT texts which mention the same kinds of inter-relationships. Some of the texts cited in the following pages could be classified under more than one of the headings used to sort them.

Passages with One Person of the Godhead Acting in Regard to Another

Different distinct Persons within the Godhead display specific actions that make one Person the object of the action of another Person:

- “Then **Yahweh** came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of **the Spirit** who was upon him and placed *Him* upon the seventy elders” (Num 11:25).
- “You are **Yahweh God**, Who chose Abraham. . . You gave **Your good Spirit** to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth” (Neh 9:7, 20).
- “O **God**, . . . do not take **Your Holy Spirit** from me” (Ps 51:10, 11 [Heb. 12, 13]).
- “O **Yahweh**, . . . You send forth **Your Spirit**, they are created . . .” (Ps 104:24, 30).
- “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. **The Spirit of Yahweh** will rest on **Him**” (Isa 11:1–2).
- “. . . for **I** will have poured out **My Spirit** on the house of Israel,’ declares **the Lord Yahweh**” (Ezek 39:29).
- “**I** will pour out **My Spirit** on all mankind; . . .” (Joel 2:28, 29 [Heb. 3:1, 2]).

Or, one Person uses another Person as the means or instrument for a divinely appointed action:

- “However, **You** bore with them for many years, And admonished them by **Your Spirit** through Your prophets” (Neh 9:30).
- “The hand of **Yahweh** was upon me, and **He** brought me out by **the Spirit of Yahweh**” (Ezek 37:1).

⁴⁵ Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:279.

Passages in which One Person of the Godhead Speaks about Another

Divine Persons often speak about each other, especially when addressing the writers of Scripture or the recipients of divine revelation:

- “**Yahweh** said, ‘**My Spirit** shall not strive with man forever . . .’” (Gen 6:30).
- “**Yahweh** spoke unto Moses saying, ‘. . . And I have filled him with **the Spirit of God** in wisdom, understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship. . . .’” (Exod 31:1, 3; cf. 35:31).
- “**Yahweh** therefore said to Moses, ‘. . . and I will take of **the Spirit** who is upon you . . .’” (Num 11:16, 17).
- “So **Yahweh** said to Moses, ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is **the Spirit**, . . .’” (Num 27:18).
- “I will surely tell of the decree of **Yahweh**: **He** said to **Me**, ‘**You are My Son**, Today I have begotten You’” (Ps 2:7). When does God ever provide a blessing for someone who “kisses” a human king and flees to him for refuge? Verse 12 makes it clear that the Son is the Son of God.
- “‘Woe to the rebellious children,’ declares **Yahweh**, ‘Who execute a plan, but not Mine, And make an alliance, but not of **My Spirit**, . . .’” (Isa 30:1).
- “Behold, **My Servant**, whom **I** uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put **My Spirit** upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations” (Isa 42:1).
- “Come near to **Me**, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the **Lord Yahweh** has sent **Me**, and **His Spirit**” (Isa 48:16).
- “And now says **Yahweh**, who formed **Me** from the womb to be **His Servant**, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (for I am honored in the sight of Yahweh, and **My God** is My strength)” (Isa 49:5; cp. v. 7).
- “As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says **Yahweh**: “**My Spirit** which is upon you” (Isa 59:21).
- “Then **the Spirit of Yahweh** fell upon me, and He said to me, ‘Say, “Thus says **Yahweh**, . . .’”” (Ezek 11:5).
- “. . . declares **the Lord Yahweh**, ‘. . . I will put **My Spirit** within you . . .’” (Ezek 36:23, 27; cf. 37:14).
- “‘. . . for **I** will have poured out **My Spirit** on the house of Israel,’ declares **the Lord Yahweh**” (Ezek 39:29).
- “. . . says **Yahweh of hosts**. . . ‘. . . **My Spirit** is abiding in your midst . . .’” (Hag 2:4, 5).
- “Then he said to me, ‘This is the word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel saying, “Not by might nor by power, but by **My Spirit**,” says **Yahweh of hosts**’” (Zech 4:6).
- “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **the Spirit of grace and of supplication**, so that they will look on **Me**

whom they have pierced . . .” (Zech 12:10).

Passages in which One Person of the Godhead Speaks to Another

Divine Persons carry on conversation with one another within the Godhead:

- “**Yahweh** says to **my Lord**: ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet’ (Ps 110:1).

Passages Identifying More than One Person of the Godhead

Some text units within the OT mention more than one divine Person in a single context:

- “In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and **the Spirit of God** was moving over the surface of the waters” (Gen 1:1–2). The OT itself commences with a reference to “the Spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2 following immediately upon the heels of the declaration that “God created the heavens and the earth” (v. 1).
- “Then **Yahweh** rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from **Yahweh** out of heaven” (Gen 19:24). Note where the first Yahweh is located—on the earth (cp. 18:22, 33; 19:27), not in heaven.⁴⁶ This text does not stand alone in distinguishing different Persons who both bear the title Yahweh—it is merely the only single verse to bring this out by itself. It is also the first such reference in the OT canon.⁴⁷
- “O **Yahweh**, . . . Where can I go from **Your Spirit**?” (Ps 139:4, 7).
- “You are my **God**; Let **Your good Spirit** lead me on level ground” (Ps 143:10).
- “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace**. . . . The zeal of **Yahweh of hosts** will accomplish this” (Isa 9:6, 7). This “son” is a child who was born, but he also is called “Mighty God, Eternal Father.” The title “Son” appears to be a description of the temporary submission of the Second Person to the First Person (in His Fatherhood) for the purpose of the program of redemption, determined within the counsel of the Godhead

⁴⁶ See my article, “The Integration of OT Theology with Bible Translation,” *MSJ* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 26–29 for a fuller treatment of this text.

⁴⁷ Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, 258 cites Gen 19:24 as important OT passages indicating “a distinction within the Divine Being.”

in eternity past. As Shedd explains, “It is a *trinitarian*, or *filial* subordination; that is, subordination in respect to order and relationship. As a relation, sonship is subordinate to fatherhood.”⁴⁸

- “For the mouth of **Yahweh** has commanded, and **His Spirit** has gathered them” (Isa 34:16).
- “Behold **the Lord Yahweh** will come with might, . . . Who has directed **the Spirit of Yahweh**, . . . ?” (Isa 40:10, 13).
- “**The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh** is upon me, Because **Yahweh** has anointed me” (Isa 61:1).
- “But they rebelled And grieved **His Holy Spirit**; Therefore **He** turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them” (Isa 63:10).
- “**The Spirit of Yahweh** gave them rest. So **You** led Your people, To make for Yourself a glorious name” (Isa 63:14).
- “‘Awake, O sword, against **My Shepherd**, And against the man, **My Associate**,’ Declares **Yahweh of hosts**. ‘Strike **the Shepherd** that the sheep may be scattered; And **I** will turn My hand against the little ones” (Zech 13:7). “Associate” in this prophetic passage refers to one who is equal to the person with whom he is associated. In this case, the Messiah is equal to Yahweh of hosts!⁴⁹ That associate is His Shepherd as well as being a human being (“the man”).

Moberly, who has difficulty seeing the Trinity in the OT or even in the Gospels (see above), declares that “The tensions between time and eternity within trinitarian understanding are part of the mystery of God, where the theologian’s task is not to dissolve the tensions but to depict them faithfully.”⁵⁰ We agree and insist upon depicting what the Scriptures say that indicates a plurality of divine Persons and let the tensions stand which make it difficult for some professed evangelicals to see the Trinity in the OT. The passages that, on the surface, seem to give testimony of the plurality of divine Persons are too numerous to be an insignificant witness.

A Problem Text

A variety of biblical texts appear in discussions and debates about the Trinity. Some texts exhibit clarity, while others remain points of contention due to lack of adequate exegetical evidence. As James Montgomery Boice reminds us,

What we know about the Trinity we know only because of God’s revelation of it in the Bible, and even then we don’t know it well. In fact, so prone are we to

⁴⁸ Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:301. Theologians also refer to this relationship as the economic Trinity. Such a concept is not in any way related to the heresy of Arian subordinationism, in which some Persons of the Godhead are inferior to others. See, also, footnote 19, above.

⁴⁹ Kenneth L. Barker, “Zechariah,” in *EBC*, rev. ed., ed. by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, 8:721–833 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 821.

⁵⁰ Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith*, 236.

make mistakes in dealing with this subject that we must be specially careful lest we go beyond or misrepresent what we find in Scripture.⁵¹

Illustrative of Boice's observation is the fact that theologians hotly debate the intent and meaning of Deut 6:4, "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God is one Yahweh" (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד; *šēma' yisrā'ēl yhwh 'ēlōhênû yhwh 'ehād*). A variety of ways to translate this text compete for acceptance, but there are only two basic views regarding any trinitarian discussion: (1) the text speaks of the uniqueness of Yahweh, or (2) it describes the unity of Yahweh. Daniel Block offers the most cogent set of significant arguments for the former viewpoint.⁵² The range of translations can be confusing:

- "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one." [Moberly, McConville]
- "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God is one Yahweh." [ASV, RSV n., NIV n., Lohfink, Weinfeld, Craigie]
- "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is one." [NASB, NIV, RSV, Janzen, Merrill]
- "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is One/Unique." [Gordon, Dahood]
- "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God; Yahweh alone." [Ibn Ezra, NRSV, NJPS, Tigay]⁵³

Arguments for the second viewpoint focus on the meaning of the numerical adjective אֶחָד (*'ehād*) and the fact that יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ (*yhwh 'ēlōhênû*) should be kept as a single title. According to Boice, the word אֶחָד (*'ehād*) "is never used in the Hebrew Bible of a stark singular entity."⁵⁴ However, other defenders of the meaning of *unity* (allowing for a plurality of divine Persons in Yahweh) rather than *singularity* (limiting the meaning to a statement about Yahweh *alone* being the God of Israel) are more cautious. Consider, for example, David L. Cooper's statement:

⁵¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 110.

⁵² Daniel I. Block, "How Many Is God? An Investigation into the Meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4–5," *JETS* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 193–212.

⁵³ See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 135 (§8.4.2g) for a listing of these views and identification of some of their adherents. The list above is not taken verbatim from their list.

⁵⁴ Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 111. Boice commences his argumentation for a plurality of divine Persons in the OT by referring to and briefly discussing Deut 6:4—even in the light of his own warning about debatable texts.

While the fundamental idea is that of a compound unity or the oneness of different elements or integral parts, it came to be used to express one in the absolute sense as the numeral one, which fact is seen by numerous examples throughout the Tenach. This fact being true, it becomes necessary to study the context wherever it occurs in order to ascertain which idea is conveyed in each particular case. To fail to observe this precaution and to read the idea of oneness in the absolute sense of the word into every example where it occurs is to ignore logic, to smash grammar, and to outlaw ordinary intelligence and common sense.⁵⁵

It is true that the uniqueness of Yahweh would have been clearer had לַבְּדֹד (lēbaddô) been employed or יְהִי (yāhîd).⁵⁶ One often neglected aspect of this debate deserves attention, however, and that is the Markan context itself. In the immediately following context of Mark 12:29 Jesus forcefully cites Ps 110:1 to demand that His hearers consider what it means for David to call the Messiah his “Lord” (Mark 12:36). Rikk E. Watts observes a significant relationship between Jesus’ use of Ps 110:1 and Deut 6:4 as follows,

What is striking is that Jesus has just responded to the good scribe by declaring the Lord our God, the Lord is one (12:29). What then might it mean for Mark’s Jesus himself immediately thereafter to draw attention to David’s calling the Messiah “Lord”?⁵⁷

It seems that one possible answer to Watts’ question involves the intent of Jesus to demonstrate that the “one” in Deut 6:4 includes two Lords.

It is not the purpose of this study to resolve the issues involved in the debate over Deut 6:4. Rather, let this brief discussion be the catalyst for further detailed examination. As we have seen with the near context of Mark 12:29, depths to this subject matter exist that have yet to be explored adequately. No matter where one comes out on this text, it is difficult to be dogmatic, so the better part of wisdom suggests that we not yet claim Deut 6:4 for one side or the other. In fact, there are other competing views besides those of either *unity* or *singularity*—others argue for a meaning of *uniqueness* (in the sense of incomparability) or even *exclusivity* (meaning that there is only one God for Israel to worship). Some scholars combine two or more of these four concepts in their interpretation of this text.⁵⁸ No matter how one

⁵⁵ David L. Cooper, *The God of Israel*, rev. ed., Messianic Series (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1945).

⁵⁶ Both the Septuagint (LXX) of Deut 6:4 and the NT (Mark 12:29) read, Ἄκουε, Ἰσραὴλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἑμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν. Unfortunately, the Greek translation itself does not help to advance the argument in either direction.

⁵⁷ Rikk E. Watts, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 111–249 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 222.

⁵⁸ E.g., Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 26–28, 45; Michael A. Grisanti, “Deuteronomy,” in *EBC*, rev. ed., ed. by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, 2:457–814 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 555–56. Grisanti’s reflection upon Mark 12:29 makes no mention of its proximity to Jesus’ citation of Ps 110:1 or its potential implications regarding a plurality of Persons in the Godhead.

might handle the problem of Deut 6:4, however, the OT's witness to the plurality of the Persons of the Godhead remains firmly positive with exceptional detail.

Conclusion

The First Person (God the Father) gives revelation to His Messenger (the Second Person or Son of God), who is the main Revelator in the OT. NT writers cite OT texts for the deity of Jesus Christ, who took the role of the Messenger of Yahweh before His incarnation. He is the pre-incarnate Word of God, the Spokesperson for the Godhead. According to both OT and NT, the Holy Spirit superintends the writing (inspiration) of inspired (God-given) Scripture.

The inspired Scriptures identify a plurality of divine Persons associated with Yahweh. The Scriptures depict the Persons of the Godhead acting with regard to one another, speaking about one another, speaking to one another, and jointly acting in a variety of historical and prophetic settings. Some of the clearest examples occur in the NT, but that does not mean that the OT is silent about a multiplicity of divine Persons. OT texts speak of multiple Persons of the Godhead, but never more than three. Just as in the NT, the term "Trinity" is never used in the OT. But, just as in the reading of the NT the identification of three Persons of the Godhead occurs, so also the OT reveals three divine Persons. The two testaments are in complete agreement.

At this point we shall conclude this study with a reminder of this doctrine's *practicality* to our everyday Christian walk.⁵⁹ The three Persons of the triune Godhead brought all things into existence in creation and are still involved in its preservation and the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth. All three Persons carry vital roles in the work of salvation both past, present, and future. Even our prayer life reflects the three Persons of the Godhead and their role in the will of God revealed and applied to the believers' prayers. All three divine Persons carry out work with regard to the ongoing witness and service of the church—especially seen in their three-part involvement in the distribution and exercise of spiritual gifts. No study could be more practical than the study of the Trinity. Believers should study the Trinity in the Bible (both OT and NT) as an obligation of our obedience to the inspired Scriptures and of our worship of the triune God of the Scriptures.

⁵⁹ I am indebted to Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 10–15 for many of the elements which I list here.