

2024 Trinity

In seminary they ask you what heresy tempts you the most. And the students debate what answer they want from you or really don't want. I answered that the trinitarian heresies tempt me the most. Because it doesn't make any sense! One plus One plus One equals One? "Well, if you divide it into thirds..." nope, can't do that. "The fullness (not a third) of the deity dwells in Christ." That's Colossians 1 and 2. "Well, if He just morphs forms between persons, God is the Father One day, the Son another, and the Spirit another..." Nope, Jesus prays to the Father. And all three persons are present at His baptism. They exist at the same time. That is true in the beginning where the Spirit was hovering and the Word, Jesus, was God and was with God. And it always will be true: God, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

So how do you explain it? And why does it even matter?

There is a catch phrase in theology that goes: all theology is Christology. Which is to say, It all seems to always come back to Jesus in the end. If you deny the Trinity, basically you are denying Jesus is who he said he is. You don't find anyone denying that the Father is God, because that's obvious. Nor the Spirit, because we can just imagine him as God's "force or energy or something" (which isn't actually true, He is a real person, who is grieved and at work).

Nevertheless all the "answers" to the trinity, to try and make it make sense, almost always attack Christ and make him some "lesser being, a super angel, or a demi god."

But the second you do that, the second you make him not quite, but almost, true God, now you've called him a liar. Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I AM." And he is not just bad at grammar. He is saying he is the I AM, Yahweh, of the burning bush. And the pharisees who hear him say it know exactly what he is saying, so they tear their robes and accuse him of blasphemy

because they don't think he is true God. But he sure said he was. They think he is a liar. And so does everyone who says he isn't true God.

Jesus says, "You will see me coming on the clouds on the last day." "No one can forgive sins but God alone," and boom, he forgives sins. Revelation 1, "I am the Alpha and Omega (Is that God? Yes!) the One who was dead but is now alive!" That's Jesus. These are divinity claims, folks.

And you can debate how important it is to get all your ducks in a row regarding the trinity, and sometimes we mess it up, because it's a difficult concept, and I am not even saying we should jump down anyone's throat if they mess up a prayer. I am saying that it is dangerous to stubbornly call Jesus a liar. And the Church throughout time has no such practice. You don't get to call Jesus a liar. He is risen from the dead and every word of his is true, he is truth.

And so if you want to talk Trinity, the best thing I've found, is just talk Jesus. Show them what he said, that he is divine. Show the Scriptures screaming it out! Because if Jesus is God, and the Father is obviously God, and obviously there is only one God (that's all over the scriptures), well, then the Trinity falls into place. It has to.

So just go to Jesus. That's what Peter does today.

He quotes the Psalm which describes how God "will not let his Holy One see Corruption." David wrote it, is it talking about David? How could it be? Peter asks, since David's tomb is still with them – indeed you can go see it today. And I bet his body in there is a bit decayed to say the least. And so who is this Holy One of God, greater than David? None other than Christ the risen One. And people say there is no Trinity in the Old Testament? Not hardly.

He quotes another psalm of David. "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand." David wrote this one too. So David has two Lords? Yes! Who could that second Lord be? A greater

King than him in his day? No, David doesn't bow to another king in his day. Could it be a descendent of his? Must be, but wouldn't his descendants normally bow to him as their senior, as the great king? Which kingly descendent of his is so great David would call him Lord? Peter has the answer for that doesn't he? Jesus. Born in Bethlehem, risen and ascended to, as the psalm says, don't miss this: to sit at the Right hand of the Father. Equal on the Dias to him. And there's no trinity in the Old Testament? Not hardly.

Let alone the threes – Holy Holy Holy, in our Old Testament lesson. Let alone God in the Old Testament says “Let us... make man in our own image,” even as it is steadfastly clear there is only One God. Let alone that Elohim, the Hebrew word for God, has a plural ending but is always treated as a singular – we have an equivalent in the New Testament, when Jesus says to go and baptize in the Name (singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Is Jesus bad at grammar again? Is the Whole Bible bad at grammar? Or is there something going on here? Over and Over again?

But again, let's bring it back to Jesus, like Peter does. He is Risen, he is prayed to, he receives worship, he says he is God and has a resurrection to back it up. You may not have the Trinity all figured out, you may confuse some terms when you talk about it, that's ok. But the reason the Church confesses it, is because it's true, because Jesus says so, and because it's there in the scriptures.

Why does it matter, then? First of all, because all of God's Word matters. It is a lamp, it is the truth. And that matters.

Even more, there is a discussion that begins to revolve around who God is. If he is Love, well, love needs an object, no? So then can we say he NEEDS us or a creation to be love? Not if He is

three in One. If He is three in one, then there is a Father and a beloved Son, and a Spirit of love there already, always, and eternally before space time and unto forever. And so in Trinity God is complete forever, and not dependent on any other – which, if God is God – it has to be. What God depends on something else? A false one.

And if that seems too lofty, if it seems in the Trinity we have lost the forest for the trees, I'm not so sure. This is GOD we are talking about. Something outside eternity, outside space time. Something that can keep each electron spinning and can uphold the laws of physics across galaxies! The power of a reactor, the time-bending power of a black hole, these are his creations! How vast is this being!? It is literally incalculable. It cannot be put into words.

Isaiah sees this God. He's terrified, and notice how he doesn't even describe him? Probably because he can't! Or dares not to! So he describes the train of his robe, and the angels beside him instead. Those he can kind of put into words.

How could he put into words the maker of the stars. The universe is so huge. So large it causes some people to stumble – thinking “it can't just be about us!” But they sold themselves short, and we do too when we get lost on the size of the universe. Because it's still too small. “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” That's Solomon in 1 Kings.

“But Pastor it's so vast!” Ok, what's the problem? Does God run out of materials? Or is his Word able to create ex nihilo? “Ah, Lord GOD!” wrote Jeremiah (at 32:17). “It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.” Is he too busy, preoccupied? Like baal going to the bathroom? To see the beauty in a

galaxy a million light years away, and still be where two or more are gathered? Or can he ride upon the cherubim and wing through the stars? Or can he be in it, beyond it, and all at once?

“But there might be more out there, the probabilities!” And who is to say that the angels and God does not delight in the new fawn in the woods that no human sees, or the life at the bottom of the marianas trench that no human observes, or some other organism on a planet we haven’t even found yet? Who is to say God doesn’t rejoice in making them new as well? A day is a thousand years and a thousand years a day, and the heaven’s declare his handiwork, with a single arm stroke he can scatter them all, know them all.

And so the world looks up and tell us of the absolute meaningless of it all, we are accidents, we are insignificant, because of it’s vastness. But they sell God short. They are overcome with the vastness and immensity of space but fail to look the otherway, at the amazing intricacy of his creation. Look at the cell, smaller, the DNA, smaller, the Atom, smaller, the elctron, smaller! The quark: The data tell us that the radius of the quark is smaller than 43 billion-billionths of a centimetre (0.43×10^{-16} cm). That’s 2000 times smaller than a proton radius, which is about a million times smaller than a grain of sand. Quarks (along with electrons) remain the smallest things we know, and as far as we can tell, they could still be infinitely small.

Oh, how infinitely vast, and how infinitely intricate! And all of it bending and moving to the same laws. What, who could envelop all of it, uphold all of it! It literally cannot be computed, it literally cannot be conceived, and yet we want to conceive of a God who’s just like us? Who we can wrap our heads around? Who we can describe? Who is limited by scope? Who is limited by the very laws he brought into being? Hardly, he is beyond it all.

Does that make us a footnote? In a way... yes! A worm, a gas bag, on a rock so small and insignificant. And we peacock around worrying about our pride and our lives and our salaries as if we are the center of the universe, when we aren't at all.

So yes, the vastness of the universe and God ought give us pause. But so also in the same conversation, can we not see the vastness of his mercy?

Psalm 8 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

Who are we that God should so love this world, That he would give his only son? Who are we that the Son would be arrested, mocked, and spit on by meaningless specs of star dust? And lifted up on a cross, a heart stops beating, yes the sun goes dark, but a blip of darkness in a vast universe, what's the consequence? Far more than we can imagine. As God's heart for the world and his creation bleeds out, and dies. This is God's vast, vast, incalculable love for you. For you who, so late in history, so far off, have been called and claimed by him. That he might make you his own. To be a new creation and reign with him in a new heavens and earth in endless light!

This is, mind the pun, a big conversation, but we have a very big God. And he has given us His Word and a Risen Son that we might trust it. That matters. Because it means you matter to him.