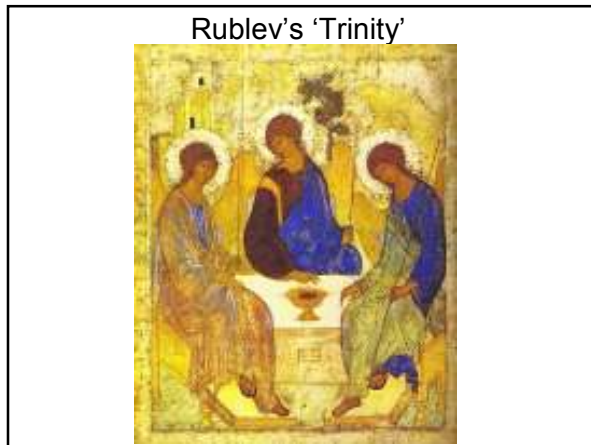
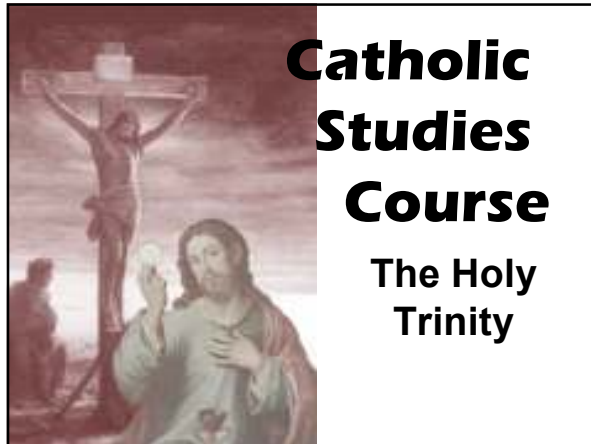


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(The Holy Trinity)



The Trinity in Scripture

- God is one (Deut 6.4)
- Hints that God exists as more than one person (Gen 1.26, Isa 6.8)
 - Other OT prefigurations of Trinity: Spirit, Wisdom, Word
- Divinity of Christ (John 1.1-3, 8.58, 20.28; 1 Cor 12.3)
- Experience of the Holy Spirit (Acts) and recognition of Spirit's divinity (1 Cor 6.19-20)
- Trinitarian formulae: Matt 28.19 (baptism), 2 Cor 13.13 (the grace)

Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the early church

- Process inspired by the Holy Spirit as the implications of God's revelation in Jesus Christ are teased out.
- Definition of doctrine more about excluding erroneous views (heresy) than specifying exactly how the Trinity 'works'.
- Word Trinity itself first used by Tertullian
- Attempts to describe Trinity by analogy necessarily flawed but can be helpful.

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Doing and Being

- Economic – God’s action in relation to the created order (the ‘economy’).
- Immanent/Ontological – God’s very being; the interior life of the Trinity.
 - More simply, ‘economic’ = what God does, and ‘immanent’/‘ontological’ = what God is
- The Economic Trinity *reveals* and *reflects* the Immanent Trinity.
 - Karl Rahner: the Economic Trinity *is* the Immanent Trinity and *vice versa*

Being and Substance

- Language to do with ‘being’, ‘substance’ etc not straightforward.
- Latin West uses different terms from Greek East
- Greek emphasis on 3 distinct ‘beings’ (*hypostases*) sharing one ‘substance’ (*ousia*)
- Latin 3 persons (*persona*) sharing one being/substance (*substantia*) (western emphasis on divine unity)
 - Substantia = ‘existence’ in abstract, ‘stuff’, or ‘something that exists’
- Words vary in meaning not just between East and West but over time and between different philosophical schools (e.g. at one time *ousia* and *hypostases* had same meaning).
 - Differences in interpretation sometimes at root of accusations of heresy (but not always)

Heresies to avoid (1)

- Modalism
 - God switches between different modes of being (water/steam/ice error!)
- Sabellianism
 - Development of modalism to take account of baptism of Christ in which all three persons appear together: God can exist in three modes at same time when necessary

Heresies to avoid (2)

- Subordinationism
 - Son is inferior to the Father
 - Related to Christological heresy of adoptionism – the man Jesus is ‘adopted’ by God at Baptism.
- Arianism
 - Extreme subordinationism. Son is created at a point in time before other creatures and called ‘God’ as honorific title. (other errors as well – e.g. Jesus not fully human)
- Tritheism
 - Persons considered as separate beings belonging to some class of being we call ‘God’ – i.e. 3 ‘Gods’

Council of Nicaea, 325

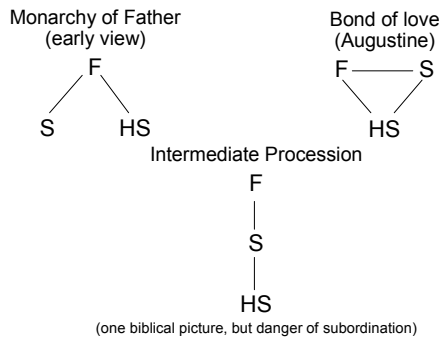
- Key moment in defining Trinitarian faith
- Concerned chiefly with divinity of Christ
- Attempts to use solely biblical formulae failed to exclude Arianism
- Key word ‘*homoousios*’ = ‘same substance’
 - Exact meaning ambiguous, really ‘Not Arianism’
- Use of this word debated for next century, Arians nearly gained upper hand but orthodoxy prevailed
 - Athanasius chief defender: realised that to be ‘like’ God is to be God since God is one

Augustine

- Persons of Trinity defined by who they are in relation to each other.
- The Holy Spirit is the Bond of Love between Father and Son
- Mind analogy – in someone who loves himself mind, knowledge and love are a kind of Trinity.
- Filioque controversy. Does Spirit proceed from Father and Son, or Father only?

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Models of Trinity



Unity of Actions of Trinity

- Trinity united in all works
- Father, Son and Holy Spirit together create, redeem and sanctify the world
- 'Appropriation' – describing Father as Creator, Son as Redeemer, Spirit as Sanctifier, reflects particular roles which these persons appear to have (e.g. Father source of being within Trinity), but important not to lose sight of unity of action.
- Replacing revealed name of God 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' with gender-neutral titles 'Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier' unacceptable for several reasons! Still worse are titles which have no basis in scripture or tradition

Dynamic rather than Static

- God is 'changeless' but not static
- Eternity = not limited by time, no beginning or end
- 'Perichoresis' / 'Circumincession' – envelopment/mutual indwelling "I am in my Father, and my Father is in me."
 - Hilary of Poitiers 4th C: persons reciprocally contain one another
 - John of Damascus 8th C
- Eternal 'procession' – Son eternally begotten from Father, not a single acts in time. Similarly procession of Holy Spirit from Father (and Son?)
- Eternal circulation of divine love within Trinity (Perichorsis sometimes confused with Greek word for dance – mistake, but nice idea if a little fluffy)

Consequences of Trinitarian Faith

- God did not create world because he *needed* creatures to relate to.
- Creation *ex nihilo* by God (Augustine: matter is either created by God, is God, or is a god) who is able to be transcendent (i.e. apart) but intimately involved
- Model of being in community as perfect way of life