

TRINITAS: ONE GOD IN THREE PERSONS EPH. 2:18

To begin our discussion we recognize several givens about the Trinity:

1. The Trinity is the God we **encounter** in the gospel!

Ephesians 2:18 For through **him** we both have access by **one Spirit** unto the **Father**.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to **God** for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because **God** hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of **the Spirit** and belief of the truth: 2 Thessalonians 2:14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our **Lord Jesus Christ**.

2. The Trinity is the God we **find** in Scripture!

A. There is one God

Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

B. There are three who are called God

Father, Son, & Holy Spirit

C. Therefore, we are left with **limited options**:

- The Bible is confused
- Deny there is only one God → Mormons
- Deny there are three who are called God → Jehovah's Witness / Oneness Pentacostals
- Affirm both & systematize the 2 truths → the Trinity

Obviously the word Trinity is never found in Scripture, but that isn't the issue. The word is not found but the concept / doctrine is!

3. The Trinity is the God we **worship** as Christians!

Augustine: The reason we talk about the Trinity at all is not because we can say something adequately about it, but rather because, in the absence of adequate speech, we must say something!

From the beginning Christians have struggled to express clearly and faithfully the teaching of Scripture:

- **Avoiding Tri-theism: three gods**
- **Avoiding Modalism: one god with three faces, roles or masks**
- **While maintaining Monotheism: one God in three persons**

What should we know and what must we believe?

I. The Trinity is **illustrated** by nature itself

God can certainly be known &/ known about from nature. This knowledge is sufficient to leave mankind without excuse (Rom. 1:18-20) but is insufficient to save.

If the Triune God created the universe we probably should expect to find his "fingerprints" / "footprints" in nature. However, remember that no analogy is perfect or complete.

All objects have 3 dimensions:

Length

Breadth

Height

The physical world of our experience:

Space
Time
Matter

II. The Trinity is anticipated in the Old Testament

God is who God is and what God is – always. But for us to know Him clearly, fully and finally He must reveal Himself → self-revelation!

Psalm 103:7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

1 John 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

1 Timothy 6:16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

The “let us” passages:

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 creepeth upon the earth.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become **as one of us**, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

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

Isaiah 6:2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. **Isaiah 6:3** And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.**

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.

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory **which I had with thee before the world was.**

Revelation 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, **Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.**

When God calls God...God!

Psalm 45:6 Thy throne, O God (אֱלֹהִים), is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. **Psalm 45:7** Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: **therefore God (אֱלֹהִים), thy God (אֱלֹהֵיךָ),** hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Hebrews 1:7 And of the angels **he saith**, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

Hebrews 1:8 But unto the Son **he saith**, Thy throne, O God (ὁ θεός), is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. **Hebrews 1:9** Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore **God (ὁ θεός), even thy God (ὁ θεός σου),** hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. **Hebrews 1:10** **And**, Thou, **Lord (κύριε),** in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: **Hebrews 1:11** They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; **Hebrews 1:12** And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

Psalm 102:25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. **Psalm 102:26** They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: **Psalm 102:27** But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

Psalm 110:1 The LORD (יהוה) said **unto** my Lord (אֲדֹנָי), Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The Angel of the Lord:

Gen. 16:7-13	Gen. 22:1-2 → 22:11-18	Gen. 24:7,40
Gen. 28:10-17 → 31:11-13	Gen. 32:9-12 → 32:24-30	Gen. 48:15-16
Judges 13:3-22	2 Sam 24:16	Ex. 32:34

Exodus 3:2 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. **Exodus 3:3** And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. **Exodus 3:4** And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, **God called unto him out of the midst of the bush**, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. **Exodus 3:5** And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. **Exodus 3:6** Moreover he said, **I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

Exodus 13:21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

Exodus 14:19 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

Exodus 23:20 Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

Exodus 23:21 Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: **for my name is in him**. **Exodus 23:22** But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. **Exodus 23:23** For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.

Exodus 33:14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

Hosea 12:4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in **Bethel**, and there he spake with us; **Hosea 12:5** Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial.

Judges 6:11 And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. **Judges 6:12** And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. **Judges 6:13** And Gideon said unto him, **Oh my Lord**, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. **Judges 6:14** And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? **Judges 6:15** And he said unto him, **Oh my Lord**, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. **Judges 6:16** And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. **Judges 6:17** And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. **Judges 6:18** Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. **Judges 6:19** And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. **Judges 6:20** And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. **Judges 6:21** Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. **Judges 6:22** And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. **Judges 6:23** And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. **Judges 6:24** Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it **Jehovahshalom** (יהוה שָׁלוֹם): unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger (מַלְאָכִי), and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord (הָאֱלֹהִים), whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant (וּמַלְאָךְ הַבְרִית), whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת).

The Trinity is not explicitly set forth in the OT. However, without it certain texts require awkward explanation!

III. The Trinity is **revealed** in the NT

Remember that false teachers will focus on the term Trinity and that it is not found in the Scripture. This is true but this is not the issue. The issue is whether the terminology expresses a Biblical teaching. The term is simply shorthand for the full and rich teaching concerning our great God!

A careful reading of Scripture will reveal 4 unmistakable truth concerning the Trinity:

A. Father, Son, & Holy Spirit are each **called** Divine names

The Father (this is obvious):

Galatians 1:3 Grace be to you and peace from **God the Father**, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

Matthew 5:45 That ye may be the children of **your Father** which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Mark 14:36 And he said, **Abba, Father**, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

B. The Son:

Matthew 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name **Emmanuel**, which being interpreted is, **God with us**.

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name **Immanuel**.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was God**.

John 1:14 **And the Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 20:28 **And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.**

Romans 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, **God blessed for ever. Amen.**

Titus 1:3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of **God our Saviour;**

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of **the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;**

Hebrews 1:8 **But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God,** is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Hebrews 1:9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; **therefore God, even thy God,** hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Hebrews 1:10 **And, Thou, Lord,** in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God, and eternal life.**

1 Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God** was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

C. The Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit	The Spirit of God	The Spirit of Christ
The Spirit of Grace	The Holy Spirit of promise	The Spirit of wisdom
The Spirit of Truth	The comforter	The Spirit of Holiness

2. Father, Son, & Holy Spirit are each **ascribed** / **attributed** Divine attributes

Father (again assumed):

Son: (omniscience, omnipresence, immutable)

John 2:25 And needed not that any should testify of man: **for he knew what was in man.**

John 21:17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, **Lord, thou knowest all things;** thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

John 1:48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, **Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.**

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, **there am I in the midst of them.**

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Hebrews 1:10 **And, Thou, Lord,** in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

Hebrews 1:11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; **Hebrews 1:12** And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

Psalms 102:25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. **Psalms 102:26** They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: **Psalms 102:27** But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

Holy Spirit:

Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through **the eternal Spirit** offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

1 Corinthians 2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. **1**

Corinthians 2:11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. **1 Corinthians 2:12** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Luke 11:20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

Romans 15:18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, **Romans 15:19** Through mighty signs and wonders, **by the power of the Spirit of God;** so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

3. Father, Son, & Holy Spirit are each engaged in Divine activities

Father:

Son:

John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Colossians 1:16 **For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:**

Hebrews 1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

1 Corinthians 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Colossians 1:17 And he is before all things, **and by him all things consist.**

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things by the word of his power,** when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Mark 2:7 **Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?**

Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: **for he shall save his people from their sins.**

John 6:39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, **but should raise it up again at the last day.**

John 11:23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. **John 11:24** Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. **John 11:25** Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:**

Holy Spirit:

Acts 28:25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

4. Father, Son, & Holy Spirit are each recipients of Divine worship!

Father:

John 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for **the Father** seeketh such to worship him.

Son:

John 20:28 And Thomas answered and said **unto him, My Lord and my God.**

Matthew 14:33 Then they that were in the ship came **and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.**

John 5:23 That all men should honour the Son, **even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.**

Revelation 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Matthew 8:2 And, behold, there came a leper **and worshipped him,** saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Matthew 9:18 While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, **and worshipped him,** saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

Matthew 14:33 Then they that were in the ship came **and worshipped him,** saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Matthew 15:25 Then came she **and worshipped him,** saying, Lord, help me.

Matthew 20:20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, **worshipping him,** and desiring a certain thing of him.

Matthew 28:9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, **and worshipped him.**

Matthew 28:17 And when they saw him, **they worshipped him:** but some doubted.

Mark 5:6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran **and worshipped him,**

John 9:38 And he said, Lord, I believe. **And he worshipped him.**

Holy Spirit:

John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and **the communion of the Holy Ghost,** be with you all. Amen.

IV. The Trinity is required by many texts

There can be no Triune teaching without Scripture and there can be no adequate clarification of Scripture without the Triune hypothesis.

The Scripture intends to make it unavoidably clear that:

- **The Father is God**
- **The Son is God**
- **The Spirit is God**
- **And that God is one!**

The locus classicus texts:

The Baptism Formula:

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. **Matthew 28:19** Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Matthew**

28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Name: singular not plural

- **Not 2 creatures plus one God**
- **Not 3 parts of God**
- **Not 3 stages of God or 3 modes**
- **But one God who is eternally Father, Son, & Holy Spirit!**

Stresses: Deity / Divinity, equality, unity, distinguishability!

Jesus Baptism:

Matthew 3:16 And **Jesus**, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: **Matthew 3:17** And lo **a voice** from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Jesus being baptized, the Father speaking, and the Holy Spirit descending.

Apostolic Benediction:

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the communion of the **Holy Ghost**, be with you all. Amen.

1 Corinthians 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

1 Corinthians 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, **flee from idolatry**.

1 John 5:21 Little children, **keep yourselves from idols**. Amen.

The gifted Church:

1 Corinthians 12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but **the same Spirit**.

1 Corinthians 12:5 And there are differences of administrations, but **the same Lord**.

1 Corinthians 12:6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is **the same God** which worketh all in all.

The priesthood of the believer:

Ephesians 2:18 For through **him** we both have access by **one Spirit** unto the **Father**.

Ephesian Confession:

Ephesians 4:4 There is one body, and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; **Ephesians 4:5** **One Lord**, one faith, one baptism, **Ephesians 4:6** **One God and Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

The Triune work of salvation: (Eph. 1:3-14)

God the Father: Choosing

God the Son: Redeeming

God the Spirit: Sealing

The apostolic Salutation:

Revelation 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, **from him** which is, and which was, and which is to come; **and from the seven Spirits** which are before his throne; **Revelation 1:5** **And from Jesus Christ**, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, **Revelation 1:6** And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Introduction to Colossians:

Colossians 1:8 Who also declared unto us your love in **the Spirit**.

Colossians 1:12 Giving thanks unto **the Father**, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of **his dear Son**:

Colossians 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: **Colossians 1:15** Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: **Colossians 1:16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: **Colossians 1:17** And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. **Colossians 1:18** And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. **Colossians 1:19** For it pleased **the Father** that in him should all fulness dwell;

Introduction to 1 Peter:

1 Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, through sanctification of **the Spirit**, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of **Jesus Christ**: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Exhortation in Jude:

Jude 20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in **the Holy Ghost**, **Jude 21** Keep yourselves in the love of **God**, looking for the mercy of our **Lord Jesus Christ** unto eternal life.

The full understanding & formulation came about from:

- **Reflection upon the life & teaching of Jesus**
- **Exposition & systematization of the Scripture**
- **Reaction to other religions**

Tertullian: this rule of faith has come down to us from the beginning of the gospel...una substantia & tres persona