

God

The Prodigal Son - God the Father

- ◆ The Father in the story, of course, is God
- ◆ We will discuss the sons further next time
- ◆ God is Father in two senses
 - ◆ He is our Father, that is the Father of mankind - our creator and the creator of the whole world
 - ◆ He is also the Father of the Trinity
 - ◆ He begets the son from all eternity
 - ◆ The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father

Apophatic Theology

- ἀπόφασις - "To Deny"
- Developed as a means of describing God
- "If you wish to speak or hear about God, renounce your own body, renounce your bodily senses, abandon the earth, abandon the sea..." - St. Basil the Great
- "... the thoughts of man are capable only of dwelling on the attributes of the Divinity, not upon the very Essence of the Divinity" - Fr. Michael Pomazansky
- God is unoriginate, unending, uncreated, unchanging, unalterable, incomplex, invisible, intangible, indescribable, uncontainable... St. John of Damascus

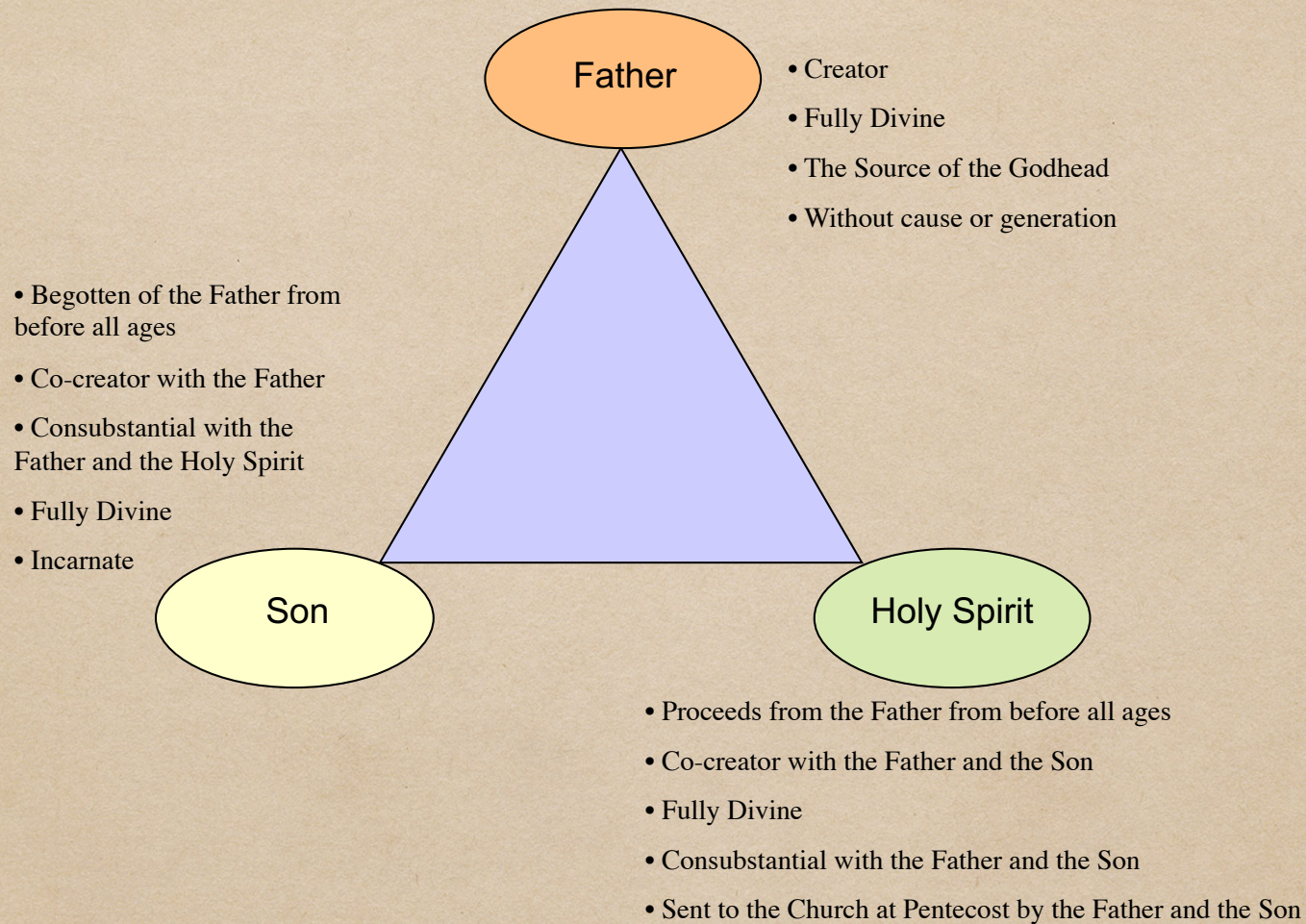
Holy Trinity

- ♦ "Because the dogma of the All-holy Trinity is the most important of all Christian dogmas, it is at the same time the most difficult for the limited human mind to grasp". - Fr. Pomazansky
- ♦ Three Persons (Προσωπον), or hypostases (υποστασις) - a way of being
- ♦ The challenge with the term Person is that it is used to refer to the mask used in ancient Greek plays
- ♦ One Essence
 - ♦ Impossible to find proper analogy among the natural world, so apophatic approach can be helpful
 - ♦ Understood in terms of unique relationship with other persons of the Trinity

Errors Regarding the Trinity

- ◆ Christ is created
- ◆ The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son
- ◆ Using terms suitable for the Trinity to apply to only one person.

Characteristics of each Person of the Holy Trinity





Scriptural References to the Holy Trinity: CREATION

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light;” and there was light.” (Gen.1:1-3)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” (Jn.1:1-3)

Scriptural References to the Holy Trinity:

ANNUNCIATION



“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.”
(Lk.1:35)

Scriptural References to the Holy Trinity: BAPTISM



“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son, with You I am well pleased.’” (Mk.1:9-11)

Scriptural References to the Holy Trinity: TRANSFIGURATION



“And after six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them, and His garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is my beloved Son, listen to Him.’” (Mk.9:2-3,7)

Scriptural References to the Holy Trinity: PENTECOST



“This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear.” (Acts 2:32-33)

Scriptural References to the Holy Trinity: THE GREAT COMMISSION



“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me; go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.’” (Mt.28:18-20)

Icons of the Trinity



Hymn about the Trínity

- ◆ From Vespers of Pentecost
- ◆ Come, you peoples, let us worship the Godhead in three persons, the Son in the Father, with the Holy Spírít; for the Father timelessly begot the Son, co-eternal and co-reígníng, and the Holy Spírít was in the Father, glorified with the Son; one power, one essence, one Godhead, whom we all worship as we say: Holy God, who created all things through the Son, with the co-operation of the Holy Spírít. Holy Strong, through whom we have come to know the Father, and through whom the Holy Spírít came into the world. Holy Immortal, the Advocate Spírít, who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son. Holy Trínity, glory to you.

Essence and Energies

- ◆ God's essence (ousía), is beyond our reach.
We cannot know his essence
- ◆ His energies, however, we can interact with.
His energies are also uncreated. They are of God
- ◆ More familiar term for God's energies is grace

The Palamite Controversy

- ◆ St. Gregory Palamas - 14th century, Athonite monk and ultimately Archbishop of Thessaloniki
- ◆ Proponent of Hesychasm - mystical tradition of contemplation using the Jesus prayer. Argued that hesychasts could know God in His energies.
- ◆ Barlaam under Western influence. Argued that we can't know God at all. Thus, intellectuals could know more about him than Hesychasts

God is Person and Love

- ◆ God is a person
 - ◆ Not an impersonal force
- ◆ God is Trinity, therefore God is Love
 - ◆ There is always another person involved when we speak of God
 - ◆ When we say we love, the question is always what is the object
 - ◆ Without love, God would, at best, be just
 - ◆ This is how Islam views Allah

Christ as Friend and Brother