

Trinitarian Passages in the NT

It is often pointed out that the Trinity is a concept which evolved in the 4th century, and isn't found in the NT. This is valuable corrective to the tendency to read 4th-cent theology back into the NT. It's possible, though, to overstate this. The Trinity was a doctrine developed to understand what was already present in non-theological form in the NT. So while the NT doesn't develop the Trinity, all the Trinitarian elements are there. They just aren't packaged the way the 4th cent thinkers did.

For instance, here are some Trinitarian verses:

- 2 Cor 13:13: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.
- 1 Cor 12:4-6: Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. (This one is particularly important because it is a call for diversity among the Corinthian believers specifically on the basis of the unity-despite-diversity in the Trinity!)
- Eph 4:4-6: There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.
- 1 Peter 1:1-2: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

In addition to this, there are sixteen other passages where two members of the Trinity are mentioned and the third is implied. (See attached.) E.g., in 1 Thess 1:4-5, we read:

For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake.

The Holy Spirit and the Father are explicitly mentioned, but not the Son. But in fact the gospel is mentioned, and there is no question it's the gospel of "the Lord Jesus Christ", mentioned a few verses earlier in 1:1. So any careful reading of the text will recognize this as a Trinitarian reference, even if all three persons aren't called out /by name/ in the verse itself.

The value in the caution regarding retrojecting the Trinity into the NT is done justice, I think, by the recognition that Paul and the other NT writers were generating what might be called "task theology". They were down in the trenches and were telling the readers how to relate to God without narrating the process. It's like telling someone how to drive a car without describing engines. Combustion may not be explicitly described, but the car won't run without it.

(The above is due to Gordon Fee's *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*.)