THE ELEMENTS OF TRIADOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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The elements of initial triadology in the Book of Revelation are carefully studied. It is affirmed that the last book of the New Testament contains a rather developed triadology. The theology of Revelation is presented in the specific form of images and symbols. Symbolic numbers and the structure of the text are of central importance. Special attention is paid to the unique threefold formula of the prescript in Rev. 1, 4f. The divine self-declarations which appear as modifications of the Name of God are carefully examined: He who is and who was and who is to come, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Lord God the Almighty. It is pointed out that there are numerous indications of the divinity of Jesus Christ and of his equality with God. The absence of direct indications of the personal character of the Spirit is noted. Nevertheless there are numerous indirect allusions to the Spirit reckoned as the third person of the divine Trinity.

INTRODUCTION

My topic is the triadic elements of the New Testament. What sort of elements exactly will I be talking about? Some of them are well-known (kreshalnaya), such as for example the baptismal formula in Matt. 28:19, the greeting at the beginning of the first letter of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 1:2) and the blessing at the end of the second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 13:13). Our attention will not be given to individual elements of the triad, such as we find in the high Christology of the Gospel according to John, the letters of the Apostle Peter and the Book of Acts. The triadic elements that will bear mentioned here are taken from a far less familiar source—the book of Revelation. The language of this book is not that of familiar discourse, often punctuated with discursive declarations so characteristic, for example, of Paul and so ready at

hand to the modern person. In Revelation we come upon a completely different method of doing theology, which is built upon establishing an intuition and a sophisticated literary structure using an entire repertoire of symbols and allusions, many of which take us beyond the world of ordinary experience.

The theology of the book of Revelation is highly theocentric. Its teaching about God is an immense addition to the theology of the New Testament.

**TRIADIC ANALOGUES OF GOD**

At the beginning of the book, John the mystery-seer speaks of God’s threeness (1:0–5a): “Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” These words are the formal part of the prescriptive address and greeting, which in the book of Revelation is commonly understood as referring to the seven churches of Asia Minor. The standard form of Judean greeting, *grace and peace*, we can find in the writings of the apostle Paul: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:3 and so on). This christianized form of the Judean greeting, which is common in letters, has an important theological force to it. Here Jesus Christ is put on the same level with God the Father. The Christians of the First Century very naturally included Jesus in the sphere of the Godlike. He is the source of salvation that comes to the people from God. Of course, the first Christians didn’t have ontological terms for expressing the relationship of Jesus to God.

But in the book of Revelation we see a unique threeness in the greeting. Trinitarian formulas are found in New Testament books such as 1 Peter 1:2; and 2 Cor 13:13. But the formula used by John the mystery-seer is unique. Perhaps it shows John’s original adaptation of Paul’s dual formula. The changes John introduces involve the expressions, *God the Father* and *Lord Jesus Christ* in describing these two faces of the Holy Trinity in a manner characteristic of the book of Revelation. John thought about the Christian concept of God artistically. The language that is characteristic of his theology isn’t contrived. Instead, he creatively used the resources of the Judean and Judeo–Christian traditions. His book is a result of an inspired and at the same time highly reflective knowledge of God.

The original form of the greeting in 1:4b–5a shows that the understanding of God is consciously and principally Trinitarian. But of course we should not credit John with the concept of a patristic teaching about the Trinity, which became a norm for later Christian teachings.