



**3017. The Old Testament Trinity**

**Russian, 17th century**

**Egg tempera and gesso on wood**

**Panel: 23.8 x 27.2 cm**

**Condition: Good**

**Provenance: German art market**

**Feast Day: Pentecost Sunday**

Icons of the Trinity depict the event recounted in Genesis where ‘three young men’ appear before Abraham and his wife Sarah and foretell, despite their advanced age, the birth of their

son. Early Christian theologians interpreted Abraham's use of the singular - he addresses the three visitors as 'My Lord' - as an epiphany or divine manifestation of God; in this case in his triune form.

Formerly, painters stressed the narrative elements of the story and included the figures of Abraham and Sarah and the sacrificial calf. Andrei Rublyov's famous composition of 1408 dispensed with these and reduced the design to its most basic elements thereby giving priority to its mystical and symbolic meaning (fig. 1.). His icon from then on was the prototype on which later painters modelled their work. Fig. 2. Shows a typical work of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 1. Rublyov Trinity, 1408.  
Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



Fig. 2. Russian School, ca. 1600.  
Private collection. Temple Gallery, 2015.

The present example is unusual. We do not see the Oak of Mamre or the traditional rendering of Abraham's 'tent'. Whatever the reasons for this further adaptation, the painting retains an atmosphere of contemplative quiet. The harmony and stillness support the mystery of God in Three Persons.