

LESSON 12

THE TRINITY

The word 'trinity' does not occur in the New Testament, yet the teachings of the New Testament clearly point to the Trinity. A Trinitarian formula appears in Matthew 28:19: "...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." All three are mentioned at the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16ff.). In 1 Corinthians 12:3-4, Paul correlates 'Spirit', 'Lord', and 'God' (cf. Eph. 4:4-6). Paul mentions all three in the benediction to the letter to the Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14). In the light of these Scriptures, Brunner's statement that the Trinity did not form part of the early Christian (New Testament) message, nor has it ever been a central article of faith in the religious life of the Christian Church does not seem entirely accurate.¹

Trinity signifies that within the one essence of the Godhead we have to distinguish three 'persons' who are neither three gods on the one hand, nor three parts or modes of existence of God on the other, but coequally and coeternally God. Although the specific term does not appear in the New Testament, there is sufficient Biblical teaching to justify the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Biblical Basis for the Doctrine

Old Testament teachings

The emphasis on monotheism.—Although Israel's environment was polytheistic, the emphasis of the Old Testament is monotheistic. Abraham was called from a country of many idols to worship and serve the one God who promised to bless him if he was faithful. Abraham became known as a man of faith because he was not drawn away to the idols of neighbouring people. He remained true to the one God who revealed Himself.

The requirements for worshipping and serving only the one true God were amplified in the

¹Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 205.

List four New Testament Scriptures which point clearly to the Trinity.

(Compare your answer to the text.)

'Trinity' means that within one essence of the Godhead there are three 'persons'.

These three persons are not: (1) _____
nor (2) _____.

The three persons are _____ and
_____ God.

(three gods, three parts or modes of existence of God, coequally, coeternally)

Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The First Commandment prohibited Israel from worshipping other gods. Although the Commandment does not deny the existence of other gods, it denies the existence as far as Israel is concerned and is the foundation of her monotheistic faith. Actually, the implications of monotheism were present from the time when God made Himself known as Creator of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1). Isaiah fully explicated the monotheistic implications of the doctrine of Creation by calling attention to the greatness of the One who had created the world (cf. Isa. 40:25-28). Since the Holy One of Israel is Creator, He not only is the highest God but the only God. Isaiah stated that before Him there was no God formed, neither would there be after Him (43:10). Israel's God is the only true God; the idols of other nations are worthless.

Even though Israel was commanded to worship only one God, she was faithless and disobedient. The prophets convinced her that captivity was her punishment for having turned to idols. After Israel's return from Babylonian captivity, her religion was marked by a strong monotheistic faith. Only the God who created the world is real. All idols are powerless, worthless, and helpless material objects. The monotheistic emphasis of the Old Testament requires God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit to be understood as one rather than three Gods.

God's transcendence and immanence.—The God of the Old Testament made Himself known not as an abstract power but as a personal Being. He is able to respond to the individual needs of man in a personal way, yet He is a great God "that sitteth upon the circle of the earth" and to whom nations are compared as a drop of water in a bucket (Isa. 40:22, 15). The emphasis of the prophet Isaiah on Yahweh's greatness impressed the people with His transcendence and resulted in the belief that God is far removed from the world He made. He became known as the 'Most High God', 'Ancient of Days', and 'Lord of Spirits'. Nevertheless, He was able to relate to the created world through intermediaries—angels and spirits. The people expected the transcendent God to send the Son of Man by whom He would be represented and would establish and rule His Kingdom. It is uncertain whether the Son of Man was expected to be divine Himself, but He was expected to be the bearer of divine power and blessings.

The Old Testament speaks frequently of the Spirit of God, but there is little or no evidence of a recognized distinction between the persons of God and His Spirit. The Spirit of God is the power of God or God present and active in power. Since

The foundation of Israel's monotheistic faith is the _____.

(First Commandment)

The monotheistic emphasis of the Old Testament requires the Trinitarian view of God. This means that

God _____

God _____

God _____

be understood as _____ rather than _____ Gods.

(the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, one, three)

In Old Testament times emphasis was placed on God's _____. The belief that God is far removed from the world He made became prevalent. This is called God's _____. The people expected the _____ of _____ to represent God on earth.

(greatness, transcendence, Son, Man)

God's nature is spiritual, question did not arise concerning the relation of God's Spirit and God Himself.

Implications of the name 'Elohim'.—It has been noted previously that 'Elohim' is a plural noun for God, but it is used with a singular verb. The grammatical structure does not indicate that the Trinity is taught in the Old Testament; however, it does not deny the possibility of such a doctrine. The plural name for God (Elohim) is probably a 'plural of majesty'. God is one, but His Being is magnified by the use of the plural. The greatness of God is also expressed in the words, "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26). The plural pronoun suggests the 'Divine Council', a way of expressing God's great wisdom.

Personification of Word and Wisdom.—The statement, "and God said" (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, etc.) does not indicate that God's spoken Word should be distinguished from Him and personalized. Later, questions arose concerning the relation of God's Word and Wisdom to Himself. 'Wisdom' became personified, and so did 'Logos' (Word). The Word of the transcendent God could be near to man—in his mouth and in his heart (Deut. 30:14). The Word of God goes forth from His mouth and is able to put into effect what it declares (Isa. 45:23). God's Word is able to heal those who cry because of affliction: "He sent his word, and healed them..." (Ps. 107:20). Man needs to hide the Word of God in his heart in order that he will not sin against God (Ps. 119:11). God's Word was thought of as His means of accomplishing His purposes in the world.

Wisdom was originally an ethical concept or principle which guided a person's life. The wise man walked in the way of the Lord and was blessed. Wisdom became personified and was represented as being with Yahweh before the creation of the world (Prov. 8:22ff.). Perhaps under Greek influence, wisdom was transferred from a principle for living to an entity of God's Being. The Wisdom of God became God's mind or reason.

The Angel of Yahweh.—The Old Testament speaks frequently of the Angel of Yahweh. In Genesis 18, Yahweh appeared before Abraham in the plains of Mamre. When Abraham looked up, he beheld three men (18:3). The Lord spoke through them in a very personal way (18:13). When the men started towards Sodom, Abraham journeyed with them, "And the Lord said ..." (Yahweh spoke through the men—18:17). Angels arrived in Sodom (Gen. 19:1). They acted as personal representatives of the Lord in the destruction of Sodom: "for the Lord will destroy this city" (Gen. 19:14).

The plural name for God, 'Elohim', is probably the plural of _____ which magnifies the greatness of God's Being.

(majesty)

Give a statement from Scripture, and its reference, which shows God's Word as a person. _____

God's Word came to be thought of as His means of accomplishing His _____ in the world.

("and God said," Genesis 1:3, purposes)

New Testament teachings

The divinity of Jesus.—The Old Testament clearly sets forth a monotheistic faith. The New Testament, however, speaks of the divinity of Jesus as well as the heavenly Father. Through their redemptive experiences and the resurrection of Jesus, the Apostles were confident of His divine nature. Through daily companionship with Him on earth, they were convinced of His humanity.

The divinity of Jesus forced the Greek Fathers to question how His divinity could be consistent with the monotheistic doctrine which the Church inherited from the Jews. Stated differently, How is it possible to maintain the unity of God while insisting on the deity of One who is distinct from God the Father?

The New Testament writers seemed not to be concerned with the problem. The Apostles were strictly monotheists. Some diversity in the Divine Unity is reflected in the Old Testament with regard to the relation of God to the Spirit, the Word, the personified Wisdom, and the Angel of Yahweh. This diversity did not require an explanation until the work, nature, names, and worship of the Father were attributed directly to Jesus.

The Father and Jesus Christ as God.—Many Scriptures speak of God as Father, for example: "for him hath God the Father sealed" (Jno. 6:27); "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:2). Jesus is also called God: "and the Word was God" (Jno. 1:1). Word and God are connected with the verb 'to be'. In the Greek text, God is placed first for emphasis, but Theos (God) does not have the article which indicates that it is the predicate and Logos (Word) is the subject. The Word was not only with God but was God. The question in John's introduction to the Gospel is not who is God, but who is the Logos. The verb of being indicates the 'Word' is God in His being or essence.

John 1:18 states: "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (NASB). Although the Authorized Version uses "begotten Son," there is strong evidence that the original reading was "begotten God." John is stating that Jesus who declares or manifests God is the only begotten God who has been in the bosom of the Father.

In John 20:28, Thomas addressed the resurrected Jesus as "My Lord and my God." Lord could be applied to either a human being of great dignity or to God. There is no alternate explanation for "my God," other than to attribute deity to Jesus.

Match the following to make correct statements.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ___ The Old Testament | 1. speaks of the divinity of Jesus. |
| ___ The New Testament | 2. sets forth a monotheistic faith. |

(2, 1)

Finish reading the topic The Father and Jesus Christ as God. Then give the correct Scripture reference for each of the following statements which show that Jesus Christ is God.

"My Lord and my God" _____

"and the Word was God" _____

Christ as "God blessed for ever" _____

"No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." _____

(John 20:28, John 1:1, Romans 9:5, John 1:18)

Romans 9:5 describes Christ as "God blessed for ever." The clear statement of His deity follows the remark about His humanity. Christ who came in the flesh is over all, "God blessed for ever." In Titus 2:13 Paul spoke of "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (RSV). Since the word 'appearing' is never applied to God the Father, "the appearing of the glory of our great God" can only refer to His revelation in the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The divine titles of Jesus.—The personal name 'Yahweh' was regarded with peculiar awe by the Jewish nation and ceased to be pronounced. The Jews substituted the word 'Lord' (*Adonai*) in order to avoid pronouncing the great name. Lord in Greek is *kyrios*. This word became the Greek equivalent of Yahweh and is used frequently in the New Testament with reference to Jesus. Paul stated that a requirement of salvation is to confess Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9). The recognition of Jesus as Lord was a result of revelation through the Holy Spirit: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3).

The divine attributes of Jesus.—The New Testament attributes to Jesus qualities which are descriptive of God. He is eternal: "In the beginning was the Word" (Jno. 1:1). The Word was already in existence when the world was created. His self-existence is implied in the statement that He is like the Father with regard to life: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (Jno. 5:26). His immutability is stated in Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." His holiness is clearly stated in the message of the angel to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Jesus expressed His omnipresence in the promise connected to the Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ... and, lo, I am with you always" (Matt. 28:19-20). His omnipotence is stated in a previous verse: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). His omniscience is implied in the statements that Jesus knew all men (cf. Matt. 9:4; Jno. 2:24,25). Paul attributed to Jesus unlimited knowledge: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

The divine works of Jesus.—Genesis begins by stating that God created the heavens and the earth. John's Gospel attributes to the Word the work of creation. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (1:3). Paul expressed the same conviction: "For by

Choose from these words the correct one for each blank (*Kyrios, Adonai, Lord*).

1. Jewish word for 'Lord' _____
2. Greek word for 'Lord' is _____
3. The title applied to both God and Jesus _____.

(*Adonai, Kyrios, Lord*)

List the divine attribute of Jesus which is set forth in each of the following statements.

- _____ "In the beginning was the Word."
- _____ "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."
- _____ "... that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."
- _____ "... lo, I am with you always."
- _____ Jesus knew all men.

(*eternality, immutability, holiness, omnipresence, omniscience*)

One work of God which is attributed to Jesus is _____.

(*creation*)

him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible ... (Col. 1:16).

The Old Testament spoke specifically of the Day of the Lord which would be a day of judgement. The New Testament states: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (Jno. 5:22).

The honour and worship of Jesus.—The Old Testament clearly states that the Israelites were to worship only the one God, Yahweh. Isaiah emphasized that the idols worshipped by other nations were material objects which were unworthy of worship and honour. To worship a god other than Yahweh is idolatry, yet worship given to Jesus is not idolatrous. The New Testament writers gave to Jesus the honour and worship due only to Yahweh. This attitude reveals that they considered Him to be one with Yahweh. The New Testament states: "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" (Jno. 5:23).

The purpose of the Passover celebration was to express honour and gratitude to Yahweh who had delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery. The Lord's Supper replaced the Passover meal for Christians. Its purpose is to express worship and gratitude to Christ who delivers men from the bondage of sin.

Paul emphasized that every person will eventually be required to recognize that Jesus Christ is Lord and worthy to be worshipped: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11). The Book of Hebrews states: "And let all the angels of God worship him" (1:6).

The Book of Revelation was written to show that Jesus who was crucified has gained victory through death and is worthy of worship. People of every tongue and nation worship Him. The Lamb which was slain is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and blessings (Rev. 5:12). Creatures in heaven and on earth express the worthiness of the Lamb: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

Jesus' equality with God.—In the statement, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," the Jews interpreted Jesus to be claiming equality with God (Jno. 5:17-18). Paul stated that Christ Jesus "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. 2:6). Paul who was raised in the monotheistic tradition found no problem

Another work of God which is attributed to Jesus is _____.

(judgement)

True or false?

New Testament writers did not consider

Jesus to be one with Yahweh. _____

(false)

Fill in the blank spaces.

<u>Observance</u>	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
_____	Jewish people	Gratitude to Yahweh for deliverance
Lord's Supper	Christians	_____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

in recognizing Christ Jesus as equal with and of the same nature as God.

The Necessity of a Trinitarian Doctrine

The transcendence of God

The God who created the heavens and the earth must be recognized as apart from and above His creative work. God's dignity, honour, and glory removed Him far beyond the experience of man. When man speaks of God, he must have words which communicate the transcendence and glory of God. He is spoken of as the 'Mighty God', 'the High God', and 'Father'. His personal name, Yahweh, became so sacred that it ceased to be pronounced. Unless God is an exalted and transcendent Being, He will have no special significance for man. But a God who is too far removed and is out of man's reach can be of no help to man.

The immanence of God

Even though God is transcendent and far above man, He is also immanent and available to man. The world which God created can not continue without His support. How can God be understood as both transcendent and immanent? Christians of New Testament times discovered God's immanence in Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself could speak of the transcendent God. He opened the Model Prayer with reference to God's transcendence: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9). This statement also refers to God's immanence and personal nature in the title 'Father'. As Jesus prayed for God's Kingdom to come on earth, He spoke of God's immanence in His creation. He closed the prayer by again emphasizing God's transcendence: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" (Matt. 6:13).

For God to be real in the experience of man, it is necessary that His immanence or presence be expressed in a tangible way. This need was met in the Son who is God in the flesh or God present in the history of man. For God to be immanent in the Son, it is necessary for the Son to be truly God. This means that He must be eternal and of the same essence as God the Father.

The problem of understanding and expressing God's personal Being as transcendent and immanent is the distinction of persons which arises in each existence. While God was immanent in the person Jesus Christ, He was at the same time transcendent in the heavenly Father.

God's transcendence means His _____.

God's immanence means His _____.

(greatness, availability)

For God who is transcendent (far removed) to be immanent (present) in Jesus the Son, it is necessary for the _____ to be truly _____.

(Son, God)

The Holy Spirit is known as God's power and presence with man. The divine Presence was given to Jesus at the time of His baptism in the person of the Holy Spirit. How is God's immanence in the tangible Son and God's spiritual presence and power in the Holy Spirit to be understood as distinct and yet related in the earthly ministry of Jesus? The Holy Spirit was present in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, yet Christ's nature was recognized as divine and not just possessing the divine Spirit as man does in a new birth experience.

After God was no longer immanently present in a fleshly or tangible body, His presence and power continued to be with man in the Holy Spirit. God continues to be transcendent as Father and immanent as the Holy Spirit. The exalted Son shows the perfect bridge between the two concepts. He was God immanent in the flesh with man, and now He is exalted to the right hand of the transcendent Father. His experience as man has enabled Him to understand in an experiential way the situation of man. He has brought that knowledge into the experience of God. Through Jesus, the transcendent God who stands above creation can also experientially know creation through the Son who became man. God is above man, yet He can see life from man's perspective. In Jesus Christ, the span between the transcendent God and creaturely man has been bridged. God has been exposed to the frustrations of human existence by becoming man in the Son.

Through the indwelling Spirit, man becomes partaker of the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). Man does not become divine in nature, but he enters into fellowship and participation with the divine Being when he is born again. The expanse between the transcendent God and creaturely man is bridged from the other direction through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

The importance of the Trinitarian understanding of God

Without the Trinity, there are four possible alternatives to the relation of God and man:

1. The transcendent God and creaturely man could not be related.
2. The transcendence of God could be denied and His immanence emphasized in order that man could find Him and be related to Him.
3. God could retain His transcendence and man could be raised to the divine level in order to relate to God.

True or false?

After God was not immanently present in the fleshly body of Jesus, His presence continued to be with man in the Holy Spirit. _____

(true)

4. Creaturely man could live a life of delusion and only imagine his relating to the transcendent God.

The doctrine of the Trinity sets forth the following Biblical teachings:

1. God in His transcendence is far beyond man, yet He knows and can understand man from man's perspective and not just from the perspective of a Supreme Being.
2. Although man is a limited creature, his fellowship with the transcendent God is real and not just imaginary.
3. As man faces creaturely existence, He can experience divine fellowship and receive supernatural power.

The Trinity and Revelation

The transcendent God is hidden and beyond the reach and understanding of creaturely man. Revelation implies that there is a God who is hidden but who can be known and is made known. The hidden God who is the origin and content of revelation is known to man as the heavenly Father and the mighty God. He is so great that man can know only His glory. The hidden and transcendent God must have a medium for making Himself known in revelation to man. The eternal, personal God has been revealed in the history and experience of man in the person of the Son who is the historic Mediator.

Since the hidden God made Himself known through a physical Mediator, His revelation took place at a particular time and place in history. The historical revelation with its limitations was necessary for man to understand the hidden God, but the historical limitations convey a misconception about God—He is not limited in space or time. Jesus told His disciples that it was to their benefit for Him to depart from them and to send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the present reality of the hidden and revealed God who has no temporal or spatial limitations. Man comes to know the hidden God through the historic person, the Son, but men everywhere of all ages are able to experience the present reality of the mysterious and hidden God in the person of the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity allows man to understand God as mysterious, awesome, and far removed from creaturely existence. At the same time, the Trinity enables man to know God as present, personal, and be involved with him in his historical experiences. God is too great and awesome, and His relation to man

Who is the historic Mediator who has revealed the hidden God? _____

(Jesus, the Son)

The historical limitations of space or time in God's revelation of Himself through the Son are removed by the third person of the Trinity, the _____.

(Holy Spirit)

is too immanent and personal for Him to be understood in any other way than the Trinity.

The Formation of the Doctrine
of the Trinity

The New Testament origin

The New Testament contains the seed for the doctrine of the Trinity and reveals an understanding of God which cannot be expressed in anything less than the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are recognized as God, yet they are distinct. Christian experience recognizes Christ as revealing perfectly the Godhead and as worthy of unlimited worship and adoration. It also recognizes that through Christ one is reconciled to God the Father who is distinct from the Reconciler Jesus Christ. While recognizing Jesus as God, it is necessary to distinguish the Father from the Son through whom we come to the Father. These facts are presented in the New Testament, but no attempt is made to explain the distinction as well as the relation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God cannot be identified absolutely with either Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. Neither is God described fully in each individual concept of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. God as Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, and Guide is known in the three Persons of the Trinity.

According to John's Gospel, the Father sent the Son (5:23), the Son reveals the Father (8:19), and the Holy Spirit enables man to apprehend the Father as revealed in the Son (16:13-14). The Holy Spirit is distinct from Jesus and the Father, yet related to them in such a way that His presence means that the Father and Son are present. Jesus stated that the *Paraclete* (Comforter, Advocate) would be sent "from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father," and He would testify of Jesus (Jno. 15:26). The Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father but was sent by the Son to dwell "with you, and shall be in you" (14:17). In speaking of the indwelling of the Comforter, Jesus stated: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Jno. 14:23). These Scriptures represent John's attempt to express the relation and yet the distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Use these words--Father, Son, Holy Spirit--in the blanks in the following statement.

According to John's Gospel, the _____ sent the _____, the _____ reveals the _____ and the _____ enables man to apprehend the _____ as revealed in the _____.

(Father, Son, Son, Father, Holy Spirit, Father, Son)

What two-letter word in John 14:23 refers to the Trinity? _____

(we)

The historical development in the Church

The early Greek Fathers did not face the challenge of proving that Jesus was divine. His divine nature was fixed in their convictions by New Testament teachings. Rather, they faced the difficulty of being consistent with the monotheistic conviction which the Church inherited from the Jews and at the same time explaining Jesus' divinity. They faced the question: How is it possible to maintain the unity of God while insisting on the deity of one who is distinct from God the Father?

The emphasis on the divinity of the Son.—Early statements of the Trinity focused on the Father and the Son but gave little attention to the Holy Spirit. Clement of Rome and Tertullian overly identified the Father with the Son. This emphasis resulted in the Patripassionistic perversion which was expressed in such statements as "God was crucified," "the blood of God," "God died," "the flesh of God," and "the murderers of God." The emphasis on the relation of the Son and the Father continued until the fourth century.

If the Godhead is not unitary, it is as simple to conceive of three persons as of two; hence, the deity of Christ carried the weight of the Trinitarian controversies. The deity of the Holy Spirit came in for much less explicit assertion and direct attack than that of the Son. The Holy Spirit had been presented in the Old Testament as the Spirit of God, as a subjective approach to the person of God. He was not recognized as a being who had distinct existence apart from the Father. That God is Spirit (invisible and supernatural) was consistent with the understanding of God as Creator who stands apart from material and visible creation.

The explanation of the Son and Spirit as attributes of God.—The Son and Holy Spirit were expressed by Theophilus as attributes of God instead of persons of the Godhead: "God made all things through His Word and His Wisdom."² Irenaeus (c. A.D. 180) stated that God had no need of angels to assist Him in calling the creation into being for "His offspring and His similitude minister to Him in all things, that is the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Word and the Wisdom."³ The identification of the Spirit and the Wisdom failed to secure wide acceptance. The title 'Wisdom' had come already to be closely connected with the Son.

² G. L. Prestige, God in Patristic Thought (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), p. 90.

³ Ibid; p. 91.

Patripassionism is a perversion of the relation of the Son and the Father to the extent that it was expressed that "G_____d _____."

(God died)

The use of the terms 'triad' and 'economy'.—

Tertullian set forth the concept of the triad by boldly stating "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God, and Lord each one." Triad did not express in any degree the unity of God but emphasized the fact which constituted the main problem that Christian monotheists had to face—a group of three or three gods. To counteract the emphasis of triad, monotheists used the term 'monarch'. The Church Fathers applied the word almost always to the absolute monarchy of God, and its primary sense was omnipotence. According to Tertullian, monarchy meant nothing less than individual and solitary dominion; therefore, he chose another word to emphasize God's unity. He used the term 'economy' to express the unity of the triad. He presented one sole God—the three persons were all out of one, that is by unity of substance. He also spoke of the mystery of the economy which distributed the unity into a triad. He stated that the unity is constituted from the inherent nature of the Godhead. Since the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all out of One, the divine essence or substance gives unity. The Godhead devolved the triad out of its own self; therefore, unity was not destroyed but distributed to three persons for functional purposes. Each person received the substance of the Godhead, and expressed not merely distribution, but also methodical arrangement or economy. God and His Word are two objects only as the root and the tree are two distinct objects, or the sun and the ray which remain indivisible and coherent. Everything which proceeds from something else must necessarily be in some sense second to that from which it proceeds—not separate and yet two objects.

The views of Hippolytus.—The thoughts of Hippolytus were very close to those of Tertullian. He claimed that the Father is one, but there are two presentations because there are also the Son and a third, the Holy Spirit. The Father commands, the Son obeys, and the Holy Spirit gives understanding. The Father is above all, the Son is through all, and the Holy Spirit is in all. The economy of harmony is conducted back to one God, for God is one. The economy refers to the eternal relationship of the Godhead. The mystery of the economy is not to the effect that a divine incarnation took place, but that the Person Incarnate, while distinct from God the Father, nevertheless was one with God.

Monarchian proposals.—Dynamistic Monarchianism represented by Theodotus of Byzantium (c. A. D. 190), held that Jesus had a supernatural birth involving the Holy Spirit but He was a 'mere man' until His baptism. When the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His baptism, Jesus received divine attributes.

With reference to Tertullian's view, match the following terms and meanings.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| — Triad | 1. The distinction of the Godhead |
| — Economy | 2. The unity of the Godhead |

(1,2)

Paul of Samosata (c. A.D. 260—Palmyra) insisted on the absolute unipersonality of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God in one Person. The Logos and Wisdom are attributes or faculties of God. Jesus had a supernatural birth since He was begotten of Mary by the Holy Spirit, but He was mere man until He was energized by the Holy Spirit at His baptism. Following His baptism, He responded with obedience so completely that He was exalted to honour and fellowship with God. His view is sometimes called Adoptionism.

Modalistic Monarchianism was held by Sabellius (c. A.D. 250). Sabellius believed that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mere developments or revelations to temporal creatures of the otherwise concealed Godhead. The three Persons of the Godhead are not eternal, but they are temporary manifestations. The view denied personal distinctions within the Godhead. God is one Person who manifested Himself in three aspects, offices, or modes. Since no distinction was made between the Father and the Son, the view led to affirming that the Father suffered in the sufferings of Christ (Patricianism). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three modes of manifesting the one God. Sabellius stated that God was not Father, Son, and Holy Ghost simultaneously, but each of these in succession.

The view of Sabellius fails at the point of explaining how Jesus as the Son could have the Holy Spirit descend upon Him and the Father speak from heaven. God is not Father except in relation to Christ as Son. The Holy Spirit does not replace the Father and Son, but His presence means that the Father and the Son are present. Fatherhood and sonship are not temporary characteristics of God, but they are essential and eternal in nature.

Subordinationism.—Arius, a presbyter of the Alexandrian Church about A.D. 320, held the following beliefs:

1. The Son was created out of nothing; therefore, He is different in essence from the Father.
2. There was a time when He was not; therefore, He is finite and not eternal.
3. He was created before anything else, and through Him the universe was created.
4. In the historic Christ, the human element is merely the material and the soul is the Logos. The historic Christ had no human soul. The human elements of Christ came from the Logos which is finite and imperfect.

The view of the Trinity as held by Paul of Samosata is called _____.
According to this view, the relation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is that the three are God in one person. _____ and _____ are attributes of God, and the _____ was energized by the _____ at His baptism at which time He was exalted to honour and fellowship with _____. (Compare your answer with the text.)

Modalistic Monarchianism as presented by Sabellius indicated that God was one Person who manifested Himself in three aspects or modes.

Is this statement which you have just read true or false? _____

(true)

After you have read all of this paragraph, which continues on the next page, list three conclusions of Arius concerning the creation of the Son.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

5. The incarnate Logos is finite, and hence not God, but He is to be worshipped since He has been exalted above all other creatures.

According to Arius the Son was completely subordinate to the Father.

Contemporary Unitarians have perpetuated the views of Arius; however, they deny the pre-existence of Christ and regard Him as only a man. Supernatural elements have been eliminated from His life.

The Triune Nature of God

Athanasius opposed Arius at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. He held the following beliefs:

1. The Son was begotten not by the will of the Father but by a necessity of the Father's nature. It is God's unchangeable nature to be Father, but He could not be Father without the Son.
2. The Son is identical in substance with the Father.
3. The Son is a personality just as the Father is a personality. The Son is not a mere attribute or mode of manifestation of the Father but an independent personal subsistence. Christ is not a delegate whom God sent, nor is the Holy Spirit an external agent sent by the Father and the Son. The works of Christ and of the Holy Spirit are as much the work of God as that of the Father.

Personality must not be interpreted to mean distinct individuality or entire separation from all others. In the one God, there is no such distinct individuality or separation. A similar statement can be made about the work of each. Each has a distinctive task but the work of each is the work of all. The work of the Son is that of the Father, and the Father works in and through the Son. The work of Christ is carried on through the Spirit. Each, however, has a distinctive function or functions: the Father is the source of creation and providential care; the Son reveals the Father and provides for man's redemption; the Holy Spirit is the inner reality of the being of both Father and Son and is the means of the presence of the Father and the Son with the believer.

The emphasis of the New Testament teachings is on the functional aspect of the Godhead. The New Testament does not attempt to explain the structure and relations within the Godhead. Yet the

Who opposed Arius at the Council of Nicaea?

(Athanasius)

Compare carefully Athanasius' teachings with those of Arius.

The emphasis of the New Testament is on the _____ aspect of the Godhead.

(functional)

Persons of the Godhead have eternal existence and are not just modes of operation. God's nature is a unity which exists in three Persons. The divine nature is present in each of the distinct Persons.

Athanasius defended the deity of the Holy Spirit with the same approach of applying the teachings of the same substance to the third Person as to the second. However, little attention continued to be paid to the deity of the Holy Spirit. After the Council of Nicaea in A. D. 325, the main line of orthodox teaching was that either the Holy Spirit is divine or the Son is not divine.

The question of the persons of the Godhead was finally settled at the Council of Constantinople in A. D. 381. Some fifty years earlier, the Nicene creed had stated:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance [*ousias*] of the Father ... begotten, not made, of one substance [*homoousion*] with the Father We believe also in one Holy Spirit.

The Council of Constantinople in A. D. 381 added the following words to the end of the Nicene formula:

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father ['and the Son' was a later Western addition], who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.

The Council made it clear that the Spirit is not subordinate but is of the 'same substance' (*homoousion*) as the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is uncreated and is to be worshipped together with the Father and the Son as one God.

Homoousion was inserted in the Creed to emphasize that Christ is not subordinate to the Father but is of the 'same' (*homo*) 'substance' or essence (*ousion*). This term emphasized that Christ is true God, but it could be interpreted to mean that Christ had no distinct personality. *Ousion* (essence) came to be regarded as the equivalent of the Latin *substantia* (substance). The same substance or essence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit stated their equality as God, but another term was needed to express their distinction.

The question of the Persons of the Godhead was finally settled at the Council of _____ in A. D. 381.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The Council made it clear that the substance of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are (the same, different).

UNDERLINE ONE

(the same)

Three men of Cappadocia worked out the interpretation of the Nicene Creed. They used the Greek word *hypostasis* (substantial nature or actual being) to distinguish the Persons of the Godhead. It is translatable into Latin by *persona* (person). The Trinitarian doctrine was formulated to state that in God there is only one *ousion* (substance), in which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share, but there are three *hypostases* (persons): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They held that there are not three Gods, but only one, and that the One is to be found equally and identically in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They used the terms 'one Substance' and 'three Persons' to state the doctrine of the Trinity. Their interpretation has continued to be held by most Christians.

The Cappadocians stated that in God there is only one _____ (substance) but there are three _____ (persons).
(ousion, hypostases)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). The following questions are based on the study guide.

1. Give four New Testament Scriptures which imply the Trinity. _____

2. What is meant by 'Trinity'? _____

3. Why does monotheism require the doctrine of the Trinity? _____

4. Why was the plural noun 'Elohim' used with a singular verb? _____

5. What was the origin and understanding of God's Word as a person? _____

6. In the light of the Old Testament emphasis on monotheism, what problem arises from New Testament teachings? _____

7. List four of the most important Scriptures which state that Jesus Christ is God.
-
8. What title is applied to both God and Jesus? _____
9. List five divine attributes which are applied to Jesus. Give a Scripture reference for each. (1) _____ (2) _____
(3) _____ (4) _____
(5) _____
10. What two works of God are attributed to Jesus? _____
11. What does the worship of Jesus reveal? _____
-
12. Why are God's transcendence and immanence important to man's understanding of Him?
-
-
-
13. How does the doctrine of the Trinity support the doctrine of Revelation? _____
-
14. How does the doctrine of the Holy Spirit correct the misunderstanding of the hidden and revealed God? _____
-
-
-
15. How does John's Gospel present the relation of the Persons of the Trinity? _____
-
-
16. How does John's Gospel distinguish the Persons of the Trinity? _____
-
-
17. What is Patripassionism? _____
-
-
18. What terms did Tertullian use to express the distinction and the unity of the Godhead?
-

19. How did Paul of Samosata describe the relation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

20. What is Modalistic Monarchianism as presented by Sabellius?

21. Name three conclusions of Arius concerning the creation of the Son.

22. List three important teachings of Athanasius concerning the Son. (1)

(2)

(3)

23. What Council finally settled the question of the Godhead and what term was used to show the equality of the Trinity?

24. How did the Cappadocians interpret the Nicene Creed to show the relation and distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3):

Read pages 89-105 in Christian Doctrine by Shirley C. Guthrie and answer the following questions:

1. Why is the doctrine of the Trinity important if it is not taught explicitly in the Bible?
2. State the Biblical teachings which require the doctrine of the Trinity.
3. What does the doctrine of the Trinity attempt to say?
4. What is the problem of using the term 'person' today to speak of the distinctions within God's Being? What expression may be used to communicate the proper concept today?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. Describe two errors the doctrine of the Trinity attempted to avoid in the early Church.
2. Read pages 162-170 in Shaping Your Faith by C.W. Christian and answer the following questions:
 - (1) How does the doctrine of the Trinity express the idea of the living God?
 - (2) What three problems of man are answered by the doctrine of the Trinity?

Optional reading: Revelation and God by Conner, pages 323-336.
The Christian Doctrine of God by Brunner, pages 205-234.
The Doctrine of God by Strong, pages 304-352.

Seminar Discussion

1. How does the Incarnate Christ relate to the Old Testament Word, Wisdom, and Angel of Yahweh?
2. Why do God's transcendence and immanence require the doctrine of the Trinity?
3. What do monarchianism and subordinationism attempt to preserve in the doctrine of God?
4. How do the teachings of Arius and Athanasius differ?
5. How was the "same substance" (*homoousion*) interpreted by the Cappadocian Fathers?