

TRINITARIANISM: UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE TRINITY I

Demand for a High View of God

For the Church

"For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that composes the Church. **Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God,** just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God." Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, p.9

For the Christian

"A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God." Ibid., p. 10

Denial of a High View of God

"It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these middle years of the twentieth century is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity." Ibid.

Danger of Idolatry

"Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry, for idolatry is at bottom a libel on His character. The idolatrous heart assumes that God is other than He is--in itself a monstrous sin--and substitutes for the true God one made after its own likeness. . . . The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him. It begins in the mind and may be present where no overt act of worship has taken place." Ibid., pp. 11-12

Decline of the Church

"Perverted notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear. The long career of Israel demonstrates this clearly enough, and the history of the Church confirms it. So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards declines along with it. **The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God.**" Ibid., p. 112

Declaration of the Church's Task

"The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him--and of her. In all her prayers and labors this should have first place. We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished that noble concept of God which we received from our Hebrew and Christian fathers of generations past. This will prove of greater value to them than anything that art or science can devise." Ibid.

Explanation of the Trinity

Theologically

Definition

"The monotheistic doctrine of one God subsisting in a plurality of Persons— three, no less and no more— is that which accords with all Scripture and, though characterized by mystery when approached by the finite mind, is, nevertheless, without contradiction and is perfect in all its adaptation and parts. It is as perfect as the God whom it discloses." Chafer, Sys. Theo. 3:282

Distinction

"The oneness and onliness of God; the three eternal distinctions or modes of being of the one only God— the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and the proper Deity of each of the three— God, the One indivisible Absolute Spirit in each of these peculiar and eternal modes of being" Harris, God the Creator and Lord of All. 1:322

Historic Development

Tertullian (c. 155-240 A.D.)

"They are three, not in substance but in form; not in power but in a specific distinction; but of one substance and power. Hold fast always the rule which I avow, in accordance with which I testify that the Father, Son, and Spirit are not separated. When I say that they are distinct, only ignorance or perversity will take this as meaning a diversity which issues in separation. For the Son is other than the Father, not by diversity, but by distribution; not by division, but by distinction. The Father and Son are not the same, but they differ one from the other in their mode of being." Quoted in Chafer, Sys. Theo. 1:282-83

Athanasian Creed: (296-373 A.D.)

"The Catholic [universal] faith is that we venerate one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the Persons nor separating the substance. The Person of the Father is one, of the Son another, of the Holy Spirit another. But the Divinity of Father, Son, and Spirit is one, their glory equal, coeternal their majesty ... created, not begotten, but proceeding. Therefore there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in this Trinity there is nothing prior or posterior, nothing greater or less; but all the three Persons are

coeternal and coequal, so that in all things both a Trinity in unity and a unity in Trinity is to be worshipped." Ibid., 1:285

Calvin:

"God predicates that He is unique, yet so as that He distinctly proposes to be considered in three persons; which unless we hold, there will flutter in our brain only the bare and empty name of God without the true God." Institutes of the Christian Religion 1:13:2

OBSERVATION— our orthodox view of the Trinity came about . . . and is maintained . . . despite attempts to deviate from orthodoxy. For example . . .

Early Church heresies— (2nd, 3rd cent.): Sabellianism, Tritheism— the heresy that there are, in fact, 3 Gods

Tritheism— A heretical doctrine from early church history concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. Tritheism declares that **there are three independent Gods** instead of the correct view that there are three Persons within one Godhead. Tritheism sees the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being three separate Gods.

Sabellianism— A Trinitarian controversy that developed during the second century. Sabellius, in an effort to refute tritheism, declared that there is but one God. But in his efforts, Sabellius went to another extreme. In his effort to explain the three persons of the trinity, Sabellius **said that God is modalistic, that He is one, but plays the role of three (Father, Son and Spirit).**

Reformation Period heresies— (16th cent.): Socinianism—denies the humanity of Jesus

Socinianism— The Christological heresy named for Faustus Socinus (1539-1604). Socinianism was derived from Arianism, a 4th century A.D. heresy which denies the deity of Jesus Christ. But unlike Arianism, Socinianism accepts Jesus Christ as a divine person, believing his resurrection from the dead and his ascension. Socinians believe that Jesus' resurrection was a result of his perfect obedience to God. **Socinians also deny the orthodox view on the fall of man. As a result, the redeeming work of Christ is not to be found in His propitiatory death, but in His life and His teachings.**

Enlightenment period attacks on orthodoxy— (18th, early 19th cent.): Deism, Unitarianism— the period that developed the view that denies the deity of Christ

Deism— **Deism sees God as impersonal, uninterested and uninvolved with the world.** It involves a mechanical conception of the universe. The deist believes God has made a machine, and because it is a good machine, He can leave it to work out, not its, but His end. The deist believes God has created His universe, given His creation His law for guidance, then turned the universe loose to run by His design, much as a clock-maker winds a clock and starts it. The deist believes the natural law delivers us from chance. But it does so only to cast us into the cogged teeth of a machine.

Unitarianism— The incorrect belief that **God is a one-personed God**, rather than a Triune God.

Delineation of the Doctrine— the orthodox view

"There is but one God, and this God is one, i.e., He is indivisible.

That the one indivisible divine essence, as a whole, exists eternally as Father, and as Son, and as Holy Ghost; that each person possesses the whole essence, and is constituted a distinct person by certain incommunicable properties, not common to him with the others.

The distinction between these three is a personal distinction, in the sense that it occasions (1) the use of the personal pronouns, *I, thou, he*, (2) a concurrence in counsel and a mutual love, (3) a distinct order of operation.

Since there is but one divine essence, and since all attributes or active properties are inherent in and inseparable from the essence to which they pertain, it follows that all the divine attributes must be identically common to each of the three persons who subsist in common of the one essence. . . .

In the Godhead, however, there is but one substance, and one intelligence, one will, etc., and yet three persons eternally co-exist of that one essence, and exercise that one intelligence and one will. . . .

These divine persons being one God, all the divine attributes being common to each in the same sense, nevertheless they are revealed in the Scriptures in a certain order of subsistence and of operation.

(1) Of subsistence, inasmuch as the Father is neither begotten nor proceeds from, while the Son is eternally begotten by the Father, and the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son;

(2) Of operation, inasmuch that the first person sends and operates through the second, and the first and second send and operate through the third.

Hence the Father is always set forth as first, the Son as second, the Spirit as third.

While all the divine attributes are common equally to the three persons, and all divine works wrought ad extra (Latin— "at the extremity"; from the point of view of a boundary or limit) such as creation, providence, or redemption, are predicated alike of the one divine being--the one God considered absolutely--and of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost severally; nevertheless the Scriptures attribute some divine works wrought ad intra (Latin— "at the interior"; considered from within) exclusively to each divine person respectively, e.g., generation to the Father, filiation to the Son, procession to the Holy Ghost; and there are likewise some divine works wrought ad extra which are attributed pre-eminently to each person respectively, e.g., creation to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Ghost." A. A. Hodge, Outlines in Theology, pp. 167-68

Dilemma Regarding Oneness and Threeness

"Although this tri-personal constitution of the Godhead is altogether beyond the capacity of reason and is ascertained to us only through a supernatural revelation, there is evidently no contradiction in the twofold proposition, that God is one, and yet Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are that one God. They are one in one sense, and threefold in an entirely different sense. **The eternal, self-existent, divine essence, constituting all those divine perfections called attributes of God is, in the same sense and degree, common to all the persons. In this sense they are one. But this divine essence exists eternally as Father, and as Son, and as Holy Ghost, distinguished by personal properties. In this sense they are three. We believe this, not because we understand it, but because thus God has revealed himself.**" Ibid., p. 194

POINT: This is the definition of faith. Faith is belief based upon the truth, as revealed by God. The logic of human reason must submit to God's revelation of Himself, even though we don't understand. God said it. . . we believe it. . . that is true faith.

Declaration of Divine Triunity

Internally, Regarding the Nature of the Godhead

"They work together or cooperate with such perfect harmony and unity that we are justified in saying that the Triune God works with one mind and one will. What the one knows, the others know; what the one desires, the others desire; and what the one wills, the others will. Independence and self-existence are not attributes of the individual persons, but of the Triune God; hence there are not three independent wills, but three dependent wills, if we may so speak, each of which is exercised for the honor and glory and happiness of the other two." Boettner, Study in Theo., pp. 106-107

Externally, Regarding Approach to the Godhead

"In the Bible all divine titles and attributes are ascribed equally to the Father, Son, and Spirit. The same divine worship is rendered to them. The one is as much the object of adoration, love, confidence, and devotion as the other. It is not more evident that the Father is God, than that the Son is God; nor is the deity of the Father and Son more clearly revealed than that of the Spirit." Hodge, Sys. Theo. 1:444

Linguistically Supportive Terms—the work of theologians over the centuries to try to **differentiate without separating** the Triune Godhead

"Essence"

Comparison of "Substance" with "Essence"

"**God is one in His essential being** or constitutional nature. Some of the early Church Fathers used the term *substantia* as synonymous with *essentia*, but later writers avoided this use of it in view of the fact that in the Latin Church *substantia* was used as a rendering of *hypostasis* [person] as well as of *ousia* [being] and was therefore

ambiguous. At present the two terms **substance** and **essence** are often used interchangeably. There is no objection to this, provided we bear in mind that they have slightly different connotations." Berkhof, Sys. Theo., P. 87

Contrast of "Substance" with "Essence"

"Essence is from *esse*, "to be," and denotes energetic being. Substance is from *substare* and denotes the latent possibility of being. The term "essence" describes God as a sum-total of infinite perfections; the term substance describes Him as the underlying ground of infinite activities. The first is, comparatively, an active word; the last, a passive. The first is, comparatively, a spiritual, the last a material term. We speak of material substance rather than of material essence." Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, 1:271

Comparison of "Essence" and "Person"

Divine vs. Human nature

The Trinitarian person possesses the entire, indivisible divine nature because the divine nature is undistributed there is only **one** divine nature.

On the other hand, every human person possesses only a fractional part of the entire human nature because human nature is distributed by propagation. The essence of human nature is multiplied by propagation.

Divine vs. Human Subsistence

The Trinitarian person subsists in a particular manner, such as

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------|
| 1. Father | \ | 1 Person |
| 2. Son | \ | |
| 3. Holy Spirit | / | |

The Human person subsists in a different manner, such as

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. Peter | \ | 3 Distinct Persons |
| 2. James | \ | |
| 3. John | / | |

Divine vs. Human Communicability of one's nature

The relation of essence and person in the Trinity is an incommunicable characteristic because

1. It is divine, therefore it is unique
2. It is undistributed by natural propagation

The relation of essence and person in humanity is a communicable trait because

1. It is human, therefore it multiplies
2. It is distributed by natural propagation

For these reasons the one thing God cannot do is create another God.

Question: Why is it important to understand that God cannot create another God? What would it mean if God could create another God?

The Number of the Divine Essence

The divine essence is trinal: **3-in-1**

The divine essence is not triple: **not 3**

"Subsistence"

Definition— **The word "subsistence" means something that has a real existence.**

Within the triune Godhead each of the divine persons is distinct from the other yet identical in essence. In other words, each is fully divine in nature, but each is not the totality of the other persons of the Trinity. Each has a will, loves, and says "I" and "You" when speaking. The Father is not the same person as the Son, who is not the same person as the Holy Spirit, and who is not the same person as the Father. Each is divine, yet there are not three gods but one God. There are three individual subsistences or persons.

The term subsistence "is used to signify **that mode of existence which distinguishes one individual thing from every other individual thing**, one person from every other person. As applied to the doctrine of the Trinity, subsistence is that mode of existence which is peculiar to each of the divine persons, and which in each constitutes the one essence a distinct person." A. A. Hodge, Out. Theo., p. 165

Dilemma of terminology

"To denote these distinctions in the Godhead, Greek writers generally employed the term *hupostasis*, while Latin authors used the term *persona*, and sometimes *substantia*. Because the former was apt to be misleading and the latter was ambiguous, the Schoolmen coined the word *subsistentia*. **The variety of the terms used points to the fact that their inadequacy was always felt.** It is generally admitted that **the word "person" is but an imperfect expression** of the idea. In common parlance it denotes a separate rational and moral individual, **possessed of self-consciousness, and conscious of his identity amid all changes.** **Experience teaches that where you have a person, you also have a distinct individual essence.** Every person is a distinct and separate individual, in whom human nature is individualized. **But in God there are not three individuals alongside of, and separate from, one another, but only personal self-distinctions within the Divine essence,** which is not only generically, but also numerically, one." Berkhof, Sys. Theo., p. 87

Distinction of the divine subsistences

Stated

"The self-distinctions in the Divine Being imply an 'I' and 'Thou' and 'He', in the Being of God, which assume personal relations to one another." Ibid., p.88

Supported

Matt. 3:16-17—After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

John 1:18—No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

John 14:26—"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Perspective of the term "Subsistence"

"Until the middle of the fourth century this word, in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity, was generally used in its primary sense, as equivalent to substance. Some, however, at that time understanding the word in the sense of person, its usage was changed by general consent, chiefly through the influence of Athanasius, and ever since it has been established in theological language in the sense of person, in contradistinction to ousia, essence. A. A. Hodge, Out. Theo., p. 165

Parallel Terms

Latin: *persona*

Greek: *prosopon*

OBSERVATION: As we begin to try to understand our Triune God we can begin to understand why it took 300 years after the death of Christ to establish an orthodox view of Trinitarianism and why orthodoxy remains under assault even today. Can you image how difficult it must have been for the early church fathers to work through these issues?

Question: Can you explain why the concept of "subsistence" is important to beginning to understand the Triune Godhead? How does an improper understanding or definition of the divine "subsistence" threaten orthodoxy?

Unity of Essence

Concept: there is no subordination as to the essential being of the persons of the Godhead. They are equally God.

Evidence: John 10:30—"***I and the Father are one.***"

Explanation

"Note how carefully both the diversity of the persons and the unity of the essence is expressed here. Jesus says, 'I and the Father.' Hence, he clearly speaks about two persons. And this plurality is shown also by the verb (one word in Greek) "we are" (*esmen*). These two persons never become one person. Hence, Jesus does not say, 'We are one person' (*heir*), but he says, 'We are one substance' (*hen*). Though two persons, the two are one substance or essence. It has been well said that *hen* frees us from the Charybdis [Greek mythological whirlpool] of Arianism (which denies the unity of essence), and *esmen* from the Scylla [In Greek mythology, a sea monster who lived underneath a dangerous rock at one side of the Strait of Messina, opposite the whirlpool Charybdis] of Sabellianism (which denies the diversity of the persons). Thus in this passage Jesus affirms his complete equality with the Father."

Hendriksen, Exposit. Gos. Jn. 2:126

Arianism— The Christological heresy named for Arius of Alexandria who lived during the fourth century A.D. Arius taught that God is a one-personed God, not a Triune God. Arius argued that to accept Jesus Christ as a member of the Godhead would affirm two Gods, or polytheism. Arius thus taught that there was a time when God was not Father, that He was alone and not yet Father. Arius believed that Jesus Christ was a created being, there was a time the Son was not, that Christ was created by God the Father and ranks first among all created beings. Arianism was condemned by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. The Council adopted a creed that affirmed the Father and Son as God.

Clarification

"When Jesus said, ***I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE***, He was not affirming that He and the Father are the same Person. The Son and the Father are two Persons in the Trinity. This is confirmed here by the fact that the word 'One' is neuter. Instead, He was saying They have the closest possible unity of purpose. Jesus' will is identical to the Father's regarding the salvation of His sheep. And yet absolute identity of wills involves identity of nature. Jesus and the Father are One in will (and also in nature for both are God; cf. 20:28; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9) Jesus did not walk around Palestine saying 'I am God,' but His interpretation of the Sabbath and His words about His union with the Father revealed His claim of oneness in nature with God." B.K.C. Blum, Gospel of John, pp. 311-12

"Trinity"

Appearance of the Term

"The word 'trinity' itself does not occur in the Bible. Its Greek form, *Trias*, seems to have been first used by Theophilus of Antioch (d. A.D. 181), and its Latin form, *Trinitas*, by Tertullian (d. ca. A.D. 220)." Theissen, Lec. Sys. Theo., p. 135

Apprehension of the Meaning

"The word trinity (*Trinitas*) is derived either from *Tresunus*, *Trinus*, or from *Trias*, three in one, or the one which is three, and the three which are one; not triplex—*Trinitas* not *Triplicitas*. This word is not found in the Scriptures. Technical terms are however an absolute necessity in all sciences. In this case they have been made particularly essential because of the subtle perversions of the simple, untechnical Biblical statements by infidels and heretics. This term, as above defined, admirably expresses the central fact of the great doctrine of the one essence eternally subsisting as three Persons, all the elements of which are explicitly taught in the Scriptures." A. A. Hodge, *Out. Theo.*, p. 164

Analogically: Vestigia Trinitatis (Vestiges/Traces of the Trinity)— a term coined by Augustine that holds that there are signs of the Trinity in all of creation. These signs are not illustrations for the Trinity but rather an imprint of the Trinity made during creation. The common Augustinian example was the mind.

Classification of Analogies

Inanimate Analogies

Egg

1. Yolk
2. White
3. Shell

Water

1. Ice
2. Liquid
3. Steam

Tree

1. Root
2. Trunk
3. Branches

Anthropological Analogies

Love

1. Lover
2. Loved one
3. The love which unites them

Family

1. Father
2. Mother
3. Child

Psychological Unity

1. Memory
2. Understanding
3. Will

Faith

1. Mind
2. Heart
3. Will

Critique of the Analogies

Inanimate Analogies

1. Within these analogies there are components but **no concept of personality**.
2. While these analogies represent an imperfect portion of the common essence, **these analogies don't exemplify the entirety of the common essence in each of its constituent parts** (e.g. there is more to a tree than the root, the trunk and the branches.)

Anthropological Analogies

Regarding Love: it coordinates two persons and a relationship, but not tri-personality

Regarding Family: it coordinates tri-personality but not unity of substance

Question: Based upon the analogies cited above, in an attempt to help understand the concept of Trinity, where do these analogies break down?

Contrast Between Modalism and Tritheism

The Soul (Modalistic)

"**the mysterious power which the soul has of dialogue with itself** - in that indrawn ideal life of the spirit, when the mind, excluding the outward world, holds converse and arguments with itself - divides itself as it were within itself, and holds discussion with itself, putting its questions and answering them, proposing difficulties and solving them, offering objections and repelling them, - all the while remaining, as we may say, in a third capacity, the neutral spectator of itself, taking watchful note of what is advanced on both sides of the debate, and passing favorable or unfavorable judgment on the issues." James Orr, Chr. Vw. of God and the World, p. 271

In other words, modalism is analogous to "arguing or talking with yourself."

Modalism— Also known as Sabellianism, it is a heretical belief concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. The Modalistic view is that there are not three distinct members of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), but instead there is only one God who plays the three different roles or reveals Himself in three different fashions.

Twins (Tritheistic)

"Take the case of **identical twins**. In one sense, they **are of the same essence**, for their genetic makeup is identical. An organ transplant from one to the other can be accomplished with relative ease, for the recipient's body will not reject the donor's organ as foreign; it will accept it as its very own. Identical twins are very close in other ways as well. They have similar interests and tastes.

Although they have different spouses and different employers, a close bond unites them. And yet they are not the same person. They are two, not one."

Erickson, *Chr. Theo.*, p. 341

Equal Emphasis

"These two analogies emphasize different aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity. The former puts major stress upon the oneness. The latter illustrates more clearly the threeness, both must be equally emphasized. The Greek (Cappadocians) stress on the three persons and the Latin (Western) stress on God's unity are equally vital. Each group had seized upon an indispensable facet of the truth. We must cling to both, even though we cannot see the exact relationship between the two." Ibid.

Caution

"In practice even orthodox Christians have difficulty clinging simultaneously to the several components of the doctrine. Our use of these several analogies suggests that perhaps in practice or in our unofficial theology none of us is really fully Trinitarian. We tend to alternate between **tritheism**, -- a belief in three equal, closely related Gods, and **modalism**, a belief in one God who plays three different roles or reveals himself in three different fashions." Ibid., p. 340

Questions—

1. Why is it even important that we believe that God is Triune?
2. If a person claims to be a Christian, and yet denies the Trinity, is that person really a Christian?
3. This is difficult stuff. Why is it necessary or important to learn this? Am I diminished in any way in my faith by not knowing this?
4. Two of the most common errors in understanding our Triune God are **tritheism** and **modalism**. Can you explain the difference between the two and why they are both in error?

TRINITARIANISM: UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE TRINITY II

Evidence for the Trinity

Foundation: Reason and Revelation

From Reason

"Reason cannot give intelligent assent to all that revelation discloses. God is the ultimate perfection of reason and whatever He discloses is none other than the manifestation of infinite reason. Belief in the doctrine of the Trinity—one God subsisting in three modes of existence— should not be founded upon reason. It is a revelation. It is, however, quite legitimate to observe, as one may do with some attention, that reason, so far as it is able to go, acquiesces in that which revelation discloses. The Bible, being infinitely true, seeks no support from finite reason." Chafer, *Sys. Theo.* 1:290

IN OTHER WORDS, while the finite minds of men have discerned what Scripture teaches about the Triune God, the finite human mind cannot truly comprehend our infinite God by reason. We believe what Scripture teaches even though we don't understand.

Flow of the Argument

Requirement of Agent/Object

"He is a perfect Agent in the exercise of infinite perfections and attributes; but who, it may be inquired, is the object? Creation presents a vast array of objects and these are all benefited by His agency; but the question is more demanding in that it inquires who served as object in the exercise of the eternal attributes in that situation which existed before aught was created. The attributes of God were active prior to creation and, if so, there must have been both agent and object then as now. To restrict the divine object to creation is to deprive God of the exercise of His qualities and characteristics during that period preceding creation. It also follows that, since creation was a matter of divine choice and thus contingent, it is to restrict the exercise of God's attributes to that which is contingent. In such a case the divine attributes might as easily have never been exercised at all." *Ibid.*, p. 292

Personality of Agent/Object

"Since the divine nature includes plurality, it must be a plurality of Persons (subsistence). Such a plurality cannot be predicated of the divine Essence, for the Scriptures distinctly testify to the truth that there is but one God. Similarly, this plurality cannot be that of mere offices or modes of manifestations, for such could not serve in their relation to each other as agent and object. Nothing short of Persons can serve in this reciprocity. In the case of the exercise of the attributes which are moral, both the agent and the object must exhibit intelligence,

consciousness, and moral agency. In the experience of communion, the necessity is as much on the object as it is on the agent, that there shall be similarity in thought, disposition, will, purpose, and affection. If the agent be a Person, the object must be a Person also; whatever pertains to Deity is of necessity eternal. Nothing in God, as has been seen, can be contingent or adventitious. Every attribute and divine quality is eternal, and, in like manner, the Person, or Persons, to whom these attributes pertain are eternal. **None of these Persons within the Godhead could be lacking in the essential features and attributes of Deity and maintain any place in the communion which comprises the Godhead.** By the most empirical necessity these Persons are coequal. **No gradations belong to infinity. There is no sphere of existence intermediate between infinite Deity and finite creaturehood.** Whatever is within the Essence of Deity is lacking nothing which belongs to infinite completeness. **All must be equal in power, glory, wisdom, benevolence, dignity, and disposition to communion.** These attributes ever have been and ever will be exercised by each Person within the Godhead. In all the fullness of infinity, these attributes have been eternally active in each Person. Therefore, as each Person has ever exercised these attributes to infinity and eternally, it becomes evident that each has been and ever will be infinitely active as agent and object." Ibid., pp. 295-94

Agent/Object Relationship Explained—In the discussion above about an Agent/Object relationship, it must be understood that **each member of the Godhead simultaneously acts as both agent and object in the Triune Godhead.** God the Father loves God the Son and God the Spirit, while God the Son loves God the Father and God the Spirit and God the Spirit loves God the Father and God the Son. Each acts simultaneously as Agent and Object within the Triune Godhead.

FOR THIS REASON there must be, of necessity, a plurality of co-equally Divine Persons in God. Of necessity for there to be a true eternal Agent/Object relationship within the Triune Godhead, all three members must be eternal and equal.

Triunity of the Personality

"It therefore follows that as the element of conjoint action as agent is experienced by two, there must be a third Person who serves as object. There is no need for more than three Persons in the Godhead and there could not be less. Three is the number of divine completeness, not only on the testimony of the Bible, which is sufficient and final, but on the ground of the fact that within a triad of Persons every demand which reciprocity might present is satisfied. **Two infinite Persons agreeing as agents for the conjoint function of Beings must have as object a third Person equally as qualified as themselves."** Ibid., pp. 294-95

POINT: A two-personed Godhead would be too few; a four-personed Godhead would be too many. Three is the number of perfection.

Question: Can you explain the Agent/Object relationship within the Triune Godhead?

From Revelation

Nature of Revelation - "One of the strongest arguments for the divine origin of the Scriptures is the organic relation of its several parts. They comprise more than sixty books written by different men in different ages, and yet they form one whole; not by mere external historical relations, nor in virtue of the general identity of the subjects of which they treat, but by their internal organic development." Hodge, Sys. Theo., p. 446

POINT: The Bible is the source of all theology, but the Bible is not a book of Theology.

OBSERVATION: higher critics deny the organic unity of the Scriptures.

Higher criticism did not emerge until the 1800's. Unfortunately, when it did emerge, the biblical scholars involved sought to impose their personal biases and philosophies to disprove and discredit biblical doctrines. For this reason, higher criticism has become synonymous with attempts to disprove the inerrancy, infallibility, and divine superintending of Scripture.

Progress of Revelation

Instruction - "The Old Testament does not contain a full revelation of the Trinitarian existence of God, but does contain several indications of it. And this is exactly what might be expected. The Bible never deals with the doctrine of the Trinity as an abstract truth, but reveals the Trinitarian life in its various relations as a living reality, to a certain extent in connection with the works of creation and providence, but particularly in relation to the work of redemption. Its most fundamental revelation is a revelation given in facts rather than in words. And this revelation increases in clarity in the measure in which the redemptive work of God is more clearly revealed, as in the incarnation of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And the more the glorious reality of the Trinity stands out in the facts of history, the clearer the statements of the doctrine become. The fuller revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament is due to the fact that the Word became flesh, and that the Holy Spirit took up His abode in the Church." Berkhof, Sys. Theo., p. 85

Illustration - "The Old Testament . . . may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity. . . is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged" Warfield, Bib. Doc., p. 142

Implication - "Indirect allusions to the Trinity were permitted by the Holy Spirit who presided over the writing of the books, but there is no reason to believe that the truth was apprehended in any adequate way even by the prophets themselves. The doctrine

itself was veiled and held in reserve until the accompanying work of Christ in redemption made it intelligible to the human mind.

HENCE the Old Testament emphasizes the unity of God and special care is taken not to aggravate the constant tendency of Israel toward polytheism. A premature revelation of the Trinity might have been a hindrance religious progress;" Boettner, Study in Theo., p. 97

POINT: With Israel's tendency toward polytheism and idolatry, the doctrine of a Triune God would have served to confuse her even more. A 3-in-1 God would have been a great difficulty for Israel.

Question: Why would the Jews of antiquity have struggled with the truth that God is Triune? Why do the Jews now reject a Triune God?

Old Testament Evidence

Plural Names

"The use of the plural '*Elohim*,' with the singular verb, '*bara*,' is at least noteworthy, and seems to call for some recognition, especially as the same grammatical solecism (grammatical inconsistency, such as *they was*) is found used by St. Paul. W.H. Griffith-Thomas, Principles of Theology, pp. 25-26

POINT: The Hebrew phrase *Bereshit bara Elohim* is the opening phrase of Genesis 1:1 . . . *In the beginning God created . . .* And while the Old Testament reads this way, the Jews do not reject or correct the grammatical inconsistency, nor do they accept it as Scriptural evidence for the Trinity.

The interpretation of '*Elohim*' as a plural of majesty (royal "we") is by no means unanimously held by recent Old Testament scholarship, however. In 1953, G. A. F. Knight argued against it in a monograph entitled *A Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity*. He maintained that to '*Elohim*' a plural of majesty is to read into ancient Hebrew a modern way of thinking, since the kings of Israel and Judah are all addressed in the singular in our biblical records. While rejecting the plural of majesty, Knight pointed out that there is, nonetheless, a peculiarity in Hebrew which will help us understand the term in question. The words for water and heaven (among others) are both plural. Grammarians have termed this phenomenon the quantitative plural. Water may be thought of in terms of individual raindrops or of a mass of water such as is found in the ocean. Knight asserted that this quantitative diversity in unity is a fitting way of understanding the plural '*Elohim*'. He also believed that this explains why the singular noun ('*Adonai*') is written as a plural." Erickson, Chr. Theo., pp. 328-29

Plural Pronouns

"Then too, the use of the plurals '**our**' (Gen. i.26), '**us**' (xi. 7), seems to indicate some self-converse in God. It is not satisfactory to refer this to angels because they were not associated with God in creation. Whatever may be the meaning of this usage, it seems,

at any rate, to imply that Hebrew Monotheism was an intensely living reality." Grif. Thom. Prin. Theo., pp. 25-26

Angel of the Lord

Stated

"Not only in Genesis, but also in all the early books of Scripture, we find a distinction made between *the Lord* and *the angel of the Lord*, who himself is God, to whom all divine titles are given, and divine worship is rendered. As the revelation is unfolded, such distinction becomes more and more manifest. This messenger of God is called "the word," "the wisdom," "the Son of God." His personality and divinity are clearly revealed." Hodge, Sys. Theo. 1:447

Genesis 16:7-13— 7 The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." 9 The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." 10 The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." 11 And the angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." 13 So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."

Gen. 18:1-19:29—when *the angel of the Lord* appeared to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre and dines with him before sending the angels to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

Gen. 22:1-19— *the angel of the Lord* calls to Abraham as he is about to sacrifice Isaac.

Gen. 32:22-32— Jacob wrestles with *the angel of the Lord*

Exod. 3:1-22— *the angel of the Lord* appears to Moses as the burning bush.

Exod. 23:20-23— the Israelites commanded to obey *the angel of the Lord* as they travel to Canaan.

Josh. 5:13-6:3— *the angel of the Lord* speaks to and guides Moses as he goes to Pharaoh.

Question: What is the difference between an angel of the Lord and the angel of the Lord?

Spirit of God

“In like manner, even in the first chapter of Genesis, the Spirit of God is represented as the source of all intelligence, order, and life in the created universe; and in the following books of the Old Testament He is, represented as inspiring the prophets, giving wisdom, strength, and goodness to statesmen and warriors, and to the people of God. This Spirit is not an agency, but an agent, who teaches and selects; who can be sinned against and grieved; and who, in the New Testament, is unmistakably revealed as a distinct person.” Ibid.

Supported

Gen. 6:3— Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.”

Ps. 51:11— Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Ps. 139:7— Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

Isaiah 63:10-11— ¹⁰ But they [Israel] rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them. ¹¹ Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them,

New Testament Evidence

The Trinity and the Names of God

The Father is called God

*John 6:27 - "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him **the Father, {even} God,** has set His seal."*

*Romans 1:7 - to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called {as} saints: Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Galatians 1:1 - Paul, an apostle (not {sent} from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and **God the Father,** who raised Him from the dead),*

The Son is called God

*John 1:1 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.***

Romans 9:5 - whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

*Titus 2:13 - looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of **our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**;*

The Spirit is called God

*Acts 5:3-9 - But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart **to lie to the Holy Spirit**, and to keep back {some} of the price of the land? "While it remained {unsold,} did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? **You have not lied to men, but to God.**" And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it. And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." Then Peter {said} to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out {as well} "*

*2 Corinthians 3:17 - Now **the Lord is the Spirit**; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, {there} is liberty.*

The Trinity and the Attributes of God

*The Father— Psalm 90:2 - Before the mountains were born, or Thou didst give birth to the earth and the world, even **from everlasting to everlasting**, Thou art God.*

The Son— John 1:2 - He was in the beginning with God.

*Revelation 1:8, 17 - "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; **I am the first and the last**,*

*The Spirit—Heb. 9:14 - how much more will the blood of Christ, who through **the eternal Spirit** offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Omnipotence

*The Father— 1 Peter 1:5 - who are protected by **the power of God** through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

The Son— 2 Corinthians 12:9 - *And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that **the power of Christ** may dwell in me.*

The Spirit— Romans 15:19 - *in the power of signs and wonders, in **the power of the Spirit**; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

Omniscience

The Father— Jeremiah 17:10— *"I, the LORD, search the heart, **I test the mind**, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.*

The Son— Revelation 2:23— *'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that **I am He who searches the minds and hearts**; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.*

The Spirit— 1 Corinthians 2:11— *For who among men knows the {thoughts} of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the {thoughts} of God **no one knows except the Spirit of God.***

Omnipresence

The Father— Jeremiah 23:24— *"Can a man hide himself in hiding places, so I do not see him?" declares the LORD. **"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?"** declares the LORD.*

The Son— Matthew 28:20— *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, **I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**"*

The Spirit— Psalm 139:7— *Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?*

Holiness

The Father— Revelation 15:4— *"Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? **For Thou alone art holy**; for all the nations will come and worship before Thee, for Thy righteous acts have been revealed."*

The Son— Acts 3:14— *"But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,*

The Spirit— His name is the Holy Spirit

Truth

The Father— John 7:28— *Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but **He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.***

The Son— Revelation 3:7— *"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: **He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:***

The Spirit— 1 John 5:6— *This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood.*

Conclusion

"The same equality might be set forth concerning every aspect of the character of God. What is true of one Person is true of each of the others and this is conclusive evidence that the Godhead is a Trinity of infinite Persons, yet one God. There is no intimation that one Person of the Godhead sustains these attributes in respect to the other two Persons, or that the attributes are held in any partnership. All is predicated of each as though no others existed. Thus the peculiar relationship of One in Three, and Three in One, is upheld apart from those usual interdependent sharings which characterize all human combinations and mutual manifestations" Chafer, Sys. Theo., 1:305

The Trinity and the Works of God

Apprehension

"Each distinctive work of God is not only said to be wrought by a Person of the Godhead, but **the major works of God are predicated of each of the Three Persons**. In no instance are these Persons said to be combined in what they do; it is rather that the same thing in one Scripture is attributed to one Person that is in another Scripture attributed to another, and so on until each of the Three is credited with the work and, in each case, it is as though no other Person was ever related to it. No outward partnership is recognized. **The fact that each One is announced as wholly achieving a given undertaking, quite apart from the Others, indicates the truth that the Persons maintain a distinction the One from the Others**. On the other hand, the fact that each does completely and perfectly the given task and in a way that it would imply that no other need undertake it, indicates a mysterious unity far more vitally concentrated than is known in any aspect of human experience." Ibid.

Accomplishment

Creation of the Universe

By the Father— Psalm 102:25— *"Of old Thou didst found the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands.*

By the Son— Colossians 1:16— *For by Him all things were created, {both} in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him.*

By the Spirit— Genesis 1:2— *And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.*

Creation of Man

By the Father— Genesis 2:7— *Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

By the Son— Colossians 1:16— *For by Him all things were created, {both} in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him.*

By the Spirit— Job 33:4— *"The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*

Resurrection of All

By Father and Son— John 5:21— *"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.*

By the Spirit— Romans 8:11 - *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.*

Inspiration of Scripture

By the Father— 2 Timothy 3:16 - *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

By the Son— 1 Peter 1:10-11 - *As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that {would come} to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.*

By the Spirit— 2 Peter 1:21 - *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

Indwelling Presence

Of the Father— Ephesians 4:6 - *one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

Of the Son— Colossians 1:27 - *to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Of the Spirit— 1 Corinthians 6:19 - Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

Work of Sanctification

By the Father— Jude 1 - Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:

By the Son— Hebrews 2:11 - For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one {Father} for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

By the Spirit— 1 Corinthians 6:11 - And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

The Trinity and the Worship of God

By Saints. All prayer and worship is now directed, by divine instruction, **to the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit** (John 16:23, 24; Eph. 6:18).

The Benedictions

In **Numbers 6:24-26**, the blessing implored by the high priest upon the people is recorded as, ***'The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.***

In **2 Corinthians 13:14** the most used benediction of the church is recorded, ***"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."*** Ibid., pp. 308-09

Questions:

1. What do the passages cited above teach us about the divinity of each member of the Triune Godhead?
2. Despite the evidence for the existence of the Trinity people who claim to believe in God refuse to accept the evidence of a Triune God. Why?

TRINITARIANISM: UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE TRINITY III

Ontological Trinity—

Ontological Trinity Defined— a recognition of the equality of personhood and being within the Godhead . . . the Father, Son and Spirit are each equally God.

The Inter-Relationship of the Members of the Godhead

Father	Generation	Neither Begotten Nor Proceeding
Son	Filiation	Begotten
Spirit	Procession	Proceeding

Inference From the Inter-Relationship

The Father begets the Son and is He from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds, but the Father is neither begotten nor does He proceed.

The Son is begotten and is He from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds, but He neither begets nor proceeds.

The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, but He neither begets nor is He one from whom any proceed.

Illustration of the Inter-Relationship

The Trinity can also be illustrated by the picture of the Nile River. A Spring flows into a River which flows into a Lake, all of which is water and = the Nile. Therefore,

spring ≠ river or lake
river ≠ spring or lake
lake ≠ spring or river

but

spring = Nile
river = Nile
lake = Nile

and

spring + river + lake = Nile

also

there are not 3 Niles but 1

Nile = one nature, one water
whole Nile = spring
whole Nile = river
whole Nile = lake

Son ≠ Father or Holy Spirit
Holy Spirit ≠ Son or Father
Father ≠ Son or Holy Spirit

but

Son = God
Father = God
Holy Spirit = God

and

Father + Son + Holy Spirit = God

also

there are not 3 Gods but 1

God = one nature, one deity
whole God = Father
whole God = Son
whole God = Holy Spirit

Economic Trinity Defined –

Economy means administration, management. The Economic Trinity speaks of the unique role each member of the Godhead plays. The economic Trinity is simply the term used to display some of the works, administrative tasks, management actions, of the three Persons, as seen in the terms involved just above.

Delineation

The Father

Electing (1 Peter 1:2)
Loving (John 3:16)
Giving (James 1:17)

The Son

Suffering (Mark 8:31)
Redeeming (1 Peter 1:18)
Upholding (Hebrews 1:3)

The Spirit

Regenerating (Titus 3:5)
Energizing (Ephesians 1:12-14; Acts 1:8)
Sanctifying (Galatians 5:22, 23)

Question: Can you explain the difference between the Ontological and Economic Trinity?

Development –

"In Hippolytus and Tertullian, we find the development of an economic view of the Trinity. There was little attempt to explore the eternal relations among the three; rather, there was a concentration on the ways in which the Triad were manifested in creation and redemption. In Tertullian's view, there are three manifestations of the one God. Although they are numerically distinct, so that they can be counted, they are nonetheless manifestations of a single indivisible power. There is a distinction (*distinctio*) or distribution (*dispositio*), not a division or separation (*separatio*)." Erickson, *Chr. Theo.*, p. 333

Distinctive Work of the Son

"It should be noted that the order of existence in the essential or ontological Trinity is reflected in the economic Trinity. The Son occupies the second place in the *opera ad extra*. If all things are out of the Father, they are through the Son, 1 Cor. 8:6. If the former is represented as the absolute cause of all things, the latter stands out clearly as the mediating cause. This applies in the natural sphere, where all things are created and maintained through the Son, John 1:3,10; Heb. 1:2,3. He is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, John 1:9. It applies also to the work of redemption. In the Counsel of Redemption He takes upon Himself to be Surety for His people, and to execute the Father's plan of redemption, Ps. 40:7,8. He works this out more particularly in His incarnation, sufferings, and death, Eph. 1:3-14." Berkhof, *Sys. Theo.*, p. 95

Distinctive Work of the Spirit

Explanation

"There are certain works which are more particularly ascribed to the Holy Spirit, not only in the general economy of God, but also in the special economy of redemption. In general it may be said that **it is the special task of the Holy Spirit to bring things to completion by acting immediately upon and in the creature.** Just as He Himself is the person who completes the Trinity, so His work is the completion of God's contact with His creatures and the consummation of the work of God in every sphere. **It follows the work of the Son, just as the work of the Son follows that of the Father.** It is important to bear this in mind, for if the work of the Holy Spirit is divorced from the objective work of the Son, false mysticism is bound to result." Ibid., p. 98

OBSERVATION: Just as the Son and Spirit do not do the work of electing and giving, and just as the Father and Spirit do not do the work of redeeming and suffering, so the Father and Son do not do the work of regenerating or sanctifying. In the Economic Trinity each member of the Godhead has a role that He alone fulfills.

Enumeration

"The generation of life. As being is out of the Father, and thought through the Son, so life is mediated by the Spirit, Gen. 1:3; Job. 26:13; Ps. 33:6; Ps. 104:30. In that respect He puts the finishing touch to the work of creation.

"The general inspiration and qualification of men. The Holy Spirit inspires and qualifies men for their official tasks, for work in science and art, etc., Ex. 28:3; 31:2,3,6; 35:35; 1 Sam. 11:6; 16:13, 14.

"The inspiration of Scripture. The Holy Spirit inspired Scripture, and thus brought to men the special revelation of God, 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:21, the knowledge of the work of redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

"The formation and augmentation of the Church. The Holy Spirit forms and increases the Church, the mystical body of Jesus Christ, by regeneration and sanctification, and dwells in it as the principle of the new life, Eph. 1:22;23; 2:22; 1 Cor. 3:16; 12:4 ff.

"Teaching and guiding the Church. The Holy Spirit testifies to Christ and leads the Church in all the truth. By doing this He manifests the glory of God and of Christ, increases the knowledge of the Savior, keeps the Church from error, and prepares her for her eternal destiny, John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13, 14; Acts 5:32; Heb. 10:15; 1 John 2:27." Ibid.

Question: Why is it significant that each member of the Trinity has a certain role or function that is not performed by the other two?

Expression - Mystery

Concept of Mystery

What the mystery of the Trinity is

"We must distinguish between apprehension and comprehension. We can know what God is, without knowing all He is. We can touch the earth while not able to embrace it in our arms. The child can know God while the philosopher cannot find out the Almighty unto perfection." Clark, Syl. Sys. Theo., p. 59

IN OTHER WORDS: In Scripture a mystery is something that is previously unknown and can only be known by revelation from God. Without divine revelation a biblical mystery could never be known or discovered by human reasoning or searching.

What the mystery of the Trinity is not

"But while the doctrine of the Trinity presents a mystery, it does not present a contradiction. It asserts that God is one in one respect—in substance or essence—and that He is three in an entirely different respect—in personal distinctions. **The doctrine of the Trinity is above reason, and could never have been discovered by man apart from divine revelation; yet it cannot be proved contrary to reason, nor inconsistent with any other truth which we know concerning God.**" Boettner, Study Theo., p. 125

IN OTHER WORDS: The Trinity is supernatural without being irrational.

Continuation of the Mystery

The Trinity is incomprehensible. **We cannot fully understand the mystery of the Trinity.** When someday we see God, we shall see him as he is, and understand him better than we do now. Yet even then we will not totally comprehend him. **Because He is the unlimited God and we are limited in our capacity to know and understand, He will always exceed our knowledge and understanding.** We will never become God. Those aspects of God which we will never fully comprehend should be regarded as mysteries that go beyond our reason rather than as paradoxes which conflict with reason." Erickson, Chr. Theo., p. 338

Consequence of the Mystery

"Let it be remembered that we are under no obligation to explain all the mysteries connected with this doctrine. We are only under obligation to set forth what the Scriptures teach concerning it, and to vindicate the teaching as far as possible from the objections that are alleged against it. **It is a doctrine which should never be presented to an unbeliever as a subject for argumentative proof, for it can be accepted only by faith,** and that only after the person is convinced that God has spoken and that He has revealed this as a truth concerning Himself." Boettner, Study. Theo., p. 126

POINT: This is especially true when witnessing to Jews or Muslims. Just as it is unwise to begin a gospel presentation by teaching the doctrines of election or predestination,

it is equally unwise to engage an unbeliever in an argument concerning the existence of the Triune God.

Question: What is the significance of the Trinity being a mystery?

Evaluation

Theological Importance of the Trinity

Expression

"It is not claimed that the refinements of theological speculations upon this subject are essential points of faith, but simply that it is essential to salvation to believe in the three persons in one Godhead, as they are revealed to us in the Scriptures. The only true God is that God who has revealed himself to us in the Scriptures, and the very end of the gospel is to bring us to the knowledge of that God precisely in the aspect in which he has revealed himself. Every other conception of God presents a false god to the mind and conscience. There can be no mutual toleration without treason. Socinians, Arians, and Trinitarians worship different Gods.

"The Scriptures explicitly assert that the knowledge of this true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent is eternal life, and that it is necessary to honor the Son even as we honor the Father.--John 5:23; 14:1; 17:3; 1 John 2:23;5:20.

"In the initiatory rite of the Christian church we are baptized into the name of each of the persons of the Trinity. Matt. 28:19

"The whole plan of redemption in all its parts is founded upon it. Justification, sanctification, adoption, and all else that makes the gospel the wisdom and power of God unto salvation, can be understood only in the light of this fundamental truth.

"As an historical fact it is beyond dispute that in whatever church the doctrine of the Trinity has been abandoned or obscured, every other characteristic doctrine of the gospel has gone with it." A. A. Hodge, Out. Theo., pp. 198-99

"The doctrine of the Trinity lies in the very heart of Christian truth. It is the center from which all other tenets of our faith radiate. If we entertain wrong views of the nature of the Supreme Being our entire theology is imperiled." Bartlett, Triune God., p. 13

"For the Trinity there is a strong, preliminary argument in the fact that in some form it has always been confessed by the Christian Church, and that all that has opposed it has been thrown off. When it has been abandoned, other chief articles, as the atonement, regeneration, etc., have almost always followed it, by logical necessity; as when one draws the wire from a necklace of gems, the gems all fall asunder." Henry B. Smith, Sys. Chr. Theo., p. 49

Question: What is the difference between a professing Christian who is ignorant of the doctrine of the Trinity and the professing Christian who rejects the doctrine of the Trinity?

Elaboration

Trinitarianism vs. Unitarianism

Dilemma

"A Unitarian, one-personed God might possibly have existed, and if revealed as such, it would have been our duty to have acknowledged His lordship. But, nevertheless, He would have always remained utterly inconceivable to us--one lone, fellowless conscious being; subject without object; conscious person without environment; righteous being without fellowship or moral relation or sphere of right action. Where would there be to Him a sphere of love, truth, trust, or sympathetic feeling? Before creation, eternal darkness; after creation, only an endless game of solitaire, with worlds for pawns." Hodge, Sys. Theo., p. 136

Danger

"Accordingly, the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of redemption, historically, stand or fall together. A Unitarian theology is commonly associated with a Pelagian anthropology and a Socinian soteriology." Boettner, Study Theo., p. 134

The Trinity and Theocentrism

Comprehension

"The doctrine of the Trinity gives us a theocentric system of theology, and thus places in true proportion the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This system alone gives us the proper approach to the study of theology, showing that it must be from the standpoint of the triune God rather than from that of the second or third Person of the Trinity, or from man,—that is, theocentric rather than Christocentric or anthropocentric. It should be unnecessary for us to have to say that theocentric theology (by which we mean that which is generally known as the Reformed or Calvinistic faith) gives Christ a very high place in the system. He is the God-man, the center and course of salvation; but while soteriology has a prominent place, it is not made the organizing principle, but rather one of the subdivisions in the theological system." Ibid.

Anthropocentric— A man-centered view in which man casts his own shadow over God. Man defines God instead of (rightly) the other way.

Christocentric— A Christ-centered improper fixation on Christ only, to the exclusion (or diminishing) of the Father and the Spirit.

Theocentric— the God-centered (and proper) view where the Trinity is the central focus.

Course of Development

"The history of doctrine shows quite clearly that those who have attempted to organize the system of theology around the person of Christ, regardless of their good intentions,

have tended to slight other vital truths and to drift into a superficial system. Their system is unstable and tends to gravitate downward, relinquishing one doctrine after another until it becomes anthropocentric.

The third system, quite common in our day and generally known as Modernism or Humanism, is anthropocentric — that is, it attempts to understand the nature of God by reconstructing Him from what we know of man. This system allows man to cast his own shadow over God, limiting His Lordship." Ibid., pp. 134-35

Modernism (also known as **Liberal Theology**)— The tenets of liberal theology include: religious beliefs must pass the tests of human reason and the findings of science; Christianity must be adapted to the modern world; the Bible is not infallible; there is no distinction between the natural and supernatural, therefore there is no distinction between God and nature, man and animals.

Conclusion

"All such errors are to be avoided by placing God in His triune nature at the center of our theological system. Only thus shall we arrive at a true knowledge of Him. This is the Biblical order: first, the Father, who is the Creator and the Author of salvation; then the Son who provides redemption objectively; and then the Holy Spirit, who applies redemption." Ibid.

The Trinity and Sin

Recognition of Sin

"One cause of the strength of the Trinitarian theology has been the appeal which it makes to the inward sense of sin— that sad weight which rests so heavily upon every serious soul—while the great weakness of Unitarianism has been its insensibility to the reality and consequences of sin. Trinitarians have seen sin not merely as misfortune or incomplete development, but as awful and heinous crime, repulsive to God, and deserving His just wrath and punishment. They have held that it could not merely be pardoned without an atonement (that is, without anyone suffering the consequences), but that God is under as much obligation to punish sin as He is to reward righteousness." Ibid.

Refusal to Acknowledge Sin

"On the other hand Pelagians, Socinians, and present-day Modernists and Unitarians have taken a superficial and minimizing view of sin, with the inevitable result that their faith has been superficial, their religious feelings have been deadened, and the sinews of all evangelistic and missionary effort have been cut. Having given up the doctrine of the Trinity, they naturally take a low view of the person of Christ.

Pelagianism— Also known as Naturalism, Pelagianism is a heretical doctrine of salvation that affirms that all the power exerted in saving man is native to man himself. In short, Pelagianism says that man has the ability to save himself, apart from God. This heresy also states that a person can lose his salvation, thereby removing God's **grace** from the doctrine. **Socinianism**— . . . the redeeming work of Christ is not to be found in His propitiatory death, but in His life and His teachings.

... Hence the best method to use in dealing with Modernists and Unitarians is to arouse in them the sense of sin; for once a person realizes the hideous and ghastly nature of his sin he also realizes that none other than a Divine Redeemer can save him from it." Ibid.

Practical Importance of the Trinity

The Trinity and Wisdom

"True and substantial wisdom principally consists of two parts, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves."

And then he adds that "no man can take a survey of himself but he must immediately turn to the contemplation of God in whom he lives and moves: since it is evident that our very existence is nothing but a subsistence in God alone." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1:1:1, 2

The Trinity and Preaching

"In many ways we are spiritually poorer than we should be, because in our theological confusion and bewilderment we have failed to do justice to these great doctrinal principles. If rightly preached these doctrines are most interesting and profitable and are in fact indispensable if the congregation is to be well grounded in the Faith. We are convinced that the chief need of the present age is great theology, and that only the emergence and dominance of great theology will produce an adequate basis for true Christian living.

This doctrine should, of course, be preached in every Christian Church. It is a mistake to say that people will no longer listen to doctrinal preaching. Let the minister believe his doctrines; let him present them with conviction and as living issues, and he will find sympathetic audiences." Boettner, *Study. Theo.*, pp. 138-39

Question: Do you agree with Boettner's final statement above, that "it is a mistake to say that people will no longer listen to doctrinal preaching"? Has the modern church become so "dumbed down" by weak, ear-tickling preaching that the average professing Christian will no longer tolerate sound doctrinal instruction?

TRINITARIANISM: CHRISTOLOGY: DEITY OF CHRIST

Introduction –

As we examine the evidence for the deity of Christ, we must keep in mind the various heretical schools of theological thought that have sought to deny His deity.

Denial of Jesus' Humanity

Docetism—

The heretical view that Jesus Christ, while appearing to be human and a man, was neither. Docetism maintains that Jesus only had a human appearance, but was not human.

Gnosticism - Not to be confused with **agnosticism**, gnosticism also comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning "knowledge." It was a second century philosophical system built upon Greek philosophy that stressed matter was evil but spirit was good. Gnostic teaching declared that because the flesh is evil, Jesus Christ was not truly a man. Instead, the Gnostics believed that He only appeared to be a man, but was not truly flesh and blood. Therefore, the Gnostics accepted the deity of Christ, but denied His humanity.

Marcionism- The improper Christological theory espoused by Marcion that the Bible portrays two Gods. The Creator God of the Old Testament Marcion considered evil because of the law he forced on Israel, while the God of the New Testament Marcion considered good because He was merciful and sent Jesus as a Redeemer for humanity.

NOTE: Since every other heretical view acknowledged Jesus' humanity, the real issue has been the denial of the deity of Christ.

Affirmation of Christ's Deity

Attributes of Deity:

He Is Eternal

His Past Existence

John 1:15— John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

John 8:58— Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

John 17:5, 24— ⁵ "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. . . ²⁴ "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

John 1:1— In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

His Future Existence

He has an eternal relationship with the Father

John 1:4— In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

John 5:26— "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;

He continues forever

Hebrews 1:11-12— ¹¹ They will perish, but you remain; and they all will become old like a garment, ¹² and like a mantle You will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end."

Revelation 1:17-18— ¹⁷ When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

He Is Infinite

His Omnipresence

He was in heaven while on earth

John 3:13— "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man."

He was on earth while in heaven

Matthew 18:20— "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

His Immensity

Ephesians 1:2-3— ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

He Is Omniscient

His Knowledge of Man

John 2:24-25— ²⁴ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, ²⁵ and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

Luke 6:8— But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" And he got up and came forward.

John 16:30— "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God."

His Knowledge of the Future

John 6:71— Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

Matt. 16:21— From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

John 12:33— But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

Matthew 24:25— "Behold, I have told you in advance.

His Relationship to Knowledge

Colossians 2:3-4— ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.

He Is Omnipotent

He is the Almighty

Revelation 1:8— "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

He upholds all things by the word of His power

Hebrews 1:3— And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

All authority has been given to Him

Matthew 28:18— And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Authority over demons

Mark 5:11-15— 11 Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. 12 The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." 13 Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea. 14 Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. 15 They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened.

Authority over disease

Luke 4:38-41— 38 Then He got up and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. 39 And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them. 40 While the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them. 41 Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

Authority over death

Matthew 9:25— But when the crowd had been sent out, He entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.

Luke 7:14-15— 14 And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.

*John 11:43-44— 43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." 44 The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus *said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."*

Authority over nature

Matthew 8:26-27— 26 He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea,

and it became perfectly calm. 27 The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Matthew 12:19— "He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets."

John 2:11— This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

He Is Immutable

Hebrews 1:12— "And like a mantle you will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed. but you are the same, and your years will not come to an end."

Hebrews 13:8— Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Offices of Deity

He Is the Creator

John 1:3— All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Colossians 1:16— For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Hebrews 1:10— And, "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands."

He Is the Sustainer

Colossians 1:17— He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1:3— And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. . . .

POINT: Neither natural law or chance mutation can explain the existence of the universe.

Prerogatives of Deity

He Forgives Sin

*Matthew 9:2, 6— 2 And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven." . . . 6 "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--then He *said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home."*

Mark 2:7— "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Luke 7:47-48— 47 "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."

He Will Raise the Dead

John 6:39-40— 39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

John 20:25— So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

OBSERVATION: The "resurrections" done by Christ while on earth were not, in the strictest definition, true resurrections. a true resurrection is the eternal reunion of body and soul in heaven.

He Will Execute Judgment.

John 5:22— "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son. . . .

Of Believers

Romans 14:10— But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

2 Corinthians 5:10— For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Of the Nations

Matthew 25:31-32— ³¹ "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

Acts 17:31— ". . .because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Of the Wicked Dead

Acts 10:42— "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. . ."

2 Timothy 4:1— I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

1 Peter 4:5— but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Of the Antichrist

Revelation 19:15— From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

Of Satan

Genesis 3:15— "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

Names of Deity

Emmanuel - God With Us

Isaiah 7:14— "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

Matthew 1:22-23— ²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."

Logos - Word

John 1:1-5, 9-14— In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . .

Revelation 19:13— He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

Son of Man

Explanation— This title of Jesus refers to His identification with and representation of the human race. Being born of the virgin and being fully man, Jesus was truly a son of man.

Evidence

The Son of Man Interprets the Sabbath

Matthew 12:8— "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

The Son of Man Gave His Life a Ransom for Many

Matthew 20:28— ". . . just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

The Son of Man Will Come Again

Matthew 24:44— "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."

The Son of Man Will Sit on His Throne in Glory

Matthew 19:28— And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Matthew 25:31— "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne."

Lord (Gr. Kurios)

Apprehension - Usages of the Term

Of God the Father

Matthew 4:7— Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Matthew 11:25— At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants."

Luke 2:33— And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.

Luke 5:17— One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.

Acts 17:24— "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

Romans 4:8— "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."

2 Corinthians 6:17-18— ¹⁷ "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. ¹⁸ "And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

Revelation 4:8— And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."

A Title of Courtesy and Respect

Matthew 13:27— "The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir [Kurios], did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

Matthew 21:30— "The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, 'I will, sir [Kurios]'; but he did not go.

Matthew 27:63— and said, "Sir [Kurios], we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.'

Luke 13:8— "And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;

John 12:21— these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Title for Master, Owner

Matthew 20:8— "When evening came, the owner [Kurios] of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.'

Luke 12:46— the master [Kurios] of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

John 15:15— "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

Application - References Applied to Christ Which Clearly Imply Deity

Matt. 7:21-22— ²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. ²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

Matthew 22:43-44— ⁴³ He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, ⁴⁴ 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies beneath your feet'"?

Luke 1:43— "And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?

Luke 2:11— for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

John 20:28— Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Acts 16:31— They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

1 Corinthians 12:3— Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 2:11— Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Son of God

He Executes All Judgment

John 5:22— "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son. . . ."

He Has Life Within Himself

John 5:21, 26— ²¹ "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. . . ²⁶ "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself."

He Gives Eternal Life

John 10:10— "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

God

John 1:1—In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:18—No one 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—Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Titus 2:13— looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

Hebrews 1:8— But of the Son He says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom."

2 Peter 1:1—Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

Illustrations of Deity

Baptismal Formula

Matthew 28:19— "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Apostolic Benediction

2 Corinthians 13:14— The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Descriptions

Effulgence of God's Glory

Hebrews 1:3— And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature. . . ."

Image of God

Colossians 1:15— He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Fullness of the Godhead Bodily

Colossians 2:9— For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form. . . .

Identity With God the Father

He and the Father Are One

John 10:30— "I and the Father are one."

He and the Father Act Together

John 14:23— Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17— ¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, ¹⁷ comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

We Sustain the Same Relationship to Both

Ephesians 5:5— For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Revelation 20:6— Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Whatever the Father Has Belongs to Christ

John 16:15— "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you."

John 17:10— and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

Divine Worship Rendered to Christ

Significance of Worship

Only God is Worshipped

Exodus 34:14— for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God--

Matthew 4:10— Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

Men and Angels Refused Worship When Offered

Men

Acts 10:25-26— 25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am just a man."

Angels

*Revelation 19:10— Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he *said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God."*

Revelation 22:8-9— 8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."

Status of Christ

John 5:23— so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Hebrews 1:6— And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."

Christ's Awareness of His Deity

He claimed that He came to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5)

He gave His disciples power to perform miracles

Matthew 10:1, 8 — Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. 8 "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give."

Luke 10:9, 19— 9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' . . . 19 "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you."

He asserted His pre-existence

John 8:58— Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

John 17:5— "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

He instructed His disciples to pray in His name

John 16:23-24— ²³ "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. ²⁴ "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

He claimed that He and the Father were one

John 10:30— "I and the Father are one."

John 14:9— Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

John 17:11— "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.

He claimed to be the Son of God

John 10:36— do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?

Conclusion:

After such a mountain of evidence from Scripture, logic demands that Jesus either knew who He is and what He claimed for Himself, or He was one of the most deluded lunatics who has ever lived and is not to be recognized at all. Which do you choose to believe???

TRINITARIANISM: CHRISTOLOGY: CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES I

Why should we study Christological controversies?

It is only by studying the errors of the past that we can guard orthodox doctrine. This is one of the greatest roles of the Elder in the church. As we study the qualifications for Deacon and Elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-12 and Titus 1:6-9, the only significant difference between the qualifications is the ability to teach (1 Tim. 3:2) and the ability to defend the doctrine of the church (Titus 1:9).

Studying these controversies will prepare each of us to “give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” (Titus 1:9) Hopefully we will be able to give an answer to the following questions:

- What is Patripassianism and why is it heretical?
- Has Jesus always been the Son of God, or did he become so only after his human birth?
- What is Modalism and why is it heretical?
- What is Arianism? Are there any religions that believe in this heresy today?
- Did Jesus have one nature or two?
- Did Jesus have one will or two?
- What is the hypostatic union?
- Was Mary the “mother of God”? Why is this question important?
- Did Jesus die on the cross? If you say “yes,” does this mean that God died? Explain.

Understanding who Jesus Christ was and is has been one of the most difficult theological concepts in Christendom. It is important that we learn these controversies so that we will be able to spot them when they walk in the front door of our church. Hopefully learning about the battles that have been waged by our theological forefathers will give you an appreciation for what we have today and the sacrifices that were made to give us sound doctrine. As future church leaders we have the solemn duty to “give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

Rise of Monarchianism

Dynamic Monarchianism

Position

“In spite of its inadequacy, the term 'Dynamic Monarchianism' is traditionally used to refer to the attempt to preserve the divine unity by claiming that the divinity that was in Christ was an impersonal power proceeding from God but was not God himself. It is called 'dynamic' by reason of the Greek term *dunamis*, which means "power" or "force" and which was employed to refer to the impersonal power that dwelt in Christ.” Gonzales, *Historical Christian Thought*, 1:147

Dynamic Monarchians held to the view that Jesus was given the power of God, from God, but was not God Himself. This view sees Jesus as a man endowed with divine power without being divine Himself.

Problem

“Although Dynamic Monarchianism did have some followers during the third and fourth centuries, it was not widespread enough to pose a real threat to the church. Its Christology was too close to that of the Ebionites, turning Christ into little more than a mere man, and this diminished its allurement among Christians.” Ibid.

Proponents of the view

1. **Theodotus of Byzantium** (2nd. cent.) -

Theodotus claimed that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit as a non-divine man, and though later "adopted" by God upon baptism (that is to say, he became the Christ), was not himself God until after his resurrection.

This doctrine, also called "Adoptionism," was declared heretical by Pope Victor I in A.D. 195 and Theodotus was condemned and excommunicated.

2. **Paul of Samosata** - Bishop of Antioch

"Paul of Samosata was elected bishop of Antioch in approximately A.D. 260. At that time the kingdom of Palmyra was flourishing and, in practically proclaiming itself independent from the Roman Empire, had awakened once again the ancient visions of a great Eastern empire. Antioch was part of that kingdom. Queen Zenobia, as a shrewd politician, favored the various considerable minorities that existed within her kingdom--among them, the Jews and the Christians." Ibid., p. 254

Essence of His Teaching

"In Jesus the Wisdom or Word of God dwelt. But, as that Word is no more than the reason or purpose of God, and as it dwelt also in Moses and the prophets, God's presence in Jesus is only quantitatively different from what it has been or can be in other men. Jesus is in no way divine, but is rather 'from below.' The union between Jesus and the Word is simply a moral union, in such a way that the Word dwelt in Jesus 'as in a temple.'" Ibid., p. 256

Evaluation of His Teaching

Council of Antioch, A.D. 264 – this council was convened to directly address the Christological threat posed by Paul of Samosata.

Conclusion

“Though this heresy was condemned, this did not solve the problem, for it became necessary to call another council when word was received that Paul was still teaching the same doctrines that he had promised to abandon. This council deposed him after long debate. But even then, with the support of Zenobia, Paul refused to accept the deposition, and held his episcopal and civil functions until the year 272, when Emperor Aurelian, after defeating Zenobia and consulting the bishops of Italy, applied the decision of the council.” Ibid., pp. 258-59

Observation: Paul of Samosata attempted to "wordsmith" around the definition and concept of **consubstantial**. Paul defined consubstantial as "another substance along with..." meaning that Jesus was endowed with the power of God without being God. The Council of Antioch reinforced the definition of consubstantial as "The same substance, equal with...", thereby reinforcing the view that Jesus was God.

Consequence

"This second council of Antioch has a certain importance for the history of Christian thought, because it was here that the doctrine that the Word is "consubstantial" (*homoousios*) with the Father was condemned. It seems that Paul of Samosata used this term in order to deny that the Word had a subsistence of its own. When, in A.D. 325, the Council of Nicaea used this same term--although in a different sense--there were many who suspected that the great council was returning to the ancient doctrine of Paul of Samosata." Ibid., p. 259

Modalistic Monarchianism

Position

"Modalistic Monarchianism did not deny the full divinity of Christ, but simply identified it with the Father. Because of that identification, which implied that the Father had suffered in Christ, this doctrine is sometimes called '**Patripassianism.**'" Ibid., p. 148

"*Patri*" = Father, *Passion* = suffering of Christ, therefore it was the Father who suffered on the cross

Proponents

Noetus (2nd Century) — a Bishop of the church of Smyrna about AD 230. He accepted the fourth Gospel, but regarded its statements about the Logos as allegorical.

Praxeas (2nd Century) — a Bishop of Asia Minor. Paul of Samosata, the Bishop of Antioch AD 260-272, preached that Jesus was a common man.

Modalist monarchianism is perhaps best attributable to Praxeas of Asia Minor and Noetus, the Bishop of Smyrna. It made its way to Rome in the form of **Sabellianism**.

Rebuttal: In a scathing rebuttal by Tertullian, he stated that Praxeas "drove out prophecy and introduced heresy: he put to flight the Paraclete and crucified the Father."

Sabellianism

Sabellius (c. 200) - the non-Trinitarian belief that the Heavenly Father, Resurrected Son and Holy Spirit are different modes or aspects of one God, as perceived by the believer, rather than three distinct persons within the Godhead. He said there is one person in the Godhead (Unitarianism), thereby denying the deity of Christ.

Sabellius correctly saw the heresy of dualism (2 Gods), but in attempting to get as far away from dualism as possible, he went to the extreme to denying the deity of Christ and declaring that God was a single person. This view was equally heretical and was condemned by the church leaders of the day.

Arianism

Arian Controversy (4th cent.)

Background of the Controversy: What is the exact relationship between Father and Son?

2 Dominant Figures:

1. **Dionysius of Alexandria** (d. 264): Bishop of Alexandria, head of the catechetical school, follower of Origen (a heretic who believed in a “mystical” theology).

Significance: Opposed Sabellianism (Unitarianism—denial of Christ as God) by emphasizing the distinction of Father and Son.

BUT: Dionysius went too far in refuting Sabellianism. He said that there was a time when the Son was not. He wanted to affirm the Son, but he didn’t want to be charged with tritheism. He said that the Father is eternal, but the Son is not.

2. **Lucian of Antioch** (240-312)— Founded the catechetical school in Antioch which rivaled the one in Alexandria

Correctly rejected allegorical interpretation (championed by Origen) and developed an historical, literal approach to Scripture. Unfortunately, Lucian is remembered as the teacher of Arius, one of the worst heretics in church history.

Beginning of the Controversy (318-325)

1. Views of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria: "Unity of the Trinity" - Alexander held to the proper view of the co-eternality of the Father, Son and Spirit.

When Alexander proposed his view of the triune Godhead, he opened himself up to the charge of poly-theism [man Gods]. Arius was politically motivated and ambitious and used Alexander’s view to further his own ambitions to replace Alexander and become the Bishop of Alexandria. Arius accused Alexander of Sabellianism, already a condemned heresy.

2. Views of Arius, Presbyter of Alexandria:

Explanation: Arius taught the Jesus Christ was the first of all created beings, thereby denying that Christ is God.

Arius said that there was a time when the Son was not. Arius taught that Jesus was not co-eternal with the Father.

Expression

Ontological Superiority of the Father

"God was not always Father; but there was a time when God was alone and was not yet Father; afterward He became a Father. The Son was not always; for since all things have come into existence from nothing, and all things are creatures and have been made, so also the Logos of God himself came into existence from nothing and there was a time when He was not; and that before He came into existence He was not; but He also had a beginning of His being created. For God, he says, was alone and not yet was there the Logos and Wisdom. Afterward He willed to create us, then He made a certain one and named Him Logos and Wisdom and Son, in order that by Him He might create us." Arius, Thalia quot. in Athanasian Oration Against the Arians, 1:2

Ontological Trinity—The distinction and subordination in the Godhead does not imply inferiority. We have to understand the difference between the Ontological and Economic Trinity. We cannot conceive of God being subordinate to anyone. But He is...to Himself. The Son is subordinate to the Father and the Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son. But such subordination does not make the Son or the Spirit inferior or less than. The Triune Godhead has ordained this subordination for the sake of order.

Economic Trinity—distinction in function.

Heretical View of the Ontological Subordination of the Son

"We know one God—alone unbegotten, alone everlasting, alone without beginning, alone true, alone possessing immortality, alone wise, alone good, alone master, judge of all, manager, director, immutable and unchangeable, just and good, God of Law, Prophets, and New Testament—who begot an only-begotten Son before eternal times, through whom he made the ages and everything. But he begot him not in appearance but in truth, having submitted, him to his own will, an immutable and unchangeable perfect creature of God, God being the cause of all is without beginning, most alone; but the Son, begotten by the Father, created and founded before the ages, was not before he was begotten. Rather, the Son begotten timelessly before everything, alone was caused to subsist by the Father. For he is not everlasting or co-eternal or unbegotten with the Father. Nor does he have being with the Father," "Anus Letter to Alexander" in Rusch, Trinitar. Contro., pp. 31-32

This heresy calls Jesus Christ a creature and not God.

Theologians have always struggled with the concept of “eternal generation,”—the begetting of the Son. Arius taught that Jesus was a created being, but not God.

Evaluation

Clash Between Arius and Alexander

- Arius was condemned by a synod, fled to Eusebius of Nicomedia, a classmate at the catechetical school of Antioch who held the same view.
- Constantine - the emperor arbitrated through Hosius, bishop of Cordova

Critique: Constantine wanted Christianity to unite the Roman Empire, but he did not understand theology so he convened the council of Nicaea.

Constantine wanted to bring the opposing sides together to stop the squabbling.

Council of Nicaea (325)

Significance of the Council

1. Short Range: 1st empire-wide council, attended by 318 bishops, 100's of lesser clergy
2. Long Range: The first of 8 councils

The only council that established a creed that has been accepted by all branches of Christendom—the Nicene Creed

Spectrum at the Council

1. Arian Party - Leader: Eusebius of Nicomedia, a bishop

Number: Minority

Position: *heterousios*—the Son was of a different substance than the Father, an attempt to protect against Sabellianism, but makes the Son less than God.

If you say the Son is of the same substance as the Father, you are guilty of Modalism.

2. Moderate Party - Leader: Eusebius of Caesarea (265-339)

His Life: born in Palestine, made bishop of Caesarea in 314, known as the Father of Church History.

His Writings: Chronicles, Ecclesiastical History, Life of Constantine

Number: Majority

Position: *homoiousios*— the Son was of a similar (but not the same) substance with the Father

They disagreed with Arianism, but were afraid of Sabellianism. Their view was incorrect because it was incomplete.

3. Alexandrian Party - Leader: Athanasius (296-373) presbyter of Alexandria, theological leader, Alexander was just a figure-head.

His Importance: **God used him to preserve an orthodox view of the Trinity.**

His Writing: *De Incarnatione*.

Number: Minority

Position: *homoousios*, the Son was of the same substance as the Father.

IN OTHER WORDS, if Christ was not God, how could He save us? Father and Son were co-equal.

Consubstantial—of the **same** substance as the Father.

Declaration of the Position- a defense of the deity of Christ

"Behold, we speak freely about the religious faith on the basis of the divine Scriptures; we place it as a light on the lampstand saying, 'He is by nature true Son and legitimate from the Father, peculiar to his substance, the only-begotten Wisdom and true and only Word of God. He is neither a creature nor a work, but an offspring peculiar to the Father's substance. Therefore he is true God, *homoousios* with the true Father.'" Athanasius, "Orat. Ag. Arians" 1:9 in Rusch Trinitar. Contro., p. 70

Danger of Arianism

"But there is one final heresy, the Arian, which has gone forth as the forerunner of the Antichrist. Wily and villainous, seeing that her older sisters have, plainly been identified as heresies, the Arian heresy employs the speech of the Scripture, as did her father the devil. She uses force to enter into the paradise of the church. She attempts to pass herself off as Christian, so that by the plausibility of false thinking (she possesses no reason!) she might beguile certain individuals to think ill of Christ. She has already led astray some foolish individuals, so that they have not only been corrupted in hearing, but receiving they ate just as Eve. Thus, being ignorant, they think that 'the bitter is sweet' [Isa. 5:20] and declare the abominable heresy beautiful. Persuaded by you, I believed it necessary to tear apart the breastplate [Job 41:13] of this foul heresy and to point out the foul smell of her folly, so that those who are distant from her might flee her, and those deceived by her might repent, and with the eyes of their heart opened might discern that, just as darkness is not light falsehood is not truth, the Arian heresy is not good." Ibid., 1:1, p. 63

Defense of the Alexandrian View

Regarding Sonship

Arius' response to Athanasius—"After these things were shown, they behave even more impudently, saying, 'If there was not once when he was not, but the Son is everlasting and coexists with the Father, you say no longer that he is the Father's Son but that he is the Father's brother.'"

The Arians are saying that if the Son is co-equal with the Father, he is not the Son of the Father, but the Brother of the Father.

Athanasius' response—"Foolish and obstinate persons. If we only said that he exists everlastingly, and is not the Son, their assumed caution would be somewhat plausible. But if when we say that he is eternal we confess that he is the Son from the Father, how is he who was begotten able to be called a brother of him who has begotten? If our faith is in the Father and Son, what sort of brother is there between them?" Ibid., 1:14, p. 76

Athanasius is simply stating that he believes what Scripture teaches about the Son. The word of God states that Jesus is the Son of God, not a brother.

Regarding Eternal Generation

"Therefore let him who seeks why the Son has not begotten a son ask why the Father did not have a father. Both these questions are absurd and full of every impiety. As the Father is always father and would not ever become son, thus the Son is always son and would not ever become father. Rather, in this he is shown to be the character and image of the Father, remaining what he is and not changing himself, but having his identity from the Father.

... But if the Father is immutable and he remains what he is, the image necessarily remains what it is and will not be mutated." Ibid., 1:22, p. 85

IN OTHER WORDS: The eternal Sonship of Christ is a necessary consequence of the immutability of the Father. If God is immutable, then He has always been God and the Son has always been the Son. There was never a time when the Father was not the Father.

Development of the Alexandrian View

Regarding the Co-Eternality of the Son

"He who dishonors the Son dishonors the Father. If the teaching about God is now perfect in a Triad, and this is the true and only worship of God, and this is the good and the true, it was necessary that it was always thus, unless the good and the truth occurred subsequently, and the completeness of the doctrine of God is composed of additions. Therefore, necessarily, this is everlastingly so. If it is not everlastingly so, then not even in the present is it so; but at present it is, just as you suppose it was from the beginning, that is, not now a Triad. But no Christian would endure such heretics. But the Christian faith knows an unmoved, perfect, constant, blessed Triad. It neither adds something more to the Triad nor considers that it has a need--each of these possibilities is impious. Therefore it knows that the Triad does not mix with originated things. On guard it worships the individual oneness of its Godhead and flees the blasphemies of the Arians, and confesses and knows that the Son always is. He is everlasting as the Father, whose everlasting Word he is." Ibid., 1:18, p. 81

IN OTHER WORDS: If the Son was not the Son at any point in the past, he would not be the Son now. If God is immutable, then He must have always existed as Father and Son, otherwise He wouldn't be immutable.

Regarding the Importance of the Incarnation

“For He became Man that we might be made like God: and He manifested Himself through the body that we might take cognizance of the invisible Father: and He underwent insult at the hands of men that we might inherit immortality. For He Himself was nothing injured, being impassible and incorruptible and very Word of God; but He was taking care of and preserving in His own impassibility [God does not experience pain or pleasure from the actions of another being] the men who were suffering, at whose hands also He underwent these things. And to sum up, the successes of the Savior, brought about by His Incarnation, are of such kind and magnitude that, if one wished to go through them all it would be like those who gaze at the expanse of the sea and try to count its waves. For as it is impossible to take in all the waves with the eye, their multitudinous approach transcending the perception of him who attempts it, so also it is impossible for him who wishes to take in all the successes of Christ in the body, to grasp the whole even by counting them, those which transcend his apprehension being more than those he thinks he has taken in.” Athanasius, Incarn., 54

The same as what David says in Psalm 139. You can't even begin to count all that God is.

Decision of the Council: The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Period of Arian Resurgence (325-361)

- 328 - Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia were reinstated
 - Eusebius became advisor to Emperor Constantine
 - Arius made a nebulous confession to get back into the church.

335 - Council of Tyre - first exile of Athanasius

- Accused by Eusebius of Nicomedia of disrupting grain shipments from Alexandria to home and disturbing the peace of the church.
- Banished to Gaul by Constantine

337 - returned to Alexandria after the death of Constantine.

339 - Eusebius of Nicomedia made patriarch of Constantinople -second exile of Athanasius.

- Emperor Constantius of the Eastern Empire supported Eusebius, Athanasius fled to Rome.

353 - Pro-Arian Constantius became sole emperor. Result: third exile of Athanasius, banished to upper Egypt (desert).

359 - returned to Alexandria

361 - fourth exile of Athanasius by Julian the Apostate, the last pagan emperor. He was banished for converting pagans to Christianity.

363 - returned under emperor Jovian

364 - fifth exile of Athanasius under Valentinian I. The reason for this banishment was because of his influence over the Arian clergy.

367 - returned to Alexandria, lived the last 7 years in peace

POINT: We should appreciate how God raised Athanasius up to be the voice of the true Church.

Period of Final Victory (361-381)

Failure of Arianism - the Arians begin to split into factions. The extreme Arians, known as Anomoeans, said that the Son was unlike the Father in substance, and so denied His deity in every respect. In response, the conservative Arians began moving toward the Nicene party. This resulted in a split in Arian ranks and caused internal dissention, eventually causing the Arian party to fall apart.

Formulation of Orthodox Trinitarianism by the "Three Cappadocians"

1. Basil of Caesarea (329-379)

His Life—from a wealthy family, intensely religious home, ascetic, educated in Caesarea, Constantinople, Athens, made bishop of Caesarea

His Influence—a great administrator and preacher

His Writings: *Against Eunomius* (extreme Arian), *On the Holy Spirit*

His Thought: *Ousia* (being) vs *Hypostasis* (person)

“The distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* is the same as that between the general and the particular; as, for instance, between the animal and the particular man. Wherefore, in the case of the Godhead, we confess one essence or substance so as not to give a variant definition of existence, but we confess a particular hypostasis, in order that our conception of Father, Son and Holy Spirit may be without confusion and clear. If we have no distinct perception of the separate characteristics, namely, fatherhood, sonship, and sanctification, but form our conception of God from the general idea of existence, we cannot possibly give a sound account of our faith.

We must, therefore, confess the faith by adding the particular to the common. The Godhead is common; the fatherhood particular. We must therefore combine the two and say, 'I believe in God the Father.' The like course must be pursued in the confession of the Son; we must combine the particular with the common and say 'I believe in God the Son,' so in the case of the Holy Ghost we must make our utterance conform to the appellation and say 'in God the Holy Ghost.' Hence it results that there is a satisfactory preservation of the unity by the confession of the one Godhead, while in the distinction of the individual properties regarded in each there is the confession of the peculiar properties of the Persons." Epistle 236:6, in Nicene, Post-Nicene Fath. 2nd Sermon. 8:278

The general statement is "I believe in God." The particular statements are "I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit."

2. Gregory of Nyssa (330-395)

His Life: younger brother of Basil, taught rhetoric, then entered monastery, shy, retiring; unwillingly made bishop

His Writing: *On the Holy Trinity*

3. Gregory of Nazianzus(330-389)

His Life: father was a bishop who met Basil, taught rhetoric, became a priest in 362, bishop in 372

His Writing: *Theological Orations*

His Thought - Regarding Eternal Generation

“Then how was He begotten? His generation would be nothing great if it was grasped by you who do not know even your own generation or have grasped some little part of it--so little that you are ashamed to speak--then do you suppose that you know all? You would be much weary before you would discover the relations of construction, form, and appearance, and the bond of the soul to the body, mind to soul, reason to mind, movement, growth, assimilation of food, sense, memory, recollection, and the other things from which you have been composed--which are of the soul and body together, which belong to the soul and body independently, which receive from one another. For those whose maturity is later, their

relations are from the time of generation. Tell, what are they? Not even then should you inquire into the generation of God. It is not safe. For if you know your own generation, not by any means do you know God's generation. The degree to which God is harder to trace than man, to a greater degree the heavenly generation is more incomprehensible than your own. But if you say that it has not been grasped by you, and for this reason he has not been begotten, then your hour has come to strike off your list many things which exist, which you have not grasped, and before all things God himself. . . . Let the generation of God be honored by silence. Learning that he was begotten is a great thing for you...

Do you wish that I should suggest how it was? The Father who begot knows how it was, and the Son who was begotten. Beyond these things, it is hidden by a cloud, escaping your dim sightedness." "3rd Theolog Orat." in Rusch, Trinitar. Contro., pp. 135-36

POINT: This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. We can't understand our own generation, why try to understand God's generation? It is the height of arrogance to think that we can explain God. If we can't even understand the concept of our own soul, why do we suppose that we can understand God.

This is the essence of faith—we believe even though we don't understand. Having no evidence other than the word of God leads in one of two directions.

The unbeliever declares the word of God **irrational** because it makes no sense to believe that which cannot be proven true. "I'm not going to believe unless I can understand."

The believer is **super-rational**, because he knows that though there is no proof other than the word of God, yet he believes it to be true. "I don't understand, but I believe God's word to be true. I hope He gives me understanding."

Regarding the Persons of the Godhead

"And when I speak of God you must be illumined at once by one flash of light and by three. Three in Individualities or Hypostases, if any prefer so to call them, or persons, for we will not quarrel about names so long as the syllables amount to the same meaning; but One in respect of the substance--that is, the Godhead. For they are divided without division, if I may so say; and they are united in division. For the Godhead is one in three, and the three are one, in whom the Godhead is, or to speak more accurately, Who are the Godhead. Excesses and defects we will omit, neither making the Unity a confusion, nor the division a separation. We would keep equally far from the confusion of Sabellius and from the division of Arius, which are evils diametrically opposed, yet equal in their wickedness. For what need is there heretically to fuse God together, or to cut Him up into inequality?"

"For to us there is but One God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and One Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things; and One Holy Ghost, in Whom are all things; yet these words, of, by, in, whom, do not denote a difference of nature, but they characterize the personalities of a nature which is one and unconfused." Orations on Holy Lights, 10, 11

OBSERVATION: This was an attempt to systematize the doctrine of the Trinity. To be able to explain how God is three-in-one and one-in-three at the same time—a noble undertaking.

Foundation Established: Council of Constantinople (381)

Calling of the Council - by Emperor Theodosius, as the 2nd Ecumenical Council

No western bishops present, though the decision of the council was accepted in the West

Content of the Council - Creed of Constantinople

Canon #1: "The faith of the 318 Fathers who were assembled at Nicaea....shall not be set aside but shall remain firm. And every heresy shall be anathematized especially that of the Arians and Semi-Arians."

Observation: This Canon dealt the first death-blow to Arianism

Canon #2: "The bishops are not to go beyond their dioceses to churches lying outside of their bounds, nor bring confusion on the churches. And let not bishops go beyond their dioceses for ordination or any other ecclesiastical administrations, unless they be invited."

NOTE: Trying to stop the spread of Arianism. That's how Arianism spread, by the individual teaching of a bishop outside his own bishopric.

Canon #3: "The bishop of Constantinople, however, shall have the prerogative of honor after the bishop of Rome, because Constantinople is New Rome."

Conclusion - This constituted the final defeat of Arianism. The Nicene Creed established orthodoxy regarding the Son.

TRINITARIANISM: CHRISTOLOGY: CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES II

Hypostatic Union - Concerning the person of Jesus Christ, He is uniquely and completely God while at the same time being uniquely and completely man. He remains forever God-man, with two distinct natures. Though Jesus has two natures, God and man, He does not have two personalities.

As God, Jesus is eternal. But when He was born of Mary He took on an additional nature. He became a man in all respects without sacrificing any of His deity. He did not simply dwell in a human person. He became a man, though for a time Jesus chose to set aside His deity.

Divergent Emphases

Emphasis of Alexandria

Following the lead of Athanasius, the Alexandrian school stressed the full deity of Christ against Arianism. THEREFORE, they tended to de-emphasize Christ's humanity because they were so involved in defending His deity.

Emphasis of Antioch

Following their literal, grammatical hermeneutic they stressed the full humanity of Christ against the Alexandrian school. THEREFORE, they tended to separate Christ's humanity from His deity.

Apollinarianism

Life of Apollinarius (b. 310)

346 - Supported Athanasius and the Nicene formula, welcomed Athanasius back from exile.

361 - made bishop of Laodicea

362 - Athanasius correctly attributed a human soul to Christ, Apollinarius disagreed and broke ranks with Athanasius, fearing Christ would be no more than a creature, approaching Arianism.

375 - Apollinarius and his followers seceded from the Alexandrian church, fearing a return of the church from Arianism.

Teaching of Apollinarius

Trichotomist View of Human Nature - sees each person as being made up of three parts: body, soul and spirit. The body is the material flesh and blood. The soul is the immaterial part of man, that which gives life and animates the body. The spirit is that part of the soul that relates the person to God.

Evidence

I Thess. 5:23 - Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heb. 4:12 - For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Explanation

Denial of Christ's Full Humanity - Apollinarius thought that Christ had a human body and soul, but a divine spirit.

Premise: This view then makes Christ only two-thirds human. This means that Christ would not be fully human, but only part human.

Presentation

"Therefore, it is inconceivable that the same person should be both God and an entire man. Rather, he exists in the singleness of an incarnate divine nature which is commingled (with flesh), with the result that worshipers bend their attention to God inseparable from his flesh and not to one who is worshiped and one who is not...

O new creation and divine mixture! God and flesh completed one and the same nature!

So Christ, having God as his spirit—that is, his intellect—together with soul and body, is rightly called 'the human being from heaven.'" Fragments by Apollinarius in Norris, Christology. Contre., p. 108

Purpose: To protect the unity of Christ's person. Apollinarius thought that if Christ was fully human and fully divine, you would have two Christs.

Condemnation of Apollinarius

By the Cappadocians

"If anyone has put his trust in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him was that begotten, and so be saved as a whole. Let them not, then begrudge us our complete salvation, or clothe the Savior only with bones and nerves and the portraiture of humanity." Nazianzus, Epistle 101, NPNF, 7:440

IN OTHER WORDS: Christ must be fully human for Him to completely identify with us to be our substitutionary sacrifice. But Christ must be fully God to pay the penalty for our sin.

By the Council of Constantinople (381) - The views of Apollinarius was rejected and condemned by the Council of Constantinople.

Nestorianism - A response to Apollinarianism

Life of Nestorius (d. 451)

Monk and presbyter at Antioch, disciple of Theodore of Mopsuestia, achieved fame as a preacher and orator.

428 - made patriarch of Constantinople by Emperor Theodosius II. This church was one of the most influential churches of the time, so this was an influential position.

Teaching of Nestorius

Opinion Regarding Mary

"Is Paul a liar when he speaks of the godhead of Christ and says: 'Without father, without mother, without genealogy'? My good friend, Mary has not born the godhead, for that which is born of flesh is flesh. A creature has not born the Creator, but she bore a man, the organ of divinity; the Holy Ghost did not create God the Word, but with that which was born of the Virgin He prepared for God the Word, a temple, in which He should dwell. Whenever the Holy Scriptures make mention of the works of salvation prepared by the Lord, they speak of the birth and suffering, not of the divinity but of the humanity of Christ; therefore, according to a more exact expression the holy Virgin is named the bearer of Christ (*Christotokos*)."

This was the focus of the debate. Was Mary the mother of God?

Explained

Mary is *Christotokos* (Christ-Bearer) but not *Theotokos* (God-Bearer) because the title God Bearer would confuse the human and divine natures of Christ. THUS Mary bore the human Jesus, but not the divine Christ.

Elaborated

"Consequently, Christ assumed the person of the debt-ridden nature and by its mediation paid the debt back as a son of Adam, for it was obligatory that the one who dissolved the debt come from the same race as he who had once contracted it. The debt had its start from a woman, and the remission had its start from a woman." Nestorius, "1st Sermon Ag. Theotokos" in Norris, *Christo. Contro.*, pp. 126-27

In other words: Just as Jesus is the second Adam, Mary is the second Eve.

Opinion Regarding the Two Natures of Christ

Separation from the Errors of Arius and Apollinarius - Nestorius is tending to separate the two natures of Christ. In putting so much emphasis on the deity and human of Christ, he is elevating the nature of to the status of a person, so that, in the thinking of Nestorius, Christ was like two persons inside of one body; God and man, two people in one body.

"Am I the only one who calls Christ 'twofold'? Does he not call himself both a destroyable temple and God who raises it up? And if it was God who was destroyed--and let that blasphemy be shifted to the head of Arius!--the Lord would have said, 'Destroy this God and in three days I will raise him up.' If God died when consigned to the grave, the Gospel saying 'Why do you seek to kill me, a man, who have spoken truth to you?' (John 8:40) is meaningless.

But Christ is not a mere man, O slanderer! No, he is at once God and man. If he were God alone, he would have needed, O Apollinaris, to say, 'Why do you seek to destroy me, who am God, who have spoken the truth to you?' What, in fact, he says is, 'Why do you seek to kill me, a man?'" Ibid., p.129

By Christ's own expressions, Nestorius is showing that Christ was both God and man.

Separation of the Human and Divine Natures in Christ - (where Nestorius stumbles into error)

"Attend to what is said here. That which was formed in the womb is not in itself God. That which was created by the Spirit was not in itself God. That which was buried in the tomb was not in itself God. If that were the case, we should manifestly be worshipers of a human being and worshipers of the dead. But since God is within the one who was assumed, the one who was

assumed is styled God because of the one who assumed him. That is why the demons shudder at the mention of the crucified flesh; they know that God has been joined to the crucified flesh, even though he has not shared its suffering." Ibid., p. 130

In other words, Nestorius thinks that God is no longer in Christ, with man, on the cross.

Opposition by Cyril of Alexandria

"Cyril called a council at Alexandria in 430 in which he set forth the teaching of Nestorius in the form of 12 "Anathemas. Cyril used this council to attempt to restore the primacy of Alexandria over Constantinople in the Eastern church and to erase the stain of Apollinarianism against Alexandria. against Canon #3 of the Council of Constantinople in 381.

Appeal to Pope Celestine I - Roman Bishop

Synod of Rome, 430 - Celestine I sides with Cyril against Nestorius, partly for his heresy and partly because of Nestorius' actions in giving Pelagius assylum from the Roman Bishop.

- Cyril wrote 12 anathemas which Nestorius would have to accept, acknowledging Alexandrian theology as orthodox
- Nestorius responded by delivering 12 anathemas against Cyril
- Nestorius rejected the condemnation of the Synod of Rome.

Council of Ephesus, 431: 3rd Ecumenical Council

Arrival of Cyril: Arrived 1st with his bishops, took over the council, condemned and deposed Nestorius without a hearing

Arrival of Nestorius: he finds that he has been condemned and deposed. He withdraws and forms his own council and deposes Cyril.

Arrival of Celestine: Came last because of further distance to travel, sided with Cyril when he agreed to condemn Pelagius.

God providentially uses these events to establish orthodoxy through the human manipulation of the events of these councils. What men used for their own political ends, God used to establish orthodoxy.

Re-Evaluation of Nestorius

Nestorianism was a caricature of Nestorius. What was condemned as Nestorianism may not have actually been the views of Nestorius, but simply a "straw man" that had been built by his opponents to make him look heretical.

Discovery: Book of Heraclides, last work of Nestorius, uncovered in 1889, different from his other writings, is in basic agreement with Chalcedon

Afterward, when he had been forgotten, Nestorius moderated his views and saw Chalcedon as a vindication of his position

Eutychianism

Life of Eutyches (378-454)

Monk of Constantinople, served under patriarch Flavian, godfather of Chrysaphius, chamberlain to emperor Theodosius II, IN OTHER WORDS: he was in a powerful and influential position.

Teaching of Eutyches - a reaction to Nestorianism, stressing the unity of Christ.

His position: Christ was of two natures, but not in two natures. The divine and human natures of Christ were fused into one nature after the incarnation, creating a *tertium quid* which was neither fully human nor fully divine

Supported

"Florentius said: 'Do you or do you not confess that our Lord, who is of the Virgin, is consubstantial and of two natures after the incarnation' Eutyches said: 'I confess that our Lord was of two natures before the union [i.e., the union of divinity and humanity in the incarnation],

but after the union one nature .. I follow the teaching of the blessed Cyril and the holy Fathers and the holy Athanasius, because they speak of two natures before the union, but after the union and incarnation they speak not of two natures but of one nature."

Controversy Over Eutyches

448 - Condemned by Flavian, patriarch of Constantinople

Plan of Dioscorus, bishop of Alexandria

The problem: The Antiochene bishopric was the only Apostolic See that had not been associated with heresy.

Alexandria had Apollinarius condemned by the church

Constantinople had Nestorius condemned by the church

For non-theological reasons, Dioscorus attempted to have Eutyches exonerated.

449 - "Robber's Council" of Ephesus controlled by Dioscorus

Eutyches exonerated and declared orthodox for political reasons.

Flavian deposed

Tome of Leo not read

Nature of the Pre-Incarnate Son

_____ "when it is believed that God is both omnipotent and Father, it is shown that the Son is coeternal with him, as one who differs from the Father in no respect. After all, he is 'God from God,' omnipotent from omnipotent. He was begotten as coeternal from the eternal--not later in time or inferior in power or dissimilar in splendor or different in essence. And in truth it is this very same being, this only and eternal Child of the eternal Begetter, who was born 'of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin.'" 'Tome of Leo' in Norris, Christo. Contro., p. 146

Nature of the Incarnation

_____ "Since, therefore, the characteristic properties of both natures and substances are kept intact and come together in one person, lowliness is taken on by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity, and the nature which cannot be harmed is united to the nature which suffers, in order that the debt which our condition involves may be discharged. In this way, as our salvation requires, one and the same mediator between God and human beings, the human being who is Jesus Christ, can at one and the same time die in virtue of the one nature and, in virtue of the other, be incapable of death. That is why true God was born in the integral and complete nature of a true human being, entire in what belongs to him and entire in what belongs to us.

By the expression 'what belongs to us' we mean the things which the Creator established in us from the beginning and which he took on himself for the sake of restoring them. Of those things which the Deceiver introduced [into human existence] and which a deceived humanity accepted, there was no trace in the Savior. No more does the fact that he shared human weaknesses signify that he had a part in our evil actions. He took on the form of a slave without any spot of sin. What he did was to enhance humanity not diminish deity. That self-emptying

of his, by which the invisible revealed himself visible and the Creator and Lord of all things elected to be reckoned among mortals, was a drawing-near in mercy not a failure in power.

Consequently, he who made humanity while remaining in the form of God is the same one who in the form of a slave became human. Each nature retained its characteristics without defect, and just as the 'form of God' does not remove the 'form of a slave,' so the 'form of a slave' does not diminish the 'form of God.'" Ibid., pp. 148-49

Mode of Expression in the Incarnation

"The mode of existence is novel because one who is invisible in his own way of being has become visible in ours, and because the incomprehensible has willed to be understood. While continuing to be beyond time, he begins to exist from a point in time. Veiling his measureless majesty, the Lord of the universe assumes the 'form of a slave.' The impassible God does not disdain existence as a passible human being, and the immortal does not disdain to submit himself to the laws of death.

He is born with a new kind of birth, because an inviolate virginity, unacquainted with desire, supplied the matter of his flesh. What the Lord took from his mother was nature, not guilt. The fact that his birth was extraordinary does not mean that our Lord Jesus Christ, in his birth of a virgin, has a nature different from ours. The same one who is a genuine human being is also genuinely God, and in this unity there is no deception as long as both lowliness and divine loftiness have their reciprocal spheres. Just as God is not altered by his compassion, so humanity is not destroyed by its elevation in honor.

Each 'form' carries on its proper activities in communion with the other. The Word does what belongs to it, and the flesh carries out what belongs to it. The one shimmers with wondrous deeds, the other succumbs to injury and insult. Ibid., pp. 149-50

Condemnation of Eutyches

Concerted Efforts of Pope Leo I- he attempted to convene another council, but he was unable because Theodosius II was a supporter of Dioscorus.

Consequent Death of Theodosius II and Reign of Pulcheria - Theodosius backed Dioscorus and the Robbers Council but less than a year later he fell off his horse and died. He was succeeded by his sister Pulcheria, who sided with Pope Leo I

POINT: In the providence of God, He used the false step of a horse to preserve orthodoxy.

451 - Council of Chalcedon: 4th Ecumenical Council - to offset the Robbers Council. It was attended by 520 Bishops, the largest number ever assembled. At the council Eutyches was condemned by the council and Flavian was exonerated posthumously.

Adoption of the Chalcedonian Creed

"Following, therefore, the holy fathers, we confess one and the same Son, who is our Lord Jesus Christ, and we all agree in teaching that this very same Son is complete in his deity and complete--the very same--in humanity, truly God and truly a human being, this very same

one being composed of a rational soul and a body, coessential with the Father as to his deity and coessential with us--the very same one--as to his humanity, being like us in every respect apart from sin. As to his deity, he was born from the Father before the ages, but as to his humanity, the very same one was born in the last days from the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, for our sake and the sake of our salvation: one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only Begotten, acknowledged to be unconfusedly, unalterably, undividedly, inseparably in two natures, since the difference of the natures is not destroyed because of the union, but on the contrary, the character of each nature is preserved and comes together in one person and one hypostasis, not divided or torn into two persons but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, Logos, Lord Jesus Christ--just as in earlier times the prophets and also the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us about him, and the symbol of our Fathers transmitted to us." Norris, *Christological Controversies*, p.15

TRINITARIANISM: CHRISTOLOGY: CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES III

Monophysitism (Christ possessed one nature)

mono = one; *phusis* = nature. Therefore it is the belief in one nature of Christ (a rehash of Eutychianism)

Categories of Monophysitism

Verbal Monophysitism—confused nature and person—a matter of semantics. Says that Christ is of one nature, seeking to emphasize the unity of Christ.

Severus of Antioch (465-538)— A Greek monk-theologian and patriarch of Antioch who was a leader of the monophysites. Having studied theology in Alexandria and having lived as a monk in Palestine, Severus was ordained a priest by a monophysite bishop. As a leading proponent of monophysitism—which viewed Christ as comprising a single, divine nature that subsumed his humanity by a personal union—Severus went to Constantinople in 509 to answer to heresy charges. While at Constantinople, Severus became a confidant of the Byzantine emperor Anastasius, who nominated him to be patriarch of Antioch in 512. With Severus' accession to this post, the monophysites came into full control of Antioch. But with the succession of the emperor Justin I (518–527), who enforced a uniform Christian orthodoxy throughout the empire, Severus was forced to flee to Egypt, where he took refuge with Timothy IV, the monophysite patriarch of Alexandria. Severus emerged as the leader of the monophysite movement in Egypt (the Coptic church) and Syria (the Jacobites). At the beginning of Justinian I's reign, Severus regained his patriarchal office, but in 535 he again had to flee to Egypt, where he went into final retirement.

Theologically, Severus was a moderate monophysite who rejected the orthodox formula of the Council of Chalcedon (451) but also rejected extreme monophysite assertions that Christ was exclusively divine.

Real Monophysitism

“Their main argument against Chalcedon (which condemned Eutychianism) was that the doctrine of two natures necessarily led to that of two persons, or subjects, and thereby severed the one Christ into two Sons of God. They were entirely at one with the Nestorians in their use of the terms 'nature' and 'person,' and in rejecting the orthodox distinction between the two. They could not conceive of human nature without personality...because there is but one person in Christ, there can be only one nature.”

Schaff, Hist. Chr. Ch. 3:763

Condemnation of Monophysitism

Context: Emperor Justinian

“The further fortunes of Monophysitism are connected with the emperor Justinian I. (527-565). This learned and unweariedly active ruler, ecclesiastically devout, but vain and ostentatious, aspired, during his long and in some respects brilliant reign of nearly thirty years, to the united renown of a lawgiver and theologian, a conqueror and a champion of the true faith. He used to spend whole nights in prayer and fasting, and in theological studies and discussions; he placed his throne under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin and the archangel Michael; he adorned the capital and the provinces with costly temples and institutions of charity; and he regarded it as his especial mission to reconcile heretics, to unite all parties of the church, and to establish the genuine orthodoxy for all time to come. In all these undertakings he fancied himself the chief actor, though very commonly he was but the instrument of the empress, or of the court theologians and eunuchs.” Ibid., p. 768

553 - Council of Constantinople: 5th Ecumenical Council

- Convened without papal concurrence and consisted of 164 Bishops in 8 sessions.
- Condemned Real and Verbal Monophysitism

Conclusion -

“Pope Vigilius at first protested against the Council which, in spite of repeated invitations, he had not attended, and by which he was suspended; but he afterwards signified his adherence, and was permitted, after seven years' absence, to return to Rome, but died on the journey, at Syracuse, in 555. His fourfold change of opinion does poor service to the claim of papal infallibility.” Ibid., p. 771

Continuation of Monophysitism

- Coptics: Egypt
- Abyssinians: Ethiopia
- Armenians: Turkey

Monothelitism - Christ possessed one will (*mono*-"one," *thelos* - "will")

The Positions

Comparison of Monothelitism (one will) and Dyothelitism (two wills)

“Monothelitism regards the will as an attribute of person, Dyothelitism as an attribute of nature. It is possible to conceive of an abstract nature without a will; it is difficult to conceive of a rational human nature without impulse and will; it is impossible to conceive of a human person without a will. Reason and will go together, and constitute the essence of personality. Two wills cannot coexist in an ordinary human being. But as the personality of Christ is complex or divine-human, it may be conceived of as including two consciousnesses and two wills. The Chalcedonian Christology at all events consistently requires two wills as the necessary complement of two rational natures; **In other words**, Dyothelitism is inseparable from Dyophysitism, while Monothelitism is equally inseparable from Monophysitism, although it acknowledged the Dyophysitism of Chalcedon. The orthodox

doctrine saved the integrity and completeness of Christ's humanity by asserting his human will." Ibid.,4:491

What's the big deal? If Christ does not have a human will, then he cannot be our Savior. To be our Redeemer, He must be just like us. He must be a human. He could not be God without a divine will. But if He is human, He must have a human will.

Concern of the Monothelites

"The advocates of Monothelitism were chiefly concerned to guard the unity of Christ's person and work. They reasoned that, as Christ is but one person, he can only have one will; that two wills would necessarily conflict, as in man the will of the flesh rebels against the Spirit; and that the sinlessness of Christ is best secured by denying to him a purely human will, which is the root of sin. They made the pre-existing divine will of the Logos the efficient cause of the incarnation and redemption, and regarded the human nature of Christ merely as the instrument through which he works and suffers, as the rational soul works through the organ of the body." Ibid., pp. 491-92

The concern of the Monothelites was a movement toward Nestorianism, which was a condemned heresy.

Contention of the Dyothelites

Stated -

"The advocates of Dyothelitism on the other hand contended that the incarnation must be complete in order to have a complete redemption; that a complete incarnation implies the assumption of the human will into union with the preexisting divine will of the Logos: that the human will is the originating cause of sin and guilt, and must therefore be redeemed, purified, and sanctified; that Christ without a human will, could not have been a full man, could not have been tempted, nor have chosen between good and evil, nor performed any moral and responsible act." Ibid., p. 492

They could not conceive of a human will that was not bent toward sin. As they were backing away from Nestorianism, they were moving toward Apollinarianism.

Supported

- Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:42 - "*not my will but Thy will be done.*"
- John 6:38 - *I came from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the Father who sent me.* The human will is always in subjection to the divine will. Only in the Garden of Gethsemane is Christ's human will revealed.

We only see the divine will of Christ in Scripture because His human will was in complete agreement and subjection with the divine will.

Correlation With the Divine Will of the Godhead

"The orthodox dogma implies the identity of the divine will of Christ with the will of God the Father, and assumes that there is but one will in the divine tripersonality. It teaches two natures and one person in Christ, but three persons and one nature in God. Here we meet

the metaphysical and psychological difficulty of conceiving of a personality without a distinct will. But the term personality is applied to the Deity in a unique and not easily definable sense. The three Divine persons are not conceived as three individuals. **NOR** are the two natures of Christ conceived of as two individuals." Ibid., p. 493

In other words, within the Triune Godhead there is only one will, but in Christ there are two wills.

The problem (for Monothelitism): Loss of Alexandria – a stronghold of Monothelitism, was lost to attacking Muslims. Thus God established and maintained orthodoxy by removing a stronghold of heretical doctrine.

The perspective: Council of Constantinople, 681: 6th Ecumenical Council—produced the following creed.

The Creed

"And we likewise preach two natural wills in him [Jesus Christ], and two natural operations undivided, inconvertible, inseparable, unmixed, according to the doctrine of the holy fathers; and the two natural wills [are] not contrary (as the impious heretics assert), far from it! But his human will follows the divine will, and is not resisting or reluctant. but rather subject to his divine and omnipotent will. For it was proper that the will of the flesh should be moved, but be subject to the divine will, according to the wise Athanasius. For as his flesh is called and is the flesh of the God Logos, so is also the natural will of his flesh the proper will of the Logos, as he says himself: *'I came from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the Father who sent me'* (John 6:38)...Therefore we confess two natural wills and operations, harmoniously united for the salvation of the human race." in Schaff, Hist. Chr. Ch. 4:493

The Conclusion

- Monothelitism was denied and Dyothelitism Affirmed: There are two wills in Christ, one human and one divine. But the human will was always in subjection to the divine will, so it appeared that Christ only had one will.

Thought: In glory our will will always be in such conformity with Christ's will that it will appear that our will and Christ's will are one. We will be in complete submission and conformity to Christ.

Consequence

"Honorius was condemned by the Sixth Ecumenical Council as 'former pope of Old Rome,' who with the help of the old serpent had scattered deadly error. This anathema was repeated by the Seventh Ecumenical Council, 787, and by the eighth, 869." Ibid., p. 504

"The connection of Pope Honorius I. (Oct. 27, 625, to Oct. 12, 638) with the Monothelitic heresy has a special interest in its bearing upon the dogma of papal infallibility, which stands or falls with a single official error, according to the principle: *Si falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus* (if you are false in one thing, you are false in everything). It was fully discussed by Catholic scholars on both sides before and during the Vatican Council of 1870,

which proclaimed that dogma (papal infallibility), but could not alter the facts of history.”
Ibid., p. 501

Filioque Controversy—the Son’s relationship to the Holy Spirit

(From the Latin *filioque*, meaning "and the Son.")

Setting of the Controversy –The Western Latin church changed the Nicene Creed to add the phrase "and the Son" to the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Western church asserted that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, while the Eastern Greek church held that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, but not from the Son.

Issue—Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son, or from the Father alone?

What is the Son's relationship to the Spirit? Is the eternal procession of the Spirit from both the Father and Son, or from the Father alone?

Implications

- This was a continuation of the Trinitarian debate although the focus drifted from the ontological Trinity to the economic Trinity

POINT: the issue became a major theological issue between the Latin west and the Greek east.

Summary of the Positions Taken

Eastern Formula: **Single Procession:** "From the Father through the Son"

Eastern View of the Trinity: Hierarchical View Eastern theologians saw the need to protect the unity of the Godhead and the single origin of the Godhead - God the Father. Since the Father is the ultimate source of being, not the Son, the Holy Spirit can only proceed from the Father

Eastern View of the West: They accused Western theologians of tampering with the Nicene Creed.

Western Formula: **Double procession:** "From the Father and the Son

Western View of the Trinity: Co-Ordinate View Westerners saw the Holy Spirit as the love which binds Father and Son; since love is mutual, the Holy Spirit must proceed from both Father and Son

Western View of the East: Saw the Easterners as denying orthodoxy. Christ is just as much God as the Father.

Comparison of the Formulas

Eastern and Western Churches agree in affirming:

1. The personality and deity of the third Person of the holy Trinity. (no question about the Ontological Trinity)
2. The eternal procession (processio) of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity." (no question about the Economic Trinity) Ibid., p. 484

Contrast in the Formulas

"They differ on the source of the eternal procession of the Spirit, whether it be the Father alone, or the Father and the, Son. The Greeks make the Son and the Spirit equally dependent on the Father, as the one and only source of the Godhead; the Latins teach an absolute co-ordination of the three Persons of the Trinity as to essence, but after all admit a certain kind of subordination as to dignity and office, namely, a subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Spirit to both." Ibid., p.485

Concessions Made in the Formulas

"The Greeks approach the Latins by the admission that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son (this was the doctrine of Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus); the Latins approach the Greeks by the admission that the Spirit proceeds chiefly (principally) from the Father (Augustine)." Ibid.

They try to get as close as possible to the other, but little is changed by this compromise.

Conclusion

"But little or nothing is gained by this compromise. The real question is, whether the Father is the only source of the Deity, and whether the Son and the Spirit are co-ordinate or subordinate in their dependence on the Father." Ibid.

Sequence of Events in the Controversy

589 - Synod of Toledo

"The third national Synod of Toledo in Spain, A.D. 589, held after the conversion of King Reccared to the Catholic faith, in its zeal for the deity of Christ against the Arian heresy which lingered longest in that country, and without intending the least disrespect to the Eastern church, first inserted the clause Filioque in the Latin version of the Nicene Creed. Other Spanish synods of Toledo did the same." Ibid., p. 481

809 - Synod of Aachen

Result of the Synod

"In a synod held in Aachen in A.D. 809, the Frankish bishops declared that the Greek formula was heretical, and that it was necessary to confess that the Holy Spirit proceeds 'from the Father and the Son (Filioque)." Gonzales, Hist. Chr. Thot. 2:127

Response of the Pope

“At that juncture Pope Leo III avoided what seemed to be an inevitable break with the East by refusing to accept any interpolation in the creed. He thus avoided a direct confrontation between Rome and Constantinople. But his action did not suffice to prevent the entire Latin church from including the Filioque clause in the creed.” Ibid.

Reason for the Pope's Response

“The Latin church had no right to alter an ecumenical creed without the knowledge and consent of the Greek church which had made it; for in the ecumenical Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople the Western church was scarcely represented, and in the Council of Chalcedon the delegates of Pope Leo I fully agreed to the enlarged Greek form of the Nicene symbol, yet without the Filioque, which was then not thought of, although the doctrine of the double procession was already current in the West. A departure from this common symbolical standard of the most weighty ecumenical councils by a new addition, without consent of the other party, opened the door to endless disputes.” Schaff, Hist. Chr. Ch. 4:481
OBSERVATIONS: There were huge political ramifications.

Visit of the Jerusalem Monks

867 - Patriarch Photius vs Pope Nicholas

“the violent assault of Photius upon the Latin doctrine, as heretical, drove the Latin church into the defensive. Hence, since the ninth century, the Filioque was gradually introduced into the Nicene Creed all over the West, and the popes themselves, notwithstanding their infallibility, approved what their predecessors had condemned.” Ibid., p. 483

NOTE: Photius accused Pope Nicholas of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

The two sides were hardened against each other and eventually, in 1054, the Western and Eastern churches permanently split. There are a lot of issues worth splitting over, but this probably wasn't one of them.

Adoptionistic Controversy

The issue concerned the Sonship of Christ: Is He 1 Son or 2 Sons?

The argument: If Christ has 2 natures, then He must be 2 Sons

Theologically

Dual Sonship Argument

“The fundamental point in Adoptionism is the distinction of a double Sonship in Christ—one by nature and one by grace, one by generation and one by adoption, one by essence and one by title, one which is metaphysical and another which is brought about by an act of the divine will and choice. The idea of sonship is made to depend on the nature, not on the person; and as Christ has two natures, there must be in him two corresponding Sonships.” Ibid., pp.518-19

Dual Natures

“According to his divine nature, Christ is really and essentially the Son of God, begotten from eternity; but according to his human nature, he is the Son of God only nominally by adoption, or by divine grace. By nature he is the Only Begotten Son of God; by adoption and grace he is the First-Begotten Son of God.” Ibid., p. 519

Historically

Origin of the Teaching

Elipandus Archbishop of Toledo – “in his effort to refute Sabellianism, but without any real need to do so, proposed a Christology in which he distinguished between Christ's filiation to the Father according to his divinity, and his filiation to the Father according to his humanity. The first is proper and natural, whereas the second is one of 'adoption' and grace.” Gonzales, Hist. Chr. Thot. 2:108
He is reacting to Dynamic Monarchianism.

Felix Bishop of Urgel - defended the proposal of Elipandus. As Felix was a much abler theologian, adoptionism soon became identified with him” Ibid.

Result

“As a result, Felix was forced to recant repeatedly, although he relapsed at least once and was finally prevented from returning to his diocese. He died at Lyon in 818. As to Elipandus, it seems that, being beyond Charlemagne's reach, he retained his see and doctrine till the end of his days.” Ibid.

Opponents to this Teaching

Beatus of Liebana
Alcuin of York
Hadrian I
Leo III
Charlemagne

Nature of the Opposition

Failure to Abide By the *Communicatio Idiomatum*— Latin for “communication of properties”

“Beatus emphasizes the unity of the Savior and the communication of the properties of his two natures--the *communicatio idiomatum*. Therefore, the distinction that adoptionism establishes between the two manners in which the Savior is the Son of God must be rejected.” Ibid., p. 109

Fear of Nestorianism

"Beatus and the other opponents of adoptionism feared that this doctrine would so divide the person of the Savior that the reality of the incarnation would be lost. This is why they accused the adoptionists of Nestorianism." Ibid.

Need for Official Action: Council of Frankfort, 794

Evaluation

The Process - "their view implies an abstract separation of the eternal Son of God and the man Jesus of Nazareth, and results in the assertion of two distinct Sons of God. It emphasized the dyophysitism and dyotheletism of the orthodox Christology, and ran them out into a personal dualism, inasmuch as sonship is an attribute of personality¹ not of nature. The Adoptionists spoke of an adoptatus homo instead of an adoptata natura humana, and called the adopted manhood an adopted Son." Schaff, Hist. Chr. Ch. 4:518

The Product - "The radical fault of this heresy is, that it shifts the whole idea of Sonship from the person to the nature. Christ is the Son of God as to his person, not as to nature. The two natures do not form two Sons, since they are inseparably united in the one Christ. The eternal Son of God did not in the act of incarnation assume a human personality, but human nature. There is therefore no room at all for an adoptive Sonship. The Bible nowhere calls Christ the adopted Son of God." Ibid., pp. 520-21