

Firm Foundation

The Doctrine of God

Introduction:

At the conclusion of the Camp David Accord (1978) during President Carter's administration, three world leaders were present: Israel's leader, Begin; Egypt's leader, Anwar Sadat; and the President of the United States, Jimmy Carter. In the spirit of agreement and being moved by the significance of the occasion, President Carter suggested, in a seemingly spontaneous gesture, that the three join in prayer. His rationale was that "we all pray to the same God anyway."

While this may have been a politically prudent action it carries no theological truth at all. As a matter of fact it simply leads to confusion and supports an already popular notion that all religions basically have the same God.

This study is an effort toward clarifying this common misunderstanding. In this regard it must be remembered that the only source of man's knowledge of God is God's self-revelation, that is, the Holy Scriptures. There can be no absolute knowledge of God independent of God's self-revelation because God dwells in the light which no man can approach, (I Tim. 6:16).

In order to accomplish the task of knowing the God of the Holy Scriptures the following outline will be employed:

- I. The Natural Knowledge of God
- II. The Christian Knowledge of God
- III. The Trinitarian Controversies
- IV. Objections to the Unity of the Godhead
- V. The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament
- VI. The Trinity and Human Reason
- VII. Ecclesiastical Terminology and the Christian Knowledge of God
- VIII. God's Essence and Attributes
 - A. The relation of essence and attributes
 - B. Classification of Divine Attributes
 1. Negative
 2. Positive

I

The Natural Knowledge of God

Man knows by nature not only that there is a personal, eternal, and almighty God, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe, but also that this God is holy and just, who demands and rewards the good and condemns and punishes the evil. This natural knowledge of God is derived in three ways.

A. _____

Romans 1:20 _____

It is noteworthy that atheist philosophers, using their reason, employ almost identical language, as when,

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for example, Aristotle says of God: "Though God is invisible to every mortal creature, He is visible from His very works." Likewise Cicero: "You do not see God, and yet you learn to know God from His works."

This is called the _____ argument for the existence of God.

B. _____

Acts 14:15-17 _____

This is called the _____ argument for the existence of God.

C. _____

Romans 1:32 _____

Romans 2:14-15 _____

This text shows us that man's conscience is God's tribunal within man and is recognized as such by man. This explains the attempts of the heathen to propitiate God by idol worship, sacrifices, asceticism, etc., and thus to silence their accusing consciences.

This is called the _____ argument for the existence of God.

What conclusion regarding logic can be drawn from all shades of atheism, that is crass atheism, pantheism, polytheism, or agnosticism?

Romans 1:18 _____

Only he who suppresses his reason can assert that there are no proofs for the existence of God. Scripture clearly says that God's invisible nature and His eternal power and deity are clearly perceived from the things that have been made (Rom 1:20).

Now we ask the following questions:

What is the practical result of the natural knowledge of God?

and

What is it that Scripture teaches regarding this?

It teaches two things:

a. In man's present condition the natural knowledge of God is entirely insufficient to attain salvation. It arouses the conscience of man, but it cannot quiet the awakened conscience; it shows man that there is a God and a divine Law, but it does not enable man to keep this Law.

Romans 1:19,21; 32; 2:14-15 _____

b. It has two positive values.

1. _____

2. _____

As Lutherans we are very careful when discussing the natural knowledge of God. On the one hand we set forth its value in great detail; on the other hand, we stress its inadequacy and utter insufficiency in bringing man to salvation.

II The Christian Knowledge of God

The Christian knowledge of God, which is derived only from God's Word, the Holy Scripture, is characterized by one word. That is that word?

_____ - _____

Luther's thesis is correct: "The Holy Scriptures teach that God is _____

and that He is also _____ persons, _____ distinct. "

First of all, the Holy Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, teaches that God is one.

This is called _____.

Deut. 6:4 _____

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1 Cor. 8:4 _____

How does the Bible regard polytheism? _____

So the Bible demands of man a monotheistic worship. (Ex. 20:3; Mk. 12:29-30)

Why do you think this is? _____

Outside of monotheistic worship, what is man doing? _____

In conclusion, polytheism is denounced in no uncertain terms in Scripture.

The Bible just as definitely teaches something else in this regard. What is that?

"Go to the Jordan, and there learn the Trinity" (Matt. 3:16-17), where, as Luther says, "the Divine Majesty reveals itself as follows: The Father in the voice, the Son in His humanity, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove: three distinct Persons and yet only one God, one almighty, eternal, divine essence."

Can we know that without special revelation? _____

What is that special revelation? _____

It is only in the bible, which is God's Word, that He speaks to us and with us and there reveals His innermost being and His loving heart.

Which statement is the correct statement?

The Bible is the Word of God. (*Quia* - Because)_____

The Bible contains the Word of God. (*Quatenus* - in so far as)_____

Thank God that the often heard claim that the Bible is only a record of human concepts of God as developed un Jewish and Christian influence is FALSE! Christ and the Apostles "identify" Scripture with God's Word without any restrictions. If, therefore, we abide in the Scriptures, we hear what God declares about Himself. We learn that the one true God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as well as what kind of thoughts He has entertained from eternity toward fallen mankind. This leads us to a discussion of the practical value of the Christian knowledge of God.

What is it that the natural knowledge of God cannot do on a day in and day out basis?

What does the Christian knowledge of God accomplish?_____

When we confess: "I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," we are saying, "I believe in that God who is gracious to me, a sinner."

Throughout the history of the Christian Church, men have taken offense at the prolonged and sometimes acrimonious battle which the Church fought to preserve the doctrine of the Trinity. (Note the study of Creeds and Confessions.) But the stakes in this controversy were high: the preservation of the Christian knowledge of God and man's salvation. The Church of the Reformation, too, confesses in the first article of the Augustana the doctrine of the Trinity and renounces any and all fellowship with the deniers of the Trinity.

Book of Concord, p 100 [Article I. God]_____

III

The Trinitarian Controversies

It is a mistaken idea that the doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Christ were developed by the church

councils of the fourth and fifth centuries. On the basis of the oral and written Word of the Apostles the Apostolic Church knew and accepted these doctrines.

Acts 2:42; Eph. 2:20; 2 Thess. 2:15

Luther was correct when he said that the Bible presents "far more abundantly and powerfully" this doctrine than the Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon. Never-the-less, the Christian Church has been compelled to fight bitter wars not only against professed Anti-Trinitarians outside the church, but also against those in her own borders who disturbed and disrupted the Church by teaching a doctrine of God which was nothing but the result of their own speculation.

The principle arguments against this doctrine are three in nature:

- 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
-

Since Christian knowledge consists in this, "that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance," the Christian Church must necessarily take an uncompromising position (a) against all such as deny the three Persons and (b) against all who deny the one God, or the one divine essence.

A. The Christian Church and Unitarianism

The Unitarians can also be know as Monarchians and Anti-Trinitarians.

The Monarchians can be divided into two classes:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

Modal Monarchianism: _____

Dynamic Monarchianism: _____

While these two types of Unitarianism differ in many important points, they agreed in their categorical denial of the three distinct Person in God. Most English, American, and German Unitarians are Dynamic Monarchians.

Why do you think Dynamic Monarchianism would be attractive in today's society? _____

The Christian Church has always successfully met and overcome Unitarianism by the following three Scripture proofs:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

B. The Christian Church and Unitarianism and Subordinationism

The unity of God is denied by the Tritheists and the Subordinationists.

Tritheists: _____

Subordinationists: _____

Scripture teaches, in the first place, that there is no division of the divine essence.

1 Cor. 8:4 _____

We must also maintain that each of the three Persons possesses this one undivided and indivisible divine essence in its entirety. A division of the Divine Being which would ascribe to the Father the first third of the Godhead, to the Son the second, and to the Holy Spirit the third, is contrary to the very essence of God.

Col. 2:9 _____

Acts 5:4 _____

There are many, many more verses and Scriptural evidence to support the divine attributes, works, or worship among the three Persons, but that the three Person share in them without any distinction of rank.

1) _____

The Son: _____

The Spirit: _____

2) _____

The Son: _____

The Spirit: _____

3) Since all three Persons possess the same divine essence, attributes, and works, therefore one and the same divine worship is due each Person.

The Son: _____

While the Scriptures do not say in express words that men must worship the Holy Spirit, it is nevertheless taught very definitely in all those Scripture passages where divine majesty, attributes, and works are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit is entitled to the same worship as the Father and the Son is expressed also in the baptismal formula. By being baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Christian adores the Holy Spirit with the same divine worship which is accorded to the Father and the Son. The Christian Church therefore worships the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity.

IV Objections to the Unity of the Godhead

The FIRST objection : _____

Answer: _____

Objection: _____

Answer: _____

The SECOND objection : _____

Answer: _____

The THIRD objection : _____

Answer: _____

The FOURTH objection : _____

Answer: _____

V The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament

This is a highly controverted matter and deserves special discussion. Many people say that the Old Testament does not teach the Trinity. Luther's position may be summarized as follows:

Although this doctrine of the Trinity is not revealed as clearly in the Old as in the New Testament, never-the-less this doctrine is unmistakably set forth in the Old Testament. "Thus at the very beginning of the world the doctrine of the three Persons in the Godhead was indicated, later clearly understood by the Prophets, and finally fully revealed in the Gospel."

In his exposition of Genesis 35:7 Luther says that the great part of the Jews did not believe this doctrine. Yet, even many in visible Christendom do not heed or believe this doctrine. Isaiah comments on their rejection in Chapter 6, verse 10.

The Lutheran theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are agreed that the doctrine of the Trinity is revealed to such an extent in the Old Testament that the believers were able to perceive and believe the doctrine of the Trinity.

Still people insist that "no theologians will turn to the Old Testament for proof texts in support of the doctrine of the Trinity."

The question whether the Old Testament teaches the doctrine of the Trinity is settled once and for all in the Christian Church by the fact that Christ and His Apostles prove the divine personality of the Son and of the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament.

Ps. 110:1 (Matt 22:41ff) _____

In regards to the Holy Spirit the Savior thereby is confirming what David declares in 2 Samuel 23:2:
 "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me."

In Hebrews 1, the deity of Christ, and that can only mean His divine personality, is proved from six Old Testament texts:

Ps. 2:7 _____

2 Sam. 7:14 _____

Ps. 97:7 _____

Ps. 45:7 _____

Ps. 102:26-27 _____

Ps. 110:1 _____

We see from these passages that the Messiah is not a Platonic idea, a mere concept, a symbol, a germinal personality, but that the Messiah is real, living, and complete personality.

In the same manner, the Old Testament clearly teaches the divine personality of the Holy Spirit in predicating the following activities:

Gen. 1:2 _____ Gen. 6:3 _____

2 Sam. 23:1-3 _____

Is. 63:10 _____

Finally, the doctrine of the Trinity is taught also in those passages which, like the New Testament in Matt. 28:19 and 2 Cor. 13:14, enumerate the three Persons of the Trinity side by side and as three separate Persons.

Is. 63:8-10 _____

Who is the "Angel of the Lord" in Genesis 22:1-12? _____

VI Trinity and Human Reason

On the one hand, we cannot nor should we dare to differentiate between a divine Person and the Divine Being, because the Scripture ascribes the entire Godhead not only to the Father, but also to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, we must make a real distinction between the Persons, because the Holy Scriptures speak of three Persons as another: only the Son--not the Father nor the Holy Spirit--was incarnate. Luther puts it this way:

"Reason cannot comprehend that on thing contains no distinctions
and at the same time is three distinct things."

further:

"Metaphysics and every speculation of the part of a creature must be
excluded in the doctrine of God."

In other words, we cannot make the doctrine of the Trinity plausible to reason.

1. _____

2. _____

But modern theology, which in its rejection of Scripture has shifted from Scripture to the theological opinions of the individual, can present only human speculations concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. Naturally, there are as many different theories and personal opinions as there are individual speculative theologians. Never-the-less, the many theological opinions fall into two general categories:

1. _____

Today the controversy of the Church with Modernism is no less serious and difficult. In the interest of its self-righteousness modern theology has reduced Christianity to an ethical religion. This is an open disavowal of divine revelation, of Christ's vicarious atonement, and of the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity. But God has guarded this doctrine with special care. As Francis Pieper observes:

"History introduces us to outspoken opponents as well as to men who attempt to explain and modify the doctrine of the Trinity. But it is a striking phenomenon that from the beginning of the Christian Church down to our day neither the outspoken opponents nor the compromising theologians have been able to suppress this doctrine, confident though they were of their anti-Trinitarian position. Nor has faith in the Trinitarian God ever proved to be an obnoxious error; on the contrary, both in theory and in practice it has proved to be a salutary doctrine."

At this point in our study we are about to conclude our discussion on Trinity. However, it is appropriate that time be taken here not only to review ;but to repeat, possibly covering some new ground, in an attempt to summarize and solidify as much as possible the **Doctrine of God among the Trinity**.

Trinity is a paradox. For the Christian, God is Triune. This is a distinctive characteristic which separates the Living God from all other "gods." But we are forced to admit that the term is extra-scriptural. We also cannot say that Trinity has been a central concern for Christians. The word Trinity is absent from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. That leaves us with something of a problem. How is Trinity to be understood? We will answer this question in three parts:

- a) Revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity in Scripture;
- b) Formulate a set of thesis' on what the teaching is; and
- c) View the three Persons separately in a Trinitarian context.

a) Revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity in Scripture

This doctrine is not presented in a systematic form. Still it is present. This is true of many other doctrines as well. Name some that you feel fit this category (accumulated data to form a teaching).

But this does not mean that it is not Scriptural.

Of what, then, does much of the study of doctrine consist?_____

It is clear that the Scriptures talk of One God and three Persons. But this is a doctrine of revelation.

What does that mean?_____

Let us construct an explanation. Biblical proofs do exist. We must be careful not to work out of context.

Old Testament

There are not many such proofs in the Old Testament. Trinity is not completely revealed in the O.T.

Why do you think that is? _____

So full revelation does not exist in the O.T.. Yet indications do exist. Indication is the best of all terms to use in this case. The reason is that the Bible does not deal with trinity as an abstract truth. It is a living reality. So it is given as fact and a way of life. As a result we can say that the Trinity is indicated in the lifestyle. So Trinity is given as fact and not conjecture.

Is. 7:14 _____

Gen. 1:26 _____

Gen. 18:19 _____

Still, this is not a full revelation. All that is indicated is a distinction of persons. It does not point to a Trinity. In fact, if this was all that we had the indication could be of more than three persons. Further indications are as follows:

Angel of Yahweh: Gen. 16:7-13 _____

Gen. 18:1-21 _____

Mal. 3:1 _____ Gen. 19:1-28 _____

These are simply indications of distinction.

Also, there are O.T. passages in which the Word is personified.

Ps. 33:6 _____

Prov. 8:12-31 _____

In the following verses we see God as speaker and the mentioning of the Messiah:

Is. 48:16 _____

Is. 61:1,9 _____

Aside from a few additional verses in chapter five of this study that is about it. Trinity is not revealed in completeness. All we have is "Hear O Israel.." and a certain distinction of persons. This equals an indication only.

New Testament

This is much more clear. There are many passages including Matthew 28.

Mat. 1:21 _____

Acts 9:31 _____

Other passages are Mat. 28:19; Mat. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 13; 1 Cor. 12. These all indicate One God and a distinction of Persons.

b) Dogma: Statement of Doctrine of Trinity

This is the faith of the Church:

1) _____

Clearly, the terms of men to articulate this doctrine is rooted in Scripture.

2) _____

Again, this is based on Scripture.

It is very difficult to express this in human terms. This is the best we can do.

3) _____

If this is not clearly understood what dangerous concept of God will emerge? _____

This third point is the major understanding.

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

Analogies of the Trinity

There are weaknesses in all of them because all are human analogies.

1) _____

What is missing from this type of analogy? _____

2) _____

What might the danger be in this type of analogy? _____

3) _____

What doesn't this illustrate? _____

Still, are analogies of the Trinity appropriate? _____ How can they be defended?

VIII God's Essence and Attributes

No classification of the divine attributes is fully adequate. It is therefore, of no theological consequence which classification is used, so long as the various attributes are defined according to Scripture alone.

We will follow the division into negative and positive attributes.

What do we mean by negative attributes? _____

What do we mean by positive attributes? _____

Why do we use this method? _____

Before discussing the divine attributes we must make one more observation. All divine attributes revealed in Scripture such as unity, infinity, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, could only fill our hearts with terror if Scripture had not also revealed God's grace toward all sinful mankind for the sake of Christ's vicarious atonement. This attribute of God's grace is the center of the entire Scriptures, for the scope of all Scripture is Christ, the Savior of sinners, "who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. 2:6). The attribute of God's grace, which is provided through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, is also the God-intended center of all human history, for the only purpose of the world's existence is the proclamation of God's grace through the redemption in Christ (Matt 24:14).

NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES

1. The Unity of God

God is in a class by Himself. Every creature has at least something in common with other creatures and exists in duplicate, triplicate, or multiple form. There can be no other God besides God. He cannot be divided.

Is. 43:10 _____

Is. 45:5 _____

1 Cor. 8:4 _____

But are not creatures also called gods in Scripture? Yes, this is true of rulers and governors. Why?

But God is the *ens summum*, that is, the Absolute Reality, and therefore He cannot share being, activity, authority, glory, with anyone or anything.

Is. 41:23 _____

The "creature gods", such as civil rulers, on the other hand, have existence and administrative powers, but only in a derived sense. Without God they are nothing and can do nothing. How important, therefore, our private and public intercessions that the one true God preserve the being and authority of these "gods"!

This doctrine has great practical value:

1) _____

2) _____

So God cannot be classified. Since we cannot compare Him with a creature the definition must be negative. As Luther says, "Who knows what God is? He is above body and spirit, yes, above everything we can say, hear, or think."

Strictly speaking, then, a definition of God is impossible. Still, the Scriptures are a description of God. So the closest we can come to knowing God is as He is revealed in the Word.

2. The Simplicity of God

We can describe God's simplicity only in negative terms. It is that attribute according to which God exists entirely uncompounded and without parts. The infinitude of God does not allow the ascribing of parts.

How should we understand the following passages? (Ps. 139:16 _____

Isaiah 55:11 _____, Ps. 119:7 _____, Matt. 5:35 _____)

This is simply beyond all human comprehension. Therefore God Himself has condescended to us, divided Himself, as it were, into component parts, and because our finite intellect permits us to conceive of God's attributes, e.g., justice, omnipotence, grace, as following one after another or as existing alongside one another. This is a knowledge of God "in part," as St. Paul says in 1 Cor. 13.

3. The Immutability of God

Ps. 102:26-27 _____

He is immutable also in all His attributes. Prov. 19:21 _____

We learn a two-fold lesson from God's immutability

1) _____

2) _____

Why then does the Scripture ascribe to God a change of mind as in Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:11; Jonah 3:10 or a change of place as in Gen. 11:5? _____

The Scripture teaches very clearly this reality in 1 Sam. 15:29_____

God's essence is not changed when He enters into time and space. (Jer. 23:24)

The Scriptures speak of God in a twofold manner:

1)_____

2)_____

We must also think of God, who in His being is immutable, is angry or merciful according to the difference the object of His affection. We must so conceive of God that in spite of the immutability in His essence He is a gracious God to the humble, poor, and contrite sinners, but a jealous God to the proud and self-righteous (1 Peter 5:5; Luke 18:9-14; Luke 1:52-53).

How might we say this in our own words?_____

4. The Infinity of God

All creatures are finite, that, they are subject to the limits and boundaries of their being and activity. God is infinite. The term infinity expresses the idea that God in His being and activity is in no way bound by the limitations of time and space. Two passages point this out very clearly:

Ps. 145:3_____

Ps. 147:5_____

Possibly one way to capture the essence of infinity is to use the word immensity instead. By ascribing immensity to God, Scripture expressly reminds us that we dare not make our puny reason and intellect the yardstick to measure God's being and activity.

1 Tim 6:16_____

Ps. 145:3_____

1 Kings 8:27_____

This is the absolute difference between God and man: we must be reminded that we are limited! Therefore it is correct to say that "God enters into time and space and still always remains above time and space."

5. Omnipresence of God

God alone is Omnipresent. Man and all creatures are always limited to a specific locality. Not even the angels are omnipresent. The Scriptural teaching on God's omnipresence may be summarized in three points.

1) Wherever God works, He is present. God never works *in absentia*.

Jer. 23:24

Ps. 139:8

2) But God's omnipresence is of such a nature that while He is present in all creatures, He is at the same time outside the creature and never becomes the creature or even a part of the creature.

Acts 17:28

Col. 1:17

But at the same time He is far outside, and distinct from the creature as the Infinite is distinct from the finite.

What is the only means of comprehending God even though He is present in all creatures?

3) God is present everywhere without local extension, contraction, multiplication, or division. If God were subject to time and space these concepts would be applicable. Scripture teaches that God transcends all time and space.

I Kings 8:27

Is. 66:1

Again, this doctrine, as in others, is provided as practical.

1) _____

2) _____

6. The Eternality of God

The term eternity in the Scriptures is used in two ways.

1) _____

2) _____

In the strict and absolute sense the word eternity denotes infinite, unlimited duration without beginning, without end, without succession. In this sense, eternity can be predicated of God only.

Ps. 90:2 _____ Ps. 102:27 _____

This is our warning and our comfort. How? _____

Of these two, which is the God pleasing motivation? _____

THE POSITIVE ATTITUDES

1. Life

God alone has life in an absolute sense. Creatures also have life, but it is a derived life, a life in God.

Acts 17:28 _____ John 5:26 _____

This living God is set in contrast to the idols set up by man.

Joshua 3:10 _____

Jer. 10:10 _____

Acts 14:15 _____

This is in contrast to all created life which has its origin in God.

Acts 17:25 _____

This fact has two realities.

Heb. 10:31 _____

Josh. 3:10 _____

1 Tim. 3:15 _____

1 Tim. 4:10 _____

In times of disaster and despair the Christian exclaims with Luther: "LIFE!"

2. The Knowledge of God

Knowledge is an attribute common to both God and man. The knowledge of creatures is relative, imperfect. God's knowledge is absolute, perfect. The knowledge of God differs from that of creatures in two points: in its extent and in its manner.

a. _____

b. _____

What Scripture teaches concerning God's knowledge serves for our warning and our comfort.

Warning: _____

Comfort: _____

3. The Wisdom of God

Scripture makes a distinction between God's wisdom and His knowledge, Rom. 11:33. In Scripture the term wisdom denotes a practical knowledge, the ability to discern correctly the best ends and choose the best means for attaining these ends. And in this sense, Scripture ascribes wisdom to God. The Gospel of Christ Crucified is expressly called the "wisdom of God," the "hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." (1 Cor. 2:6ff).

Since God is the "only wise God" (1 Tim. 1:17; Rom. 16:27) dare we criticize God's wisdom? _____

How do we stand before His wisdom? _____

They must serve God's gracious purpose and will to bring men to repentance and faith, as Christ expressly teaches on the basis of concrete examples in Luke 13:1ff.

4. The Divine Will

The Scriptures ascribe to God not only mind (Rom. 11:34) but also will (1 Tim. 2:4; John 6:40; 1 Thess. 4:3). It is in this final category that we will conclude our study of the Doctrine of God. Within this section we will consider the following:

- a. His holiness;
- b. His justice;
- c. His truthfulness;
- d. His grace; and
- e. His patience.

We should take a few moments to discuss God's will in general.

a. _____

1. _____

2. _____

Why is this important? _____

b. _____

irresistible: _____

resistible: _____

Why is this important? _____

c. _____

immediately: _____

mediately: _____

Can you think of circumstances where God's means of order is misunderstood or ignored?

d. _____

Realm of grace: _____

Realm of law: _____

Can you think of examples where God's good will is contingent upon man's fulfillment of the Law?

No one who hopes to be saved in this way should forget that the will of God is conditioned by nothing less than a perfect fulfillment of the entire Law, for "cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them" (Gal. 3:10).

e. _____

a. The Holiness of God

Two things are pointed out: 1) _____

2) _____

How then do we deal with the existence of evil? _____

b. The Justice of God

The proper understanding of this point constitutes the essence of Christianity.

1) _____

2) _____

c. The Truthfulness of God

Men put little faith in what God says. They believe neither God's threats in the Law (Ps. 90:11) nor His promises in the Gospel (Is. 53:1; John 12:38). But this distrust and disbelief frustrates God's gracious purpose to save man. Therefore God does not hesitate to assure us in His Word that He is not a liar like men, but the absolute truth.

Rom. 3:4 _____

Men are categorized otherwise: Titus 1:12 _____

Matt. 15:19 _____

Ps. 116:11 _____

But against this universal dishonesty of man, Scripture places the absolute truthfulness of God: Titus 1:2

John 3:33 _____ Heb. 6:18 _____

John 10:35 _____

d. The Goodness of God

There is a very important lesson in the truth that God alone is good in Himself, whereas all human goodness is only a derived goodness. This truth will guard against pride when we observe special gifts in ourselves not given to others, and against envy when the situation is reversed. Scripture and experience teach us that pride and envy have always been the great troublemakers in the Church and in the State.

1 Cor. 4:7 _____ 1 Pet. 2 _____

"All good gifts come down to us and our neighbors from God. Whoever therefore is envious of the neighbor has a quarrel with God, the Giver of the gifts, and is in reality one who picks a fight with God."

God's goodness is not only "remote," that is an attribute within the divine essence, but it is also "subjective," something that God shows toward His creatures.

Ps. 145:9 _____ Jonah 4:11 _____

Ps. 36:6 _____ Ps. 136 _____

As a result, all creatures are to praise God. (Ps. 148)

But Scripture focuses our attention in particular on God's goodness toward man, more specifically, toward man as a sinner.

Mercy: (Luke 1:78-79) _____

Love: (John 3:16; Titus 3:4) _____

Grace: (Titus 3:5; Rom. 3:24) _____

Patience: (1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:9; Ex. 34:6) _____

God's goodness must be reflected in His children:

Luke 6:36 _____ 1 Thess. 4:9 _____

Matt. 5:44-45 _____ Eph. 4:32 _____

Pro. 12:10 _____

The most important attribute of God's goodness lies in His grace in Christ. We must always keep in mind that the true scope of the Bible is none other than to reveal God's grace.

John 3:17 _____

Acts 10:43 _____

If Scripture had revealed all the divine attributes except God's grace, then Scripture would be of no value to us. Our knowledge of God would fill our hearts with terror if Scripture had not revealed that the one, indivisible, immutable, infinite, omnipresent, eternal, living, all-knowing, all-wise, omnipotent, holy, just, truthful God is also the gracious God--gracious in Christ and for Christ's sake.

"All sins Thou borest for us,
Else had despair reigned o'er us."

This is the one and only, true God.

In concluding our discussion of the doctrine of God we must once more point out that all who deny the Holy Trinity know nothing of God's gracious being. If there is no Trinity, then there is no eternal Son of God, no incarnation of the Son of God in the fullness of time, no Vicarious Atonement, no justification by faith, no peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; then there is only Law, with in obligations, demands, threats, and curses. The Triune God is the gracious God--and the gracious God is the Triune God.