

A Study Guide for

The Oneness of God

David K. Bernard & Neil Stegall

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by David K. Bernard and Neil Stegall

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Preface

This workbook is a companion study guide to *The Oneness of God* by David K. Bernard. It is designed to be used for independent study, group Bible studies, Sunday schools, church day schools, evening institutes, Bible colleges, seminars, and other training programs. The level of instruction can be adapted to the type of use.

The study guide outlines each section of *The Oneness of God* (designated as OG). The outline is designed for a teacher to use in lecturing or for a student to use in personal study. It does not cover every detail of the book but seeks to cover the most important points relative to a Bible study of the Godhead.

The outline was developed by David Bernard from college lecture notes on systematic theology. In that setting, it has taken approximately thirteen to fifteen hours to cover the material. This is roughly equal to one quarter of a year in a weekly program such as Sunday school, or one semester hour in a college program. Of course, the amount of time can be adjusted by the degree of coverage or by adding or omitting material.

Most sections of the outline conclude with a short list of Scripture verses or word definitions. It is highly recommended that, as a minimum, the student memorize and learn to discuss these verses and definitions.

Following each section of the outline are study questions over important concepts. These questions call for short answers or discussion, and they can be used for independent study, homework, discussions, quizzes, or tests. Answers to the questions can be found in the back of the study guide, along with citations to relevant page numbers in *The Oneness of God*. The questions and

answers were prepared by Neil Stegall.

It is hoped that this study guide will be a useful tool for both teacher and student as they study the doctrine of God in the Scriptures.

**OUTLINE
WITH
STUDY
QUESTIONS**

I

Christian Monotheism

A. Definitions

1. Monotheism: belief in one God.
2. Atheism: denial of the existence of God.
3. Agnosticism: assertion that the existence of God is unknown or unknowable.
4. Pantheism: belief that God is nature or the forces of the universe.
5. Polytheism: belief in more than one God.
 - a. Ditheism: belief in two Gods
 - b. Tritheism: belief in three Gods.
6. Beliefs in Christendom.
 - a. Trinitarianism: belief in three distinct persons “in” the Godhead.
 - b. Binitarianism: belief in two persons.
 - c. Strict monotheism (excluding multiple persons) with a denial of the full deity of Jesus Christ. Examples: Arianism, dynamic monarchianism.
 - d. Strict monotheism (excluding multiple persons) with an affirmation of the full deity of Jesus Christ. Examples: modalistic monarchianism (modalism); Oneness.

B. Old Testament Emphasis

1. Deuteronomy 6:4 teaches absolute monotheism.
 - a. It is the historic Jewish confession of faith, called the Shema.
 - b. It is important to teach continually (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).
 - c. It is the first and greatest commandment (Mark 12:28-31).
2. God declared His absolute oneness in Isaiah: “alone, by myself, no God beside me, none else, no God else, none like me.” (See Isaiah 37:16; 42:8; 43:10-11; 44:6, 8, 24; 45:5-6, 21-23; 46:5, 9; 52:6.)
3. Over fifty times the Bible calls God “the Holy One,” but never the holy two or three. (See Isaiah 54:5.)
4. Old Testament saints had no trinitarian concept.

C. New Testament Emphasis

1. It affirms Old Testament monotheism (Romans 3:30; Galatians 3:20; I Corinthians 8:4, 6; James 2:19.)
2. There is one God, and one mediator (John 17:3; I Timothy 2:5).
 - a. The mediator is the sinless man Jesus, in whom God was manifested. He reconciles the holy God and sinful humanity.
 - b. If there were a second, co-equal divine person, he could not be the mediator; he also would need a man to mediate between him and sinful humanity.
3. Jesus endorsed the Jewish concept of God (Mark 12:29; John 4:22).

Scripture Memorization: Deuteronomy 6:4; I Timothy 2:5

Definition: monotheism, atheism, agnosticism, pantheism, polytheism, tritheism, trinitarianism, Shema.

Questions

1. List the four different views of the Godhead proposed in Christendom.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
2. Define monotheism.
3. Compare the trinitarianism view of the Godhead with that of binitarianism.
4. What are the two extreme tendencies discernible in trinitarianism?
5. Strict monotheists in church history have been divided into two distinct classes. Name a group associated with each class and state its unique view of the Godhead.
 - a.

- b.
6. The view of twentieth-century Oneness believers most closely resembles which form of strict monotheism?
 7.
 - a. What is the key Old Testament verse that gives classic expression to the doctrine of one God?
 - b. This is the first verse of the basic statement of faith of the Jews. What is this passage of Scripture called?
 8. Cite a verse from each major division of the Old Testament—the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets—that affirms strict monotheism.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 9. The Jews have not understood a theology of “persons” to be present in the Old Testament but have insisted on absolute monotheism. Examining the language of the Old Testament, what can we conclude about the verses that affirm absolute monotheism?
 10. Cite three verses from the New Testament, including Revelation, that affirm strict monotheism.

- a.
 - b.
 - c.
11. a. What can we conclude about the teaching of strict monotheism throughout the entire Bible?
- b. Should this doctrine have any effect on the practices of the church? Explain.

II

The Nature of God

A. Nonmoral Attributes

1. Life.
2. Individuality (personality).
3. Rationality.
4. Spirituality (John 4:24).
 - a. Not material; not flesh, blood, or bones.
 - b. Not confined to a body.
 - c. Since the Incarnation, God is fully revealed in Jesus; there is no visible God outside Him.
5. Invisibility (John 1:18; I Timothy 6:16).
6. Self-existence.
7. Eternity.
8. Omnipresence (being everywhere present) (Psalm 139). The description of God as being in heaven has these connotations: (a) God's transcendence; (b) center of reasoning and activity ("headquarters"); (c) immediate presence and glory; (d) perhaps a visible manifestation to angels.
9. Omniscience (having all knowledge).
10. Omnipotence (having all power).
11. Immutability (unchanging nature).
12. Transcendence (beyond human comprehension, except by revelation).

B. Moral Nature

1. Holiness.
2. Justice and righteousness.
3. Love.
4. Mercy and grace.
5. Faithfulness.
6. Truth.
7. Goodness.

C. Anthropomorphism

1. Description of the nonhuman (God) in human terms (for the sake of our finite understanding).
2. Specifically, speaking of God as having eyes, arms, heart, feet, nostrils, and so on.
3. These descriptions are figurative; for example, God's "feet" are not literally propped up on the earth.

D. Theophany

1. Definition: visible manifestation of God, usually thought of as temporary.
2. The angel of the LORD was sometimes a theophany of the one God and sometimes simply an angelic agent of God.
3. Melchizedek was probably not a theophany, but he was a type or foreshadowing of Christ.
4. The fourth man in the fire was probably not a theophany, but an angel.
5. In the New Testament, Old Testament theophanies were superseded by the Incarnation (Jesus Christ). Jesus is more than a theophany; He is God incarnate.

Scripture Memorization: John 1:18a; 4:24

Definition: omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, anthropomorphism, theophany

Questions

1. God is a spirit (John 4:24). Define *spirit*.

2. Cite a verse from each testament which emphasizes that God is invisible.
 - a.

 - b.

3. a. God is the only spirit that is truly omnipresent. Explain.
 - b. What passage of Scripture most wonderfully describes God's omnipresence?

4. If God is truly omnipresent, why does the Bible describe Him as being in heaven? Give four reasons noted by the author.
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

 - d.

5. When the Bible says God came to earth or appeared to humans, did His omnipresence come to an end or was it restricted? If not, what did such an appearance demonstrate?

6. Given God's invisibility and omnipresence, what can we conclude about scriptural references to eyes, arms, feet, and other bodily parts ascribed to God in the Old Testament?

7. A few verses in the Old Testament may raise the possibility that God had a spirit body. What is the most consistent explanation of such verses?

8. How has God chosen to make Himself visible to humans and angels under the New Testament?

9. Omniscience is an attribute that is God's alone. Not even Satan is all knowing. Cite a verse from each testament that establishes God's omniscience.
 - a.

 - b.

10. God is omnipotent, or all powerful (Genesis 17:1; Romans 13:1; Revelation 19:6). Does He have any limitations, or is anything impossible for Him to do? Discuss.

11. Explain what it means to say that God is eternal.

12. God changed His plans to destroy Nineveh, yet God is supposed to be immutable, or unchanging. In what sense is He unchanging?

13. God is an individual being with personality and rationality. Explain how each verse below supports this conclusion.
 - a. Romans 9:19
 - b. Isaiah 1:18
 - c. Genesis 1:27
14. I John describes God in terms of what fundamental moral attribute?
15. Explain how the moral attributes of God listed below relate to the human condition and the plan of salvation.
 - a. Holiness
 - b. Righteousness and justice
 - c. Love and mercy
16. Briefly define *theophany*.
17. Some Old Testament appearances of the “angel of the LORD” seem to be theophanies. What are three views of these appearances?
 - a.

- b.
 - c.
18. Some maintain that Melchizedek was a theophany, though Hebrews 7:4 calls him a man. In any case, what is most important to understand about this Bible figure?
19. a. What does the original Aramaic text of Daniel 3:24-25 reveal about the account of the fourth man in the fire?
- b. How did Nebuchadnezzar describe the appearance of the fourth man?
- c. Even if this were a theophany, could this have been the only begotten Son of God?
20. Why is there a lack of theophanies in the New Testament?

III

The Names and Titles of God

- A. Significance of God's Name
 - 1. Character (Exodus 6:2-7).
 - 2. Power (Exodus 9:16).
 - 3. Authority (Exodus 23:20-21).
 - 4. Presence (I Kings 8:27, 29, 43).

- B. Old Testament Names and Titles of God (See table, OG, pp. 45-46.)
 - 1. God.
 - a. El means "strength, mighty, almighty, deity."
 - b. Elohim is the plural form, denoting intensity; it is the most common Hebrew word meaning "God."
 - 2. Lord.
 - a. Adon means "ruler, master."
 - b. Adonai is the emphatic form; it always refers to God.
 - 3. LORD, or Jehovah.
 - a. YHWH (Yahweh) is derived from the verb "to be."
 - b. It is related to "I AM" (Exodus 3:14).
 - c. Its connotation is the "Self-Existent One, Eternal One."

- d. It is the unique name by which God identified Himself in the Old Testament (Exodus 6:3-8; Isaiah 42:8).

C. The Progressive Revelation of God's Name

1. Compound names of Jehovah. (See table, OG, pp. 48-49.)
2. Longings to know God's name.
3. Culmination in the name Jesus (Zechariah 14:9).

D. The Name of Jesus

1. It means Jehovah-Savior or Jehovah Is Salvation.
 - a. It incorporates everything the Old Testament reveals about God (Jehovah).
 - b. It reveals that Jehovah has come in flesh to be our Savior (Matthew 1:21, 23).
2. Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the only one who actually personifies and fulfills that name. His name reveals:
 - a. God's character (example: love) (Colossians 2:9).
 - b. God's power (example: miracles) (John 14:14; Acts 3:6).
 - c. God's authority (example: teaching) (Matthew 28:18; John 5:43).
 - d. God's presence (fullness of the Spirit) (Matthew 18:20).
3. It is the highest name (Acts 4:10, 12; Ephesians 1:21; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 3:17).
4. It is not a magical formula; we must have faith in Jesus Himself (Acts 3:16; 10:43; 19:13-17).
5. The early church preached, taught, prayed, performed miracles, healed the sick, cast out demons, baptized, suffered, and rejoiced in that name.

Scripture Memorization: Acts 4:12

Definition: Elohim, Adonai, Yahweh

Questions

1. What was the significance of a name in Bible times?
2. How did God use names and titles of Himself?
3. What was the full significance of the name Jehovah as revealed to Israel?
4. What does God's name represent?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
5. Cite some scriptural teachings that show the importance God attaches to His name.
6. State the meaning of the following names or titles of God.
 - a. El
 - b. Adonai
 - c. Yahweh (Jehovah)

7. a. Why did the Jews use Adonai as a substitute for YHWH?
 - b. Did the New Testament follow this custom?
 - c. What English word is most commonly used as the substitute for YHWH?
 - d. What is the technical term for the four-letter, sacred name of YHWH?
8. What was God's apparent purpose in the continuing use of compound names to describe Himself?
9. How does the name of Jesus reveal His relationship to His people?
10. How is the New Testament church identified with the name of Jesus?
11. What importance should the name of Jesus have in Christian living?
12. What makes the use of the name of Jesus effective?
13. What happens when we call on the name of Jesus in faith?

14. The Bible prophesied that the Messiah would declare the name of the LORD. Jesus declared that He manifested the name of the Father. How did He manifest and declare the Father's name, and what did this prove?

IV

Jesus Is God

A. Old Testament Teaching

Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 35:4-6 (with Luke 7:22); Micah 5:2.

B. New Testament Teaching

1. We must interpret the New Testament in the light of Old Testament context and culture.
 - a. The original writers and readers were strict monotheists.
 - b. When the writers called Jesus “Lord” and “God,” they used the Old Testament meaning of those words.
2. Colossians 2:9 teaches the absolute deity of Jesus.
 - a. It is a foundational doctrine (verses 8, 10).
 - b. Three different words emphasize this truth: “all, fulness, Godhead.”
3. Other passages teach that Jesus is God incarnate (John 20:28-31; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; II Corinthians 4:4; 5:19; Colossians 1:15, 19; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:3; II Peter 1:1; I John 5:20).

C. Jesus Is the Word Made Flesh (John 1:1, 14).

1. Old Testament meaning of *word* (Hebrew, *dabhar*): God speaking.

2. New Testament meaning of *word* (Greek, *logos*): unexpressed word (thought, reason, plan) or expressed word (speech, action).
3. The Word is God's mind, thought, reason, plan, which is God Himself. The Word was "with" God in the sense of "pertaining to" God.
4. The Word is also God's self-revelation; God's self-disclosure; God uttering Himself. The eternal Word, or God Himself, came in flesh as the Son.

D. The Incarnation Occurred at Christ's Conception

1. Jesus was God at conception (Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:35).
2. The baby Jesus received worship from angels, Simeon, Anna, and the wise men.
3. God caused a virgin to conceive. Jesus thereby received the divine nature at conception, instead of the nature of an earthly father.

E. The Mystery of Godliness

1. The absolute oneness of God is no mystery; it is clearly stated throughout Scripture.
2. The mystery is that God came in flesh (I Timothy 3:16), and it has been revealed to us.

F. Jesus Is the Father Incarnate

1. The Bible so teaches (Isaiah 9:6; 63:16; John 10:30, 33, 38; 12:45; 14:6-11, 18; I John 3:1-5; Revelation 21:6-7).
 - a. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one," instead of "I am the Father," because He was both Father and Son, both invisible Spirit and visible flesh.
 - b. Jesus said, "I am in the Father," because unlike any other man, His humanity was inseparably united and joined with the Spirit by the Incarnation.
2. Scripture attributes many unique acts both to the

Father and to Jesus: raising Christ's body, sending of the Comforter, drawing people to God, raising believers from death, answering prayer, sanctifying believers.

G. Jesus Is Jehovah Incarnate

1. The Bible so teaches (Isaiah 40:3, 5; Isaiah 45:23 with Philippians 2:9-11; Isaiah 52:6; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Zechariah 11:12; 12:10; Malachi 3:1; Acts 9:5; Revelation 22:6 with 16).
2. Scripture gives many unique titles of Jehovah to Jesus, such as Almighty, Rock, Horn of Salvation, Shepherd, Light, Savior, Lord, Holy One, Judge, First and Last, King of Israel, Creator, and Redeemer. (See tables, OG, pp. 73-75.)
3. Jesus is the I AM (John 8:56-69; 10:38-39).

H. Jesus Is the One on the Throne

1. The description of the One on the throne (Revelation 4:2, 8) is identical to the description of Jesus (Revelation 1:7-8, 11, 17-18).
2. Jesus is "in the midst of the throne," or literally "is (seated) on the center of the throne" (Revelation 5:6; 7:17).
3. "God and the Lamb" is one personage seated on one throne. He has one name and one face (Revelation 22:3-4).
 - a. Only Jesus is both God and Lamb, deity and humanity, sovereign and sacrifice for sin.
 - b. The name of Jesus is the supreme name (Philippians 2:9-11).
 - c. The face of Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3).

Scripture Memorization: Isaiah 9:6; Colossians 2:9; John 1:1, 14; 10:30

Definition: Word (Logos)

Questions

1. Isaiah 9:6 uses the terms *child* and *son* in its prophecy of the coming Messiah. What do these terms describe?

2. What did Isaiah 7:14 prophesy concerning who the Messiah would be?

3. a. How could Jesus be both a branch out of Jesse and a root of Jesse, as prophesied in Isaiah 11:1, 10?

b. How did Jesus use this concept to challenge and confound the Pharisees?

4. How did Jesus use Isaiah 35:4-6 to confirm His ministry and identity?

5. a. Isaiah 40:3 is cited in Matthew 3:3 to demonstrate that John the Baptist was the prophesied forerunner of Jesus. By what name does Isaiah 40:3 identify the one to come?

b. What then is the identity of Jesus?

6. Micah 5:2 prophesied that the Messiah would come out of Bethlehem. How does this verse describe the Messiah?

7. State the central idea of the following verses, as related to the identity of Jesus.
 - a. John 20:28
 - b. Acts 20:28
 - c. Titus 2:13
 - d. II Peter 1:1

8. I Timothy 3:16 and John 1:1-14 state that God was manifest in, or made, flesh. According to John 1:14, God was literally tabernacled in flesh. When did this occur?

9. Why was it necessary for God to take on flesh?

10. State the central idea of the following verses, as related to the identity of Jesus.
 - a. II Corinthians 5:19
 - b. John 1:18
 - c. Hebrews 1:1-3
 - d. Colossians 1:15

- e. Hebrews 10:20
 - f. Hebrews 3:3-6
 - g. John 1:10-11
11. What are two meanings of the word *logos* in Greek usage?
 - a.
 - b.
 12. How then can we understand John 1 to teach the concept of God manifest in the flesh?
 13. How did Greek philosophy influence the understanding of the Word, or Logos?
 14. Why does the Gospel of John use this Greek philosophical term?
 15. The Bible unequivocally declares that the fullness of God was in Jesus from the moment His human life began. Cite four verses that declare this truth and state the idea of each.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

16. a. The mystery of the Godhead is how God could come in the flesh—how Jesus could be both God and man (I Timothy 3:16). How is the truth of this mystery revealed?
 - b. How might we best understand the meaning of “mystery” in New Testament usage?

17. Briefly explain how each of the following verses affirms Jesus as God and Father.
 - a. Isaiah 9:6
 - b. Colossians 2:9
 - c. John 10:30
 - d. John 12:45
 - e. John 14:7

18. For each pair of verses below, cite the work of the Father manifested through Jesus.
 - a. John 2:19-21; Acts 2:24
 - b. John 16:7; John 14:26
 - c. John 6:44; John 12:32
 - d. John 6:40; Romans 4:17 or I Corinthians 6:14
 - e. John 14:14; John 16:23
 - f. Ephesians 5:26; Jude 1

g. I John 3:1, 5; John 1:29-31

19. Jehovah was the revealed redemptive name of the one God of the Old Testament. The Old Testament contains many prophecies of the works of Jehovah to be revealed under a new covenant. Explain how each prophetic verse below refers to Jesus as the manifestation of Jehovah and His work.

a. Isaiah 40:3

b. Jeremiah 23:5-6

c. Isaiah 52:6

d. Isaiah 45:23

e. Zechariah 14:3-5

20. How do each of these verses affirm Jesus to be Jehovah?

a. Acts 9:5

b. Psalm 68:18

c. Revelation 22:6

21. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am" and "I and My Father are one." He also forgave the palsied man his sins. Why did the Jews react so violently to Jesus in these instances?

22. a. Revelation demonstrates that the One on the throne who receives worship is the holy, eternal Lord God almighty (Revelation 4:2-8). Jesus describes Himself as the holy, eternal Lord almighty in Revelation 1:8. What can we conclude from this comparison?
- b. The One on the throne is also revealed as Creator and Judge. Cite verses to show that these are roles of Jesus.
- c. Revelation 22:3-4 speaks of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and then it speaks of one throne, one face, and one name. What can we conclude about the identity of God and the Lamb in view of this passage?
- d. As Jesus is the only one revealed to be both God and the Lamb, what can we conclude about the visible manifestation of God we will see on the throne?
23. The Greek word for revelation is *apokalupsis*, from which we get the word *apocalypse*. What is the literal meaning of this word?
24. In sum, what is unveiled in the Revelation of Jesus Christ?
25. The following is a list of some attributes of God. Cite a verse that ascribes each quality to Jesus.
- a. Spirit

- b. Omnipresent
 - c. Omniscient
 - d. Omnipotent
 - e. Immutable
26. List three exclusive prerogatives of God that apply to Jesus.
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
27. A comparison of God's moral attributes (p. 32) with those of Jesus reveals that Jesus is everything that the Bible describes God to be. Quote one verse that summarizes this truth.

V

The Son of God

A. The Deity and Humanity of Jesus Christ

We must affirm:

1. The absolute and complete deity of Jesus.
 - a. See part IV.
 - b. Confessing His deity is necessary (John 8:24).
2. The perfect, sinless humanity of Jesus.
 - a. He is fully human (Matthew 26:38; Luke 2:40, 52; 22:42; 23:46; Acts 2:31; Hebrews 2:14, 16-17; 5:7-8).
 - b. He is sinless (Hebrews 4:15; I Peter 2:22; I John 3:5).
 - c. Could Jesus sin? His humanity, viewed alone, had the same capacity as Adam, but as the union of deity and humanity He could not sin.
 - d. Confessing His humanity is necessary (I John 4:3).
3. The clear distinction between the deity and humanity of Jesus.
 - a. See table, OG, pp. 86-87.
 - b. Example: contrast Romans 5:8 and Colossians 1:27.
4. The inseparable union of deity and humanity in Jesus (John 1:1, 14; 10:30, 38; 14:10-11; 16:32; Hebrews 9:14).

B. Historical Doctrines of Christ (optional)

1. Jesus was a man only: Ebionitism, Unitarianism.
2. Jesus was a spirit only: Docetism (in Gnosticism).
3. Christ was a divine being who temporarily dwelt in a man Jesus: Cerinthianism (in Gnosticism).
4. Jesus was a second divine person subordinate to the Father: Subordinationism.
5. Jesus was a human who was later deified to some degree: Dynamic Monarchianism, Adoptionism.
6. Jesus was a created deity, or demigod, but not the one true God: Arianism.
7. Jesus had an incomplete human nature: Apollinarianism.
8. Jesus had one nature, dominated by divinity: Monophysitism, Monothelitism.
9. Jesus had two natures unified not in substance but only in purpose, action, or appearance: Nestorianism.
10. The traditional formulation (Council of Chalcedon, 451): Jesus is one person with two natures, human and divine.
11. Conclusion.
 - a. Of these views, the last is probably closest to Scripture although the council and its language were trinitarian.
 - b. Nestorius also had some valid points, such as his refusal to call Mary the mother of God.
 - c. Probably it is best simply to use the four scriptural affirmations in A.
 - d. Rather than speaking of “two natures” in Christ, perhaps it is better to speak simply of His humanity and deity, or to speak of the one God as revealed in Christ and at the same time of Christ as a real man.

C. Terminology for the Son of God

1. “Christ” means the Messiah, the Anointed One.

2. Son.
 - a. The Son is not a distinct divine person but is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:13-15; Hebrews 1:1-3).
 - b. The Son came into existence by the virgin conception (Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4).
 - c. The term refers to Christ's humanity (Romans 5:10), or sometimes to the union of deity and humanity (Matthew 26:64; Hebrews 1:8-9).
 - d. It is never used in reference to deity alone, never used apart from the humanity of Christ.
 - e. Conclusion: the term refers to God's manifestation in flesh.
3. "God the Son" is a nonbiblical phrase.
4. Son of God.
 - a. The title refers to Christ's being literally begotten by God, not a human father.
 - b. It also refers to Christ's being God in flesh. "Son of" means "having the nature or character of." As the unique Son of God, Jesus bore the very nature, or perfect likeness, of God (John 5:17-18; 10:33). This means He was God, for no one else can be perfectly like God or equal to Him. (See Isaiah 46:5, 9.)
5. Son of man.
 - a. The title refers to Christ as a perfect or archetypical human.
 - b. It is also a Messianic allusion.
6. The terms Word and Son are related but not equivalent.
 - a. The Word is the eternal God that was manifested in the Son.
 - b. The Son is the humanity; this term is limited to the Incarnation.

D. The Begotten Son Versus the "Eternal Son"

1. "Eternal Son" is a nonbiblical phrase.

2. The beginning of the Son was at the Incarnation (Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 1:5).
3. The ending of Sonship role will occur after the last judgment (I Corinthians 15:23-28; Ephesians 5:27).
 - a. There will be no more need for redemption or mediation.
 - b. Christ's glorified humanity will exist forever (Revelation 22:3-4).

E. Purposes for the Son

1. To provide salvation for fallen humanity, as the sacrificial lamb (propitiation), substitute, kinsman redeemer, reconciler, mediator, high priest, advocate, second Adam, and example of righteousness.
 - a. To put away sin.
 - b. To destroy the works of the devil.
 - c. To prepare a church for His second coming.
2. To reveal the Father, serving as apostle and prophet.
3. To establish the Messianic kingdom on earth.
4. To judge the world.

F. Creation by the Son (Colossians 1:13-19; Hebrews 1:2)

1. The One who later became the Son created the world.
2. God created the world with the Son in view (depending upon the Son, "through" the Son).
 - a. God knew that humans would sin.
 - b. God also knew that redemption would be provided through the Son, and therefore His original purpose in creation would be fulfilled through the Son (I Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8).
3. Though God did not take on the humanity until the fullness of time, He acted upon it from before creation.

G. Jesus as the Firstborn or First-begotten (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 1:6)

1. He is the only person literally begotten by God.
2. He was first in the plan of God. (See F-2.)
3. He was the first person to conquer sin.
4. He was the first person to conquer death.
5. He is preeminent (like a firstborn son), the head of the church, the head of the human spiritual family.

H. Conclusion about the Son of God

1. The title of Son always has reference to Christ's humanity, to the Incarnation.
2. It always has reference to time.
3. As God, Jesus had all power and knowledge; but as the Son (in His humanity), He was limited in power and knowledge.

Scripture Memorization: Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4

Definition: Son

Further Reference: David Bernard, "Oneness Christology," in *Symposium on Oneness Pentecostalism 1986* (Hazelwood, Mo.: United Pentecostal Church International, 1986); David Bernard, "Jesus Christ," in *Doctrines of the Bible* (Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, 1990).

Questions

1. Explain the meaning and significance of the words *Jesus* and *Christ*.
2. Explain what it means to say Jesus Christ has a dual nature.
3. Give three biblical examples of the dual nature of Jesus Christ.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
4. How does this dual nature help us to resolve questions about the Godhead?
5. There are two broad views of the nature of Jesus Christ that can be considered false. Each general concept is stated below with various associated false doctrines. Give a brief explanation of each specific doctrine.
 - a. Jesus Christ had only one nature.
 - i. Ebionitism (also Unitarianism)
 - ii. Docetism (Gnostic doctrine)

- b. Jesus Christ had a dual nature, but either was not fully God from His birth or, in the view of some, not fully man.
 - i. Cerinthianism (Gnostic doctrine)
 - ii. Adoptionism
 - iii. Arianism
 - iv. Subordinationism
- 6. a. Why was the Nestorian doctrine considered to be heretical?
 - b. What was Nestorius's chief concern in his differentiation of two natures in Christ?
- 7. The truth concerning the dual nature of Jesus Christ probably lies between the various historical views discussed. With our finite minds, we can only make a distinction and not a separation of the two natures that were perfectly blended in Him. Jesus Christ had at once a complete human nature and the fullness of God dwelling in Him. Yet Jesus Christ differed from the born-again Christian. Explain two ways in which Jesus differed from the Spirit-filled, born-again human.
 - a.
 - b.

8. Explain how the complete human nature of Jesus differed from that of any other human.

9. Apart from having a human body, Jesus had a human will, spirit, and soul. Cite one verse that demonstrates each quality.
 - a. Human will
 - b. Human spirit
 - c. Human soul

10. Why is the complete humanity of Jesus important to the concept of redemption and atonement?
 11. a. Because Jesus had a complete human nature, He theoretically had the capacity to sin. Therefore, some have asked if Jesus could sin. Why is this a misleading question?
 - b. Why could not Jesus, viewed as the union of deity and humanity, sin?
 - c. How could one respond to speculation about Jesus committing sin after rebelling against divine leadership?

12. a. If Jesus could not sin, does this make His temptation meaningless?
 - b. Why, then, did Satan tempt Jesus?

13. What are two ways in which the title *Son of God* is applied to Jesus?
 - a.
 - b.
14. Why is the term “God the Son” unscriptural? Give two reasons.
 - a.
 - b.
15. Cite four verses of Scripture to demonstrate that the term *Son of God* always includes reference to the humanity of Jesus, and state the point of each verse.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
16. Why cannot we use the phrase “God the Son” in describing the death of Jesus?
17. The title of Son does not always refer to humanity alone but to deity and humanity together as they exist in the one person of Christ. Cite two verses to demonstrate this fact and explain the point of each.

- a.
 - b.
18. a. What is the significance of the title *Son of God*?
- b. In what sense is Jesus the Son of God as no other being is or can be?
19. a. The title *son of man* can refer to mankind in general or any man in particular. What is its unique usage in Psalm 80:17 and Daniel 7:13?
- b. How did Jesus apply this title to Himself?
20. Distinguish between the *Son* and the *Word* in Bible usage.
21. Why is the phrase “eternal Son” never correct?
22. What does the biblical term *begotten* indicate as applied to Jesus?
23. Explain the significance of Galatians 4:4 and Hebrews 1:5-6.

24. Do all trinitarian theologians accept the doctrine of the “eternal Son”?
25. What is the central reason for the Sonship?
26. In what sense does the Sonship come to an end?
27. Cite two scriptural passages which indicate that the Sonship will end.
 - a.
 - b.
28.
 - a. If the role of the Son ends, what will become of the resurrected and glorified body of Christ?
 - b. Cite two passages of Scripture to support this view.
29. The Son fulfilled many roles in salvation. Briefly explain the importance of each role and cite a relevant passage of Scripture that describes it.
 - a. Sacrifice (propitiation)
 - b. Substitute
 - c. Kinsman redeemer
 - d. Reconciler

- e. Mediator
 - f. High priest
 - g. Advocate
 - h. Example of righteousness
30. Other roles are fulfilled by Jesus as the Son. Briefly explain these roles and cite a verse of Scripture in support.
- a. Apostle
 - b. Prophet
 - c. Revealer of God's nature
 - d. King
 - e. Judge
31. After reviewing the roles of the Son, what can we say about the assertion that the Son existed from all eternity?
32. Hebrews 1:2, Colossians 1:13-17, and Ephesians 3:9 refer to creation "by the Son." As the Son did not exist at creation except as the Word in the mind of God, how then did the Son participate in creation?

33. List five ways in which Jesus is the firstborn or first-begotten.
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
34. How can we explain Hebrews 1:8-9 and its reference to the Son?

VI

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

A. Father

1. The Father is God in parental relationship to humanity.
2. God is the Father of all creation (Deuteronomy 32:6; Malachi 2:10; Hebrews 12:9).
3. He is the Father of born-again believers (Romans 8:15).
4. He is the Father of the Son (Hebrews 1:5).
5. The Father is revealed in Jesus' name (John 5:43; 17:6, 26; Hebrews 1:4; 2:12).

B. Son

1. The Son is God in the flesh. (See V.)
2. The name of the Son is Jesus (Matthew 1:21).
3. We do not say the Father *is* the Son, but the Father is *in* the Son (John 14:10).

C. Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit)

1. The Holy Spirit is God in spiritual action, especially action that only a Spirit can do (Genesis 1:2; Acts 1:4-5).
2. Holiness is the basis of God's moral nature; God is the "Holy One."

3. Spirituality is the basis of God's nonmoral nature; "God is a Spirit."
4. Thus the Holy Spirit is God Himself (Acts 5:3-4; I Corinthians 3:16 with 6:19).
5. The Holy Spirit comes in Jesus' name (John 14:26).

D. The Father Is the Holy Ghost

1. The Father is the only true God (John 17:3), and God is the Holy Spirit.
2. The Father of Jesus is the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35).
3. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, of Jehovah (Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 40:13; Joel 2:27-29).
4. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father (Matthew 10:20).
5. Scripture attributes unique acts both to the Father and to the Holy Spirit: raising Jesus, raising the dead, adopting believers, indwelling believers, comforting, sanctifying, inspiring, giving words in persecution.

E. The Deity of Jesus Is the Father (See IV-F)

F. The Deity of Jesus Is the Holy Ghost

1. The Lord is the Spirit (II Corinthians 3:17).
2. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son, of Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19).
3. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the resurrected Christ (John 14:16-18; 16:7). (See also Matthew 18:20; 28:20; Colossians 1:27).
4. Scripture attributes unique acts both to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit: moving on prophets, raising believers, raising Christ's body, indwelling believers, sanctifying, being the Paraclete (Comforter/Advocate), being the intercessor, giving words in persecution.

G. Threefold References

1. Ephesians 3:14-17 identifies the Holy Spirit as the Father's Spirit and also as Christ.
2. Matthew 28:19 speaks of the one name that fully reveals God in His redemptive roles, which is Jesus.
 - a. One supreme name was to be revealed (Isaiah 52:6; Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 22:3-4).
 - b. *Name* in Matthew 28:19 is singular.
 - c. The name of Jesus reveals Father, Son, Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:21; John 5:43; 14:26).
 - d. The apostles fulfilled this command by baptizing in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; I Corinthians 1:13).
 - e. They orally invoked the name of Jesus at baptism (Acts 22:16; James 2:7). (See also Acts 3:6; 4:10.)
 - f. The name of Jesus is prominent in the other great commission accounts (Mark 16:17; Luke 24:47).
 - g. The name of Jesus is the only name given for remission of sins, and thus it should be used in baptism, which is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 4:12; 10:43).
 - h. In the context of Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus is the central figure. Because He had all power and authority, He commanded His followers to make disciples unto Him and baptize them in His name.
3. I John 5:7.
 - a. This verse identifies three heavenly modes of revelation: Father, Word, Spirit.
 - b. A man's word and spirit are not different persons from him, but different ways by which he is known.
 - c. "These three *are* one" speaks of identity, not mere unity or agreement. (Contrast with verse 8.)

- d. Trinitarian scholars usually say this verse was not part of the original text of Scripture.

H. Conclusion

1. Three roles were necessary for the plan of salvation.
 - a. Son: the sinless Man necessary for the Atonement.
 - b. Father: God begetting and relating to the Son.
 - c. Holy Spirit: God working in human lives to regenerate, sanctify, and empower.
2. The terms *Father*, *Son*, *Spirit* refer to aspects of God's redemptive revelation, roles, manifestations, modes of activity, titles, functions, offices, or relationships of the one God to humanity.
3. God is not defined by, or limited to, an essential threeness; He is simply one. Example: One man can have three significant functions or relationships—such as administrator, teacher, and counsellor—and yet be one person in every sense.
4. God is not three persons, nor are there three Gods. God does not have three centers of consciousness, personalities, wills, minds, or bodies.

Scripture Memorization: Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 3:17

Definition: Father, Holy Ghost

Questions

1. “God the Father” is a biblical phrase and refers to God Himself. What does the title indicate about God?
2. In what ways does God reveal Himself as Father?
3. Cite two verses which teach that Jesus is the Father incarnate.
4. Psalm 22:22 prophesied that the Messiah would declare the name of the LORD. Cite two New Testament verses which show that Jesus is the name by which the Father is revealed.
5. Why do we not say that the Father is the Son, if Jesus is the Father? What distinction is important here?
6. How is the phrase “Holy Spirit” related to God? Use scriptural evidence to support your view.
7. What particular aspect of God does the title of Holy Spirit emphasize?
8. How is the name of Jesus associated with the Holy Spirit?

9. How do we know that the titles of Father and Holy Spirit describe the same being? Cite Scripture to support your answer.
10. a. I Corinthians 12:11 and Ephesians 4:4 attest that there is one Spirit. How does Joel 2:27 show that the one Spirit is Jehovah?
- b. How does Matthew 10:20 demonstrate that the Father is the Holy Spirit?
11. What verse plainly establishes that as to His deity Jesus is the Holy Spirit?
12. We can see that the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit when we compare the activities attributed to each. List below verses that attribute each activity or role both to Christ and to the Holy Spirit.
- | <i>Christ</i> | <i>Holy Spirit</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| a. Resurrection | |
| b. Comforter | |
| c. Sanctification | |
| d. Abiding presence | |
| e. Intercessor | |
13. What is the significance of the singular form “in the name” as applied to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in Matthew 28:19?

14. How was the command of Matthew 28:19 applied, according to the baptismal accounts in Acts?
15. Some claim that the baptismal references in Acts do not really mean that the name of Jesus was orally invoked at baptism. How does Acts 22:16 relate to this view?
16. a. How did the apostles signify the power and authority of Jesus in prayer for healing?
 - b. What significance does this have for understanding the baptismal formula of the early church?
17. What is the historical evidence concerning the original Christian baptismal formula?
18. Who is the central figure of power and authority in Matthew 28:18-20?
19. How do the great commission accounts of Luke and Mark bear on the interpretation of Matthew 28:19?
20. What verse supports the great commission accounts in declaring that Jesus is the only saving name?

21. What problem do we encounter if the word *one* in I John 5:7 merely refers to unity “in” the God-head?

22. What is the significance of the use of the term *Word* rather than the term *Son* in I John 5:7?

23. What do trinitarian scholars usually conclude about the I John 5:7 text?

24. a. Is God limited to three manifestations, roles, or titles?

b. What name can we use to address Him in the totality of His character, attributes, and self-revelation?

VII

Old Testament Explanations

A. The Plural Form of *Elohim*

1. The plural form represents greatness, intensity, or majesty in Hebrew, and it is so used in relation to the one God. Examples: the singular manifestation to Jacob; Jesus (Genesis 32:30; Psalm 45:6; Zechariah 12:8-10; 14:5).
2. Even in other biblical contexts, this word often refers to a singular being. Examples: the golden calf, singular pagan gods (Exodus 32:4; Judges 8:33; 11:24).

B. “Let Us Make Man” (Genesis 1:26)

1. The Creator is absolutely singular (Genesis 1:27; Isaiah 37:16; 44:24).
2. The image creature, man, is one person in every sense, and in this way he reflects the likeness of his Creator.
3. Possible explanations of the plural pronoun.
 - a. God counselled with His own will (Ephesians 1:11).
 - b. It is a majestic or literary plural (Daniel 2:36; Ezra 4:18; 7:23-24).
 - c. God informed angels of His plan (I Kings

22:19-22; Job 38:4-7).

- d. It simply agrees with the plural form of Elohim.
- e. It is a prophetic reference to the Son. (See V-F)

C. Other Plural Pronouns (Genesis 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8)

1. God was addressing the angels.
2. Isaiah 6:8 could refer to the righteous.

D. “One” (*Echad*) in Deuteronomy 6:4

1. Does it mean numerical oneness or unity?
2. The context indicates numerical oneness, since the passage seeks to refute polytheism. If it only means unity, then it does not exclude polytheism.
3. *Echad* means numerical oneness in many scriptural passages. Examples: Joshua 12:9-24; Ezekiel 33:24.

E. Theophanies

1. All theophanies can be explained by the existence of one omnipotent, omnipresent God.
2. The additional “men” who appeared to Abraham were angels.
3. The angel of the LORD may sometimes be a theophany; at other times it is an angel clearly distinguished from God but who acts as God’s messenger or agent.

F. References to the Son and the Messiah
All are prophetic.

G. The Word of God

God’s Word is His expression, not a distinct person from Him (Psalm 107:20; Isaiah 55:11).

H. The Wisdom of God

1. Wisdom is an attribute of God, not a distinct person from Him.
2. Proverbs personifies wisdom as a woman (Proverbs 1:20).

I. Threefold Repetitions

1. “Holy, Holy, Holy” (Isaiah 6:3) is used for emphasis, as in Jeremiah 22:29.
2. Repetitions of “God” and “LORD” are easily explained as part of ordinary usage. Examples: a threefold blessing; God speaking of Himself in the third person; use of the twofold name “LORD God.”

J. The Spirit of God

1. The Spirit is God in spiritual essence, spiritual action, and work among humans.
2. The Spirit is not a distinct person, just as a man and his spirit are not distinct persons.

K. The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man (Daniel 7:9-28)

1. The Ancient of Days is Jesus (Revelation 1:12-18).
2. “One like the Son of man” is symbolic of the saints (Daniel 7:13, 18, 22, 26-27).
3. If “one like the Son of man” is Jesus, then it symbolizes His human role.

L. The Fellow of Jehovah (Zechariah 13:7)

The Messiah is not a fellow God, but a man who has perfect fellowship with God.

Questions

1. What is the significance of the fact that the Hebrew word commonly used for God is in a plural form?
2. Some interpret Genesis 1:26 as expressing a plurality in the Godhead, though that view cannot be reconciled with Genesis 1:27 or 2:7. There are several harmonizing explanations of the verse that do not indicate a plurality in the Godhead. Briefly state these explanations.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
3. The Hebrew word for one, *echad*, is used to describe God in Deuteronomy 6:4 and many other verses. Some trinitarians suggest that this means one in unity, not absolutely one in numerical value. What is the most readily apparent problem with their view?
4. When Abraham had an encounter with Jehovah in Genesis 18, he saw three men. Does this event support a trinitarian view? If not, why?

5. What are two ways to explain the “angel of the LORD” passages in a way consistent with one God?
 - a.
 - b.
6. The most complex passages relating to the angel of the LORD are in Zechariah, a book with a Messianic emphasis. Yet the Jews have no problem in reconciling the angel of the LORD with their belief in absolute monotheism. What is the most logical explanation for the angel of the LORD in Zechariah?
7. Do Old Testament references to the Son indicate a duality in the Godhead or prove a preexistent Son? If not, what is the explanation for verses such as Psalm 2:2-7, 45:6-7, and Isaiah 9:6?
8. Do Old Testament references to the “word of God” indicate a second person in the Godhead? Explain.
9. Several verses in Proverbs speak of the wisdom of God in personal terms, and some view this as a distinction of persons in the Godhead. How can these verses be explained in a way that is consistent with the oneness of God?

10. Does the worshipful repetition “holy, holy, holy” indicate praise of a trinity? If not, what is the purpose of the threefold repetition?
11. Do verses such as Numbers 6:24-26, Daniel 9:17, or Hosea 1:7 reveal one person in the Godhead speaking about another or existing alongside one another? Explain.
12. Do Old Testament references to the “Spirit of the LORD” or even the “LORD God and His Spirit” (Isaiah 48:16) demonstrate a plurality in the Godhead? Explain.
13. Trinitarians often interpret Daniel’s vision in Daniel 7:9-28 as a vision of God the Father and God the Son. What interpretation is more consistent with the language of the passage, its context, and related verses? Specifically address the description of the Ancient of Days and the Son of man.
14. Does Zechariah 13:7 describe God the Father and another co-equal person in the Godhead? Explain.

VIII

New Testament Explanations: The Gospels

A. Four Aids to Understanding

1. Dual references speak of the humanity and deity of Jesus.
2. Jesus sometimes spoke and acted from His divine self-consciousness and sometimes from His human self-consciousness.
3. Other plural references speak of a plurality of attributes, redemptive roles, manifestations, modes of activity, relationships to humanity, or aspects of God's self-revelation.
4. The New Testament writers and readers had no concept of the trinity, for that doctrine and the terms necessary to define it had not yet been invented. Some passages may appear difficult because of centuries of trinitarian interpretation.

B. The Baptism of Christ

1. The voice and dove do not require distinct persons; one omnipresent, omnipotent God can simultaneously manifest Himself in various ways.
2. The strictly monotheistic onlookers did not indicate

that they received a dramatic new revelation of plurality in God.

3. The dove was a symbol of anointing and a sign for John the Baptist (John 1:32-34).
4. The voice was a sign for the people (John 12:28-30).
5. The purpose was the authoritative anointing of Jesus as the Messiah, for the inauguration of His ministry.
6. The heavenly voice on two other occasions can be similarly explained as a miraculous sign.

C. The Prayers of Christ

1. They were prayers from an authentic human life. Since Jesus was truly human and set a perfect example for us, He prayed.
2. Prayer relates to humanity only, for God has no need to pray.
3. If Jesus prayed as a second divine person, then He was not truly God but was subordinate to the first person, contrary to the trinitarian doctrine of co-equality.
4. We do not say Jesus prayed to Himself; that phrase incorrectly implies that He had a human nature only, like us. Rather, as a true man, Jesus prayed to God, and at the same time God was truly manifested in Him.

D. "My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46)

1. The Spirit of God did not actually depart from the body of Jesus until His death (John 10:30; 16:32).
2. Jesus expressed genuine human emotion as He experienced the feeling of separation from God—the separation that unrepentant sinners will undergo at the last judgment.
3. The Spirit of God still dwelt in Christ but did not

protect His humanity from the full brunt of the human suffering.

4. Jesus quoted David's words in Psalm 22:1. David was not actually forsaken, but he felt forsaken.

E. Communication between Divine Persons?

1. This argument leads to three centers of consciousness in the Godhead, which is tritheism.
2. Communication of knowledge between divine persons?
 - a. Matthew 11:27: No one can understand the Incarnation except by divine revelation, and the only way to know God in His fullness is through Jesus Christ.
 - b. John 16:13: Spirit-filled believers do not have independent authority; the Spirit in them will speak only what is consistent with the mind and will of God.
 - c. Romans 8:26-27: The God who motivates our prayers and helps us pray also hears and answers our prayers. He works in harmony with Himself to prompt prayers that are in accordance with His own will.
 - d. I Corinthians 2:10-11: God reveals things to us by His Spirit in our lives, conveying truths from His mind to ours. But God and His Spirit are not two persons any more than a man and his spirit are.
 - e. Conclusion: These verses describe a conceptual (not an essential) distinction between God as viewed in His sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipresence and God incarnate or God as He works in human hearts.
3. Love between divine persons?
 - a. God is love, but that fact does not require multiple, eternal persons. For example, He loved us before creation.

- b. Love between Father and Son (John 3:35; 14:31; 17:24): God loved the man Christ as He loves all men, and the man Christ loved God as all men should.
 - c. The Holy Spirit is never mentioned as part of the supposed love relationship.
4. Conversations between divine persons?
- a. Some proposed examples are prophetic utterances regarding the future Incarnation. Examples: Psalm 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-9.
 - b. Others describe Christ as a genuine man praying to God.
 - c. The voice from heaven was a sign for the people (John 12:30).
 - d. The Holy Spirit is never part of these supposed conversations.

F. The Preexistence of Jesus

1. As God (the Spirit, Jehovah) Jesus preexisted His earthly life, but not as a man (the Son) (John 8:58).
2. Before the Incarnation, the Son only existed conceptually as the predestined plan in the mind of God (John 17:5; I Peter 1:19-20). (See V-C.)
 - a. The glory that He had with the Father before creation and asked to receive related to His crucifixion and resurrection.
 - b. He spoke of giving this glory to His disciples (John 17:22), but God does not share divine glory.
 - c. Jesus always had His glory as God and did not need anyone to give it back to Him.
3. Jesus Christ “came forth from the Father” (John 16:28).
 - a. His origin was divine, not human: He was begotten by God, not a man, in a virgin’s womb.
 - b. The deity in the divine-human Christ was the

Father: the Father united Himself with humanity to bring Christ into existence.

4. Jesus said He came from heaven (John 6:38, 62).
 - a. These verses describe the Incarnation: God came to earth as a man (as Jesus, as the Son).
 - b. “Son of man” in John 6:62 is equivalent to “I.”

G. The Son Was Sent from the Father

1. The word *sent* in John 3:17; 5:30 does not imply preexistence of the Son.
 - a. John the Baptist was “sent,” but he did not pre-exist (John 1:6).
 - b. The Son was “sent” by being made of a woman (Galatians 4:4).
2. The word *sent* alludes to purpose. The Son was born and appointed for a special purpose or mission.

H. Other Distinctions between Father and Son

1. Many verses distinguish Father and Son in power, greatness, and knowledge (Mark 13:32; John 5:19; 6:38; 14:28).
2. If they show two divine persons, then the Son is subordinate or inferior to the Father, contrary to the trinitarian doctrine of co-equality.
3. Actually, these verses relate to the true humanity of Jesus. In His humanity, or Sonship role, He was limited; as to His deity He was not.
4. God did not lose His omnipotence, omnipresence, or omniscience in the Incarnation. While God was fully revealed in Christ, the Spirit of Christ—the Father—was still omnipresent.
 - a. Jesus was in heaven and on earth at the same time (John 3:13).
 - b. God still communicated and manifested His presence (“face”) in some way to the angels in heaven (Matthew 18:10).

I. Other Plural Usage

1. The “with” passages (John 1:1-2; I John 1:2).
 - a. The meaning is “pertaining to, belonging to, within.”
 - b. God’s self-expression, God’s plan for the Incarnation, and eternal life were “with” God in the sense of pertaining to Him and being His very essence, not as a distinct person.
2. The two witnesses (John 8:16-18).
 - a. The Spirit of God and the man Christ both testified that Jesus was God in the flesh.
 - b. Examples: God spoke miraculously from heaven; as a man, Christ testified through human words and deeds.
3. Use of plural words for Father and Son: “both, also, we, not alone, with” (John 8:19, 29; 15:23-24; 16:32; I John 2:23; II John 9).
 - a. Jesus was not just a man, but He was God also.
 - b. Jesus was not alone; He had the Spirit of God within Him.
 - c. Jesus was more than the invisible Father. He was both Father and Son, Spirit and flesh.
 - d. Since Jesus is the Father incarnate, when we see, know, believe, and confess Him we not only see, know, believe, and confess the Son but also the Father.
4. Union with both Father and Son (John 14:23; 17:21-22).
 - a. The context speaks of union, not bodily entrance of two divine spirits.
 - b. We are united with God through the man Christ and His atonement.
 - c. We have union with God as the man Christ had.
 - d. Qualities of both roles—Father and Son—are available to us. Example: the power of God; the obedience, submission, and humility of the Son.

- e. The way we are so united is by the indwelling of one Spirit (not three)—the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of Christ.
- f. We have one relationship with one Spirit, one personality; we cannot identify three relationships or three personalities.

J. “Another Comforter” (John 14:16-18)

1. The Comforter is not another person, but someone the disciples already knew who already dwelled “with” them.
2. The difference would be one of form or relationship only. The Comforter would soon be “in” them.
3. In other words, Jesus would come back to them in Spirit. (See Matthew 28:20; John 16:7; Ephesians 3:16-17.)
4. In other words, the “other” Comforter is Christ in Spirit rather than in flesh, dwelling within believers rather than physically accompanying them.

K. Christ’s Oneness with the Father

1. In His humanity, Jesus was one with the Father in the sense of unity of purpose, mind, and will (John 17:21-22).
2. In this sense Christians can be one with God and each other.
3. But Jesus is also one with the Father in the sense of deity and identity (John 10:30-33; 14:9). Christians are not one with God in this sense.

Questions

1. List four important aids to understanding when we study the doctrine of God in the Gospels.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
2. In discussing the voice and the dove at Christ's baptism, what is important to remember about the nature of God?
3. List three purposes served by the baptism of Jesus.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
4. John 1:32-34 states that the appearance of the dove at Christ's baptism was for the benefit of John the Baptist. What did it signify to him?
5. In studying Christ's baptism, what is the significance of the following events?
 - a. The appearance of the dove.

- b. The voice from heaven.
6. On two other occasions a voice from heaven spoke concerning Christ. Name these occasions and the apparent purpose of each occurrence.
- a.
 - b.
7. a. Do the prayers of Christ indicate a distinction of persons, as if “God the Son” were talking to God the Father? If not, what do they indicate?
- b. If such prayers make a distinction between the divine nature of Jesus and the Father, what problem is readily apparent?
8. How, then, can we explain the prayers of Christ?
9. Into what error would we fall if we conclude that Jesus as God prayed to God the Father?
10. a. Does Matthew 27:46 describe an actual separation between Father and Son? Why or why not?
- b. What does Christ’s cry in Matthew 27:46 signify?
11. Some have argued from verses such as Romans 8:26-27 that the Bible describes transfers of knowledge between separate persons in the Godhead. Why is this argument dangerous?

12. a. Many passages of Scripture refer to the existence of Jesus before His human life began. Do these references to preexistence teach that He existed apart from the Father?
 - b. Did the Son preexist the Incarnation? Explain.
13. Verses such as John 3:17 and 5:30 state that the Father sent the Son. Does this mean that Jesus, the Son of God, is a separate person from the Father? Explain.
14. A popular argument for the trinity is based on the fact that God is love. Supposedly, before the world was created, God could only be love and show love if God was a plurality of persons who had love for one another. In other words, God's love had to have an object. List three objections to this reasoning.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
15. Why is it a mistake to found a belief in the trinity on verses such as I John 5:19, which distinguish between the Father and Son in power, greatness, and knowledge?
16. a. When John 1:1 says the Word was *with* God, does it teach two separate persons in the Godhead co-existing alongside one another?

- b. Some say that *God* in John 1:1 means God the Father as the first member of a trinity and as a distinct person from the Word. What problem does this understanding of the word *God* encounter?
-
- 17. In John 8:16-18, Jesus said there were two witnesses to Him in His messianic role, the Father and Himself. Does this statement imply a separation of persons in the Godhead? Explain.

 - 18. John 16:32 says Jesus was not alone, but the Father was *with* Him. Explain.

 - 19. If John 9 says that someone who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. What is the doctrine of Christ?

 - 20. How are believers united with both the Father and the Son?

 - 21. Do scriptural passages such as John 12:28-30 describe conversations between persons in the Godhead? Explain.

 - 22. In John 14:16 Jesus promised to send another Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Does this verse demonstrate that another person exists in the Godhead? Explain.

23. Jesus mentioned His oneness with the Father in John 17:21-22.

- a. How was Christ's oneness with God similar to the oneness of believers with God?

- b. How was Christ's oneness with God different from the oneness of believers with God?

IX

New Testament Explanations: Acts to Revelation

A. The Right Hand of God

1. Since God is an invisible Spirit, He does not have a physical right hand apart from the Incarnation.
2. The phrase is symbolic or figurative. Examples: Psalm 16:8; 77:10; 98:1; 109:31; Isaiah 48:13; Luke 11:20.
3. It refers to strength, power, authority, preeminence, victory, exaltation, and salvation. Examples: Exodus 15:6; Psalm 98:1; 110:1; Matthew 26:64; Ephesians 1:20-22; I Peter 3:22.
4. The visible Christ has been exalted and invested with all the glory, power, and authority of the invisible God.
5. The phrase also speaks of Christ's present mediatorial role (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 8:1).
6. The words "sat down" indicate the finality of Christ's atoning work (Mark 16:19; Hebrews 1:3; 10:11-13).
7. Stephen did not see two divine persons; he saw the exalted Christ radiating all the glory of God, and he called upon Christ alone.

- B. Twofold References in the Epistles (Romans 1:7, etc.)
1. The greetings do not teach trinitarianism. If they do
 - a. Why is the Holy Ghost never mentioned?
 - b. Some passages could teach four persons (Colossians 2:2; 3:17).
 2. They emphasize the need to accept God in two roles. Our salvation is based not only upon the identity of God as Father and Creator, but also His incarnation as Jesus Christ.
 3. The Greek word for “and” (*kai*) does not require two persons. (See chart, OG, pp. 209-10.)
 - a. Sometimes *kai* means “even” or “which is” (II Corinthians 1:2).
 - b. Granville Sharp’s rule applies in some instances: If two nouns of the same number, gender, and case are connected by *kai* and if the first noun has the definite article but the second does not, then both nouns refer to the same thing. Examples: Colossians 2:2; II Thessalonians 1:12; Titus 2:13; II Peter 1:1.
 4. The phrase “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” indicates our new covenant relationship with God through Christ, similar to the phrase “God of Abraham” under the old covenant.
- C. The “Apostolic Benediction” (II Corinthians 13:14)
1. This verse speaks of three gifts or works of God, using names or titles of God most closely associated with each.
 2. Love is the eternal nature of God.
 3. Grace comes specifically through the Atonement.
 4. Our communion with God and other saints is by the Spirit.
 5. Trinitarians violate their own theory by assuming that “God” refers only to one of three divine persons (the Father). Is this person somehow more God than the other two?

D. Other Threefold References

1. Ephesians 4:4-6: the one God is Spirit and the Lord of all.
 - a. Our faith and baptism are specifically conditioned upon the atoning work of the Lord Jesus.
 - b. The one Spirit of God baptizes us into the body and dwells in us.
2. Hebrews 9:14: By the power of His indwelling Spirit, Christ offered His human life as a sacrifice to meet the requirements of God's law.
3. I Peter 1:2: Foreknowledge is part of God's nature before the Incarnation; the blood was shed as a result of the Incarnation; and sanctification is a spiritual work of God.
4. I Peter 3:18: Christ died as a man, but was raised by the power of His indwelling Spirit in order to reconcile humanity to God.
5. Jude 20-21: Love is part of God's eternal nature; mercy comes through the Atonement; and prayer is a spiritual work.

E. The Fullness of God

1. Jesus is God incarnate; in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9).
2. A study of the context shows that Colossians 1-2 strongly affirms the absolute deity of Jesus Christ. (See chart, OG, p. 217.)
3. We can have the fullness of God in us by receiving the Spirit of Jesus (Ephesians 3:19).
4. We are not deified, but we have access to God's fullness through Jesus. Only Jesus is the fullness of God by identity.

F. The Humiliation of Christ (Philippians 2:6-8)

1. "Being in the form of God" means "being in very nature God" (NIV). Jesus was the one true God incarnate.

2. "Thought it not robbery to be equal with God" means "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped" (NIV).
 - a. The Spirit of Christ was the same as (identical to) God.
 - b. Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, was equal to God in His preincarnate state. The divine-human person was equal in power and authority to the unmanifested, unrevealed Spirit.
 - c. Nevertheless, Jesus did not insist on godly prerogatives of visible glory, honor, majesty, and exaltation.
3. "Made himself of no reputation" means "made himself nothing" (NIV). In His life and ministry Jesus was humble and willingly submitted to human experiences, humiliation, and death.
4. Jesus did not relinquish any divine attributes, contrary to what many trinitarians teach.
 - a. God cannot divest Himself of His attributes and nature.
 - b. Jesus would not have been God, merely a demigod, as in Arianism.

G. The Lamb in Revelation 5

1. The vision of the Lamb is symbolic; we will not see an actual lamb in heaven, slain, with seven eyes and horns.
2. The Lamb represents the Atonement—Jesus in His human, sacrificial role.
3. The Lamb relates to Christ's humanity only, for only humanity can die, not deity.
4. The Lamb actually came from the center of the throne, representing the Incarnation (Revelation 5:6; 7:17; 22:3-4).
5. The One on the throne represents all the Deity, which Jesus embodies.
6. Jesus is the One on the throne. (See IV-H.)

7. Revelation 3:5 depicts Christ's mediatorial role.
 - a. We are declared righteous in the presence of God by Christ's atonement.
 - b. In the judgment we will appear before one person—Jesus—not two (John 5:22; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11).
8. Revelation 3:21 explains that we will reign with Jesus in His Messianic kingdom.
 - a. We will rule with Him as kings and priests (Revelation 1:6), but He will not share His divine glory.
 - b. There is only one throne of deity, representing sovereignty, and Jesus alone is on it. (See IV-H.)

H. Why Did God Allow "Confusing" Verses?

1. They are understandable when studied in their original background and context, which is non-trinitarian.
2. God uses difficult sayings to winnow out those who do not hunger and search for truth but who are satisfied with human traditions (Matthew 13:13-15; John 6:41, 51-60, 66).

I. Conclusion

1. The supposed trinitarian proof texts can be explained in a nontrinitarian way to harmonize with the rest of Scripture.
2. Some are actually strong Oneness texts.
3. Trinitarian use of these passages leads to further errors, such as Arianism, subordinationism, binitarianism, and tritheism.

Questions

1. a. Several New Testament passages tell us that Jesus is at the “right hand of God.” In general, what kind of expression is this?
 - b. What does this phrase specifically signify?
 - c. Cite a passage or verse from each Testament to illustrate your answer.
 - d. What is the significance of the past tense in the few passages that say Jesus “sat down” at God’s right hand?
2. a. Some contend that the greetings in the Epistles indicate a trinity of persons in the Godhead. Cite two serious problems with this interpretation.
 - b. If these passages do not teach a plurality of persons in the Godhead, how can we best understand them?
3. a. What is the common alternate translation of the Greek word *kai* that is used in the greetings of the Epistles?

- b. If *kai* does not indicate a distinction of persons in God, what does it denote?
 - c. In studying various passage that use the word *kai*, it is clear that Jesus is sometimes identified as whom?
4. II Corinthians 13:14 is often called the “apostolic benediction” and interpreted as a reference to a trinity. How can we understand the three designations of that verse?
5. Each of the following passages has threefold references. Give a brief explanation of each passage.
- a. Ephesians 3:14-17
 - b. Ephesians 4:4-6
 - c. Hebrews 9:14
 - d. I Peter 3:18
 - e. I Peter 1:2
 - f. Jude 20-21

- g. Revelation 1:4-5.
- h. In general, what is the best way to understand these plural references?
6. According to Colossians 2:1-9, what is the mystery of God? Is it a trinitarian Godhead?
7. Does Ephesians 3:19 teach that Christians can be filled with the fullness of God in the same manner as the man Christ? If not, how is a Christian different from the man Christ if both have the fullness of the deity resident in them?
8. Though Colossians was written to oppose early Gnostic beliefs, and not trinitarianism, why is the doctrine of this book a strong refutation of trinitarianism?
9. Some trinitarians believe that Philippians 2:6-8 describes two coequal members of the Godhead, with God the Son voluntarily emptying Himself of many of His attributes as God in the Incarnation. What is another interpretation, consistent with the Oneness view?

10. Does Revelation 1:1 indicate a distinction between two persons in God? Explain.
11. What do the references to the seven Spirits of God, found in Revelation, indicate?
12.
 - a. Revelation 5 describes One on the throne and a Lamb who takes the book from the One seated. Explain this passage in a way consistent with Oneness.
 - b. Revelation 5 mentions the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. What do these symbols represent?
13. What two explanations can be offered for verses that seem to confuse or obscure Oneness doctrine, such as Matthew 28:19?

X

Oneness Believers in Church History

A. Overview

1. The Oneness doctrine is based on Scripture, not history, tradition, or creeds.
2. We can draw three historical conclusions.
 - a. The early post-apostolic church was apparently Oneness; it certainly was not trinitarian.
 - b. Trinitarianism emerged in the latter part of the second century but did not become the dominant belief until around A.D. 300 and was not universally established until around 400.
 - c. Oneness beliefs continued to appear throughout subsequent history.
3. Historical information about Oneness is sparse and perhaps distorted.
 - a. History was written by doctrinal opponents of Oneness.
 - b. In most cases “heretics” did not leave a written record, or their writings were destroyed.
4. We do not necessarily know or endorse all the teachings of the following people, but it seems that they embraced the essential tenets of the Oneness view of God.

B. The Post-Apostolic Age (Second Century A.D.)

1. Early post-apostolic leaders and writers were Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Hermas (A.D. 90-140).
 - a. They affirmed Old Testament monotheism and the deity and humanity of Jesus. Ignatius repeatedly referred to Jesus as “our God.”
 - b. They did not use distinctly trinitarian terms or ideas, but adhered closely to biblical language.
 - c. Some made reference to baptism in the name of Jesus.
 - d. It appears that they were essentially Oneness.
2. Irenaeus (died c. 200) was an influential theologian.
 - a. He strongly emphasized that Jesus was God incarnate and said that the Logos was the mind of God and the visible manifestation of the Father.
 - b. He perhaps believed in an economic trinity or a trinity of manifestations.
3. Some mid and late second-century references indicate an emerging form of trinitarianism. Example: the *Didache* speaks of threefold baptism (but also of baptism in the name of the Lord).
 - a. Trinitarian readers may misunderstand some of these statements, just as they do the Bible.
 - b. There is a strong possibility of interpolations (additions) by later trinitarian copyists.
 - c. False doctrines had already begun to creep into the church even in apostolic times.

C. Modalistic Monarchianism or Modalism (Third Century A.D.)

1. This movement affirmed the absolute oneness of God and the full deity of Jesus. (See definition, OG, pp. 239-40.)

- a. There is one God (the *monarchia*).
 - b. “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” do not refer to different persons, but to *modes* of activity of the one God.
 - c. Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead incarnate.
2. It was apparently the dominant Christian belief for much of the third century.
 3. Prominent teachers were Noetus, Praxeas, and Sabellius.

D. Fourth Century to the Present

1. Oneness beliefs possibly existed among various “heretical” groups from the fourth century through the Middle Ages.
2. During the Reformation, Michael Servetus (1511-53) taught a form of Oneness and was burned at the stake by John Calvin.
3. Emmanuel Swedenborg (1698-1772) taught a form of Oneness, but some of his other doctrines were extreme.
4. A U.S. Presbyterian minister named John Miller wrote a book in 1876 that taught Oneness.
5. More examples are being uncovered by current research, and no doubt many others are yet unknown to us. (See the following chart.)
6. The modern Oneness Pentecostal movement dates to 1913-14.
 - a. There are millions of adherents today.
 - b. There are a number of Oneness organizations. (See OG, pp. 245.)

Definition: Modalism (modalistic monarchianism)

Oneness Believers in History

Note: We do not necessarily know about or endorse all the doctrines of the following people (after the apostles), but it appears that they affirmed the absolute oneness of God and the full deity of Jesus Christ and that they were nontrinitarian.

Century

1st	Apostolic church
2nd	Post-apostolic fathers, including Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp
3rd	The modalists, including Noetus, Praxeas, Epigonus, Cleomenes, Sabellius Probably the Roman bishops Callistus and Zephyrinus “The majority of believers” in Tertullian’s day
4th	Marcellus of Ancyra, Photinus, Commodian, Priscillian, Sabellians
5th-15th	Sabellians, Priscillianists, possibly other “heretics”

- 16th Michael Servetus, many Antitrinitarians,
 some Anabaptists
- 17th-18th Some English Baptists, William Penn and
 some Quakers, Emmanuel Swedenborg,
 Isaac Newton, Isaac Watts
- 19th Some New England Congregationalists, John
 Miller, John Clowes
- 20th Oneness Pentecostals, some Sabbatarians,
 some charismatics, some Baptists includ-
 ing Frank Stagg

Questions

1. How did Christian writers of the immediate postapostolic age describe and view the Godhead?

2. There are a few possible references to an emerging trinitarian doctrine in some second-century writings. What are three possible explanations for these apparent references?
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

3. Name three prominent modalist leaders in early church history.

4. Explain what we know about the doctrine of Sabellius.

5. a. Who is the source for much of our information on the modalists?

- b. According to him, how widespread was the Oneness doctrine?

6. Why is not there a written record of the Oneness doctrine through much of church history during the Middle Ages?

7.
 - a. During the Reformation, Michael Servetus objected strongly to the trinitarian doctrine. What was his view of the Godhead?

 - b. How did Servetus view the retention of the trinitarian doctrine by the Protestants?

8. What did a nineteenth-century Presbyterian minister named John Miller conclude about the trinitarian doctrine?

9. Briefly explain the modalist doctrine.

10. How did the modalist definition of the Logos differ from that of the trinitarians?

11. How did the modalists define *Son*?

12. What was a common ancient objection to modalistic monarchianism?

13. How does modalistic monarchianism reaffirm the Old Testament concept of one indivisible God?

XI

Trinitarianism: Definition and Historical Development

A. Definition

1. There is “one God in three persons” (the Trinity).
2. These persons are co-equal, co-eternal, and of co-essence.
3. Their distinguishing characteristics are as follows: the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten (generated), and the Spirit is proceeding (spirated).
4. Each person participates in the work of the others.

B. Problems with Trinitarianism

1. It tends toward tritheism. (See quotations, OG, pp. 258-59.)
2. It tends toward subordinationism, diminishing the deity of Jesus.
3. It uses nonbiblical terms and concepts.
 - a. The Bible never uses the word *trinity*.
 - b. The Bible does not use the word *three* in relation to God, except in I John 5:7 (KJV), which says, “These three are one. “
 - c. The Bible never uses the word *persons* to

describe God.

- d. The Bible (KJV) twice uses the word *person* in relation to God—in Job 13:8, speaking of favoritism, and in Hebrews 1:3, speaking of God’s nature or substance.
- e. The Son is not a second person, but the visible, human image of God’s own “person” (Hebrews 1:3).
- f. Standard Catholic and Protestant reference works acknowledge that the biblical writers did not think or express themselves in trinitarian categories.

C. Pagan Roots and Parallels

1. Trinities were prominent in ancient pagan religions, particularly those of Babylon and Egypt.
2. Trinities are prominent in pagan religions today, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, suggesting the possibility of an ancient pagan source.
3. A philosophic trinity appeared in Plato’s writings and was prominent in Neo-Platonism, which greatly influenced some Christian theologians.

D. The Greek Apologists (A.D. 130-180)

1. The first Christian writers to teach a plurality in God were apologists of the second century who wrote in Greek.
2. The most prominent was Justin Martyr, a converted Greek philosopher.
3. They tried to adapt many Greek philosophical terms and ideas to Christianity in order to win acceptance among pagans.
4. Some of them began to speak of the Logos (the Word in John 1) as a distinct person from the Father, created by Him and subordinate to Him.
5. They did not clearly distinguish the Holy Spirit as a third person; to the extent that they did, he was

seen as subordinate to the Father also.

6. The first mention of a threefold baptismal formula occurred during this time, in the writings of Justin about 150.
7. The apologists were not trinitarians in the later sense, but subordinationistic binitarians.
8. Theophilus used the Greek word for *triad* in 180, but the use is not clearly trinitarian; it is a passing reference to God, His word, and His wisdom.
9. It appears that the majority of believers were still basically Oneness.

E. Early Trinitarianism

1. Tertullian (c. 150-225) is the father of Christian trinitarianism.
 - a. He was the first writer to describe God by the Latin words for *trinity* and *three persons* about 200.
 - b. He taught an economic trinity, or trinity of revelation, that would cease in eternity.
 - c. He believed the Son/Logos (second person) was subordinate to the Father (first person).
 - d. He vigorously opposed the modalists, whom he said had the support of the majority of believers.
2. The meaning of the word *person*.
 - a. Originally, the Latin word for person (*persona*) could mean a role or manifestation, but trinitarians used it to mean an individual being or personality.
 - b. The Greek word for person (*hupostasis* or *hypostasis*) originally meant nature, subsistence, or individualized manifestation, but later both the Latin and Greek words were seen as equivalent, meaning an individual being.
3. Origen (died 254) introduced the doctrine of the

- eternal Son and the eternal generation of the Son.
- a. He attempted to fuse Greek philosophy and Christianity.
 - b. He said the Son was begotten from all eternity and is eternally being begotten.
 - c. He retained a subordination of the Son to the Father in existence or origin, but moved toward co-equality.
4. Hippolytus opposed Noetus in Rome and accused the Roman bishops Callistus and Zephyrinus of modalism.
 5. Novatian was one of the first to emphasize the Holy Spirit as a third person.
 6. Each of these four men were later excommunicated or officially denounced by the organized church for various false doctrines.
 7. By 300 trinitarianism had replaced modalism as the majority belief.
- F. The Council of Nicea (A.D. 325)
1. Athanasius taught that the Son is a distinct person co-equal, co-eternal, and of co-essence with the Father.
 2. Arius taught that the Son is a created divine being subordinate to the Father.
 3. The Arian-Athanasian controversy swept across the Roman Empire and threatened its unity.
 4. Emperor Constantine, who used Christianity to consolidate his power, called a council to resolve the dispute, and he enforced the decision.
 5. The majority of participants at the council were confused but wanted peace.
 6. The result was
 - a. A clear rejection of Arius and endorsement of Athanasius.
 - b. The first official declaration incompatible with modalism or Oneness.

- c. The first official declaration supportive of trinitarianism.
 7. See OG, p. 274, for the original Nicene Creed.
 - a. It teaches the eternal Son.
 - b. It does not clearly teach the Holy Ghost as a third person.
- G. The Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)
1. After Nicea theological, political, and even military struggles continued between Athanasians and Arians. For a time, it seemed that Arianism would prevail, having Emperor Constantius's support.
 2. New controversies arose over the identity of the Holy Ghost.
 3. The Council of Constantinople settled these issues. It affirmed the Council of Nicea, declared the Holy Ghost to be a third co-equal divine person, and added to the Nicene Creed.
 4. The revised creed is the definitive statement of modern trinitarianism, and the council marks its triumph.
 5. A later addition to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, the *filioque* clause, was accepted by the West but not the East.
 - a. Eastern Orthodoxy says the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only.
 - b. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism say the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.
- H. The Athanasian Creed
1. This creed is the most comprehensive trinitarian statement.
 2. It was composed in the West in the 400s or later, not by Athanasius, but possibly by followers of Augustine.

3. See OG, pp. 278-80, for the text of the creed.
4. It asserts that belief in the trinity according to its definition is essential to salvation.

I. The Apostles' Creed

1. This creed is not of apostolic origin.
2. Its earliest form is traced to Rome in the second century.
3. It does not teach trinitarianism, but it uses biblical language. (See OG, p. 280, for the original text.)
4. It is not appropriate for use today.
 - a. Its name falsely implies apostolic authority.
 - b. It does not necessarily emphasize all the important doctrinal themes, especially in light of false doctrines today.
 - c. It is preferable to refer to Scripture itself for summary statements of doctrine.
 - d. Its use today would associate us with trinitarianism.

Definition and identification: trinitarianism, Greek apologists, Tertullian, Origen, eternal generation, Athanasius, Arius, Council of Nicea, Council of Constantinople, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, Apostles' Creed

Questions

1. Define and explain the basic tenets of the trinitarian doctrine.
2. How does trinitarian use of the term *person* lead to tritheism?
3. How is subordinationism a problem in trinitarian doctrine?
4. What is the basic problem with trinitarian terminology?

5. Did the idea of a trinity play a role in any ancient religions or philosophies before the Christian era?
6. How did the trend towards binitarianism develop in the early postapostolic church?
7.
 - a. Who introduced the basic language of trinitarianism to Christianity?
 - b. How did he view the Logos?
 - c. Did his economic view of the trinity conflict with modalism? Explain.
8.
 - a. What key concept did Origen contribute to trinitarian doctrine?
 - b. What was the source of many of Origen's doctrines?
9. Who was one of the first to emphasize the Holy Spirit as a third person in the trinitarian Godhead?
10. State the basic views on the Godhead associated with the following men:
 - a. Athanasius
 - b. Arius

11. a. What was Constantine's goal in convening the Council of Nicea?
 - b. How did the eventual establishment of Christianity as the state religion of Rome affect the church?

12. What was the threefold significance of the Council of Nicea?

13. What was the significance of the Council of Constantinople in 381?

14. a. What ancient creed gives us the most comprehensive statement of trinitarianism in ancient church history?
 - b. What do we know of the origin of this creed?

15. What are the main points of difference between East and West on the doctrine of the trinity?

16. What are four objections to the use of the Apostles' Creed?

a.

b.

c.

d.

XII

Trinitarianism: An Evaluation

- A. Nonbiblical Terms and Concepts
1. It is dangerous to use nonbiblical terms that are not merely an alternative for biblical terms but instead introduce new concepts.
 2. *Person* and *persons*.
 - a. *Person* limits God to our concept of a human being.
 - b. *Persons* leads to polytheism.
 3. *Three* and *trinity*.
 - a. These words lead to tritheism.
 - b. Both testaments emphasize only the number one in relation to God.
 4. Although trinitarians profess to reject tritheism, in practice their views and illustrations lead toward it.
 5. Trinitarians seek to avoid discussion of the logical and scriptural contradictions of their doctrine by saying it is a mystery.
 6. Trinitarians affirm the deity of Jesus, but in practice their doctrine detracts from the fullness of His deity and their arguments subordinate Him to another person.

B. Contradictions

1. It is impossible for God to be three persons in any meaningful sense and yet be absolutely one as Scripture declares.
2. Trinitarianism is self-contradictory and contradicts Scripture. (See examples, OG, pp. 290-93.)

C. The Oneness Doctrine Contrasted to Trinitarianism

1. God is absolutely one, with no plurality of persons.
2. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different designations for the one God; these titles refer to roles, manifestations, modes of activity, aspects of God's self-revelation, or relationships to humanity.
3. Jesus is absolute in deity; He is in no way subordinate to anyone else.
4. The Son of God was begotten in time; the term *Son* refers to the Incarnation.
5. The Word (Logos) is not a distinct person from God, but is God's mind, or God revealing Himself.
6. Jesus is the supreme name of God revealed to us today.
7. Water baptism is administered in the name of Jesus.
8. God's oneness is not a mystery; the mystery of godliness is the Incarnation, and it has been revealed.
9. We will see one divine being in heaven: Jesus.

D. Conclusion about Trinitarianism

1. The doctrine is not scriptural in terms, concepts, or historical origin.
2. It does not add any positive benefit to the Christian message, but instead detracts from it.
3. The average church member does not understand it.
4. Many trinitarians think in Oneness terms.

5. A simple question helps clarify the issue: How many divine personages will we see in heaven—one or three?
 - a. We cannot see “three in one”; we will either see three or one.
 - b. If someone’s answer is “three,” then he is tritheistic and does not believe in one God in any meaningful sense.
 - c. If the answer is “one,” then who is the One? Clearly, He is Jesus. (See IV-H.) If a person acknowledges this truth, he has essentially adopted the Oneness position.
 - d. If the answer is “I don’t know,” then the person has very little concept of the God he seeks to serve. With whom does he have a saving relationship? To whom does he pray? Whom is he looking forward to meeting?
6. By contrast, the Oneness doctrine is scriptural and brings many blessings. It is vital for the church. (See XIII.)

Questions

1. When does nonbiblical terminology present a special danger in doctrinal discussion?

2. a. Why is it a problem to use the term *person* in describing God?

b. How is the problem amplified through the use of the term *persons*?

3. State two ways in which the use of the number three in relation to God is dangerous.

a.

b.

4. Does the Bible affirm that the Godhead is an incomprehensible mystery?

5. How does trinitarianism detract from the full deity of Christ?

6. The following section offers nine points of trinitarian belief on the Godhead. Below each statement, respond with an appropriate Oneness teaching.

a. There are three persons in one God. That is, there are three essential distinctions in God's nature. God is the Holy Trinity.

b. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) are the three persons in the Godhead. They are distinct persons, and they are co-equal, co-eternal, and of co-essence. However, God the Father is the head of the Trinity in some sense, and the Son and Spirit proceed from Him in some sense.

c. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of *God the Son*. Jesus is not the Father or the Holy Spirit.

- d. The Son is eternal. God the Son has existed from all eternity. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father.

- e. The *Word* of John 1 (the Logos) is the second person in the Godhead, namely God the Son.

- f. Jesus is the human name given to God the Son as manifested in the flesh.

- g. Water baptism is correctly administered by saying “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” over the person being baptized.

- h. We will see the Trinity or the Triune God in heaven, possibly in three bodies.

- i. The Godhead is a mystery. We must accept by faith the mystery of the Trinity despite its apparent contradictions.

XIII

Conclusion

(See OG, pp. 298-306)

A. Definition of the Oneness Doctrine

1. There is one, indivisible God with no distinction of persons.
2. Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead incarnate. (Thus, all names and titles of the Deity properly apply to Him.)

B. Summary of the Oneness Doctrine

1. God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4).
2. God is Spirit (John 4:24).
3. The Son is God in flesh (Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4).
4. Jesus is the fullness of God in flesh (Colossians 2:9).
5. Jesus is the Father in flesh (Isaiah 9:6; John 10:30; 14:6-11).
6. Jesus is the Holy Spirit in flesh (II Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 4:6).
7. Baptism is in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38).

C. Importance of the Oneness Doctrine

1. The Bible emphasizes it.

2. It reveals the true identity of Jesus.
3. It makes the power of Jesus' name available to us.
4. It teaches the proper baptismal formula.
5. It teaches the significance of receiving the Holy Spirit, namely, it is the means of receiving Christ.

D. Witnessing to Others

1. We should not condemn, antagonize, or stereotype them.
2. We must lead others to this truth in order to restore apostolic doctrine and power.

E. Significance for Christian Living

1. Understanding God's oneness is the foundation of our salvation experience, worship, and holiness (Mark 12:28-31; John 17:3).
2. Our Creator became our Savior.
 - a. God Himself came (II Corinthians 5:19).
 - b. The God who *told* us how to live came in flesh to provide salvation and to *show* us how to live.
3. Our Creator-Savior is also the indwelling Spirit who regenerates, sanctifies, and empowers us. He *enables* us to live for Him.
4. We are complete in Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:9-10). In Him we have salvation, deliverance, healing, and victory.