

framework needed for grasping the meaning of the Incarnation. In other words, the NT deals first of all with the understanding of God's self-revelation in Jesus of Nazareth.

The binitarian formula is the necessary presupposition for the Incarnation. Since the main task that NT writers undertake is the clarification of the incarnation of God in Christ and its implications for the whole of theology, it is not surprising to find the binitarian formula used throughout. On the other hand, the trinitarian concept and formula appear as necessary presuppositions for properly grasping the meaning of Christ's postresurrection activity through His representative, the Holy Spirit. The specific, practical concern of NT writers may explain why the trinitarian formula is less frequently utilized. A full revelation of God's being was accessible only after Jesus Christ Himself introduced the divine person of the Holy Spirit.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The trinitarian nature of the one biblical God is not complete without God the Holy Spirit. That the revelation of the Holy Spirit as the third divine person of the Godhead comes after the revelation of the Son and the Father does not mean that He is either less important or that He has been involved in salvific activities only since the time of His revelation. A proper understanding of the one Christian God and His personal plurality requires, therefore, a careful consideration of the biblical witness to God the Holy Spirit.

1. Christ's Announcement

Even though God the Spirit appears from Genesis (1:2 ; 6:3) onward, the explicit concept that God's plurality involves not only the persons of the Father and the Son but also a third person, the Holy Spirit, originates in Jesus Christ Himself. The revelation of the existence and specific salvific role of a third person of the one God was given by Jesus Christ as He tried to prepare the disciples for His departure from earth (John 7:33 ; 14:1-3). According to John, Christ hinted at the personhood and historical coming of the Holy Spirit at the Feast of Tabernacles before His death, when He promised "rivers of living water" flowing out of the believers' hearts, to explain "the Spirit, which those who believe in him were to receive" (John 7:38 , 39). However, Christ clearly announced the coming of the Holy Spirit only a few hours before His crucifixion: "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16 , 17 ; cf. 16:4-7 , 13).

After His resurrection Jesus again brought to the attention of the disciples the coming of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49 ; Acts 1:4 , 5 , 8). The existence of the Holy Spirit as a divine person was revealed at this time, because the Holy Spirit had to be revealed as a divine person to explain how the redemptive work of Christ would continue after His ascension, simultaneously on earth and in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:1 , 2). The revelation of God's trinitarian nature is disclosed not with the speculative purpose of revealing the nature of God but rather so that human beings may understand God's redemptive acts in history.

2. Pentecostal Coming

As there was a historical coming of the Son to the world, there was a historical coming of the Holy Spirit to the church. The mode of historical presence of the Spirit is different from the mode in which the Son was present. The Holy Spirit's coming does not involve the taking on of human nature as did Jesus' incarnation. The mode in which God the Holy Spirit is present is such that makes Him accessible to all, while the incarnated mode of God the Son in Jesus limited His divine presence to a few human beings. This remarkable difference may have been one of the reasons why Jesus said it would be to the disciples' advantage that He should go away so that the Spirit could come to them (John 16:7).

The historical coming of the Holy Spirit to the church occurred at Pentecost, following the Resurrection. That the coming of the Holy Spirit to the church occurred on the day of Pentecost could be seen as a mere coincidence bearing little theological significance; however, the specific timing deserves special study.

a. Typological setting. In the OT , Passover and Pentecost were closely related festivals. Both were memorials and prefigurations of important aspects of God's acts of salvation. Passover (Lev. 23:5 ; Num. 28:16 ; Deut. 16:1–8) was a memorial of God as a source of freedom in connection with Israel's liberation from under Egyptian bondage (Deut. 16:1 , 3 , 6). Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 23:16 ; 34:22 ; Lev. 23:15–22 ; Num. 28:26–31 ; Deut. 16:9–12), was a memorial of God as the source of all good gifts. The very name, Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, pointed to the close connection between the Passover and Pentecost by making explicit reference to the 50 days between them (Lev. 23:15 , 16 ; cf. 6BC 133, 134). As the Passover and the deliverance from Egypt were types of Jesus' mission (Matt. 2:15 ; cf. Hosea 11:1) and death at the cross (1 Cor. 5:7), it is possible to see Pentecost and the covenant at Sinai as types of the historical coming of the Holy Spirit. The historical coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, then, would be the antitype of the Sinaitic covenant understood as the good gift of God to His people. As a distinctive function of the Sinaitic covenant was to lead Israel to redemption through a concrete understanding of God's will for man, the coming of the Holy Spirit appears designed to bring that purpose to new, surprising levels of specificity and closeness. When Jesus talked to the disciples about the historical coming of the Holy Spirit, He underscored that "the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). Between God's redemptive work at Sinai and the revelation and historical coming of the Holy Spirit there is no discontinuity but rather a clear typologically conceived continuity. This does not mean, however, repetition of the same but rather the disclosure of new aspects of truth not present in past revelations. These bring our knowledge and experience of God's salvific will and acts to deeper levels.

b. The Spirit of God in the OT . The fact that the Holy Spirit is not explicitly revealed as a divine person in the OT (Gen. 1:2) does not mean that He did not exist or act as a person before His historical introduction at Pentecost. The revelation of the Holy Spirit as a person of the Godhead became possible and necessary after the historical

revelation of Jesus Christ as God the Son. The OT, consequently, does not refer to the Holy Spirit as a person different from other divine persons. However, at times it is possible to understand some OT references to the rather general designation "Spirit of God" as allusions to divine activities that properly belong to the Holy Spirit. The giving of spiritual gifts to special individuals for the execution of definite tasks is the activity most commonly associated in the OT with the Spirit of God (Ex. 31:3 ; 35:31 ; Num. 11:25 , 29 ; 24:2 ; 27:18 ; Judges 3:10 ; 6:34 ; 11:29 ; 13:25 ; 14:6 , 19 ; 15:14 ; 1 Sam. 10:6 , 10 ; 16:13 ; 19:20 , 23 ; 2 Chron. 15:1 ; 20:14 ; 24:20). The Spirit of God is not so frequently presented as indwelling the heart of the believer, although the idea is, nonetheless, present in the OT . According to the Sinaitic covenant, religion was to be a deep experience of love to God: "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to hear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul?" (Deut. 10:12). Thus Paul can describe a "real Jew" as one who is so, not by adhering to external rituals, but rather, according to Deuteronomy 10:16 , he who has the real circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:28 , 29). David knew that the inner change of the heart amounts to a new creation that can be accomplished only by God Himself (Ps. 51:10). Saul not only received gifts from the Spirit, but the Spirit of the Lord changed him into another man (1 Sam. 10:6 , 9). Israel in exile anticipated a spiritual revival as a result of God's putting His Spirit in them (Eze. 36:26 , 27 ; 37:1-14).

The Spirit of God, then, is also associated in the OT with the divine indwelling in the inner being of man (cf. Isa. 57:15 ; Eze. 11:19 ; 18:31). On this basis, Jesus Christ could speak to the disciples as if they already knew the Holy Spirit before His historical personal coming at Pentecost (John 14:17). If the Holy Spirit was already acting, giving gifts, and indwelling the hearts of the believers, the newness of the NT ministry of the Spirit needs examination.

c. The newness of the Spirit in the NT . One obviously new aspect of NT revelation on the Spirit of God is that now He is clearly presented as a divine person, distinct from Father and Son (see VII. C. 4). This change, however, affects only our understanding of His personhood and not His redemptive activity. The work of the Holy Spirit in the NT appears to involve the same areas covered either by God or the Spirit of God in the OT . The newness of the Holy Spirit in the NT has to be found in His new role as representative of Christ. According to John's interpretation of Jesus' typological reference to the Spirit (John 7:37-39), the revelation, historical coming, and redemptive task of God the Holy Spirit is essentially connected to the cross and ascension of Jesus Christ. John interprets Jesus' typology by remarking that He spoke "about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). Consequently, according to John, the death and glorification of the Son were necessary conditions for the historical outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, His coming was witnessed by all because of the external manifestation of supernatural gifts poured out on the believers (Acts 2:2-11). In response to questions on the theological meaning of the event, a very

superficial and inadequate explanation was forwarded: “They are filled with new wine” (verse 13). In defense of the apostles, Peter addressed the multitude (verses 14–36). After identifying the seemingly strange event as a miraculous manifestation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (verses 15–21), Peter explained the event as a necessary step in the historical achievement of God’s plan of salvation (verses 23 , 24). Peter affirmed that “this Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear” (verses 32 , 33). Peter referred to Christ’s heavenly enthronement (see VII. B. 4), which followed His victory at the cross and conferred on Christ “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18 ; cf. 1 Peter 3:22).

Since Jesus Christ was to be personally involved in the task of intercession in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:1 , 2 ; see Sanctuary II, III) the necessary, continuous, personal presence of God on earth required the revelation of the third person of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit. The specific newness brought about by the historical coming of the Holy Spirit in the NT , then, is not to be seen in relation to the specific salvific tasks which the Spirit continues to perform as He did in OT times, but rather it is related to the new status of the Spirit as representative of Jesus Christ’s triumph on the cross and His work of intercession and lordship in heaven. Jesus Christ Himself underlined the characteristic harmony and unity in which the Trinity performs the activities pertaining to salvation by pointing out that the Holy Spirit not only was His representative (John 16:13 , 14) but also, because of the delegation of the Father to the Son (see VII. B. 4), the representative of the Father (John 14:16 , 17). For this reason the technical expressions “in Christ” (Rom. 6:11 , 23 ; 8:1 , 39 ; 9:1 ; 1 Cor. 1:4 ; 3:1 ; 2 Cor. 2:17) and “in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 9:1 ; 14:17 ; cf. Col. 1:8) are, in fact, equivalent.

d.Procession from the Father and the Son. The procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son (John 15:26 ; 14:16 , 26 ; Acts 2:33) is to be understood not in an ontological sense, but rather, in a historical sense as the inner divine activity involved in sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as the representative of Christ’s presence, sacrifice, and ministry. In other words, the procession of the Spirit does not refer to an inner process in the makeup of the trinitarian being, as classical theology came to believe. The question regarding whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, from the Father and the Son, or from the Father through the Son became relevant as the “born-of-the-Father” and “procession” language we find in the Bible was misunderstood as referring to an inner, divine process that constitutes the very being of the Godhead. Biblically, however, the procession of the Holy Spirit belongs not to the constitution of the Trinity but rather to its life as the work of salvation is carried out by the historical activity of the three divine persons.

The distinction between the historical coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, as the Father’s and Son’s gift to the church, and the personal coming of the Spirit to the hearts of men and women is important. The book of Acts particularly underlines the historical coming of the Spirit to the church at a specific time, the day of Pentecost. Signs and

miracles accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that day and at other specific times when the Spirit came to special segments of the church. However, the Holy Spirit need not always come to the church in the same way; Pentecost was unique. At Pentecost, Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit to the church was fulfilled; since then, the third person of the divine Trinity is present in the Christian church as the gift (Acts 2:38) of God in Christ. Therefore, the church does not need to pray for the historical coming of the Spirit as did the disciples in the upper room (Acts 1:13 , 14), but rather for surrender and openness of heart to the promptings of the Spirit so that His promised presence and power (see VII. C. 6) might be manifested in the life and mission of the church.

3.Divinity

The divinity of the Holy Spirit is attested in various contexts. The Holy Spirit is described as possessing divine characteristics; He is called "Holy" (Matt. 1:20), "the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11), and "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7). When confronting Ananias and Sapphira, Peter pointed to the divinity and personality of the Spirit. Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3) and at the same time to God. Jesus introduced the Spirit to the disciples as "another Counselor" (John 14:16). Since the Greek *allos* means "another of the same kind," it follows that the Holy Spirit was of the same kind as Christ, namely, a divine person.

The divinity of the Holy Spirit as third person of the Trinity is further affirmed as He is described as possessing other divine attributes: omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10 , 11), truth (1 John 5:7), life (Rom. 8:2), wisdom (1 Cor. 2:11), power (Luke 1:35 ; Rom. 15:19), and eternity (Heb. 9:14). The NT underlines the divinity of the Holy Spirit by referring to Him as performing specific divine actions, such as speaking to the fathers through the prophets (Acts 28:25), inspiration of Scriptures (2 Peter 1:21 ; cf. VII. C. 5. a), illumination (John 15:26 ; cf. VII. C. 5. b), regeneration (John 3:7 , 8 ; Rom. 8:11 ; Titus 3:5), and sanctification (2 Thess. 2:13 ; 1 Peter 1:2). Furthermore, the divinity of the Holy Spirit is strongly affirmed as He is identified with the OT Yahweh as is Christ. Acts 28:25–27 and Hebrews 3:7–9 attribute to the direct activity of the Holy Spirit statements that in the OT are explicitly reported as Yahweh's utterances (Isa. 6:8–10 and Ps. 95:7–11 ; cf. Ex. 16:1–8 ; Deut. 1:34–36). In the NT Paul affirms the same identification: "The Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17). There seems to be no doubt that the NT writers understood the Holy Spirit to be God.

4.Personality

Christian theology has often neglected the study of biblical information regarding the nature and salvific activities of the Holy Spirit. Within this context the Spirit has been understood in terms of divine energy and power belonging properly to the Father's person. Thus, the Holy Spirit is understood as divested of both individuality and personality. This interpretation seems to find support in some biblical passages. For instance, while the names Father and Son evoke personal realities, the name Spirit does not necessarily do so. The gender of the Greek *pneuma* (spirit) is neuter, seemingly

suggesting a nonpersonal reality. Besides, the fact that Scripture talks about the Holy Spirit as taking the bodily “form” of a “dove” (Luke 3:22), and likens Him to wind (John 3:8), water (John 7:37–39), and fire (Acts 2:3) also contributes to the superficial and mistaken idea that the Holy Spirit is not a personal being like the Father and the Son. Finally, overemphasis on the biblical description of the Holy Spirit as a gift (Acts 2:38 ; 10:45) that grants gifts (1 Cor. 12:4–11 ; Eph. 4:11 ; cf. VII. C. 5. e) to men and women may also be responsible for incorrectly thinking of the Holy Spirit as a “divine energy” rather than as a divine person. These biblical passages do not teach that the Holy Spirit is a nonpersonal being; they merely leave open the possibility that the Holy Spirit may be understood as a nonpersonal divine energy. Further explicit evidence is necessary to decide whether the Holy Spirit is a personal or nonpersonal being.

The NT uncovers the personal nature of the Holy Spirit in a variety of ways. While the NT writers could not change the gender of the Greek word for “spirit,” when speaking of the Holy Spirit they sometimes utilized masculine pronouns to replace the neuter form Spirit (John 14:26 ; 15:26 ; 16:13), even at the cost of syntactical inconsistency. Additionally, the NT adjudicates to the Holy Spirit a variety of characteristics that explicitly reveal His personal nature. Among these the following can be mentioned: intelligence and knowledge (John 14:26 ; 1 Cor. 12:11), emotions (Eph. 4:30), and judgment (Acts 15:28). Also, the Spirit can be lied to (Acts 5:3 , 4), resisted (Acts 7:51), and sinned against (Matt. 12:31 ; Mark 3:29). Furthermore, the NT presents the Holy Spirit as doing what can be done by a personal being: He speaks (Acts 8:29), teaches (Luke 12:12), reveals (Luke 2:26), testifies (Acts 20:23), searches (1 Cor. 2:10 , 11), sends (Acts 13:2), guides (Acts 8:29 ; 11:12), declares things to come (John 16:13), and bears witness with our spirit (Rom. 8:15 , 16). Moreover, the Greek expression “another Counselor” that Jesus used regarding the Holy Spirit (John 14:16) suggests not only that the Holy Spirit is a divine being but also that He is a personal being in the same way as the Father and the Son are personal beings. Likewise, the intercessory role (Rom. 8:26) that the Holy Spirit plays in the salvation of the believers can be performed only by a personal being. Finally, the glorification of the Son by the Holy Spirit (John 16:14) cannot be accomplished by a power or energy, but only by a person. Without doubt the NT writers understood the Holy Spirit as a divine personal being.

Only when we clearly grasp the biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit as a divine person does the NT specification about the OT concept of the plurality of the one God come into full view. On the basis of the biblical evidence presented above, a doctrine of the Trinity becomes both unavoidable and necessary for Christian theology. Before the biblical approach to the Trinity is considered, it is necessary, however, to examine the work of the third person of the Trinity.

5. Salvific Work

The NT presents a wealth of additional information regarding the third person of the eternal Trinity. The understanding of the Holy Spirit as a representative of the person and work of Christ on the cross and in the heavenly sanctuary is set forth and integrated, not

as speculative insights into His divine nature but rather from the perspective of His salvific task.

a.Revelation-inspiration. Since the Bible is said to be the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17), it is not surprising to find that the Holy Spirit is closely related to the processes through which the Holy Scriptures originated. The Spirit was actively involved in revelation, the process through which the truths, concepts, and information found in the Bible originated (Eze. 8:3 ; 11:1 , 24 ; 37:1 ; 43:5 ; Mark 12:36 ; 1 Cor. 2:11 ; Rev. 21:10). He also took part in inspiration, the process through which these communications were shared by the prophets (2 Sam. 23:2 ; 2 Chron. 24:20 ; Eze. 11:5 ; Zech. 7:12 ; Matt. 22:43 ; 2 Peter 1:21). After Pentecost the revelatory-inspirational task of the Holy Spirit concentrated on guiding the disciples to a proper understanding of the truth as revealed in the historical person and work of Jesus Christ (John 16:12–15), which, when put into writing, became the NT . The reception of the Holy Spirit into the heart of the Christian believer (see VII. C. 5. c) cannot be conceived in independence from or contradiction with the truths revealed in Scriptures as a whole (see Revelation/Inspiration III , IV).

b.Illumination. According to Jesus the Holy Spirit not only takes part in the task of revealing and inspiring Scriptures, but He is also involved in convincing “the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8). It is not enough that truth be theoretically expressed in words, oral or written; it is necessary that it be written in the mind and heart of men and women (Jer. 31:33 ; Heb. 8:10). The writing of truth in the human mind is the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3), which involves revelation-inspiration (see VII. C. 5. a), illumination, and indwelling (VII. C. 5. c). God originated Scripture through the agency of the Holy Spirit in order that divine light (knowledge), necessary for the salvation of sinners and the redemption of the world, would be available to the human race (Ps. 119:105). Yet, for the Bible to be a light and not merely a dead letter, men and women must understand it (verse 130). However, understanding the light presupposes the possessing of light: “In thy light do we see light” (Ps. 36:9). Unless God is recognized as the author of the words, a veil (2 Cor. 3:13 , 14 ; cf. Isa. 6:9 , 10 ; Acts 28:26 , 27) hinders both mind and heart from seeing God and understanding His Word (Luke 11:34 , 35). Since the Fall men and women have no light in themselves (Acts 26:18 ; 2 Cor. 4:3 , 4 ; cf. John 1:5). The Spirit must remove the veil of darkness (2 Cor. 3:17 , 18) from the mind so that the light may be seen. The Spirit of understanding and knowledge, given in a special way to the Messiah (Isa. 11:2), also leads human beings in the process of reading and understanding Scriptures (Eph. 1:17–23) and is one of “the gifts bestowed on us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12). The writing of the law in the heart assumes illumination but goes beyond it, requiring the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the mind and heart of believers.

c.Indwelling. When the promptings of the Holy Spirit are accepted and sinners open themselves to God in faith, confession, and repentance, a divine-human relationship begins (Rev. 3:20). The initial act by which God is accepted into the mind and heart, thereby turning the believer into a new person, is so dramatic that Jesus refers to it as a new birth from the Holy Spirit (John 3:3–8). The divine-human relationship established

through the new-birth experience is known as divine indwelling, filling (Luke 1:67 ; Acts 2:4 ; 4:31 ; 9:17 ; 13:52), or baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11 ; Mark 1:8 ; Luke 3:16 ; Acts 1:5 ; 11:16). Paul describes this intimate divine-human relationship not only as the circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29) but more specifically, as the Spirit of God dwelling “in you” (Rom. 8:9 ; cf. Eph. 2:22). Consequently, the body is “a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19). The biblical view of divine indwelling in human beings can be perceived only when it is seen within the context provided by (1) the historical (see IV. D and VII. C. 2) and personal nature (see VII. C. 4) of the Holy Spirit as Christ’s representative (see VII. C. 2. c and VII. C. 5. d); and (2) when one realizes that the biblical understanding of man and woman does not recognize the existence of a timeless eternal soul in the human person (see Man I. E). Consequently, the Holy Spirit cannot be conceived as a “divine energy” that penetrates the eternal substance of the soul and divinizes human nature. On the contrary, the indwelling is to be conceived within the mode of personal, historical relations (1 John 4:13). Within the relational mode the Holy Spirit dwells “in” human beings. Thus, human nature is not divinized by the Spirit’s indwelling but is rather transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). Since the Holy Spirit as a divine person is the representative of Christ, the indwelling brings Christ’s presence to the mind and heart of the believer. Hence, the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer is the indwelling of Christ.

Because the Holy Spirit represents the victorious Christ His presence in the heart of the believer becomes a down payment of God’s redemption and the guarantee of His promises (2 Cor. 1:20–22), notably of Christ’s glorious second coming (2 Cor. 5:4 , 5 ; Eph. 1:13 , 14 ; cf. Rom. 8:11). The indwelling of the Spirit occurs “in the inner man” (Eph. 3:16), which involves heart (Rom. 5:5), mind (Rom. 8:6 , 7), and spirit (verse 16). The indwelling of the Spirit that commences with the new-birth experience brings Christ to the inner man, establishing an ongoing divine-human relation that changes believers into the likeness of Jesus Christ (verses 4–17 ; cf. verse 29). In Romans 8 Paul specifically explains the submission of the believer to the law of God (verses 4–7), the results of the Spirit’s indwelling: victory over sinful acts (verse 13), God’s providential care for the believer (verse 14), sonship (verse 15), assurance of acceptance as children of God (verse 16), cosuffering with Christ (verse 17), and the future resurrection from death. Obedience to God’s will is also a concrete result of the Spirit’s indwelling, by which the eternal principles of the law of God are written in the heart and mind of believers (Jer. 31:33 ; Eze. 36:27 ; Rom. 2:15 ; Heb. 8:10 ; 10:16 ; cf. Ps. 37:31 ; 40:8 ; 119:34 ; Isa. 51:7). On the basis of the relational reality of Christ’s indwelling the believers through the Spirit, they are said to possess “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16 ; cf. 12:3) and, to “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Hence in their daily lives the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22 , 23) is produced.

Since the Holy Spirit does not indwell the believer as an energy that penetrates the soul, but rather as a person, the question about how He indwells human beings arises. Paul, in full agreement with the relational structure of the Spirit’s indwelling, explains that “we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17 , 18). Paul declares that sinful human beings can behold the glory of

the Lord through the preaching and teaching of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4 , 5), “for it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (verse 6). The indwelling, then, occurs as a result of the specific work of the Holy Spirit. Through the inspiration of the Bible and the illumination of its contents, the Holy Spirit brings the presence of Christ to the consciousness of believers who thus are able to behold “the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

When, as a response to the divine initiative of God in the Spirit, the human heart surrenders in total openness to Christ for the first time, the new birth occurs simultaneously with the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the gift of God’s personal presence (Acts 2:38). The continuous process of indwelling follows. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is not a permanent possession, acquired once and for all at the time of the new birth. On the contrary, it must be a permanent process, daily renewed (1 Cor. 9:27) in further and deeper surrender to the Spirit’s promptings, lest the believer fall into apostasy at the risk of eternal loss (Heb. 6:4–8).

d.Intercession. As a representative of Christ, the Holy Spirit performs intercessory functions that complement Christ’s intercession in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:1 , 2). To the clear mediatorial functions of revelation-inspiration (see VII. C. 5. a), illumination (see VII. C. 5. b), and indwelling (see VII. C. 5. c), performed by the Holy Spirit, Paul specifically adds the Holy Spirit’s intercessory activity in favor of the saints’ prayers (Rom. 8:26 , 27).

e.Gifts. The Holy Spirit is instrumental not only in the constitution of the new creature through His work of indwelling, but also in the mission of the church through the conferral of spiritual gifts (see Spiritual Gifts II). The notion that the Spirit of God endows believers for the fulfillment of special tasks is present in the OT (Num. 11:25 ; 27:18 ; Deut. 34:9 ; Judges 3:10 ; 1 Sam. 10:6 ; Micah 3:8 ; Zech. 4:6). However, in the OT the spiritual gifts generally seem to be given to special persons rather than to the whole community of faith. This restriction is lifted in the NT , when Joel’s prophecy (2:28 , 29) is partially fulfilled at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit and the granting of spiritual gifts to the whole church (Acts 2:15–21 , 32 , 33 ; Eph. 4:8). Gifts are given to believers in whom Christ dwells through the Spirit. In other words, the believer receives spiritual gifts on the basis of a reception of the person of the Holy Spirit (the Gift) in total surrender (Acts 2:38) and continuous obedience to God’s will (Acts 5:32). The gifts are given with the purpose of accomplishing the unity of the church (Eph. 4:13) and “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (verse 12). They are given not as supernatural signs of God’s existence or divine forgiveness but rather as necessary skills for the accomplishment of the Christian mission of representing Christ and preaching His gospel as revealed in the OT and NT Scriptures.

6.Eschatological Endowments

The OT presents the eschatological times preceding the end of redemptive history as involving a universal spreading of the knowledge of God’s will as revealed in Scriptures.

Such a universal, eschatological expansion is to be brought about by God through the instrumentality of His people (Ps. 72:8–11 ; Isa. 14:1 ; 45:14 ; 56:6 , 7 ; 60:5 , 11 ; Jer. 3:17 ; Haggai 2:7 ; Zech. 2:11 ; 8:21–23). Joel's prophecy about the universal outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh (2:28 , 29) brings the instrumental component, assumed in the OT vision, regarding an eschatological universal spreading of God's kingdom, to explicit formulation.

Even though Joel's prophecy began to be fulfilled with the historical coming of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21 ; see VII. C. 2), it is clear that its complete universal fulfillment is still future (verses 19–21). The vision of a universal spreading of the gospel message, before the end of the history of redemption is continued in NT eschatological thinking (Rev. 14:6 , 7 ; 18:1). God's immutability expresses itself in the constancy and consistency of His historical salvific actions (III. B). Consequently, it is to be expected that in bringing the plan of redemption to its historical climax and consummation by means of the eschatological universal spreading of the gospel message God will utilize the same instrumentality He used at Pentecost, namely, the unlimited outpouring of spiritual gifts on His church. Such an eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is implicitly assumed in the enlightening of the earth by the angel in Revelation 18:1 , will complete the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy initiated at Pentecost.

Thus, as the coming of the Holy Spirit and His gifts empowered the emerging church in a special way, so at the end of time the Holy Spirit will bestow His gifts to the church for the finishing of the work. On both the personal and historical levels, God bestows the gifts of the Spirit as the early and latter rains (Joel 2:23 ; cf. Hosea 6:3). The eschatological bestowal of spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit has the same purpose: the preaching of the gospel truths (Rev. 18:2 , 4) preparing the way for Jesus Christ's second coming (Matt. 24:14 ; 2 Peter 3:9 , 12 ; Rev. 14:6–12). However, as the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer is the condition for the reception of the gifts (VII. C. 5. e), the eschatological manifestation of the Holy Spirit will occur on the basis of the total surrender and openness of the church to the Spirit's illumination and indwelling.

D. Trinitarian Patterns in the NT

The specific revelation of the Holy Spirit as a divine person distinct from the Father and the Son completes the NT expansion of the biblical picture of the plurality of the one God. There are three different divine persons in the one Christian Godhead. The NT expresses the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead not only by means of a clear presentation of the different, divine persons, but also by means of short Trinitarian formulas. Binitarian (see VII. B. 6) and Trinitarian formulas are concise statements that express the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead rather than extended inquiries into its theological meaning. The following are the main instances in which Trinitarian formulas are alluded to or directly presented in the NT .

The event of Jesus' baptism brought about the clearest historical revelation of the Trinity available to us. The Son appeared in His human incarnated existence, the Holy

Spirit was present in the form of a dove, and the Father revealed Himself (Matt. 3:16 , 17 ; Mark 1:10 , 11 ; Luke 3:21 , 22 ; cf. 2 Peter 1:17).

The concept of Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one, is not explicitly stated but only assumed. Consequently, these passages cannot be taken as Trinitarian formulas but rather as references to the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover, the three persons of the divinity are brought together and identified by pointing to some of the specific activities in which each has been involved in the history of salvation. Thus, Peter clearly emphasizes that the believers were “chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood” (1 Peter 1:2). Likewise, Paul closes his second letter to the Corinthians by wishing that “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). Still, these two statements only assume the divinity of Spirit and Christ, and the oneness of the three. Not a Trinitarian formula, but rather a reference to the Trinity is present here. The Pauline setting for the divine bestowal of the spiritual gifts to the church (VII. C. 5. e) in his first letter to the believers at Corinth (12:4–6) may refer also to the Trinity: Spirit, Lord, and God refer to the Holy Spirit, the Son, and the Father, respectively, thus expressing the unity of the Trinity in God’s salvific action in history. However, the oneness of the Godhead cannot be reduced to a concept of unity of life or redemptive action in history.

The Trinitarian formula seems to be clearly expressed in Jesus’ great missionary commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name [*onoma*] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). The direct reference to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit clearly sets forth the threefold plurality of Divine Persons, while the designations of them all as the “name” of God (in singular) clearly sets forth the oneness of the Divine Being. Hence a clear Trinitarian formula, where the threeness and oneness belong together in the Divine Being is expressed.

In conclusion, the NT has not given extensive consideration to the doctrine of the Trinity as a theological locus. On the other hand, there is extensive evidence that the reality of the Trinitarian nature of the one Christian God is a biblical teaching. In Scripture God has revealed His transcendent nature as Trinity, namely three distinct divine Persons who act directly and historically in history and constitute the one divine Trinitarian being.

VIII. Impact of the Doctrine of the Godhead

The biblical doctrine of God affects at least three major domains of Christian thinking: the methodological, soteriological, and ecclesiological areas, and it permeates the entire field of Christian theology. It influences our interpretation of Scripture by determining the way we view some foundational matters that have a decisive role in our process of understanding. Among these matters we find certain disciplinary, procedural, and doctrinal issues. Within the disciplinary realm, the philosophy-theology relation has always deserved special attention. Much of Christian theology has developed under the

conviction that philosophy occupies an essential role in setting the intellectual framework that the task of theology requires. Since the Reformation some theologians have challenged this conviction. The biblical doctrine of God requires the reversal of this traditional disciplinary view. If we take the biblical doctrine of God seriously, we cannot replace it with a philosophical teaching about God. Besides, disregard of biblical revelation on God leads to a distorted understanding of Christian doctrines and the capitulation of biblical authority to philosophy and tradition.

Within the procedural area, the Trinitarian Godhead of Scripture functions as the center of theology. The Trinitarian Godhead of Scripture links together the manifold aspects of life, biblical truths, and Christian teachings. As center of life, God is not the whole, but the One who brings the whole into existence and harmony. Moreover, the biblical doctrine of God calls for a historical interpretation and understanding of Christian teachings and doctrines. Within the doctrinal field, the relational nature of the biblical Godhead grounds the relational nature of human beings which, in turn, influences the ecclesiological and missiological areas.

The biblical doctrine of God also exercises a dominant influence on the practical level, where the experience of salvation takes place. Christian experience or spirituality takes place as God and human beings relate to each other. Both God and human beings are relational by nature. Consequently, biblical spirituality can take place only within the parameters of divine and human relationality. Moreover, the biblical conception of God's historical presence (IV. D) places the salvific relationship of Christian experience not within a divine otherworldly level but within the flow of historical space and time where human beings exist and operate.

Because Christian experience is relational and historical, we must abandon classical and contemporary conceptions according to which the human experience of the salvific event occurs in the eternal "now." When Christian believers assume that the experience of salvation takes place in the otherworldly level of the eternal instant, they become convinced that most aspects of everyday life are irrelevant and therefore excluded from Christian spirituality. As Christian spirituality is viewed as a matter of interiority, individuality, withdrawal from this world, and connection with another reality, it becomes dissociated from everyday life. The fact is that an otherworldly encounter does not involve challenges or require changes in everyday life and culture. One concrete outcome of this conception is the secularization of Christian life. The biblical doctrine of God requires a much different understanding of Christian experience and spirituality. When, following Scripture, we attempt to envision Christian experience and spirituality within the historical and relational understanding of God and human nature, an inclusive rather than exclusive notion takes place. Encompassing all aspects and dimensions of human life and action, Christian experience becomes all-inclusive and entails revolutionary changes in all aspects of everyday life. Spirituality is no longer the contact with the other side in the eternal instant but the ongoing historical relationship with the God who dwells with His people within historical time and space. This view of Christian spirituality, grounded on the biblical doctrine of God, makes no room for secularization and presents a divinely originated alternative to contemporary secularism.

The biblical doctrine of God also affects the way we conceive the nature of the church. The relational nature of the biblical Godhead suggests a relational interpretation of the nature of the church. Traditional teaching claiming that the church is an institution or sacrament of God's presence in the world become groundless when one accepts the relational nature of the biblical God. A full development of the biblical doctrine of God shows the Trinitarian Godhead involved in mission. The self-appointed mission of the Godhead (IV. B) aims at the salvation of fallen human beings and the establishment of permanent harmony within the created universe. According to biblical revelation, God carries out the various tasks entailed in the mission of salvation within the historical mode of existence of His Creation. Within His master missionary plan God has called the church to play an indispensable role. The missionary calling the Christian church has received from God is not incidental; it is an essential aspect that, permeating everything, gives ultimate direction and purpose to church life and activities. (See Church IV.)

The impact of the doctrine of God on the Christian believer was summarized by Jesus Himself. Praying to His Father, Christ stated that eternal life was for their disciples to "know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3 , NIV). The biblical doctrine of God has been called to occupy grounding and central roles in the thinking and life of Christ's disciples.

IX. Historical Overview

From the first the NT revelation about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit inspired a broad range of theological reflection that still goes on unabated. From this wealth of data only a very brief outline of salient points dealing with the understanding of God's nature and activity will be addressed in this section. The succinct survey that ensues is organized following the main historical periods of Christian theology: the patristic, medieval, reformation, and modern periods.

From the very beginning, the Christian interpretation of God was heavily influenced by extrabiblical philosophy. Because the Christian doctrine of God has become a synthesis between philosophical and biblical ideas, we need to briefly sketch the main philosophical trends that have conditioned the formulation of the Christian doctrine of God.

A. Philosophical Antecedents

The intellectual background for the Christian doctrine of God was provided by Greek philosophy, notably the Platonic and Aristotelic systems, together with some Stoic influences. Plato, by way of Neoplatonic reinterpretations of his thought, became a major influence in patristic thought. Aristotelianism played a decisive role in medieval theology. Indeed, until the end of the twentieth century, the methodological conviction that the understanding of Christian theology requires the foundation of extrabiblical philosophies has been broadly accepted.

1. Neoplatonism

As a philosophical trend, Neoplatonism refers to a syncretistic movement with strong religious overtones. It brings together, not always successfully, elements of Platonism, Pythagoreanism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism. Influential in patristic thought were Philo (c. 20 B.C.- c. A.D. 50), the great Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, and Plutarch (c. A.D. 46- c. 120), representative of middle Platonism. They may be considered as precursors of Neoplatonism, which received systematic formulation in Plotinus (c. A.D. 205–270). These authors embraced Plato's two-world theory, yet modified it in substantial ways. For them the heavenly realm was not merely a world of timeless entities but the transcendent domain of the timeless One. Philo conceived God as timeless, one, transcendent, personal, self-sufficient spaceless, and ineffable, sharing all the perfection of being in an ineffable mode. He considered God so different from the world that a series of intermediary realities belonging to the intelligible world were necessary. God created not only the intelligible world but also our temporal world in which, by means of divine foreknowledge, He acts providentially, allowing for a certain degree of human freedom. Middle Platonism, as expressed by Plutarch, departed from Philo in that he conceived God after Plato's Demiurge, who orders the world only according to the heavenly ideas. Plotinus, sharing the same basic schema, articulated the relation between the One, the intermediary beings, and our world by way of an all-embracing emanative pantheism.

2. Aristotelianism

Aristotle's philosophy simultaneously built on and criticized Plato's system. Aristotle's system is not contradictory to Platonism or Neoplatonism, but a critical outcome of Platonism. Between them are clear differences but also basic similarities. For this reason, in a general sense, Aristotelianism has always been a contributing factor in the development of Greek philosophy even in the Neoplatonic trend noted above. Yet, as an overall systematic approach, Neoplatonism had the upper hand in influencing the patristic and early medieval periods of Christian theology. In a more specific sense Aristotelianism traces its deep influence to the twelfth-century discovery and translation of Aristotle's writings produced in Toledo, Spain, by various Arab and Jewish thinkers. It also developed as Aristotle's works were discussed and explained in Oxford and Paris. This rediscovery of Aristotle's ideas provided grounds for the scholastic synthesis of Christian theology in the medieval period.

Neoplatonism basically agrees with Aristotle on the nature of God. Differences appear in relation to God's activities. Aristotle's view did not make room for divine activity *ad extra*. God does not know the world; He did not create *ex nihilo* or even organize the world, which is everlasting in its temporal spacial realm. God has no dealings with human history, nor can He produce miracles. The only activity proper to the perfection, self-sufficiency, immutability, and timelessness of God is conceived in analogy to the theoretical contemplative life of the philosopher. The action proper to God is to know Himself. In not requiring an object other than Himself, God's activity is self-

sufficient. Because it occurs in timelessness, it is immutable. Because the “goal” of the action is the perfect being that God is, His action is absolutely perfect.

B. Patristic Period

During the patristic period the Christian doctrine of God developed under the working assumption that the Greek Neoplatonic conception of God was, in a broad sense, compatible with biblical revelation. An ever-increasing, though not always uniform, synthesis between Greek philosophy and biblical ideas took place. Inner contradictions in the theological constructions ensued, resulting in an understanding of God cast in the matrix of Greek philosophy rather than biblical thought.

1. Justin Martyr (c. 100-c. 165)

By adopting the Platonic-Aristotelic conception of an eternal, unchangeable, impassible, incorporeal God (*First Apology* 13, 61; *Second Apology* 6 [ANF 1:166, 183, 190]), Justin and the apologists set the blueprint for classical theology. Yet Justin also spoke of God in biblical, personal terms which, as they stand in Scripture, are incompatible with the philosophical ideas of eternity, immutability, and impassibility of God that Justin had implicitly adopted. This description of God corresponds to Christ’s Father. Since such a being cannot act in history, a mediator is required. Drawing from later Judaism, Stoicism, and Philo, Justin speaks about the divine Logos. This Logos preexisted in God as His reason and is contained in His essence (*Dialogue With Trypho* 128, 129 [ANF 1:264]). By emanation-generation the Logos was born of the Father’s will, becoming a person shortly before Creation (*Dialogue With Trypho* 61, 62 [ANF 1:227, 228]). Being Word and first-begotten of God, the Logos was also divine (*First Apology* 63 [ANF 1:184]). The Logos, and not the Father, was incarnated in Jesus Christ (*First Apology* 5; *Second Apology* 10 [ANF 1:164, 191]). The stage for the doctrine of the immanent Trinity is set, together with a certain subordinationism clearly present in the Logos doctrine.

2. Irenaeus (c. 115-c. 202)

Irenaeus approached the doctrine of God from within his apologetical concern against Gnostic heresies. He purposely followed Scripture, while Neoplatonic categories seemed to play little role in his theology. Thus, Irenaeus approached the doctrine of God from the perspective of His works rather than His nature. Two main ideas were central to Irenaeus’ view of God: Creation and Trinity. According to Irenaeus, God is Creator of the world *ex nihilo* (*Against Heresies* 2. 1. 1; 2. 10. 4 [ANF 1:359, 370]). The Trinity moves within the historical realm, where Scripture presents God as working out salvation. Consequently, Irenaeus’ conception of the Trinity was economic, for example, engulfing both the inner reality of God in Himself and His acts of salvation in human history. This

view, due to its lack of philosophical speculation, was considered naive and was overcome by later theological reflection.

3. Origen (c. 185-c. 254)

At the zenith of the Alexandrian School, Origen's thought represented the first attempt to overcome heresies by way of a systematic approach to theology. Unfortunately Origen developed his approach to theology not on the basis of Scripture alone, as Irenaeus had endeavored, but rather on the basis of Neoplatonic philosophical ideas. These ideas, to a large extent, regulated Origen's conception of God's nature: God is the one, simple, timeless, spaceless, immutable, impassible, invisible, intellectual, personal reality (*On First Principles* 1. 1. 6; 1. 2. 4, 6; 1. 3. 4 [ANF 4:245, 247, 252, 253]).

Origen attempted to express the biblical revelation about the Trinitarian God within the same Neoplatonic philosophical categories. In so doing he moved from the economic-historical level in which Scripture reveals the Godhead to the immanent, timeless, spaceless level corresponding to the nature of God in Himself. Thus the Father alone is the simple and unoriginated cause of everything (*ibid.* 1. 3. 5 [ANF 4:253]). To explain the divine "multiplicity" of hypostases, Origen devised the idea of eternal generation, according to which the Son is timelessly generated by the Father (*ibid.* 1. 2. 4, 6 [ANF 4:247]). The Holy Spirit, though belonging to the unity of the Trinity, belongs to a lower ontological status than the Son. The Father, as source of everything, has the highest ontological rank, even above the Son (*ibid.* 1. 3. 4, 5 [ANF 4:252, 253]). A clear, twofold subordinationism is implicit in Origen's interpretation of the immanent Trinity. Origen conceives the Trinity as eternally active as Creator, benefactor, and provident (*ibid.* 1. 4. 3; Butterworth edition 1973). The Trinity's blessed and ruling power "exercises control of all things" (*ibid.*). God's power does not involve the everlasting existence of temporal creation. However, following basic dualistic Platonic ontology, Origen taught that all things "have always existed in wisdom, by a prefiguration and preformation" (*ibid.* 1. 4. 3, 5). This constituted the basis for the doctrine of divine predestination. What has been made by God in Creation is what was already made, and therefore predestined, in God's eternal activity.

4. Trinitarian Heresies

From the second to the fourth centuries A.D. some unsuccessful conceptualizations of the biblical teaching regarding the Godhead were formulated. Dynamic Monarchianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, and Arianism were efforts at understanding the Trinity from the intellectual background provided by Neoplatonism in the tradition of Justin Martyr and Origen.

Dynamic Monarchianism was initiated by Theodotus (c . 190) and more technically developed by Paul of Samosata (second half of the third century). This position was built on Adoptionism, the christological heresy according to which Christ was a mere man upon whom the Spirit descended, anointing Him with divine powers at the time of His baptism, thus "adopting" Him as Son. Consequently, in the being of the eternal God there

is no plurality of persons. The idea of an eternal, immanent Trinity is replaced by the idea of God's "dynamic" presence in Christ through the indwelling Spirit. Monarchianism holds that God is not a plurality of Persons but rather one sovereign, eternal being; "dynamic" means that the one God is connected with the man Jesus Christ through impersonal spiritual power.

Modalistic Monarchianism was initiated by the end of the second century by Noetus of Smyrna (c. 200). As with Dynamic Monarchianism, Modalistic Monarchianism also claimed that there is only one God, the Father. If Christ were God, as Christian faith maintained, then He must be identical with the Father. Father and Son are not two different divine persons but, rather, names that refer to the same God involved in different activities at different times. The Spirit plays no role except as another word to designate the Father. In Modalistic Monarchianism, "monarchy" affirms that God is one, namely the Father, while "modalism" states that God the Father is able to adopt a special mode of historical revelation in Jesus Christ the Son. Modalistic Monarchianism is a heresy to the Trinitarian position because it rejects the idea of Trinity, both in the immanent and economic levels.

Sabellian Modalism thought of God as a monad, which expressed itself in three successive historical operations, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. By including the Holy Spirit and placing the Father at the same level with the other persons, Sabellianism improves Noetus' version of modalism. Yet the Trinity of persons is recognized only as modes of divine self-manifestations and not as belonging to the being of God Himself.

Arianism was originated by Arius (c. 250–336), who approached the understanding of the Immanent Trinity within a conception of God closer to Aristotelianism than Platonism and Neoplatonism. Even though Arianism shared Origen's conception of God as immutable, timeless, and simple, it rejected the idea of emanation implicit in his concept of eternal generation of the Son. Precisely because of God the Father's simplicity and immutability, Arius was convinced that His essence is not communicable through emanation or generation. On the other hand, God's timeless transcendence required a mediator who could execute God's purposes in space and time. Thus, Arius replaced Origen's idea of an eternal generation with the idea of creation out of nothing, a creation described as "before" and "outside" time, yet "there was a time when he [the Son] was not" (O'Carroll 26). The Son is, therefore, the most exalted creature, not to be compared with the rest of Creation, and Himself Creator of the world. The Holy Spirit is created by the Son and subordinate to him. Arianism, then, is the most severe distortion of the Trinitarian concept of God, bringing Monarchianism and Subordinationism to their extreme expression.

5. Council of Nicea (325)

The first ecumenical council met in Nicea to address the threat presented by Arianism, which it decisively condemned. The council affirmed the divinity of the Son, pronounced the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son—the Son is "born of the

Father, that is of the substance of the Father” and set forth the much-discussed consubstantiality (*homoousios*) of Father and Son. Finally, it affirmed the Holy Spirit as an afterthought by saying “And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit.” In 381 the second Ecumenical Council met in Constantinople and proclaimed what is known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which enlarged Nicea’s statement by explicitly affirming the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

6. Augustine (354-430)

In Augustine’s works the patristic synthesis of Neoplatonism and Scripture reaches its most articulated and influential formulation. According to Augustine God is timeless, simple, immutable, self-sufficient, impassible, omniscient, and omnipotent (*Confessions* 7. 11; 12. 15; 11. 11; 11. 13; 13. 16 [NPNF-1 1:110, 167, 180, 196]; *On the Holy Trinity* 1. 1. 3; 5. 2. 3 [NPNF-1 3:18, 88]; *The City of God* 11. 10; 22. 1 [NPNF-1 2:210, 479]). On this basis, Augustine brought the doctrine of the Trinity to its classical theological expression in his book *On the Holy Trinity*. Unlike the Cappadocian Fathers, Augustine started with the conception of the oneness of God, and from there he moved to His threeness. The oneness of God was conceived by Augustine in relation to the consubstantiality (identity of substance) of the persons. God’s simple, timeless essence is not only the ultimate ground for His ontological oneness, but it also replaces the Father as the fountainhead of the Trinity, thus becoming the source from which the persons and their unity are deduced.

Augustine is unhappy with the word “persons,” probably because it suggests the idea of separate individuals. He believes that the term is used “not in order to give a complete explanation by means of it, but in order that we might not be obliged to remain silent” (*On the Holy Trinity* 5. 9 [NPNF-1 3:92]). Augustine’s theory is that the persons are unchangeable, original, subsistent relations. He takes the ideas of eternal generation and procession and uses them to define the relations. Persons, thus, are reduced to the relations of begetting, being begotten, and proceeding. Within this framework and advocating the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (*Filioque*), Augustine advances his idea that the Holy Spirit, as subsistent person, is the mutual love of Father and Son, the consubstantial bond that unites them. There are reasons to wonder whether this view does justice to the biblical revelation about three different and independent subjects. The *Deo uno* seems to take over the *Deo trino*. Trinity is replaced by monarchy.

The timelessness of God’s simple essence gives rise to the interpretation of God’s foreknowledge-predestination-providence as the divine eternal sovereign causation of multiplicity, temporal creation, and history (see *The City of God* 22. 2 [NPNF-1 2:480]). The Platonic duplication of eternity in time is not produced by a Demiurge but rather by God who is conceived as creating both the world of ideas and their duplication in time (*ibid.*).

7. The Athanasian Creed (c. 430-500)

The Athanasian Creed, also known as Quicumque, is considered to be the definitive expression of Catholic belief in the Trinity. Drawn up by an unknown author, this creed shows the influence of Augustine's theology of the Trinity. It explicitly expresses the simultaneous plurality and oneness of God: "The Father is God, the Son is God, (and) the Holy Spirit is God; and nevertheless there are not three gods, but there is one God" (Denzinger 15). It declares the divinity of persons not only by explicitly calling each one God and Lord but also by adjudicating to each one, respectively, the divine qualities of uncreatedness, immensity, eternity, and omnipotence. It clearly distinguishes the three different persons, who are not to be confused (against Sabellianism). Unfortunately a subtle form of Monarchianism and ontological subordinationism is preserved when the differences of the persons are explained metaphysically by recourse to the ideas of generation and procession. Thus the Father is not begotten, while the Son is begotten from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (an expression of *Filioque*). The oneness of the Trinity is explained on the basis of its divine substance or nature: "The divine nature of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one" (Denzinger 39).

C. Medieval Period

Theological reflection during the Middle Ages articulated in a systematic way the logical consequences of the Augustinian synthesis. Unlike Augustine, however, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the most prominent representative of scholastic theology, developed his theology on an Aristotelic philosophical foundation.

Thomas Aquinas did not formulate a new conception of God, but rather, building on Augustine, he brought the classical doctrine of God to a level of technical specificity and inner coherence not attained by former expositors. His system of thought built on his own Christian interpretation of Aristotle. Aquinas dealt first with the doctrine of God who is described as timeless, one, simple, immutable, perfect, and good (*Summa Theologica* 1a. 20. 4; 1a. 11. 3; 1a. 3. 6, 7; 1a. 9. 1; 1a. 4. 1; 1a. 6. 1). Once the doctrine of God is completed, the doctrine of the Trinity is brought in for lengthy discussion (*ibid.* 1a. 27–43). The one and simple essence or substance of God is understood in analogy to the workings and characteristics of the human intellect; more precisely, in the likeness of the Aristotelian interpretation of the intellect. Consequently, the persons in the Godhead refer not to independent centers of knowledge and activity as the biblical record declares. That would imply Tritheism. Persons are rather real distinctions within the simple absolute divine essence. The distinctions, which determine the persons as subsistent within the essence, are relations within the essence, and the relations are conceived as originating from the generation of the Son and procession of the Holy Spirit. Thomas integrates the classical teaching on the eternal generation and procession of the Spirit as necessary "results" of God's intellect (the Father) that, in expressing itself, produces in itself a Word (the Son). Moreover, God is not only knowing but also simultaneously loving. Love arises from the two divine persons, Father and Son, in an act that is described as unitive movement, a kind of return. That movement issuing from both the Father and the

Son precipitates an eruption within themselves, namely the Holy Spirit, that becomes as real as they. The Holy Spirit is the act in which the love that issues from and unites the Father and the Son is consummated. Thus a threefold distinction of mutual opposition (paternity, filiation, spiration-procession) is established within the simple essence of God as identical with it. These subsistent relations, understood as opposition within the simple essence of God, are known as hypostases or persons. The relations, however, are identical with the simple essence. Thus, in the inner structure of the simple substance a certain relationality is revealed.

Thomas conceives foreknowledge, predestination, and providence as grounded in God's own timeless being (*ibid.*, 1a. 14. 13; 1a. 19. 3, 4; 1a. 22), thus continuing the Augustinian tradition. Aquinas' views on God are attractive and coherent within the philosophical system he chose to follow. However, since Aquinas' approach does not flow from Scripture, he is unable to present the inner coherence of the biblical view of God.

D. The Reformation

The theological concern of the Protestant Reformation centered on soteriological and ecclesiological issues. This emphasis may explain why the doctrine of God was not considered for revision. In general terms Protestantism reaffirmed the classical approach to God while at the same time intensifying or modifying some emphases. Additionally, the philosophical foundation for theology was not specifically addressed. Luther's and Calvin's theologies used biblical data and language extensively, thus giving the impression of being based only on Scripture. However, in their writings the Neoplatonic, Augustinian, and Ockamist influences are at work, in an implicit rather than explicit manner.

1. Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Luther's theology of God is based on God's revelation in Jesus Christ. From this basic starting point he draws a distinction between the revealed God and the hidden God. The revealed God is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, in whom God reveals Himself as He really is, a God of love and justification. This is the work proper to God. Broadly speaking, the revealed God belongs to the historical level of immanence. The hidden God is the naked God beyond revelation (*Luther's Works* 5:44-46). According to Brunner, Luther in this level includes the wrath, mystery, and absolute power of God as well as our rational and legal knowledge of Him. Regarding the Trinity, Luther affirmed the traditional dogma. On the issue of God's actions, he intensified the Augustinian concepts of God's sovereignty, foreknowledge, and predestination, which would also be emphasized by Calvin. Luther's doctrine of God, however, falls short of faithfully including all biblical data on God.

2. John Calvin (1509-1564)

Calvin approached theology in a systematic way, following the tradition of Augustine. For him God is timeless, simple, impassible, immutable, and self-existent (*Institutes* 3. 21. 5; 1. 2. 2; 1. 13. 2; 1. 17. 13; 1. 18. 3; 3. 2. 6). Calvin reaffirmed the classical Augustinian position on the Trinity (*ibid.* 1. 13). Regarding the actions of God, Calvin even intensified the Augustinian view. On the basis of God's timelessness and immutability, foreknowledge and predestination were equated. Thus the sovereignty of God became the deployment of His eternal will for creation and humanity. Calvin's doctrine of God also falls short of faithfully including and integrating all biblical data on God.

3. Anabaptism

Also known as the Radical Reformation, Anabaptism developed in the sixteenth century as a pluralistic movement with a pietistic, practical, and biblical orientation. Because of the Anabaptist emphasis on practical Christian experience, theological issues were dealt with in relation to their practical application. With few exceptions, Anabaptists were orthodox in doctrine, accepting Nicene trinitarianism. They did not develop a speculative or biblical understanding of the Godhead but rather reaffirmed traditional teaching as the clarification of practical issues required. The trinitarian doctrine of God was important to them as a framework for ethical and communal life. Occasionally, however, their references to traditional doctrine may be read as a departure from it, as when Menno Simons refers to the Trinitarian persons not as modes or relations but rather as "three, true, divine beings" who "in deity, will, power, and works" are one (*Confession of the Triune God*). Within this practical context, it is not surprising to find the Holy Spirit receiving a greater emphasis than in classical theology. Practical concerns tend to lean more on the work of the economic than on the nature of the immanent Trinity.

4. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)

Arminius formulated his approach to Protestant theology within an explicit philosophical framework. Following Aristotelic-Thomistic intellectualism, Arminius strongly agreed with the traditional view of God as timeless, simple, impassible, and immutable (Arminius 1:436–442; 2:34, 35). Arminius affirmed that God's foreknowledge of future free contingent human actions was caused by the future will and action of human beings (3:66, 67; 3:482, 483). Specifically, a "middle or intermediate [kind of] knowledge ought to intervene in things that depend on the liberty of created [*arbitrii*] choice or pleasure" (2:39). Arminius felt uncomfortable with the idea of absolute predestination, according to which damnation and salvation are determined by God's immutable timeless decree "without any regard whatever to righteousness or sin, to obedience or disobedience" (1:212; cf. 1:211–247). Consequently, Arminius thought that salvation is the result of God's absolute decree, "in which he decreed to receive into favor *those who repent and believe*" (247). Arminius' theology moves within a philosophical rather than biblical matrix.

E. The Modern Period

The rise of the modern antimetaphysical trend developed since the Enlightenment has significantly influenced Christian theology. New philosophical trends became increasingly critical of the Platonic-Aristotelic tradition on the basis of which the classical understanding of God and theology had been cast. On the basis of Kantian, Hegelian, and Whiteheadian thought new theological interpretations were produced by liberal, avant garde theologians. In North America Whiteheadian Process Philosophy is becoming influential in the thinking of an increasing number of liberal as well as some conservative theologians. At the same time, the old classical understanding of God still continues.

1.Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834)

Schleiermacher is considered the father of liberal theology because he devised a new ground on which Christian theology should build its doctrines. Theology, according to Schleiermacher, is not grounded in cognitive revelation, reason, or ethics, but in an inner religious experience identified as the feeling of absolute dependence on God. Since God is timeless, immutable, and simple (*Christian Faith* §52, §56), there is no place for distinctions within Him. Consequently, Schleiermacher dismissed the doctrine of the Trinity as second-order language that does not speak about the being of God in Himself. According to him the doctrine of the Trinity is inconceivable and contradicts divine simplicity; it is a theoretical construct produced by the speculative imagination of philosophy (§170–172).

2.Karl Barth (1886-1968)

According to Barth, God is one simple, timeless essence whose content is lordship or sovereignty. His personhood is one and identical with His essence. However, Barth also manages to believe in a Trinitarian God. Thus he reverses Schleiermacher's rejection of the classical doctrine of the Trinity, not only by adopting and developing it, but also by making it the structure of his entire *Dogmatics* . Barth follows Augustine's view that "persons" is a mere convention of speech that we are forced to use not to remain silent. The three persons are modes of existence of this one essence, required by the fact of revelation. In order to avoid tritheism, the modern idea of independent personality is not to be associated with them. In short, Barth's understanding of God and the Trinity is very close to that of Aquinas. The main differences between Barth and Aquinas are Barth's equation of God's simplicity with His sovereignty and the replacement of Aquinas' intellectualistic conception of the Trinity by analysis of the logic of revelation in Jesus Christ.

3.Alfred Whitehead (1861-1947)

Whitehead develops a metaphysical system whose capping piece is God. From a Platonic framework Whitehead builds his system under the influence of British Empiricism—John Locke (1632–1704) and David Hume (1711–1776). According to Whitehead, God is an entity that, like any other, must conform to the same metaphysical principles valid for the interpretation of the world. By applying the metaphysical

principles of worldly entities to God, Whitehead arrives at the conclusion that God's nature is dipolar. The primordial pole in God's nature is timeless, unlimited, conceptual, free, complete, potential, actually deficient, unconscious (Whitehead 521, 524). The consequent pole in God's nature is temporal, determined, incomplete, fully actual, and conscious (524). "The consequent nature of God is the fulfillment of his experience [knowledge] by his reception of the multiple freedom of actuality [the world process] into the harmony of his own actualization. It is God as really actual, completing the deficiency of his mere conceptual actuality [his primordial pole]" (530). This system allows God's timeless primordial pole to act only by means of "persuasion" or "lure" (522). God's temporal consequent nature knows and experiences the world, thereby completing himself and reaching full reality (actuality). According to Whitehead's system, God does not create the world; He saves it (526). God "saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of His own life." In this consists the "divine judgment" of the world (525).

"What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands" (532).

God and the world are, therefore, mutually interdependent. Even though Whitehead's criticism of classical thought is well taken, his dipolar view of God's nature has more in common with classical than with biblical thought.

4. Wolfhart Pannenberg (b. 1928)

Pannenberg is a leading neoclassical theologian writing at the end of the twentieth century. His God is infinite, timeless, omnipotent, and omnipresent (Pannenberg 1:397–422). The three divine persons are also described as three forms or modes of God's existence. Spirit, as essence of God, is to be understood not as intellect (*nous*) but rather as an impersonal force of life, further described in analogy to Michael Faraday's idea of universal field. Knowledge about the three persons of the deity—their names and their distinctions—is derived from the biblical testimony that deals with the economic Trinity. The relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity is explained in connection with Pannenberg's understanding of God's action, which cannot involve the setting or the achievement of goals that would impinge on God's eternal self-sufficiency (384–396). God's action cannot be attributed to the immanent Trinity but rather to the immanent Trinity *ad extra*, that is, in relation to the world. God's activity *ad extra* is understood by Pannenberg as the self-actualization of the eternal God in time or, in other words, the temporal duplication of God's eternal life. Departing from Barth, however, Pannenberg does not apply the idea of eternal repetition to the duplication of persons in the immanent Trinity itself, but rather to the duplication of the eternal God the Father in space and time (the Son and the Spirit).

5. The "Open View" of God

The “open” designation seems to reflect the fact that this view calls for the openness of the eternal transcendent God of classical theology to the limitations and risks of the temporal world. The open view of God, also designated as “free-will theism,” has developed as a direct result of Whitehead’s influence on American Protestantism. This trend has gained acceptance not only among liberal Protestant theologians such as John B. Cobb, Jr. (b . 1925), but also among conservative evangelical theologians such as Clark Pinnock “(b . 1937). The open view uses Whiteheadian understandings to replace the Platonic-Aristotelian framework of classical theology. Whitehead’s views, consequently, are incorporated into theology only after suffering various degrees of reinterpretation and adaptation to Christian thinking. The more conservative proponents of the open view are forthright in their criticism of some aspects of Whitehead’s system, such as the idea that God is not the absolute Creator and that God’s way of acting in the world is limited to a persuasive mode, leaving no room for occasional coercive interventions (Hasker 139, 140). In spite of these criticisms, the open view of God implicitly assumes a modified version of God’s dipolar nature. God is, at the same time, timeless and temporal. Unlike the timeless God of classical theism, the God of “free-will theism” is able to enter into direct relationships with His creatures within the past, present, and future sequence of time. However, by adopting the Whiteheadian, rather than biblical, view of divine knowledge, the open view limits God’s knowledge to the past and present dimensions of time. In other words, the open view of God makes no room for divine foreknowledge of the free actions of human beings (Pinnock 124; Hasker 187). This conviction renders biblical prophecy uncertain. Moreover, divine providence cannot lead us to make the best long-term choice simply because God does not know the end from the beginning (Basinger 163).

F. Seventh-day Adventists

Seventh-day Adventists have limited themselves to dogmatic and theological statements, staying away from a systematic development of the Doctrine of God and the Trinity. Most theological statements have been produced within the context of studies about Christology, atonement, and redemption. In a very real sense, Adventist emphasis on Scriptures as the sole source of data for executing theology has given theological reflection on God a new and revolutionary start. Systematically distrustful and critical of traditional theological positions, Adventists were determined to build doctrines on the basis of Scripture alone. The difficulties implicit in this fresh approach may account for the scant number of Adventist statements on the doctrine of God. Among Adventists, developmental theological statements about the doctrine of the Trinity are mainly of three kinds: those that involved temporal subordinationism, those in which the classical interpretation of the doctrine on the Trinity is rejected, and those that affirm the Trinity as the biblical conception of the Christian God. Following a description of these, a brief reference to contemporary trends will be made.

1. Temporal Subordinationism

As early as 1854 J. M. Stephenson, writing on the atonement, clearly argued in favor of subordinationism, according to which Christ would have been temporally generated by the Father, that is, begotten by the Father (Stephenson 126). Being generated, Christ was divine, yet not eternal (*ibid.* 128); Stephenson accepted a semi-Arian Christology (cf. “Christology,” *SDA Encyclopedia* 10:352–354). Other pioneers endorsing similar views were James White (1821–1881), Joseph Bates (1792–1872), Uriah Smith (1832–1903), J. H. Waggoner (1820–1889), E. J. Waggoner (1855–1916), and W. W. Prescott (1855–1944). Much should not be made of this erroneous teaching, however, since both E. J. Waggoner and Uriah Smith considered it compatible with, and not detracting from, the full divinity of Jesus as the “fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9 , KJV; see also E. J. Waggoner 44; Smith 17).

2.Rejection of the Classical Doctrine

The rejection of the classical theological interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity by some Seventh-day Adventist authors does not necessarily entail a rejection of the biblical revelation about the Trinity, because they reject the interpretation, not the facts themselves. The classical doctrine is frequently rejected on the basis of very weak arguments, such as that the word “Trinity” is not biblical or that the doctrine is against our God-given sense and reason. Sometimes the doctrine of the Trinity is rejected on the basis of wrong arguments, such as, for instance, that it teaches that the Holy Spirit is a person rather than an impersonal influence. However, more serious theological reasons have been submitted for rejecting the classical doctrine on the Trinity. Thus, some Adventist pioneers understood that the classical interpretation of the immanent Trinity was incompatible with the economic Trinity as presented in Scriptures (Frisbie, in RH Mar . 12, 1857). Others clearly perceived that, should such an interpretation be accepted as correct, the biblical teachings about the historical actions of the Trinity would need to be radically reinterpreted, notably the teaching about the divine reality of Christ’s atonement on the cross. James White found that the emphasis placed by the classical doctrine of the Trinity on the oneness of the immanent Trinity involved a lack of clarity regarding the distinctions among divine persons (*Day-Star*, Jan. 24, 1846) Loughborough went so far as to say that God is one person rather than three (RH Nov. 5, 1861), thus suggesting that the Father and the Son are the same person (Canright, in RH June 18, 1867; Bates 204, 205). Such a confusion of persons was correctly evaluated as involving the identification of Christ with the eternal God (J. White, in RH June 6, 1871), thus diminishing the divine status (J. White, in RH Nov. 29, 1877) of the historical Jesus Christ and His atonement (Stephenson 151; Hull, in RH Nov. 10 and Nov. 17, 1859; J. H. Waggoner 174). On the other hand, since early Adventists did not differentiate between biblical facts and their classical interpretation as conditioned by Greek, philosophical ideas, an antitrinitarian sentiment was pervasive during the first decades of Adventist history.

3.Affirmation of the Biblical Trinity

In spite of early temporal subordinationism, the tendency to think about the Holy Spirit in impersonal terms (Smith 10), and a strong critical stance against the classical doctrine of the Trinity, most Adventist thinkers have believed in the biblically revealed teaching that the Christian God is not circumscribed to the Person of the Father in heaven, but also includes the historical Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as divine Persons. The truth of the full divinity of Christ was specially emphasized by E. J. Waggoner in 1888. In 1892 the doctrine of the Trinity was set forth explicitly when the Pacific Press reprinted Samuel T. Spear's article on the Trinity. Since Spear was not an Adventist, it is not surprising to find in his article a strong emphasis on the *Deo uno* of tradition and a remnant of ontological subordinationism regarding the person of the Son. With increasing levels of precision the Seventh-day Adventist Church affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity, first in the "unofficial" 1872 statement penned by Uriah Smith, and in the 1931 and 1980 official statements of belief. Ellen White's 1898 statement that "in Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived" (DA 530) constituted the starting point both for the affirmation of the Trinity as an authentic, biblical teaching (Dederen 5, 12), and for a distinctive way of understanding it as a doctrine. Ellen White's statement dismissed not only the basic error included in both early Adventist Christology and doctrine of God, namely, the temporal subordinationism of the preexistent Christ, but it also signaled the necessary departure from the classical doctrine (Dederen 13), which involved the eternal, ontological subordination of the Son. In God's eternal being there is no eternal generation, and consequently, no eternal procession of the Spirit. The biblical concepts on the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit must be understood as belonging to the historical personal acts of the Trinity in the work of Creation and redemption. In the being of God is an essential coprimordiality of three coequal, coeternal, nonoriginated persons. Moreover, Adventism conceives the idea of persons in its biblical sense, as referring to three individual centers of intelligence and action (Dederen 15). Finally, having departed from the philosophical conception of God as timeless and having embraced the historical conception of God as presented in the Bible, Adventists envisage the relation between the immanent and economic Trinity as one of identity rather than correspondence. The works of salvation are produced in time and history by the immanent Trinity (Guy 13) by way of its different Persons, conceived as centers of consciousness and action. Consequently, the indivisibility of God's works in history is not conceived by Adventists as being determined by the oneness of essence—as taught in the Augustinian classical tradition—but rather by the oneness of the historical task of redemption (Dederen 20). The danger of Tritheism involved in this position becomes real when the oneness of God is reduced to a mere unity conceived in analogy to a human society or a fellowship of action. Beyond such a unity of action, however, it is necessary to envision God as the one single reality which, in the very acts by which He reveals Himself directly in history, transcends the limits of our human reason (Prescott 17). In no way could human minds achieve what the classical doctrine about the Trinity claims to perceive, namely, the description of the inner structure of God's being. Together with the entire Creation, we must accept God's oneness by faith (James 2:19). Ellen White wrote: "The revelation of Himself that God has given in His word is for our study. This we may seek to understand. But beyond this we are not to penetrate. The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out in conjectures regarding the nature of God, but the effort will be fruitless. This problem has not been given us to solve. No

human mind can comprehend God. None are to indulge in speculation regarding His nature. Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion” (MH 429).

4. Contemporary Trends

Generally speaking, contemporary Adventists have continued to center their theological interests in soteriological and eschatological matters. For this reason the technical discussion of the doctrine of God has not become an issue. However, while dealing with other related theological issues, such as atonement, justification, sanctification, and eschatology, a growing inclination to over-emphasize the love, goodness, and mercy of God to the detriment of His justice and wrath be perceived in some authors (e.g., Provensha 49). Some discussion has been initiated supporting the open view of God (Rice 11–58; see IX.E.5).

X. Ellen G. White Comments

A. Speculative Study of God

“One of the greatest evils that attends the quest for knowledge, the investigations of science, is the disposition to exalt human reasoning above its true value and its proper sphere. Many attempt to judge the Creator and His works by their own imperfect knowledge of science. They endeavor to determine the nature and attributes and prerogatives of God, and indulge in speculative theories concerning the Infinite One. Those who engage in this line of study are treading upon forbidden ground. Their research will yield no valuable results and can be pursued only at the peril of the soul” (MH 427).

B. General Revelation

“The beauties of nature are an expression of the love of God for human intelligences, and in the Garden of Eden the existence of God was demonstrated in the objects of nature that surrounded our first parents. Every tree planted in the Garden spoke to them, saying that the invisible things of God were clearly seen, being understood by the things which were made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (UL 198).

“But while it is true that in the beginning God could be discerned in nature, it does not follow that after the Fall a perfect knowledge of God was revealed in the natural world to Adam and his posterity. Nature could convey her lessons to man in his innocence. But transgression brought a blight upon the earth and intervened between nature and nature’s God. Had Adam and Eve never disobeyed their Creator, had they remained in the path of perfect rectitude, they would have continued to learn of God through His works. But when they listened to the tempter and sinned against God, the light of the garments of heavenly innocence departed from them. Deprived of the

heavenly light, they could no longer discern the character of God in the works of His hand” (8T 255, 256).

“The Gentiles are to be judged according to the light that is given them, according to the impressions they had received of their Creator in nature. They have reasoning powers, and can distinguish God in His created works. God speaks to all men through His providence in nature. He makes known to all that He is the living God. The Gentiles could reason that the things that are made could not have fallen into exact order, and worked out a designed purpose, without a God who has originated all. They could reason from cause to effect, that it must be that there was a first cause, an intelligent agent, that could be no other than the Eternal God. The light of God in nature is shining continually into the darkness of heathenism, but many who see this light do not glorify the Lord as God. They do not permit reason to lead them to acknowledge their Creator. They refuse the Lord, and set up senseless idols to adore. They make images which represent God and worship His created works as a partial acknowledgment of Him, but they dishonor Him in their hearts” (ST Aug. 12, 1889).

C. The Reality of God

1. God’s Existence

“The existence and power of God, the truth of His Word, are facts that even Satan and his hosts cannot at heart deny” (FLB 90).

“Faith familiarizes the soul with the existence and presence of God, and, living with an eye single to the glory of God, more and more we discern the beauty of His character, the excellence of His grace” (1SM 335).

“Christ and the apostles taught clearly the truth of the existence of a personal God” (8T 266). “The existence of a personal God, the unity of Christ with His Father, lies at the foundation of all true science” (UL 316).

“It is faith that familiarizes the soul with the existence and presence of God; and when we live with an eye single to His glory, we discern more and more the beauty of His character” (RH Jan. 24, 1888).

2. God as Mystery

“Let human beings consider that by all their searching they can never interpret God. When the redeemed shall be pure and clean to come into His presence, they will understand that all that has reference to the eternal God, the unapproachable God, cannot be represented in figures. It is safe to contemplate God, the great and wonderful God, and Jesus Christ, the express image of God. God gave His only begotten Son to our world, that we might through His righteous character behold the character of God” (18MR 222).