See also Body; Dichotomy; Human Being; Soul; Spirit

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Trinity, The Holy. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the one true God eternally exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Trinitarianism is the Christian variety of monotheism, carrying forward the OT's insistence that God is one (Deut. 6:4), while including in that unity the Father, who sends his Son; the Son, who is sent; and the Spirit, who is sent by them both. It has been described by James Denney as "the change in the conception of God which followed, as it was necessitated by, the New Testament conception of Christ and His work." It is thus a biblical doctrine, not only in the sense that its essential content is found in the OT and NT but also in the deeper sense that the two-Testament canon of Scripture came into being to testify to the conviction that Israel's God sent his Son and poured out his Spirit. Thus B. B. Warfield defined the NT as "the documentation of the religion of the incarnate Son and of the outpoured Spirit, that is to say, of the religion of the Trinity."

Because it is biblical, the doctrine of the Trinity also coheres with the content of the gospel, which is nothing less than reconciliation with God the Father through the Son's work applied by the Holy Spirit. The theological project of explicating the doctrine of the Trinity from Scripture is often portrayed as a constructive task, assembling from raw materials a doctrine that was not previously there. But in fact a Christian finds the Trinity in Scripture because the Triune God is already at work on both sides of the equation: bringing Scripture together, and bringing the regenerate mind to seek there what it knows by experience.

Biblical Revelation. The Trinity is often called a mystery, but those who use this word should first of all acknowledge its NT sense: something long present but late revealed. Paul proclaims "the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed" (Rom. 16:25 ESV); "the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God . . . now . . . made known" (Eph. 3:9–10 ESV). Because Paul is speaking directly about the work of the Son and the Spirit, he is also speaking indirectly about the doctrine of God. Because the Trinity was not made known until God sent

forth his Son and Spirit in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4–6), accomplishing salvation in history was the condition for communicating doctrinal truth. Hence it is primarily promised and foreshadowed in the OT but is analyzed and indicated only in the NT. It is traditional to say that God's triunity is adumbrated—literally, "shadowed forth"—in the OT. Adumbration is not revelation.

However, while not yet revealed in the OT time, the reality of the Trinity is present there precisely as much as the gospel is, "foreseen" by Scripture and "preached beforehand" (Gal. 3:8 ESV). The revelation of Christ and the Spirit throws light back on the preparatory period. With retrospective clarity, readers of the completed canon can reread the OT to see what God indicated in advance there. Some of the phenomena that take on new meaning in light of the coming of Christ and the Spirit include the sheer richness of the monotheism proper to the living God, manifested in the variety and the oddness of God's names ("YHWH" the proper name, "Elohim" as the generic name in plural form). The names are sometimes doubled or even tripled in liturgical settings (Isa. 6; Num. 6) in a way difficult to account for satisfactorily without the trinitarian hypothesis. The prophetic tendency to personify divine attributes such as wisdom and word (but also power, hand, name, glory, face, law, and many more) seems thicker than merely figurative language and easily gives way to the advent of actual divine persons (hypostases) as the fulfillment of literary personifications (hypostastizations). Some of God's agents, especially "the angel of the LORD," linger at the threshold between identity and difference, sometimes seeming to be God in person and at other times acting as those sent by him. When John's Gospel describes the *logos* as simultaneously "God . . . and with God" (John 1:1), it is announcing the conceptual resolution of what the OT authors inquired after (1 Pet. 1:10–12), because the Evangelist writes in the full light of the actual resolution in history (John 1:14).

Several (not all) of these phenomena are exploited by the NT's own use of the OT, and the NT also retroactively discerns the preexistent Son and Spirit in the OT in even more surprising ways. Especially striking is the way NT authors find Christ and the Spirit in contexts where they were not explicitly named (John 8:56; 1 Cor. 10:4; Gal. 3:14), as well as the way they identify dialogue between the Father and the Son in the OT's Spirit-given words, such as "Sit at my right hand" (Matt. 22:44), "I will send my messenger ahead of you" (Mark 1:2), and "a body you prepared for me" (Heb. 10:5). The NT's

reading of the OT discerns persons in relation within the one God and secures the doctrine of the Trinity as canonical theology.

Historical Development. The canonical dynamic of the biblical material was the main factor to determine the direction that the doctrine took in the early centuries. The early church grew increasingly skillful at drawing out implications of a biblical witness that started with the one God and saw that oneness unfold into a threefold unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In a wide variety of ways, theologians gained fluency in speaking of God as one and as three; considered from outside (the one God) and from inside (the three persons); described absolutely (a single being) and relatively (Father, Son, and Spirit in relation). The key idea was that what happened in Christ and the Spirit was of ultimate significance for identifying the one true God, yet it was not a change in God's identity. In need of nouns, theologians soon enough settled on the terms "one being in three persons."

Two other factors in the church's formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity were the appropriation of philosophical categories from the surrounding Greco-Roman cultural milieu on one hand and confrontation with emerging heresies on the other. Late antiquity's intellectual world included a number of helpful concepts and schemas for thinking about ultimate issues, and theologians made critical use of these in various ways. None of the available concepts was quite appropriate for the trinitarian task, preoccupied as they were with the God-world relationship (rather than distinctions within God), emanations of divinity (which tended to blur the difference between the world and the Son, since both "come from God"), and the meaning of philosophical abstraction (not revelation but a Socratic quest for truth that asks, What is x? until it reaches being itself). They had to be, and they were, carefully handled. As for heresies, they arose sometimes from the misapplication of these Greek concepts to theological issues and sometimes from other sources. The necessity of publicly refuting heresies such as modalism and subordinationism helped codify trinitarian theology. Modalism is any reduction of the three persons to mere modes, phases, or manifestations of the one God, while subordinationism is any demotion of the Son or Holy Spirit from full deity. As the sixth-century Athanasian Creed says, Christians confess the Triune God without "confounding the persons or dividing the substance."

Trinitarianism is not exhausted in the assertion that the three persons are distinct from one another yet equal. The three-one formula captures only one

formal aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity. In its classic form, the doctrine of the Trinity has been considerably more specific about the relationships among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, affirming that these three stand in eternal relations of origin. The Son is from the Father, being eternally begotten or generated from the Father. The Nicene Creed calls the Son not just "true God," but "true God of true God," signifying at the same that they are coessential (or consubstantial, of one essence, from the Greek word *homoousios*, also used in the creed) and that one originates from the other. This relationship is eternal and irreversible: the Father was never without the Son, and the Son does not beget the Father. This relationship of origin is what distinguishes the First Person from the Second Person; in fact, for most theologians the relations of origin have been acknowledged as the only things that distinguish the persons. All other actions are external to the divine life, directed outward, and are in fact the undivided work of the entire Trinity. This is true even of the incarnation, in which only the Son takes on flesh, but the entire Trinity undividedly brings it about (as the Father sends the Son into the world and the Spirit causes the conception). But the internal action of the Father begetting the Son is within the divine life and is exclusive to one person: only the Father begets, while only the Son is begotten.

A relationship of origin also distinguishes the Holy Spirit from the other persons, but how to describe that relationship has been a matter of controversy between the Eastern and Western churches since the eighth century. The Eastern churches affirm that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, in an eternal relation that is parallel to, eternally simultaneous with, and ineffably distinct from the generation of the Son. The Western churches assert that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son as from one common source; this view is called the *filioque* because of the Western addition of that Latin word (meaning "and from the Son") to the Nicene Creed, in a modification of the creed's teaching that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father." This was the chief doctrinal disagreement between East and West as they divided into Carolingian and Byzantine cultures in the Middle Ages. In modern times, although the churches have found ways to de-emphasize their mutual anathemas and to recognize the validity of the other's concerns, they continue to have elaborate defenses for their respective positions. Filioquism is, after all, an important element of Augustinian and Thomistic theology, which recognizes the Spirit as the bond of union between the Father and the Son. Monopatrism (from-the-Father-alone-ism), on the other hand, is

well supported in Cappadocian thought and is crucial to Palamite theology, which has influenced the modern Orthodox self-understanding.

The difference between the Eastern and Western views of the Trinity is frequently exaggerated. Many textbooks and lectures in the past 150 years have taught a schematic contrast between a West that begins with divine unity and then works toward distinct threeness, and an East that begins with the three persons and works toward divine unity; supposedly the former tends toward modalism and the latter toward subordinationism or tritheism. This widespread oversimplification is misleading and is especially distorting when readers attempt to apply it to most theological texts written between the second and the ninth centuries. The doctrine of the Trinity, as the official doctrine identifying the God of the gospel, is a vast area of consensus among the various Christian churches and traditions. East and West have developed different theological accounts of the same doctrine, but both have the same Trinity.

Modern Accounts. If there is a major divide in the doctrine's history, it is between the ancient world and the modern world. The doctrine of the Trinity became unfashionable in academic theology under the pressure of Enlightenment preferences for self-evident truths and universally available criteria of judgment. Any doctrines founded on revelation alone fared poorly under these conditions. At the same time, the rise of historical biblical criticism took many traditional proof texts for the doctrine out of the hands of its defenders, ranging from the widely shared text-critical rejection of the words interpolated into 1 John 5:7–8 (the so-called Johannine Comma, saying "these three are one," etc.) to the more skeptical tendency to treat John's Gospel as inadmissible for information about the theological ideas of the historical Jesus. Alongside the application of neutral historical methodologies to the Bible and the history of doctrine, antitrinitarian patterns of interpretation that developed in support of Socinianism also came into the mainstream of academic practice. In response to this major shift in the plausibility structure of the doctrine, many of those who defended trinitarian doctrine began to base it on foundations outside of scriptural revelation. Lessing and Hegel founded it on an overall philosophy of history and on absolute truth's tendency to emerge as the course of events unfolds in the world. Schleiermacher and a range of pietists based it on the redeemed person's spiritual experience and a resulting threefold God-consciousness. The more persuasive these supplementary approaches came to be, the more

they tended to lead away from the main lines of the revealed doctrine: the Father's sending of the Son and Spirit made known the eternal processions of the eternal Son and Spirit. As a result, a general climate of trinitarian neglect was met by multiple attempts to commend the traditional doctrine on nontraditional grounds.

In the twentieth century, academic theologians began devoting much more attention to the Trinity, and this increase of interest has been hailed as a revival of the doctrine. It became important to distinguish between the eternal Trinity in itself (the "immanent Trinity") and the Trinity experienced in the history of salvation (the "economic Trinity"), even if only to unite them as in Karl Rahner's claim that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice versa. This distinction is helpful if it safeguards the fact that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit even apart from us; that the only way we know truth about the eternal Trinity is by its self-revelation for our salvation; and that the economy of salvation is shaped by God's own triune pattern of life. More generally, the doctrine of the Trinity has become more prominent in the past century because of an increased awareness of other religions and belief systems. Because it is a description of God that includes Christ and the Holy Spirit within the divine being, the doctrine of the Trinity is the distinctively Christian doctrine of God, enabling Christian theology to distinguish its God from all others in a marketplace of ideas.

God's triunity is not one of the things that natural reason can know about deity but is instead strictly a revealed truth. From the perspective of revelation, while the fact of God's triunity is demonstrable, the mode of God's triunity remains inexplicable. That these three are one is evident, but how they are one is not. Since the second century, the classic trinitarian formula has been Tertullian's phrase "one essence, three persons." If these terms are handled attentively, Christians can avoid giving the impression that the doctrine violates the laws of logic. This doctrine is above reason but not contrary to reason, though there have always been Christians who enjoyed stating it as a stark paradox ("God is three yet somehow one," omitting the clarifying nouns). The mystery of the doctrine of the Trinity lies in the difficulty of conceiving how a single being can be three persons, because we have no available examples of such a thing, and any such examples would not be God anyway.

While eschewing exact explanations of the way the three persons are one God, trinitarians generally have offered various analogies to indicate its

plausibility. Two major analogies have been most fruitful because they are the two most clearly suggested by scriptural language. On one hand, the Triune God is like a mind that knows and loves itself, but so fully that its self, knowledge, and love are subsistent. On the other hand, the Trinity is like three people who share one life so fully as to be inseparable, but so fully that they are mutually constitutive. Each analogy, the psychological and the social, captures something of biblical truth better than the other, and the analogies seem to be irreducible to each other. It is good to remember that they are analogies rather than models. Raised to the level of models that could be articulated in detail, the psychological and social models in fact seem to logically contradict each other. In recent decades the label of social trinitarianism has been applied to a tendency to describe the three persons as distinct centers of consciousness, each having its own mental faculties and contents. A divine person is like a human person in this regard. Critics of social trinitarianism allege that its notion of divine unity is inadequate, consisting in a set of individuals rather than the one God. But social trinitarians ground divine unity in the ancient idea of perichoresis, a mutual indwelling whereby each person is interior to the other. A more precise criticism is that social trinitarianism fails to recognize the analogical distance between our use of the word *person* for ourselves and for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From the perspective of the psychological analogy, it seems that social trinitarianism fails to indicate the way the divine Logos of John 1 is not only another who stands in relation to God but is also a kind of faculty of God. But if the psychological analogy were fully developed, the Logos and Spirit would dwindle to faculties of God, earning the charge of modalism.

Following Scripture's own usage, Christians have always appropriated external actions of God to a single person of the Trinity. The Apostles' Creed, for instance, calls God "the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth," although creation is the work of the entire Trinity. Likewise, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are sometimes loosely called Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, although, strictly speaking, it would be a doctrinal error to exclude the other two persons from any of those works. At its best, this flexible usage may reflect the way a deep intuition leads Christians to identify various persons of the undivided Trinity with particular divine actions or attributes that have a certain fit or aptness with their trinitarian character. However, these intuitions ought to be guided by Scripture's own usage whenever possible. An unguided imagination may mistakenly associate justice and

wrath with God the Father, relegating mercy and forgiveness to Jesus the Son, and vague spirituality in general to the Holy Spirit. The Bible speaks in a better way of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the doctrine of the Trinity should guide Christians into a deeper participation in its way of speaking.

See also God; Holy Spirit; Jesus Christ

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Troeltsch, Ernst (1865–1923). A German theologian, philosopher of history, and social theorist. Son of an Augsburg physician, he studied theology at Erlangen, Berlin, and Göttingen (under Ritschl), served as a curate in Munich briefly, and took an appointment at Göttingen in 1890. He then went to Bonn and in 1894 to Heidelberg, where he was named full professor at age twenty-nine. In 1915 he became professor of philosophy at Berlin. A liberal, he was active in politics as a state legislator and held a post in the Prussian ministry of cultural affairs.

Closely linked with the history of religion school (a movement that questioned Christianity's distinctiveness and stressed gaining insights from comparative study of other religions) and profoundly influenced by Dilthey's historicism, Troeltsch grappled with problems raised by the scientific historical method. He saw modern awareness of history as the key to understanding our culture, yet conflict existed between the ceaseless flux and manifold contradictions within history and the demand of the religious consciousness for certainty, unity, and peace. He concluded that all world religions were unique and relative to given historical situations, with conscience valid for each individual who subscribes to a faith. Although no religion can be shown historically to be absolute or final, Troeltsch functioned as a Christian theologian because he held to a Hegelian perspective of history as the movement of the spirit that is on the way back to its home in God. He saw all religion as a reflection and intimation of God's ultimate reality, and from a rational standpoint Christianity is valid because