

THE TRINITY AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:
ISSUES OF INTEGRATION AND
ORIENTATION

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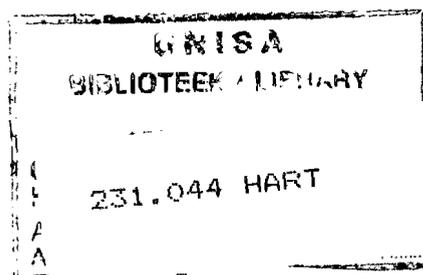
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SUMMARY

This thesis is an attempt to relate the Scriptural revelation of God's nature to the normal Christian life. It analyses the experiential factors that originally gave rise to a triune awareness of God, arguing that a contemporary recovery of those seminal events is requisite for an integration of the trinity into the Christian life. After a theological summation of the biblical revelation, the thesis then explores the nature of the orientation of the trinity within the Christian life. This orientation is brought about by observing the harmonious arrangement of the different Persons within the Godhead. Once this is done we can then ensure that this arrangement finds an echo and corresponding imprint within the Christian life. As the Christian consistently integrates that tripartite relationship into the Christian life, the doctrine of the trinity will be a continual source of sustenance and direction for life and godliness.



Key terms:

Trinity; Trinitarian theology; Revelation of the trinity; the Father; the Son; the Holy Spirit; the Christian life; Experience of God; Synoptics; Pauline letters; Johannine letters

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Purview This thesis is an attempt to develop a coherent and synthetic trinitarian theology that is intrinsically related to the believer's everyday experience of faith. It is hoped that this work will provide a 'map' and framework for the orientation and enrichment of the Christian life. The need for a 'working knowledge' of the triune God that has a bearing on everyday experience of faith, necessitates both a biblical framework *and* a theological orientation of a non-speculative but experiential character. Having both foci will hopefully ensure that this doctrine will become an incarnated faith and not a docetic one. My approach will be to unearth the biblical reality of the tripartite God, observe the theological orientation and then harmonise the differing aspects (or rather Persons¹) of God as they relate to the Christian life.

This thesis will concentrate on the practical, historical and 'human' aspects of this doctrine, starting *here*, at our level and recovering those aspects that are requisite for our life and devotion. This approach has a distinctly Hebrew flavor to it. The Hebrew 'eye' and attraction for earthly corporeality as against the Greek penchant for more noetic and heavenly incorporeality is an important factor to remember as we recover the historical 'genetic code' of the trinitarian doctrine (see Boman 1977: 133, 142). In looking at this doctrine from this angle, I will delimit the vast field of trinitarian theology to matters found within this trajectory. It is outside the purview of this work to critically defend the belief of the eternal ontological existence of the One God in three distinct personal subjectivities. I see the traditional creeds as pointing in the right direction, and not as salty Hellenistic intrusions into the pure stream of biblical orthodoxy. This thesis will hopefully pick up where many books

on the trinity have ended off, hopefully providing material for a chapter on 'Trinitarian Integration and the Christian Life' in such books. I will also not seek to probe into the ineffable mysteries of *how* God is triune or to exactly *how* His threeness relates to His oneness. I will rather delineate the more practical aspects of this revelation, addressing the more pressing issues of *orientation* and *relationship* to the triune God. The primary motivation for this is the conviction that relationship rather than constitutional and ontological definition is at the heart of the biblical witness to God. This focus on relationship, rather than definition, is particularly germane to our times, where people have a preoccupation with and a need for relationships, love and friendship above theological precision and definition. Thus the renewed Greek Orthodox emphasis in certain theological circles on God as a 'being-in-communion' and of the priority of the personal over the impersonal, is rightly needed in our global culture of the twentieth century. Focusing on this will also ensure the applicableness and relevancy of this doctrine to all believers, preventing it from being seen as a dogma of nebulous categories and celestial mathematics, only to be tossed around by pundits who are initiated into its convoluted nomenclature.

Seeing that this is a study in systematic theology, an important part of our task will be to 'organise the material of divine revelation topically and logically, developing a coherent and comprehensive world view and way of life' (Demarest and Lewis 1987: 23). Thus a good part of this work will entail biblical exegesis and a subsequent biblical synopsis. This biblical synopsis is particularly important in our study, for there is at present a ubiquitous uncertainty in popular trinitarianism and a lack of biblical coherence of the doctrine at 'grass roots' level. Schaeffer (1991) was correct in noting that 'the basic problem of the Christians in this century is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals' (p 23). Although speaking particularly of his American experience, I think the problem is pandemic. In this thesis I will attempt to be more panoptic in scope.

A brief synopsis. In Chapter two I will highlight the importance of the experiential aspects in the doctrine of the trinity, showing that if these are not stressed alongside its more conceptual categories, the future of this doctrine looks bleak. This will be done against the backdrop of the modern theological trinitarian ferment as well as the contemporary Christian setting. I will show that without living experientially *within* the triune reality of God, we practically have a deistic view of God. If we are not living inside our 'Father's House', we are living inside man-made booths, precariously exposed to the destructive elements of the world. We must practically integrate the revelation of the Godhead into our lives.

Chapter three takes us a step further, providing us with the necessary biblical and theological building blocks for a practical integration. After a look at the person and place of the Father, Son and Spirit within the New Testament letters, there will follow a collation of the multifaceted revelation of the New Testament. Here we will look into the nature and reality of the triune God as confessed in the creeds. This is a 'map' of the 'Father's House'.

Chapter four will give us the much needed direction and orientation within the Father's House. We need to have a certain protocol within our relation to the triune God, as the Scriptures bear witness to: '*even* the first covenant had regulations of divine worship' (Heb. 9. 1) and 'no-one comes to the Father but by Me' (John 14. 6). We must come to God along the paths He has revealed for us. Once we have indicated the importance of the experiential aspects of this doctrine (Chapter two) and have shown how there is an order and particular 'structure' within God and His work in the world (Chapter three), then we are confronted by the issue of orientating this into the Christian life. Such a biblical orientation will prevent us from slipping back into practical modalism and so back into trinitarian irrelevancy. These dynamics in our life *in* God are reviewed in this section.

A note on prejudices. It needs to be acknowledged that I come to this topic with the presupposition of the basic correctness of the historic Christian confession *vis-à-vis* the trinity, i.e., one God subsisting in three Persons. Although this might seem counter-productive, I believe that the old adage, 'I believe in order to understand', contains one correct approach to doing theology. If we begin with a belief in the traditional tenet of One God existing in three Persons, the data of the New Testament can more easily and smoothly be accounted for. For as Erikson (1995) states:

Although presuppositions cannot be initially verified, they can, when traced out to their implications, be validated, or shown to be more adequate than competitive presuppositions (p 198).

The myth of total objectivity and the detachment of the self in theology is an impossibility. We all have participatory knowledge, intuitions which we bring to any field of study. We all have a 'tacit dimension of knowing' (Polanyi 1958: 266ff). Polanyi exposed the fact that our whole persons are involved in any study, and we can never be the neutral detached observer in any discipline. This personal 'prejudice' needs to be open to the future, to new things revealed, that, although they may seem to contradict our present knowledge, might be shown to be consistent with that knowledge later. Truth is always in front of us, in the future. This open dimension in theology needs to be vulnerable to biblical truth, affirming or condemning our presuppositions.

The most important thing is the need to avoid rigidity and to remain flexible to fresh openings to the One reality of God. Konig (1981) states:

However important the context might be in the interpretation of the gospel... and however important the ecumenical intercourse might be to let the different contexts critically expand and correct each other, the crucial question nevertheless remains whether every form of theology and every church tradition takes into account that

new perspectives shall emerge from within the gospel to break open our contexts, to expand them and to make us more sensitive towards each other (p 43).

A note on gender inclusive language The author has preferred to use the traditional term "man" in a generic sense rather than delimiting it to a specific gender application, i.e., man as contrasted with woman. This seems to be in harmony with the biblical witness as expressed in Genesis 5. 2. This will certainly be a regressive step to some, whilst to others it remains a satisfactory rubric for the human race.

Finally, it needs to be said that this work is done in the dust of life and has the dusty hands of man on each page. In no way is this thesis peremptory, but is rather a contribution to the ongoing task of theology to explicate the reality of the triune God for the salvation of man and the transformation of life.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FUTURE OF TRINITARIAN FAITH

2. 1 The Demise of Trinitarian Faith

The concern over the marginalizing of the trinity in worship led the British Council of Churches (BCC) to form a study commission to look into the matter of trinitarian relevancy in the present life of the church. The findings of this study commission were published in three monographs entitled *The Forgotten Trinity* (1989, 1991). A motivating conviction of theirs was that,

... trinitarianism has declined partly under the weight of its own inadequacies (II p 5).

One of the primary inadequacies in this demise has been the lack of application and 'relatedness' of this doctrine in many ecclesiastical institutions and theological treatises. Although there have been propitious signs for renewed relevancy on trinitarianism in the 'academic' and the practical 'unofficial theology' side, trinitarian faith is still on the decline. Since Barth, the dogma has gained considerable theological momentum and the reality of God's being as triune has been brought to the fore. In the rise of the charismatic movement, there has been an emphasis on experience that has been much needed. Yet both of these renewing aspects have tended to be reactionary and their theology has been dominated by one dimension, preventing them from penetrating below the surface of their own underlying questions. We need to rather move beyond these and return to the original issues that led to the trinitarian formulation, paving the way toward a practical full-orbed trinitarian faith.

At the outset I want to draw a distinction between 'academic' trinitarianism and 'popular' or 'unofficial' trinitarianism. The primary focus of my concern is the latter. I believe that it is in the relevancy and common practice of the believer that doctrines ultimately rise and fall. It is how we experience God and the truth in the practical reality of our lives, rather than what the theological text books say, that has the greatest theological sway over the church. This 'street level' theology finally supplants the textbook theology. This is expressed well by Blockmuehl (1988):

The unreality of God in theology has been preceded by a phase in the Christian life in which theoretical theism was already accompanied by practical atheism (p 138).

2. 1. 1 The Fall and Rise of the 'Academic' Trinity

The Fall

As with the seasons, it is impossible to rigidly affix a date to the malady of theological trinitarianism. It was certainly during the ferment of the *Aufklärung* that trinitarian theology fell prey to the critical mind of man. Here Christians were encouraged to liberate themselves from the infantile tutelage of the church, and to don themselves with the garland of autonomous reason. Because the 'verification' for the doctrine of the trinity rested upon the bedrock of revelation, it was one of the first doctrines to 'suffer' from such a Cartesian attitude. The position of the trinity in theology thus became symmetrical with one's concept of revelation. A brief cameo-impression of some of the most influential theologians and philosophers will now be looked at.

Descartes (1596-1650), ostensibly the father of Cartesian doubt, asserted that one ought never to be persuaded of the truth of anything unless on the evidence of our reason, and not of the imagination or the senses. For Descartes, the origin of all knowledge was to be found *within* human experience. He thus raised the whole question of whether Christian truth claims had any referential value. (Pinnock 1990), and began the tenor of thought that placed certainty of all truth within the consciousness of man. The 'abstruse' doctrines were thus not a part of Christian faith. Rather it was those simple doctrines of the religion, verifiable to all men, that were the accepted dogmas.

Empirical deists such as **Locke** (1632-1704) then arose. Locke's work was at once the 'conclusion of the ideas which revealed themselves in the seventeenth century as well as the starting-point of the inquiries which occupied the eighteenth century' (McDonald 1959: 41). He inexorably applied the principle that revelation must be judged by reason, and brazenly used his 'razor' to jettison certain doctrines. Any metaphysical ideas and principles that could not be grounded in the experience of man were summarily excised. The Deists asserted that the only revelation men were given or needed was the moral dicta written into the constitution of the universe, discoverable by all rational beings. What the intelligence could encompass, could belong to the essence of religion.

On the Continent in the 1700's **Kant** (1724-1804), thought by many to be the father of modern theology, naturally wound up the findings of his forebears. He struck a cognitive bargain with the prevailing spirit of modernity and found a place for Christianity within this environment - the ethical noumenal sphere, where unprovable *a-priori* presuppositions exist. Christianity was thus interpreted in narrowly ethical terms. This was an 'ingenious salvage operation' (Pinnock 1990) and rescued faith from Hume's sceptical critique. Brown (1968) suggests that this scepticism cast a long shadow over the nineteenth century, with Kant

personifying modern man's confidence in the power of reason to grapple with material things and man's incompetence to deal with anything beyond (p 91). Kant thus had no place for the trinity in his framework. Moltmann (1981) quotes Kant:

From the doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, nothing whatsoever can be gained for practical purposes, even if one believed that one comprehended it - and still less if one is conscious that it surpasses all our concepts (p 6).

Reason became distinctly separate from religion. The more reason came to be seen as a watertight self-contained faculty only filtering the 'phenomenal', the more any concept of God as trinity was abandoned.

We see this trend of a split reality come to focus again in the theology of **Schleiermacher** (1768-1834). He saw the revelation of God as innate to the subjective self-consciousness of man and not something extraneous to man, in any objective self-consciousness. Religion was not something dependent upon historical facts or abstract doctrines or even traditional institutions, but was sense of the Infinite. Barth was right when he noted that the great formal principle of Schleiermacher's theology was at the same time its material principle, that is, 'Christian, pious self-awareness contemplating and describing itself - that is in principle the be-all and end-all of this theology' (A. Torrance 1988: 6). With this, Schleiermacher 'effected a *metabasis eis allo genos* (Kierkegaard) on the part of Christianity' (A. Torrance 99). External authority like the Bible or the Church would not be binding under this theory unless it could be confirmed experientially. There is no longer a need to prove that Christianity is rationally or historically true. It need only ring true in one's heart. The doctrine of the trinity is therefore relegated to an appendix in The Christian Faith (1928). According to Welch (1952), the main reason this was so placed was 'his conviction that the doctrine in itself is an unnecessary and unwarranted addition to the faith' (p 5). It

was because Schleiermacher saw the trinity as unhitched from the 'Christian self-consciousness' that he had little time for it. It had no practical content for him. His approach in doing theology without a strict dependence on revelation allowed him to give it such an adjunct status, as well as opening up new aspects and methodologies for theology. Welch trenchantly adds:

Succeeding theologians, who accepted in principle the abandonment of the old concept of revelation and the revision of methodology, tended also to accept Schleiermacher's judgement that upon such a basis it was impossible to defend the notion of the trinity in any sense which justified the use of the term (p 9).

Hegel (1770-1831), steering things in a new 'metaphysical' direction, posited the trinity as a symbol and a picture of the dialectic process of God immanent in the world. He broke Kant's distinction, placed no limits on theoretical reason in ultimate reality and posited a new kind of logic to do the job. Thus ensued a marriage between religion and reason and a retaining of 'metaphysics'. Religion, and specifically theology, must be interpreted philosophically, for 'philosophy enables faith to understand itself for the first time' (Erikson 1995: 118). Although he brought the trinity back into consideration, he reinterpreted it in philosophical categories, and translated theology into a philosophy of immanent monism. The trinity was thus a substantially empty analogy of his dialectic philosophy and the gospel merely a pictorial myth representing Hegelian metaphysics.

Ritschl (1822-1889), through his Kantian moralism, ruled out metaphysics in theology and saw the doctrine as mere speculation. Religious and theological statements were essentially judgements of value-for-us. The dogmas mislead us if we take them as objective descriptions of the constitution of God's being. What they really refer to and bring to expression is His 'meaning for us' (see Heron 1980: 35-6). He adopted a firm agnostic stance toward the doctrine of the trinity and

firm agnostic stance toward the doctrine of the trinity and saw the distinctive revelation of Christianity as simply the personhood of God.

All the above philosophers and theologians jettisoned their belief in the classical doctrine of the trinity for reasons of practicality and historical verification. It is patent that the struggle that was inherent in these thinkers was their desire to relate the doctrines of faith to the particulars and exigencies of life. Could it be that because the sixteenth century reformers and later theologians had not shown how the trinity had *practical significance* that therefore these thinkers found such dictums as irrelevant? Many of the more 'orthodox' theologians were content with paying lip service to the trinitarian formulas, passing down parrot fashion the formulas of Nicene theology void of orthopraxis and life relevancy. They only had a trinity from above and failed to supplement it with a trinity from below.

A. Torrance (1988) well summarises the backdrop which faced the theologians of the early twentieth century, introducing us to the new theological direction charted by Barth:

For far too long in the history of Christian thought the church had to witness the struggle to find prior gaps in human knowledge and experience into which to fit man's knowledge and experience of God. As scientific knowledge has advanced throughout the centuries, God was continually being brought into prevailing scientific theories to act as the link and explanation in the various spaces or gaps in scientific knowledge and then being displaced when scientific explanation was given for the relevant gap. Similarly, in philosophy too God was continually 'on the move'! He first reigned as Lord in the sphere of reason and then, as this faculty and its speculative ideas were undermined by Hume and Kant, he was moved into the moral sphere as the postulate of moral action and moral experience. Schleiermacher moved him out of this realm due to his romantic distaste for moral dogmatism but then, a few decades later, Ritschl moved him back on account of the late nineteenth century distaste for Romanticism. Rudolf Otto created a new home for God in human experience through his postulation of the sense of the numinous and the Neo-Kantians finally established God in the realm of non-cognitive *Erlebnis* and *Gefühl* which was finally to become, in Bultmann, man's existential

openness to the unknown or 'faith'... Barth set out to spell the end of this (Kantian) attempt to see God as a postulate of some venerated (or usually fashionable) form of human experience (p 101-2).

The Rise

The preceding ante-bellum Protestants saw the locus of Christianity as consisting in morality and remained flintly agnostic toward many transcendent truths. But the prevailing optimism that this spawned was shattered by World War 1 and from the theological ruins arose a new theological emphasis, commonly known as Neo-Orthodoxy². Revelation was brought back to the centre and man was substantially cut down to size. It has been called Neo-Orthodox, and rightly so, for many of these theologians still had a hangover from the previous century, especially in their criticism of the Bible. Revelation was not simply equated with the Bible but was rather seen in the salvific 'acts of God' that the Scriptures bore witness to. McDonald (1963) notes also that revelation was seen as,

... the inbreaking into human lives in the grace of redemption... Man has no 'point of contact' with God. The idea of revelation as having any propositional form is consequently anathema. Man has sinned away his rationality and cannot be appealed to as a creature. It is in the Divine-Human Encounter, an encounter in which man, whose whole history is but the chronicle of his sinning, can do nothing but wait to be awakened to response by the very impact of the Divine revelation (p 26-7).

History was reduced to a meta-historical category, commonly known as *Heilsgeschichte*. The dictum of Lessing - that 'accidental truths of history can never become proof for the necessary truths of reason' - was still somewhat held to, thus downplaying historicity. It was Barth who pioneered a reconstruction in trinitarian theology during this period and who brought about a new direction in theology. We will now look at his

contribution as well as two others who also contributed toward the rise of twentieth century academic trinitarianism.

That **Barth** (1886-1968) pioneered trinitarianism in a new direction is clearly seen by his placing of the doctrine of the trinity - not as Schleiermacher did as a mere adjunct - in the prolegomena of his Church Dogmatics (1975 Vol. I, I). Barth begins his thought of the trinity by linking the doctrine and the content of revelation. Any knowledge of God is knowledge of the trinity. Revelation is an exegete of the God who is the Revealer, the Revelation and the Revealedness. The function of the trinity is in revelation and the content of that revelation is the Lordship of the One God. The triune God is the very ground and possibility of revelation. The trinity for Barth is the 'immediate implication of revelation' (Welch 1952: 170). He explains it as follows:

The doctrine is not something arrived at by a combination of the revelation with other insights; it is not necessitated by the problem of relating the revelation to monotheism, or the deity of Christ to the deity of the Father. It is a doctrine arrived at by analysis of the one central fact to which the Bible bears witness - the act of revelation - and is therefore indirectly identical with this witness to revelation (p 171).

The doctrine is the very possibility of our knowledge of God and cannot but be placed first systematically. We know that God is triune if we look at the *mode* or *form* of revelation. There is a distinction in the event of revelation between Him who stands *above* and *apart*, the One to whom Jesus points (Father), between Him who *confronts* man as the objective content of revelation (Son), and between Him who subjectively *converts* man to this revelation (Holy Spirit). Barth avoided speaking about 'persons' and preferred 'modes of being', disliking the heavily anthropomorphic language of 'person' (see 1975: 408-11). He preferred seeing these aspects as roles taken by the one God in His acts in history, not speaking of three divine 'I's but thrice of the one divine 'I', a repetition

of the one 'I' of God (p 403 and 421). This avoidance of any three-fold 'personal' distinction in God is clearly seen when he says:

Three-in-oneness in God does not mean a three-fold deity, either in the sense of a plurality of deities or in the sense of the existence of a plurality of individuals or parts within the one deity (p 402).

For Barth the trinity has to do with the epistemology of the knowledge of God, being of apologetic value as to how we can speak of *God* theologically and not autobiographically, i.e., man speaking of God in a loud voice. Barth avoids talk of any experience of the trinity, 'due to his overriding concern to move theology from the subjectivity of faith (Schleiermacher) to the objectivity of God as He is in Himself' (A. Torrance 1988: 101). Any experience of faith is merely the radical repetitive responsive to the objective Word. For this reason, Barth's tomes do not yield much help for the issues germane to this thesis, his work unfortunately moving in a different direction. He does show how the trinity is a necessary ground of theology, bringing this doctrine back on to centre stage. As grateful as we are for this return to the centrality of this doctrine, he seems to be particularly mute as to how this threeness has implications for Christian experience and worship. This could stem from the following two conspicuous fissures in his writings.

Firstly, he has a heavy *trinity from above*. In his reacting to the subjectivism and moralism of his day, Barth seems to be leaning too far into the wind. He shows how the trinity is necessary for God's revelation above its more salvific dimensions. Moltmann (1981) has severely criticised Barth on this point:

He is interested in it [trinity] for the sake of securing the sovereignty of God - and in order to ward off the danger of the objectification of God by human beings (p 141).

This is an important point for this assignment, in which I wish to draw out the relevance of the trinity for the Christian life and not merely for

epistemological reasons, as true as they may be. His gargantuan dogmatics is of much academic interest but for the subject of this assignment it is of little help, probably due to his reactionary stance. His strong theological positivism allowed him to put the trinity first, not highlighting its historico-empirical emergence in relation to salvation-history. The biblical pattern, it will be argued, shows a development in the doctrine and how it 'grows' or rather 'emerges' out of revelation in history. Barth sought to distance himself from such historical and anthropomorphic taints. He had a strong trinity from above and not one from below. Hodgson (1960) criticised Barth, in that,

... his thought is governed by considerations which are essentially rationalistic rather than biblical. Instead of allowing the empirical evidence of biblical revelation to revise his idea of unity, he insists on making that evidence conform to the requirements of his *a priori* concept of unity (p 229).

We can detect that a large part of his doctrine is a response to the prevailing philosophical concepts of the day. He was a child of his times, as we all are. One wonders if the New Testament believers would have shared his concept of revelation. Surely they explicated a trinitarian understanding from historicity and not through a prolegomenal epistemology. Barth wanted to get behind those events to the ground of their possibility. He therefore omits much of the richness of the New Testament trinitarianism, his conclusions being their foundations, their *a priori* was his lengthy *a posteriori*. Because the trinity is the immediate implicate of revelation, Barth sees this doctrine as a Church doctrine rather than a biblical one, one that is not so much defined by the Bible as it is by epistemological categories. As correct and insightful as he is, his explication is circumscribed by modern epistemological concerns more than biblical constraints.

Secondly, he does not confess the three-fold *personhood* of God. This is due to his preoccupation with apologetic categories of revelation,

noetic issues rather than personal ones. His starting point ineluctably determines his conclusions. All the wealth that the personalness of the trinity reveals is neglected by Barth. He seems to eclipse the Persons by the *aspects* of revelation of the One God. In focusing on the single act of God in Christ in revelation as the sole truth that is needed to explicate a plenary doctrine of the trinity, the distinctions between the Persons are blurred by the singularity and other truths not within this event. Roberts (1980) also notes that in Barth,

... God is fully trinitarian but any such assertion is subordinated to the demands of singularity posited in the act of revelation, in which the eternal antecedence of God in Trinity is given temporal realisation in this 'single act'. The distinctiveness of divine function upon which meaningful distinction-in-unity of the 'modes' relies is subsumed into moments in the act of revelation (p 85).

The issues of prayer to the Father or Son or Spirit are not relevant for him. We only encounter one Person in three ways. He has been accused of holding to a quasi-modalism (Moltmann 1981: 63 - 4, Plantinga 1989: 5), shunning any social understanding of the Godhead as masked tritheism. Plantinga is correct in his criticism:

All the harmonious communion and mutuality in God of which Barth speaks so eloquently gets assigned to a single divine 'individual', a sole subject, whose fellowship is merely self-reflexive (p 5).

Before we leave Barth, we need to look at certain salient issues that are found in Bockmuehl's book The Unreal God of Modern Theology (1988). Although the book looks at how both Bultmann and the 'early' Barth contributed to the deterioration of the doctrine of God, we will merely note his appraisal of Barth.

Bockmuehl contends that Barth's early theology led to a deobjectification of theological statements and a surrender of a 'this-worldly' reality. He suggests that Barth transferred the content of biblical

statements into the superterrestrial and suprahistorical world of transcendence. This was concomitant with Barth's downplay of any experience of God, who saw 'religious experience in its historicity, facticity and concreteness as always a betrayal of God' (p 80). Due to Barth's insistence on the 'analogy of faith', he did not do full justice to present reality and practice. Blockmuehl notices:

Earthly reality as the battlefield of God's kingdom is not an emphasis to be found in his work. All along we hear magnificent things, but they are strictly statements of faith and to no extent of experience - a mighty airplane, very high up in the sky, but with no engagement of the enemy! (p 95).

Faith was in danger of becoming 'not a new alteration of the whole man, but merely an alteration in the thinking of man' (p 96). In the light of this, Blockmuehl asks the pertinent question throughout his book: Is Barth merely finding a way for religion to survive in an age of atheism? Even if this was not Barth's intention, he could be so interpreted, and as history reveals, this tendentious seed germinated in the writings of Bonhoeffer.

Yet Blockmuehl does see a later self-criticism in Barth's writings. The 'latter' Barth apparently learned the importance of 'keeping the real life of man in view and bring the holy into this everyday reality, rather than relegating it to a holy place' (p 100) - a concern in this thesis with regard to trinity. Through a lecturer of Barth's, a certain Kutter, Barth learned that,

... to actually *proclaim* God to a society that has fallen away from him is quite another thing than to differentiate a correct concept of God from an incorrect concept of God (Blockmuehl 1988: 100).

Barth's book, The Humanity of God (1961) compensated for his earlier tendencies, revealing that in Christ God had effected this change and crossed over the boundary between God and man.

The transcendentalizing of God that the enlightenment had spawned had in one way or another led to the devaluation of history. Both Barth and Bultmann had castigated experience as a category that belonged to reality. They were both dealing with the Kantian unreality of God in the world, seeking to justify the 'reality' of God differently. Blockmuehl notes that these theologies arose from the actual experience or rather lack of experience of God in modern man and actually fostered a godless spirit. Yet there is only one remedy against the theories of the unreality of God, that is, the experience of the reality of God through the Spirit who leaps this barrier between the other world and this world. He is the 'great realiser' (p 142). Blockmuehl admonishes us to heed the truth that 'to be a Christian is not to respect the boundary, but to *cross* it' (p 114). We must not make the hiddenness of God our decisive presupposition, but see God in his whole revelation in His world. It is the task and glory of theology to point to the traces of God in history, and not to dwell on the modern problem of the possibility of divine revelation in epistemological terms, noting rather that 'for the Old and New Testaments, the problem was rather moral and religious' (p 154).

How much Blockmuehl is overstating his case is difficult to tell. There is an emphasis on experience in Barth, seen as the determination of human existence by God's Word, in the will, feeling and intellect. It is a determination of the whole self-determining man. Yet Barth seems to allow experience to be given space and qualification only in terms of the action of God in Christ for us. The Spirit is thus for him little more than the subjective side of that central event. Blockmuehl has made some salient observations and prognoses that help explain the lack of emphasis on trinity in devotion and Christian life in such theologies. He also forewarns us from making the qualitative difference between God and man the starting point in our theology, rather than remembering that God's work in the world has a perceptibility within the context of human experience. This was surely Barth's greatest failure.

Rahner (1904-1984), the influential Catholic theologian, was influenced by Barth and according to Moltmann (1981) developed a similar trinitarianism, 'surrendering the impersonal relations of the triune God' (p 156). Yet Rahner did introduce some new aspects into trinitarian theology worthy of note. In his book The Trinity (1970) he stressed the importance of making the economic trinity the norm for all our thoughts and speech about God, insisting that the economic trinity is the immanent trinity and the immanent trinity is the economic trinity. This was in keeping with his reaction to extrinsicism and dualism. God is thus shown by nature to be self-communicating. The source of this emphasis in Rahner is the doctrine of the Incarnation, which is 'a dogmatically certain instance of the identity between God's being in the economy and God's being as such' (Rahner 1970: 37). Through focusing on the Incarnation, he was able to speak historically and 'immanently' of God, avoiding transcendent heteronomous speech of God. His underscoring of the Incarnation and the 'economic' trinity was stimulated by his concern that the doctrine of the trinity not be separated from piety as well as his concern over the traditional separation of the treatise *De Deo Uno* from the treatise *De Deo Trino*, On the One God and On the Triune God. All is to be revealed through the external historical event of the Incarnation.

Rahner does well to link the trinity with the Incarnation and to insist that the 'economic' trinity is determinative for our knowledge of God. But his statement is *too sharp*. LaCugna (1991) criticises Rahner for such a sharp symmetrical relationship. She shows that his axiom, while true to a certain extent, does not do justice to the new way God is working in the world. It also produces absurd conclusions for the Incarnation and crucifixion (see LaCugna p 213-5 and 216-21). As regards to Rahner's axiom, there is a 'yes' and a 'no'. God is as He reveals Himself for otherwise it would not be revelation of God, *but* God is not a static being. He interacts with man, and undergoes changes in

in dealing with man. God is dynamic and undergoes changes in the 'economic' trinity for the sake of our salvation. He is the One who *incarnates* Himself and *sends* the Spirit He has not previously sent. His Incarnation and works shown in the Bible are a revealing picture of God, yet certainly not the only one. Zizioulas (1991) also warns us of too sharp an identification:

If God is Trinity he must be so also outside the Economy. If he cannot be *known* as Trinity except in and through the Economy this should not lead us to construct our Trinitarian doctrine simply on the basis of the Economy. Without an apophatic theology, which would allow us to go beyond the economic Trinity and to draw a sharp distinction between ontology and epistemology or between being and revelation, God and the world become an unbreakable unity and God's transcendence is at stake. Although the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity the Immanent Trinity is not exhausted in the Economic Trinity (p 3 - 4).

It is this tendency to confuse or identify the economic trinity with the immanent trinity that has allowed the introduction of time and history into God's being in much of modern Western philosophy, breeding a quasi Process theology. It is unfortunate that Rahner supplants the intrapersonal relations of the triune God rather speaking of God's self communication by a single divine subject. Yet this departure from the traditional understanding is an ineluctable consequence of his immanentism being the controlling framework for the reality of the being of God. His framework determined the shape of his God.

Moltmann (1926-) has done more than anyone since Barth to revitalise the doctrine of the trinity in contemporary theology (Grenz and Olson 1992: 185). He has pioneered trinitarian theology in a new direction, stressing the necessity of grounding *our knowledge* of God as trinity in our experience of suffering and particularly God's suffering on the cross. Unlike traditional theologians who derived a soteriology from the cross, Moltmann broadens his trinitarian theology of the cross by 'moving the

meaning of the cross beyond a soteriological context only, to its implications for all theological concerns' (Waite Willis 1987: 98). God is seen as an event of suffering love. Moltmann, in his excellent book The Trinity and the Kingdom of God (1981) explains:

If a person once feels the infinite passion of God's love which finds expression here [at the cross], then he understands the mystery of the triune God. God suffers with us - God suffers from us - God suffers for us; it is this experience of God that reveals the triune God. Consequently, fundamental theology's discussion about access to the doctrine of the Trinity is carried on today in the context of the question about God's capacity or incapacity for suffering (p 4).

Again:

The New Testament talks about God by proclaiming in narrative the relationships of the Father, the Son, and Spirit, which are relationships of fellowship and are open to the world (p 64).

Lastly:

The Father is known as the Father of the forsaken, the object of the suffering. The Son is known as the Forsaken, the subject, and the Holy Spirit is the link in the separation. Thus the cross is at the center of the Trinity (p 81-3).

Further than our experience of God being central, Moltmann sees our experience of *God's* experience as being crucial for trinitarian faith. He takes seriously the modern situation and the desire of people for truth to be concrete. He thus shows how the trinity has a strong 'historicity' and how *our* world is the context for the revelation of the triune God. The history of Christ's passion is central to Moltmann's theology. When this becomes real to us then we come to true faith. It is God who thus suffers, and because 'the self-sacrifice of love is God's eternal nature, we can only talk of God's suffering in trinitarian terms' (p 25). The theology of the suffering God is much more important than the theology of the

God who is 'Wholly Other'. Suffering is '*the open wound of life* and it is the real task of faith and theology to make it possible for us to survive, to go on living, with this open wound' (p 49). This is the lens through which he views theology and trinitarianism.

Moltmann does not begin with God as Supreme Substance or as Absolute Subject, as he censures Barth for doing, but he starts with the *history* of the Son of God and develops a historical doctrine of God, a history of the triune God. He says as to his approach:

Here we shall presuppose the unity of God neither as homogenous substance nor as identical subject. Here we shall inquire about that unity in the light of this trinitarian history and shall therefore develop it too in trinitarian terms. The Western tradition began with God's unity and then went on to ask about the trinity. *We are beginning with the trinity of Persons and shall then go on to ask about the unity.* What then emerges is a concept of the divine unity as the union of the tri-unity, a concept which is differentiated and is therefore capable of being thought first of all (p 19).

In his theology, he brings the Persons into the foreground and leaves the 'substance' in the background. If the biblical testimony is chosen as a point of departure then we shall have to start from the three Persons of the history of Christ. If philosophical logic is made the starting point, then the inquirer proceeds from the One God. In his own way, Moltmann thus seeks to negate any natural theology and sees the revelation of the three Persons as the starting point in trinitarianism. The unity of the Father, Son and the Spirit is then the eschatological question about the consummation of the trinitarian history of God. The unity must be seen as a communicable unity and as an 'open, inviting unity, capable of integration' (p 149).

Moltmann's contribution to the renewal in trinitarian faith comes from his stress on the necessity of looking to history - biblical history - for an understanding of the trinity. In making the history of the Son of God the matrix for the doctrine, he has brought this doctrine out of the ghetto

and into the broad daylight of history and life, showing that it is in this light that the doctrine was originally seen and not in philosophical epistemology - a salient point. He also underscores the Persons in the trinity in a way that is more satisfying than mere '*modes of being*'. He lifts out the social aspects of the trinity, advocating a social doctrine of the trinity modelled on the Cappodocians and Richard of St. Victor. This emphasis is not at the expense of the oneness of the divine being, even though it may seem so at times. He affirms the unity by saying that the Persons '*subsist in the common divine nature and exist in their relations to one another*' (p 173).

Important for this thesis is his stress on the trinity as a *movement* in God (as against all static concepts) that opens up His being to embrace the whole of the world. The union of the divine trinity is open for the uniting of the whole of the creation with itself and in itself. The unity of the trinity is not merely a theological term, but rather a soteriological reality. As the relations within God are brought to the foreground, it invites man into fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Though there is much to buttress traditional trinitarianism in his work, he does unfortunately flirt with certain subversive elements. Firstly, his whole approach in starting *a priori* with *suffering* as the main experience of God is a questionable hermeneutical presupposition, betraying his own axiomatic concentration on the problems of theodicy and suffering. Because Scripture has not been allowed to provide its own 'presuppositional pool', he has filled that space with the chronicles of his own suffering. He has also limited himself to express the Christian experience of God only within the depths of guilt, of despair, of disillusionment and of hopelessness, not sufficiently incorporating the joy and victory of the resurrection into his book. If he so emphasises having a biblical approach, why does he begin with the cross as the locus of trinitarianism? One aspect of God in Scripture must not 'bully' the rest of the revelation of God, but rather be seen in organic relation to the

whole.

Secondly, and following on from this, Moltmann seems to consume God within the humanity and sufferings of Christ, falling within the shadow of Rahner's error. Thus he says:

What Christ did in time, God, the heavenly Father, does and must do in eternity... We must trace the thread back from the historical, earthly cross to the eternal nature if we are to perceive the primordial nature (p 31).

Wanting to avoid any metaphysical statements or speculations, he eternalizes the cross event, not making clear the distinction between the humanity of Christ and the spiritual immaterialism of God. God's being is so historical that he barely allows space between God and the world. This importation of history into the being of God, spawns dangerous statements such as:

God himself is nothing other than love... Self-sacrifice is God's very nature and essence (p 32).

That Christ *exhausts* the revelation of God is debatable, even though it is a key tenant in much modern theology. This leads to the issue of the temporality of God, something which remains obscure in his theology, forcing the question, 'is the trinity simply a shorter version of the passion narrative of Christ?' (Grenz and Olson 1992: 180). Our answer is surely *Nein*.

Thirdly, his rejection of the traditional understanding of monotheism is questionable. His linking of monotheism with patriarchy and lordship with domination clearly reactionary. Somewhere during his theological sojourn Moltmann became convinced that hierachy and power are intrinsically evil and he set about to erase all vestiges of lordship from his doctrine of God (Grenz 1994: 184). Here his political influences are importing foreign concepts into the Scripture. Plantinga (1989) sees 'the clear agenda of Moltmann's book as suggesting a

network of correspondences and reciprocities between our ideas of God and of government' (p 6). Moltmann's recoiling from any form of monotheism is certainly due to aberrant encounters. Yet, as Plantinga asks,

... is it obvious that monotheism and monarchy are inherently oppressive, and that a social analogy of the Trinity naturally yields some sort of political socialism? (p 7).

Moltmann is reacting to an *improper use* of monotheism and authoritarianism. The remedy is a *proper use*. As a result of this there is also a tendentious preoccupation with Jesus' identity as being the 'Son' to the exclusion of him being 'Lord' - Paul's favorite term for Christ. He even says that the kingdom of the Son is the kingdom of brothers and sisters, not a kingdom of the Lord and his servants (p 88). He thus ignores an important aspect of the biblical message.

Lastly, in all his emphases on history and experience, Moltmann leaves one hanging as to how we can *know* the triune God personally and experientially, beyond a mere experience of suffering. His theology does have important implications for society and life but he is conspicuously mute on any personal relationship with the triune God. This could be a subtle reaction to pietism. He shows how God is a God of suffering but he does not *adequately link the sufferer with God*, let alone deal with issues of our relating to the trinity. The trinity cannot merely be explained for sympathetic, apologetic or social purposes - it must be within reach so that the sufferer can be in fruitful contact with God. This is the great lacuna in modern theology. I suggest therefore that he does not have a satisfactory prophylactic against the demise of trinitarianism, for he only finds space for trinitarianism within the life of suffering man and not necessarily within the experience of the Christian man.

Following on from our discussion of Moltmann, we need to briefly look at the renewed surge of interest pertaining to the **social model of the trinity**, to which he has indubitably contributed. A return to the social model of the trinity is experiencing a renewed boom in the late twentieth century, providing a conceptual resource for sociology, anthropology, politics and a host of other disciplines. The triune God is seen as the ground and paradigm of true social life and liberation³. This is a conscious return to the more Eastern trinitarianism of the Cappadocians, Richard of St. Victor and John of Damascus, as well as a corresponding rebuttal of the psychological trinity from the matrix of Augustine, spread by Aquinas, where the analogy of the trinity is found within the mind's activity of remembering, knowing and willing. Theologians of diverse traditions are returning to the social model, providing 'the strange sight, in the pluralistic world of contemporary theology, of Protestants, Catholic, Orthodox, liberation, feminist, evangelical and process theologians agreeing on a particular trinitarian model of God!' (Greshan 1994: 325-343). Plantinga (1989) succinctly defines the social model for us:

The Holy Trinity is a divine, transcendent society or community of three fully personal and fully divine entities: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit or Paraclete... The Trinity is thus a zestful, wondrous community of divine light, love, joy, mutuality and verve (p 27 - 8).

Although this is in concert with the ancient faith, Greshan reveals that the peculiarity of this renewal is that 'the modern social model of the trinity represents a new development in its use of that analogy to illustrate the meaning of divine *unity*' (p 331). The old school did not compare the unity of God to the *social* union of three persons but to their *ontological* unity of nature. The new school 'envisions divine unity as analogous to the social union of human persons' (p 332). His apt

critique is that 'the social model of the trinity cannot provide a sufficient description of divine unity' (p 324). The *perichoresis* must be grounded in a single monotheistic unity, in a shared nature underlying the unity.

The social model has profound humanitarian implications. It ensures that 'humans find their true being as a communion of persons whose mutual, personal relations mirror, however imperfectly, the triune life of God' (Speidell: 288). The trinity thus cuts both ways. It restores a true individualism and prevents us from disappearing into the impersonal mass of humanity in our consumerist society. Yet this individualism is not at the expense of the social emphasis. As the being of God is in a relational unity, so it is on the human plane. The strong individualism of much theology needs to undergo a reformation, returning to the Cappodocians conception of what it is *to be*.

In conclusion, we could continue with A. Torrance's description of modern theology's quest to find a space for God, as found on page 14. Barth moved God to the self-grounding vacuous space between heaven and earth, Rahner to the transcendent depths of the human being and Moltmann to the experience of suffering and the future. Still being in the shadow of Kant, they are seeking a certain autonomous realm where God can dwell, revealing that they had not broken down the wall that Kant had constructed. Their incandescence had fed off the combustion of the liberal heritage in the oxygen of Kantian rationalism, and when this fuel is exhausted the critical framework itself will burn away. We need to go beyond these theologians and begin from an anthropological, Hebraic foundation, which posits a point of authentic contact with God and man *within* the nature of the universe and man. This is the way for us in the twentieth century, where we find the inherently religious man and the scientific relativity of the world around us extruding a generation that is more religious than ever - even though the content of belief is far from Christian. We need not let outdated

approaches to epistemology, 'rationality' and apologetics be finally determinative for us. We can rather boldly posit that the space for contact with God can be sought both outside *and* within the subjectivity of the human person. A theology of the Holy Spirit linked with a doctrine of human persons made in the image of God will hopefully pave the way for effective and viable communion between an objective God and a subjective believer. Our incandescence must thus feed off the fact that this is *God's* world (we need not start *a-priori* with the infinite qualitative difference) and it is *God's* man. The ground of relationality is thus found within the nature of things. We must have a change of axis once again, a tectonic Cartesian re-orientation, returning to the biblical starting point of Genesis, where the transcendent and the immanent join in a natural and harmonious beauty.

The words of Hardy and Ford (1984) provide a bridge to the next section:

It is possible to be so occupied with protection against anticipated attacks that one's energy is spent mainly on border disputes and frontier wars. These are important, but they can so easily detract from development of the heartlands, where food can be grown and ordinary life carried on. It is not a matter of first securing one's borders and the proper international exchanges, and only then building up a rich domestic life; the two go together, and the home affairs are often impoverished by an obsession with security... It is only by going deeper into the country that one can grasp what is at stake in the external conflicts (p 1 - 2).

2. 1. 2 The Demise of the Practical Trinity

A catscan of the contemporary Christian scene In seeking to understand the relevance and the proper place of the trinity amongst many believers, one confronts a conspicuous vacuum at the 'pedestrian' level. Many Christians seem to be practising monotheists and theoretical trinitarians, thus Rahner (1970) has said:

One could dispense with the doctrine of the trinity as false and the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged (p 10-11).

Many have never been taught how to relate to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Many have felt happier with a practical modalism, seeing a relationship with Jesus as all that is important. Some avoid any talk of the trinity because this is often seen to roil one's spirituality and to create more heat than light. This may be understandable in the light of the absence of a 'practical' or working knowledge of the trinity. This 'muteness' at the grass roots level has exacerbated the problem and caused a subtle recoiling from trinitarian issues and extrication. Yet I believe that this neglect is primarily due to practical reasons rather than theological reasons. Because it has not been understood *practically*, it has been avoided - the experiential has thus alienated the theoretical. Catholic scholar De Margerie (1982) expresses a similar sentiment, asking:

Can we truly say that for the average Christian or even priest of our times that the mystery of the Trinity is subjectively recognised and 'lived' as the secret of their own salvation in time and eternity? (p 18).

Rather than edifying clarity, there is often dissonance and confusion.

This confusion is betrayed primarily in prayers, for it is in the doxologies and eulogies of our faith that we express our 'popular' or 'unofficial' theology. Practically, many prayers reveal a modalism where

there is no difference between the Persons and where there is perceived to be only one center of divine consciousness. Some are Jesus only whilst others are Father only. In some groups the Holy Spirit is so highlighted that Jesus and the Father are eclipsed. There is also a prevalence in some circles to praying to the Spirit and, less often, worshipping Him. In other groups there is a 'pneumaphobic' feeling whenever the Holy Spirit is mentioned. Some so exalt the Father that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are dwarfed. This betrays a paucity of a 'direct' or devotional understanding of the trinity. In meetings I often wonder at the differences in spiritual direction as expressed on the lips of prayers and worshipers. Some are communicating to the Father, whilst others are praying to Jesus or the Spirit. Some slip so easily from one Person to another, that if you were to objectively follow the spiritual content and direction of the prayer, you could end up with some sort of spiritual vertigo! It is forgotten that we can only look into the eyes of one Person at a time. Though God certainly looks at the heart and not the mind, these issues are important for the renewing of our mind.

The issue at hand seems to be the presence of a conspicuous *chasm* between what is *theologically confessed* and 'believed' in and what is *actually practiced*. This gap seems to be widening, especially in the greenhouse of certain types of charismatic anti-intellectualism. This thesis is an attempt to bridge the gap and lead the believer to live authentically in what he or she confesses. We are wise to heed Blockmeuhl (1988) who warns that,

... if we do not begin to bridge again the gulf between man and the message, the next step for the church's proclamation will be its assignment to the museum of ecclesiastical antiquities and the devising of a new and more relevant education which draws from other sources (p 141).

What factors have contributed to the widening of this 'gap'? This is an important question, for if we are able to identify these factors we can

hopefully stem the tide and move in an antithetical direction. Here I suggest are some of the widening factors:

The **Practical unreality of God** is something which every believer must fight against. This gap between confession and practice has always been endemic to the church. Blockmuehl once again puts his finger on the issue:

In Evangelical orthodoxy, one sometimes encounters a deep rift between theory and practice, which is the first sign of the factual unreality of God and a practical atheism. Here, a full system of faith and piety is still in place and is defended tooth and claw at every point. But here, as always in orthodoxy, it is often almost impossible to help the people concerned to an awareness of any reality. What's the problem? Everything has been thought of. But the point is that it has *only* been thought of. In real life, humanity faces the abyss... Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the familiar reaction of many circles against Evangelical orthodoxy. The claim to stand at the heart of God's people is resented when no marks of this status can be seen. Believers should not take the criterion of reality lightly (p 136).

To some church-attending people, the reality of God in their everyday lives is not experienced. Such people would be scandalised by the suggestion that God is dead, however, if He were, it would make no practical difference to their lives. Unfortunately, God becomes 'a useful philosophical postulate, a comforting abstraction, a vague, nebulous word for what is solemn and serious and irrelevant to daily life' (France 1977: 10).

The error of thinking that **only certain parts of the biblical revelation are requisite** for today's Christian is also a widening factor. Paul made sure that he taught the *whole council of God* to the believers in Ephesus (Acts 20. 27). We often tend to distil our faith to suit our needs, focusing in on those elements of our faith that seem to be particularly germane to our needs. We tailor our faith by our personal needs for the sake of expediency, gravitating to those more perspicuous truths of the faith. It can be forgotten that the doctrine of God is the best prophylactic

for imbalance and the best antidote for all our problems and needs, lifting our lives into the reality of God.

A truncated experiential and theological inheritance impoverishes our faith. The influence of our spiritual forefathers is of significant import, for we are all both beneficiaries and victims of our spiritual inheritance. Many have not been taught to know the triune God and the distinctions between the Persons. Many believe in the Father, trust the Son but have no knowledge of the Spirit. Sometimes there is a de-emphasis on experience which fuels agnosticism on these issues. In other traditions there might be a de-emphasis on knowledge which fuels a vacuous existentialism. According to Lovelace (1979),

... when the full dimensions of God's gracious provision in Christ are not clearly articulated in the church, faith cannot apprehend them, and the life of the church will suffer distortion and attenuation... When any essential dimensions of what it means to be alive in Christ are obscured in the church's understanding, *there is not guarantee that the people of God will strive toward and experience fullness of life* (p 74. Italics mine).

This produces an unfortunate atrophy of our faith.

There is also a **lack of proper teaching regarding the trinity in its application**. Many theologians and church teachers have had lovely explanations of how God in the inscape of His being is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet they have not properly applied this to the life of the man in the pew. Nicene orthodoxy is of little importance to today's believer, and rightly so if the creeds do not go on to delineate how Nicea and Chalcedon can effect my life. I have oft bemoaned this as I have read trinitarian theologies. They do not show how one can relate to Father, Son and Spirit in a balanced and integrated way. Their lovely 'hot air balloons', as it were, never touch ground. The doctrine of the trinity 'has suffered more than other central doctrines of the Christian creed by not being closely related to the practice of the Christian religion' (Hodgson 1960: 176). Hodgson predicted that the doctrine would indeed be of little interest so long as for the preacher it remains a dry and abstract doctrine

and that for the congregation the sermon is not an interpretation of the religion which its members are practising. He goes on to say:

Our efforts to teach the doctrine will always, I am convinced, be futile so long as we try to teach it as an intellectual truth without having prepared the ground by teaching our hearers to live a trinitarian religion (p 77).

He follows this up by adding:

If we try to think or speak of it except on the basis of such prayer and action, both we and they will find it a jejune weaving of abstractions, for we shall be thinking and speaking truths which, though they may be true, have no apparent relevance either to religion or to life (p 181).

Some denominations have a Trinity Sunday, but for many this is simply the day on which the doctrine is 'taken out of deep storage, briefly given an airing, and then returned to its hiding place until the same time next year' (BCC 1989 II: 1).

Certain theological hangovers from our **western theological heritage** have also subtly effected our relation to the triune God. It is impossible in such a subsection to avoid generalisations, but I will pull out one major influencing factor, that of Augustine, the great mentor of Western theology, of whom 'all medieval theologians considered themselves to be followers' (Gonzalez 1971: 107). In his landmark work on the trinity, *De Trinitate*, critics have observed that Augustine's anti-materiality forced him to find the point of contact for the trinity within the human soul. This de-historicising tendency is well noted by Gunton (1991) in his stringent strictures on Augustine. Gunton moves in a direction antithetical to Augustine, noting that materiality and historicity is a 'prerequisite for a doctrine of the trinity that does not float off into abstraction from the concrete history of salvation' (p 34). This is exactly what happened to Augustine. He found the soul of man as his saving grace, for there God could relate to man, thankfully avoiding any material contact. Thus the whole historical emphasis inherently linked to our

knowledge of the trinity, and so central for this thesis, is undermined and rejected. Thompson (1994) also notes that there is a failure in Augustine's theology to link the nature of God as triune with the economy of salvation. Together with his Platonistic influence, it is this penchant which 'made his positive biblical insights take a rather abstract form and made his views less concrete and dynamic than those of the East' (Thompson 129). Rather, a Platonic triad of thought where the human mind is seen in a three-fold act of memory (Platonic eternal forms), understanding (the mental screen of which the mind's store of these forms can be actualised) and will (the power of bringing the content to actuality), is the interpreter of the trinity (see Gunton 1991: 45 ff). The outcome is that Augustine finds the act of knowing the *self* the best channel for knowing *God*. His understanding of the trinity charted a new course for theology and introduced the dimension of introspective human analysis into the doctrine of the God. Norman (1995) perceptively saw that,

... as he progresses in his desire to ecstatically encounter and become joined with the Divine, Augustine becomes less dependent upon the Scriptures and other outside witnesses, and far more introspective (p 21).

Much has been said and written on his concept of the Spirit being the love between the Father and the Son, and I will not add much more on this score (see Bray 1993: p 165 - 177 and Gunton 1991: p 48 - 55). It naturally led to the depersonalising of the Spirit and gave little personal distinctiveness to the Spirit within the life of God. The Holy Spirit was seen as merely the personification of love.

Lastly, Kaiser (1982) points out that there is evidence of a diminishing of the three-fold distinctions in the works of the Godhead in Augustine's works:

The general picture that Augustine paints is one of a transcendent God, simple and immutable in his substance, who from within appears to be three 'persons' in relation to each other and from

without appears as a unified field of eternal will, immutable knowledge and infinite power (p 81).

Bray also adds:

Augustine thought of God primarily as a single being, in whom there were three persons. This primacy of the essence over the persons was to become and remain characteristic of the Western tradition, and is one of the main features distinguishing it from its Western counterpart (p 167).

Gunton (1991) contends that Augustine's domineering concept of the one immutable substance,

... precluded him from being able to make claims about the being of the *particular* persons, who, because they lack distinguishable identity tend to disappear into the all-embracing oneness of God. It is for reasons such as this that there is in Augustine, and in most Western theology after him, a tendency towards modalism, and it is not surprising that we find him denying what for Basil was a truth about the being of God, that 'three somethings subsist from one matter which, whatever it is, is unfolded in these three'... Does Augustine believe that the true being of God *underlies* the threeness of persons...? In that case, the danger is that the being of God will either be unknown in all respects, or will be made known other than through the persons, that is, to say the economy of salvation (p 42).

For Augustine then, the works of the trinity *ad extra* are one (*opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*). Although he still developed a doctrine of the 'appropriations' whereby each Person appropriates specific actions, their differences are often supplanted by the indivisible actions of the Godhead. This spawned the concept in the West that the divine Persons differed solely in their mutual relations (subsistent relations). The East on the other hand emphasised that the relations only serve to express the hypostatic diversity of the three. The East did not stumble on issues of the 'impassable monarchical monad' but rather emphasised 'being in communion'. All this has affected much practical theology, where the distinctions are blurred and the historicity of the trinity is replaced by psychological analogies that end up making God into our image. Due to

the image of the trinity being found in the human soul, a modalistic understanding ineluctably surfaced.

Yet in the light of this backdrop, there are propitious signs for the salvaging of trinitarian theology. The report of the British Council of Churches (1989 II p 2) names three encouraging signs. Firstly, the *ecumenical* thrust is calling for a renewed interest in the traditional trinitarian aspects. Secondly, the *charismatic* experiences of many have required an integration of the Spirit with the rest of the Godhead, bringing about trinitarian equilibrium. Lastly, the *academic* rise in the twentieth century has been of significant import. Beyond these three propitious signs, it is my conviction that if we want to *fully* recover trinitarian relevancy for the average Christian we need to take a fresh look at the biblical matrix and pull out those aspects that will aid us in 'grounding' the doctrine in a way similar to the experiences of the biblical writers. The next section explores this as a possible solution.

2. 2 The Renewal of Trinitarian Faith

One of the tragic facts seen in the trajectory of historical trinitarianism is the preoccupation over ontological issues. It is my conviction that the biblical documents are best understood as a record of *experience* and not a quarry for abstract trinitarian definitions. Unless we re-think this point, we are in danger of losing our moorings in trinitarian theology. Hodgson (1960), appealing for such a rediscovery, warns us that 'the doctrine of the trinity is left, so to speak, in the air unless the experience on which it is based is experience of a definite, concrete, self-revelation of God in history' (p 288).

As noted in the previous section, the relevancy of the trinity for the believer has not been affected by ontological questions but rather by practical ones. This 'gap' between orthodoxy and orthopraxy needs to be bridged - not merely fine-tuning our orthodoxy. It is my firm conviction that a focus on the particular 'experiential' and 'historical' aspects of the trinitarian faith will equip us to personally and corporately integrate and orientate our faith in the triune God of grace. In this section I will first highlight the experiential dimension of trinitarianism, then trace the emergence of the trinitarian faith from within its original matrix and lastly analyse our contemporary experience.

2. 2. 1 The Experiential Dimension

To bring the doctrine of the trinity within the compass of practical Christian living and faith, there needs to be a rediscovery of the experiential aspects of this doctrine. Unless we have a living experiential dependence upon the Father *and* the Son *and* the Holy Spirit, we will never maintain the practical relevancy of the doctrine. Neo-Orthodox theologians, and particularly Brunner, have re-emphasised the role of

encounter in the discovery of truth. Brunner (1949) insisted that revelation 'is never the communication of knowledge, but it is a life-giving and a life-renewing communion' (p 20). For him, revelation and faith meant a personal encounter, personal communion (p 26). Although he overstressed his point, it was a much needed emphasis. Learning from Brunner, we see that it was not merely through enfolded propositions that God revealed himself, but also and firstly through *encounter* - an important point for this thesis. Although encounter had a certain historical priority, it was the dynamic interplay between these two realities (event plus interpretation) that extruded the historical apostolic formulation of trinitarian theology. To pit these two aspects against each other - which God has joined together - creates an artificial antithesis. Mere 'propositional' theology leads to a cognitive centred Christian life, with Christian growth being symmetrical with intellectualism and resulting in a 'belief that' theology. Mere 'encounter' theology on the other hand leads to a cognitive vacuum and a uncritical subjectivism where a protean relativity can freely roam. The two joined together unite the head and the heart in a mutual inter-dependent relationship. This inter-dependence prevents experience from merely being an enjoyment of its own religiosity and theology from being the enjoyment of its own curiosity. Baxter (1988) well observes:

God added his word of interpretation to religious experience either before, concurrently, or after, and the community weighed the word, judged the prophet, tested the spirits, and finally recognised that in the event and the interpretation *combined* God had revealed Himself (p 137).

The development from the inchoate and sometimes barely compatible affirmations in the Bible to the later trinitarian formulations was not just a matter of logical inference from certain texts. Rather this development occurred within a complex matrix of experience and reflection. The personalness of the believers as well as their changed life experience had a formative role on their writings. It was into this 'real life' that Christ

and the Spirit came, not some abstract noetic sphere. Hurtado in his excellent book One God, One Lord (1988) trenchantly reflects upon this truth:

One of the most likely causes of the new mutation in Jewish monotheistic tradition that early Christian binitarian devotion presents was this sort of *religious experience*. Rather than trying to account for such a development as the veneration of Jesus by resorting to vague suggestions of ideational borrowing from the cafeteria of heroes and demigods of Greco-Roman world, scholars should pay more attention to this sort of religious experience of the first Christian (p121. Italics mine).

Wainwright, summarising his findings in his landmark book The Trinity in the New Testament, also argues for a more personal matrix:

The problem of the trinity was being raised and answered in the New Testament. The problem of the trinity arose because of the development of Christian experience, worship and thought. It was rooted in experience, for men were conscious of the power of the Spirit and the presence and Lordship of Christ. It was rooted in worship, because men worshipped in the Spirit, offered their prayers to God through Christ and sometimes worshipped Christ Himself. It was rooted in thought, because the writers tackled first the Christological problem, and then, at any rate in the Fourth Gospel, the threefold problem. The whole matter was based on the life and resurrection of Jesus himself, who received the Spirit during his earthly life and imparted the Spirit to others after his resurrection. For many centuries the Christian Church has interpreted its doctrine of God in terms of Greek metaphysics. But the biblical writers presented the doctrine in terms of their own experience, interpreted by the Hebrew names of God and the Hebrew ideas of divine functions... The writers did not make it their chief aim to unravel all the complexities of the divine nature. Their chief aim was to show God as revealed in Christ and as present in the Spirit... Their freedom from philosophical traditions, their down-to-earth Hebrew approach to heavenly things, enabled them to give an account of the work of God through Christ in the Spirit, which must ever provide the basis for Christian thought about the Triune God (p 266-7).

If the identity of Christ was cemented through worship, how much more the companion awareness of the triune God. Could this awareness not

have arisen from the church's participation in the life of God, a participation granted by the Spirit? Was it not particularly in the experience of *worship* and *reflection* that the early church related to the triune God? What is our context today? It surely needs to be the same. The more we move away from this experiential setting, the further we drift from a living and dynamic trinitarian faith.

The theologians. This experiential aspect in the formulation of the doctrine of the trinity was emphasised by theologians around the early to middle part of this century. To name a few: Thornton, The Incarnate Lord (1928), Hodgson, The Doctrine of the Trinity (1960) and Kirk in Essays on the Trinity and Incarnation (1928). Moltmann in The Trinity and the Kingdom of God (1981) has also rooted this doctrine firmly in the soil of experience. All these theologians have been firm advocates of the 'social model' of the trinity, something which inevitably arises out of a historical analysis of the roots of this doctrine. We will briefly look at the contributions of these theologians.

Thornton saw the Christian experience of *koinonia* as the root of the doctrine of the trinity. The experience of redemption through Christ as the mediator between God and man is genesis of the doctrine of the trinity. This redemptive fellowship has an ultimate background in the eternal fellowship in God. The divine intra-personal *koinonia* is the basis of our *koinonia*. Welch (1952) quotes Thornton:

Since the new law of *agape* flows down into the new community through the Spirit of Christ from the 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ', this law of *agape*, revealed in the Messiah's life-story and reproduced by the Spirit as the inner principle of life in the New Order, must be referred back to its transcendent source in the life of God... The fellowship, or *koinonia*, of the Spirit in the new community is referred back to the transcendent fellowship of Persons in the life of God (p 136-7).

This is in line with the Johannine theme of salvation being an experience of the Father-Son relationship through the Spirit. Thornton has stimulated us to consider the fact that the salvation in the New Testament was not a matter of believing certain truths or adopting a certain 'world-view', but was a dynamic experience of Christ as the mediator between God and man. Many of Thornton's ideas influenced Hodgson.

Hodgson, within a Neo-Orthodox framework, focused on the revelation of the triune God as given not in propositions but in the acts of God. For him, the doctrine of the trinity is,

... the product of rational reflection on those particular manifestations of the divine activity which center in the birth, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church (p 25).

Along with Thornton, he posited the consciousness of being adopted into Christ's relationship with the Father as the subjective ground and root of the doctrine. The doctrine is,

... the formal statement of the divine setting of the Christian life, arrived at by an analysis of the implications of that life as it came into existence and continued to exist in the history of the world (p 50).

The reality within the doctrine is the very air of the Christian life, and represents the conception of God involved in the Christian life of *adopted sonship* in Christ (p 56). The doctrine thus did not begin as a theological doctrine, but as a religious outlook, the outlook of the One who thought of Himself finding and doing His heavenly Father's will through the indwelling Spirit by whom He was one with the Father (83-84). This essential relationship, projected into eternity, is the doctrine of the trinity. The disciples came to believe God to be triune because they had experienced this adoption of sharing in the relation of the Son to the

Father in the Spirit. They then committed to their successors the task of thinking out the doctrine of God implied by their religious practice. He saw 'trinitarian theology as the interpretation of trinitarian religion' (p 176). The common stock of Christian consciousness is to be the same as that of Christ, that is, a doing of the Father's will by the Spirit.

Hodgson well highlights the role that experience played in the life of the disciples, an experience interpreted by Christ's own experience of God and bequeathed to his disciples. This line of thought is taken up and expanded by Dunn in his landmark book Jesus and the Spirit (1975). In this book he focuses upon the particular charismatic and 'trinitarian' dimensions of Christ's life and the echo of this as found in the Christian life.

Kirk also maintained that the doctrine of the trinity was generated and justified by spiritual experience and not philosophical or theological speculation. According to H Owen (1984), Kirk made the following very important observation:

Whatever philosophical or historical grounds might have pointed to the doctrine of the three Persons within the Godhead, they would have been insufficient to establish it in the face of its inherently supra-rational character; *only empirical grounds could make it certain*. This implies that for the recognition of distinct hypostases within one Godhead there must be, on the part of man, a conviction that he also has, or is capable to have 'personal relations' with each of them (p 168. Italics mine).

He went on to add:

If we could recognise *three distinct activities of the Godhead toward ourselves*, each sufficiently universal to be the expression of a whole personality summed up in one activity, and not a mere attribute, allowing room for other attributes alongside itself; and could recognise moreover, that these activities, so far from being intermittent, transitory and successive, were contemporaneous and continuous, we should have *empirical support* for belief in three persons in one Godhead, as distinction from a belief in three attributes or three aspect of Godhead only (p 55. Italics mine).

This *tour de force* clearly shows that belief in three-Persons, being so 'supra-rational', must have arisen within a powerful crucible of experience. Mere rational postulations could not do justice to such a divine reality. Clearly, the New Testament believers felt that they met the same God three times: the *Father* - God in glory in heaven was their Father; the *Son* - God incarnate as man was their Saviour; the *Spirit* - God indwelling and empowering them. These realities were not experienced tangentially but were *given* to them by grace, something into which they entered and participated, birthing a radically new life and outlook.

As we have already seen, **Moltmann** (1991), also argued for a return to trinitarian thinking along the lines of experience, albeit that of suffering. He asks the question: Is it possible to talk of the triune God out of personal experience? He finds his answer in suffering, looking at our experience of God as being the experience of God's relationship to us. God's experience of us is a divine historical 'pathos' and this is the way in which we experience God. For Moltmann, the expression 'experience of God' therefore does not only mean our experience of God; it means also God's experience of us (p 4). We learn to know ourselves in the mirror of God's historical experience of the world. We experience God when we know His suffering and love of His dealings with man and His Son. It is particularly in our experience of suffering - for to Moltmann our experiences incorporate mainly wonder or pain - that we experience the triune God, as the One who suffers with us, from us and for us.

Some of his contributions are helpful. His insistence that our experience should be the experience of God and God's experience of ourselves, provides a vaccine to our experience being simply a subjective self-encounter (Schleiermacher). Taking up thought along this line, I suggest that the experience of Christ as man was the 'experience of God'. He knew the Father and was led by the Spirit, and had a Messianic

the Holy Spirit. In his inner life he had a consciousness of the other(s) and of himself. My emphasis on our triune experience and consciousness is in keeping with this emphasis of our experience being an experience that God Himself has. We are drawn up into the life of God. This way our experience is rooted in the reality of God's own self-consciousness and movement. We love the Son *as* the Father loves the Son and love the Father *as* the Son loves the Father and we follow the Spirit *as* the Son follows the Spirit. Nothing less than this is the high calling with which we have been called. This prevents our experience from being a mere experiment of the human self-consciousness. The *reality* of the love between the Persons of the Godhead becomes the apologetical ground for the possibility for a *real objective* subjective fellowship with God (i.e. what we subjectively encounter is a real objective reality) - the point of Thornton. Our knowledge is thus grounded upon a concrete, sensuous object revealed in history, which remains subject over human experience, escaping the Scylla of Schleiermacher and the Charybdis of Feuerbach. This 'sensuous objective reality' of the experience of the Godhead in history is the only prophylactic to the taunts of atheism (see Waite Willis 1987: 27-66).

All these theologians have brought us back to the matrix of the New Testament experience, the place that forged the trinitarian shape of the gospel. They have all shown that if we want to regain trinitarian relevancy, we must perpetuate the experience from whence this doctrine arose.

The Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. This twentieth century phenomenon has certainly underscored the aspects of encounter within the trinitarian faith. The growth of Pentecostalism has been stimulated by the modern cry for depth in life. People are tired of approaching reality and truth only through *logos* (understanding), they now want *pathos* (feeling). Boff (1988) has noted that because of this modern tendency,

pathos (feeling). Boff (1988) has noted that because of this modern tendency,

... the classic doctrine of the trinity - which supposes confidence in reason and enthusiasm for its performance - has, for most if not all of our generation, lost its power of persuasion (p 112).

There is a urgency to relate the doctrine of the trinity to this *pathos*. The ubiquitous penchant for 'subjectivity and feeling, the quest for experience, anti-structure and *communitas* are here to stay and our theology must speak to them if it is to be relevant' (Tidball 1988: 12). That the Holy Spirit was a dynamically experienced reality within the early church can hardly be disputed. The echo of the apostolic Pentecost experience in the 'Pentecostal' experience in our century, has for many assuaged this thirst. Theologically, this has raised renewed questioning regarding the trinity in the more conservative world. The 'blessing', often proceeding evangelical conversion to Christ, has forced many to clarify their relation between Christ and the Spirit, in a way similar to the early church. Unfortunately there has been a paucity of theological integration within the charismatic world - a reality that is crying out for formulation⁴.

It is time for us as theologians to surrender our de-valuing of the role that personal experience plays in theology, and to rather see them as credible and necessary factors in constructing a valid theology. The whole of the person - mind, imagination, feeling, willing, *being* - is an essential variable in the pursuit of a holistic knowledge of God. Hardy and Ford (1984) have articulated this well:

All our faculties play a part in knowing God, and can take the lead - the imagination by entering into the symbolism of worship, the voice by singing and expanding one's conception by soaring, the arms by lifting up and freeing one's whole self for something larger than it, the feet by dancing, taste by eating and drinking, and so on. (1984: 10).

Our whole experience of life invariably effects our knowledge of God, with both our experience and cognition functioning simultaneously. I suggest that it was a particular experience of the triune God which indelibly effected the nascent church in the upper room and gave rise to the trinitarian framework. To their experience we now turn.

2. 2. 2 Biblical Emergence

As we have seen, Rahner (1970) and Moltmann (1981) have suggested that historicity and time are inextricably bound up in the revelation of God as trinity. This thought has spawned the current idea that it is impossible for thought on the trinity to proceed in abstraction from the history of salvation, as Augustine did. The being of God is thought 'by means of the concrete and revealed threeness of hypostasis' (Gunton 1991: 39). We know the concrete particularity of each Person, not from abstracting off some analogy of the soul (Augustine) or by theorising on the possibility of revelation (Barth), but from their particular historical manifestations. This notion has a contemporaneous truth - the necessity to return to the original context of trinitarian revelation found in the history of salvation.

The revelation of the trinity is rooted in the nature of God and is covertly inherent in all His works, yet surfaces here and there in God's personal interaction with His people, reaching a zenith in the New Testament events. If the triune God has been at work in the Old Testament then we will surely find his unique fingerprints therein. If the doctrine of the trinity is to be accepted and built on a biblical basis it must be that of the Bible as a whole. There is a gradual unfolding of what was latent or implicitly present from the beginning. Moule (1977), though speaking about the development of Christology in the New

Testament, has some pertinent observations regarding doctrinal development:

The developmental approach tends to explain all the various estimates of Jesus reflected in the New Testament as, in essence, only attempts to describe what was already there from the beginning. They are not successive additions of something new, but only the drawing out and articulating of what is there. They represent various stages in the development of perception, but they do not represent the accretion of any alien factors that were not inherent from the beginning; they are analogous not so much to the emergence of a new species, as to the unfolding (if you like) of flower from bud and the growth of fruit from the flower. Moreover, when once one assumes that the changes are, in the main, changes only in perception, one is at the same time acknowledging that it may not be possible, a priori, to arrange such changes in any firm chronological order. In evolution, the more complex species generally belong to a later stage than the more simple; but in development, there is nothing to prevent a profoundly perceptive estimate occurring at an early stage, and a more superficial one at a later stage: degrees of perception will depend upon individual persons and upon circumstances which it may be impossible to identify in any intelligibly chronological sequence (p 105).

Much of what is true for the development of Christology can apply for the development of biblical trinitarian revelation.

Analysing the revelation of the triune God in biblical theology is an exhaustive field, but I will delimit my research to highlight certain aspects of those trinitarian events that led to a trifurcation in Israel's awareness of God through the subjective impact of the revelation.

The Old Testament paradigm What we are looking for in the Old Testament, as uniquely bound up with the New, is 'some foreshadowing of what was to come, since it was the same God manifested in both testaments' (Thompson 1994: 10). The quick assimilation of the trinity in the worship and life of the New Testament believers can only be explained in terms of precedence. This new revelation was in harmony with the previous activity of God.

explained in terms of precedence. This new revelation was in harmony with the previous activity of God.

The oneness and uniqueness of **Yahweh** was certainly the primordial truth cemented into the Jewish consciousness. Even though one can see a compound unity within the circle of this Oneness, there is a strong emphasis on the priority of the unity and singularity of Yahweh, for: 'there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Saviour, there is none except Me' (Is. 45. 21). Even though there are differing aspects of Yahweh, these are aspects of the one and only God. This monotheism is the great epithet on the temple door of the Old Testament and is a controlling principle in all that follows.

Yet *within* the circle of Old Testament monotheism a diversity of activity (not so much of being), appears right from the start - an inclusive monotheism rather than an exclusive monotheism. This is seen both conceptually and experientially. Conceptually, it is seen in statements in Scripture such as, '*Elohim*', '*Let Us*' (Gen. 1. 26; 11. 7; Is. 6. 8), '*echad*' (Dt. 6. 4), etc., showing God to be a compound unity. Yet most of the Scriptures in the Old Testament that furnish truth for a triune God, arose in the *encounter* with Yahweh, giving rise to specific distinctions in relationship to Yahweh. Through the appearances of the Angel of the Lord (*Malak Yahweh*) and the activity of His Spirit (*Ruach*), the nation encountered this tension of difference and similarity. It was these records of experience that later helped pave the way for the early Jewish believer's acceptance of a plurality within the Godhead.

Undoubtedly, the documents that had the most formative impression on the mind of the nation was the Pentateuch. It was in these books that God first appeared to His covenant people, making these manifestations the pattern and hope for all future manifestations (see Is. 64. 1 - 5 and Hab. 3). These books witness to a threefold pattern in Yahweh's relations and have clear traces of rudimentary elements of the later Christian doctrine of the trinity.

Mankind's history started with the **appearance** and fellowship of God with Adam. God walked with the man and woman 'in the cool of the day' (Gen. 3. 8). God was corporeally present in the garden. One reputed commentator writes:

He comes to them as one man to another. This was the earliest form of divine revelation. God conversed with the first man in a visible shape, as a Father and Instructor of His children (Keil and Delitzsch 1981: 97 Volume 1).

This more 'quiet' theophany has been neglected in much Old Testament theology. Could it be due to a tendentious Greek antipathy for such realities, as has been seen in Augustine's antimateriality? With the entrance of sin, this presence soon disappeared and was surely longed for by the faithful, who believed that he would again 'stand on the earth' (Job 19. 25). In Genesis 4. 26 'men began to call on the Name of Yahweh', which could be interpreted as the transference of worship from a more localised concentration (Eden) to a more universal, vertical and transcendent one. The biblical account thus started out with a very *personal* and 'anthropocentric' concept of God. He was particular and focused. With this presence gone the revelation became more general and 'diffused'. This revelation of God, so close, personal and 'human', set the tone for all future aspirations and was surely fulfilled at the Incarnation.

With this presence lost, God frequently 'came down' and reappeared for specific purposes. These are known as *theophanies* (lit. 'God manifest'). The events of the Exodus are introduced as God 'coming down' to save His people (Ex. 3. 8). He continued appearing, reminiscent of the garden of Eden, with these theophanies reaching a zenith in His manifestation to Israel and Moses in the Siniatic theophanies. In Exodus 19, the introductory section to the inauguration of the covenant, God 'came down' on the top of Mt. Sinai (vs. 20). The fire, the trumpet blast, the earthquake and smoke were the accompanying terrestrial alarms,

inducing the necessary fear and reverence. He then appeared to the seventy elders who 'saw the God of Israel; and *under His feet* there appeared a pavement of sapphire stone as clear as the heavens' (Ex 24. 10. Italics mine). The most outstanding Siniatic theophany is the revelation of the glory of Yahweh to Moses in chapter 33.18 - 34. 9, where 'the Lord came and *stood* there with him' (34. 5). Later, Yahweh also 'came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the door-way of the tent'. Yahweh Himself says of these events: 'I speak with him [Moses] mouth to mouth... and he beholds the form of the Lord' (Nu. 12. 5-8). We must surely agree with patristic tradition and see these appearances as the pre-incarnate Word, the Messenger of the Godhead, who appeared to the saints and 'made God known' (John 1:18).

The **Angel (*Malak*) of the Lord** provides the 'clearest of all hints of the trinity in the Old Testament' (McLeod 1994: 12). Within biblical tradition, *the* Angel of the Lord came to be understood in many places as the personal presence of God among His people, the Messenger who appears on behalf of Yahweh. He is to be both distinguished from Yahweh and yet is *Elohim* himself, speaking on behalf of Yahweh in the first person. The Jewish people seem to have instinctively distanced these encounters from Yahweh (thus using mediatorial language) as well as linked these encounters with Yahweh. Pannenberg (1991) notes:

This tendency, to distinguish God from the forms of His manifestation and work in the world, is linked to the idea of the divine transcendence (p 276).

Yahweh is the One God who comes to His people in and through his activity. He was *in* these events and yet *separate* from them. These personal appearances of God came to be related to this one divine Messenger. If we compare Genesis 28. 13 with Genesis 31. 11-3, we understand that 'Yahweh' who appeared to Jacob on his way to Haran at Bethel is identified as the Angel of the Lord. Hosea 12. 4-6 confirms this,

under the epithet *Elohim*. This is seen clearly in Genesis 48. 15-6 where Israel blesses Joseph by the Angel of the Lord:

The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked,
the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,
the Angel who has redeemed me from all harm, bless these lads...

The Old Testament people thus 'saw God as wholly other than man yet coming close to him in saving action' (Thompson 1994: 11). We see that this Messenger, right from early Hebrew history, played an important role in mediating Yahweh's presence and will. He came to be known as the Angel of His face and presence (Is. 63. 9). He is particularly related to helping, speaking, providing - involved in all the salvific activities of a mediator. This foreshadows the peculiar dynamics of Christ's relationship to his church. The above reference to Genesis 48. 15-6, where the Angel's salvific functions of 'shepherding', 'redeeming' are seen, shows that with these appearances there came about a corresponding response of worship and invocation - a bifurcation already present between Yahweh and the Messenger of Yahweh.

During these periods of great redemptive significance, the **Spirit of the Yahweh** was also at work as the dynamic presence of Yahweh. In Numbers 11. 17, when the Spirit upon Moses was taken and placed upon the seventy elders, the activity of the Spirit is specifically related to the equipping of leadership, to miracles and prophecy - the active presence of God. In Isaiah 63. 7-14 we see that the miraculous events surrounding the Egyptian exodus - the Red Sea opening, the provisions of water, manna and quail - were the result of the presence of God leading and guiding His people. Isaiah 63. 11 mentions this:

He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them
His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses
who divided the waters
who led them through the depths...

who divided the waters
who led them through the depths...
the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest.

Once again this is mentioned in Isaiah with the hope that it will be perpetuated in his day. Both during Moses' time and Isaiah's, the people had a focus of awareness with regards to the necessity of the immediate presence of God with them, the One who provides and protects. This was the seed-bed of the fully mature New Testament pneumatology.

I conclude that *ab initio* there was a three-fold awareness of Yahweh, encountered in the original redemptive events of the Pentateuchal period. The rest of the Old Testament shows how through similar events and renewed revelations, these aspects were deepened and enriched. We notice how the Angel of the Lord takes on renewed relevancy in the post-exilic community, as seen particularly in the writings of Zechariah. These Pentateuchal theophanies were the shape and substance of the nation's longing for Yahweh's renewed appearance in the coming Kingdom age.

The New Testament paradigm On the threshold of the New Testament there was a three-fold anticipation. *Yahweh* the great God of Israel was going to act as he did at the time of the Exodus; the *Messiah* would come and set up the kingdom; and the *Spirit* would be poured out on them from on high. This anticipation reaches its denouement in the events of New Testament. Grenz (1994) well adds:

The journey that led to the development of the doctrine of the trinity began in the Old Testament, but the experience of the early Christians provided the immediate impetus that launched the quest for a more appropriate theological understanding of God (p 70).

There was thus a diachronic and a synchronic process in the development of this consciousness. The early Christian's continual conjugation and experience of the One God and Father, the Lordship of Christ and the Presence of the Spirit, shaped the trinitarian mind of the early church. Their situation demanded that the 'early believers integrate into a composite understanding of these three dimensions of their experience of God' (Grenz 72). Certainly, these were experienced realities before they became conceptually understood. The Persons were experienced dynamically, *ab initio*, before they became a 'structural concept'.

Many theologians rightly link the doctrine of the trinity as a contiguous truth to that of the **Incarnation**. The enfleshing of the Word is directly linked to the development of the doctrine, showing that it arose amidst very historic and concrete realities - realities experienced by the early believers who, 'beheld his glory, glory as of the unique and only Son of the Father' (John 1. 14). The Incarnation was the final theophany. It was particularly through the reality of Christ - his person, relationship to Yahweh and the workings of the Spirit - that the believers were to come to know the triune God. In him, they could only know the Father and the Spirit. It was through Christ that these realities were heightened and presented.

Christ was worshipped as Lord, given divine honours, bursting all the cultural concepts and epithets for the Messiah. The liturgical origin of the acknowledged deity of Christ has been noted by Wainwright (1962). This is seen when in the moment of faith and worship, Thomas confessed Christ as Lord and God. For it is,

... only when the early church bowed in faith and worship before his risen majesty, could they know who he was. The writers of the New Testament seem to have been reluctant to commit to writing the confession that Jesus is God, due to it sitting ill with their strong monotheism. Yet their faith outstripped their reason (Wainwright 1962: 8).

Yet although he had the kind of impact on the early believers that only God could cause, he was not simply equated with Yahweh.

The experience of **Pentecost** was the second key event in concretizing the early church's trinitarian consciousness, being a very historic and experiential event. The Spirit was initially a reality contemporaneous with the ministry of the Messiah, yet at Pentecost the Spirit assumes a more distinct role. Pentecost was the crowning act in forging the trinitarian experience. H Owen (1984) asks:

Why then was the church not content with a divine dyad? Why did it proceed to speak of the Spirit as a third member of the Godhead? The answer lies in experience (p 55).

The experience of the Spirit, called by some a 'possession' or positively a 'controlling' (Luke prefers 'filled'), was the special way in which his status as the third person of the Godhead was first made known.

The early believers went beyond the Old Testament concept of the Spirit as 'empowerer' and manifest presence of God, ascribing to him the peculiar and conscious personal activity of God amongst themselves. The book of Acts bears witness to this, showing how all the activities of the early community were done in the Spirit: He *gave orders*, *foretold* current events, *gave utterance* (13 times the Spirit is mentioned as giving speech), *gave* dreams and visions, *sent out* apostles, *guided* decisions, *forbade* movements, *made* overseers, *comforted* the church, *solemnly testified*, *indicated* future events etc. Wainwright sums up his survey of the personality of Spirit in the New Testament saying:

There is abundant evidence that the Spirit was regarded as a personal being, who was capable of experiences of grief and approval, who could forbid and be lied to, who could guide and inspire... It was not a mere mindless force which Jesus promised would direct the disciples (p 200).

Besides the community and individuals often experiencing the 'filling' of the Spirit, the Spirit was seen to permeate the community and added a whole new dimension that could only be described as the personal presence of God, distinct from Christ and the Father. His fingerprints, or rather personal imprint, on the community of Acts is so prevalent that He can be seen as the very life-constituting principle of the early church. This assertion of the Spirit as God present was 'born out of an ongoing experience of a personal, divine reality within the Christian fellowship who was neither the Father nor the Son' (Grenz 1994: p 71). The early believers were conscious of a new inner dynamic that was divinely wedded to their own psyche, mind and body, driving them to an unprecedented height and level of life and service. The new experiential engagement with God inevitably led to a new understanding. The Messiah was at the Father's right hand and the Spirit was right with them, aiding them in every way - the final step toward a *trifurcation* of worship.

These two events no doubt extruded the trinitarian faith of the early church. Jewett (1991) sees these pivotal events in salvation history - which occurred after the writing of the Old Testament and before the writing of the New - as constituting 'that 'revelation in the middle in the light of which the apostles, as the founders of the Christian church, both read the Old Testament and wrote the New' (p 269). Warfield (1968) also argued for historical factors being formative for this doctrine, for,

... the revelation itself was not in word but in deed, it was incidental to, and the inevitable effect of, the accomplishment of redemption... The doctrine of the trinity is simply the modification wrought in the conception of the one only God by His completion of the revelation of himself (p 33).

Warfield, contrary to popular opinion, went on to say that the reason for the delay of the revelation of the trinity lay not in the cementing of the unity amidst polytheism - as Gregory of Naziansus and many today

believe - but rather in the 'secular development of the redemptive purposes of God, when the fullness of time came. Advances of revelation were linked with advances of redemption' (p 34). A helpful observation.

In the New Testament this trifurcation in awareness of God most likely arose within the experience of worship. This experience of the Spirit led the believers to a further aspect in their awareness of God - God within and amongst them - a trinification of worship. These experienced realities, together with Christ's teaching, introduced a new dynamic in the church's relation to God, a dynamic which could only be understood in the classical doctrines of the faith.

After this brief analysis of the emergence of the trinity in the Scriptures, Warfield introduces us to our next section, fecundly observing:

As the roots of its revelation [trinity] are set in the threefold Divine causality of the saving process, it naturally finds an echo also in the consciousness of everyone who has experienced this salvation (p 56).

2. 2. 3 Contemporary Experience

In a previous section we saw that there was an uncomfortable distance between the rich biblical triune reality and today's malady of 'modalistic' practice. Our biblical analysis sharply contrasts with today's contemporary practice of the Christian life where there is seldom the same triune experience and theological formulation as in first century practice. The balance and dynamic of its beginning has somehow been lost amidst all the vicissitudes of the centuries. Certain aspects have been jettisoned whilst others have been held on to - and often without the mutual correction of the organic truth of Scripture. Its primordial wholeness and dynamic integration is often lost due to one truth being

held to at the expense of another. A return to a full-orbed trinitarian life and thought is much needed today. This will bring back the balance and dynamic so often missed. Where there is not a triune knowledge and experience of God, there will be imbalance and aberration. The British Council of Churches (1989 II) perceptively noted:

Much one-sidedness and lack of balance in the faith and the practice of the churches can helpfully be understood in trinitarian terms as an overemphasis on one or other of the Persons of the trinity with a consequent failure to relate fully and freely to the remaining Persons (p 21).

In this section I will first analyse three aberrant types of Christianity, labelling these reductionist tendencies; Theocentric, Christocentric and Pneumacentric orientations - a focus on the Father, Son and the Spirit respectively. This is an important background observation, for if we are more aware of our own idiosyncrasies, we can then know where to reform ourselves. After this I will show how the practice of the Christian life is inherently trinitarian and also how we can grow into a mature trinitarian Christian life.

Three Aberrations Throughout church history (which can also be seen as a mirror of our lives) people, movements and denominations have often arisen by emphasising (lit. to 'display' or 'manifest') a certain aspect of a particular Person and his work. Hardy and Ford (1984) state:

One great movement after the other that arises and seems to threaten or deny the others can be seen as reasserting some neglected emphasis in the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is big enough and open enough to wrestle with these contributions and be enriched by them (p 58).

Because this peculiar revelation of God was never 'down-loaded' as a comprehensive belief system or merely given to satisfy the desire to

understand abstract reality - but rather as framework' for a relationship with God - heuristic engagement has enriched our knowledge of the triune God. In the walk of life, in the moulded thought of each culture and through the inimitable eye of each life, the full spectrum of the reality of God can only be seen. Diversity is the fabric of discovery. Yet the human problem is that people forget this diversity and tend to absolutise a peculiar discovery. In the depth of their discovery, they forget the importance of keeping all three Persons 'emphasised'. This tendency has polarised and distanced groups and people. It is forgotten that all biblical truth exists in and through the other facets of truth, in *pericoreisis*. To emphasise one at the expense of another has been the travesty of church history. In a trinitarian sense, to emphasise a Person more prominently or to neglect a certain ministry of a Person, is to deny the Godhead, for they eternally exist in perichoretic unity.

We now note three trinitarian aberrations, helping us to avoid the fringes and move to the centre of relational harmony.

A **Theocentric** aberration has an undue overemphasis on God the Father, or on God that eclipses Christ in practice. Of all the aberrations this seems to have the most biblical support, for there is a priority of the Father in the gospel - as Smail (1980) has pointed out. The aspects of God's transcendence, providence, authority and fatherly care are highlighted here, with a corresponding view of man in his sinfulness, smallness and utter dependency upon this great God. Strong moral rigorism, an awareness of the awful holiness of God and God's sovereign eternity are important aspects focused upon. Within the conservative Protestant tradition, rigid deterministic Calvinism has had an unbalanced preoccupation on this aspect. God's pretemporal existence and timelessness has threatened man, forgetting His temporal limitations through His Son. A Christianity too much focused on the Father without communion with the Son or interiorization of the Spirit, can give rise to

an 'oppressive image of God as terrifying mystery, who's designs seem unforeseeable and absolutely hidden' (Boff 1988: 15).

J B Torrance (1991) has noted that in the more liberal Protestant tradition, the Harnack model of Christianity has bred such an emphasis, where the gospel proclaimed by Jesus has only to do with the Father and little to do with the Son. Harnack's view was clearly unitarian and individualistic and did not bring man within the life of God. This 'liberal' reconstruction 'made deep inroads into Britain, and accounts in measure for the 'moralistic' view of Christianity, where Jesus is the Teacher of ethical principles, and where the religious life is seen as following the Example of Jesus and living by the golden rule' (p 8-9). Without the balancing effect of the trinity, this God becomes more and more remote and also more and more made in the image of man's conceptual categories - far from the God revealed in Jesus Christ. Smail (1980) well notes that God,

... quickly becomes the remote and distant God of the philosophers, the anonymous and abstract ground of being, who is everything in general but never does anything in particular (p 25).

A **Christocentric** aberration arises when people concentrate almost exclusively on the person of Christ, worshipping Him and praying to Him above that of the Father. He is seen as the Alpha and Omega of the Christian life. The evangelical world, focusing on a commitment to Jesus and of 'accepting Him into one's heart' is closest to this aberration. It is often need-centred, negates all previous knowledge of God, and posits Christ as the self justifying reality.

Theologically, those who have had a rigid view of Christomonistic revelation have tended to squeeze all knowledge of God through the keyhole of Christ. Though Christ is finally determinative for all revelation of God, it is dangerous to limit talk about God to only talk about Christ.

Barth's theology has been found guilty of this emphasis by some. Bray (1993) well says:

It is true that Jesus pointed people to himself, as God's self-revelation, but he also pointed people to the Father. It is not enough to say that we can know the Father only as he has been revealed in and through the Son; Jesus clearly expects us to enjoy a relationship to the Father as a distinct person - a relationship which is analogous to his own, though not identical with it... We cannot be content with his earthly ministry; we must discover him for ourselves in the way that Jesus intended we should (p 192-3).

Although belief in Christ and evangelical commitment to Him are requisite to the faith, the stress on Christ as the *Way* is neglected. It is forgotten that His salvation is defined by God's verdict of the human situation and not merely man's felt need. The subtle undermining of a prior God-knowledge fosters an anti-cognitive setting for faith. The dynamic of repentance as being an awareness of sin against God is lost. The Father is eclipsed contrary to the sweep of the biblical reality of salvation being a reconciliation to God the Father. It is forgotten that Paul's evangelism was done in the circle of the glory of God and the need to be reconciled to God, for man had 'fallen short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3. 23). Paul never viewed Christ in isolation and only revealed Him in terms of His relation to the Father. Being a Christian is not just having a personal relationship with Jesus, but through Him being related to His Father, who is the Creator of all things.

A **Pneumacentric** aberration reveals an unhealthy preoccupation with the Person and work of the Spirit. Experiencing His power and presence is the desired goal and one is not satisfied until this happens. Prayer to Him and even worship is prevalent. It is forgotten that in the New Testament there is no such autonomous realm of the Spirit, which 'evolves from inside itself, building on its own experiences and developing its own techniques. The realm of the Spirit is entirely subordinate to that of the Father and the Son' (Smail 1980: 26). This proclivity can also lead

to an apathy toward social renewal because one is preoccupied with gazing upon his own spiritual belly button! This can easily be corrected when it is remembered that the goal of the Spirit's activity is not himself, but the Son and the Father. If we are not in line with this, we cannot and do not have fellowship with Him.

The Christian life needs to incorporate all the elements and aspects of the truth of God. Hardy and Ford (1984) encourage an inclusive trinitarian worship of all Persons, for if not,

... the idol could be a transcendent God who is not really free to take a personal part in history; or a divine-human being who himself receives all our worship; or a God who is within human beings or in some other way immanent in the world. Those three basic ways of absolutising one dimension of the Christian God roughly correspond to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit... Taken as a unity, the trinity continually dispels illusions and fantasies about God... So the Trinity is a comprehensive 'negative way', refusing to let one rest in any image of God. It offers a ground rule: never conceive of the Father apart from the Son and the Holy Spirit, or the Son without the Father and Spirit, or the Spirit without Father and Son (p 55).

To be true to a knowledge of any Person, we cannot avoid a knowledge of the other. This is not because of the *homousios*, but because of the personal *love* between the Persons. If it is truly Jesus we are coming to and confessing, we will be brought into that particular focus and love of his - the Father. If it is truly the Father that we confess, we will also be brought into the focus of his love - the Son. If it is truly the Spirit we are having communion with, then we will be led to his bipolar focus - the Father and the Son. The sovereign holiness of the Father, the salvation and Person of Jesus and the presence and fellowship of the Spirit - the whole compass - needs to be appropriated and held in dynamic relation. Salvation in Christ, renewing by the Spirit and restoration to the Father are all points on the one compass, each giving meaning to the other. Yet

this does not develop overnight. All these elements are inherent within our initial encounter with God, yet it takes a lifetime to unpack our inheritance and grow up into a full knowledge of God. We will now turn to this process.

The pattern of our experience. From encounter to trinity We need to now look at how we can develop a conscious experiential triune relationship to God. Some might remonstrate: This triune reality is a complex impossibility for the Christian life, for 'who will go up to heaven to get it for us and who will cross the sea for us to get it?' (Dt. 30. 11-4). I believe that 'it is not too difficult or out of reach, it is very near to us'.

It firstly needs to be stated that the 'problem' of harmonising our relationship to the tri-Personal God in the Christian life is a problem first and foremost for the believer 'in Christ' and for the 'body of Christ' and not a problem generic to humanity. It is only as a person has received the revelation of God in Christ into his or her life, as she is taken up into Christ by the Spirit, that the issues of this thesis becomes relevant. These realities of God are given to us by grace, from above, and do not grow out of our humanity. This is where I take leave of Rahner, who's theological aim, according to Grenz and Olson (1992), is to show that,

... human persons in every age, always and everywhere, whether they realize it or reflect upon it or not, are in relationship with the unutterable mystery of human life that we call God. Looking at Jesus Christ the crucified and risen one, we can have the hope that now in our present life, and finally after death, we will meet God as our own fulfillment' (p 173).

Without going into critical debate, the biblical view sees a time when people were without 'God in the world' and a time when some experienced a conversion and now 'had God' (Eph. 2:12). It is dangerous to talk about God's nature to people who have no interest in worshipping

God, for this leads to contempt and irreverence. It is a *mysterion* made known in Christ, and not in creation. The triune God cannot be read off from the doctrine of creation *qua* creation, but is fully manifest in the light of the new revelation of God in Christ. Yet we can, after being enlightened in Christ, see how 'the doctrine of creation cannot be understood apart from the trinity' (H Owen 1984: 20). The revelation of God as triune is a truth given by revelation (Aquinas). The corollary to this is that it is in communion with God, in prayer and acts of devotion, that the trinity is to be known. We can only know God's triunity if we are taken up into God. The external works of God are indivisible.

Knowledge of the triunity thus depends on the initiative of God in revealing Himself to us, for it is the Spirit who reveals the things of God (1Cor. 2. 10-2). If God is a personal being, it is not surprising that we can know him only by His revelation, since the same is true humanly. Other people know us only to the extent that we wish to reveal ourselves to them. With the coming of Christ, God has revealed his very being to the believer, 'wearing his heart on his sleeve'. If we are called to know God, then the whole personal dynamic of relationship is present and there can be a spiritual growth in our knowledge of God (Philip. 3. 10). Because God is personal, we cannot know all we can know about Him in a moment of time, but rather need to discover his richness over time.

There is often a progressive realisation of the Godhead in the Christian life (Frost 1978: 4). As there was no smooth evolutionary development of the revelation in the Bible, so it is in the Christian life. Although for our purposes we will now look at this knowledge synchronically, it must be stressed that such linear analysis is never a simple logical movement. All is inherently contained within our nascent knowledge of God, revealing itself diachronically to us in different ways at different times. Here I am 'dissecting' our trinitarian knowledge of God for the purpose of my thesis, exposing overlapping layers, interlinking concepts and interdynamic perspectives. The danger is that I fall prey to an 'atomizing' tendency,

and forget the larger more collective picture. This is unavoidable, for in doing theology the Subject is infinitely larger than the concepts expressed in this thesis.

Most people begin with a **prior awareness of God** as delineated in Romans chapter one, a nascent God-knowledge, a 'natural' theology of God. Besides the questions and bitter disputes around the reality and efficacy of this knowledge, the Scripture bears witness to a 'general revelation' of God, seeing it as predisposing and preparing man in some way for the revelation of God in Christ, or what has been called 'special revelation'. This aspect of theology has had a rather pejorative note due to controversy, yet it must be scripturally dealt with and not philosophically. Demarest and Lewis (1987) mention nine truths of God from 'general revelation': God is one; God is Creator; God is Eternal and independent of all; God is invisible and powerful; God is personal and wise; God is active in the world; God supports the world; God is moral; God is the supreme object of worship (p 72). The Johannine literature places particular emphasis on this 'antecedent' revelation, for only those who have been 'taught by God' come to Jesus (John 6. 45). Calvin (1964), along similar lines, has said:

The Lord first appears, as well in the creation of the world as in the general doctrine of Scripture, simply as a Creator, and afterwards as a Redeemer in Christ - a twofold knowledge of Him hence arises, a 'duplex cognito domini' (p 40).

He also stressed the importance of this prior 'God knowledge' as a prelude to the revelation of Christ for 'the redemptive revelation is of significance only when it is known to come from God the Creator' (Davey 1994: 221). It was those who in some way responded to this 'antecedent revelation' that came to Christ. Only those whose 'deeds had been wrought in God' (John 3. 21) and who had 'heard and learned from the Father' (John 6. 45) came to Jesus. Yet the initial saving **encounter with Christ** is the normal starting point in our active Christian walk with

God. This is when God 'reveals His Son in us' (Gal. 1. 16) and shines in our hearts to give 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Cor. 4. 6). Such knowledge of Christ is the 'access point' to the triune God and the requisite ingredient for a true knowledge of God, for 'no-one can come to the Father' except through Christ (John 14. 6). This is where the New Testament begins. The actuality of evangelical salvation births with heartfelt trust in Christ as God. This Christological starting point is well seen in the invitation of Jesus in Matthew 11. 27-28:

All things have been handed over to me by my Father
and no-one knows the Son, except the Father
nor does anyone know the Father except the Son
and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.
Come to me all you that are weary and heavy-laden
and I will give you rest.

In the context of his exclusive relation to the Father, Jesus calls people first to himself and then to the Father through him.

Both the early church and present Christian faith are based on this encounter with the risen Lord; an experience of being encountered or addressed by him, recognising that in this risen Lord, God himself addressing us. This experiential aspect cannot be ignored by theology, for it was 'the context of worship of the risen Christ that provided the seedbed for the early church's New Testament Christology' (France 1978: 58). It is still this ingredient of experience that affects the nature of a theology and the direction of thought.

At first this encounter might seem to be exhaustive, but it is not, for there is more to God than what we can experience. Knowledge of the oneness of God with Christ and a specious modalism is where many begin. There is often no differentiation in this knowledge or encounter but rather a focus on the *reality* of God, regardless of the ways in which it comes to one. This seems to be the beginning of most experience. Yet within this knowledge of God there is already a hidden threeness in the

event, though it is not at first seen; *God* is being personally revealed (Father), *God* is being *personally* revealed (Son) and *God* is being personally *revealed* (Spirit). The trinity is initially, to use Welch's saying, the immediate implicate of revelation (1952). In Bickersteths' classic *The Trinity* (1957), he compares the threeness-in-oneness to the three constituent properties in pure white light (p 147-8). A pure white light does not seem a compound of various colours, yet it is. So with God. In the pure white light of our initial encounter there are inherent dynamic possibilities. But to stop with Welch's observation would be to short circuit our faith. The trinity is also the consequent dynamic of a restored relationship of life within the triune God - the trinity is always behind us and before us, the presupposition and the destination of our encounter.

The possibility of this revelation of Christ is the reality of the **Holy Spirit**. This is the subjective side of our encounter with Christ - and yet much more. The appearance of Christ in Scripture was associated with the activity of the Spirit. The two are mutually inclusive. The Messiah comes in the power of the Kingdom, often with charismatic eventfulness. Whether internally or externally, there is a new dynamic which comes with the knowledge of the Person of Christ. In the New Testament, eventful filling and empowering by the Spirit accompanied conversion and the revelation of Christ (Gal. 3. 1-5), thus providing a certain concrete knowledge and awareness of the Spirit as separate to yet inextricably linked with Christ (see Fee 1994: 854-55). Yet as we grow in grace, we realise that the Spirit is not the 'mere' subjective alter ego of Christ, but a distinct Person who relates to us intimately, aiding us in our Christian life. He is the Spirit of adoption, leading us, through Christ, to the Father.

As we finally turn to the Father, we must remember that encounter with Christ in the New Testament paradigm is rooted in the need for the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Today it seems to be more determined by personal needs than 'theological needs' - something

which is not wrong but must not stand alone (in Rom. 11. 14. Paul says that Jewish jealousy will precipitate conversion!). Today, with our secular age and a secular framework, the points of contact and access have become those of personal needs, the meaning in life, a sense of future uncertainty and the like. This is not wrong, but there needs to be a supplemented theological orientation that leads into Christological sanctification. Christ is the true reflector and shape of our new humanity, not the other way round. Christ's teleological orientation is what needs to be inculcated into our need of salvation - for our felt needs are not always our real needs. In the light of this, we see that a knowledge of his Father is the final destination that proceeds salvific knowledge of Christ.

Jesus never came to supplant our knowledge of God, but to give us a knowledge of God as Father, as **Abba**. Jesus 'toiled for three years to write of the Fatherhood on the minds of the disciples' (Watson 1896: 258). His coming was to direct people through himself to 'that' God' who all knew in some degree. Pannenberg (1991) lifts out this truth well:

The paradox is that Jesus shows himself to be the Son of God precisely in his self-distinction to God. Precisely by distinguishing himself from the Father, by subjecting himself to his will as his creature, by thus giving place to the Father's claim to deity as he asked others to do in his proclamation of the divine lordship, he showed himself to be the Son of God and one with the Father who sent him (p 310).

This is forgotten by our 'Christomonists'. It is for this reason that Jesus answered the rich young ruler: 'Why do you call me good, no one is good except God alone' (Luke 18. 19). The implication of Matthew 11. 28, as referred to above, is that in coming to Jesus we will be introduced by Jesus to his Father. Theologically speaking, there is a near identification of Jesus and his Father, but also a separateness. Through Christ, the Spirit and the Word, we are drawn into the greater reality of God, though

always keeping that relation of Christ as central and as an orientation point. As we experience a portion of the sea, yet know that there is a whole ocean out there, so our relationship with Christ is the continual reference point for our relationship of the Father of the Son (see McGrath 1987: 78-83).

This desire of Christ to lead believers on into a knowledge of the Father is shown particularly in the gospel of John. Jesus sums up his ministry as a 'revealing of the Father' to the disciples (John 17. 6), who is overjoyed when at last the disciples *believed* that all things given to Jesus were 'from the *Father*' (John 16. 30-31; 17. 7). Jesus is the Word *himself*, his personality, nature and works being the source of our knowledge of the personality, nature and works of the Father. *Through* him we know the Father and the Spirit. Through him we know the personal God and the personal activity of God.

As mentioned, *all* aspects of these relationships need to be entered into in the Christian life, preventing it from becoming atrophied. Our relation to God needs to be matured, strengthened and brought to the 'fullness that there is in Christ' (Eph. 4. 13). The importance of this triune relationship to God is provocatively expressed by the BCC (1989 II):

If we are not communing with a trinitarian God in our churches and private prayers then clearly such a God is not part of our conscious experience (p 2).

How then does this full-orbed relationship occur? I believe that it takes place through the twin modalities of the *Spirit* and the *Truth* (2 Thess. 2. 13). This dual dynamic of experience (Spirit) and teaching (Truth) is vital, and the believer's growth is stunted if any one is not at work. As the quip goes: The Spirit without the Word and you blow-up, the Word without the Spirit and you dry-up. G Lewis (1980) puts this well:

Without reliable information a person may expend her life for nothing: without faithfulness to the highest values, one may be a hypocrite. On the one hand a merely doctrinaire view to truth may lead to an empty idealism or an arrogant legalism. On the other, an undirected commitment may lead to a blind emotionalism, a frustrated activism, or a tragic discontinuity with what is or ought to be (p 11).

If authentic, these two modalities will lead us into a dynamic relation to the triune God. The aspect of teaching is becoming more essential in our time, for converts come to Christianity more because of personal existential needs than out of theological conviction ('I have *sinned*' is replaced by 'I need *security*'). A theological framework needs to be inculcated in order to save the convert from collapsing in on himself because of a lack of a solid foundation. The believer must know the full salvation in Christ, the new relation to God as Father, *as well as* the renewing and personal work of the Spirit. Full orientation to the whole trinity. No matter how one comes into genuine salvation, we are called in Christ, who is always the centre-piece of salvation and the nexus point, to know him, his Father and the Spirit of God.

As with all growth in grace, there is both a 'reckoning' and an 'enlightening' that needs to take place. This reality of the triune God is something that 'is' - it is already present for the believer. Through grace, the Christian has *already* been taken up into a new situation, to a new world or 'creation' (2 Cor. 5. 17). This is the *de facto* factor. In this thesis I am urging for a living of the Christian life that is in correspondence with what 'is', not by trying to manufacture something that is not. As Paul urges us to deal with sin by 'reckoning' it so (Rom. 6. 11), so we also need to simply reckon upon what we already have. Hodgson (1960) helps us here. He well observes the obvious truth that it does not necessarily follow that something is not true because we are not aware of it. Full truth is always 'more extensive than the portion of it of which one is aware' (p 56). As in physical birth things are true of which we are quite unaware, so in the spiritual. The history of the conscious

life of every human being is in large part the story of his waking up to what he has already. It is all latent within the DNA. We must grow up into all the fullness of our life in God, remembering that 'the ultimate question is not what the Christian life feels like, but what it is' (p 58). This growing up into the things of God that are already 'there', will lead us into a richer faith, and we will save ourselves from making salvation into the shape of our needs, rather than according to the truth that is in Christ.

Yet there is also an enlightening needed, a power to see what is there and to make visual what 'is', as the sun illumines the darkness. God gives power and light through His Spirit so that we can have 'illuminated hearts and minds' (Eph. 1. 15-9). The depths of God are revealed through the Spirit, who discloses all that He 'predestined for us to know' (1 Cor. 2. 10-6). This way the *de facto* becomes *de jure*.

Looking at the pattern of our experience has shown how a personal knowledge of the trinity is both 'already' and 'not yet'. Yet one thing is certain: the 'first-fruits' in our knowledge of the triune God, this side of heaven, enable us to live the Christian life under the reality of the trinity. Such an awareness of God is not for 'when we know fully', but for now even when we know in part (1 Cor. 13. 12). Before we seek to practically thread these aspects together comprehensively into Christian life, we have to turn our attention to the biblical foundation and subsequent theological formulation of the doctrine of the trinity. Our integration must be harmonious and concomitant with the present reality of God.

CHAPTER THREE

FOUNDATIONS FOR ORIENTATING TRINITARIAN FAITH

3. 1 **Biblical Foundations**

In this section I will analyse 'the faith given once and for all to the saints' as found in the New Testament. The question may well be asked: why be confined to the New Testament? Although it can be argued that there is a three-fold personal plurality of Yahweh in the Old Testament, showing the oneness and the distinctions as Bickersteth (1957) and Custance (1976) have done, it is only with the spectacles of the New Testament that we can correctly see what is there. Custance exegetes the 'let us' references as 'revealing equality and personhood of the Persons' (1976: 219-20), something that is only clearly seen through the lens of post-apostolic trinitarianism. It is for this reason that Jewish scholars do not see any personal distinction within God. Both Johnson (1961) and Knight (1957) have given substantial evidence that even within the Old Testament, read in its own light, a diversity in Yahweh's interacting with His people is seen⁵. Yet even this in itself can simply lead to an anachronistic modalism. Warfield (1968) gives an excellent analogy of this matter:

The OT may be likened to a chamber richly furnished, but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not there before; but it brings out into clear view much of what is in but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the OT; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the OT revelation and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the OT revelation of God is not corrected by

the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged (p 30-32).

In keeping with our theme, it is important to start synchronically with the New Testament, for it is only since the Incarnation and Pentecost that we see the three-foldness in God as clearly being *tri-personal* - thus introducing our problem of relating to God according to His revelation. Knight sums this up well:

With the advent of Christ, God did something utterly new and surprising and unique... These are utterly unique events beyond the wit or heart of man to conceive. However, once the event has happened we read the OT in the light of these events, and discover in that revelation enshrined in the OT a paradoxical oneness with that given in the New (p 52).

In analysing this New Testament revelation, my approach will be as follows: I will look at the whole tenor of each Scriptural division as it relates to the Persons. This will not be a detailed exegesis of the Theology, Christology and Pneumatology of each division, but rather an analysis of the peculiar emphasis that each section has as touching the Persons - i.e., the *place* and *focus* of the Father, Son and Spirit. Next, I will attempt to integrate and summarize these findings, relating it to our specific quest for a practical and orientated trinitarianism with particular reference to the Christian life. The three *main* sections to be studied will be the Synoptic gospels, the Pauline correspondence and the Johannine letters. These indubitably form the backbone of New Testament theology and deserve our primary attention. Notes on Acts and the General Epistles will be added in short. With regards to the critical issues of authorship and reliability, I hold to traditional conservative views. Readers with problems here should consult the plethora of works available.

3. 1. 1 Synoptics and Acts

The tenor of the Synoptics

It is commonly understood that the central message of the New Testament is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom, summarized by Jeremias (1971), is a dynamic concept, denoting the reign of God in action (p 98). Its chief characteristic is the realization, by God, of the ideal of the Kingdom of righteousness, constantly longed for, but never fulfilled on earth. This *basileia* 'is always and everywhere understood in eschatological terms' (p 102), denoting the time of salvation, the consummation of the world and the restoration of the disrupted communion between God and man. Looking at Jesus' inaugural sermon in Luke's gospel we see that the arrival of the long awaited Kingdom of God is **God** acting in a new way to return His creation and people back to Himself. This is the acceptable day of the Lord God. The age of God's mercy, grace and liberty has arrived. This salvation is accomplished and carried out by the Spirit-inspired **Messiah**. He comes to proclaim and personify this new age in word and deed. That the Messiah is bestowed with the gift of the Spirit serves as a sign of the new activity of God. The Messiah is anointed with God's **Spirit** and is thus equipped to carry out his divine agenda. *The gospel is a Father, Son and Spirit movement*. The three are all integral to the one Kingdom of God. We now look at the distinctive place of each in this Kingdom.

The focus on the Father The identity of the God of the New Testament with Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, 'is everywhere assumed by New Testament writers, though they never explicitly assign to Him the name Yahweh' (Argyle 1965: 9). The New does not repeat the Old, but shows its fulfillment. The gospels naturally have a strong Jewish monotheism - although as we have seen, within this *mono* there is room for diversity. They are founded upon the content and revelation of God in

the Old. What is now about to arrive is not novel or heteronomos, but rather a continuation in line with the old. Jesus quotes the *Shema* and points to God in heaven, refusing to be equated with Him (Mk. 10. 17-9). Ascriptions of deity refer to the God of Jesus Christ, even though the Son has divine status and activity. This God was now acting in a new way, demanding repentance. Ladd (1974) refers to the seeking, inviting, fatherly and judging God acting through the Messiah (p 81-90). The mission of the Messiah was to personalise this activity and to incarnate this revelation of God. The parables are picture stories to tell people of how God was acting and what kind of God was bringing about this new day - all with reference to the person and work of the Messiah. Thieliicke, in his book *The Waiting Father* (1966), shows in detail how the parables are God's picture-book, cogently showing how through these stories of Jesus, God is calling us to Himself, to the Father's House.

It is Jesus' favourite epithet for God as 'Father' which merits further attention. For it is particularly in this title that we see the personal definition of the God of Jesus. Since Christ, the title is interpreted in a distinctly Christian sense and forms part of the revelation and content of the gospel.

Jeremias (1971) has stated that Jesus' use of **Abba** (which is in all his prayers except his cry of dereliction on the cross) expresses 'the ultimate mystery of the mission of Jesus' (p 68). Although some have thought that Jeremias has put undue emphasis on Jesus' *Abba* usage (Van Gremeren 1988), Dunn (1975) has shown that Jeremias' conclusions, though in need of qualifications, are generally correct. According to Jeremias, nowhere in the Old Testament do we find God addressed as 'Father' (p 63-7). Although this seems to be an overstatement, it inclines in the right direction. Wainwright (1962) notes:

The title Father was used mainly in corporate prayers to the Father of the nation. The title occurred in both Hebrew and other

religions, but was given a distinctive content in Christian thought and worship (p 44).

Jeremias found that in the literature of Palestinian Judaism no evidence has yet been found of 'my Father' being used by an individual as an address to God. This is supported by Hofius (1967) who says that 'there has yet to be found an instance of an individual addressing God as 'my Father' in Palestinian literature' (p 618). We do not have a single example of God being addressed as *Abba* in Judaism, yet Jesus always addressed God in this way in his prayers. Compared to the religious custom and the Old Testament, this new word in personal address to God introduces something radically new into the religious life of the day.

The word was originally a babbling sound, a children's word used in everyday talk, and an expression of courtesy. This Aramaic form of address to a father was originally a term used by young children as part of nursery speech, but had acquired an extended meaning in familiar usage, roughly equivalent to 'my father' or 'dear father'. It would have seemed disrespectful, indeed unthinkable, to the sensibilities of Jesus' contemporaries to address God with this familiar word. Jews did not use this absolute form to address God because it implied too great a familiarity. When Jesus used *Abba* for describing his relationship with God, he was making a startling innovation. He was claiming a relationship with God which was closer than that claimed by any of his countrymen. He was claiming a unique kind of sonship, on par with the warm and intimate domestic father-son relationship. *Abba*, this *ipsissima verba*, was carried over into the Greek-speaking churches, showing its preciousness and newness, forever ensuring that the origin and content of the word is to be found only in Jesus and his revelation of God. Smail (1980) adds:

It is a vocative form of address, which passing on to our lips, indicates the intimate existential relationship which we have with the Father... The *Abba* form conveys a sense of intimacy and familiarity which introduced an entirely new factor into an

approach to God, christologically defined and charismatically revealed (p 40).

According to Dunn (1975), this Christian assertion,

... did not begin as a theological assertion but in Jesus' own experience of intimate sonship and specifically in his experience of prayer. So too it was confirmed in the earliest days of Christianity by the first Christians' shared experience of sonship, in the shared experience of prayer, as a participation in his sonship, or, alternatively expressed, as an access to God the Father in prayer through and by virtue of Jesus' own sonship. This integration of christology, soteriology and spirituality, of doctrine and experience, is thus at the heart of Christianity (p 618-9).

Jesus, out of His own relationship with God, pointed us in that direction. His own special sense of God as his Father - to whom he was called to respond as God's obedient Son - probably formed a central feature of Jesus' mission as reflected in the Gospels. This special sense of sonship to God likely 'provided the experiential impetus of Jesus' mission' (Hurtado 1992: 257). But the more striking fact was that the mission to which God called Jesus, apparently included extending an unusually intimate relationship to God as 'Father' among those who accepted Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom. God called him to become 'the pioneer and catalyst for a special filial relationship to God to be enjoyed by his disciples' (Hurtado 276). This is the new situation inaugurated by Jesus, and where the Father is most clearly revealed.

The focus on the Son The Son is the centerpiece of the gospels (Mk. 1. 1). It is the revelation of his person, nature and works that is the preoccupation of the gospel writers. Yet the paradox is that he did not proclaim himself but the Kingdom of God. This has led some such as Wells (1984) to say that,

.. the Kingdom is the framework for understanding Christ, it being the *sine qua non* for a full and proper understanding of Christology (p 26).

The significance of Jesus in the synoptic gospels has wholly to do with his relationship to God and his indispensable place in bringing in the Kingdom. He has come as the one to bring the Kingdom to this earth. If the Kingdom of God means fundamentally the invasion of God's rule and reign within history without consummation, then Jesus' life and ministry must be seen as the proclamation and application of this reign. He embodies all the dynamic aspects of this reign, in both salvation and judgement. Jesus is decisive for the Kingdom of God and the mystery of the Kingdom is inextricably tied up to the Person of Jesus. The New Age of the Kingdom is the Messianic age, the two cannot be separated. The proclamation that God is about to act is followed by the deeds and words of the *Messiah*. Jesus, in Luke 4. 8-19, proclaims the fulfilment of the promise of Isaiah because *he* is anointed with the Spirit. Something happened in the person and ministry of Jesus which constituted the fulfilment of the Old Testament promise, for 'the Kingdom of God stands as a comprehensive term for all that Messianic salvation included' (Ladd 1974: 114).

Jesus is presented as being endowed with the authority of the King. He is the Captain of the Kingdom, the Son, the Prince, who has divine authority among men. He sends out the twelve and seventy two. Calling him Master and Lord were only natural responses to this authority. His definitive status as Lord and King, brought people a corresponding blessing or curse in accordance with their response to him. As King he allowed the spotlight of divine glory to shine on himself, receiving devotion and trust that is only due to God alone. He called people toward himself (Mt. 11. 28), to have faith in him and challenged many to follow him. Faith and commitment to Jesus was the door to the Kingdom, allegiance to the King was seen as final and determinative for one's salvation. He demanded absolute service (Mt. 10. 37-9). This was

not in competition to *Abba*, but was precisely for man to access *Abba* through him.

The focus on the Spirit The Spirit in the Synoptics is drawn off the Old Testament understanding of the personal presence and power of God. This reaches an unprecedented climax in the ministry of Jesus. In as much as the Kingdom of God was dependent upon the kingly Messiah, so the Messianic age is dependent upon the Spirit. The presence of the Spirit upon the Messiah is in some sense constitutive for the Kingdom of God. Where the Spirit moves, there the Kingdom of God is (Mt. 12. 28). The Spirit was Jesus' power to implement the kingly reign of God. With the coming of the Kingdom and the King, there is an increase in Spirit activity. From his conceiving of Christ, his empowering in ministry, in revealing the Father's will, to the glorifying of Jesus, the increase is inextricably linked to Jesus and his ministry. This climaxes with John the Baptists' prediction that the Messiah would baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire⁶. The coming of the Messiah 'will bring Jesus' followers into vital contact with the Holy Spirit and thus inject a new force into their lives' (Morris 1992: 62). As John baptised with water so Jesus will immerse in 'Holy Spirit'. The New Age of the Messiah would be an age of heightened Spirit-experience, made known through the Messiah to many.

Integration of the Synoptics

Right from the baptism of Jesus, we have a clear threefold pattern within the pages of the New Testament, 'occurring at crucial moments in the gospel story' (Wainwright 1952: 252). Yet there is an *order solutis* within this activity.

Jesus directs attention toward his Father As we have noticed, the Gospels are narratives about Jesus, but his whole significance rests on the claim that God is the source of Jesus' authority, the one whose Kingdom he truly proclaims. Hurtado (1992) states:

Though the gospels are undeniably christological narratives, they are also deeply God-centred. The whole thrust is that the one whose story they narrate represents God's new overture of revelation, fulfilment and salvation. Although the Gospels are narratives of Jesus' ministry and are explicitly concerned with presenting his significance, they are on a deeper level dominated by God, whom Jesus proclaims and represents as Son and Christ. The entire Gospel narratives in fact consist in the portrayal of God's purpose, and all characters and events in the narratives receive their evaluation and meaning in the light of their relationship to this divine purpose (p 270-1).

Although Christ has centre-stage focus, we can only understand his life and ministry within the environ of God, who we call the Father. Patrology precedes and proceeds Christology. There can be no Son who is not *Son of the Father*. This important proclivity is sustained throughout the whole New Testament. The gospel emerges out of a prevenient God-centrelines and never strays from that centre. People needed a prior relationship to God to recognise Jesus, and it was back to Him that Jesus took them - but in a radically new way - in *Abba*. Jesus never came to supplant peoples relationship with God, he came rather to fulfil. Christ has come to maintain and restore man's relationship with God. This he does through bringing man into that relationship that he has carved and that he himself knows. To provide evidence for this conclusion is unnecessary. To point to the sermon on the mount (Mt. 5-7) is sufficient to show that the dominant emphasis on which Jesus taught was on purity of heart in loving God. He never stole reverent worship deserved for the Father, but, in symmetry with the Old Testament, came to restore us to serve and worship the only true God. This focus on the Father is sustained by Jesus in the gospels, requiring repentance toward God, prayer and devotion to the Father, fear of God

and a love for Him with all heart, soul, mind and strength. He leads us into a relationship that is horizontal with him and vertical through him. We look up with Christ into the face of the Father. Yet he was not reticent to receive honour himself or to demand allegiance worthy only of God. To this we now turn.

Jesus directs attention toward himself In the gospels Jesus is seen as the centrepiece of God's Kingdom and New Age. Yet, in accordance with his dynamic functional identity, Jesus did not point to his divinity directly, but indirectly, in the ways he was the King of the Kingdom and the unique Son of the Father. He did not want to overshadow Father, but as the Son sought to be God *by* serving and glorifying the another. The deference he gave to the Father as God did not exclude his divinity, but rather revealed his servant nature and glory as the Word who gives glory to Another. God in the *depth* of His glory is revealed. The unique sonship of Jesus is the only implication of this inimitable position he has in the synoptics. Even if there is no direct reference to Jesus as being God (which is so in the synoptics), this need not imply he possessed only *mere* humanity. God can appear in some very ordinary ways, challenging our concepts of deity. Yet it was in his resplendent nature as Son of Man and Son of God that he called people to have faith in him and challenged people to follow him. Therefore we hear him say in Matthew 11. 28: 'Come to *me*'.

The title **Son of God** certainly had more than one meaning in the gospels. As is common in seeking to historically understand the meaning inherent in titles and terms of the New Testament, the meaning often took on new meaning in the light of the current events. This was certainly so with this term. It did not originally signify in the Jewish mind divine status, yet with Jesus' filial consciousness and provocative address of *Abba*, the concept of sonship radically deepens to embrace his divinity. Thus in the New Testament the term 'Son', as applied to Jesus Christ, conveyed the meaning of a divine and supernatural Messiah.

Wainwright (1962) well says that of the titles, 'Son of God is best fitted to express the idea of Jesus' divinity' (p 172). This term was used by Jesus to describe *his relation to God* and by the Christian community to describe his divine status. All the other titles describe the relation of Jesus to the world, but 'Son of God' describes his relationship with God. It suggests 'both the divinity of Jesus and the existence of a family relationship within the Godhead' (p 172). Unique divine sonship of Jesus is the only presupposition that will do justice to Jesus' own assertion that there is exclusive, intimate knowledge and unique reciprocal fellowship between the Son and the Father, with him being the only revealer of the Father (Mthw 11. 27; Lk. 10. 22.) As Son, he is particularly the revealer of the Father, and as the characteristics of a father are seen in a son, such a term could only apply ontological union with God. Commenting on Matthew 28. 18, France (1991) concludes:

the whole Son of God christology of the gospel comes to its remarkable climax in association of 'the Son' with the Father and the Holy Spirit as the joint object of the allegiance of those who are to be made disciples (p 249).

The title **Son of Man** has traditionally been interpreted as the converse of the term 'Son of God', i.e., as referring to his humanity. Modern scholarship has now distanced itself from such an over simplistic claim, recognizing that the need to acquaint itself with the Jewish speculations about the figure of the Son of Man, and to take into account the fact that 'by means of this very term Jesus spoke of his divine heavenly character' (Cullmann 1975: 163). Yet there is still a consensus on the need to see Jesus as interpreting his calling as Son of Man primarily in terms of the vocation of the Suffering Servant. The choice between *either* the eschatological divine figure *or* the earthly suffering servant is avoided if we remember that 'Jesus' combination of *Ebed Yahweh* and the Son of Man represents something entirely new' (Cullmann 161).

This self-designation by Jesus is a comprehensive term that embraces the totality of his work as no other term does. Scholars have identified three frameworks of interpretation: (1) The term is used by Jesus as a periphrasis for the first person singular 'I'; (2) as one who represents the original Adam, having a collective and representative function, and; (3) as one who is the eschatological Man, coming with the clouds of heaven in Daniel 7. After an exhaustive survey of the Son of Man material in the gospels, Lindars (1983) concludes that it is not a term that carries any Messianic significance:

In fact, it is not a title at all. The idiomatic use of generic *bar enasha* tends to deflect the thought from Jesus himself. It concentrates attention upon the particular issue, which often relates to Jesus' personal authority, but it evades the question of his identity. Jesus identifies himself with his eschatological mission, but he avoids identifying himself with a particular figure of popular eschatological expectation. He speaks of himself ironically, in such a way as to discourage further probing... Jesus' concern for his mission was far more important to him than any titles that might be applied to him (p187-8).

In order for him to sustain his argument, he must deem certain texts as 'inauthentic', fitting all the sayings into one category. Nevertheless, his insight is a necessary swing away from the traditional interpretation, subordinating the definition of the term to the concept of the Kingdom of God. Yet to polarize a specific interpretive framework for an understanding of this term is to miss the rich diversity of the term. Beasley-Murray (1994) sees the common thread of the Son of Man sayings as being 'found in the way they relate to the service of the Kingdom of God by the one so named' (p 30-1). Ladd (1974) is certainly correct in stating that Jesus called himself Son of Man because 'this title made an exalted claim and yet at the same time permitted Jesus to fill the term with new meaning' (p 157-158). Jesus used the term in a deliberately ambiguous sense because of his knowledge that with his person the Kingdom of God was already introduced, creating new

categories and roles for the prevalent Jewish concepts Son of Man. As there is a mystery to the Kingdom, so there is a mystery to the Son of Man. It permitted him to lay claim to Messianic dignity, but to interpret that Messianic office in his own way. Jesus appropriates the symbol 'to bind in one the varied aspects of his task of mediating the Kingdom of God' (Beasley-Murray 31). Cullmann sums up these matters well:

Jesus used the title Son of Man to express his consciousness of having to fulfil the work of the Heavenly Man in two ways: (1) In glory at the end of time - a thought familiar to the expectation of the Son of Man in certain Jewish circles : (2) in humiliation of the incarnation among sinful men - a thought foreign to all earlier conceptions of the Son of Man (p 164)

Both these terms, Son of God and Son of Man, portray Jesus as the divine figure who mediates the character and activity of the God who has come to reign. He is glorious and exalted in both, yet with a particular orientation. There is thus a dual focus. Jesus simultaneously points away from himself toward the Father *and* toward himself, eliciting a divine-human response toward himself. The Son of God has come to obey, reveal and glorify the Father. The Son of Man has likewise come to serve and be the exclusive minister of the Kingdom of God.

In conclusion, we see that the synoptics present us with the Spirit endowed Messiah who has come to inaugurate the Kingdom of God upon the earth. The Kingdom's primary content is a knowledge of God mediated through the Son issuing in a radical transformation in the individual, corporate and creative spheres. The priority of the Father, the indispensability of the work of the Son and the power of the Spirit are sustained themes found throughout these three books.

The tenor of Acts

The tenor of this book is a report of the continuity of the *works* of the Lord Jesus by the disciples through the ministry of the Spirit (Acts 1. 2). According to Fee (1982), Luke's main interest is in,

... the movement, orchestrated by the Holy Spirit, of the Gospel from its Jerusalem-based, Judaism-orientated beginnings to its becoming a world-wide, Gentile-predominant phenomenon (p 92).

The disciples are to be *witnesses* to the risen Lord, the Holy Spirit being the director and power thereof. It is only after his glorification that the Spirit comes, for the Spirit's work has a christological shape. The disciples are co-witnesses with the Spirit of Christ's resurrection and of his Lordship. Christ is Lord of the mission and the Spirit the primary witness and 'actuator' of his Lordship.

The reality of the *Holy Spirit* being with and in the disciples introduces a new element in the scheme of God's purposes. As the disciples were first under the guidance of the First Paraclete, they are now under the control of the Second Paraclete. His presence in this book is conspicuous because it is His particular ministry to work on the earth to equip, inspire, fill, lead etc., the church of Christ. Gordon (1985) is correct in saying that 'the entire management of the church has been committed to him until Jesus returns' (p 93). Many have called this book 'the acts of the Holy Spirit', seeing in it the particular temporal mission of the Spirit.

If we conclude that Luke, the travelling companion of Paul, uses 'Lord' to refer mainly to Jesus, then the title 'Father' is used only three times (1. 4, 7; 2. 33). This is in keeping with the understanding that it is *now* Christ who is Lord of the mission of the church, which he conducts under the Spirit's control (1. 2). The preponderance of the phrase 'Name of Jesus' highlights this christological mission. In biblical terminology, 'into the Name' of something or someone introduces a fundamental

reference, reason, purpose or capacity of something or of an action. This shows that 'Jesus was the fundamental reference and authority for salvation and grace' (Hurtado 1988: 108).

This book helps us understand mission as being the activity of Christ through his church under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. The trinitarian emphases are revealed as they intersect with the theme and purpose of the book. This is why there is a focus on the activity of the Lord and the Spirit and indirectly the Father. It highlights for us the place the Spirit is to occupy within the economy of God as well as in the Christian life. It is also the backdrop for an understanding of our fellowship with the Holy Spirit which is so clearly seen in the life and teaching of the apostle Paul. To his writings we now turn.

3. 1. 2 The Pauline Letters

Tenor of Pauline theology

Theologians have vigorously debated the elusive centre of Pauline theology. Many proffered solutions - such as the traditional Lutheran centre of justification - have been found wanting and focus in on an aspect of Paul's theology and not the whole. Amongst some of the more recent suggestions are: reconciliation (Martin 1981), the Lordship and person of Christ (Dunn 1980), in Christ (Stewart 1941) and the redemptive-historical, eschatological *mitte* of Ridderbos (1975). Due to the fact that much of Paul's theology is occasional rather than systematic or discursive, it is difficult to arrive at a distilled quintessence. Yet taking all these discoveries in sum, it seems that Paul has an emphasis on *God's new age of salvation in Christ*. This is in organic continuity with the synoptic gospels, a theme which also spawns other aspects such as

reconciliation, justification, Lordship etc. Fee (1994) summarises Paul's theological centre:

Through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus, our Lord, a gracious and loving God has effected eschatological salvation for his new covenant people, the church, who now, as they await Christ's coming, live the life of the future by the power of the Spirit (p 13).

For our study, it will be shown that the preponderance of '*en Christos*' and its cognates in the Pauline corpus reveals the experiential and subjective side of this great salvation. This is the door to the trinity and is the experiential centre for Paul.

Guthrie and Martin (1992) point out that Paul's doctrine of God is 'less part of his reasoned theology and more implicit in his pastoral and pragmatic handling of human situations' (p 254). He has in view the congregations gathered in worship where they are to be read. That means the doxological note is sounded throughout his correspondence. Paul's truest teaching on God 'is mirrored in these liturgical jubilation's, notably in his use of creeds, hymns, poetic snatches and prayer speech' (p 354). The study of his doctrine of God is not the main argument of his letters, but is rather that which undergirds all of his reasoning and gives it force and cogency. We now turn to this undergirding doctrine.

The person and the place of the Father Paul's Jewish heritage was the preparatory influence for his thought on God. His understanding of God is no doubt revolutionised and deepened by the coming of Christ, yet there is a continuity between the two. Some of his pre-Christian presuppositions which he brought with him into his Christian faith are:

- He is the God of all flesh. *Theos* was God of Israel and God of the Gentiles (Rom. 3. 29), a truth of definitive import for his theology and mission.

- Man is morally accountable to God - a truth which forms the backbone of his letter to the Romans (1. 18 - 3. 18). The moral law implanted within and the witness of our conscience to our conformity to that law, gives a nascent testimony to God.
- God has and does reveal himself through His creation giving people a rudimentary knowledge of God as Creator, seen through reflection on created things⁷. Though man suppresses this knowledge it is still an important aspect in serving the gospel. In Acts 14 and 17 we see how the gospel of Jesus is introduced and given a framework within God's claims upon man. He is the 'living God' who is active in the world (1 Thess. 1. 9). He is the 'source of every family in heaven and earth' according to Ephesians 3. 15. Paul here posits the Father as the ground, archetype and source of all personality, relations and social structures, human and heavenly.
- God is 'one'. Paul's monotheism remains a major axiom of his theology (1 Cor. 8. 6 and 1 Tim. 2. 5) where the focus of this attribute of God is attributed to the Father. This 'oneness' is in contra-distinction to the many gods and polytheism rampant in Greek society. Although God's oneness in other places contains within it a sense of a compound unity, here it seems to be defining His singularity over against a plurality of gods.
- He is personal, and he is to be thanked, honoured (Rom. 1. 21) and served (Acts 17. 25). The whole panoply of piety and devotion is to be offered up to Him.
- He is transcendent and possesses immortality, 'dwelling in unapproachable light, who no man has seen or can see' (1 Tim. 6. 16). Paul upholds a strong atemporality and eternality of God. In the Acts records of the preaching of Paul (taken as reliable summations of Paul's historic preaching), we notice in his sermons to the Gentiles that there is no emphasis on the explicit deity of Christ, whilst God

(Father) maintains the priority and the Godness. Besides two occurrences (Rom. 9. 5 and Tit. 2. 13), when Paul refers to God in his letters he invariably means God the Father.

The above are preparatory truths for the gospel. The gospel comes to restore and enrich man's relationship with God and his fellow man, adding new light and revealing deeper aspects of God's nature and being. After Christ, Paul's doctrine of God deepens and revolutionises. Some of these post-christological revelations are:

- The gospel is a revelation of God. Through the person and work of Christ, God is revealed more fully. As seen already, Christ's work is an index to the nature and activity of God. Paul sees the divine implications of the sending, sacrifice and resurrection of Christ as revelatory of the God of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8. 31 - 33).
- The gospel is a revelation of the righteousness of God. This seems to be a particular Pauline emphasis and a main tenet of his gospel as delineated in the epistle of Romans. Though Paul uses righteousness in a variety of nuances, what is important to note is that the gospel firstly reveals the moral excellence of God in saving sinners through the death of His Son. It shows an attribute in God (Rom. 3. 26) - the subjective genitive; and secondly, it reveals the saving action of God in making man righteous before Him (Rom. 4) - the objective genitive.
- It is a demonstration of the love of God. That 'God did not spare His only Son but delivered him up for us all' (Rom. 8. 32) is the Pauline equivalent of John 3. 16. That He gave His only Son for the world is the zenith of the love of God.
- It is a showing of the power and wisdom of God in the gospel. Christ is the power and the wisdom of God revealed (1 Cor. 1. 24). Fee (1987) well clarifies this Scripture for us:

Paul's concern here is not so much on their [the Corinthians] being able to *perceive* the cross as wisdom, but on the actual *effective work* of the cross in the world. Thus in saying that Christ is the 'wisdom of God', he is not using philosophical categories, nor is he personifying wisdom in Christ; rather, this is an evangelical statement, i.e., a statement about the effectual working of the Christian evangel (p 77).

- It reveals the Fatherhood of God. This is the most familiar epithet that Paul uses for God. In opening most of his letters with a blessing from God our Father, Paul shows that this theological axiom forms the basic assumption behind all that the apostle writes in these letters. This characterization of God 'is the criterion and norm of all that we are to understand by the name of God' (Guthrie and Martin 1993: 357-8). It speaks of Him being the source of all spiritual blessings, the One who planned the gospel, who nurtures, guides and glorifies His children and who will complete the work He began in them. There is no one concept of God which so dominates the theology of Paul more than this. As far as believers are concerned, it means that God is the source of their spiritual life and pours his love upon them.
- Finally, the gospel is a revelation of the glory of God. This is a Pauline theme and is the ultimate goal of all the works of Christ and the Spirit. Even the Lordship of Christ is to the glory of the Father (Philip. 2. 11). Paul uses this term some 26 times, forming a framework for his gospel.

Not only does the gospel reveal the reality of God, it also **reconciles** us to God, restoring our alienated relationship with Him. Paul's great declaration in Romans 5. 1 that 'we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ', is the ultimate fruit of the gospel. This is the burden of Pauline preaching. We are not reconciled to Christ but through Him to the Father, for 'in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself' (2 Cor. 5. 18-21). Paul's ministry was a ministry of reconciliation. Paul here shows in this Corinthian passage, that it is as an ambassador and representative of Christ that he carries on his work. Christ is thus

shown to be the one speaking through Paul, the one who is the active reconciler and mediator between God and man. This restoration results in a father-son relationship with God. Through the gospel, man knows God (Gal. 4. 9), has fellowship in loving communion (1Cor. 8. 3), and can now serve Him without fear (Rom. 1. 9; 1 Thess. 1. 9)⁸.

This renewed relationship expresses itself in worship and praise. God is to be extolled not only *qua* God, but also in the light of the revelations of the gospel. The characteristic word for this response is 'thanksgiving' (Eph. 5. 20; Col. 3. 17). Thanksgiving is an act of devotion that is particularly ascribed to God the Father in Paul. This act signifies the outward expression in word or deed of the interior sentiment of gratitude for a favour received. O'Brien (1980) observes that:

Paul mentions the subject of thanksgiving more often per page than any other Hellenistic author, pagan or Christian, using it mostly as a *response* to God's saving activity in creation and redemption. It is never the first word, but always the second (p 61-2).

In this usage of *eucharisteuw* in Paul (some 26 times), we see that the object is predominantly God the Father. Of the 9 times he directly thanks God in his letters (*ego charis*), only once does it refer to Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1. 12). The significance of this will be dealt with later.

In the Pauline corpus this relationship with the Father of Jesus is primarily expressed in *prayer*. Undoubtedly the most prevalent act of devotion to God seen in his letters is that of prayer. In Paul's prayers it is noticeable that his wish prayers, prayer reports, doxologies and benedictions do not evidence prayer to Christ, either as petition or intercession, nor is there a hint of prayer offered to the Holy Spirit. Paul would affirm as normative the often stated maxim: Prayer is a co-operation between God and the believers in that it is presented to the

Father, in the name of the Son, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Yet it is clear that Paul did not stick to this scheme rigidly.

Our new loving relationship with God can be summed up in the vocative and charismatic form of address *Abba!* In Galatians 4. 6 - 'God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying *Abba Father*' - we see that our *Abba* relationship with God is christologically derived and is alien to us. It is a gift of grace through Christ in the Spirit. It speaks of love, acceptance, belonging, security, guidance and intimacy. This word pulls into one neat seam all the fruits of the gospel with regards to our relationship to God. The companion truth to this is that of our sonship. This reality is bound up with Christ's sonship and is only received by the Spirit. Ridderbos (1975) finds that,

... it is in the sonship pronouncements that the personal and intimate character of the reconciled relationship with God finds expression (p 201).

The following words of Ridderbos trenchantly sum up this theocentric emphasis in Pauline theology:

The decisive view point, even of his expectation of the future, is that of the theocentric significance of the divine redemptive work manifested and the coming to consummation in Christ. The whole exaltation of Christ in the present and in the future is directed toward this, that God shall be all in all (1Cor. 15. 28), and that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow to the glory of God the Father (Philip. 2. 12). This theocentric point of view is also inherent in Christ's all-embracing significance for the future of creation and humanity. In him, the Beginning and the Firstborn from the dead, the Fullness was pleased to dwell, in order through him to reconcile all things to himself (Col. 1. 19-20). And in him as the second Adam will the new humanity arise, be justified, and manifested (1 Cor. 15. 22; Rom. 5. 19 ff.; Col. 3. 4) (p 89-90).

The person and place of Christ Paul's Christology has a two-fold focus, i.e., toward Christ and away from Christ, in Christ and through Christ. This is in harmony with what we discovered in the synoptics. As Christ pointed to himself and away from himself in his earthly ministry, so this twofold feature appears in Pauline Christology.

It is patently clear that Paul has a unequivocal **focus on Christ**. Christology is the epicentre of Paul's gospel and the penultimate focus of his life. For Paul, the gospel orbited around the Person of Jesus Christ. This is clearly seen in the opening verses of the opening letter in the Pauline canonical corpus: 'Paul... set apart for the gospel of God... concerning His Son...' (Rom. 1. 1-3). The universe of Paul's thought revolved around the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Paul's Christology illumined his thought in its entirety, 'sometimes shedding its light on aspects of his thought that one might have expected would have gone relatively untouched by Christology' (Witherington 111 1993: 103). The exegesis of Paul's Christology is the content of his gospel and the linchpin around which all his other topics rotate. This is not from theoretical or 'traditional' reasons, but primarily practical and experiential ones. Bruce (1977) explains:

The gospel as revelation was what accomplished his conversion. The one thing that could have convinced Paul that Jesus was indeed the risen Lord was the Damascus-road revelation: the risen Lord appeared to him in person and introduced himself as Jesus. This was henceforth the heart of his gospel: he owed it to no witness on earth but to that 'revelation of Jesus Christ'. Wrapped up in that revelation-encounter, as Paul proceeded to unpack it, was much that was distinctive of the gospel as he understood and proclaimed it (p 87).

Only an experience of the risen Christ would provide the impetus to change the arch-enemy of the church into one of its, if not *the*, leading protagonists. Christ played a central role not only in his theology, but firstly in his *life*. His statement in Philippians 1. 21 suffices to show that the reality of Christ was *the very stuff within which Paul lived*,

worshipped and had his being. The sphere of existence for Paul was 'in Christ'.

In the light of this, and because Christ related to Paul in a way that only God was able and should, 'many, though not all, of the names, titles, roles and functions of God were predicated of Christ precisely because Paul believed that he was dealing with God in Christ, and God as Christ' (Witherington III 1993: 103)⁹. Hurtado (1988) posits the experiences of the risen Christ in worship as one of the cogent factors that brought about an early binitarian worship in the early church. Paul's Damascus road experience involved a sight of Christ glorious in appearance, bearing the bright glory of God in unique fullness. Through this encounter, 'the risen Christ must have appeared to Paul accompanied by the radiance of light which was perceived by him as the divine glory' (p 119). Glory is supremely a category that belongs to God alone, and Paul, weaned on the milk of the Old Testament, strongly asserted that. Yet we see that this 'glory' is attributed to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. That Christ was divine and not merely a created bearer of God's inherent glory (which would anyway be impossible for any creature to do) was a bedrock conviction for Paul. Nothing else can account for the impact Christ made on him and his subsequent devotion and service for Christ. This knowledge coloured all his inherited Christological titles and filled them with new meaning.

Paul's practical and theological understanding of Christ's deity undergirds all of his work and titles. Even though Paul's Christology is strongly functional, as Cullmann (1975) has shown, his pre-existence and Godness is the presupposition of his creative and salvific mediatorial roles. It was precisely in these functions that Christ shows his distinctive mode of deity. Ridderbos (1975) sees,

... this pre-existence of Christ with the Father so emphatically declared by Paul underlying his whole Christology and making it impossible to conceive of all the divine attributes and power that

he ascribes to Christ exclusively as a consequence of his exaltation. This 'exaltation Christology' is at the same time not for a moment to be divorced from the significance of Christ's person as such (p 68).

It is this pre-existence *with* the Father that helps us to understand most of Paul's designations for Christ. We will now look briefly at two titles that focus in on the dignity and person of Christ.

The characteristic designation for Paul to use of Jesus is **Lord** - *Kyrios*. This is clearly seen in 1 Corinthians 8. 6:

for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him;
and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through him.

The Father is distinctively 'God' and Jesus is 'Lord'. According to Ladd (1974), 'this was peculiar to Gentile Christianity at large' (p 415). Wainwright (1966) notes four different meanings of this flexible word: the possessive; the polite; the courtly; and the religious (p 77). It is with the latter that we are most concerned, one that certainly includes all the rest. Hurtado (1988) characteristically sees the cultic veneration of Jesus in the early Christian circles as the most important context for the use of Christological titles and concepts. This veneration 'produced a new and deeper connotation to the titles' (p 13).

Though this confession predates Paul, for him it was enriched and realized through his conversion experience, so much so that it is the most characteristic phrase Paul used for referring to Christ. The full meaning of this title to Paul 'is not found outside that parameters of His present life - his biography of Jesus contains within it its own interpretation' (Wells 1984: 31). The term was not fully defined by any surrounding culture but came from the church's own exegetical tradition. The only way to fathom the word's depth's of meaning for the apostle is to remember that the man who was using it was conscious of a debt he

could never pay. On the Damascus road, says Stewart (1941), Paul's 'who are you Lord' was the well spring of his understanding of Lordship (p 302). The title 'certainly connotated divinity for Paul, for only God could hold such divine authority and demand such obedience and service' (Wainwright 92).

This distinctive title also had its roots in the Septuagint. There *Kyrios* is the Greek translation of the tetragrammaton YHWH. The early church saw the exalted Jesus in the role of God himself ruling over the cosmos. This is also evidenced in places where Christ is the New Testament referent for Yahweh in quotes from the Old Testament¹⁰. For Paul to enter Greek speaking synagogues and to use *Kyrios* to refer to Jesus, was revolutionary. The cry *Maranatha* (our Lord come!), a primitive prayer to Christ, also reveals the early confession of Christ as Lord. It is an invocation of the risen Christ and thus indicates that such a custom was a regular feature of worship of the first Christian community, that is, among Jewish Christians of Palestine. This word, too sacred to be translated into Greek, 'reveals Christ as the 'name above every name', a name which belongs exclusively to God' (Hurtado 106).

Finally, we need to note that *Kyrios* incorporates both Christ's inherent pre-existent glory as the 'Lord of glory' (1Cor. 2. 8) and Christ's inherited authority, given to him as the Son of Man who humbled himself to the nadir in serving God, *receiving* the Name *Kyrios* (Philip. 2. 9-11). At the resurrection Christ was given glory and honour by the Father, the glory which he had prior to his incarnation, now seen through the reigning Son of David. The difference is that now, as a Man, he bears this glory as a gift of the Father. This is the Name that he has above all other names, something even more glorious than what was his before. His inherent authority is absolute and is eternal and certainly shines through his temporal authority. The declaration that Jesus is Lord is certainly a declaration of his identity in himself. His inherited Lordship has a functional purpose and is for the bringing together of all things in

heaven and earth. His inherited authority is temporal and will be given back to the Father (1Cor. 15. 28). P Lewis (1992) writes:

While the elements of Jesus' original Lordship and his acquired Lordship may be distinguished, they are not divorced from each other in the later New Testament texts. Throughout Acts and the epistles, the title Lord 'vibrates between the two' (p 172-3).

All this shows that Jesus receives the title *Kyrios* not merely by right as God, but as gift of the Father as the one who is *worthy* of such dignity. This is Christ's distinctive honour. So persistent is this feature in the New Testament that it becomes the trinitarian name of Christ. So we see that though this term refers primarily to the name and inner being of Christ, there is even here a twofold direction. Christ is Lord and yet he receives all honour in his relation to the Father.

Paul also exalts Jesus as the **Son of God**. Compared to the 230 times he uses *Kyrios* for Christ, Paul refers to the Sonship of Christ only 17 times. Wells (1984) says that,

... more than any other title, Son of God connects the figure of Jesus with God. For Paul and John, the Son comes from the depths of God where he pre-existed. He is God, and while on earth he holds intimate communion with the Father, a fellowship without parallel. He does what only God can do in overcoming sin, death, and the devil, and through his conquest he raises those who trust in him to newness of life (p 71).

Here we come close to the inter-relationship within the Godhead that is revealed to be the source of our salvation. Sonship is a subordinate term for Christ and often speaks of his obedience in accomplishing the salvation that was planned by the Father. Here there is no reference as to 'eternal regeneration'. Paul does not answer speculative questions as to *how* the Son is internally related to the Father. We can generally say that his Lordship speaks of his own status, whilst his Sonship refers firstly to his relationship with God (thus the common 'His Son'), and as a

consequence, to his divinity. Thus to Paul Sonship has a strong functional sense, Christ being subordinate to the Father and most of Paul's Sonship references 'referring to some divine work that Christ accomplished for us' (Stewart 1941: 304). This title gives us a bridge into the next aspect, for as Son, he reveals something of the nature and purposes of God.

Paul also has a focus **through Christ**, who is the mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2. 5). The centrality of Christ in Paul's life and doctrine is never at variance with his tenaciously held monotheism and his confession that the Father is the 'one God and Father who is over all and through all and in all' (Eph. 4. 6). The juxtapositioning of an all-embracing Christology and a supreme Paterology is held without strain, without the two never encroaching or supplanting each other. Paul was not Christomonistic - though at times it may seem so - especially in Colossians and Philippians. He always spoke of Christology, as it were, under the shadow of God.

As we have seen, through Paul's experience of Christ, his doctrine of God burgeons in all directions. Far from supplanting his Jewish heritage, he builds upon it and takes it to new heights, yet he *gives it a Christological modification*. Through Christ, our relationship with God is revolutionised. Paul can now hardly speak of God without mentioning Jesus Christ. The reason for this is well explained by Young and Ford (1987):

With the title 'Son of God' and 'Father', God and Jesus Christ are seen as intrinsic to each other. Something ultimate has happened which will not allow either to be conceived without the other. Yet there is no simple identification of Jesus with God but the differentiation is such that *this unique, intrinsic relationship is constitutive of who God is* (1987: 241. Italics mine).

This functional aspect of Christ's Person is seen distinctly in his role as the *mediator* between God and man. Christ is the go-between in revelation, creation and salvation - the proximate point of contact in God's dealings with man. The Son is the intermediary in God's relations with man and man's relations with God. This accounts for Paul's frequent preposition *through* when mentioning Christ with relation to the Father. Hurtado (1988) sees the Jewish concepts of divine agency as assisting the first Christians in framing a concept into which to begin fitting the exalted Jesus, yet they did in no way redraw the nature of Jewish monotheism (p 21-2). To Paul, the role of an intermediary is taken up by the pre-existent Christ. Yet it remains the case that Paul's monotheism, which retains God's creative act as the sole originator of creation, stands firm (1 Cor. 8. 6; 2 Cor. 4. 4-6) - even if it is enlarged to accord a cosmological role to the preincarnate Christ.

A distinctively Pauline title for Christ is the 'Image', the *Eikon*. In ordinary Greek usage, the word *eikon* always assumed a prototype, that from which it is drawn, including and involving that which resembles and represents. This word means that 'God becomes manifest in Christ giving us an exact representation of the invisible God' (Zodhiates 1992: 512). Ridderbos (1975) rightly says that this designation shows that he is on the one hand distinguished from God, and on the other identified with God as the bearer of divine glory (p 70). He also adds that the expression 'Image of God' in Colossians 1. 15 and 1 Corinthians 4. 6, is clearly rooted in Genesis 1. 27 where man is made in the image of God (p 71). Christ is the image of God in an absolute sense and is not created 'after' God's image as Adam was. The new creation that has broken through with Christ's resurrection takes the place of the first creation of which Adam was the representative (Rom. 5. 12-21). He is however as much more glorious than the first, for the second man, both in virtue of his origin and of his destiny, is superior to the first. It is 'in the description of this superiority of the Second Man in the categories that have been derived from the significance of the first man, that Paul comes

to the full explication of the salvation that has appeared in Christ' (Ridderbos 85-6).

Hughes (1989) sees the Sonship of Jesus having a close affinity with the *Eikon* of God. The 'function of the Son, whose nature and being are one with the nature and being of the Father, is to reveal, as the true Image, the character and will of God' (p30). P Lewis also sees Jesus as the image bearer of the invisible God, not only in who he is, but also in what he *does* (p 242). Lewis challenges us to think of the term not in static categories, but rather in dynamic relations. The *Eikon* is thus the communicator, not only of the nature of God, but also the activity of God. As Adam represented God to the creation, both in nature and activity, so Christ represents God humankind as the New Adam. Thus this phrase stands at the head of the Christological section of Colossians 1. 15-23 precisely because it sums up all that follows. The image of God in Christ is also seen in 2 Corinthians 4. 4, 6 where Paul sees God 'in the face of Christ'. Knowledge of God is given its true criterion in this Face. For Paul, 'the gospel is seen within the framework of a face' (Young and Ford 1987: 123). In Christ the nature and the activity of the invisible God is clearly seen.

We have seen that the glory of Christ is paradoxical. It is his, yet it is from the Father and is to always lead us back there. 'To the glory of God the Father' is the final word in Paul's Christology.

The person and place of the Holy Spirit

Hunter (1954) introduces us to the vital place of pneumatology in Paul's thought:

One might as well try and explain Paul's Christianity without the Spirit as modern civilisation without electricity (p 108).

The Spirit is not *the* central factor in Paul's theology, but the Spirit stands very close to the centre as the requisite ingredient of all genuine Christian life and experience. For Paul, the Spirit gave life and efficacy to all that Christ had accomplished and to all that the believer in Christ needed to live a life pleasing to God. The Spirit was 'an *experienced* and *living reality*, absolutely crucial for Christian life from beginning to end' (Witherington 111 1993: 108). Fee, in his book God's Empowering Presence (1994) adds:

Both Paul's explicit words and his allusions to the work of the Spirit everywhere presuppose the Spirit as an empowering, experienced reality in the life of the church and the believer (p 897).

Pauline Pneumatology is an interlocking discipline, for, according to Fee,

... if we are truly to understand Paul, and to capture the crucial role of the Spirit in his theology, we must begin with his thoroughly Trinitarian presuppositions. Not only has the coming of Christ changed everything for Paul, so too has the coming of the Spirit. In dealing with the Spirit, we are dealing with none other than the *personal presence of God* himself (p 6).

For too long the Spirit has been seen as a mere adjunct to Christology, preventing it from having a distinctive role within Paul's theology. Fee's work helps counteract this imbalance, highlighting three requisite elements of Paul's Spirit texts. Firstly, the Holy Spirit is God Himself and therefore personal, secondly, the Spirit is God's presence and thirdly, the Spirit is God's empowering presence. 'Person, Presence and Power: these three realities are what the Holy Spirit meant for the apostle Paul' (p 8). Thus we do not have to think of the Spirit in strictly Christological terms as Dunn (1975) and others who have embraced or at least flirted with a Spirit-Christology have done. The distinction is rather a Pauline presupposition. Fee believes differently and charts a course in the other direction:

Paul thinks of the Spirit primarily in terms of his relationship to God the Father. There is no firm evidence that Paul considered the Spirit also to be sent by the Son. *Filioque is simply not a Pauline idea* (p 835. Footnote).

I agree with this conclusion. This is in harmony with Paul's use of terms for the Spirit, such as *Holy Spirit*, *Spirit of God* etc. There can be little question that Paul sees the Spirit as distinct from God, yet at the same time, the Spirit is both the interior expression of the unseen God's personality and the visible manifestation of God's activity in the world. The Spirit appears as the 'substrate of the divine self-consciousness, the principle of God's knowledge of Himself, just God Himself in the innermost essence of His Being, His very life-element' (Warfield 1968: 53). This seems to be a better description of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2. 10-1), rather than describing Him as spiritual *alter ego* of Christ.

The Spirit plays a decisive role in the Christian life. The Spirit's major role, in Paul's view of things, lies with his being 'the absolutely essential constituent of the whole of the Christian life, from beginning to end' (Fee 898). The believer relates *directly* to the Spirit in certain peculiar relations commensurate with the Spirit's particular ministry. A summary of Paul's active relationship toward the personal Spirit is seen below:

- He serves in the Spirit of God - Romans 7. 6 Philippians 3. 3
- He sets his mind on the Spirit of God - Romans 8. 4-8¹¹
- He keeps in step with the Spirit - Galations 5. 25¹²
- He sows to the Spirit - Galations 6. 8.

We see here that Paul had a particular relationship toward the Spirit of God. He was conscious of His indwelling and wanted to order his life by the movement and personal promptings of the Spirit. The renewed

The Pastorals also have a strong *theological* emphasis. This change of spotlight is probably due to the nature of the letter as well as the particular focus of consciousness of the apostle at the time. His own understanding was affected by many factors, with deeper revelation of God being given not to satisfy intellectual queries but to respond to particular concrete practicalities.

For Paul, all aspects of the Christian life are to be influenced by the triune God. This is seen in various Pauline texts. The subtle trinitarian structure of **Romans** 1-8 is:

- Chapter 1-4: Moral standing before *God*.
- Chapter 5-7: Salvation through *Jesus Christ*.
- Chapter 8 : The *Spirit* controlled life.

This pattern is also important as it is in harmony with our knowledge of God in the Christian life: Father - Jesus - Spirit, as seen previously. From Romans 14. 17-18 we see that in the Christian life, 'we please *God* and do his will by serving *Christ*, and we serve *Christ* in the *Holy Spirit*' (Erikson 1995; 186). Ethical behaviour is also laid out as trinitarian in this chapter: each believer has a Master and Lord *for* whom we eat, drink and live. We are under God and as He is our Father and Source, we therefore *thank Him* in all things. Yet the very fabric of our ethical lives and the source of our sustaining *power* in the kingdom is the Holy Spirit. Such apparently menial things, as eating and drinking, are to be done before the triune God.

This trinitarian structure of the Christian life and conduct is seen throughout **Ephesians**. The well-spring of all behaviour in the Christian life is the filling with the Spirit (5. 18). This experience issues in a four-fold overflow, seen in the proceeding four Greek participles; speaking to one another in songs, singing *to Christ*, giving thanks *to the Father* in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and submitting ourselves to one another

out of fear of Christ. These acts of worship are what is to govern and empower all the patterns of behaviour; in the marriage (5. 22-33), in the home (6. 1-4) and in the work place (6. 5-9). The reality of Christ permeates these relationships. Gordon (n.d.) well says:

Christianity obliterates no natural relationships, destroys no human obligations, makes void no moral or spiritual laws. But it lifts all these up into a new sphere, and puts upon them this seal and signature of the gospel, *in Christ*. (p 12).

In **Colossians**, the Pauline instruction is well summed up: 'whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the *Lord Jesus*, giving thanks through Him to *God the Father*' (3. 17). This statement sums up the structure of our relation to God. It maintains the priority of the Father and also maintains the necessity of life to be lived in Christ, the only acceptable Person to God. Life for Paul was *in Christ*, by the *Spirit's power* and for the *glory of God*.

In summary: All things in the Christian life must be brought within this glorious divine ambit. All behaviour is done against the reality that: the Father is the source, initiator and goal of the gospel, the Son is the content and personal mediator of the gospel, and the Spirit is the communicator and experience of the gospel.

In conclusion, we can do no better than once again quote Fee (1994) who panoptically summarises to the place of the Father, Son and Spirit in the Christian life:

Paul's trinitarian understanding is thus foundational to the heart of his theological enterprise - *salvation in Christ*. Salvation is God's activity, from beginning to end: God the Father *initiated* it, in that it belongs to God's eternal purposes (1 Cor. 2. 6-9), has its origins in God and has God as its ultimate goal (1 Cor. 8), and was set in motion by his having sent both the Son and the Spirit (Gal. 4:6-7). Christ the Son *effected* eschatological salvation for the people of God through his death and resurrection, the central feature of all Pauline theology. The *effectual realisation* and appropriation of the love of God as offered by the Son is singularly the work of the

Spirit... There is no salvation in Christ which is not fully Trinitarian in this sense, and there is therefore no salvation in Christ which is not made effective in the life of the believer by the experienced coming of the Spirit, whom God 'poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour' (Tit 3. 6) (p 898. Italics mine).

3. 1. 3 The General Letters

Hebrews

This book's trinitarian pattern can be clearly seen in chapter 7. 25, where Jesus as the heavenly High Priest is able to save those who draw near to God through him. The overarching reality in the book is that of our relationship to God and our need to be acceptable before Him. Jesus is our sacrificial High Priest through whose blood we enter into the heavenly sanctuary. Set in the foil of the Old Testament, the Spirit is therefore the Spirit of God (2. 4) and the speaker in the Old Testament Scriptures (3. 7; 9. 8). The believers are now partakers in the Holy Spirit (6. 4) and have now come directly to the Holy City and the Heavenly Jerusalem (12. 22 ff.).

The believers are exhorted to imitate Christ (12. 2), approaching him for strength and grace because of his human affinity with humankind (2. 17-18; 4. 14-16), so that through him we might draw near to God (7. 25; 10. 19-23) and exercise our own priestly ministry (13. 15), being His sons (2. 10-11). The book is in keeping with Paul's statement that we have access *to the Father in the Spirit through Christ*, as well as the famous Johannine saying of Jesus that we can only come to the Father through him.

1 and 2 Peter

Here we have the triune tenor thoroughly woven into the letter. We will briefly look at each trinitarian proclivity. Peter focuses on the Father in the following way:

- He has chosen the believers according to His foreknowledge - 1. 2
- He is praised for causing their regeneration - 1. 3
- He is the moral source and Judge of all behaviour - 1. 15-17; 2. 19
- He is the object of our priestly ministry and praises - 2. 5, 9
- He receives all the glory in all things - 4. 11
- He is the One who will vindicate and restore - 4. 19; 5. 6, 10.

It is interesting to note that the Father is not in the foreground in 2 Peter except as the One who witnessed and bestowed glory on His Son (1. 17). This seems to be in keeping with the theme of the letter: an exhortation to press on to maturity, spurred on under apostasy.

Peter focuses on the Son in the following way:

- We are chosen and cleansed unto obedience and love for the Lord Christ - 1. 2, 8; 2. 5, 13, 25; 3. 15; 2 Pt. 3. 14
- Our knowledge of him brings life, godliness and power - 2 Pt. 1. 2-3, 8; 3. 18
- His resurrection and revelation is our focus and hope and pledge - 1. 3, 7, 13, 21; 2. 12; 4. 13, 21, 22; 5. 4; 2 Pt. 1. 11; 3. 3-10
- His blood is the basis of our forgiveness 1. 2, 18; 2. 24; 3. 18
- His life is our example 2. 21-25; 3. 17-20; 4. 1; 5. 2.

Finally, the Spirit appears in the following contexts:

- He is the One who sanctifies us - 1. 2
- He witnesses to Christ - 1. 11, 12; 2 Pt. 1. 21
- He rests on the believers - 4. 14.

Once again: The Father is the ultimate source of the gospel, the Son the proximate communicator of the gospel and the Spirit the experiential applier of the gospel.

James

In James there is a concentration on our God and Father (1. 27) more than on the Person of Christ - a reverse of the situation in 2 Peter. This is due to the content matter of the letter and his particular focus on God as the moral judge and legislator of the universe. The Father is the focus of this aspect in the Christian life. Christ is only mentioned in 1. 1 and 2. 1 as well as with regard to the second coming (5. 7 ff.). The Spirit is not mentioned at all, except if one opts for *pneuma* in 4. 5 to refer to the Holy Spirit.

Jude

Jude writes to exhort his readers to remain true to the faith delivered once for all the saints (3). He highlights the fact that they are loved by God (21), who can strengthen and perfect them (24-25). Christ is the Lord and Master for whom they are kept (1) and for whom they wait (21). The Spirit is what separates them from the world (19) and helps them pray (20). These truths are arranged in a neat trinitarian formula in 20-21 and is surprisingly visible in this short letter.

Erikson (1995) concludes this section:

In all these Pauline and non-Pauline letters we have seen how the authors relate each of the persons of the Trinity to the experience of salvation, to the church and its leadership and to the living of the Christian life. It is apparent that for these several writers, to be a Christian was to be related to the Triune God, and to be related to each of the three persons of the trinity in terms of the unique, specific ministry of each (p 189).

3. 1. 4 The Johannine Corpus

The apostle John displays the deepest intimacy of knowledge and experience of the threefold Godhead. The trinitarian framework is thoroughly and consistently worked into the texture of his letter, undergirding all that is said and done. His preoccupation with the Son unlocks for him the triune nature of God. The deity of Christ is a bedrock foundation for John, who wants the reader to discern that the risen Christ is *Theos*. Plantinga (1989) says that:

Father, Son and usually the Spirit or Paraclete are clearly distinct divine persons who play differentiated roles within the general divine enterprise of life-giving and life-disclosing... John's gospel is the acme of New Testament witness and reflection, a pretty well-developed base for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (p 25-6).

This heightened emphasis on the triune Godhead is primarily due to John's meditative and 'mystical' penchant in his relationship toward the Son. Life for him lies in personal relationships and not in impersonal abstractions. It is the particular Father - Son relationship that provides a framework for the gospel, as well as all ethics and life. He provides the most comprehensive and yet 'simple' view of reality, seeing all things in their ultimate sense - their relation to the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is mentioned within this context and not simply on His own ground. He is seen as the One who is the personal link between Father and Son, the One working dynamically between these two gospel foci. In

the Godhead, He proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son upon those who love and obey him.

In John there is a focus on the **mutual love** between the Father and the Son within the Godhead. This love existed before the foundation of the world (17. 24). The Son had glory and 'life' *pros* the Father - this glory and life are defined by His loving relationship with the Father. He is subordinate to the Father in function but not in identity (John 1. 1; 10. 30; 14. 28). This mutual love between the Father and Son in the Spirit is the background for all that takes place in the world. This love and relationality is the life and truth in the world. This is the light in which God dwells (1 John 1. 7), and the life in the Word (John 1. 4). It is for this reason those who hold to a social view of the trinity lean heavily on Johannine writings.

Salvation for John is not a legal standing but rather a restoration of relationship. **Eternal life** is the experience of the quality of relational life that the Son himself enjoys with his Father. The believer is drawn up into the Son, and therefore into a relation with His Father and with the Spirit. Eternal life is thus having a knowledge of the Father *and* the Son (John 17. 3), this love toward the Father and the Son being the motive for ethics (14. 15) as well as the goal of life (1 John 1. 3; 2. 15; Rev. 19. 1-10).

The name '**uiov monogenys**' for Jesus is central to the identity of Jesus. There is so much scholarly confusion over this term because of its continual analysis, that it is difficult to obtain a clear view of its reality. Boff (1988) has well noted that the church has narrowly interpreted this term in causal metaphysical concepts, rather than seen this term,

... not as a philosophical concept but a linguistic resource for helping us to see the diversity in communion between the three persons. It is a descriptive figure of speech (p 124).

We need to note a few truths *vis-à-vis* this term, remembering its metaphorical nature¹³.

Firstly, the Sonship of Jesus is radically different from our concept of sonship, the former being revealed by Christ in his obedient life of revelation. Here Barth (1960) is right in noting the divine fatherhood and sonship of the gospel is not understood anthropomorphically but is rather theologically defined (see p 42-45) Christ defines sonship by his life. We can take human analogies into account, but they must be tailored to this special activity of Jesus revealed in the gospels. Secondly, and leading on from this, we must recognise the Hebraic nature of this gospel (Martin 1994: 281-282 and Erikson 1995: 196). Traditional Greek concerns over abstractly defining Christ's ontological nature supplanted the radical Hebrew genesis of the term. The term need not mean more than 'only beloved Son' and does not necessarily touch on 'generation'. Jewett (1991) shows that even a Greek understanding of the term supports this point:

The consensus of contemporary scholarship would regard the primary meaning of the term, in the Hellenistic period, to be the 'only', as when Jesus raises the only son of his mother (Luke 7. 12) To speak, then, as the *monogeneis* of the Father is to affirm that he is related to God as his 'only' Son, a phrase having virtually the same meaning for Paul's designation of him as God's 'own Son' (Romans 8. 3, 32) (p 292).

That means that we can look to the earth to interpret this term and not to the heavens. It has been this observation that has resulted in modern versions of the Bible interpreting the term as 'only Son'¹⁴. The relation between Abraham and Isaac (who was his 'son, his only son, the son of his love', Genesis 22. 2) is a possible etiology for John's term. This would allow the term to imply uniqueness, intimacy, special status, favour and responsibility.

Lastly, we must remember that the gospel is its own dictionary. From this we see that sonship for John does not consist in metaphysical relations of eternal generation, but rather in likeness, linking the concept of Jesus being the 'Word' with 'Son' (Warfield 1968: 52 and Jewett 1991: 304). The divine nature of the Son and all the activities he does in the gospel, are merely reflections upon the reality of this term. *Monogenys* is a summary term for all that John wanted to say about Jesus:

- As the Son, he reveals himself. At the centre of the gospel is the Person and the *glory* of the Son of God (John 1. 14). This glory is defined not by our earthly categories, but by his heavenly pedigree. He is the Unique Son of God, his identity being defined by his inherent divinity and his unique relation to God.
- As the unique Son, he comes to *reveal* his intrinsic family likeness to his Father. The knowledge and glory of God is the goal of Jesus' mission. He has come to make the Father's name known (17. 6). This is seen when Jesus rejoices at the knowledge that the disciples eventually believe that behind all his words and works is the Father (16. 31; 17. 7). This is the focus through the Son.
- As the Son, he has *love* for his Father. The divine life of communion and love within the Godhead is seen as the source, motivation, plan, action and completion of our salvation. Reality for John is ultimately found within the Godhead. The very statement that 'the Father loves the Son' therefore necessitates a personal distinction within the Godhead.
- As the Son, he is subordinate to the Father and willing to obey. He does nothing on his own initiative but is entirely dependent upon the Father for all things (John 5. 17-47). His servant nature is also clearly seen in John 13, which brings a radical transformation in our understanding of deity. We also note that his relationship with the Father was his lodestar for describing and prescribing the type of relationship the believers were to have with himself, thus: 'As the living

Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me' John 6. 57.

In John's writings, the **Spirit** comes to particular personal focus. The Spirit is the One who has firstly been given to the Son without measure (John 3. 34). That Jesus receives the Spirit shows that he does this as the Incarnate Man. This is not speaking of the 'eternal relationship of Jesus to the Spirit, but of his temporal mission' (Congar 1983: 56). Thus the dictum 'the economic trinity is the essential trinity' cannot hold here. The Spirit first rests on the Son (1. 32) and then on his disciples who receive of that fullness (1. 16; 15. 6; 20. 22). The Son is also the mediator of the Spirit (Rev. 5. 6) in relation to God's dealings with the world and the church (Rev. 3. 1). He only sends, communicates and pours out the Spirit as the gift of the Father. This gift is the living water given through Jesus (4. 13-14; 7. 37-38).

Besides the Spirit being directly related to the Son, He is the promised Paraclete of the Father. It is here that His own distinctive personalness is revealed. Congar (1983) well says:

The fact that the Spirit is the subject of a number of actions, that he is, after Jesus, 'another Paraclete' (14. 16) and that the masculine form of the demonstrative is used in the text, even after the neuter word *Pneuma*, clearly means that certain personal characteristics are attributed to him (p 56).

He proceeds from the Father, being sent in the Son's name - a distinction which the *filioque* blurs. He continues to do all the work of the departed Son, as well as enabling the disciples to enter into a new relationship with the Son after the withdrawal of his palpable presence.

Thus we can summarise the trinity in John with reference to the Christian life: The eternal divine Son of God, who was in eternal fellowship with the Father, has been sent by the Father to bring eternal life to the world. This life is a life of fellowship with the Father and the

Son, as well as with those who have believed. Through the Paraclete who proceeds from the Father, we are given this fellowship as a gift, sharing in the Son's relation to the Father as well in his mission to the world.

This concludes our New Testament analysis. We have seen that there is a trinitarian framework thoroughly woven into the fabric of the New Testament. To unpick along the seam of trinitarian teaching would be to destroy the very fabric of our faith. We now turn to the theological explication, seeking to harmonise the biblical revelation just analysed.

3. 2 Theological Explication

In this section, I will move from the biblical superstructure just analysed to the biblical foundation, seeking to construct an integrated view of the variegated statements of Scripture. This is the field of *dogma*, where we are concerned with 'correlating all the aspects of Christian faith and bringing them together into a coherent unity' (McGrath 1987: 112). I will seek to offer a framework in which these biblical statements can best be understood and integrated. In our analysis of the biblical witness we have seen a certain pattern emerge in relation to the writers response to God. I now seek to expose this pattern more visibly in order to know the *nature* of the relations between the Persons and their *primary functions* in their relations toward each other and all creation.

It is important for this thesis to delineate the flow of relations within the Godhead. For if there is an order of preference between the Persons of the trinity, a movement *within* the Godhead, if there is a divine 'protocol', then we are wise to follow that pattern in our relations between the Persons of the Godhead. An understanding of *their* interrelations will help us orientate *our* response to the triune God. At the centre of concern in this thesis is the practical application of the threefold Godhead in the Christian life and part of the success of this application will depend upon an integrated response to God based upon a knowledge of the differing trinitarian relations. Simply stated, our faith must be commensurate with the reality of its object. As we know the differentiations we can respond accordingly and assimilate into our faith the triune activity of God, living *in* that reality.

3. 2. 1 The Nature and Internal Relations of the Godhead

Here I will briefly look at the nature of the being of God and then focus in on the internal relationships of the Godhead.

The nature of the being of God The traditional view of One God eternally subsisting in three Persons has been denied, reinterpreted and modified in many different ways, particularly in this century. In academic circles the issue today seems to hinge on the veracity and possibility of speaking of the metaphysical and of the triune God of grace as a being separate and wholly other yet also within the human compass, i.e., being immanent and transcendent. Much of theology in this century is 'an attempt to balance the two aspects of transcendence and immanence in God's relation to creation' (Grenz and Olson 1991: 12). Three main streams of trinitarian thought are prevalent today:

Firstly, there are those who see any talk of God as inherently impossible because the nature of man and 'God' is mutually exclusive. Talk of an objective God 'out there' is dehumanizing and irrelevant. Secularism in theology finds a metaphysical-cosmological dualism untenable, wanting a plausible humanitarian theology rather than antiquated God-talk.

Secondly, there are those who hold to certain modernistic presuppositions of the unknowability of God yet affirm the revelation of God in history and time. These theologians avoid any 'speculation' of God *in se* and limit all talk of God to His revelation in Christ, who is the horizon of our knowledge of God beyond which we cannot nor need go. The economic trinity therefore reveals the *all* of God. What cannot be revealed in historical acts and in personal encounter, is outside the parameters of theology. These theologians uphold the personal dimension as ultimate, not the impersonal substance.

Thirdly, there are those who hold to the more traditional interpretations and argue that history and Scripture work together and

lift the veil on God's inter-trinitarian life. Contrary to the second stream, these theologians confess that there is *more* to God than what the economic trinity reveals (apophatic theology), and that history is merely a reliable door to further knowledge of God. The 'substance' is complemented by the personal, the *ousia* by the *hypostasis*. The traditional language preserves the doctrine of the trinity from being reduced to subjective, psychological and historical categories that do not describe God as He has revealed Himself to be, but rather in the way in which we *experience* him. Given the classical doctrine in which the Father, Son and Spirit subsist eternally in one Being (*ousia*), there can be no doubt that 'there is a real trinity transcending the realms of changing, subjective human experience' (Jewett 1991: 280). This approach avoids the common error of absorbing God's eternity by His temporality.

Although there is much to agree with in the second approach (the first being outside the purview of this thesis), there are however some serious defaults. These scholars begin with the great events in Scripture, yet they abstract their theology from those events using a methodology derived from other more philosophical concerns - Barth's 'possibility of revelation' and Moltmann's societal suffering. Even though many of these theologians would differ at points, there is a shared reticence about speaking of the nature of God's being apart from any historical connection. Many of them would concur with Gunton (1991) in saying that:

God is no more than what Father, Son and Spirit give to and receive from each other in the inseparable communion that is the outcome of their love. Communion is the *meaning* of the word: there is no 'being' of God other than this dynamic of persons in relation. Augustine and his successors allowed the insidious return of a Hellenism in which being is not communion but something underlying it (p 10).

Rightly have these theologians noted that 'Western theology has been dominated by a 'substance ontology' of individuals with attributes, in an interpretation of God, Jesus and ourselves as human beings' (J B Torrance 1991: 16). There is a healthy return to a 'relational ontology', however, they seem to have slipped into reductionism, now explaining all in terms of *being-in-relation*. The self-communication of God is thus *the* mystery of the triune God (Rahner), not anything beyond that. They deviate from the traditional interpretation of *perichoresis*, which is now seen as something 'not added to the constitution of the divine Persons, but is their origin, simultaneously with them and constitutive of them' (Boff 1988: 49). These protagonists forget the need to emphasise the *circumincessio* (*perichoresis*, interpenetration and co-inherence) and the *circuminsessio* (the more static conception of being located in, 'to be seated in'). Although this is a welcome return to 'Spirit' being personal, they do not adequately describe what is unitive of the Persons. Grensham (1994) puts his finger on *the* issue:

The social model alone cannot provide a sufficient description of the divine unity. Social union provides a beautiful analogy for the eternal communion of the trinitarian life, but to portray adequately the divine unity the social model must be complimented by another model or analogy which more adequately expresses the ontological unity of God (p 324-3).

The advantage of the third approach is that it allows Scripture to guide us in our thinking, giving direction for our thought in taking seriously the relations between time and eternity, transcendence and immanence, God and the world. It includes the findings of the above, agreeing with what they affirm but not with what they deny. The traditional interpretation affirms rather that God is a being-*with*-relation (not merely a being-*in*-relation) and that the *ousia* of God is that spiritual essence which constitutes the being of God and is shared by all Persons. The spiritual is metaphysically basic. God exists in His divinity in a manner absolutely incomprehensible to creaturely minds. This is 'His

supraessential nature, His hyperousios' (Hupko 1992: 147). God is spiritual, not material, incorporeal and not corporeal (John 4. 14), in time yet above time. God's action does not exhaust His being and 'His self-revealing Being takes priority *over* His revelation in salvation' (Houston n.d. : Tapes, Lecture 6). Scripture does not reveal the nature of this 'substance' of God is (save 'spirit'), but uses the verb 'to be' of God, speaking of Him as the Living God. Thus we still need an apophatic theology, saying that this aspect of God's nature (spirit) is not definable, for there is nothing by which we can describe it, it is qualitatively beyond man and can only be described in the negative.

Along with the second approach, we can affirm that the most we know of God's being is that He is a *Personal* being. This is not because it is the only constitutional element of God, but because it is what He has chosen to reveal to us. This awesome personal revelation of God fully manifests and reveals God as a tri-Personal God. God's essential nature is one that is fully personal and inherently communicative. This has explosive possibilities for ontology and sociology. The universe is therefore personal and social, with reality being primarily Social. Although He is supraessential, He is not suprapersonal. This personalness leads Boff (1988) to contend that the mystery of the trinity,

... should be the deepest source, closest inspiration and brightest illumination of the meaning of life that we can imagine. There has to be a way of presenting it that will not hide these riches but bring them out in an adequate manner. There still is the suspicion that the conceptual and terminological complications surrounding the trinity owe less to the mystery itself than to our cultural heritage and to an approach that has paid more attention to clarity of concepts than to finding meaning for ourselves (p 111).

And this is surely the main thrust of Scripture. We must seek to declare God and not define Him. In the nominalism and scholasticism of the West, we have too often sought to define Christian doctrine and to subsume God under creaturely categories. May we never project onto

God the patterns and concepts of our fragmented experience, but rather receive the truth which is according to godliness.

This adumbration is enough for our purposes and lays a foundation for looking at the relations between these Persons, thus helping us understand how our relationship with God can be consonant with the reality of God.

Internal Relations of the Godhead What is the nature of the relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit? Is there personal 'space' between them or are they rather modes of the one person of God? Are they merely economic aspects or do they speak of something intrinsic to God? Is there an order *within* God or is it merely an economic function *of* God? Are these relations changeable or eternally frozen? To these questions we now turn.

Once again we are confronted with such a variety of approaches and diversity of conclusions that it is difficult to find a starting point. Yet we can analyse two basic approaches to this issue: one which eternalizes and freezes the economic trinity and one that relativises the economic trinity. One that sees the being of God *in* His economy, the other seeing the being of God *in* and *over* His economy. These cannot be kept in watertight compartments but are rather proclivities of approaches, with theologians following mainly in one or the other trajectory. It is at this point that I depart from much traditional and contemporary theology. It will be argued that seeing the *functional* nature of our revelation of God will provide a way forward for trinitarian theology as well as give us new light in the understanding of our relationship to the triune God.

nature of the relations from the Nicene Creed, seeing the Son as 'begotten of the Father before all ages'. The conclusion of Nicea was that the Son is eternally begotten of the Father and the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father (and the Son in the West). The eternal nature, position and intrinsic deity of the Father is the presupposition of all of these relations.

Recently, this school has been boosted by Rahner's insistence that the immanent trinity is the economic trinity and the economic trinity is the immanent trinity. Put in another way, 'God's intrinsic being corresponds essentially to His extrinsic being' (Lederle 1979: 7). God's being corresponds with His revelation. There is an actual *identity* between the two, a univocal relation. What we can know of the trinity and the relationships among its members, seen in the history of salvation, 'is the way that they actually are, in and of themselves, or itself' (Erikson 1995: 292). There is a deobjectifying tendency here and an 'impossibility of interchangeability among the Persons' (Rahner 1970: 34). The tendency here is that the direction in movement in doing trinitarian theology is '*from* the economy of salvation *to* the immanent trinity, not the reverse' (Erikson 1995: 295). The economic trinity is the lodestar and lens of the immanent trinity. If this is so, one cannot but wonder why Rahner and others even have an immanent trinity. Is this not a vestige from a time when there was an apparent difference between the two?

The penchant of this approach is to see the relations of the Persons within history as inherent within the being of God. The monarchy of the Father therefore has a priority in the Godhead, He being the source of the Son and Spirit. He is revealed as having a priority in salvation history, *therefore* He is ontologically prior to the Son. The Son is *eternally* generated by the Father and the Spirit *eternally* proceeds from the Father - because this is *temporarily* manifest, the temporal relations are eternalised. This introduces the issue of causality within the Godhead. Erikson rightly adds that,

... to speak of one of the persons as unoriginate and the others as either eternally begotten or proceeding from the Father is to introduce an element of causation or origination that must ultimately involve some type of subordination among them' (p 309).

The Cappadocians saw that the distinctions of the hypostases resided in the 'cause' which brought it into being. Thus 'the mode of origin was definitive for the identity of each hypostasis, the attributes of each Person' (Bray 1993: 159). In other words, their historical manifestations determined their identity within the one *ousia*. The data of the temporal mission was transposed into the plane of inner relations. Relations were turned into attributes. *Full* personality and deity is thus not posited of each, and even if it is, it is distorted by the overshadowing historical determinations. This has been characteristic of both the East and the West. The basic error has been a confusion of the mode of operation for mode of origin. They focused on the inter-relationship of origin and not that of function and relations.

Traditionally, constitutional issues were the main concerns of our forefathers, and not personal ones. St. Thomas thus defined the Persons as 'an incommunicable subsistence in the divine essence' (Jewett 1991: 286). This unique subsistence is what the Persons do not have in common in contrast to their essential deity which they share as the one God. The differences were traditionally interpreted as their origins, i.e., unbegotten, begotten and proceeding. Thomas noted that a divine Person is a relation of subsisting. To be of none is the Father's incommunicable property - *fons trinitatis*. Filiation is the Son's incommunicable property. Eternal procession is the Spirit's incommunicable property, the divine breathing.

The traditional approach, namely, that the key to understand the term 'person' in an intertrinitarian sense is the relationship which the members of the Godhead have one to another, pervades the history of the doctrine of the trinity. Unfortunately, this approach takes away the

element of the free dynamic of personal love and response between the Persons, and focuses on metaphysical issues rather than personal salvific ones. There is a tendency to view the relations not as spontaneous responses but as constitutive necessities. Personal volitional assimilations are supplanted for deterministic ones. They are not voluntary but determined. The personal is merely relationally defined, as an order of status within God rather than a personal volitional centre in its own right. Pannenberg (1991) adds that,

... the tradition basing identity on causal relations, rules out genuine mutuality in the relations of the trinitarian persons, since it has the order of origin running irreversible from the Father to the Son and Spirit (p 312).

An inherent hierarchy within the Godhead is ineluctably introduced. *Full divinity* is reserved to the *Father* as the fount of the deity of the Son and Spirit. The latter emphasis of Calvin that each Person being *autotheos* (see T. F. Torrance 1994: p 41-76) brought a corrective, yet has been difficult to reconcile with the tradition. The problem of the Holy Spirit's identity remained a perpetual issue. Does He have room on His own or does He always have a secondary status? This approach cannot but downplay the Person of the Spirit because it identifies the Person in terms of the historical function. He is reduced to the Spirit of the Father in the East and the bond of unity between the Father and Son in the West. He is seldom seen as *autotheos*, as acting volitionally (as against mere 'echo' response) and as being a recipient of love from the Father and the Son.

Our early fathers seem to have interpreted the trinity in terms of the prevailing theological issues of the day, with their conclusions therefore being as valid as their presuppositions. A spurious Platonic understanding of divine immutability was surely a controlling concept for them, with the result that the temporal mission orientated actions and appropriations of each Person of the Godhead has been downplayed because of this false controlling concept. Process theology, though

generally deviating from mainstream Christianity, has challenged us to think more dynamically. The above weaknesses have dogged trinitarian theology for centuries and unless we become more radical (lit. 'the root'), we will not be able to avoid those pitfalls or forge a new path ahead.

I deem it necessary to have a more eclectic and **dynamic approach**. At the heart of this approach is the comprehension of God as subsisting in three Persons, co-equal, co-eternal, co-reciprocal, with none before and none after. This was one of Athanasius' tenets (see T. F. Torrance 1994: 7-10). Because all Three constitute the Godhead, they are all mutually dependent upon each other, all sustaining the same relations toward each other. This God involves *Himself* in a personal dynamic movement for the sake of creation and redemption. For such movement and purpose, His modes of existence change in order to accomplish such purposes. If all Three are *autotheos* and if Christ can *become* Man and still remain God, why cannot God adopt modes of Son, Father and Spirit and still remain God? A Greek concept of God's immutability has prevented such thoughts. The inevitable question is: *does God eternally exist as Father, Son and Spirit?* The answer is both yes and no, a continuance and discontinuance, an univocalness and an equivocalness.

Firstly, the **Yes**. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as distinct Persons of the Godhead, are eternal in the sense that each is an eternal Person constituting the Godhead. Arianism on the left, and Modalism on the right, are the Scylla and the Charybdis between which we need to chart our course. The Persons are also eternal in that the personal qualities seen in each are intrinsic and generic to all the Persons within their shared nature. That 'God is love' implies that love is the essential moral characteristic of each Person and that the permutations of love revealed in the peculiarity of Father, Son and Spirit, are intrinsic to all. The authority and the nature of the Father, the submission and nature of the Son and the serving and nature of the Spirit are characteristics that

are endemic to the Godhead and each Person. Each Person is *autotheos* and thus has the potential for all these functions. Love is the eternal mode of existence of the Persons, but has been expressed in terms of authority, subordination and obedience for our sake. Authority can be seen as love's purposefulness and strength of love (Father). Obedience is love's disciplined direction and active humility in preferring the other above oneself (Son). Service is love's labor and action to obtain the required end (Spirit). Smail (1980) puts this issue well:

Within the one divine nature, equal and identical in the Father and in the Son, there is nevertheless an ability of that nature to express itself in differing functions, to be first and to be second, to send and to be sent, to be glorious in the heavens and to be humble and small in the womb of Mary and on the cross of Calvary (p 116).

Barth (1975) writes that in order to humble himself and become man, God,

... does not need to deny, let alone abandon and leave behind his Godhead to do this. He does not need to leave the work of the Reconciler in the doubtful hands of a creature. He can enter in himself, not only as the one who commands and rules in majesty, but also in his own divine person, although in a different mode of being, as the one who is obedient in humility (p153-4).

Yet there is also a **No** to this question. I do not see the Father, Son and Spirit as eternally assuming those functions. There is a relativity to these functions. These epithets are related to *our* salvation and to the purposes of God. At a certain point, each Person willingly assumed a distinct role, on behalf of the Godhead and within the economy of God, for creation and salvation. This brings out the truth of Norman's statement (1996):

Each Person is intimately involved in the salvation process of man. Thus the dogma of the Trinity, primarily a doctrine about God, is nevertheless, a doctrine about human beings as well (p 14).

I submit that these divine epithets are *true* names, a name is shorthand for all that a person is (the Father is really Father, Son really Son in view of the *autotheos*), *yet* they are also appropriated and assumed by each Person specifically for creation and redemption. They are functions *appropriated for us*. The scheme of grace has thus been functionally built into the very subsistence of the Godhead, and God has somehow 'undergone change' in creating and redeeming mankind. Pannenberg (1991) hints at this relativity of function associated with the Father when he says:

The relativity of the Fatherhood that finds expression in the designation 'Father' might well involve a dependence of the Father on the Son and thus be the basis of true reciprocity in the trinitarian relations (p 312).

Erikson (1995) comes close to this view, seeing references to the Father 'begetting' the Son or the Father (and the Son) 'sending' the Spirit, as:

... temporal roles assumed by the second and third persons of the Trinity, respectively. *They do not indicate any intrinsic relationship among the three...* These roles were asserted by each person *on behalf of the trinity...* There is an *eternal symmetry of all three persons* (p 310-1. Italics mine).

Here Erikson goes against the grain of his own Protestant conservative tradition, yet he is merely inexorably applying the truth of traditional theology that the Persons *equally* subsist *within* the one divine being.

Together with this eternal symmetry, there also exists an eternal love between the Persons. This inter-personal love and service is reflected in the history of God, lived out on the stage of human history. There is a harmony of fellowship that is continued throughout all the activity of God in His external works of God in the world. Demarest and Lewis (1987) wisely say that this harmony of fellowship is,

... rooted in the holistic commitment of each of the three persons to function harmoniously with the eternal purposes for history

determined from eternity, whether universal in nature and history or redemptive among the people (p 275).

What then is the personal uniqueness of the Persons within the Godhead if it is not seen in their relationship to one another? Can we not see *individuality of Personhood* as a great uniqueness and not 'relation' or 'function'. The very threeness of the Persons - their personal 'space', the Many as distinguished from the One - is a uniqueness inalienable to each Person. This personal individuality within community is what distinguishes the Persons.

I therefore submit that prior to creation there was a divine movement within God that was the event in which each Person freely assumed a unique role in the scheme of creation and redemption. In traditional Reformed theology there is an echo of this in their concept of the 'divine convention', an agreement, between the Persons of the trinity - or as Warfield called it, a 'Covenant' (1968: 54) - by virtue of which a distinct function in the work of redemption is voluntarily assumed by each. This movement of each Person, assimilating a role in the economy of God, implies *a three-fold self-limitation within God*. This mutual and simultaneous moment of humiliation within God was the divine *pathos* needed to accomplish His purposes.

Before we turn to these particular functions, we will look at this self-humiliation of God, this *pathos* of God, in further detail.

In the **Son** we see this humiliation most clearly because He is the personal condescension point in God. Moltmann (1985) has noted the necessary fact that 'in order to create a world 'outside' himself, the infinite God must have made room *beforehand* for a finitude in himself' (p 55). He fecundly notes:

With the creation of the world which is not God, but which none the less corresponds to him, *God's self-humiliation* begins - the self-limitation of the One who is omnipresent, and the suffering of the eternal love (p 59).

This self-limiting is the,

... action of God prior to creation. The existence of the universe was made possible through a shrinkage process *in* God (p 109. See also p. 108-11 and 118-21).

Christ is this 'shrinkage point', and to a certain extent the world is created 'in himself', giving it time *in* his eternity, finitude *in* his infinity, space *in* his omnipresence and freedom *in* his selfless love. Brunner (1952) expresses the same concept:

God does not wish to occupy the whole space Himself... He limits Himself... We begin to see what a large measure of self-limitation He has imposed upon Himself, and how far He has emptied Himself, in order to realize this aim, to achieve it, indeed, in a creature which has misused its creaturely freedom to such an extent as to defy God. This *kenosis*, which reaches its paradoxical climax in the Cross of Christ, began with the Creation of the world (p 20).

Hodgson, quoted in Grensham (1994) adds:

Creation and creaturely freedom already implies a self-imposed passibility upon God with the possibility of entering into further limitations entailed by the incarnation (p 338).

His becoming Son for our salvation implies such a 'height' of condescension, worthy of all our worship.

In the **Father** I also see a self-imposed limitation. He 'became' Father when that Person of God we call the 'Son' became the Son. He took on particular roles for our salvation. He also became 'limited' to heaven. In some very real way His glory has a particular cosmological focal point, a place specifically related to the Father, i.e., heaven. Thus in Revelation 4 He is seen as 'sitting' on the throne at the Son's left hand. Jesus' favourite designation for God was 'Father *in heaven*', or 'heavenly

Father'. Jesus was not a 'child of his time' but rather worshipped the Father in accordance with His 'location' and accommodation.'

In the **Spirit** we might also see a certain humiliation. He is the One who contemporises and manifests the work of the Son and decision of the Father, relating *directly* to the world and us. His needing to use media to communicate can be seen as a humbling, a kenosis. Truly, for God to relate directly to His creation - even to create - is in some sense a self-humbling. Wheeler-Robinson (1962) devotes considerable space to this fact. In the human body our spirit always functions through the body, that is through something lower than itself. This implies that the body is essential to the spirit of man. He calls this characteristic a 'sacramentalising activity of the spirit'. He then goes on to say:

We can also see that the indwelling of the divine Spirit in humanity, whether by the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, or by the continuance of His presence through the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, must always involve a 'kenosis', a humiliation and an acceptance of the lower as the medium of the higher, though this principle of limitation need not imply the duality of mind and matter (p 75-6).

The Spirit is to have a close relationship with the world, closer than the Father. Each Person only assumes *certain* roles, implying a deference on behalf of the other Persons. He is not the centerpiece of worship nor the object of our prayer - thus a certain humiliation.

Lastly, we briefly need note that the Platonic concept of immutability, so prevalent in the West's doctrine of God, has detrimentally affected the possibility of a change of mode within the Godhead. The Platonistic view of God 'was constantly present in the trinitarian and Christological controversies which shook the church in the fourth and fifth centuries' (Gonzalez 1970: 100). The static view of the divine monad definitively influenced the thought of the church and was the foil in which much

trinitarian theology was done. According to Ware (1956) much classical theology,

... so stressed God's absolute immutability that his relationship to the contingent and changing world could only be conceived, if at all, as a relation of reason i.e., a relation that is not real in God but only insofar as God knows from all eternity that creatures will be really related to him (p 431-446).

Ware reminds us that in His ontological (intrinsic) and ethical nature, God is immutable, yet because God is active and intimately involved with His creation, He undergoes numerous changes without His essence changing. The Incarnation is the ultimate instance of this 'holy mutability' of God (Barth). The British Council of Churches (1989 I) has observed:

Christian theology took shape in a world where it was believed that the foundations for the world were provided by an impersonal abstraction of being which was *logically* related to the superstructure. By contrast, in the doctrine of the Trinity the Fathers developed a conception of being at the heart of which were not logical connections but *personal* relations (p 16).

If this is so, then one is not wrong to urge for a return to a more dynamic and mutable understanding of the Godhead.

We have seen how there was a corporate humiliation within God, necessitated and preparatory for redemption and creation. I will now look at the assumed activities of each Person, that particular divine *proprium* of each Person. As we do this, we will begin to understand our particular response to this activity of God.

3. 2. 2 The Primary Functions of the Persons

We have stressed the importance of the truth articulated by Warfield (1968) that:

In *modes of operation* the principle of subordination is clearly expressed... It is not clear that the principle of subordination rules also in '*modes of subsistence*' (p 53-4).

We are now interested in these 'modes of operation'. The Scriptures bear witness to the differing activities of the Father, Son and Spirit in their corporate relations with the world and with each other. These will be noted here. In the history of theology these distinctives have tended to be eclipsed by the unity of divine action, something consonant with the Western theological tradition. Yet in the differences of the Persons there is a 'clear distinctiveness not to be overshadowed by the unity of the Godhead' (Zizioulas 1991: 21). We will now be looking at what has been called the 'economy of the trinity', the 'appropriations', 'proprium', or 'divisions of labour' within the Godhead.

Let us firstly note that these functions are **freely chosen** by each Person and are not necessitated because of their eternal status. The Son's choice to humble himself, seen in Philippians 2, shows that Christ is no puppet in the hands of the Father. The Incarnation was Christ's *own* act. These are self-appointed distinctions. The Godness is seen in all three, but in differing ways, ways which now merit our attention. Let us remember, secondly, that **all the Persons are involved** in all the works of God, albeit in a different way. According to Bray (1993) the Reformers rejected the conventional division of labour within the Godhead -the Father is the Creator, the Son the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier. They insisted that 'the trinity as a whole was Creator, Sanctifier and Redeemer and they attributed specific functions to each Person within that work' (p 203). Thirdly, we must remember that **each Person of the Godhead is autotheos**, fully God and reveals

the whole of the deity, albeit in a distinct way. Each distinction seen in the Person (in the Son we see the face of God) is representative of the others. In other words, although inimitable, it is also generically applied, therefore, 'he who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14. 9). What is in reality the common prerogative of the trinitarian members, 'it is predicated of one alone to manifest his personal uniqueness in the Godhead' (Hill 1982: 283). Lastly, let us take note that subordination brings about a **functional order** and not an essential order within the Godhead. These functions are actually taken up in the classical and biblical epithets - Father, Son and Spirit. These concepts, when applied to God, must not be seen as ontological definitions, but rather as analogical descriptions. They each have particular functions that do not underlie their *ousia*, their being, but affect their activity in relating to each other. Smail (1980) pacifies any critics by reminding us that 'subordination of function does not imply inferiority of being' (p 115). The Eastern approach has rightly noted that there is an order of priority within the being of God, though I have argued that this need not mean that this order is constitutive of the being of God. This order of priority is the immediate implication of the functions of the Persons, as well as being the very content and ground of all their activity. All their activity is done in relation to the other Persons.

The Scriptures speak of a point in God, prior to creation, when He chose the believers in Christ for holiness and salvation (Ephesians 1. 4). This decretive action by the *Father*, and mediatorial action of the Son, was at a certain 'time'. I believe that it was *then* that these appropriations began, when the Father's decisions were made, and all was preventively and antecedently accomplished by God and in God. Wells (1984) inclines toward a similar possibility, seeing this as hinted in the 'handing over of all things' to the Son in Matthew 11:27:

The use of the verb *paredothe*, may suggest, although it does not absolutely require, a pretemporal act (p 45).

This interpretation might help us in understanding verses in the gospel of John which seem to imply a certain time when the Father handed all authority over to the Son (John. 3. 25; 5. 26; 17. 2). Lastly, it is interesting to note that when the Scripture draws back the curtain on such pre-creation activity of God, it does so *for us* and reveals God's actions and *grace toward us*. This is in keeping with our understanding that God assumed certain modes of existence and functions specifically for creation and redemption.

The functions of the Father In the economy of creation and redemption, the Father has appropriated the role of the Source, Originator and Authority in all of the Godhead's activity. In the order within the Godhead, the Father receives a divine ultimacy and priority. The Son is Lord to the glory of the Father and the Spirit is the One who is before His throne, proceeding from Him. To mankind He represents and displays the absolute character of the **transcendent divine majesty** of the Godhead. It is He who 'reminds us of the incommunicable attributes of the divine essence, of what Barth called the '*wholly other*' quality of God' (Bray 1993: 247). The Scriptures display the Father to us as 'the representative of the absolute majesty of the transcendent God' (p 247), and therefore ascribes the more decisive eternal and atemporal activities of salvation to God the Father. This is why the activities of choosing, electing, predestining, and foreknowing are all activities of God the Father in the New Testament.

In keeping with this, the Father is the Holy One, the One who's holiness is the source and judge of all things. His holiness is not merely His loftiness and 'otherness' to man, but is also His 'morality' and similarity to man. He is the ultimate ground for our holy, moral living.

He is also the official **representative** of the Godhead. Palmer (1892) cogently notes that:

... if the distinctions in the Godhead are real - if especially the functions which these fulfill are clearly distinguished - then it

would seem necessary that jointly they should be represented by one of the three and that this should be the Person who is first in the order of thought (p 202).

The oneness and singularity of God is ascribed to the Father and not the Son. The New Testament never dealt with the latter issue of how this oneness is affected by the revelation of Christ. It was 'enough to see the Father as the representative of the unity of the divine essence' (Palmer 210). Thus the whole Godhead comes to an ultimacy and glory in a focus and exaltation of the Father, for He represents all that is in and of God. As the British Council of Churches (1989 I) report says:

We should base the being of God not in abstract deity but in the Father, who as a person provides a personal basis for the unity both of the deity and of all things (p 32).

This point is the only conclusion to the preponderance of references to 'God' in the New Testament referring mainly to the Father. Plantinga (1989) adds:

Paul reserves the designator *God* for the Father, and indicates the divinity of the Son and the Spirit in ways usually other than calling them *God* (p 25).

McGrath (1987) writes:

At no point in the New Testament is any suggestion made that there is any God other than he who created the world, led Israel to freedom, and gave her the Law at Sinai. The God who liberated his people from their captivity in Egypt is the one and the same God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead (p 120).

The Father, unlike the Son, remained in the form of God (Philip. 3. 6), and in the economy of God's being is the representative focus and bearer of the aseity, infiniteness, providence, ineffability, immortality and invisibility of God. In this way I see the *principium divinitas* of the Father.

He is also the ultimate **originator** and **planner** of all things. In biblical context the term 'Father' is often a figure of speech for the creative source of ideas, the fountainhead of planning goals, and the initiator of mutual relationships and activities. The first Person initiates and purposes. The first Person 'emanates light, determines the nature of the copy, expresses his word and sends his Son' (Demarest and Lewis 1987: 275). He creatively designs and initiates relationships and activities. Thus the ultimate cause of salvation is the heart and purpose of the Father, clearly shown in John 3. 16. Bray (1993) notes that Calvin distinguished the Father as 'the beginning of action, the fountain and source of all things' (p 203). According to 1 Corinthians 8. 4-7, the Father is the One God from whom are all things and to whom are all things.

Traditionally creation has been seen as the work of the Father, seen in the Apostles creed, 'I believe in the Father, maker of heaven and earth'. Yet the Scriptures reveal that it is as much an activity of the Spirit (Gen. 1. 2; Ps. 33. 6; 139. 7; 104. 30) and of the Son (John 1. 3 Heb. 1. 2; 1 Cor. 8. 6). This last reference will help us in noting the *proprium* of the Father in creation. Since within the life of the trinity it is the Father who is originator of every work, 'it is he who through the Son and in the Spirit is *par excellence* the Creator of all things' (Smail 1980: 191). The Father is the responsible source (*ek*) of all creation, and it was His decision which was mediated (*dia*) by the Son and actuated by the Spirit. In the binitarian worship of the heavenly host in Revelation 4 and 5, it is particularly said of the Father: 'Thou didst create all things and because of Thy will they were and are created' (Rev. 4. 11. See also 10. 6 and 14. 7). Since the Creator is revealed in the New Testament as the Father, the creation has a teleological orientation. The personal fatherly genesis of creation gives it meaning, preservation and purpose.

Not only in creation but also in redemption is the Father the proximate source and goal. All the work of Christ has the Father as its explanation and was done in obedience to the will of the Father. We are

saved 'according to His own grace and purpose which was granted us in Christ from all eternity' (2 Tim. 1. 9). All the gospel provisions are from Him and to Him.

Through the above activities for creation and redemption, I understand that the first Person 'became' Father for these purposes. In this way we uphold the priority of the Father in His economy but not in his intrinsic being. Due to His specific representations, the Father maintains and sustains a functional supremacy over all. This appropriated function of the Father will again be mutually held by all three Persons as in eternity past, when God will again become 'all in all' (1 Corinthians 15. 28).

The functions of the Son In the economy of creation and redemption, the Son has assumed the role of being the Mediator and Servant of the Father's purposes. His glory as Son is seen particularly in his obedience, his humility in exalting the other and effectively serving the other.

To the world he represents the manifest **saving activity** of God. He is the Messenger (Angel) of Lord who comes to be 'God with us'. It is particularly in this salvific action that the Son is known - 'the Lamb slain' (Rev. 5. 6). He is the active Person who accomplishes all that we need to be and do before God and before the world. He is the Restorer, the new Adam. The peculiar functions of Christ involve *accomplishing* effectively all the Father's will for humanity, as well as effectively accomplishing all of humanity's requirements toward God. When these are fully accomplished and redeemed, then this specific function of Christ will end (1 Corinthians 15. 28). In salvation, Christ's distinctive work comes into a certain priority. Through his death and resurrection, the will of the Father for salvation is effectively enacted and accomplished. He is the Suffering Servant of the Godhead who *acts* in accomplishing salvation for the world. He is the Lamb slain, God suffering on behalf of man. In this way we see that Christology is inextricably linked to anthropology, something clearly seen in the

Incarnation. He is the God who has humbled himself, accommodating our human finitude within his existence, able to enter efficaciously into our human predicament, raising us up to his height.

He is also the **Revealer** of God. He communicates the Father to mankind in a way accommodated to their humanity. In the Son, God is able to come within the pale of human intelligibility. The Son *audibly* expresses the Word of the Father, *visibly* radiates the glory of the Father, and *personally* represents the being of the Father (Heb. 1. 1-3)¹⁵. He is the Mediator *par excellence*. Demarest and Lewis (1987) well say:

The second Person of the trinity in eternity as well as in time, radiates, models, expresses, and exhibits the Father's plans and purposes. Eternally and temporally he radiates the Father's purposes with the brilliance of the sunlight, models them with the accuracy of an exact copy, expresses them with the meaningfulness of a word, and exhibits them with the personalness of a unique Son (p 278).

According to Iraneaus, 'what is invisible in the Son is the Father and what is visible in the Father is the Son' (Erikson 1995: 51). As Jesus said: 'he who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14. 9). A friend of the author explained this aspect of the Son by comparing it to the condescension of a dew drop. The invisible vapour in the air manifests when it condenses and crystallises. The Son is the crystallisation and manifestation of the invisible God.

He is the **Mediator** in the creation of God. As the Father is the *ek* of creation so the Son is the *dia* of creation. Hurtado (1988) contends that the 'concept of divine agency in ancient Jewish monotheism assisted the first Christians in framing a concept into which to begin fitting the exalted Jesus monotheism' (p 21-22). This prevented them from redrawing the nature of Jewish monotheism. As we have seen, the Angel of the Lord is an Old Testament concept which provides an Old Testament antitype to Christ as the New Testament mediator. This

aspect of Christ's ministry is perpetuated in the New Testament and can provide an interpretation of John 1. 51, where Jesus is the ladder upon which the angels are ascending and descending. Once again, in 1 Corinthians 8. 6, the particular activity of instrumentality and mediation is attributed to Christ. The Son is seen as carrying out the creative decrees of the Father and mediating them between the Father and creation. He is the one Lord, through whom are all things and through whom we live. He is the cosmic mediator in creation and providence. In Iraneaus' terms, he is one of the two hands of God.

Lastly, we again notice a subordination in all of the activities and actions of the Son. The Son is equal to the Father as touching his Godhead yet subordinate to the Father as touching his function ('the Father is greater than I' John 14. 28). There is a subordination in his exaltation and 'even his exaltation as Messiah is his condescension as the eternal Son of God' (Jewett 1991: 320). The temporal nature of these functions is brought out well by Moltmann (1981):

All the titles of Jesus' sovereignty - Christ, *kyrios*, prophet, priest, king, and so forth - are *provisional* titles, which express Jesus' significance for salvation in time. But the name Son remains to all eternity.. *God's trinity precedes his divine lordship* (p 92-3).

This Lordship of Christ has a temporal relation, for 'he must reign *until*..' (1 Cor. 15. 25). This Scripture prompts Wainwright (1966) to also see 'a Lordship of temporary duration' (p 187). The rule of Christ is eschatologically limited. Once the goal of the submission of all things to Christ is fulfilled, bringing all things under his headship (Eph. 1. 10), he will then surrender the kingdom to the Father (see Moltmann 1981: 90-4). Finally, in the above quote from Moltmann, could we not include the *title* Son into that list of temporal relations? Could not the Son assume his pre-creation glory with the Father, returning to his unsubordinated state? We need to know the Son now in all of these relations, but

whether we will do so for all eternity, when his task is finished, is doubtful.

The functions of the Spirit In the economy of salvation, the Spirit is the Person in the Godhead who has assumed the functions of Executive and **Empowerer**. All that is willed by the Father, mediated and wrought by the Son, is applied to the world and humans by the Spirit. He is the divine energy working in the world. He is God in the present tense, God our contemporary. Demarest and Lewis (1987) again wisely note:

As the Word continuously expresses the 'heart' of the Father, the Spirit continuously emanates from the 'lungs' of the Father to bring his purposes to fulfilment (p 278).

The Spirit is distinctively the One who powerfully brings to fulfilment in our lives the redemptive transformation envisioned by the Father and provided for by the Son. He is the vitality of the triune God overflowing to His creation. Smail (1988) adds:

The Spirit gives us life, not as the source of it, which is the Father, not as the normative prototype of it, which is the Son, who is alive so fully and finally that he has done with death in all its forms for ever. The distinctive work of the Spirit is to communicate to us the life that is in the Father and the Son, so that we actually share and experience it in ourselves (p 167).

He acts as the voice and **spokesman** of the Godhead. For this reason it was customary for the apostolic church to refer to the Old Testament as 'the Holy Spirit says'. In the letters to the churches in Revelation, the words of Christ are 'what the Spirit says to the churches'.

He is the dynamic principle **affecting** the creation (Ps. 33. 6). Although the Spirit does not receive much attention in the creative role, He is as involved as the Father and Son. Need we go beyond Genesis 1. 2? There the Spirit is seen as the activator of God's decrees, the divine

executive of the Godhead. Because of this, He has a proximate relation to creation, 'moving and hovering over the face of the deep'.

He is also indispensable in the Redemption of man. He is the one that restores us and regenerates us, being the subjective life principle within the redeemed (Ez. 36. 26-27; 37. 9; John 20. 22; Tit. 3. 5). He relates directly to us in applying all the benefits of Christ. In this way He is particularly related to the **sanctification** of the believer (2 Thess. 2. 13). The Spirit effectively applies the will of the Father and the work of the Son. The person and work of Christ provides the context and shape for the Spirit. His work is prescribed by the nature and work of God delineated in Christ, and thus has a Christomorphic work. The Spirit's role in the economy of redemption is to be expressed in the present tense, being the divine Contemporiser. Jewett (1991) observes that,

... the third article is concerned that the 'then' becomes 'today', that the 'there' becomes 'here', that what is 'without' becomes what is 'within', that the 'Christ-for-us' becomes the 'Christ-in-us'. (p 312).

In Christ, the Spirit is 'constructing' us into Christ's image according to the desire of the Father. The old adage is true: The Father planned salvation, the Son procured it and the Spirit applies it. The Father is the architect of salvation and creation. The Son is the pattern. The Spirit is the builder on site. The Spirit thus particularly identifies with the needs and life of the believer, who is now His temple. His intense desire is to lead us into conformity to the image of the Son (Rom. 8. 26-7) and bring us to full sanctification. He is also known as the *Holy Spirit* because His work is particularly that of making us holy and sanctified for God's use.

This personal desire, attention, sensitivity, and purpose of the Spirit has been greatly neglected in theological history. This neglect can be almost understood, for He is 'person without a face' (Congar 1983). His self-effacing ministry is caught up in his epithet 'Spirit', an epithet apparently not as personal as 'Father' or 'Son'. This is because He takes

from the Father and the Son and takes back to the Father and the Son. He is never the destination. This is the selfless love of God.

All this implies a unique space for the Spirit. He is not merely the subjective experience of the Father or Son. Smail (1988) is right in saying that,

... the West has shown an inbuilt tendency to regard the Spirit as the mutual love between the Father and the Son or as the relationship between the ascended Christ and the Church. This tendency of seeing Pneumatology as immanent Christology is seen in Barth (p 43).

His distinct 'space' in the trinity is not in His being the 'bond of love' between the Father and the Son, but found in His own personality and mutual inter-communal relationship.

We have analysed the distinctive ministries of each Person in the scheme of creation and redemption. We must now provide an orientation and application of the above, so that the Creator, the Saviour and the Sanctifier, who are one, can operate in their own distinctive ways among us, each bringing His own distinctive gift. We need to integrate our findings of this section into our lives in ways commensurate with their peculiar work. To this we now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRACTICALLY INTEGRATING TRINITARIAN FAITH

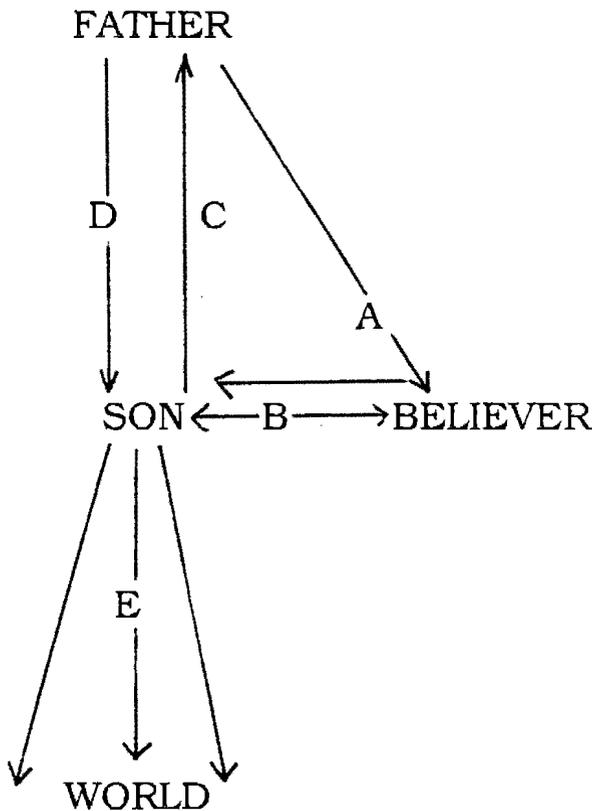
We are now prepared to analyse the relevant dynamics in our relationship to the triune God. We are ready to explore our relationship with the God of the Bible. There is a slight orientation in the direction of our paper here. In most of the above we have dealt with the more God-man-ward movement, seeing that there are different appropriations and proclivities in the triune God's relationship toward the world and specifically the believing community. We now change our axis to the more man-God-ward movement, seeing the different appropriations and proclivities in *our* reflexive response to the activity of God.

4. 1 Theological Integration

In this section I desire to develop a flexible framework that will integrate all of the above in relation to the believer. This is necessitated by the biblical call for us to relate dynamically with all three Persons. I will draw up a 'map' that will attempt to harmonise our relationship to the Father and the Son and the Spirit - incorporating all the Theocentric, Christocentric and Pneumacentric aspects and relations of God into the Christian life.

4. 1. 1 A Working Paradigm - A 'Grammar' for the Christian Life

Can we pull together all the aspects of our relation to the triune God paradigmatically? I believe that we can. In doing this, I will provide a framework within which the Christian can authentically live in fellowship with God. Of first importance in this construction is the fact that it must *correspond* to the present salvific modes and relations of the Godhead. As we have seen, God has accommodated Himself for our creation and salvation, thereby taking into Himself a pattern and a hierarchy of activity. Our relationship to God should always be harmonious with this. Secondly, our model must provide guidance and orientation for the believer. *Our* point of contact with the triune God needs to be known, otherwise we will return to practical trinitarian irrelevancy. The paradigm to be used is adapted from J B Torrance's 'Incarnational Model' of worship (tapes):



Torrance's model, although adapted, provides a framework for incorporating the two-fold movement in Christ, something that we have seen recurring throughout this thesis. In this model we observe five main movements:

- A: The Father draws us to the Son and unites us with Him;
- B: We participate in Christ and in the Spirit of life that is in Him;
- C: We share in Christ's *Abba* and communion with the Father;
- D: We are accepted and beloved in the Son;
- E: We participate in the Son's mission to the world.

The Christian life may thus be defined as the activity of the Father through the Spirit to bring us into participation with the life of Christ (A and B) and through Christ into his communion with the Father (C and D), overflowing in a participation with the Son in his mission from the Father to the world (E).

There are then two main *koinonia*'s that we are baptised into: A and B is participation into Christ the Lord and Saviour, overflowing into mission; C and D is our participation into his Father as *Abba*. There are other aspects such as our relations with each other and also further aspects of our mission (Christ's mission), yet for the sake of our task we will focus on the believer and the Godhead relationships.

These represent two layers, strata or axis of relationship that interact mutually and spirally. Layer A and B we will call 'in Christ' and C and D 'through Christ'. Christ is therefore the nexus of both relations.

In Christ - our horizontal koinonia In this relation we *face Christ*, the one to whom the Father has drawn us through His Spirit (A): 'my Father has revealed this' (Mat. 16. 17), 'No one can come to be unless the Father who sent me draws him' (John 6. 44), and, 'He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1. 30). By this we note that it is those who have responded to prevenient grace and light who are drawn to Christ, those

who 'have heard and learned from the Father' (John 6. 45). Our relationship to Christ is two-fold: one which is positional or legal, 'we are in him who is true' (1 John 5. 20) and one which is experiential, 'abide in him' (1 John 2. 28). We must 'reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 6. 11), as well as 'work out' the positional status in practice (Philip. 2. 12).

This is the axis in which we receive all the redemptive activity of God, working out in a Christological redemptive lifestyle. The glorious Person of Christ is our goal, focus of devotion and pattern of the ethical life. On this axis, there is a specifically *salvific* nature to our relation to Christ the Saviour. He sustains all that the believer needs for wholeness and complete salvation (Col. 2. 10; 3. 3). Paul's theological preoccupation with the believer's salvation and life being 'in Christ' is evidence of this. The form of his salvation is *anthropologically* orientated and we are restored in the second Adam. Faith is the active response to this relation and appropriates the benefits of Christ. Here Christ is Lord over the believer. Christ sustains the relation of Head to the church and the church submits to his authority (Eph. 5. 22-33). This rule is firstly over the heart (1 Pt. 3. 15), but also extends to all things (Eph. 5. 2 - 6. 9). Within this authoritative context, the believer is orientated along a prescribed way. He imitates Christ and takes his yoke upon himself. Under his yoke, a symbol of service, the believer also shares in the Lord's mission to the world (E). The works that he has done, we also do (John 14. 12), and as the Father sent the Son, so we are sent by the Son (John 20. 21). All this is implied in his Lordship.

Christ is therefore the foundation and cornerstone of the Father's House (Eph. 2. 19-22). Yet all these aspects have a proclivity and penchant, for Christ is *the Way*. We are saved 'from' to be saved 'unto'.

Through Christ - our vertical koinonia In sharing Christ's life we also participate in his relationship *with the Father* (C and D). The key note on this axis is that 'we have our access in one Spirit to the Father'

(Eph. 2. 18) and we can know the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jewett (1991) elucidates on this reality:

'Father' here is not a general name of God, common to the piety of all religions; rather, it is the name we take upon our lips as Christians who pray to the God whom the Son has made known to us. The biblical vision of God's fatherhood is understood primarily in a soteriological way (p 309).

This knowledge and fellowship with the Father is only as a consequence of our being in Christ, for, 'the one who confesses the Son has the Father also' (1 John 2. 23), 'we have access through faith in Him' (Eph. 3. 12), and, 'we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. 5. 1). Here we stand not as servants of Christ but *with* Christ as brothers and are 'co-heirs' before our Father (Rom. 8. 17), for 'both he who sanctifies and he who is sanctified is from one' (Heb. 2. 11). Instead of a salvific emphasis, the emphasis is more on the *doxological* and *filial* aspects of restoration - *Abba ho Pater!* Christ is our High Priest who enters the holy place for us in order to prepare a place for us. We see Christ as our elder brother within our Father's House, preparing a place so we can exercise our priestly ministry there. Wainwright (1966) has well observed that 'the Greek word *latreuein* (priestly service and worship) is only used in the New Testament in our relationship toward God the Father and never in relation to Christ' (p 103). This vertical aspect, unlike the horizontal, is ultimate and has no further movement. The Father is the goal of salvation of all the activity of the Spirit and the work of Christ, the consummative goal of creation and redemption. Our adoption is the 'glorious summation of grace' (Palmer 1894: 208).

The above duality - 'in Christ' and 'through Christ' - is well expressed in the Pauline statement of Galatians 4. 26: 'you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ'. John 1. 12 describes it thus: 'as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God'. Peter mentions it as well: 'As you come to him... you yourselves are being

built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 2. 4).

What of our **relation to the personal Spirit**? In our model, the Spirit can be seen as the One who draws us into Christ, the Father and our mission to the world, i.e., the lines on the diagram. The focus of the believer's devotion and service is to be to the Father and the Son. The Spirit in the New Testament is the One who stands alongside us as our Paraclete, assisting and giving us all we need to live 'vertically' and 'horizontally'. As Christ is the nexus point in our salvation, so the Spirit works in Christ to bring us into all that he accomplished for us. Smail (1980) perceptively notes that Paul mentions two confessional cries in the New Testament that are the result of the Spirit's operation in their lives - *Kurios Iesous!* and *Abba ho Pater!* He summarises and says:

What constitutes the body of Christ is its relationship to and its confession of the Son and Father, and it is the chief business of the Spirit to create the confession and prompt the relationship (p 31).

Our relationship to the Spirit has these two confessions as its goal. He is more 'alongside' us, personally aiding us in these two relationships. These two relationships are the foci of the believers life, discovered under the personal assistance of the Spirit. The nature of the Spirit's work introduces us to certain 'theological constraints' to be upheld in our relationship with the triune God.

4. 1. 2 Theological Constraints

We have seen the basic shape of the believers relation to the triune God. It now remains to be shown that there are certain theological constraints and proprieties within the model. We have noticed that there is an order within the economy of God, a certain 'shape', and this needs now to be summarised. This is of importance for the Christian life, for a living relationship with God requires that 'each of the Persons be honoured and adored in the context of their revealed relationship with each other' (Bray 1993: 246). We must 'behave in a way that is worthy of God's company' (Houston 1989: 7). This is seen in our model. The Christian life is a participation into an already-existing dynamic relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit. We do well to heed the flow of the relationships and be correctly orientated.

Firstly, we must preserve the **priority of the Father** in all things, seeing Him as the integrating factor within the Godhead and the gospel. As we have seen, Jesus' identity is revealed in relationship to the Father ('Son') and the Spirit is seen as the Spirit *of God*. It is the Father's purpose for His whole creation that gives meaning to the coming of the Son and the sending of the Spirit. Smail, in his book The Forgotten Father (1980), pleads for a theological and experiential focus on the Father:

He is the catholic person within the Holy Trinity who gives context and unity to the work of the Son and the manifestations of the Spirit (p 17).

Houston (1989), who has also given particular attention to the trinity in the Christian life, adds:

This term [Father] distils the essence of Christian faith. To say 'holy Father' is to acknowledge 'the buck stops here', cosmically and eternally. The Father is the ultimate source and authority behind all the powers that be - the originator of all creation, the love beyond all loving (p 171).

This means that even in our relationship to Christ, the Father has a priority. We have faith in the Son of God because he is from the Father and the Father has 'set His seal on him' (John 6. 27). We submit to the Lordship of Christ because God has 'made him Lord and Christ' (Acts 2. 36) and because this Lordship of Christ is 'to the glory of God the Father' (Philip. 2. 11).

This priority is also seen in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where the first three chapters focus on the priority of Father in the whole sweep of the gospel and work in Christ. We see here the *movement* of the gospel which takes place within the Godhead in history. As already noted, the whole schematic and problem posed by Paul in his letter to the Romans begins with mankind's despoiled relationship with God. It is this which sets the tone for the book. In this sense Eastern Orthodox theology is correct in seeing the gospel as a Father movement. This 'Paterlogical Priority' must be upheld in our relationship to the triune God

Secondly, as our model has made clear, it is only in and **through Christ** that we can be saved and come to Father. He is the Christian's *experiential integrating factor* that allows us to experience the life of the triune God. He is *our entry point* and 'door' into the Father's House. It is only with the Incarnation that we see this revelation of God being our Father. The revelation of Christ exposes the reality of God, for Christ is intrinsic to God and only function, 'exists', as One among Many. If the One is revealed, the Many are as well. Matthew 11. 25-30 is particularly instructive here. The Father has revealed truth to the disciples about the Kingdom (25). He is the only One who knows the Son and therefore the One who reveals Him (27). The Son in turn reveals the Father to those who come to Him (27-8). So there is a pattern: The Father reveals the Son and the Son reveals the Father. This is clearly the pattern in the New Testament¹⁶. Because the Father loves the Son (John 3. 35), He

reveals the Son and draws us up into *that* relationship. Because the Son loves the Father, he draws us up into that relationship with the Father (*Abba*). Because the Spirit loves us (Rom. 15. 30), he draws us into the Son and through him to his Father. This is the ultimate mystery of salvation. We are caught up in the circle of never-ending love between the Persons of the Godhead.

Ephesians 4-5 shows how our lives must be rooted in Christ and how from this vantage point we can live realistically and correctly orientated within the whole sweep of the gospel. In Christ we are *taken up* and *drawn* into the movement in God and can orientate ourselves within it. The order of the divine clauses in the great trinitarian benediction (2 Cor. 13. 14), where 'the grace of our Lord Jesus' stands first followed by 'the love of God', may be taken as a 'transcript of Paul's own experience' (Stewart 1941: 140). It was through meeting with Christ that he entered on the knowledge of divine love. We can do no better.

Lastly, it is only **in the Spirit** that we can live the Christian life. The practice and service of the Christian life must be sanctified by the Holy Spirit in order to be acceptable to God. He is the personal medium in whom we related to God. In our diagram, we have no relationship with the Father or Son except we partake in the movement of the Spirit. Thus the Scriptures exhort us to pray in the Spirit (Eph. 6. 18), walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5. 16) and serve in the Spirit (Philip. 3. 3). In these relationships, we have a Person to guide us, One who will disclose all that has been given to us by God (1 Cor. 2. 12).

4. 2 Inferential Application

I have looked at factors Christians need to be aware of as they love and worship God. Now I will observe those dynamics of their actual relation to the Godhead. I will first confirm the reality of a *triune relationship* with the triune God, then will delineate some *specific characteristics* of our response to each Person.

4. 2. 1 The Three-Fold Relationship

It is my conviction that after a close study of the New Testament we must avowedly confess that distinct relationships can be cultivated and sustained with the three Persons of the Godhead. A conscious, personal awareness of the triune God's omnipresence and redemptive presence may be experienced here and now! A trinitarian understanding of God enriches our limited grasp of the one God *above* us, *for* us, and *in* us, a truth that needs to vibrate within the life of the believer. This three-fold polarity, with Christ as the fulcrum, the Spirit as the presence and power and the Father as the glorious overarching goal, is our glorious inheritance.

The New Testament reveals a corresponding three-fold relationship to Father, Son and Spirit, taking these three Persons seriously and distinctly. We relate to the Son *and* the Father *and* the Spirit. We see this specifically in John's letters: 'that all may honour the Son *even* as they honour the Father' (John 5. 23), 'if you knew me you would know my Father *also*' (8. 19), 'believe in God, believe *also* in me' (14. 1), 'that they may know You, the only true God, *and* Jesus Christ who You have sent' (17. 3), 'our fellowship is with the Father *and* with His Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1. 3), 'from Him who was and is and is to come, *and* from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, *and* from Jesus Christ...'

(Rev. 1. 4-5), and, 'to Him who sits on the throne *and* to the Lamb' (Rev. 5. 13). The Greek conjunction *kai* reveals this truth. This is also seen in the Pauline epistles: 'he eats for the Lord *and* gives thanks to God' (Rom. 14. 6), 'singing and making melody to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father' (Eph. 5. 19-20), 'rejoice in the Lord... let your requests be made known to God' (Philip. 4. 4-6), and, '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). These Scriptures are not meant to be isolated 'proof texts', but rather instances of a larger reality found throughout the structure of the whole New Testament.

We have seen that this trinitarian framework is deeply ingrained into the New Testament, and that our three-fold relationship is merely an ineluctable consequence of this framework. To deny that we can have a distinct relation to each Person is to deny the reality of God and to return to modalism. Yet if we believe that the traditional creeds are pointing us in the right direction, then to have true devotion with the God who is confessed, is to have a triune relation to Him. Throughout this thesis it has been an axiom that if there are three distinct Persons in the Godhead, as traditional orthodoxy has maintained, then it implies a corresponding three-fold personal relation of the believer with the Godhead in the Christian life. Anything less is a distancing of devotion and a worship of the god of our projected speculations. Devotion is to draw its nature and shape from its object and *not* to be an abstraction of man's psychological aspirations. If we are to maintain a supernatural dimension in the Christian life (i.e. *God*), if we are to be true Bible-believing Christians and live in *practice* in this supernatural world, if we want to experience reality now and not just a 'bare' supernaturalism, then 'we must have a moment by moment, increasing, experiential relationship to Christ and to the whole of the trinity' (Schaeffer 1991: 259).

The ultimate ground for this assertion lies with the reality of the Christian life as an experience of being caught up into the life of God. We have a 'friendship within the holy trinity' (Houston 1989: 191ff.). Christian experience is nothing less than this. With the revelation of the Messiah being the Son of God, the 'second' Person, we see that God gives of Himself to the world and not merely an aspect of salvation. Likewise, the Spirit is now given not just as a power to perform a service, but as the 'third' Person to abide with and in us. We have seen that God is personal and that revelation of Himself is a purposeful disclosure. Therefore, it is as we come to know God personally that He reveals more of Himself to us. He does not 'cast pearls before pigs' but reveals Himself to those who love Him. It is no coincidence that because John was the closest of the disciples to Jesus, the one who 'leant on Jesus' breast' (John 13. 23), his writings display the deepest trinitarian awareness.

J. Owen, the famous 17th century Puritan, was also of the conviction that the saints have distinct communion with the Father, Son and Spirit, and that there was for the Christian a peculiar appropriation of this distinct communion. In Volume 2 of his Works, he devotes most of the book to describe what these peculiar appropriations of God's distinct communion with us are, as well as what our distinct response to each Person is. He is one of the few writers that I have come across who has dealt with this issue. Hodgson (1960) also touches on this reality. He first asks: 'how can we initiate our congregation into the trinitarian way of life?' He then says that we can begin by practicing it ourselves, and teaching and encouraging others to practice themselves, in living as men and women who have been adopted to share in Jesus Christ's relationship to the Father in heaven and to the Father's world, in the Spirit. In his understanding of the Christian life as being that of seeking, finding and doing the Father's will in the Father's world with the companionship of the Son by the guidance and strength of the Spirit, he stresses the following:

I have to make the truth my own by practising myself in living by it, until the lesson which was taught to my intellect takes possession of my whole being and becomes my second nature. I must cure myself of any tendency I have to live as though I were myself the self-contained centre of my world, seeking to reconcile my earthly interests with my duty to God who is a mysterious threeness in oneness above the skies (p 178).

Adding brilliantly that,

... it is better that we should enrich our spiritual life by exploring to the full the possibilities of our threefold relationship to Him than that for fear of tritheism we should impoverish it and never enter fully into the heritage of our Christian revelation (p 180).

Hodgson maintained this life on earth by faithful and regular habits of prayer, meditation and sacramental communion (p 55). Conforming our Christian life to all those dimensions revealed in the Word, will aid us in abiding in the Father, Son and Spirit. As we pray, we recognise that we come to the Father through Christ in the Spirit. As we truly love Christ, we will be brought to *his* love, the Father. As we seek the leading of the Spirit, we will be led to know *Abba* as well as the *Kurios*.

Certain aspects of this devotion can be neglected and eclipsed, something which we need to continually guard against. The best prophylactic to such an impoverished Christian life is a constant assessing of it in the light of holy Scripture. As John said: 'if what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you will abide in the Son and in the Father' (1 John 2. 24). Simultaneously with this Scriptural watch, is the need to 'practice the presence of God'. This is a continual living and walking in the light of God. It is a conscious presenting of ourselves to the triune God so that we might be transformed by His reality more than anything else. To some this might smack of mysticism, yet it is the goal of the Christian life and a pure imitation of the life of Christ¹⁷. Lovelace (1979) appeals for a such an exercise, specifically in relation to the Spirit:

We should make a deliberate effort at the outset of every day to recognise the person of the Holy Spirit, to move into the light concerning his presence in our consciousness and open up our minds and to share all our thoughts and plans as we gaze by faith into the face of God. We should continue to walk throughout the day in a relationship of communication and communion with the Spirit... relying upon every office of the Holy Spirit's role as illuminator of truth and of the glory of Christ (p 130-1).

If this is true in regard to the Spirit, how much more do we need to a conscious fellowship with the Father and the Son. Only such devotion toward the triune God will bring us into our full inheritance as believers. The awareness may differ in intensity at different times - like one's awareness of a distant loved one over many busy days, months and years - but it can be brought back to consciousness through the classic spiritual disciplines, just as human relationships are heightened at times by letters, phone calls, and special visits. Smail (1980) trenchantly writes:

The realization of all three relationships is not automatic. Doctrinally conversion to Christ, eventful infilling with the Spirit and realized relationship with the Father belong together as inseparable aspects of God's salvation. Experientially it is possible to confess Christ and not live by the power of the Spirit or have confidence before the Father (p 42).

We must actively appropriate *all* the ministries and graces of the triune God, and intimately relate to each of them in a way that is appropriate. The hope of this thesis is that the Spirit will lead Christians to realize all that is theirs within the shared life of the Godhead.

4. 2. 2 Specific Relations toward each Person

In the previous chapter, I delineated the primary functions of the Persons toward the world and the believer. I have also shown that the Christian life incorporates distinct fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I must now analyse what specific relations *we* must sustain toward the Persons of the Godhead, with His tri-personal 'modes' moulding our response. As we have looked at the angles of God's relationship toward us, we need to respond in a way commensurate with these angles. All that has been analysed so far is the trajectory into which we must now shape our response to this God of grace. As God communes with us in a three-fold manner, so we similarly commune with Him. We must 'respond to Him in a particular way, or rather set of ways, corresponding to the richness of His being' (Gunton 1991: 4). The tenor of this section is highlighted by Grudem (1994). As he reflects on our relationship to the Persons of the Godhead, he says:

These additional relationships are not blurred into a distinctionless, mystical ecstasy, however. Both now and in eternity we relate to the Father in his distinct role as our heavenly Father, to the Son in his distinct role as our Saviour and Lord, and to the Holy Spirit in his distinct role as the Spirit who empowers us and continually applies to us all the benefits of our salvation (p 847).

Hodgson (1960) also talks of 'clearly and consciously realising our distinct relationship to each Person of the Blessed Trinity', adding:

We may sometimes address ourselves to the Spirit or to the Son as well as to the Father, for each is a He, none is an it. But we shall not be confusedly addressing ourselves sometimes to the One and sometimes to Another without knowing when or why. We shall speak to the Spirit as to the Lord who moves and inspires us and unites us to the Son; we shall speak to the Son as to our Redeemer who has taken us to share in His sonship, in union with whom we are united to His Father and may address Him as our Father (p 180).

A lack of the 'distinctiveness of the Persons also fuels trinitarian irrelevancy in worship' (BBC II 1991: 30). It is in our worship that we do not merely speak *about* God but speak *to* Him. It is in our worship that we encounter the 'problem' of distinction and diversity within the Godhead - that is if we truly worship the God revealed through Jesus Christ. If we are to worship God and enjoy Him forever, then it behoves us to know the God that we are addressing and reverencing. We need to remember that these distinctions are not mere 'modes' but dynamic aspects of loving relationships between the Persons, therefore heightening the issue of correct worship. The British Council of Churches (1991 III) has rightly said:

Worship is trinitarian in a serious sense only when its whole manner and exercise reflects the loving relationships within the trinity (p 74).

It is also important to remember that in whatever communion we have with any Person, there is an influence from the other two. Gregory of Naziansen is known for first mentioning that 'we cannot think of One without immediately being surrounded by the radiance of the Three' (T. F. Torrance 1994: 54). Although there is distinction, there is not division. No Person is being neglected and depreciated when we focus in on a particular Person, for each Person is only made known through the other and depends inseparably on the other. Erikson (1995) adds:

Even when we pray regarding one of the works that is the distinctive special responsibility of one of the three, and direct it to that person, we will retain the consciousness that the whole Trinity is involved in that work, and that it is one of those persons especially on behalf of the triunity of persons, or of the triunity doing that work through that one person (p 328).

The Scriptures do indicate specific relations of the church toward each Person that are consonant with their specific ministries. It will be argued

that they incorporated the Father, Son and Spirit not haphazardly, but purposely and out of their own charismatic experience of God.

Lastly, it will be observed that a methodology is upheld in this section. I call this the 'inferential approach'. Here I will deduce the nature of the response to each Person, not by simply imitating biblical injunctions (as important as they are), but by rooting our response to the triune God in consonance with His triune working in the world and the church. The biblical text guides us and supports us, but does not provide an integrating framework. I believe that the framework underlying all those statements is in a response rooted in the nature of God's work toward man. As the early church encountered the triune God in their experience (section 2. 2), so they responded in a way 'tailor-made' to their experiences. Because all three experiences were experiences of God, there was a similarity and unity of response, but because each Person was manifest in a particular context and for a peculiar purpose, they had distinct responses to each Person. Yet we saw that it was not only through their encounter but also through their particular understanding of God that they ordered their lives. Thus they formulated an unspoken trinitarianism, not merely because they experienced God in new ways, but because they were convinced that there was a *reality* undergirding and moulding their lives. Both factors mutually interrelated. So for us, our response to God needs to be influenced by experiential factors and theological factors. We can relate to the Persons equally when we encounter their saving activity in our lives and also when we understand their respective sphere of ministry to us.

So then, what is the nature of our relationship to the Father, Son and Spirit when considered distinctly?

To the Father We have seen that the Father is the ultimate source of the world and of our salvation, being the final goal of all things. Through the Scriptures and the revelation of Christ, His purposes, His holy justice and love are clearly seen. The Scripture *therefore* orders **prayer**, **thanksgiving**, and acts of **worship** as primarily to the Father. Palmer (1894) says:

If in this scheme of grace it is necessary that the first Person of the Godhead should sustain this relation of official supremacy, it is easy to see why the natural mode of address in our prayers should be to the same Person who is the acknowledged representative of all parties of the covenant (p 21).

He is the object of our worship, particularly as the bearer of the sublime mystery of God and representative of the fullness of the Godhead in love, power, mercy, holiness, sovereignty etc. Palmer (1894: 202-11) notes that prayer is to be directed to the Father because: He is the representative of the Godhead; in Him resides the seat of sovereignty in providence; it is His office to enforce the claims of violated law as Judge; and because He is the author and source of adoption in His family.

Toward the Father there is also directed the obligation of supreme worship. In His representative character 'it is His office to receive the united worship offered through Him by the entire Godhead' (Palmer 208). He is also our motivation for holy living being the source and creator of all things. He is our ultimate succour and ultimate demand. Because of the revelation of this love, He is the object of our **filial loving devotion**. J Owen (1965) sees this love of God as the peculiar revelation in the Scriptures:

His love to us is the great discovery of the gospel. He is now revealed peculiarly as love, as full of it unto us, the manifestation whereof is the peculiar work of the gospel (Tit. 3. 4). This love is peculiarly to be eyed in Him, so it is to be looked on as the *foundation* of all following dispensations and sweetness (p 21-3).

The primary obligation of the Christian is to pray, give thanks and to praise and glorify the Father. Such acts of devotion reveal that the New Testament is a display of the manifold *grace* of God in Christ. Our responses are *responses* to the antecedent grace and initiative of God for us in Christ.

To the Son We have seen that the Son is the mediator of the nature and works of the Father, also being the one who accomplishes the will of the Father in creation and salvation. This truth is brought across well by Peterson in the introduction to the book of Hebrews in his popular translation of the New Testament The Message (1993). He says:

The main and central action is always what God *has done, is doing, and will do for us*. Jesus is the revelation of that action. Our main and central task is to live in responsive obedience to God's action revealed in Jesus. Our part in the action is the act of faith (p 457).

The ground and possibility of the functions of the Son is his humility in incorporating aspects of man and God into his theanthropic person. In this sense he has more proximate relations to us and the Father more ultimate ones. In the light of this, the Scripture *therefore* presents Jesus as:

- the immediate object of our **faith** as we seek to fulfil our divine responsibilities before the Father. Faith in Him for salvation and access to the Father is the beginning of the Christian life.
- He is the object of our **love**. As he is God become flesh, we have a great human affinity with the Son, as between Adam and Eve who was 'bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh' (Gen. 2. 23).
- He is the object of our **worship**. In him we behold the face of God (Col. 1. 15; 2 Cor. 4. 6), unlike the more mysterious worship of the Father who no man has seen or can see (1 Tim. 6. 16).

- As Christ has been endowed with all authority and given the Name Lord, **submission** to this headship is urged upon the church and the world.

Prayer and thanksgiving are activities that are not normally directed to the Son in the New Testament for he is not the source of his activities. When Paul does thank Christ in his letters, it is characteristically done in the context of his obedient service. On the occasions where Christ is addressed in prayer, it is important to take note of the context, which is more one of **invocation** than formal prayer¹⁸. It seems to be a biblical activity occasioned by man's immediate need of salvation and redemption, such as the Psalmist does by 'calling on the name of the Lord'. If he is the Saviour, being the One who has come to us, the One who is God for us, God on *our side*, then prayer to him in accordance with this function is apposite. This 'Christo-soteriology' is perspicuous in the Johannine gospel, where all the 'I am' statements of Christ (bread, light, door, shepherd, resurrection, life, way, truth and true vine) are metaphors expressive of his saving relationship toward mankind. These ubiquitous human needs are met through salvific fellowship specifically found in Christ. That Paul's personal passion and pursuit is specifically Christ and not the Father (Phillip. 3), is consonant with this Christo-soteriology.

In this way these acts of devotion are not simply duplicated responses as to the Father. They are rather responses tailored to the Son's peculiar mission and ministries.

To the Spirit We have seen that the Spirit is the Effector and 'Personal Executive Power' of the will of the Father, as well as the One who draws us up into the *koinonia* of the Son and the Father. He comes 'upon' us, is 'in us' and is 'with us' in a way that the Father and Son are not. He is the *Paraclete*. The Scripture *therefore* exhorts us to live in active relation

with the Spirit in His ministry in us and through us. We are to follow, be filled, be ordered by, keep in step with, not quench or grieve, set our mind on and obey the Spirit of God. Because He is not the source and goal of His activities, He does not receive our prayers. Yet there are instances where He is invoked¹⁹. Because He does not bear the manifest glory of God, He is therefore not the object of our worship²⁰. Rather, it is in His assisting activities that He is to receive our responsive awareness, an awareness not as to a power, but as to a royal personal Helper. In the Greek of John 14. 16, Jesus words for 'another Helper' are *allos Paraclytos*. His choice of *allos* rather than of *heteros* implies another one 'of the same kind'. The word *Paraclete* sums up all that is implied in His ministry. Congar (1983) explains this word:

There is no suitable word in our language which adequately renders all the values of this Greek word: defender, counsel for the defence, helper, comforter, assistant, lawyer, advocate, solicitor, counsellor, mediator and one who exhorts and makes urgent appeals. All these meanings are present in the Greek *Paraklytos* (p 53).

As to the interpretation of the word, Gordon (1985) adds a warning:

The question cannot be fully settled by an appeal to classical or patristic Greek, for the reason, we believe, that it is a divinely given name whose real significance must be made manifest in the actual life and history of the Spirit. Only as we know the Person can we interpret the name... The heart of the church is the best dictionary of the Spirit (p 35-6).

It was in the context of the disciple's loss of Jesus as their proximate companion, guide, friend and counsellor, that he speaks of the other Comforter. We know the Paraclete's ministry because, as the unknown is known by the known, so Jesus moulded the Spirit's relation to the disciples of that of his own. All the 'recognition and deference which the

paid to their Lord they now pay to the Holy Spirit, his true vicar, his invisible self, present in the body of believers' (Gordon 22). In this 'paraclesis of the Holy Spirit, the church went forward' (Acts 9. 31). To us it should be the same, with the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit being 'all that Jesus was to the early disciples' (Tozer 1968: 44). This guidance by the Spirit has never had the theological 'press' as the revelation of God in Christ has had, yet it is an important aspect of Scripture and needs greater prominence. Runia (1985) gives the reason for this:

Maybe this is so because in our relation to the Spirit the Christian is *co-responsible* for His influence (thus the reality of new depths of experience). This is the essential difference between the doctrine of Christ and the doctrine of the Spirit. In *Christology* man is utterly passive. In *Pneumatology* man is no longer passive but he is immediately employed by the Spirit (p 185).

Before we end this section, we need to give a little guidance to the issue of prayer, especially to answer the question: 'When is it appropriate to address the Father in prayer, when do we invoke Son and when do we call on the Holy Spirit?' I submit that when the respective spheres of ministry of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit conflate with our experienced need, then prayer to that particular Person is appropriate. Grenz (1994) has put it similarly:

Because God is triune - none other than Father, Son and Spirit - our prayers ought to be addressed to the three trinitarian persons in accordance with both the *purpose of the specific prayer* we are voicing and the function of each trinitarian person (p 96).

When the particular need or situation of ours is related to that ministry of a particular Person, we should relate directly to that Person. Thus the

Person of the Godhead to whom we relate is rooted in the purpose of need and request.

This chapter has provided a trinitarian model for the Christian life and has delineated the nature of our three-fold response toward the Christian God. This three-fold relationship is the inevitable consequence for anyone who agrees with the traditional trinitarian creeds. It is also the only way to maintain and sustain a vital and healthy trinitarian faith. Without this devotion, the doctrine of the trinity will always remain an impractical doctrine reserved for the theological pundits and for academic debates. Let it have its proper place in every Christian's life.

To some this three-fold devotion might be quickly dismissed as convoluted speculation and a far cry from the simple Christian faith. To others it will hopefully provide a possible solution to questions they have longed to ask. I hope that the issues raised and the solutions proffered will be taken seriously, and that they will stimulate Christians to ask relevant questions regarding their relationship with the triune God.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have hopefully given old truth new wings. I have not wanted to be sensational or novel but have desired to provide some pointers in helping the Christian *live* in an understanding way with one of the bedrock doctrines of the faith. Trinitarian relevancy has been in the forefront of my mind throughout this thesis. I have pointed out the importance of the experiential aspects of this doctrine and how a neglect of this leads to trinitarian irrelevancy. It has been a firm conviction that if we want to retain the relevancy of the doctrine we must encounter the triune God in a way similar to that which extruded the early confessions. This will also lead to a balanced Christian life, focusing us upon the whole spectrum of the revelation of God in the gospel and not a favourite aspect. Through an analysis of Scripture, I have highlighted the two main orientations in the Christian life - through Christ and in Christ - as well as the essential role of the Spirit in these two axis. I also suggested that the priority of the Father is an interpretive framework for understanding these two aspects. I have also delineated some guidelines for our responses to each Person, showing where they overlap and where they differ. In all these aspects of the Christian integration and orientation around the triune God of grace, we need to allow the Spirit of God to guide us into the full realisation of these relationships. These truths are merely guiding principles, like scaffolding, that can be discarded when one enters into the dynamic reality of the Godhead where 'all the sons are taught by God' (Is. 54. 3). My concern, articulated well by the BCC (1999 I) is,

... not that trinitarian words and phrases should be incorporated into liturgies and hymns in a merely cosmetic way, but that through a symmetrical relationship to all Persons, worshippers

should celebrate the reality of God and be drawn into the life of the triune God (p 28).

The thesis has far from dealt with all the issues involved and has maybe raised more questions than given answers. It has hopefully provided some guidelines for the Christian as he or she thinks of their relationship with the triune God. Much still needs to be studied.

Let it be remembered that if a quasi-modalistic practice is perpetuated, there will be no urgency in these matters nor any need for fresh discoveries. Yet if we take the biblical witness seriously, we will be confronted with these issues. If the issues springing from this are merely from a subjective confusion of the author, may those thoughts fade away after this thesis is read. But if there is a witness in this thesis to the truth of the Word, let what is of the truth endure and enrich the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we stand before the triune God, may we continue to orientate our lives around Him. Moltmann (1981), who more than any other modern theologian has taken seriously the reality of the Three-Personed God, encourages us to,

... stand before the all transforming fact and surrender wholly to it. We must be willing to die and rise again to enter into the full dynamic trinitarian life God has for us. The closer people come to the divine reality, the more deeply they are drawn into this dying and this rebirth... The practice of his own life is thereby changed, and changed much more radically than is possible within the potentialities open to the 'active' person (p 8).

May the God of grace, the Father of all things, enlighten our minds so that we may see the truth that is in Jesus and apply it to our needy lives by the power of the eternal Spirit.

Glory to the Father,

Glory to the Son,

Glory to the Spirit, now, and forever more,

world without end. Amen.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. I will retain this traditional word 'Person' in referring to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although it has its weaknesses (which is common to all theological words), no better alternative has been found - 'modes of being or existence' is hardly satisfactory.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Grenz and Olson (1992) define Neo-Orthodoxy as 'a movement that was characterised by the attempt of theologians to rediscover the significance for the modern world of certain of the doctrines that had been central to the older Christian orthodoxy... standing in a complex relationship to the liberalism that preceded the newer thinking' (p 63).

3. See the works of Hodgson (1960), Moltmann (1981), Pannenberg (1991), LaCugna (1991), Boff (1988), Gunton (1991), Plantinga (1989), Grenz (1994), Erikson (1995).

4. Hinn, a leader within certain charismatic circles, known for his personal emphasis on the Holy Spirit, has developed strong trinitarian thought. See his books Good Morning Holy Spirit (1990), and Welcome Holy Spirit (1995). Houston has also paid particular attention to these issues (1989).

CHAPTER THREE

5. Johnson (1961) sees the Hebrew anthropology as an analogy of Divine extensions. The *nephesh* or soul of man in Hebrew thought is 'a complete personality as a unified manifestation of vital power' (p 4). In

Israelite thought, the individual, as a *nephesh* or centre of power capable of indefinite extension, is never a mere isolated unit; he lives in constant reaction towards others. Therefore the conception of the social unit is dominated by that of kinship (p 7). Knight (1957), who strongly contends for Hebrew concepts in understanding the trinity, gives us a comprehensive list of indicators of Hebraic 'trinitarianism':

- We must start then with **Man**. He is a unit, yet has a unity of consciousness. There is diversity in unity. As the body is a unit yet our flesh lives out our inner intentions, so the aspects below 'live out' in enfleshed form, the intentions of God. These are really aspects of Him as the body is of the person (p 40).
- The **Name** can be His *alter ego* (p 13), separable, yet containing the essence of God.
- The objectification of the *living Word* (as in a comic). 'By means of them the Hebrews are seeking to express what to them was essentially true of their God, viz., that He is not to be thought of as a mere monad of being, or as a mathematical integer is 'one' over against another 'one' (p 16-7). The Hebrew has two words for one - *yahidh* means that which is singular and only: 'thy *only* son', and *echad* a compound unity as in the Shema.
- **Elohim** is a quantitative plural as in the Hebrew words for 'water' and 'heaven' (p 20).
- Theophanies of the **Angel of the Lord** - God, performing a mission for God. The Hebrews could isolate in the mind's eye any one particular activity of God at a time, and continue to see that activity in living terms, in terms of will, of purpose, of personality (p 28).
- In the activity of the **Spirit** we see the activity of God Himself. God in action *in His Spirit* (p 53).

6. Scholars have debated whether we have a single Spirit-fire baptism (in judgement or blessing) or a dual baptism to affect the righteous and the

wicked. The context should be our deciding factor, which in this case favours a dual baptism, one of blessing on the wheat and one of judgement on the chaff.

7. Demarest and Lewis' Intergrative Theology (1987) gives a scholarly defence of a limited but efficacious revelation of God in nature.

8. For a replete list of the believers devotion to God as distinct to that of Christ, see Howell (1993), p 467-497, especially page 479 footnote 21.

9. Some Scriptures referred to are: Rom. 10. 11-3 cf. Joel 2. 23; Philip. 2. 10-1 cf. Is. 45. 23; Eph. 4. 8 cf. Ps. 68. 18; 1 Pet. 2. 7-8 and Rom. 9. 33 cf. Is. 8. 13-4; 1 Pet. 3. 15 cf. Is. 29. 23; John 12. 41 cf. Is. 6:1 and Heb. 1. 6 cf. Dt. 32. 43. Jude 5 might also be a referent to Christ being Yahweh in the Old Testament. See Hanson (1965) and Wainwright (1966).

10. Wainwright (1966), after giving substantial grammatical evidence that in Romans 9. 5 Paul calls Jesus God (the only time he does this is here and in Titus 2. 13), surmises that the reason this was not so prevalent in his extant letters is that 'he was reluctant to include it in his letters because he had not yet reconciled it in thought with his Jewish monotheism' (p 57). He also surmises that the reason why Paul uncharacteristically called Jesus God here is that he allowed himself to write down what he was ready to say in the intensity of worship, but was 'in the habit of restraining himself from writing in his letters' (p 58). Wainwright lists seven occurrences in the New Testament where Christ is called God: John 1. 1, 18; 20. 28 Romans 9. 5; Titus 2. 13; Hebrews 1. 8 and 2 Peter 1. 1, concluding that 'the Christians called Jesus Christ God mainly in worship' (p 68).

11. Translations differ here and I follow the New Revised Standard Version and the New American Standard Version. '*Phronousin*' is the activity of the believer toward the Spirit in distinct parallel to the unbeliever toward the flesh (vs. 5 and 6). Reinicker (1980) interprets this word as 'to think, to set ones mind or heart upon something. It denotes the whole action of the affections and will as well as of the reason' (p 363). Goetzmann (1964) notes that 'of its 26 uses in the NT, Paul uses it 23 times' (p 617). He goes on to note that,

... this word implies that man is always aiming at something. Striving and endeavour are part of his nature. He must seek to possess, and he must be committed. This is the idea behind *phronema*, which occurs only in Romans 8 and which is well translated by 'setting the mind on'. In the context of this chapter, which describes the new life in Christ as a life in the Spirit of God. Paul testifies that a man's mind is set on certain things, and what these are depend on whether he is in 'the flesh' or in 'the Spirit'. Thus, those who live according to the flesh, i.e. their thinking and striving are directed, as is the whole of their life, towards those things which are 'merely human, the earthly-transitory'. On the other hand, those who are living in the Spirit of God endeavour to live in the light of the promised gift of the Holy Spirit and under His control (p 617).

12. Reinecker(1980) explains *stoichew* as used for movement in a definite line, as in military formation or in dancing. Here it means to 'walk in a straight line' (p 518). The NIV well translates it as 'to keep in step with', implying an ordered life taking ones bearings from the Spirit. In Romans 4. 12, the word is translated, 'following in the footsteps of'.

13. Gunton (1992) observes that in interpreting metaphorical language, the 'procrustean will force everything into a given form of language or thought; the protean will find reality so diverse that anything - or nothing (in the end it is the same thing) - can be said of it' (p 68). In the matter of the meaning of *uios monogenys* we must avoid these two extremes, using a critical realism to understand the ancient term, for it points to a pivotal

reality in John's gospel. We need to interpret it in terms of its intended meaning, as carefully as interpreting the *prototkos* in Colossians 1. 15.

14. The New Revised Standard Version, New Jerusalem Bible and the New Living Translation interpret the term 'only Son'. The New International Version interprets it 'one and only Son'. These are clear departures from the traditional interpretation of 'only-begotten Son'.

15. According to Hodgson (1960) Dorothy Sayers developed an analogy of the trinity according to her own profession - a writer. First there is the book as thought - idea of writers mind. Second the book as written - idea expressed. Third the book as read - power in reader. This can correspond to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (p 274). Although this *vestiga trinitatis* smacks of modalism, it nevertheless provides an interesting concept for understanding Christ as the Word of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

16. This is seen in Paul's letters: Gal. 1. 16; 2 Cor. 4. 6 compare with Eph. 2. 18; 3. 12 and Philip. 2. 11 and also John's epistles: John 6. 45; 8. 19 and John 1. 1 and 18.

17. Is. 2. 5; Ps. 42, 63, 84; Mat. 6. 33; John 15. 1-11; Gal. 5. 25; Philp. 3. 1-16; Col. 3. 1- 4. 17 to name but a few.

18. The occasions where prayer or rather invocation is addressed to Christ are: Acts 7. 56 and 9. 24; Rom. 10. 13; 1 Cor. 1. 2 and 16. 22; 2 Cor. 12. 8, 9; John 14. 14. Erikson (1995) also notes that the Pauline benedictions, which while not in the strict sense are prayers, are more than simply well-wishing. They are invoking the blessing of the Lord on his readers; 2 Thess. 2. 16; 3. 16 and 1 Thess 3. 11, 12, 13 (p 320-1).

19. In the Old Testament, there is an invocation in Isaiah 51. 9 to the 'Arm of the Lord', in Ezekiel 37. 9, the prophet calls and prophesies to the *ruach* of the Lord. In the New Testament, Paul, using the term Lord for the Spirit as in 2 Cor. 3. 17, indirectly invokes the Spirit in 1 Thess. 3. 11-13 as well as in 2 Thess. 3. 5.

20. Hodgson (1960) has noted that there is no extant instance of hymns or prayers addressed to the Holy Spirit that is certainly earlier than the tenth century. The standard form of Christian worship is worship offered by the Christian to the Father in union with the Son through the Spirit (p 232).

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