

III. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD...THE HOLY TRINITY

A. Introductory Notes

1. The relevant portions of the Symbols:

a. The Godhead--persons

Section II, LC 6-11 SC 4-6

b. The Enactments of God

Sections III, IV, VII, LC 12-15, 18 SC 7-8, 11-12

c. The Prerogatives of God

Sections III, V, LC16-17, 19-20, SC 12

The office-works of the Persons in the Godhead will be discussed in the sections of the syllabus tracing the doctrinal statements along these lines. The student is advised to read these statements with some competency...and in the understanding that he is not obligated to everything that is written, only to an appreciation of what it is. At the same time my analysis is not exhaustive...it is quick!

2. Summary of the Doctrine

God is the absolute of all virtues, yet personal and responsive to human need. The Godhead is marked by three Divine personages of one substance, power and eternity. God orders the universe by decree and all parts of it are so subject to His will. He is the responsible Creator and sustainer of our lives, the absolute sovereign and provider of all means of blessing for us by His grace.

3. Importance

It is, of course, hard to estimate relative importance and we like to think that all the doctrines are necessary. But after we have settled the authority matter so that we know on what grounds and by what means we stand, the person of God becomes a dominant thought. Since religion is the quality of man's life as lived in the respect of a divine presence, the character of that presence will have almost everything to do with the organization of that life. The church was quickly forced to think about the God that ruled it and to describe him in ways that made His character apparent in the light of the world about it.

B. Factors influencing the Early Christian Concepts of God

1. The polytheism of the ancient world

While it was a powerful force we need say little about it save that the deities of the polytheistic world were gods made in the image of men at their worst! (general principle)