

of course be noted that the "empty talkativeness" Calvin wanted to cut short was that of the Arians and the Sabellians; and that Calvin himself went on to discuss at some length the distinctions between substance, essence, subsistence, and persons.

William G. T. Shedd, a nineteenth century theologian, stated that "Theology asserts that God is one in respect to essence, and is three in respect to personal distinctions."³

And the first of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, in the form of its American Revision of 1801, states:

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.⁴

Of course these brief statements leave much unsaid and use some technical terms which need definition and expansion. For the moment, however, we will let these assertions stand as brief responses to our first question.

The second of our initial questions is

B. Why is this doctrine important?

Although it is not apparent upon initial reflection, the doctrine of the Trinity is important in its implications for the nature and meaning of biblical revelation, particularly that body of revelation concerning the true deity and mediatorial work of Christ. If God is one in the sense of one individual Person, then when we read in Scripture of the Father saying at Jesus' baptism, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well-pleased" (Mark 1:11), or the Father saying at Jesus' transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5), or Jesus in His high priestly prayer saying, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee." (John 17:1), we must understand these statements to mean either that Jesus was only a man who experienced very special personal interrelationships with God,