



SURVEY OF THEOLOGY PROPER

What is God Like?

Grace Institute - Pastor Jim C. Davis

Lecture Twelve: Trinity – The History of the Doctrine

1A. The History of the Term Trinity and the heretical views

1B. Introduction – Theology Proper answers the question. **What is God like?**

Heretical conflicts clarified our orthodox doctrines of Scripture.

And there are **two principles** to determine orthodox doctrine.

- God has revealed all we need to know through His **inspired word**.
- The **Holy Spirit** will teach and guide the church into all truth.

1C. For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. [Rom 15:4 NASB]

2C. "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. [Jhn 16:13 NASB]

3C. As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. [1Jo 2:27 NASB]

2B. 2nd Century – Conflict with **Gnosticism**

1C. The earliest extant usage is from Theophilus, ca. A.D. 170.

2C. It is assumed that the word was used one to four decades earlier.

3C. 2nd Century response from the church – **Apostle's Creed**

3B. 3rd Century – Conflict with **Monarchianism**

1C. The earliest Latin use of the word is by Tertullian, A.D. 190-200

2C. The word was widely used by this time.

3C. 3rd Century - response was **confusion** in church

- Dynamic Monarchianism – Jesus was a man given special power at his baptism by the Holy Spirit. (also called Adoptionism)
- Modalistic Monarchianism – the Persons of the Godhead were modes in which the one God manifested Himself.

- Patripassianism – God the Father manifested and suffered the crucifixion in the role of the Son. (West)
- Sabellianism – the word person means roles or manifestation of divine essence. (East)

4B. 4th Century – no response brought a time of confusion & disunity

1C. There was conflict over the doctrine of the Trinity.

2C. The doctrinal conflict was serious to the foundation of Christianity.

3C. **Main Point:** the contention was over the nature of the Son

2A. **The Council of Nicea 325AD – Arian conflict**

1B. Arians – (heteroousios) = the Son is a different substance

1C. Arians taught that the son is of a different substance or nature or essence than the Father

2C. The Son is not eternal but a second God created or brought into existence by the Father before creation.

3C. Major Proponents: Arius of Alexandria challenged the teaching of the eternity of the Logos (Jesus) in 318 A.D. during a teaching session of Bishop Alexander. He was banished from teaching in the Alexandrian churches and found refuge with Eusebius of Nicomedia.

4C. Contemporary Adherents: Jehovah's Witnesses; Worldwide Church of God (Herbert W. Armstrong); the Concordant Publishing Concern; Christadelphianism; and many in Unitarianism.

2B. Homoousians – (homoousios) = the Son is the same substance

1C. Homoousians taught that the Son is of the same substance as the Father.

2C. The Son is not brought into existence but is eternal and creator of all things.

3C. Major Proponents: Alexander, Hosius, Eustatius, and Athanasius were some of the major defenders of this position. These proponents were larger in number than the Arians but fewer in number than the third group.

4C. Contemporary Adherents: All orthodox Christianity, Protestant and Catholic.



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- 3B. Homoeousians – (homoiousios) = the Son is similar substance
 - 1C. Homoeousians taught that the Son is of like substance with the Father.
 - 2C. Confusion in terminology caused them to be labeled as Semi-Arian.
 - 3C. The Homoousians thought that the Homoeousians denied the unity of the three person of the Godhead. The Homoeousians thought that the Homoousians denied the distinction of three persons.
 - 4C. When the terminology was defined these two groups unified and defeated the Arian theology.
 - 5C. 4th Century response to Arianism – The Nicene Creed
- 3A. **The Council of Constantinople 381AD** – settled the question of the deity of the Holy Spirit and also officially marked the end of the Arian Controversy.
- 4A. **Augustine (354-430AD)**
 - 1B. each of the three Persons possesses divine essence.
 - 2B. each of the three Persons are interdependent.
 - 3B. The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.
- 5A. **The Synod of Toledo (589)**
 - 1B. filioque clause “and from the Son” was added to the Nicene-Constantinople Creeds.
 - 2B. The Eastern Orthodox Church rejected this as heresy and split from Roman Church.
- 6A. **The Reformation Churches**
 - 1B. The Augsburg Confession (1530) Lutheran Church
“...there is one divine essence which is called and is God...yet there are three Persons of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost”

2B. The Westminster Confession (1647) Reformed Churches
“In the unity of the Godhead there be three Person, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father: the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”

7A. False views of the Trinity

- 1B. Tritheism = three gods: Father, Son & Holy Spirit
- 2B. Monarchianism = three modes: Father (OT) Son (NT) Holy Spirit (Present)
- 3B. Unitarianism = One God: Father (Creator) Son (creature) Holy Spirit (impersonal)

8A. Heretical progression

- 1B. Arianism – the Son was not eternal but generated and created the Holy Spirit
- 2B. Socinianism – denied the pre-existence of the Son
- 3B. Unitarianism – Christ is human and morally ascends to status of Son of God
- 4B. Deism – adopts the moral & ethical standards of Christ but rejects miraculous acts and deity of Christ.

9A. Conclusion

- 1B. Two clues a teacher is an Antichrist.
 - 1C. False teaching on the person of God
 - 2C. False teaching on the work of God in Salvation – works salvation
- 2B. John’s Creed – Christ’s incarnation & relationship to the Father.
 - 1C. 1 John 2:18-3:3
 - 2C. 1 John 4:1-6
 - 3C. 1 John 3:23
 - 4C. 2 John 7-9

Orthodox Christianity is monotheistic. The Bible reveals there is one God unified in divine nature. The Bible also teaches that there is plurality of persons in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Arianism compromises the deity of Christ. They teach that we are united to a fellow creature not God. We believe that only God could do the work of salvation for mankind and Jesus being fully God and fully man (yet sinless) united us through the work of redemption at the cross of Calvary.