

## Lecture 18 – The Trinity (cont.)

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

### Key Terms

*Trinitas, persona, substantia, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, ousia, hypostases, Arianism, monarchianism, subordinationism*

### Objectives

- \*Identify major contributions by Tertullian, Origen, Hippolytus, Arius, and the Council at Nicea to the understanding of the trinity.
- \*Recognize the implications (positive and negative) of each contribution.

### Trinity (cont.)

#### IV. Distinction: The Economic Trinity

- A. The issue of tritheism. What is it, and what are its implications?
- B. Tertullian of Carthage (d. 225)
  1. “What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?”
  2. There is a real distinction between persons.
    - a. Ontological analogs
      - 1) river—stream—brook
      - 2) trunk—limbs—roots
    - b. A functional analog
 

Creator—Redeemer—Comforter
  3. Tertullian’s contribution to the trinitarian lexicon
    - a. *trinitas*
    - b. *persona*
    - c. *substantia*

\*Tertullian: One \_\_\_\_\_ in three \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. Behind the plurality of roles within the history of redemption, there is a single God.
- C. Hippolytus (d. 235)
  1. There is no separation within God, but there is distinction.
  2. God’s oneness is prior to His threeness.
    - a. Charged with being a modalist
    - b. The persons of the Trinity are “capable of being counted.”
  3. “Though alone, he was multiple, for he was not without his Word and his Wisdom, his Power and his Counsel....”
  4. The essential unity of God
- D. The contribution of the economic trinitarians
  1. Sought to include the Holy Spirit in the theological discussion
  2. Tertullian’s formula: One *substantia* in three *persona*

#### V. Derivationism or Subordinationism

- A. Origen of Alexandria (d. 254)
  1. Followed in the tradition of Justin Martyr and the logos philosophy of middle Platonism as it was developed by Philo in the early first century

2. Starting point: the monarchy of the unchanging Father
3. The Father alone is God (*autotheos*) in the proper sense, for He alone is ungenerated.
4. The Son is the divine speech (*logos*) of the Father.
5. All divinity derives from the Father.
  - a. The Son is divine only as He participates in the Father.
  - b. The Holy Spirit is divine, but not quite deity.
6. The immanent, ontological, or essentialist trinity. Three persons, eternally distinct
  - a. The essence of God is properly the Father.
  - b. Metaphysical rather than historical generation: The eternal generation of the Son
  - c. The Holy Spirit
7. One *ousia* in three *hypostases*

#### B. Arianism

1. Since God is unbegotten (unoriginated being), if He has a begotten Son, the Son cannot be God.
2. Sought to protect monotheism (divine simplicity and unity)  
Proverbs 8:22; Mark 13:32; Luke 18:19; 1 Cor. 15:28
3. Monarchianism: To suppose that someone besides the Father is God is to lapse into polytheism.
4. Subordinationism
  - a. The Father is the source of all things.
  - b. Being generated, the Son is a creature of the Father.
  - c. The Son cannot be of the Father's essence.
  - d. "There was a time when he was not."
  - e. The Son was the first of all creatures (*tertium quid*).
5. Metaphysical adoptionism; a foot in both adoptionism and subordinationism
6. Honorific titles
7. Soteriology
  - a. Exemplarism
  - b. Implication: moralism

#### VI. The Council of Nicea (325 A.D.)

##### A. The people involved/events

1. The emperor Constantine (Arian in leaning)
2. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria (leader of the orthodox party)
3. Eusebius of Nicomedia (leader of the Arian party)
4. Hosios of Cordova (emperor's theological expert, probable primary author of creed)

##### B. The Creed

1. The Son is *homoousios* (of the same essence; consubstantial) of the Father.
2. Christ is true God of true God and from the same (*ousia*) as the Father.
3. Christ is begotten not made.

##### C. Anathematized (cursed) Arian language

1. There was a time when he was not...
2. The son is a creature.

#### VII. A Nicene Epilogue

##### A. Strife over the creed.

1. Imprecise language: *homousios* was inherently ambiguous.  
*Ousios*: Capable of 2 very different interpretations.
2. Constantine continued to be an Arian sympathizer.

##### B. Athanasius of Alexandria

1. The soteriological principle:
    - a. No creature can redeem another creature, for all are under the curse.
    - b. Jesus is the Savior. Therefore, Jesus is not a creature.
    - c. Only God can save.
    - d. Jesus is the Savior. Therefore, Jesus is God.
  2. Athanasius at the Alexandrian Synod of 362
    - a. Defanged the terminological problem
    - b. Turned to the question of redemption
    - c. Included the Holy Spirit in the discussion
- C. Constantinople (381): The Cappadocian Fathers
- Standardized the trinitarian language by creating a distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*
1. *ousia*: Commonly held essence
  2. *hypostasis*: Individual member or identity, person
  3. God is one *ousia* in three *hypostases*.
  4. Included the Holy Spirit: The Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, and is worshiped and glorified with the Father and Son