

5—Defining the Trinity

“The Story of the Church”

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1. Rejected Theories to the Trinity

- A. Arianism—Jesus is not God at all, only a servant of God—Jesus is emotional, teachable, and mortal (Arius of Alexandria, 318)
- B. Monarchism—God is *one* indivisible being (Oneness)
 - 1) Modalism (Sabellianism)—Working through different modes (father, son, husband; liquid, ice, vapor)
 - 2) Adoptionism—Jesus was adopted into the godhead at baptism, crucifixion or ascension
 - a) *“You are my son; today I have become your father” (Psalm 2:7)*
 - b) *“This is my Son, whom I love” (Matt 3:17)*
- C. Subordinationism—Jesus is co-eternal, but not equal to God—subordinate (common prior to Nicaea)
 - a) *“For the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28)*
 - a) *“He was heard because of his reverent submission” (Heb 5:7) 1*
 - b) *“Then the Son himself will be made subject to him” (1Cor 15:28)*
- D. Partialism—One God in three parts (yoke, white, shell; root, trunk, branch; three leaf clover)
 - a) *“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me” (John 15:26)*

2. The Pillars of Trinitarianism

- A. Co-equal (*homooúsios*) one essence
- B. Co-eternal (*gennethénta, oú poimthénta*) begotten not made
- C. Co-substantial (*hypostásis*) one substance

3. Arguing Over Words

Fathers in the West spoke Latin, fathers in the East spoke Greek
“They are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words.” (1 Timothy 6:4)

- A. Essence (*oúsios*) what God is
 - 1) Grk (*oúsios*) being, reality, substance, essence, nature
 - 2) Lat (*substantia*) essence, contents, material, substance
- B. Substance (*hypostásis*) what God is made of (nature, essence)
- C. Person (*prósopon*) who God is
- D. Nature (*physis*) what is God’s nature

4. The Ecumenical Councils

- A. Council of Nicaea (325) Called by Constantine
 - 1) Rejection of Arianism—Jesus is not God
 - 2) Council—Father and Son have the same divine essence (*oúsin*)
 - 3) Nicene Creed barely mentions the Holy Spirit
*“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the **essence** of the Father, God of God,] Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, **consubstantial** with the Father”*
- B. Council of Constantinople (381)
 - 1) Cappodocean Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzas, Gregory of Nyssa) reintroduced the Holy Spirit
 - 2) *“And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who **proceedeth** from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is **worshiped** and **glorified**, who spake by the prophets.”*
- C. Council of Ephesus (431)
 - 1) Rejection of Nestorianism (Church of the East)
 - a) Christ has one person (*prósopon*) with two substances (*oúsin*)
 - b) Virgin Mary may be called “Chris-bearer” (*christotókos*) but not “God-bearer” (*theotókos*)
 - 2) Council—Jesus has one substance (*hypostásis*) that is both human and divine (*hypostatic union*)
- D. Council of Chalcedon (451)
 - 1) Rejection of Eutychanism—Christ has one substance (*hypostásis*) with two natures (*physis*) and only his divine nature is God (*monophysite*)
 - 2) Rejected by the Oriental Orthodox Church (Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Malankara, Ethiopian, Eritrean)
 - a) Saw it as a rebranding of Nestorianism
 - b) Believed both natures were God (*miaphysite*)
 - c) Only accept the first three councils
- E. “Filoque” controversy
 - 1) Latin church added the word “filoque” to the Creed (1014)
*“who proceedeth from the Father **and the Son**”*
 - 2) Lead to the East West Schism (1054)

5. How important are the Creeds?

- A. Not what they include, but what they leave out
“No creed but Christ, no book but the Bible”—Christian Church
- B. Not who they include, but who they leave out
“To kill a man is not to protect a doctrine, but it is to kill a man.”—Sebastian Castellio on the execution of Michael Servetus