

The Trinity and Jesus Christ in the Modern Era, 1700-2000

What is Classical (Orthodox) Trinitarianism?

Deuteronomy 6:4 – “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

There is one God (with one will, identity, and action) who subsists (exists) in three distinct persons. The Father who is not begotten, the Son who is eternally begotten (Generated), and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Augustine (354-430) – “The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit intimate a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality; and therefore that they are not three Gods, but one God. Although the Father hath begotten the Son, and so He who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, Himself also co-equal with the Father and the Son, and pertaining to the unity of the Trinity. Yet not that this Trinity was born of the Virgin Mary, and crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven, but only the Son.”

Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390) – “Monotheism, with its single governing principle, is what we value – not monotheism defined as the sovereignty of a single person... but the single rule produced by equality of nature, harmony of will, identity of action, and the convergence toward their source of what springs from unity – none of which is possible in the case of created nature. The result is that though there is numerical distinction, there is no division in the substance.”

The Change The Enlightenment Brought:

Historical Overview:

Rationalism and the Unitarian Age

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) – “I rejoice that in this blessed country of free enquiry and belief, which has surrendered it’s creed and conscience to neither kings nor priests, the genuine doctrine of one only God is reviving, and I trust that there is not a young man now living in the US who will not due a Unitarian” (Letter to Benjamin Waterhouse in 1822).

The Quest for the Historical Jesus – Jesus of history vs. the Christ of Christianity

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834)

Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889)

Functional Christology: _____

Functional Christology attempted “to form a religious-ethical model of Jesus’s person and ministry, rather than one grounded in his pre-eternal ontological identity as the second person of the Trinity” (*Historical Theology for the Church*, 298).

Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930)

“The Gospel nowhere says that God’s mercy is limited to Jesus’s mission. But history shows us that he is the one who brings the weary and heavy laden to God, and again, that it is he who raised mankind to the new level, and his teaching is still the touchstone, in that it brings men to bliss and brings them to judgment” (*What Is Christianity*, 156).

Neoorthodoxy (A Response to Liberal Theology)

Karl Barth (1886-1968)

John Webster (1955-2016)

“The doctrine of the Trinity is not one doctrine among others; it is foundational and pervasive. To expound any Christian doctrine is to expound with varying degrees of directness the doctrine of the Trinity; to expound the doctrine of the Trinity in its full scope is to expound the entirety of Christian dogmatics.”

Preparation For Next Week:

Read – <https://jgduesing.com/theology-in-the-modern-era-nathan-a-finn-on-scripture-and-authority/> (Attached to this document.)

Further Resources:

Duesing, Jason and Nathan Finn. *Historical Theology For The Church*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2021.

Duesing, Jason. *Seven Summits in Church History*. Nashville, TN: Rainer Publishing, 2016.

Woodbridge, John D. and Frank A. James III. *Church History, Volume Two: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

Litfin, Bryan. *Getting to Know The Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.