

Trinity

Review of Key Concepts:

-Eternal Relation of Origin-Distinguishes how each Person is related to another (Father-Paternity, begotten of none, Son-Filiation, begotten of the Father, Spirit-Spiration, proceeding from Father and Son). This phrase is synonymous with “modes of subsistence” and “personal properties”.

-Subsistence-Another way of referring to a divine Person. The One, simple divine **essence** subsists or exists in three Persons.

-Eternal Generation-The Son of God has from eternity been generated (begotten-come from) from the Father's essence. Therefore, the Son has no beginning and possesses all the divine essence.

Lesson 4 - Eternal Generation defended by Church History

Protestants unashamedly hold to the doctrine of sola scriptura (Scripture alone). This doctrine teaches that “*Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule for all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience*” (LBC 1:1). Scripture alone is our ultimate authority for things pertaining to God and salvation. We do not reject the instructive nature of church history but we never let it rise _____ Scripture as our ultimate authority.

1. Ante-Nicene support

As the church was forced to wrestle against attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity, its formulation of eternal generation strengthened over time (as we would expect). The earliest Christian writers were more focused on defending the work of God in _____ (like Christ's true physical body), so, issues regarding God's eternal nature were not usually the focus.

The first Christian leaders after the apostles strongly held to the doctrine of the Trinity.

_____ - (c. 156) was recorded blessing the “*Father, of His beloved and blessed Servant Jesus Christ...in the immortality of the Holy Spirit.*”

_____ - (c. 110) declared that “*Jesus is the unique Son of God, who was with the Father from eternity and appeared at the end.*”

_____ - (c.165) writes, “*Those who claim that the Son is the Father are shown to be unfamiliar with the Father and do not know that the Father of the universe has a Son, who being the First-begotten Word of God, is even God.*”

_____ - (c. 180) writes, “*Since His generation is unspeakable, those who try to explain generations and productions cannot be in their right mind, as they attempt to describe things which are indescribable...But the Son, eternally co-existing with the Father, from of old, yea, from the beginning always reveals the Father...*”

_____ - (c. 300) says the Son, *"has a generation from the Father, without beginning."*

In the late third and fourth centuries, questions about how God works were being replaced with questions of who God is. This can be seen in the _____ controversy, which has been labeled, *"the greatest theological controversy in the history of Christianity."* The church responded to this attack on the nature of the Son by forming the greatest of Christian creeds.

2. Nicene Creed (325)- *"This counsel has always lived in Christian tradition as the most important in the history of the church."* -Walker

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Spirit.

3. Post-Nicene support

_____ - (c. 350) one of the greatest Christian thinkers in the history of the church, writes, *"Thus we see that the Son is begotten not from without, from 'from the Father,' and that Father remains entire...To beget in time is characteristic of man: for man's nature is incomplete; God's offspring is eternal for His nature is always perfect."*

Athanasius grounded much of his support for eternal generation in the doctrine of _____. If God is simple (not composed of parts) than the Father could not give part of the divine essence to the Son but must communicate the whole essence to the Son.

_____ - (c. 370) *"Therefore, the very designation 'Son' teaches us that he shares in the nature [of the Father], not created by a command but having shone forth from the Father's substance and been conjoined to him instantaneously beyond all time, his equal in goodness, his equal in power, sharing in his glory."*

_____ **of Hippo**- (c. 400) *"How is it, then, that He says, He has given to the Son to have life in Himself? I would say it briefly, He begot the Son. For it is not that he existed without life, and received life, but He is life by being begotten. The Father is life not by being begotten; the Son is life by being begotten. The Father is of no father; the Son is of God the Father. The Father in His being is of none, but in that He is Father, 'tis because of the Son. But the Son also, in that He is Son, 'tis because of the Father: in His being, He is of the Father. This He said, therefore: has given life to the Son, that He might have it in Himself."*