

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Theology Proper, Session 3, Historical Soundings on the Trinity, Biblical and Second Century

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Theology Proper, or God. This is session 3, Historical Soundings on the Trinity, Biblical and Second Century.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we bow before you. We thank you that you are our God and we are your people. Teach us, even as we study how you led the church, to gradually understand that you are three in one from all eternity. Bless us, we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We begin a historical theology of the Trinity after a little more biblical good stuff going on. The doctrine of the Trinity highlights the importance of the church taking its time to understand Christian theology in the light of the message of Scripture while rejecting the errors of false teachers.

I want to acknowledge help from Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, 2004. Robert Letham, L-E-T-H-A-M, *The Holy Trinity*. It was an award-winning book.

It beat Morgan's and my book, *Hell Under Fire* for Zondervan, which was a finalist, but Letham won and he deserved it. The Bible teaches but does not systematize the doctrine of the Trinity. It teaches it but doesn't systematize it.

The church fathers follow the biblical trajectory and rightly teach that the one God eternally exists as the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We'll see that that's a pretty brief summary of a long and arduous process, and rightly so. It was a very hard thing for them to understand.

The Old and New Testaments consistently affirm that there's only one living and true God. Deuteronomy 4:35. Deuteronomy 6:4, famously. 1 Timothy 2:5, James 2:19. Although the tree of the doctrine of the Trinity grows in the New Testament, its roots are in the Old Testament.

An important biblical development is the New Testament's threefold, or triadic, understanding of God. This triadic pattern played an important part in the church's developing understanding that God is the Holy Trinity. Here's a list of seven passages displaying this pattern from six different New Testament writers.

That is significant. So, it was common in the early church: a pattern of triads, or triads, or threes.

Matthew 28:19, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, Jesus said in the Great Commission, baptizing them in the name, singular, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It's a triadic pattern. Galatians 4:4-6, an adoption text.

God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Galatians 4:4-6. That last sentence contains that God sent the spirit of his Son, which is a way to refer to the Holy Spirit, into our hearts, crying, Father, Father.

God, obviously in the context of the Father, sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts. So, in short, compass, Father, Holy Spirit, Son. And again, the spirit is there called the spirit of the Father's Son.

There it is. There's a phrase, not even a clause, no verb, the spirit of his Son, the spirit of the Father's Son. Romans 8 simply says the spirit of adoption, the spirit of sonship.

God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, as I said. Hebrews 9:14, how much more, if the blood of bull and goats did their work, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God. This is the only place I know of in the Bible where the Holy Spirit is involved in the death of Jesus.

Christ, the blood of Christ, the sacrificial death of the Son of God, through the eternal Spirit. There is a minority exegesis. Philip Hughes, whom I greatly respect, thinks that's the divine nature of Christ.

But the majority and historical exegesis says, no, it's the Holy Spirit. As William Lane says in his great commentary on Hebrews, the part that the Holy Spirit plays in Jesus' sacrifice renders it an absolute sacrifice, putting to an end all the other sacrifices. You might say, and I'm coining this, it comes to me right now, it is the sacrifice of sacrifices that makes legitimate, Hebrews 9:15, all the previous sacrifices, and brings them to a screeching halt, and makes it God's will such that we there should be no more sacrifices.

The blood of Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself up to God. In context, it has to be the Father. There's the Trinity again.

So this pattern just recurs in all the different writers, 1 Peter 1:1 and 2. To those chosen, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient and be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1:1 and 2. To be obedient in this context, as frequently in Peter, as sometimes in Paul, means to be obedient to the gospel is to obey the gospel. It is a command. So it's talking about to believe in Christ and be sprinkled with his blood.

The Father's foreknowledge, the Spirit's sanctification, in this case, initial, definitive, and the blood of the Son sprinkles those who are obedient, that is, who obey the gospel, who believe the gospel. If you study the words obey, obedient, disobey, disobedience in 1 Peter, you find that some of the time, a good portion of the time, it speaks of faith and unbelief. Not always.

Of course, it's context-dependent, as always. 1 John 4:13 and 14, the Father has given us of his Spirit, or just say God has, and we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent the Son as the world's Savior. I might prefer the translation, the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

This is that Christian standard Bible. You have the Spirit, you have the Father and the Son. Again, within two verses, or how about Jude 20 and 21, we quoted it earlier, but you, dear friends, as you build yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting expectantly for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life.

Praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourself in the love of God, obviously the Father, because he said alongside the Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ. Once again, a triadic pattern.

Revelation 1:4 and 5, right out of the box, you get this pattern. Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who was, and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Obviously, Christ, the one on the throne is the Father. The seven Spirits before his throne is a way of referring to the Holy Spirit, and that is a common understanding of the seven Spirits before the throne.

The early Christians, so we saw seven New Testament passages from six different writers, inspired writers who demonstrated this threefold, three, threeness pattern, this triadic pattern. The early Christians never wavered from the Bible's understanding that God is one. Their theological challenge was combining that truth with something new, namely the worship of Jesus Christ.

The early Christians worshiped him before they understood the doctrine of the Trinity. Worshiping Christ as Lord implied his deity. We'll see it later when we actually do a system and systematize the doctrine of the Trinity.

God the Father is God, here are the proofs. God the Son is God, here are the proofs. The Holy Spirit is God, and under the deity of Christ, we'll see he is the object of devotion, and prayers, and doxologies, and worship.

It's a wonderful proof of the fact that he is God. Worshipping Christ as Lord implied his deity. The Christians related to him who died and rose again to save them as believing sinners, creatures relate to their God.

How could they worship Jesus while simultaneously holding to their settled belief in God's unity? This task was complicated, and ironically, it was helped along its way by false teachings concerning the person of Christ, to which the church responded to those false teachings. That is, the history of the doctrine of the Trinity, along with the history of the doctrine of Christ, is controversial theology. God, in his providence, led the church to respond to false teaching with the truth, with good teaching, but it was prodded along this trajectory by the errors, even the heresies.

Therefore, it took a few centuries for the church to crystallize the doctrine of the Trinity. I go to a remarkable source, the best for patristic theology, J. N. D. Kelly, the famous Anglican historical theologian and church historian, *Early Christian Doctrines*, J. N. D. Kelly. Page 83 of his book.

The classical creeds of Christendom opened with a declaration of belief in one God, maker of heaven and earth. The monotheistic idea, grounded in the religion of Israel, loomed large in the minds of the earliest fathers. Though not reflected in the text of the theologians.

You're not going to see a systematic presentation of the Trinity that you find at Chalcedon, for example, where the Nicene Creed is polished, finished, given its final form. Though not reflective theologians, they were fully conscious that it marked the dividing line; the unity of God marked the dividing line between the church and paganism. According to the shepherd of Hermas, an apostolic father, the first commandment is, quote, to believe that God is one who created and established all things, bringing them into existence out of non-existence, close quote.

It was he who by, "his invisible and mighty power and great wisdom created the universe and by his glorious purpose clothed his creation with comeliness and by his strong word fixed the heavens and founded the earth above the waters." He may not be a reflective theologian, but he's a good writer, I'll tell you that. For Clement of Alexandria, God is the Father and creator of the entire cosmos.

For Barnabas, another apostolic father, and the Didache, he's our maker. His omnipotence and universal sovereignty were acknowledged, for he was the Lord Almighty, a biblical expression occurring in the book of Revelation, for example, the Lord who governs the whole universe, the master of all things. The fathers said these kinds of things.

The title Almighty connoted God's all-pervading control and sovereignty over reality, just as Father referred primarily to his role as creator and author of all things. These ideas derive almost exclusively from the Bible and latter-day Judaism, rarely from contemporary philosophy. Though sometimes, especially in the apologists, the early defenders of the faith, they used secular thought, which is what Paul does in the book of Acts a couple of times.

Justin Martyr, around 100 to around 165, c. stands for the Latin circa, and it means around. We don't know his exact dates, but those are the estimates that are given, approximately 100 to 165.

In Justin, the oneness, transcendence, and creative role of God are asserted in language strongly colored by the Platonizing Stoicism of his day. So he's steeped in the Greek philosophy, and it shows. It was apparently his sincere belief that the Greek thinkers had access to the. That's how he acknowledges the truth in them.

It's probably good apologetics. Now we know it's error, but in its day, he sincerely said that. So he says God is everlasting, ineffable, without a name, changeless, impassable, and ingenerate.

A technical term stressing his unique unoriginateness in contrast to creatures. It's Greek. He's also creator of the universe, maker and father of all things, himself above being.

He's the cause of all existence, and Marcion, the famous Gnostic heretic that attacked the church, who was a bright fellow, was wrong in drawing a distinction between God and the Demiurge. Gnosticism said that God did not have direct contact with the world. There were these intermediate beings, sometimes called Demiurges.

We have learned, he states, that being good, God created all things; this is Justin, in the beginning, out of formless matter. This was the teaching of Plato's Timaeus, which Justin was supposed to be akin to, and borrowed from, that contained in Genesis. We applaud Justin's heart, and even his mind.

Oh, he's got some of his stuff mixed up. Thanking the Greeks borrowed from the Bible. For Plato, of course, pre-existent matter was eternal, but it's improbable Justin acquiesced in this dualistic conclusion.

It's more likely he regarded the heaven and earth, which according to Moses had been created first, as the material out of which God formed his cosmos. A further important point he made was that in creating and sustaining the universe, God used his logos, his word, as his instrument. The other apologists were in line with Justin, although they were more definite regarding creation ex nihilo, out of nothing.

Tatian does that, as Athenagoras and Theophilus of Antioch do. I don't need to give all those quotes. Irenaeus comes later, but with Irenaeus, so the apologists, early defenders of the faith, not great theologians, readers of the Bible, believers of the Bible, knowledgeable in philosophy, that's their world, and trying to bring the two together in defending the faith.

Irenaeus is regarded as the first true Christian theologian, a real thinker who made some remarkable conclusions. With Irenaeus, the affirmation of God as one and as creator assumed special prominence. His task was different from that of the apologist, being to rebut the Gnostic theory of a hierarchy of eons descending from an unknowable supreme God with its corollary of a gulf between him and the creator or demiurge.

That's their cosmology, okay? Unknowable God, a whole hierarchy of these eons, these created beings, with a great gulf between him and the God who created, the creator God of the Old Testament. They didn't have a high view of the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, Marcion said it was from the demiurge, it wasn't from God.

God was responsible for the New Testament, except he took out places where it looked like God, where it presented God as creator. My word, he did text, he did content criticism of the New Testament. Socrates.

Should I read you a little bit of... Irenaeus is just attacking that notion strongly. The one they call the demiurge is God; that's what he says. Blasphemously, they describe him as an abortive product.

We know there's nothing above or after him, since he alone is God, alone Lord, alone creator, alone Father, alone contains all things and bestows existence on them. The first article of the faith he explained, Irenaeus did, is, quote, God the Father, increate and unengendered, invisible, one and the only deity, creator of the universe. He was huge, along with Paul, in saying the creator is the redeemer.

Think of Colossians 1, the Christ-him, all right? The one who has first place in the creation because he was the Father's agent in creation, has first place in redemption because he's the firstborn from the dead. That is a vital connection between the two, because the redeemer, Jesus Christ, is the creator, the agent of the Father's creation in the first place. He is God incarnate, and Irenaeus saw that, and he went to battle over that.

His famous book is called *Against Heresies*, and you're seeing his target right here. Christ's own words imply that the world has but one fabricator and that he is identical to the God proclaimed by the law and the prophets, the unity of the testaments, and the unity of God's story, if you will. He taught that God exercises his creative activity through his word and his wisdom or Spirit, word, Son, wisdom, Spirit, and was a firm believer in creation, *ex nihilo*, out of pointing out that men indeed cannot make anything out of nothing, but only out of material already before them.

I think of Spurgeon. My pastor, Van Lees, quotes Spurgeon quite often, and Spurgeon kind of got excited talking about, oh man, can you think you could create a fly? You can't create an insect, you know, talking about the creator-creature distinction. It's beautiful.

He could have been Irenaean in doing that, although I don't think so. Men, human beings, can only make out of material already before them. God is superior to men in this prime aspect, that he himself furnished the material for his creation, although it had no previous existence.

To establish these principles, Irenaeus appeals, in addition to scripture, to our natural reason. Creative things must necessarily draw the commencement of their existence from some first cause. This sounds like Aristotle, and God is the commencement of all.

I should say Aristotle sounds like Irenaeus, of course. He comes from no one, and all things come from him. Among all things is included what we call the world, and in the world, man.

So, this world has also been created by God. Again, he delights in exposing the contradiction involved in postulating a series of emanations between the unknowable God and the world of greater degrees of divinity. Quote, by the very reasoning by which they, Gnostics, strive to show that there is a Pleroma, that's this intermediary business, or God above the creator of heaven and earth, it will be possible to maintain that there is another Pleroma above the Pleroma, another again above that, and above Bythos, another ocean of divinity, and thus their doctrine falling off *ad infinitum*.

He's arguing, he's using the logical argument to infinity to get them. They will always be required to conceive of other Pleiomata, and other Bythi, that's the plural of those words. In any case, every subordinate emanation must share the nature of its principle, but the very notion of Godhead excludes the plurality of gods.

Either there must be one God who contains all things and has made every creature according to his will, or there must be many indeterminate creatures or gods, small g, each beginning and ending at his place in the series. But in this case, we shall have to acknowledge that none of them is God, for each of them will be defective in comparison with the rest, and the title Almighty will be reduced to naught. The demiurge of Gnosticism cannot be God since he has another superior to himself.

He's arguing for the superiority of God to all things, and if you've got this series of reduced divinities, none of them are God because there's always one greater. Oh my word, the church's faith, the doctrine of one God, the Father and creator, form the background and indisputable premise of the church's faith. Inherited from Judaism, it was her bulwark against pagan polytheism, Gnostic emanationism, and Marcionite dualism.

The problem for theology was to integrate with it intellectually the fresh data of the specifically Christian revelation. Reduced to their simplest, these were the convictions that God had made himself known in the person of Jesus. Excuse me.

Here's the new data that must be correlated with the unity of God. Two convictions. God had made himself known in the person of Jesus the Messiah, raising him from the dead and offering salvation to men through him, and that he had poured out his Holy Spirit upon the church.

Even at the New Testament stage, ideas about Christ's pre-existence and creative role were beginning to take shape, and a profound, if often obscure, awareness of the activity of the Spirit in the church was emerging. The Bible itself did not put these truths into a coherent church. The church had to wait for a few centuries in order to do so, and I'm glad they did because fending off the heresies was one way God kind of led them to the truth, but it wasn't simple.

We'll see there are different formulations, and some of the early fathers made good moves, but a principle of historical theology is it is unwise and even unfair to judge earlier writers by later formulations. So Tertullian, who made great progress, doesn't pass muster according to a technical, detailed study of Nicaea and Chalcedon, but it's not fair to do that. It simply isn't fair to hold him to later formulations and vocabulary.

The East and the West couldn't get together on vocabulary, and when Athanasius showed a humble spirit, that helped kind of broker a deal that enabled the fathers of East and West to agree because they were defining the same terms very differently, and they looked at each other with askance, because their own definition of the other's viewpoint, other's terms, led them to faulty conclusions, and vice versa. Justin Martyr, still. On several occasions, Justin coordinates the three persons, sometimes quoting formulae derived from baptism and the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, other times echoing official catechetical teachings.

Thus, each countered the charge of atheism brought against Christians. Christians were atheists because they wouldn't worship the Roman gods or the emperor. Just offer sacrifice to the emperor, and we will harm you.

Many Christians died rather than do that. Justin countered the atheistic charge by pointing to the veneration they paid to the Father, the Son, and the prophetic Spirit. Indeed, references to the Holy Spirit or the prophetic spirit abound in Justin Martyr's writings, and although he was often hazy about the relation of his function to those of the Logos, the attempt he made to extract testimony to his existence as a third divine being from Plato's writings, there that goes again, prove he regarded the two as really distinct.

And again, early fathers and apologists. Again, we give the apologists credit for worshiping the Son and for beginning to think about these things, right? And for calling the Son the Logos as John 1 does, and 1 John 1 and Revelation 19, and to begin to think about these things. Yet, the apologists, as compared with their thought about the Logos, appear to have been extremely vague as to the exact status and role of the spirit.

I would say, give them a break. It's very hard to do that. His essential function, in their eyes, would seem to have been the inspiration of the prophets.

That makes sense according to the New Testament, doesn't it? Developing this, Justin interprets Isaiah 11:2, which we read in our service of worship Sunday morning. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him as indicating that with the coming of Christ, prophecy would cease among the Jews. Henceforth, the Spirit would be Christ's spirit, and he would bestow his gifts and grace upon Christians.

Hence, it is he who is the source of the illumination and makes Christianity the supreme philosophy. That's exactly how the apologists presented it, the supreme philosophy given by God, because that was their context. They were philosophers addressing philosophers.

There can be no doubt the apologist thought was highly confused. They were very far from having worked out the threefold pattern of the church's faith into a coherent scheme. In this connection, it's noteworthy that Justin did not assign the Holy Spirit any role in the incarnation.

Sometimes, they say the son was responsible for the son becoming incarnate. Like other divine pre-Nicene fathers, before Nicaea 325, like other pre-Nicene fathers, he understood the divine spirit and power of the Most High, mentioned in Luke 1:35, not as a reference to the Holy Spirit, but as the logos, the pre-incarnate word or son, whom he envisioned and envisaged as entering the womb of the Blessed Virgin and acting as the agent of his own incarnation. In spite of incoherencies, however, the liniments of a Trinitarian doctrine are clearly discernible already in the apologists.

Remarkable. The spirit was for them the spirit of God. Like the word, he shared a divine nature.

Being in Athenagoras' words, an effluence from the deity. Although much of Justin's language about him as a sub-personal ring, it becomes more personal when he speaks of the prophetic spirit. And there is no escaping the personal implications contained in his pleas that Plato borrowed his conception of a third one from Moses and that the pagan custom of erecting statues of Cor at springs was inspired by the scriptural picture of the spirit moving upon the waters.

That's enough. Sort of a concluding word for the apologist of whom Justin is regarded as the chief. Thus, the image with which the apologist worked, that is, namely, that of a man putting forth his thought and his spirit in external activity, enabled them to recognize, however dimly, the plurality in the Godhead, and also to show how the word and the spirit, while really manifested in the world of space and time, could also abide within the being of the Father.

That essential unity with him, their essential unity with him, was unbroken. Irenaeus, back to the major theologian of the early church, we don't know when he was born, somewhere between 120-140. Likewise, good grief, we have better for his death, better estimate, 203 or 204.

The great opponent of the Gnostics. I had a professor who said, back in seminary, if we could go back into the first century and look, or second century, and look around, there might have been more Gnostics than Christians. That's how influential it was, and the Greek thought, the Greek philosophy was.

The theologian who sums up the thought of the second century, and dominated Christian orthodoxy before origin, was Irenaeus. He was, for his part, deeply indebted to the apologist. Although he was more of a self-conscious churchman than

they, more openly attached to, and more ready to frame the Christian's threefold rule of faith, the framework of his thinking remained substantially the same as theirs.

Thus, he approached God from two directions, envisaging him both as he manifests in his intrinsic being, and also as he manifests himself in the economy, in his created world, and redemptive history. That is the ordered process of his self-disclosure. We would say, as the imminent Trinity, and the, I've lost the word, the revealed Trinity.

It'll come up if I don't try, perhaps. From the former point of view, God the Father of all things, ineffably one, and yet containing himself from all eternity, his word and wisdom. In making himself known, however, or in exerting himself for creation and redemption, God extrapolates or manifests these as the Son and the Spirit.

They are his hands, famous, Irenaeus is famous for calling the Son and the Spirit the hands of God, the vehicles or forms of his self-revelation. Thus, Irenaeus could claim that by the very essence and nature of his being, there is but one God, while at the same time, "according to the economy of our redemption, there are both father and Son." And he might easily have added Spirit.

Where he was in advance of the apologists, from whom he also diverged in his deliberate avoidance of philosophical jargon, was A, in his firmer grasp and more explicit statement of his notion of the economy, there it is, the economical Trinity, eminent Trinity, that is, God in himself as three persons, and the economic Trinity, the Trinity revealed in creation, providence, and redemption, for example. But Irenaeus improved on the apologist in having a greater grasp of the economy, and B, in the much fuller recognition he gave to the place of the spirit in the triadic or threefold scheme. We previously noticed Irenaeus's emphasis on the uniqueness and transcendence of the father, the author of whatever exists.

Nevertheless, in the quote, being altogether mind and word, God utters what he thinks and thinks what he utters. His thinking is his word, and his word is his intelligence, and the Father is that intelligence comprising all things, close quote. More briefly, "since God is rational, he created whatever was made by his word."

Here we have the conception, so familiar from the apologist, of the logos, or word of God's imminent rationality, which he extrapolates in creation, et cetera. Unlike them, however, Irenaeus rejects the favorite analogy between God's utterance of his word and the declaration of human thought and speech on the ground that he is identical with his word. God is identical with his word.

In fact, taking his cue from Isaiah 53, eight, sub to it, who shall explain his generation? He repudiates all attempts to explore the process by which the word was begotten or put forth. He also throws into much more striking relief that they,

then they, then the apologist, he also throws into more striking relief than the apologist, the word's coexistence with the Father from all eternity. And here's a man who definitely believes in one God, so we can see he's a real thinker, he's wrestling, doesn't have a polished doctrine of the Trinity formulated, but who, he has the rudiments of it, doesn't he? He doesn't seem to have taught a doctrine of eternal generation, however, which is a later understanding.

Irenaeus certainly conceived of the word's relationship to the Father as eternal, but he had not reached the position of picturing it as generation, generation. With the Son, Irenaeus closely associated the Spirit, arguing if God was rational and therefore had his logos, he was also spiritual and also had his Spirit. Here he showed himself a follower of Theophilus rather than Justin, identifying the Spirit with the divine wisdom and thereby fortifying his doctrine of the third person with a secure scriptural basis.

Thus he states that, "his word and his wisdom, his Son and his Spirit are always by him." And that it was to them that God addressed the words, let us make man in our image after our likeness. That is wisdom, that is the spirit, was with him before the world was made, he finds proved by Solomon's statements in Proverbs 8, among other places.

"By wisdom God established the earth," also Proverbs chapter 3, 3:19 and 8:22 and following. Thus the word and the spirit collaborated in the work of creation, being as it were God's two hands again. This image was intended to bring out the indissoluble unity between the creative Father and the organs of his activity.

It was the function of the word to bring creatures into existence and of the Spirit to order and adorn them. So he writes, quote, it is the word who established, who establishes things, that is gives them body and bestows the reality of being upon them, and the Spirit who gives order and form to these different powers. Creation, of course, does not exhaust the function of the word and spirit; it is by the word and the word alone that the Father reveals himself.

"He is ineffable but the word declares him to us." The Johnine basis of this theology is apparent, and it finds characteristic expression in statements such as, quote, the son reveals the knowledge of the father through his own manifestation, for the son's manifestation is the making known of the father, and quote, what is invisible in the son is the father, and what is visible in the father is the son, close quote. So in the Old with the patriarchs.

In the incarnation of the word, hitherto himself invisible to human eyes, he became invisible and disclosed for the first time that image of God in the likeness of which man was originally made. As for the spirit, it was he, quote, through whom the

prophets prophesied, and the spirits learned the things of God, and the righteous were led into the way of righteousness, and who at the end of the age was poured out in a new way, renewing man unto God, close quote. He is a good thinker, is he not? Oh my, part of this is that some of the early Christians didn't have time to think. Although we could have lost certain writings perhaps, they were dodging lions and trying to survive.

But he was a bishop and he had some time in between golf and flying his plane, he liked to anyway engage in a little reading and writing as well. Our sanctification is indeed wholly the work of the spirit, for "it is the spirit of the father which purifies a man and raises him to the life of God." Naturally, the son is fully divine, quote, the father is God, and the son is God, for whatever is begotten of God is God.

The spirit, too, although Irenaeus nowhere expressly designates him God, clearly ranked as divine in his eyes, for he was God's Spirit, ever welling up from his being. Thus we have Irenaeus's vision of the Godhead, the most complete and most explicitly Trinitarian to be met with before Tertullian. Its second-century traits stand out clearly, particularly its representation of the triad by the imagery not of three co-equal persons, that was the analogy to be employed by the fathers after Nicaea, but rather of a single personage, the Father, who is the Godhead itself with his mind or rationality and his wisdom.

The Western view is, Nicaea promotes the Western view of Augustine, three co-equal persons, the notion of the single personage, the Father, being the source, not in a way of creation or subordination, but of deity, is Eastern, and is Eastern in its, or to this day it is eastern, eastern orthodoxy. The motive for this approach, common to all Christian thinkers of this period, was their intense concern for the fundamental tenet of monotheism, but its unavoidable corollary was a certain obscuring of the position of the Son and the Spirit as persons, to use the jargon of later theology, prior to their generation or emission. Because of its emphasis on the economy, the world God made, not pre-creation, eternity, but creative history, this type of thought has been given the label economic trinitarianism.

The description is apt and convenient, so long as it is not assumed that Irenaeus's recognition of and preoccupation with the Trinity revealed in the economy prevented him from recognizing also the mysterious three in oneness of the inner life of the Godhead. The whole point of the great illustrative usage which he, like his predecessors employed, that of a man with his intellectual and spiritual functions, was to bring out, however inadequately, the fact that there are real distinctions in the imminent being of the unique indivisible Father, and that while these were only fully manifested in the economy, they were actually there from all eternity. That is a good place for us to conclude this lecture.

We'll pick it up next time with third-century trinitarianism.