

Dr. Robert Peterson, Theology Proper, Session 5, Trinity, Augustine and the Council of Constantinople. There is One God

© 2024 Robert Peterson and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson and his teaching on Theology Proper or God. This is session 5, Trinity, Augustine, and the Council of Constantinople. There is One God.

Welcome back to our lectures on the Doctrine of God or Theology Proper. Let us pray before we do anything else. Gracious Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we bow before you.

We acknowledge that you alone are God. We rejoice to take our place as your creatures. We acknowledge our sins.

We glorify our Redeemer Christ and the Holy Spirit who opened up our hearts to the gospel. Bless us and get honor to your name. Through these lectures we pray.

In Jesus' name, amen. I twice yesterday mentioned the name Sibelius. I had a momentary block.

And rather than say something wrong, I just didn't say anything. I thought the hearers might need clarification. And indeed, you probably do.

Sibelius, as it turns out, and as I remember now after looking it up, is one of the prime representatives of modalistic monarchism or modalism, which, as you remember, is an effort to emphasize the unity of God that ended up in false teaching by saying, yes, there's a Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but that they don't exist simultaneously, but rather successively through history. The one God now appears as the Father in Old Testament times, in the Gospels, in the earthly life of Jesus. He appears as the Son, no longer as the Father.

That's what I mean by successive. After Pentecost, the one God appears only as the Holy Spirit. That is a false teaching because indeed there's one God and there are three who are God, but these three are God simultaneously.

Sibelius is a very famous modalist. As a matter of fact, so famous, another name for modalism is Sibelianism. We are concluding our survey, our historical reconnaissance, if you will, of the doctrine of the Trinity, and we're up to the crown of the West, which is Saint Augustine.

While Augustine's exposition of Trinitarian orthodoxy is scriptural throughout, his conception of God as an absolute being, simple and indivisible, transcending the categories, forms its ever-present background. So, in contrast to the tradition that made the Father its starting point, that is, the Eastern tradition, he begins with the divine nature itself. It is this simple immutable nature or essence that he prefers essence to substance, for the latter suggests a subject with attributes, whereas God, for Augustine, is identical with his attributes, which is the Trinity.

It's this simple, immutable nature or essence that is the Trinity. The unity of the Trinity is thus set squarely in the foreground, subordinationism of every kind being rigorously excluded, Augustine affirmed, where whatever is affirmed of God is affirmed equally of each of the three persons since it is one in the same substance which constitutes each of them. Not only is the Father not greater than the Son in respect of divinity, but Father and Son together are not greater than the Holy Spirit, and no single person of the three is less than the Trinity itself.

That is a true doctrine of one person, one God in three persons, and three equal persons constituting the one God. Several corollaries follow from this emphasis on the oneness of the divine nature. First, Father, Son, and Spirit are not three separate individuals in the same way as three human beings who belong to one genus, the human race.

Rather, each of the divine persons, from the point of view of substance, is identical with the others or with the divine substance itself. In this way, God is not correctly described as Victorinus had described him as threefold, triplex, a word which suggested to Augustine the conjunction of three individuals, but as a trinity, and the persons can be said severally to indwell or co-inhere with one another. Secondly, whatever belongs to the divine nature as such should, in strictness of language, be expressed in the singular since that nature is unique.

As the latter Athanasian creed, which is Augustinian through and through, puts it, while each of the persons is increate, uncreated, infinite, omnipotent, eternal, etc., there are not three increates, infinity, omnipotence, eternal, etc., but one. Thirdly, the trinity possesses a single, indivisible action and a single will. Its operation is inseparable.

In relation to the contingent order, the three persons act as one principle, and as they are inseparable, so they operate inseparably. This is wonderful orthodoxy from a brilliant man who loved the Lord. In his own words, where there is no difference of natures, there is none of wills either.

In illustration of this, Augustine argues that the theophanies recorded in the Old Testament should not be regarded, as the earlier patristic tradition had tended to

regard them, as appearances exclusively of the Son. Sometimes they can be attributed to the Son, or to the Spirit, sometimes to the Father, and sometimes to all three. On occasion, it is impossible to decide to which of the three to describe them.

Lastly, Augustine faces the obvious difficulty that his theory suggests: It seems to obliterate the several roles of the three persons. His answer is that while it is true that the Son, as distinct from the Father, was born, suffered, and rose again, it remains equally true that the Father cooperated with the Son in bringing about the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection.

It was fitting for the Son, however, in virtue of his relation to the Father, to be manifested and made visible. In other words, since each of the persons possesses a divine nature in a particular manner, it is proper to attribute to each of them, in the external operation of the Godhead, the role which is appropriate to him in virtue of its origin. It is a case of what later Western theologians were to describe as appropriation.

This leads us to the distinction of the persons, which Augustine sees as grounded in their mutual relations within the Godhead. While they are identical and considered as a divine substance, the Father is distinguished as Father because he begets the Son, and the Son is distinguished as Son because he is begotten. The Spirit, similarly, is distinguished from Father and Son in as much as bestowed by them.

He is their common gift, being a kind of communion of Father and Son, or else the love which they together pour into our hearts. He is that love. The question then arises as to what, in fact, the three are.

Augustine recognizes that they are traditionally designated persons, but is clearly unhappy about the term. Probably it conveyed a suggestion of separate individuals to him. If in the end he consents to adopt the current usage, it is because of the necessity of affirming the distinction of the three against modalism.

The formula three persons were employed, he said, not so that that might be said, but so as to avoid having to say nothing at all. And with a deep sense of the inadequacy of human language. His own positive theory was the original, and for the history of Western Trinitarianism, a highly important one, that the three are real or subsistent relations.

His motive in formulating it was to escape a cunning dilemma posed by Aryan critics. Basing themselves on the Aristotelian scheme of categories, they contended that the distinction within the Godhead, distinctions within the Godhead if they existed, must be classified under the category either of substance or of accident. The latter was out of the question, God having no accidents.

The former led to the conclusion that the three are independent substances. I should clarify, for Aristotle, the great thinker, who through especially Thomas Aquinas, influenced his two-week award, Medieval Western Theology, distinguished between substance and accidents. The substance of this pulpit is its essence.

It partakes of pulpit substance, pulpit essence, that which makes a pulpit a pulpit. The accidents of this pulpit are its precise shape, its color, its weight, and so forth, right? But a fish does not partake of pulpit essence, right? Even a chair doesn't, and we could actually debate exactly what does, but you understand that essence or substance is what is essential to something, and accidents are not essential. They are the characteristics that qualify that essence or substance.

Yes, we're talking about the background of the Roman Catholic understanding of the mass, which is a trans-substantiation, that is, a change in the essence of the bread and wine, so that they become spiritually the very body and blood of Christ. The accidents, the bread and wine before our eyes, and that we touch and consume, don't change, but miraculously and invisibly, the essence changes, the substance, so to speak. That is the Roman Catholic doctrine, which I do not endorse, but I'm just explaining the Aristotelian distinction between essence or substance and accidents.

The Wiley-Aryans thought they had the Orthodox over a barrel with this business. If the persons, if the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist, they've got to be either substances or accidents. That's all there is.

There can't be accidents. God has no accidents. He's God.

If you say they're substances, it leads to the conclusion that there are three independent substances, which sound to the Aryans like tri-theism, poly-theism, and multiple gods. Augustine rejects both autonomists, pointing out that the concept of relation still remains. The three, he goes on to claim, are relations as real and eternal as the factors of begetting, being begotten, and proceeding, or being bestowed within the Godhead which gave rise to them, which give rise to them.

Father, Son, and Spirit are thus relations in the sense that whatever each of them is, he is in relation to one or both of the others. None of them is a separate individual. They are part of the tri-unity of the Godhead.

To modern people, unless schooled in technical philosophy, the notion of relations, above, to the right, greater than, etc., as having a real substance sounds strange, although they're usually prepared to consider their objectivity, that is, that they exist in their own right independent of the observer. To Augustine, it was more familiar, for both Plotinus and Porphyry had taught it. The advantage of the theory from his

point of view was that by enabling him to talk meaningfully about God at a new language level, it made it possible simultaneously to affirm the unity and plurality of the deity without lapsing into paradox.

Third, Augustine was always puzzled about explaining what the procession of the Spirit is or wherein it differs from the Son's generation. He was certain, however, that the Spirit is the mutual love of Father and Son, the consubstantial bond that unites them. His consistent teaching, therefore, was that he is the Spirit of both alike, as he put it.

The Holy Spirit is not the Spirit of one of them, but of both. The Holy Spirit is not. Thus, he believed it to be the clear deliverance of Scripture.

Thus, in relation to the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son form a single principle, inevitably so since the relation of both to him is identical, and where there's no difference of relation, their operation is inseparable. Hence Augustine, more unequivocally than any of the Western Fathers before, taught the doctrine of the double procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, Latin *filioque*, *filio*, son, *quae*, and. The important *filioque* clause was one thing that separated the East from the West.

The East rejected it. Remember, its emphasis on the starting point and emphasis on the Father as the Godhead. I'm not saying either Eastern or Western Fathers are unorthodox.

I'm saying they did it differently. Answering the objection that since both the Son and Spirit derive from the Father, there should be two Sons, he stated, the Son is from the Father, the Spirit also is from the Father, but the former is begotten, the latter proceeds. So the former is Son of the Father from whom he is begotten, but the latter is the Spirit of both Father and Son, since he proceeds from both.

The Father is the author of the Spirit's procession because he begot such a Son, and in begetting him made him also the source from which the Spirit proceeds. The point is that since the Father has given all he has to the Son, he has given him the power to bestow the Spirit. It should not be inferred, he warns us, that the Spirit has, therefore, two sources or principles.

On the contrary, the action of the Father and Son in bestowing the Spirit is common, as is the action of all three persons in creation. Further, despite the double procession, the Father remains the primordial source, inasmuch as it is he from whom the Son derives his capacity to bestow the Spirit. We continue that kind of thing by talking about the first, second, and third person.

We affirm unity, we affirm equality, but we give the Father sort of primacy within the Holy Trinity, as I would say scripture does, as we will see. We come lastly to what is probably Augustine's most original contribution to Trinitarian theology, his use of analogies drawn from the structure of the human soul. The function of these, it should be noted, is not so much to demonstrate that God is Trinity.

On his view, Revelation provides ample assurance of that, as to deepen our understanding of the mystery of the absolute oneness and yet real distinction of the three. Strictly speaking, according to Augustine, there are vestiges of the Trinity everywhere, for insofar as creatures exist at all, they exist by participating in the ideas of God. Hence, everything must reflect, however faintly, the Trinity which created it.

For its veritable image, however, a man should look primarily into himself. For scripture represents God as saying, let us, that is the three, make man in our image and our likeness. Even the outer man, that is the man considered in his sensible nature, his senses dominating, offers a kind of resemblance to the Trinity.

The process of perception, for example, yields three distinct elements which are at the same time closely united and of which the first in a sense begets the second, while the third binds the other two together. That is the external object, the mind's sensible representation of it, and the intention or act of focusing the mind. Again, when the external object is removed, we have a second Trinity, much superior because it is located entirely within the mind and, therefore, of one and the same substance.

That is the memory impression, the internal memory image, and the intention or setting of the will. For the actual image, however, of the triune godhead, we should look to the inner man or soul. And in the inner man, in his rational nature or men's, which is the loftiest and most godlike part of him.

It has often been assumed that Augustine's principle Trinitarian analogy in the De Trinitate, concerning the Trinity, is disclosed by his analysis of the idea of love, his starting point in the Johannine dictum that God is love, into the lover, the object loved, and the love which unites Father, Son, and Spirit, or strives to unite them. Yet, while expounding this analogy, he himself reckons that it affords only an initial step toward our understanding of the Trinity, at best a momentary glimpse of it. His discussion of it is quite brief and forms no more than a transition to what he considers his all-important analogy, based on the inner man.

That is, the mind's activity as directed upon itself, or better still, upon God. This analogy fascinated him all his life so that in such early work as *The Confessions*, we find him pondering the triad of being, knowing, and willing. In the *De Trinitate*, he

elaborates it at length in three successive stages, the resulting trinities being a. the mind, its knowledge of itself and love of itself, b. memory, or more properly, the mind's latent knowledge of itself, understanding, that is, its apprehension of itself in the light of the eternal reason and the will or love of itself by which this process of self-knowledge is set in motion, and c. the mind as remembering, knowing, and loving God himself.

Each of these, in different degrees, reveals three real elements which, according to Augustine's metaphysical personality, are coordinated and therefore equal and at the same time, essentially one. Each of them throws light on the mutual relations of the divine persons. It is the last of the three analogies, however, which Augustine deems most satisfactory.

The three factors disclosed in the second are not three lives but one life, not three minds but one mind, and consequently are not three substances but one substance. But he reasons that it is only when the mind has focused itself with all its powers on remembering, understanding, and loving on its creator that the image it bears of him, corrupted as it is by sin, can be fully restored. While dwelling at length on these analogies and drawing out their illustrative significance, Augustine has no illusions about their immense limitations.

In the first place, the image of God in man's mind is in any case a remote and imperfect one, a likeness indeed, but a far distant image. The image is one thing in the sun, another in the mirror. Secondly, while man's rational nature exhibits the trinities mentioned above, they are by no means identical with his being in the way in which the divine trinity constitutes the essence of the Godhead.

Whew! If you find this confusing, welcome to the human race. Welcome to the non-genius category. Wow! They represent faculties or attributes which the human being possesses, whereas the divine nature is perfectly simple.

It is one incapable of division. Thirdly, as a corollary from this, while memory, understanding, and will are his greatest Trinitarian reflection in the human mind, while memory, understanding, and will operate separately, the three persons mutually co-inhere, and their actions are one and indivisible. Lastly, whereas in the Godhead the three members of the trinity are persons, they are not so in the mind of man.

The image of the trinity is one person, but the supreme trinity itself is three persons, which is a paradox when one reflects that nevertheless, the three are more inseparably one than is the trinity in the mind. This discrepancy between the image and the trinity itself merely reminds us of the fact that the apostle has told us that

here on earth, we, quote, see in a mirror darkly. Afterward, and only afterward, we shall see face to face.

Woo! Augustine's work on those analogies is greatly respected and studied in different fields besides theology for its perceptiveness and creativity. But in the end, it seems that no analogy really works well. He admits it.

He admits it himself. But that was his crowning achievement. The Council of Constantinople produced the famous Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, often called the Nicene Creed.

The Nicene Creed of 325 was polished, finished, at Constantinople in 381. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed summarizes much of the father's progress in understanding the Trinity. Here is the creed.

I'm quoting a translation that appears in Robert Lethem's wonderful book on The Holy Trinity. And he in turn credits R. P. C. Hanson in *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God, the Arian Controversy, 318-381*, written in 1988. Here's the Nicene Creed, updated, finished, in light of the father's council at Constantinople.

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 from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things came into existence, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, from the heavens, and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became a man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and ascended into the heavens, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and there will be no end to his kingdom. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets, and in one holy, catholic, and apostolic church, we confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We wait for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming age.

Amen. We wrap up with a few comments. God is one being who has always existed as three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God cannot be divided, which is one aspect of divine simplicity. Therefore, each person is entirely God, and the entire God is in each person. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are of the same divine essence.

They're consubstantial. When the church fathers use the language of origin, the Father begets the Son, who's the only begotten. The Spirit proceeds or is sent from the Father and the Son.

They do not teach that the persons of a trinity are created beings. Instead, this language refers to the eternal relationships between the persons. God has always been the Father.

The Son has always been the Son of the Father. The Spirit has always proceeded from the Father and the Son. The relationships between the persons are eternal.

God has always been the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is no other God. Significantly, the Creed clarifies the church's teaching on the Holy Spirit.

It teaches the Spirit's personality when it says he spoke by the prophets. Only a person, not an impersonal force, could speak, and that is what the Spirit has done. The Creed also teaches the deity of the Holy Spirit.

First, it calls him by the divine name, Lord. Second, when it says the Holy Spirit is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, it accords him the worship due to God alone. Third, it ascribes to the Spirit the divine works of creation and redemption.

When it says, he is the life-giver, the one who gives physical life to the creation and spiritual life in redemption. We close our historical theological survey of the Trinity again with Saint Augustine, the foremost theologian of the early church, who shaped the development of Western Christianity. He is best known for *Confessions*, the *City of God*, and *On the Trinity*.

In the last of these, he distinguishes between use and enjoyment. We are to use or utilize the things God gives us as means in the end of glorifying him. But enjoyment pertains to God alone.

We're not to use him as a means to another end, for he is the highest end. Instead, we are to enjoy him and find fulfillment in him by loving and serving him, even in our use of other good things. Augustine's quotation from *On Christian Doctrine*, *De Doctrina*, which is a, he was a teacher of rhetoric before he was converted, and he repented of that.

He said he gave immoral lawyers tools to deceive people. But in *On Christian Doctrine*, he summarizes the belief of the Catholic small C, the universal church before the year 400 A.D., and not only so, he talks about hermeneutics very helpfully,

and then he also gives a section on homiletics, using his great experience as a teacher of rhetoric. It's a fascinating little work.

Here's a quotation from *On Christian Doctrine*. The true objects of enjoyment then are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are at the same time the Trinity, one being supreme above all and common to all who enjoy him. The Trinity, one God, of whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things.

Thus, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and each of these by himself is God, and at the same time, they are all one God, and each of them by himself is a complete substance, and yet they are all one substance. The Father is not the Son nor the Holy Spirit. The Son is not the Father nor the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not the Father, nor the Son, but the Father is only the Father. The Son is only Son, and the Holy Spirit is only the Holy Spirit. To all three belong the same eternity, the same unchangeableness, the same majesty, the same power, to which we can only say, Amen.

It's good to have a few geniuses on our side, isn't it? In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul says, look around you in church, there aren't many rich people, there aren't many really smart people. God chose the beggarly elements of this world to glorify himself, that we might only glory in the Lord, not in human strength or wealth or wisdom, as he quotes Jeremiah on that score. The Bible teaches that the living and true God is triune.

As we explore what this means, we will unpack seven statements. There is one God, number one. Number two, the Father is God.

Third, the Son is God. Fourth, the Spirit is God. Five, the Father, Son, and Spirit are inseparable but distinct.

Six, the Father, Son, and Spirit indwell each other. Seven, the Father, Son, and Spirit exist in unity and equality. Although the scriptures do not give us a full-blown doctrine of the Trinity, when you put those seven statements together, whew, they point us in that direction, shall we say.

Number one, there is one God. Both Testaments uniformly confess monotheism, the belief that there is only one God. Deuteronomy 6:4, and 5. Moses wrote, now this is the commandment, Deuteronomy 6:1, the statutes and the rules that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.

Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may not apply greatly, as the Lord the God of your fathers has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey. Deuteronomy 6, 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand.

Orthodox Judaism takes this verse literally, and you shall, they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorpost of your house, and on your gates. The meaning of course is, the scriptures are to be not only confessed, but lived in front of children, grandchildren, and so forth.

Deuteronomy 6:4, and 5 is our foundational text, as a matter of fact. Passages such as this one lay the foundation for the New Testament doctrine of the Trinity. Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Deuteronomy 6, although this passage concentrates on God's exclusivity, it implies his unity too. The Lord has confronted and defeated the so-called gods of Egypt in the plagues and exodus. Now through Moses, he calls upon the Israelites to acknowledge publicly that he, that is God, belongs to them.

Earlier, Moses had proclaimed God's uniqueness in 4:35 of Deuteronomy. To you, it was shown that you might know that the Lord is God. There is no other besides him, Deuteronomy 4:35.

In the midst of rampant ancient Near Eastern polytheism, in the midst of rampant ancient Near Eastern polytheism, Moses powerfully confesses the unity of God. Despite the claims of Canaanites, who worship Baal, Egyptians, who revere Ammon-Re and Babylonians, who are devoted to Marduk, Israel's God alone is God. There is no other.

Israel professes faith in the Lord alone, Deuteronomy 6:4 and 5. Israel is not only to profess monotheism, but to truly believe and practice it. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Verse 5. God's people must love him with all they are and all they have, and they must cherish God's words and impart them to their children in daily life, verses 6 and 7. James 2:14 through 26. Luther had difficulty with James, and in his table talk, which comes down to us not in altogether reliable form, he and Katie had to take students into the

home to help pay the bills, and they would gather around the table, and he would brag to them.

He would brag and tell stories and so forth, and they took his words as pearls of wisdom, and there were some pearls in there, but when he said sometimes he feels like throwing Jimmy into the fire, that is not among the pearls of wisdom. In truth, he never put James out of the canon, but he did place it toward the back of the New Testament because it spoke little of Christ, and that was his overarching theological principle, especially justification by faith was it was a theological principle, an ethical principle, a hermeneutical principle, even a canonical principle. James wasn't put out, but it was put toward the end.

Calvin, who regarded Luther as the apostle of the Reformation, all right, and would hardly ever speak against him in his commentary on James 2, Calvin says, whereas some have difficulty with this passage, not naming Luther, he says, I don't. If we give attention to the use of the language, then there's unharmony is not hard to find. Calvin is exactly right.

As a matter of fact, Paul sometimes uses the words in a similar way, but not usually it is true. So, whereas usually in Paul, faith means a heartfelt trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, in James 2:14 to 26, pistis or faith means a profession of faith. If a man says he has faith and has no words, can that faith save him? No, no.

The demons, they confess the unity of God, the demons say the shema, of which the beginning comes from Deuteronomy 6:4 and 5, 6, 4. That's not true faith; that is a profession. And whereas sometimes in Paul, especially viewing justification from the beginning of one's relationship to God, works are filthy rags held up to God that he might accept us. Not only in Paul, he teaches that also works sometimes.

As a matter of fact, in Ephesians 2:10, following 8 and 9, which emphasizes faith alone and grace alone, and all and in Titus, which says the same thing, grace alone, faith alone, works, works, works are important as evidence of true faith. In James 2, works are validating deeds that demonstrate the profession of faith is genuine. This is a good line, show me your faith without works and I will show you the validity of my profession of faith.

I will show you my faith by my works. Even like Abraham, and scandalously to the Jews, Rahab are examples of people who not only profess belief in Yahweh, Rahab, yes, but they live demonstrating their lives, validating their profession. Even justify is used differently in James.

It's more in keeping with Old Testament usage, which makes sense to me, an early Jewish Christian writer and epistle. Whereas for Paul, justify usually views the

beginning of salvation, James views it at the end, and God vouches for, vindicates, he justifies his people who have been saved by grace through faith but who have demonstrated it by their validating deeds. In any case, James writes to Jewish Christians who realize that the unity of God is a basic tenet of Judaism.

The book of James underlines that God is one, but also points out that simply confessing this vital truth is insufficient. It is necessary, it is a necessary but insufficient condition. James notes that even demons know there's only one God, and they certainly do not trust Jesus for salvation.

Nevertheless, that passage in its context is a New Testament confession in harmony with the Old Testament that God is one. As we did our historical theology reconnaissance, we saw the church always, the starting point was the unity of God. Tritheism was no option.

It was impossible. The difficulty was reconciling the worship of Jesus and even of the Spirit with the confession of the unity of God. It was not; the church wasn't tempted to say, well, there must be three gods or two or three gods.

No, impossible. One more passage before we take a break. 1 Timothy 2:5, and 6, Paul affirms, there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.

1 Timothy 2, 5, and 6. Paul declares the unity of God in concert with Old Testament teaching. Deuteronomy 4:35, Deuteronomy 6:4, as we saw. He then adds to it, presenting Jesus as the only mediator between God and people.

The living and true God makes himself known in his Son, who rescues all believers. He gave himself as a ransom for all. While affirming God's unity, the church holds that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Against modalism, the church teaches that there, these are not just three manifestations of his being, but that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God simultaneously, not successively. Can we talk about three modes? Yes, but the three modes constitute God. They not merely manifest God.

I remember reading a church doctrinal statement on their website, and it says, God exists as a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who reveal God. I don't think they were modalistic. But that is a modalistic statement.

It could be. They should have said, who are God and who reveal God, something like that. So, we have dealt with the first of our seven statements to build a doctrine of the eternity from the scriptures.

There is one God. Next time, we will see that indeed the Father is God and the Son and the Spirit.

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson and his teaching on Theology Proper or God. This is session 5, Trinity, Augustine and the Council of Constantinople. There is One God.