

The Trinity, The Dogma, The Contradictions
Part 5

In our fifth and final lesson on “The Trinity, The Dogma, The Contradictions” we will turn our focus on the topic of the evolution of the Trinity doctrine as taught by the Catholic Church.

(New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1965, Trinity, p299-300)

"Question of Continuity and Elemental Trinitarianism: From what has been seen thus far, the impression could arise that the Trinitarian dogma is in the last analysis a late 4th-century invention. In a sense, this is true; but it implies an extremely strict interpretation of the key words Trinitarian and dogma. Triadic Consciousness in the Primitive Revelation. The formulation "one God in three Persons" was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title the Trinitarian dogma. Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective; among the 2d-century Apologists, little more than a focusing of the problem as that of plurality within the unique Godhead. "

(New Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 13, page 1021, 1967)

"There is the recognition on the part of exegetes and Biblical theologians....that one should not speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualifications...New Testament exegesis is now accepted as having shown that not only the verbal idiom but even the patterns of thought characteristic of the patristic (church fathers) and councilian (church councils) developed would have been quite foreign to the mind and culture of the New Testament writers. The Trinitarian dogma is in the last analysis a late 4th century invention. "

[**Commentary:** Herein lies an amazing statement, “that one should not speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualifications”. The Apostles told us in 2 Corinthians 3:12 “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech”. Everything we have read in this study of the Trinitarian Doctrine has been the complete opposite of great plainness of speech.]

Article: Holy Ghost

**Heading: The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity
Tradition**

While corroborating and explaining the testimony of Scripture, Tradition brings more clearly before us the various stages of the evolution of this doctrine.

As early as the first century, St. Clement of Rome gives us important teaching about the Holy Ghost. His "Epistle to the Corinthians" not only tells us that the Spirit inspired and guided the

holy writers (8.1; 45.2); that He is the voice of Jesus Christ speaking to us in the Old Testament (22.1 sq.); but it contains further, two very explicit statements about the Trinity. In 46.6 (Funk, "Patres apostolici", 2nd ed., I,158), we read that "we have only one God, one Christ, one only Spirit of grace within us, one same vocation in Christ". In 58.2 (Funk, *ibid.*, 172), the author makes this solemn affirmation; zo gar ho theos, kai zo ho kyrios Iesous Christos kai to pneuma to hagian, he te pistis kai he elpis ton eklekton, oti . . . which we may compare with the formula so frequently met with in the Old Testament: zo kyrios. From this it follows that, in Clement's view, kyrios was equally applicable to ho theos (the Father), ho kyrios Iesous Christos, and to pneuma to hagian; and that we have three witnesses of equal authority, whose Trinity, moreover, is the foundation of Christian faith and hope.

The same doctrine is declared, in the second and third centuries, by the lips of the martyrs, and is found in the writings of the Fathers. St. Polycarp (d. 155), in his torments, thus professed his faith in the Three Adorable Persons ("Martyrium sancti Polycarpi" in Funk, *op. cit.*, I, 330): "Lord God Almighty, Father of Thy blessed and well beloved Son, Jesus Christ . . . in everything I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee by the eternal and celestial pontiff Jesus Christ, Thy well beloved Son, by whom, to Thee, with Him and with the Holy Ghost, glory now and for ever!"

St. Epipodius spoke more distinctly still (Ruinart, "Acta mart.", Verona edition, p. 65): "I confess that Christ is God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and it is fitting that I should give back my soul to Him Who is my Creator and my Redeemer."

Among the apologists, Athenagoras mentions the Holy Ghost along with, and on the same plane as, the Father and the Son. "Who would not be astonished", says he (A Plea for the Christians 10), "to hear us called atheists, us who confess God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Ghost, and hold them one in power and distinct in order [. . . ten en te henosei dynamin, kai ten en te taxei diairesin]?"

Theophilus of Antioch, who sometimes gives to the Holy Ghost, as to the Son, the name of Wisdom (*sophia*), mentions besides (To Autolycus I.7 and II.18) the three terms *theos*, *logos*, *sophia* and, being the first to apply the characteristic word that was afterwards adopted, says expressly (II.15) that they form a trinity (*trias*).

Irenæus looks upon the Holy Ghost as eternal (Against Heresies V.12.2), existing in God *ante omnem constitutionem*, and produced by him at the beginning of His ways (IV.20.3). Considered with regard to the Father, the Holy Ghost is his wisdom (IV.20.3); the Son and He are the "two hands" by which God created man (IV.Preface.4, IV.20.20 and V.6.1). Considered with regard to the Church, the same Spirit is truth, grace, a pledge of immortality, a principle of union with God; intimately united to the Church, He gives the sacraments their efficacy and virtue (III.17.2, III.24.1, IV.33.7 and V.8.1).

St. Hippolytus, though he does not speak at all clearly of the Holy Ghost regarded as a distinct person, supposes him, however, to be God, as well as the Father and the Son (Against Noetus 8, 12).

Tertullian is one of the writers of this age whose tendency to Subordinationism is most apparent, and that in spite of his being the author of the definitive formula: "Three persons, one substance". And yet his teaching on the Holy Ghost is in every way remarkable. He seems to have been the first among the Fathers to affirm His Divinity in a clear and absolutely precise manner. In his work "Adversus Praxean" he dwells at length on the greatness of the Paraclete. The Holy Ghost, he says, is God (13); of the substance of the Father (3 and 4); one and the same God with the Father and the Son (2); proceeding from the Father through the Son (4, 8); teaching all truth (2).

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, or at least the Ekthesis tes pisteos, which is commonly attributed to him, and which dates from the period 260-270, gives us this remarkable passage (P.G., X, 933 sqq.): "One is God, Father of the living Word, of the subsisting Wisdom. . . . One the Lord, one of one, God of God, invisible of invisible. . . . One the Holy Ghost, having His subsistence from God. . . . Perfect Trinity, which in eternity, glory, and power, is neither divided, nor separated. . . . Unchanging and immutable Trinity."

In 304, the martyr St. Vincent said (Ruinart, *op. cit.*, 325): "I confess the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father most High, one of one; I recognize Him as one God with the Father and the Holy Ghost."

But we must come down towards the year 360 to find the doctrine on the Holy Ghost explained both fully and clearly. It is St. Athanasius who does so in his "Letters to Serapion" (P.G., XXVI, col. 525 sq.). He had been informed that certain Christians held that the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity was a creature. To refute them he questions the Scriptures, and they furnish him with arguments as solid as they are numerous. They tell him, in particular, that the Holy Ghost is united to the Son by relations just like those existing between the Son and the Father; that He is sent by the Son; that He is His mouth-piece and glorifies Him; that, unlike creatures, He has not been made out of nothing, but comes forth from God; that He performs a sanctifying work among men, of which no creature is capable; that in possessing Him we possess God; that the Father created everything by Him; that, in fine, He is immutable, has the attributes of immensity, oneness, and has a right to all the appellations that are used to express the dignity of the Son. Most of these conclusions he supports by means of Scriptural texts, a few from amongst which are given above. But the writer lays special stress on what is read in Matthew 28:19. "The Lord", he writes (*Ad Serap.*, III, n. 6, in P.G., XXVI, 633 sq.), "founded the Faith of the Church on the Trinity, when He said to His Apostles: 'Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' If the Holy Ghost were a creature, Christ would not have associated Him with the Father; He would have avoided making a heterogeneous Trinity, composed of unlike elements. What did God stand in need of? Did He need to join to Himself a being of different nature? . . . No, the Trinity is not composed of the Creator and the creature."

A little later, St. Basil, Didymus of Alexandria, St. Epiphanius, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory of Nyssa took up the same thesis *ex professo*, supporting it for the most part with the same proofs. All these writings had prepared the way for the Council of Constantinople which, in 381, condemned the Pneumatomachians and solemnly proclaimed the

true doctrine. This teaching forms part of the Creed of Constantinople, as it is called, where the symbol refers to the Holy Ghost, "Who is also our Lord and Who gives life; Who proceeds from the Father, Who is adored and glorified together with the Father and the Son; Who spoke by the prophets". Was this creed, with these particular words, approved by the council of 381? Formerly that was the common opinion, and even in recent times it has been held by authorities like Hefele, Hergenröther, and Funk; other historians, amongst whom are Harnack and Duchesne, are of the contrary opinion; but all agree in admitting that the creed of which we are speaking was received and approved by the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, and that, at least from that time, it became the official formula of Catholic orthodoxy.

[[Commentary: As you can see the doctrine of the Trinity evolved over time.](#)]

Article: The Blessed Trinity

Heading: Proof of the doctrine from tradition

The Church Fathers

In this section we shall show that the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity has from the earliest times been taught by the Catholic Church and professed by her members. As none deny this for any period subsequent to the Arian and Macedonian controversies, it will be sufficient if we here consider the faith of the first four centuries only. An argument of very great weight is provided in the liturgical forms of the Church. The highest probative force must necessarily attach to these, since they express not the private opinion of a single individual, but the public belief of the whole body of the faithful. Nor can it be objected that the notions of Christians on the subject were vague and confused, and that their liturgical forms reflect this frame of mind. On such a point vagueness was impossible. Any Christian might be called on to seal with his blood his belief that there is but One God. The answer of Saint Maximus (c. A.D. 250) to the command of the proconsul that he should sacrifice to the gods, "I offer no sacrifice save to the One True God," is typical of many such replies in the Acts of the martyrs. It is out of the question to suppose that men who were prepared to give their lives on behalf of this fundamental truth were in point of fact in so great confusion in regard to it that they were unaware whether their creed was monotheistic, ditheistic, or tritheistic. Moreover, we know that their instruction regarding the doctrines of their religion was solid. The writers of that age bear witness that even the unlettered were thoroughly familiar with the truths of faith (cf. Justin, First Apology 60; Irenaeus, Against Heresies III.4.2).

[[Commentary: Justin suffered martyrdom about the year 165 and we just read the statement, "The writers of that age bear witness that even the unlettered were thoroughly familiar with the truths of faith \(cf. Justin, First Apology 60; Irenaeus, Against Heresies III.4.2\)." In the next article reference we will turn our focus to Tertullian. "Tertullian is one of the writers of this age whose tendency to Subordinationism is most apparent, and that in spite of his being the author of the definitive formula: "Three persons, one substance"." Tertullian wrote "Against Praxeas" in the early third century. He tells us that the majority of the believers of the day, as we just saw here stated that "The writers of that age bear witness that even the unlettered were thoroughly familiar with the truths of faith", did not believe the teaching of the evolving Trinity and accused those of who were teaching and preaching it that they were teachers and preachers of two and](#)

three gods. Despite what the Catholic Church is saying there is still historical evidence in their own encyclopedias and that of the early Church Father's writings showing us that the Trinitarian doctrine not only evolved, but came with great opposition.

However, we know eventually those who spoke against this Trinitarian doctrine that was birthed in the second century and receiving final approbation in the fourth century with adjustments made to the Nicene creed as late as 589 AD at the Synod of Toledo, were put to death or excommunicated.]

Article: Against Praxeas

Chapter 3. Sundry Popular Fears and Prejudices. The Doctrine of the Trinity in Unity Rescued from These Misapprehensions

The simple, indeed, (I will not call them unwise and unlearned,) who always constitute the majority of believers, are startled at the dispensation (of the Three in One), on the ground that their very rule of faith withdraws them from the world's plurality of gods to the one only true God; not understanding that, although He is the one only God, He must yet be believed in with His own monarchy'. The numerical order and distribution of the Trinity they assume to be a division of the Unity; whereas the Unity which derives the Trinity out of its own self is so far from being destroyed, that it is actually supported by it. They are constantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods, while they take to themselves pre-eminently the credit of being worshippers of the One God;

Article: The Blessed Trinity

Heading: Proof of the doctrine from tradition The Church Fathers

(1) Baptismal formulas

We may notice first the baptismal formula, which all acknowledge to be primitive. It has already been shown that the words as prescribed by Christ (Matthew 28:19) clearly express the Godhead of the Three Persons as well as their distinction, but another consideration may here be added. Baptism, with its formal renunciation of Satan and his works, was understood to be the rejection of the idolatry of paganism and the solemn consecration of the baptised to the one true God (Tertullian, De Spectaculis 4; Justin, First Apology 4). The act of consecration was the invocation over them of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[**Commentary:** Yet we just read from Tertullian in "Against Praxeas" that he said the majority of believers "are startled at the dispensation (of the Three in One), on the ground that their very rule of faith withdraws them from the world's plurality of gods to the one only true God... They are constantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods, while they take to themselves pre-eminently the credit of being worshippers of the One God". Here the Catholic Church said that Christ in Matthew 28:19 clearly expresses "the Godhead of the Three Persons as well as their distinction".

This is the very teaching that the majority of believers were in disagreement with saying that they were preaching a plurality of gods and accusing them of preaching two gods and three gods. Are we then to believe that all of these people were being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? When they were being taught that this was the revelation of Jesus Christ of three persons of the Godhead? The answer to this question is no. The majority of believers disagreed with this new teaching that was contrary to the Apostolic Doctrine that was delivered to the Church from the Word of God the Bible. The Apostles taught the Church to baptize everyone in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins as was recorded in Acts 2:38. This name fulfilling the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

To disregard Acts 2:38 and the baptism in Jesus name for the remission of your sins is to ignore what the inspired scriptures taught concerning water baptism and the oneness of God.

Matthew 28:19 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”. The singular name of these titles is Jesus. How do we know?

Luke 24:45-47 “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” His name was Jesus.

Acts 2:36-38 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

This fulfilling being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost as well as fulfilling going to Jerusalem and preaching repentance and remission of sins in Jesus name.

Apostle Peter was given the keys to the kingdom of Heaven by Jesus Christ (Mt 16:18-19) and he preached the same message of repentance and baptism in Jesus name for the remission of sins to the Jews first in Acts 2 and then also again to the gentiles as found in Acts 10. There is not one recorded incident in scripture of anyone being baptized in the name of the titles listed in Matthew 28:19, but there are recorded incidents in scripture of the believers being baptized in Jesus name. (Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5, 22:16)

We are also told in Ephesians 2:20 “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” and Jesus and the Apostles taught us to baptize in his name. That name being Jesus.

We are also told in Colossians 3:17 “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” This would include the baptism,

but this is also showing us that we give thanks to God the Father when whatsoever we do in word or deed, we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Thus being baptized in Jesus name is “giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

We also find in Romans 6:3-5 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection”.

You can not fulfill being planted together in the likeness of his death by being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of God can not die and be buried. But the body of Jesus Christ who is the image of the invisible God could both die, be buried, and then resurrected by the glory of the Father. Therefore we are to be baptized into Jesus Christ that we may be planted together in the likeness of his death so that we too can be also in the likeness of his resurrection at the last day.]

Heading: Proof of the doctrine from tradition Later Controversy

The Socinian writers of the seventeenth century (e.g. Sand, "Nucleus historiae ecclesiastic", Amsterdam, 1668) asserted that the language of the early Fathers in many passages of their works shows that they agreed not with Athanasius, but with Arius. Petavius, who was at that period engaged on his great theological work, was convinced by their arguments, and allowed that at least some of these Fathers had fallen into grave errors.

It is further to be remembered that accurate terminology in regard to the relations between the Three Persons was the fruit of the controversies which sprang up in the fourth century. The writers of an earlier period were not concerned with Arianism, and employed expressions which in the light of subsequent errors are seen to be not merely inaccurate, but dangerous.

[**Commentary:** Notice carefully that the Catholic Church is stating that the writings of the Church Fathers prior to the Trinitarian Doctrine which received final approbation in the fourth century did not agree with the doctrine of which received this final approbation.]

It should further be remembered that throughout this period theologians, when treating of the relation of the Divine Persons to each other, invariably regard them in connection with the cosmogony. Only later, in the Nicene epoch, did they learn to prescind from the question of creation and deal with the threefold Personality exclusively from the point of view of the Divine life of the Godhead. When that stage was reached expressions such as these became impossible.

Article: Cosmogony

By this term is understood an account of how the universe (cosmos) came into being (gonia — gegona = I have become). It differs from cosmology, or the science of the universe, in this: that

the latter aims at understanding the actual composition and governing laws of the universe as it now exists; while the former answers the question as to how it first came to be.

[**Commentary:** Not only did the prior writings of the Church Fathers not agree with the Trinitarian Doctrine that received final approbation in the fourth century, but now we see several profound statements being made. 1) “It should further be remembered that throughout this period theologians, when treating of the relation of the Divine Persons to each other, invariably regard them in connection with the cosmogony.” 2) “Only later, in the Nicene epoch, did they learn to prescind from the question of creation and deal with the threefold Personality exclusively from the point of view of the Divine life of the Godhead.” 3) “When that stage was reached expressions such as these became impossible.”

1) Cosmogony, being the study of the origin and development of the universe, was a crucial part of understanding what the Apostle John meant when he spoke to us in John 1:1-3 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

3056. logos, log'-os; from G3004; something said (including the thought); by impl. a topic (subject of discourse), also reasoning (the mental faculty) or motive; by extens. a computation; spec. (with the art. in John) the Divine Expression (i.e. Christ)

Remember that the Word (Logos) is something said (including the thought) and also the reasoning (the mental faculty) or motive of what was said. This is why cosmogony was such an important part of understanding what the Apostle John meant in regards to the Word.

2) Notice again that it was “Only later, in the Nicene epoch, did they learn to prescind from the question of creation and deal with the threefold Personality exclusively from the point of view of the Divine life of the Godhead.” Why did they learn to prescind from this question? They answer that for us in the next sentence.

3) "When that stage was reached expressions such as these became impossible." They became impossible because you were either banished, excommunicated, or possibly put to death for teaching heresy!

Do you remember the questions from our first lesson that we were addressing? I will now restate them with their respective answer.

Question one - Is the doctrine of the Trinity professed by the Catholic Church contained in the New Testament? The answer is no.

Question two - Was this doctrine first formulated in the second century and then receiving final approbation in the fourth century as the result of the Arian and Macedonian controversies? The answer is yes.

Question three - Why did those who were given the name here Liberal Protestantism teach that the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated in the second century and received final approbation in the fourth, as the result of the Arian and Macedonian controversies? The answer is because history as you have also read teaches us that this is true.]