



TRAINING TRACK

PART ONE:

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY



Westlake Church Lausanne
Rooted in the Gospel & Radical Transformation

Section Four

The Trinity

Memory Verse

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14

Key Texts

Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, (IVP: 2007 Edition), Chapters 14 and Appendix 6.

The Nicene Creed

The Athanasian Creed

1. Definition

Read Grudem 226-231

- Attempt a definition of the Trinity

Grudem argues that the Bible requires us to affirm three truths:

- a. God is three persons.
- b. Each person is fully God.
- c. There is one God.

a. God is Three Persons

The Old Testament

- Consider the following verses from the Old Testament: Gen 1:26; Gen 3:22; Gen 11:7; Is 6:8; Ps 45:6-7 (cf Heb 1:8); Ps 110:1 (cf Matt 22:41-46).

What do these verses tell us about the nature of God?

- What are some of the implications of Isaiah 48:16, 61:1 and 63:10?

Read Prov 8:22-31.

- What are some of the difficulties and solutions in viewing this passage as an argument for a Divine plurality of persons?

The New Testament

- What can we learn about the nature of God from the following verses?

Matt 3:16-17:

Matt 28:19:

1 Cor 12:4-6

2 Cor 13:14

1 Peter 1:2

- What bible verses justify us talking of God as three distinct persons?
(Grudem 231-3)

- How do we know that the Holy Spirit is a person and not simply a force?
(Grudem 232-3)

- What are some of the implications of the statement: 'God is three persons'?

b. Each Person is Fully God

- What evidence is there from the New Testament for the deity of Christ?
(Grudem 234-7)

- What is the evidence from both Old and New Testaments for the deity of the Holy Spirit? (Grudem 237-8)

c. There is One God

- Summarize the evidence from the Old and New Testaments that there is One God. (Grudem 238-9)

Note: In explaining the Trinity to others it is worth remembering that no analogy from the created world can adequately explain the Trinity, as there is nothing in all creation that is like the Trinity.

2. The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed was adopted by the early church councils in 325 and 381 AD in the face of the Arian controversy (see below). Spend a few minutes studying the creed:

*We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.*

*We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.
Amen.*

How does the creed address the issue of the Trinity?

4. Trinitarian Errors

a. Modalism (Grudem 242)

- Define Modalism:

- Why has Modalism proved attractive to some?

- Why does it fail in its description of God?

- What other names is Modalism known by?

- Why does understanding the error of modalism matter today?
 - Because it is always important to think rightly about God.
 - Because some high profile 'ministers' (such as TD Jakes, who has an extensive broadcasting and publishing ministry) hold Modalist views, a doctrine that has been consistently viewed as heretical. It would be important to warn people to avoid such teaching if they have come into contact with it.

b. Arianism (Grudem 243-4 and 1233-4)

- Spend a few minutes reading The Athanasian Creed.
- Define Arianism

- How should Colossians 1:15 – Christ as the first-born over all creation – be rightly understood?

- How should we understand those texts that refer to Jesus as the *monogenes* – which older translations rendered as ‘only begotten son’? (John 1:14; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9).

- Why does understanding the error of Arianism matter today?
 - Because a number of cults – for example the Jehovah’s Witnesses – teach that Jesus was a created being.

c. Subordinationism and Evangelical Feminism

Read Grudem 244-5.

- Define the heresy of Subordinationism:

Read Grudem 244, footnote 27 and Grudem 249-51 (including footnotes).

- How does the correct doctrine of the Son’s subordination to the Father *in role* differ from the heresy of Subordinationism?

- Why does a correct understanding of the differing roles within the Godhead help inform our understanding of differing male and female roles?

Memory Verse

Review the memory verse

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14