



The Trinity in Baptism and Benediction

LECTURE 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE TRINITY

ALEC & BELLE WATERHOUSE LECTURES

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Outline

- A. Introduction: The Cappadocian Fathers
- B. The Baptismal Commission
- C. The Benediction
- D. Conclusion: Worship the Holy Spirit

A. Introduction: The Cappadocian Fathers

- Basil, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (modern central Turkey), was confronted with a great problem.
- His fellow bishops were teaching their people to not class the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son. These bishops argued that the Spirit was the gift of holiness to the converted person, but the Spirit cannot be called God.

Basil of Caesarea

- Among these bishops was Eustathius of Sebaste, who mentored Basil after he converted to Christ. Basil had already been led to faith in Christ by his own sister, Macrina.
- “I neither chose to name the Holy Spirit God nor dare to call him a creature,” Eustathius reported to a synod.
- Basil set out to convert him to true worship.

Basil's Confession for Eustathius

Basil convinced Eustathius in the Summer of 373 of his error. They agreed upon a common statement. Three truths were affirmed:

1. The Spirit is God
2. Baptism is Trinitarian in Form
3. The Persons are distinguished in Scripture by their Eternal Relations of Origin

Basil's Confession for Eustathius

1. *The Spirit is God*: “[We] anathematize those who call the Holy Spirit a creature, those who think so, and those who do not confess that he is holy by nature, as the Father and Son are holy by nature, but who regard him as alien to the divine and blessed nature.”

Basil's Confession for Eustathius

2. *Baptism is Trinitarian*: “A proof of orthodox doctrine is the refusal to separate him from the Father and Son, for we must be baptized as we have received the words, and we must believe as we are baptized, and we must give honor as we have believed, to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to withdraw from the communion of those who call the Spirit a creature since they are clearly blasphemers.”

Basil's Confession for Eustathius

3. *Eternal Relations of Origin*: “It is agreed—this comment is necessary because of the slanderers—that we do not say that the Holy Spirit is either unbegotten for we know one unbegotten and one source of what exists, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or begotten, for we have been taught by the tradition of the faith that there is one Only-Begotten. But since we have been taught that the Spirit of truth proceeds from the Father we confess that he is from God without being created.”

Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*

- Eustathius, however, had second thoughts after several other bishops told him Basil was wrong. He thus retracted his statement and attacked Basil.
- Basil published *On the Holy Spirit* in 375 to answer the claims of those who denied the Spirit is equally God with the Father and the Son.
- His argument depended on two major texts: The Great Commission and the Benediction.

B. The Great Commission

The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted. Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:16-20

The Great Commission

1. Baptism is a formal act of worship of God:
 - It is commanded by Christ for all disciples.
 - It follows the making of a disciple.
 - It is the Christian's external proclamation of true faith in God. It identifies the Christian with the God who has this "name," this identity.
 - It begins a life of continually adhering to Christ's teaching in Christ's presence in the gathered church.
 - It inaugurates the Christian's membership in the church, where Christ is eternally present.

The Great Commission

2. Baptism is in the “Name” of God

- The “Name” of God in the Old Testament was used to refer to God himself. It served as a substitute for his proper covenantal name, *Yahweh*, “the Lord.”
- The “Name” also indicated the authority by which a royal or religious act was performed.
- The “Name” occurs here in the singular, not in the plural. There is no significant textual variant.
- However, the “Name” includes three proper names.

The Great Commission

3. Baptism is in the “Name” of Three Names. Three persons are indicated as being in a coordinate relationship through the use of the common conjunction, *kai*, “and.” Note: Every baptized believer begins the Christian life as a Trinitarian.
 - “The Father” – The first person of the Trinity
 - “The Son” – The second person of the Trinity
 - “The Holy Spirit” – The third person of the Trinity

The Great Commission



- In Matthew 13:55 four brothers are mentioned in a coordinate relationship by the same conjunction, *kai*. They are “together with” one another, not “above” or “below” one another.
- Basil of Caesarea, a native and highly educated Greek-speaking Christian, understood this New Testament usage meant there was a relationship of “connumeration” rather than “subnumeration” between the Three. Persons of the One God.

C. The Benediction

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

The Benediction

1. Similarities with the Great Commission:
 - Again, it carries the weight of divine revelation.
 - Again, the context is an act of worship, this time a prayer by the Apostle Paul. Christians have rightly often included the Benediction in their own formal acts of corporate worship.
 - Again, the *kai*, “and,” is used to indicate a relationship of *connumeration* between the three persons and not of *subnumeration*.

The Benediction

2. Whereas the Great Commission focused on the real identity of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Benediction focuses on the works of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Two types:
 - *Inseparable Operations*: Every act of God is participated in by all three persons.
 - *Proper Operations*: The acts of God are led by different persons. Basil said the Father acted as the “original cause,” the Son as “creative cause,” and the Spirit as “perfecting cause.”

The Benediction

3. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ”
 - Jesus is *kurios*, “Lord,” the Greek name for *Yahweh*.
 - “Grace” is particularly the work of the eternal Son of God in his incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and final judgment. He has promised the grace of eternal life to those who believe in him.
 - “Grace” also comes from the Father (1:2; 6:1; 8:1) and in the Spirit (3:6, 16-18) in 2 Corinthians.

The Benediction

4. “The love of God”

- *Theos*, “God,” is typically used of the first person of the Trinity, God the Father, in the New Testament.
- “Love” is a key perfection of God according to 1 John 4:8, 16, indicating his being and his work.
- The Son (2 Cor 5:14-15) and the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 6:6; Rom 5:5) are also indicated as involved in love.

The Benediction

5. “The fellowship of the Holy Spirit”
 - *Koinonia* has been translated as “fellowship,” “participation,” and even “deification.”
 - The Holy Spirit is simultaneously the subject and the object of fellowship. He creates our capacity for fellowship with God. He is also one of the three Persons with whom we are invited into fellowship.
 - Both the Father and the Son are also involved in restoring God’s fellowship with humanity (2 Cor 1:21-22).

The Benediction

6. “Be with you all”

- “Be with” indicates believers are promised an intimate relationship with God the Trinity. It also indicates a supplication by the Apostle to God.
- “You all” indicates the corporate and individual aspect of the Christian faith. We each have a relationship with God. We together have a relationship with God.

D. Conclusion: Worship the Holy Spirit

- Always trying to bring those bishops who refused to recognize the personhood of the Holy Spirit and his equality with the Father and the Son, with lovingkindness into the faith, Basil never directly wrote that the Holy Spirit was God.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, unlike Basil, explicitly and publicly identified the Spirit as God: “Is the Spirit God? Most certainly. Well, then, is He Consubstantial? Yes, if He is God.”

Conclusion

- The Cappadocian Fathers identified the three by their eternal relations of origin:
 1. the Father is eternally the Monarch,
 2. the Son is eternally begotten, and
 3. the Spirit eternally proceeds.
- They distinguished the three *hypostaseis* or *prosopa*, “persons,” from the shared *ousia*, “substance” or “essence,” of the one God.

Conclusion

“You have before now, in springtime, beheld the brilliance of the bow in the clouds—I mean the bow which is commonly called the ‘rainbow.’ ... Now, the brightness is both continuous with itself and divided. It has many diverse colors; and yet the various bright tints of its dye are imperceptibly intermingled, hiding from our eyes the point of contact of the different colors with each other. As a result, between the blue and the flame-color, or the flame-color and the purple, or the purple and the amber, the space which both mingles and separates the two colors cannot be discerned. For when the rays of all the colors are seen they are seen to be distinct, and yet ... it is impossible to find out how far the red or the green color of the radiance extends, and at what point it begins to be no longer perceived as it is when it is distinct.”

Basil, *Letter 38.5*



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Conclusion

“We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke through the prophets.”

The Nicene Creed

Adopted by the Council of Constantinople, in 381

Both Nazianzus and Nyssa influenced the Council