

## GF 101: Understanding the Trinity

### Lesson 6.2 (article, “Denials of Orthodoxy: Heretical Views of the Doctrine of the Trinity”)

1. What was considered the first significant challenge to the early church’s understanding of the Trinity?

*Monarchianism. This position emphasized “the unity of God as the only monarchia.” In other words, it denied the distinctions of the three persons of the Trinity.*

2. What early church father defended the orthodox understanding of the Trinity and was influential in forming the foundation for the church’s definition of the Trinity (e.g., God is one in essence or substance, yet three in persons)?

*Tertullian*

3. What ancient heresy denied the deity of the Son?

*Arianism*

4. The author writes, “In particular, Arianism emphasized monotheism—the belief in only one God.” Where does Arianism go wrong if it emphasizes monotheism?

*Arianism, while correctly emphasizing monotheism (belief in one God), assumes that the one God shares only one person. In other words, it falsely assumes a Unitarian understanding of God (one Being shared by only one Person) when there is no logical basis for limiting God in the same way we human beings are limited. The Trinity (one Being shared by three Persons) likewise logically maintains the monotheistic teaching of Scripture. All of that is to say it is improper to assume a Unitarian understanding of God, especially when God reveals Himself as three separate and distinct Persons—each of whom are fully God.*

5. Even though the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) affirmed Trinitarian orthodoxy, Arianism prevailed in parts of the Roman Empire. Who was instrumental in fighting for orthodoxy in the years following the Council?

*Athanasius*

6. Another view that surfaced was called Pneumatomachianism. What does this mean?

*This aberrant view denied the deity of the Holy Spirit.*

7. What is meant by the terms *economic Trinity* and the *ontological Trinity*?

*Economic Trinity refers to the distinct roles or activities in which they engage in the works of creation, preservation, and salvation; whereas the ontological Trinity addresses the three persons as distinct in terms of their eternal relationship.*

8. What are four modern examples of revived old heresies that each deny the doctrine of the Trinity?

*Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormonism), the Unitarian Universalist Church, and Oneness Pentecostalism.*

9. Why is upholding the doctrine of the Trinity essential?

- *First, the Triune God revealed Himself as one in Being, three in Persons. This truth distinguishes Christianity from every other religion in the world—and means all others worship a false god. Furthermore, baptizing in the name of the “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” distinguishes Christians from everyone else.*
- *Second, divine revelation bears a Trinitarian shape: the Son does not speak on his own authority, but speaks on the Father’s authority. The Holy Spirit does not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears—from the Son, who hears it from the Father—the Spirit declares. The apostles receive the Holy Spirit in order to testify that Jesus’ words, life, and ministry are true and authoritative. And, under the inspiration of the Spirit, divine revelation is imparted in the Bible.*
- *Third, salvation is the work of the Triune God and reflects perfect harmony and consistency. The Father commissions and sends the Son; the Son joyfully obeys the Father to embark on a mission; the Spirit serves the Father and Son by applying the Son’s accomplished work to human lives.*