

Stop and Think About It is a Christian discernment podcast produced by Phil Sessa, Glenroy Clarke, Nick Vasquez and my dear friend Steve Langella. Entertaining and rich in theological content, Stop and Think About It is intended to take

"Sound biblical doctrine and practical Christian theology out of the ivory towers and putting it into the hands of Christians. We are living in a day when sound biblical preaching has been replaced by man-centered entertainment, and the church is becoming increasingly anti-intellectual. This podcast will encourage believers to think biblically and theologically."

Episode 1, **Sabellius: The Great Pretender**, focuses on expressions of modalism in history as well as its present manifestation within Oneness Pentecostalism. Even if one is not interested in the person of Sabellius and has no inclination toward the Oneness heresy, Christians ought to be interested in the identity and attributes of God. It is important for us to be aware of how the doctrine of the Trinity has been articulated historically, the nature of common objections to this non-negotiable doctrine, and why many common illustrations fail to accurately convey the reality that "in the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity...." (WCF 2.3)

The Athanasian Creed asserts that "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God." The Trinity, a doctrine concerning God's identity and therefore essential to Christianity, cannot be something dismissed as totally incomprehensible or merely a topic for academics to muse over. It should be of primary concern that we seek to worship God as He is revealed in His own Holy Word.

In fact, denials of the historic formulation of the Trinity are not confined to fringe heretics (which is precisely why I commend the Stop and Think About It crew for taking this subject up). Consider, for example, Gordon Clark's interaction with reformed scholar Cornelius Van Til's novel and contradictory view of the Trinity. Clark notes that

*"...There is no contradiction in asserting one-ness and three-ness **in two different senses**.*

[Yet] most amazingly Van Til has repudiated this defense of the Trinity and has asserted that the Godhead is three and one in precisely the same sense. In his

*Junior Systematics (178, 179)...he writes, **'We do assert that God, that is, the whole Godhead, is one person.... We must maintain that God is numerically one, He is one person.'***

...Since in the history of theology so few theologians, perhaps none, have asserted that God is One Person in Three Persons—not even Sabellius—explicit denials are hard to find. But implicit denials abound. To quote John Gill again, 'Nor is the article [on one God] to be understood in the Sabellian sense, that God is not but one person; for though there is but one God, there are three Persons' (A Body of Divinity, I, xxvi, 2). This is not to suggest that Van Til is a Sabellian; but had he been the author instead of Gill, he would have probably added that God was also one Person. Gill has no such idea....

Since this matter involves that law of contradiction, it is proper to note that Gill continues by insisting that John 10:30 'cannot mean one person for this is to make him say what is most absurd and contradictory' (Sovereign Grace edition, 1971, 128, column 2). Does not all this show that Van Til's position is not the uniform heritage of the church? Could not one call it a novelty?

*To indicate that this treatise neither misunderstands nor distorts Van Til's position, we further quote An Introduction to Systematic Theology (1949, 224—226 [2004, 363—364]. Here he repeats his allegation that the Trinity is One Person: **'We do assert that God, that is, the whole Godhead, is one person.... Even within the ontological Trinity we must maintain that God is numerically one. He is one person...'**" [emphasis added].[1]*

Clearly, Van Til had deviated from the historic formulation of the Trinity and was content to express an incoherent and contradictory view under the guise of "incomprehensibility". The doctrine of incomprehensibility, however, does not nullify the laws of logic; Such were given to us in part for the purpose of systematically studying (and comprehending) God's inspired and non-contradictory revelation.

Listen to **Stop and Think About It** episode one [here](#) for an edifying and educational discussion of the Trinity against some of the modern manifestations of modalism in Christian dress.

[1] Clark, G.H., *The Trinity* (3rd ed.), The Trinity Foundation, Unicoi, TN, 2010, 108—109.

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