

1) ¹ How Does God Find Us? The doctrine of Special Revelation

a) Introduction

- i) We know God because God comes to us; God finds us.
- ii) Special Revelation is God's Self-revelation.

b) This self revelation comes to us in three ways

i) In the history which leads up to, centers in, and follows the man named Jesus.

ii) In the Scripture which bears witness to what God has done.

iii) In the community which for centuries has listened to and been shaped by that Scripture.

c) God's Self-Communication

i) What is revealed is a Person, not just information about that Person. In Scripture, God confronts us. To receive revelation is to "know" a person. Jesus said "I am the truth".

ii) The knowledge we receive in special revelation is thus personal knowledge. It creates a relationship with God. What Guthrie is stressing here is the difference between knowing a person and knowing about a person.

iii) This knowledge is new and unexpected or it is not a revelation. It often offends or troubles us. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord." (Is 55:8-9)

iv) God reveals Himself in words and actions which are completely in accord one with another.

v) God's self-revelation is given in a human way.

(1) God is revealed in the history of Israel

(2) God is revealed in the person of a human, Jesus

(3) God is revealed in human words in Scripture.

Luther said as God came to us in the infant Jesus who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger, so too the Word of God comes to us wrapped

up in human words. God speaks to us through the human words of the Bible.

vi) God is revealed in the Church

- (1) In its worship
- (2) In its teaching
- (3) In its acts of justice and mercy

d) God thus reveals Himself indirectly

i) This means it is not always clear

ii) It means God comes to us through our relationships with people

iii) How do we know it is the Spirit speaking to us and not just our own unconscious desires?

- (1) Cannot be contrary to the God we know in Jesus Christ.
- (2) Cannot be contrary to Scripture and the Church's long history of wrestling with that word.

2) WHO IS GOD?

a) God's nature as Triune

i) There is no doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament. This doctrine, hammered out by the church over the ages, is an attempt to balance two beliefs:

- (1) God is One; there is only one God.
- (2) Early Christians encountered God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit".

ii) Unsatisfactory ways of speaking about the Trinity

- (1) God is like a heavenly board of directors with three equal partners.
- (2) God is like a heavenly board of directors with one senior partner and two junior partners.
- (3) God is like three players sitting on the sideline waiting to get into the game one at a time
- (4) God is like a man or woman who wears three hats.

iii)The Churches attempt at a satisfactory answer

- (1) One God who is three persons but one substance.
- (2) A modern version of the above is "one personal God who lives and works in three different ways all at the same time".
- (3) Three works are emphasize and attributed to "one of the persons"
 - (a) Father...Creator
 - (b) Son...redeemer, savior
 - (c) Holy Spirit...comforter, advocate, transformer
- (4) And yet the church asserts we cannot simply separate the work. God is fully at work in all these activities.
- (5) The Social Trinity
 - (a) Western church has often represented God as a Triangle with the Father at the Top and the Son and Holy Spirit at the base
 - (b) Perichoreisis...the three "persons" pictured as three dancers holding hands and dancing together in a circle. The oneness is in the community, the togetherness of the persons
 - (c) The leading idea of the above is that God is essentially, by God's very nature communal.
 - (i) God is reflected best by loving communities
 - (ii) Intense individualism is therefore against what God has in mind when he created human beings in His image and likeness.