CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Doctrine of the Trinity

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Introduction

The Doctrine of the Trinity has been challenged, misunderstood, and maligned throughout the history of the church. Celsus, a second century pagan critic of Christianity, declared that the idea that a man who was disgraced in arrest and crucifixion could be God was nothing more than "sophistry."[1] Voltaire, apostle of rationalism, ridiculed the doctrine as "bad math" and charged that Christians "imagine the Trinity, and to make it credible, falsify the earliest gospels."[2] Adolf von Harnack, preeminent among church historians, looked upon the doctrine of the Trinity as a piece of Hellenistic philosophy imposed on the early church - a view which never had the support of evidence and now a century later has little support among scholars.[3] More recently, Bishop James Pike, in broad ecumenical spirit, suggested that Christians could dispense with this distinctive, divisive doctrine and simply confess their faith

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[1] Origen, *Contra Celsus*, Book 2, Chapter 31.

[2] Voltaire, "The Sermon of the Fifty," translated by Peter Gay, editor, *Deism: An Anthology,* 143.

[3] Among others Norris Cochrane argues convincingly that the doctrine of the Trinity actually demonstrates early Christianity's discontinuity with classical philosophy. See Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture,* 233-235, where the author states, "The question raised by Arius was whether the substance of paganism was to survive in a Christian form. . . . Arius followed the Neoplatonists. . . . In opposition the [Nicene] fathers reaffirmed the sense of a substantial or essential union of the divine and the human in the historical Jesus, as this had found expression in the literature and tradition of the ante-Nicene Church. This belief rested on ultimately on the text, 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.'"

in the "Ultimate ground . . . Source, Evolver, Energizer, Savior, Sustainer, and Inspirer of all that is."[4]

In addition to this rejection by those who to various degrees discount the authority of the New Testament, some who have a higher view of Scripture have also abandoned the doctrine of the Trinity. Reformation era Socinians and eighteenth century American Unitarians, Jehovah Witnesses, and Latter Day Saints each turned away from the doctrine of the Trinity to revive positions rejected by the ancient church as unbiblical and sub-Christian. Moreover, even more damning than outright rejection in the present era, the doctrine of the Trinity suffers from the inherent disadvantage of simply being "doctrine," which to many connotes "dry, dusty, abstract, impractical, and hardly worth the effort of thought required to understand or discuss."

In spite of these attacks and disadvantages, however, the brute fact is that the doctrine of the Trinity has survived and remained central in the living faith of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians. It seems that wherever there are people who call themselves Christians and claim to know God in Christ as Christ is proclaimed in the Bible, the issues addressed in the doctrine of the Trinity are raised afresh and considered worthy of careful thought and expression. Christians of all sorts, everywhere, continue to find the doctrine of the Trinity a helpful, biblical, and meaningful way to express their understanding of the God they have come to know in Jesus Christ. This booklet will provide an overview of the doctrine's historical development, some explanation of its place and function within Christian thought and discussion of relevant biblical passages.

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[4] James A. Pike, *A Time for Christian Candor,* 127 as cited by Linwood Urban in *A Short History of Christian Thought,* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), 45.

Discussion of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity must first take into account that this is, indeed, a "doctrine." The word "doctrine" often gives the impression of something sacred, unchanging, and handed down from heaven. But it will be much more helpful in the present discussion to remember that this word simply means "teaching," or "expression." Doctrine in this sense may be good or bad, right or wrong, local or widespread, biblical or unbiblical, individual or corporate or even universal, helpful or unhelpful, clear or confusing, mutually agreed upon or divisive. Most importantly it should be kept in mind that doctrine as teaching or expression is something that may change and develop with time.

It is a fact that the church's human words, by which it proclaims and explains what it understands to be the meaning of the divine words in the Bible, change. This, of course, is not to say that God and God's revelation in Jesus Christ and in the Bible change. They do not. But the church's doctrine (read "teaching" or "expression") changes. In fact, in order to proclaim faithfully the living God who has revealed Himself to men in Jesus Christ, the Church's doctrine must change. It must change as the church's understanding of God and His Word grows and develops. It must change as the language in which the church expresses itself changes. It must change when the church crosses from one culture or language group into another. The church must continually ask itself "Is the way we are proclaiming our God faithful to His self-revelation in Christ and the Bible? Is it meaningful to us and understandable to those who will hear in the present situation?" "Is this really what we ought to say about our God and is this the best way to say it here and now?"

It is difficult for many Christians to think of the doctrine of the Trinity in this way for several reasons: 1) This

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doctrine is one of the **oldest** pieces of Christian doctrine. This was the first major subject upon which Christians struggled to express themselves and achieved a widely agreed upon and satisfactory teaching. 2) The doctrine of the Trinity is nearly **universal** among Christians. The struggle to arrive at a satisfactory expression in this area of belief took place before Christians had divided from one another for other reasons and so this doctrine is the common heritage of Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Protestants and many other smaller branches of Christians. 3) On the other hand, only Christians hold this doctrine. Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity is **uniquely Christian** and is in a real sense a defining mark of Christianity. It is generally true that those who believe that God is Three in One also consider themselves to be Christians; those who do not, do not. 4) This doctrine is **central and foundational** to almost all other areas of Christian teaching. What one believes and says about God drastically affects what one believes and says about salvation, the spiritual life, the church, the future and so on. 5) This expression of Christian belief is among the most "**successful**" of Christian doctrines. For over seventeen hundred years Christians have continued to resort to the doctrine of the Trinity as a biblical, meaningful, and helpful way to express what they believe about God and Christ. This doctrine hasn't been abandoned as obsolete or irrelevant. It has not been improved upon in any substantive way or superceded in the church by a superior doctrinal formulation.

Nevertheless, in spite of these weighty considerations, the doctrine of the Trinity remains a human proclamation and explanation of concepts found in the Bible and is not identical with those concepts or with the Bible. Otherwise, Christians could simply read the baptismal formula from Matthew 28 and would never have to resort to the term "Trinity" or to the formula "three Persons, one Essence" to explain themselves further. Thus the

doctrine of the Trinity is not "biblical" in the strictest sense - neither the term "trinity" nor the formula "one Essence in three Persons" is found in Scripture. On other hand, the doctrine of the Trinity is very biblical, if by this we mean that in the judgment of Christians everywhere (at least since the fourth century) it expresses and explains concepts found in Scripture in an accurate, clear, and meaningful way.

The doctrine of the Trinity developed as a way to express and explain three biblical concepts that Christians have held from the time of the apostles**: 1) Monotheism – there is one and only one God.** The earliest Christians were Jews. The gospel was proclaimed first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Early Christians considered their faith as a continuation and completion of the faith of Israel. Christianity, in this way, inherited monotheism from Judaism (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 46:9; Mark 12:29). Clearly it was Paul's understanding that there is but one God (Acts 17:22-32; Ephesians 4:6; I Timothy 2:5). The same clear affirmation of monotheism is found in James 2:19. Clement, writing to Corinthian Christians in approximately A.D. 95, appealed to the Genesis creation account and to the one "Creator and Master of the universe" with no sense of distance or difference between Christian faith and Jewish monotheism.[5] There is no evidence that the early church ever seriously considered tri-theism or polytheism as an option. On the contrary, Christianity stood in stark contrast with the polytheism of Rome, Greece, Egypt and the east. Their belief in one God set Jews and Christians radically apart from the rest of the ancient world.

2) Jesus Christ is God (John 1:1, 18; 10:30; 20:28). Jaroslav Pelikan, in The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, notes, "All Christians shared the conviction that salvation was the work of no being less than the Lord of

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[5] *I Clement* 33:1-8.

Heaven and earth . . . Christians were sure that the Redeemer did not belong to some lower order of divine reality, but was God himself."[6] He points out that the oldest surviving Christian sermon outside of the New Testament (*II Clement*), the oldest surviving account of the death of a Christian martyr (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*), the oldest surviving pagan report describing Christian worship (Pliny), and the oldest surviving liturgical prayer (1 Corinthians 16:22, "Our Lord, Come!") all demonstrate that early Christians believed and taught that "God" was an appropriate name for Jesus Christ. Ignatius (circa. AD 105) states clearly, "God appeared in human form"[7]

3) There is in God a three-ness. In obedience to Christ's command (Matthew 28:19) the earliest Christians baptized new converts in the name (singular, not plural) of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.[8] Clement and Ignatius used triadic phrases such as "Have we not one God, and one Christ and one Spirit;"[9] "as God lives, and the Lord Jesus lives, and the Holy Spirit;"[10] and "in the Son and the Father and in the Spirit."[11] Toward the end of the second century, Iranaeus concluded, "The Church, though dispersed through out the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in

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[6] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 173.

[7] *Ignatius to the Ephesians* 7:2 and 19:3. See also 15:3, where "Lord" is certainly a reference specifically to the Son. "Nothing is hidden from the Lord. Therefore let us do everything with the knowledge that he dwells in us, in order that we may be his temples, and he may be in us as our God – as, in fact, he really is.."

[8] *Didache,* 7:1-3.

[9] *I Clement* 46:6.

[10] *I Clement* 52:2.

[11] *Ignatius to the Magnesians* 13:2; see also *Ignatius to the Ephesians* 9:1 and *Martyrdom of Polycarp,* 22:3.

one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations."[12]

Those who reject the doctrine of Trinity often try to show that one or more of the ideas above are not found in the Bible. This does not change the fact that almost all Christians, including those in the early church, have found these ideas to be very clearly taught in the Bible. The biblical evidence for these concepts will be given below. Here it is simply noted that Christians in first and second centuries clearly held these three convictions. Again, those who reject the doctrine of the Trinity may deny this and may seem to find some evidence of other views in the Apostolic Fathers. For instance, *The Shepherd of Hermas* appears, at times, to speak of Christ as an angel. Close examination of such passages, however, shows that they are really not clear. *The Shepherd of Hermas* is notoriously difficult to interpret and it is not certain that its author ever definitely identifies Christ as an angel. Even if this identification is assumed, it remains uncertain what he might have meant by it. He may well have intended to identify Jesus Christ as the "Angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament, an orthodox view, since this figure is generally understood to be the pre-incarnate Christ. There is little clear evidence in the Apostolic Fathers that even a minority of Christians held a view contrary to the three points above.

The problem, however, for the early church was "How may we believe, proclaim, and explain these three concepts without contradicting ourselves or at least appearing to contradict ourselves?"   The doctrine of the Trinity is the teaching worked out by Christians in the second and third centuries to solve that problem. This teaching was recognized and accepted by some 300 bishops (a few Latin but mostly Greek pastors and

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[12] Iranaeus, *Against Heresies,* Book 1, X, 1.

church leaders) at the Council of Nicea (AD 325), disputed energetically by a group known as the Arians in the years following Nicea, reaffirmed by the Council of Constantinople (AD 381) and other councils and synods, expounded by Athanasius, the three Cappadocians, and Augustine from AD 320-420, and from that time on almost universally accepted by the church.

It is very helpful to note that the process by which the doctrine of the Trinity developed was more a matter of excluding inadequate or unbiblical solutions to the problem posed above than proceeding in a direct path toward the "final" or "correct" solution. This reveals something very important about the doctrine. In the end the doctrine of the Trinity was not and is not a thorough resolution of the tension felt by the church in affirming the three propositions above. What this doctrine does do, and does very well, is to mark off and exclude resolutions of that tension that Christians have come to see as less than biblical.

In this way the doctrine of the Trinity reminds us that there is mystery involved in the knowing and worshipping the God of the Bible, Who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, which reason cannot penetrate. It's function then is not to solve this central mystery of the Christian faith, but to guard it against unbiblical solutions. In this way it points us to the God who created our reason and reveals Himself so that we may apprehend Him through our reason and, yet, at the same time remains forever above and beyond our reason. In the end, to be faithful to Him Christians must simply proclaim Him as He has revealed Himself in His Son, even when that proclamation involves an apparent contradiction or paradox. In this purpose the doctrine of the Trinity has served the church well. It has allowed Christians to faithfully proclaim the God they have come to know in Christ, without denying or setting

aside important elements of His self-revelation found in Christ and in the Bible.

The Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity

At the close of the first century the writings known collectively as the Apostolic Fathers repeated and affirmed the three convictions above (monotheism, the deity of Christ, the three-ness of God) without further elaboration. In the second century several explanations emerged which attempted in different ways to reconcile these ideas: Gnosticism, dynamic Monarchianism, and modalistic Monarchianism. From about AD 150 to AD 300 a group of men known as the Apologists thoroughly examined these explanations and led the church at large to reject them as sub-Christian.

Gnosticism provided the first of these explanations. Gnosticism was a religious system that threatened at times to merge with and absorb Christianity, producing "Christian" forms of Gnosticism.   The feature of Gnosticism that is of interest here is its view of God. In Gnosticism the supreme god was thought of as a "certain perfect, pre-existent Aeon, whom they call Proarche, Propator, and Bythus, and describe as being invisible and incomprehensible. Eternal and unbegotten, he remained throughout innumerable cycles of ages in profound serenity and quiescence."[13] By a process of "emanation" (like rays from the sun or sparks from fire) this supreme god was supposed to have produced other beings or "aeons," more or less like him. Out of these lesser gods arose the being, often identified in Christian forms of Gnosticism as the God of the Old Testament, who created the material world in opposition to the

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[13] Iranaeus, *Against Heresies,* Book I:I:1.

supreme god. In this act of creation, the evil creator god entrapped pure spiritual beings within bodies of flesh, which were opaque, gross and sluggish. These beings (Adam and Eve in Christian forms of Gnosticism) were doomed to perpetuate this imprisonment of the spirit in the flesh through procreation. Gnostics believed that Christ, a purely spiritual "aeon" who merely appeared to have a material body, came to save men by giving them secret knowledge (Greek *gnosis*) that would allow them to escape the material world at death.

In the Gnostic doctrine of God, pagan polytheism approached and threatened Christianity. Gnosticism compromised or denied the church's convictions that there was one and only one God and that Christ was God in the fullest sense. The Apologists (especially Iranaeus[14] and Tertullian[15]) and the church at large were quick to recognize and repel this threat decisively. Against the Gnostic "heresy," Christians reaffirmed their beliefs that there is one God, that Christ was God, that the physical creation was "very good," and that Christ was also fully and really man. In rejecting Gnosticism, the church took a step toward the doctrine of the Trinity by rejecting the idea that Christ was a different and lesser god than either the God who created the world or the one supreme God. Gnostic-like ideas would surface again at the beginning of the fourth century in the teaching of Arius.

Unlike Gnosticism, Monarchianism, in both its forms, was motivated by the desire to protect and express very

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[14] Iranaeus, *Against Heresies* (circa. A.D.195). Iranaeus' work is an explanation of and refutation of many different Gnostic teachers and teachings. He argues in many different ways that the church had always held and taught that there is only one God who created the universe and who, in Christ, redeemed men.

[15] Tertullian wrote against numerous "heresies," but chief among them were variants of Gnosticism – for example see his *Against the Valentinians* and *Against Marcion* (circa.200, 210).

strongly the conviction that there is but one God who rules over all (hence Monarchianism or "one ruler"). Its two forms are very different answers to the problem - "If Jesus is God and the Father is God, how can we say that there is indeed only one God?" Though never widespread, these teachings gained some currency in the late third century. The church decisively rejected both as unsatisfactory.

Those who taught what has come to be called dynamic Monarchianism sought to maintain strict monotheism by rejecting the true deity of Christ. It is called "adoptionistic" or "dynamic" Monarchianism because it taught that Jesus, a worthy man, at a certain point (usually his baptism) was adopted by God as Messiah and indwelt by the "Logos." The Logos, in this case, was conceived, not as the second person of the godhead (as in John 1), but rather as an impersonal divine power (Grk. *dunamis*). Thus, Jesus Christ was not really God, but rather a God empowered man in this view. A sect called the Ebionites (circa. A.D. 100), Theodotus of Byzantium (fl. circa. 180 - 200), Artemas of Rome (mid third century), and Paul of Samostata (fl. circa 260 - 270) taught this view. Hippolytus (circa. A.D. 170-236) in his *The Refutation of All Heresies* described and rejected this teaching.[16] Once again, in recognizing and turning away from a teaching that it considered less than biblical, the church took a step toward clearer thinking and expression with regard to its faith. It reaffirmed its conviction that Christ was God by ruling out the explanation that this meant that He was merely a God-chosen and God-empowered man.

Modalistic Monarchianism, also known as Patripassionism ("the Father suffers") and Sabellianism (after its most influential teacher), taught that there was really no distinction between the Father, Son, and Spirit.

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[16] Hippoyltus, *Refutation of All Heresies,* Book 7: 22-23.

Its major proponents were Praxeas (fl. circa. 200), Noetus of Smyrna (late second century), and Sabellius of Pentapolis (early third century). Here the desire to express the belief in one and only God was so strong that it overshadowed the concept of a three-ness in God. "Father," "Son," and "Spirit" were considered to be merely different names for the one God. Or, again, they were presented as three successive modes of action of the one God – in the Old Testament, Father; in the Gospels, Son; in the church presently, Spirit. In the language used in the doctrine of the Trinity, modalistic Monarchianism taught that there was really only one person in the godhead who had three different names that described His three different roles. This view was most influential in the Latin speaking west, where Sabellius taught at Rome and even one of the bishops of Rome, Zephyrinus (died 217), seems to have accepted it as orthodox.[17]

Modalistic Monarchianism was refuted by a number of Christian thinkers. Tertullian is certainly the most noteworthy of these because in arguing against Modalistic Monarchianism he articulated quite clearly what would be accepted one hundred years later at the Council of Nicea as the doctrine of the Trinity.

> This heresy supposes itself to possess the pure truth, in thinking that one cannot believe in One Only God in any other way than by saying that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are the very selfsame Person. As if in this way also One were not All, in that All are of One, by unity (that is) of substance; while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded, which

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[17] Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies,* Book 9, 6. Hippolytus presents an very uncomplimentary picture of Zephyrinus- "an ignorant and illiterate individual, and one unskilled in ecclesiastical definitions."

distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in
their order the three *Persons* - the Father,
the Son, and the Holy Ghost.[18]

Here Tertullian not only uses the term "Trinity,"[19] but also
the two other terms which Latin Christians came to
accept as helpful for describing the unity and the three-
ness of God, "substance" and "Persons." Thus
Christians, in refuting Modalistic Monarchianism,
discovered stronger and more precise language to
express their knowledge of the one God who is Father,
Son, and Holy Spirit. They learned how to affirm their
belief in the "three-ness" which is in God in a stronger
way that they considered to be faithful to the Scriptures.

The historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity
through the second century then may be summarized in
this way. From the time of Christ and the apostles
Christians believed that there was one God, that Jesus
Christ was God, and that there was a three-ness in God.
In the second century Gnosticism, dynamic
Monarchianism, and modalisitic Monarchianism
challenged these beliefs. These challenges caused
leading Christians (known to us as the Apologists) to
think more critically and clearly about their beliefs and
reaffirm those beliefs with stronger and more precise
language. During the third century, as the thinking and
terminology of these men became widely known, the
whole church moved toward a Trinitarian consensus by
A. D. 300. Consensus was reached more quickly in the

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[18] Tertullian, *Against Praxeas, II.* This work dates from approximately
AD 210.

[19] The first use of "trinity" that we know of was by Theophilus in A.D.
188 in his *To Autolycus*, book II: chapter 15, "The three days [of
creation] which were before the luminaries are types of the trinity, of
God, and His Word, and His wisdom." Does this sentence assume
that the reader is familiar with the term or does it define "trinity" as
"God, His Word, and His Wisdom?"

less populous, Latin speaking, western Empire, because of the work Tertullian. The challenge presented by Arius in the first half of the fourth century accelerated this process in the eastern Empire and directed it along certain lines, but the process itself was well advanced even before the controversy with Arianism.

Little remains of the writings of Arius. Having been declared heretical, it may be that his writings were purposefully destroyed or simply not preserved through copying and recopying. This is unfortunate because the controversy that his teachings precipitated was an important catalyst in the refinement of Trinitarian doctrine. Reportedly Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and other Arians studied under Lucan (or Lucian) of Antioch, a disciple of Origen about whom very little is known. Lucan's martyrdom enhanced the reputation of his school and many of his pupils moved into important ecclesiastical positions. Arius became a deacon in the church at Alexandria, where he soon clashed with Alexander his bishop. Arius disagreed with Alexander's emphasis upon the unity of the godhead and charged him with modalism. Alexander, in turn, accused Arius of adoptionism and called a synod that expelled Arius (320/21). Arius sought and found refuge with Eusebius of Nicomedia who was sympathetic to Arius' views and quite influential in the imperial court (he later became the Bishop of Constantinople and baptized Constantine before the emperor's death in 337). Arius was evidently gifted as a composer of songs and poetry and was able to widely disseminate his teachings in these forms. Thus, the local quarrel between Alexander and Arius was raised to empire-wide importance and set Christians in Alexandria and Constantinople against one another.

Arius' views, as reported by Athanasius, were:

God was not always a Father. There was a time when God was not a Father. The Word of God was not always, but originated from things that were not; for God that is, has made him that was not of that which was not; wherefore there was a time when He was not; for the Son is a creature and a work. Neither is He like in essence to the Father; neither is He the true and natural Word of the Father; neither is He His true Wisdom; but He is one of the things made and created, and is called the Word and Wisdom by an abuse of terms, since He Himself originated by the proper Word of God, and by the Wisdom that is in God, by which God has made not only all other things but Him also. Wherefore He is by nature subject to change and variation as are all rational creatures. And the Word is foreign from the essence of the Father, and is alien and separated therefrom. And the Father cannot be described by the Son, for the Word does not know the Father perfectly and accurately, neither can He see Him perfectly. Moreover, the Son knows not His own essence as it really is; for He is made for us, that God might create us by Him, as by an instrument; and He would not have existed, had not God wished to create us. Accordingly, when some one asked them whether the Word of God can possibly change as the devil changed, they were not afraid to say that He can; for being something made and created, His nature is subject to change.[20]

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[20] *The Deposition of Arius,* 2. An encyclical from Alexander perhaps drafted by Athanasius himself. See also *Defense of the Nicene*

Thus, Arius viewed the Son as a creature. He denied that the Son was co-eternal with the Father, that the Son was equal with the Father, and that the Son and the Father were one in essence. He did give Christ a more exalted position than the dynamic Monarchians in that he viewed Christ as the first and foremost creature of God, rather than as a man who was adopted and empowered by God. Moreover, Arius' views were less extreme than the Gnostics in that He viewed the Son as a uniquely exalted being (in contrast to the many demigods in Gnostic myth) and he viewed the Son as fulfilling the intention of the Father in creating the world (in contrast to the Gnostic view that the material creation was evil). In this way, Arius' views were a more subtle and a more powerful challenge to the church's conviction that Christ was God. On the other hand, the church was better prepared to recognize and respond to Arius' views because of the challenges that had come before.

When Constantine defeated Licinius in 324 to become the sole ruler of the Empire, he found the churches of the east embroiled in controversy over Arius' views. He was distressed by this situation for political reasons and determined to end the matter. He sent his ecclesiastical adviser, Hosius of Cordova, on a mission of inquiry and conciliation and also called for a vast assembly of bishops at Ancyra. Upon arriving in Alexandria, Hosius sided with Alexander against Arius and then presided over a local synod in Antioch that attempted to excommunicate Eusebius of Caesarea for his neutrality toward Arius. Constantine interpreted Hosius' actions as an attempt to prejudge the issue and changed the location of the council to Nicaea where he could personally oversee the proceedings.

Defiinition, 6:3, by Athansasius and three letters of Arius in William Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy.*

The Council of Nicaea (325), first of the "ecumenical" councils, was attended by approximately 300 bishops, almost all Greek, with Hosius presiding.   Constantine immediately declared his support for Eusebius of Caesarea and denounced his censure. He also made it clear, however, that this did not mean that he supported Arius or his doctrines. The Council's deliberations resulted in the approval of the Nicene Creed and the condemnation of Arius' views. It is likely that very little, if any, of the Creed's wording was original. An important exception is the phrase "of the same essence as the Father" which may have been used here for the first time. The Creed seems to have combined, rather, wordings from several older local creeds (Profession of the Presbyters of Smyrna, Creed of Caesarea, others now lost).

> *We believe in one God, Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of His Father as only begotten,* ***that is, of the essence (ousia) of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made, of the same essence (homoousios) with the Father****, by whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things in earth; Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and became flesh and became man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into the heavens and comes to judge living and dead; and [we believe] in one Holy Spirit.*

> *But those who say "there was when He was not," or "before being begotten He was not," or "He was made out of things that were not" or those who say that the Son of God*

> *was from a different subsistance*
> *(hypostasis) or being (ousia) or a creature,*
> *or capable of change or alteration, these*
> *the catholic and apostolic church*
> *anathematizes.*

The Creed was signed by all but two of the attending bishops. This remarkable agreement, however, was possible only because the terms of the creed could be understood differently by the opposing parties. "Of the same essence" (homoousios), most importantly, could be interpreted as broad, generic equality by the Arians, or as specific, essential identity by the party of Alexander and Athanasius (the Arians later argued that such an understanding was modalism). The moderate majority, led by Eusebius of Caesarea, accepted the Creed in the interest of peace and probably did not fully appreciate the danger of the Arian position. The Council of Nicaea, therefore, wounded Arianism, but the blow was not a fatal one. It remained for the generation of theologians after Nicaea to clarify the intent of the Creed in such a way as to achieve true understanding and consensus.

Athanasius (c. 296-373), like Arius, was a deacon under Alexander of Alexandria. Unlike Arius, however, he was completely loyal to his bishop's theology. Although he had no official role in the Council of Nicaea, his service to Alexander as his secretary certainly contributed to the outcome. When Alexander died in 328, Athanasius was made bishop of Alexandria by popular acclaim. He became a skilled theologian, a prolific writer, and the chief defender of the Nicene Creed during the fourth century. He wrote On the Incarnation, Against the Gentiles, An Exposition of the Faith Apology against the Arians, Discourses against the Arians, History of the Arians, and other expositional and polemical works. In the resurgence of Arianism that followed Nicaea, Athanasius was often the target of the Arian attack,

suffering exile five times. It was largely through his tenacity and tireless explanation, however, that the Nicene Creed achieved almost universal acceptance among Greek and Latin speaking Christians as an accurate expression of their faith.

Two factors contributed to the surprising resurgence of Arianism after Nicaea. First, because of the close association of the eastern Church with the imperial court at Constantinople, the Arians were protected as long as they outwardly agreed with the Nicene Creed. As mentioned above, the foremost concern of Constantine and his successors Constantius II (337-61) and Valens (364-78) was the unity of the empire. The Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia was particularly adept at maintaining his influence in the court. He was able, in fact, to find grounds upon which to have three of the leading defenders of Nicaea exiled (Eustace of Antioch, Athanasius, and Marcellus of Ancyra).

Second, the Arians were able to take advantage of the growing tension between the East and West. Because of the difference in language and terms (Greek - *ousia*, *hypostasis*; Latin - *substantia, persona*) the East suspected the West of modalistic Monarchianism. The Arians loudly denounced modalism and their argument that insistence upon the unity of the Godhead (a single ousia or essence) and the equality of the Persons amounted to modalism seemed plausible. Moreover, the exiled bishops Athanasius and Marcellus had taken refuge in the West and were admitted to communion in Rome by Bishop Julius. Some eastern bishops felt that this strengthened the claim by Rome of being a higher court of appeal, a claim that they resented. The West, in turn, suspected the East of Arianism (extreme subordination of the Son to the point of considering the Son a creature). In fact this suspicion was true only of a politically influential minority, but it could hardly be

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refuted as long as Eusebius of Nicomedia, the leading proponent of Arianism, was the bishop of Constantinople.

As the Arians became more powerful in the East and consolidated their position, they also became more confident in stating their beliefs openly. Radical Arians, such as George of Alexandria and Eudoxius of Antioch, offended the conservative majority by blatantly denying the orthodoxy of Nicea and the deity of the Son. Meanwhile, Athanasius, from his exile in the Egyptian desert, poured out pamphlets. Athanasius' greatest contribution was to see the intimate connection between the doctrine of Christ's deity and the doctrine of salvation. He pressed the argument over and over in different ways that if Christ was not fully God he could not do what only God could do - save men from their sins. He argued that if Christ was not fully God as well as fully man, he could not completely bridge the chasm between God and man. But Christians believe that Christ has saved them, that He has bridged the chasm, and therefore Christians must confess that Christ is fully God.

Athanasius recognized that to achieve consensus of expression and teaching (doctrine) among Christians it was much more important to focus on intention than on simple verbal agreement. He realized that the conservative majority who hesitated to accept the term *homoousia* rightly feared modalism but, at the same time, really did agree with the central intention of the Nicaea Creed – to affirm Christ's complete deity. Little by little he was able to persuade this group that the term *homoousia* could and should be used to affirm the unity of God, without denying the distinction between the three persons - Father, Son, Spirit. By his death in A. D. 373 the battle against Arianism had been all but won.

At Athanasius' death the three "Cappadocian Fathers," Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzius, and Gregory

of Nyssa emerged as the champions of Trinitarian doctrine in the Eastern Church. They argued that the Christian concept of God could be best expressed in the formula "one essence (*homoousia),* three subsistences (*hypostases).*" Athanasius had recognized the legitimacy of this use of terms, but had preferred to retain the usage of the Nicene Creed (where *ousia* and *hypostasis* are used as synonyms). The Cappadocians' writing and preaching won broad support for this formula (one essence; subsistences) and fixed the usage of these theological terms in the Eastern Church. The Cappadocians also clarified and extended Trinitarian thought and expression with respect to the Holy Spirit.

The Council of Constantinople in A. D. 381 reaffirmed and refined the wording of Creed of Nicaea and added a fuller statement regarding the Holy Spirit. In the Western Empire Trinitarian issues were not contested so thoroughly. Tertullian's terms "trinity," "substance," and "persons" seem to have given Latin speaking Christians a means to express their faith clearly, while requiring less explanation or qualification than the Greek terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*. The classic expression of western or Latin Trinitarianism was given by Augustine in *On the Trinity* (A. D. 419).

Biblical Evidence in Support of the Doctrine of the Trinity

It is too much to claim that the Old Testament explicitly teaches the doctrine of the Trinity. Nevertheless Christians find the doctrine implied or suggested in the Old Testament. Among the specific points and passages they note: 1) the distinct roles of God, the Spirit of God and the word of God in creation (Genesis 1:1-4); 2) *Elohim*, one of the most prevalent names of God is plural in form; 3) plural pronouns are sometimes used in

reference to God ("let us make man in our image" Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8); 4) in other cases plural verbs are used of God (Genesis 20:13; 35:7); 5) Psalm 45:6-7 "Oh God . . . Thy God has anointed you." (Cited in Hebrews 1:8 as a proof of Christ's deity); 6) Psalm 110:1 "The Lord says to my Lord" (cited by Jesus in Matt 22:44 to show that the Messiah was more than David's son); 7) Isaiah 44:6 "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts . . ."; 8) Daniel 7:13-14 "One like the Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him."; 9) Hosea 1:6-7 "the Lord said, ' . . . I will deliver them by the Lord their God.'"; 10) threefold formulas (Numbers 6:24-26; Isaiah 6:3); 11) the personification of eternal wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-31; 12) the remarkable appearances of the "Angel of the Lord" (Genesis 16:7-13; 18:1-2, 22; 19:24, 22:11,16; 31:11,133; 48:15,16; Exodus 3:2,4,5; Judges 8:20-22); 13) Isaiah 63:8-11 "the [Lord] said, 'Surely, they are my people' . . . He became their savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted . . . they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit"; 14) passages which indicate that the Messiah is God (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6); 15) passages which seem to distinguish God and the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 139:7; Isaiah 48:16; Ezekiel 2:2; 8:3; Zechariah 7:12).

Regarding the relation of the New Testament writers' very clear and definite Trinitarian perspective to the Old Testament, it is difficult to improve upon the observations of B. B. Warfield:

> The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows

it, but only perfected, extended, and enlarged. . . . It is important that the continuity of the revelation of God contained in the two Testaments should not be overlooked or obscured. . . . We cannot help perceiving with great clearness in the New Testament abundant evidence that its writers felt no incongruity whatever between their doctrine of the Trinity and the Old Testament conception of God. The New Testament writers certainly were not conscious of being "setters forth of strange gods." To their own apprehension they worshipped and proclaimed just the God of Israel; and they laid no less stress than the Old Testament upon His unity (Jn. xvii. 3; I Cor. viii. 4; I Tim . ii. 5). They do not, then place two new gods by the side of Jehovah as alike with Him to be served and worshipped; they conceive Jehovah as Himself at once Father, Son and Spirit. . . . Obviously they understood themselves, and wish to be understood, as setting forth in the Father, Son and Spirit just the one God that the God of the Old Testament revelation is. . . . The God of the Old Testament was their God, and their God was a Trinity, and their sense of the identity of the two was so complete that no question as to it was raised in their minds.[21]

Warfield's point should be kept in mind in considering the New Testament passages that relate to the doctrine of the Trinity. Whatever the New Testament writers say about God they say with a firm grasp on Jewish monotheism. Their new faith in Christ in no way diminished their conviction that there was one and only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6, 8b; 45:5a; Mark

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[21] Benjamin Warfield, Biblical and Theological Studies, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity," 30-32.

12:29; Acts 17:22-32; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19).

As noted above there are several Old Testament passages which suggest, at least to Christian readers, that the Messiah is God (Psalm 65:6-7; Psalm 110:1; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6). This idea becomes explicit in the New Testament. Perhaps the most direct affirmation of the deity of Christ is John 1:1, "The Word was God." Another very strong text is John 1:18, where Jesus is referred to as "the only-begotten God." Hebrews 1:8 specifically argues the Son is God by quoting Psalms 45:6 "Thy throne, Oh God" and identifying the Son as the one to whom the phrase is spoken. In Paul's writings Jesus Christ is called "our great God" (Titus 2:13) and "God over all" (Romans 9:5). Paul further declares that "in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). Peter uses the expression "our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:1)

The idea that Jesus Christ is God is stated less directly, but no less definitely in other ways in the New Testament. In the gospels, Jesus' acceptance of the title "Son of God" (Matthew 4:6; 8:29; 14:33; 27:40; 43, 54; Mark 3:11; 15:39; Luke 4:41; 22:70; John 1:34, 49; 11:27) and His use of this title for Himself (John 5:25; 9:35; 11:4; 10:36) are, especially in Hebrew thought, a claim of equal status and authority with God (John 16:15; 17:10). John especially takes care to point this out. "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18; See also 19:7 where they accuse Him of blasphemy for claiming to be God's Son).

Jesus also stated, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Once again, his listeners understood Him to be

guilty of blasphemy, because "You, being a man, make yourself out to be God" (John 10:33). Some argue that John 17:11, 21, 22, (Jesus' prayer that His followers would be one as He and the Father are one) indicate that Jesus' hearers misunderstood what He meant by being one with the Father, since His prayer in chapter 17 can't mean that men should become God. In fact, His prayer does not actually ask that Christians should be one with the Father, but that merely they should be one with each other with the same degree of intimacy that the Son shares with the Father. The relationship of the Son with the Father is the ideal toward which the imperfect relationships of Christian to Christian should grow. Moreover, it must be noted that neither Jesus as reported by John nor John himself as narrator tells us that the Jews' conclusion in 10:33 was wrong and offers a correction. On the contrary, it appears that John wants his readers to come to the same conclusion that the Jews did – that Jesus claimed to be God.

Jesus' affirmation that "Before Abraham was, I am" in John 8:58 strongly suggests identity with Jehovah who identified Himself as "I am who I am" to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Moreover, the unusual use of the present tense here is understood as a claim by Jesus to eternal existence. Jesus did not merely say, "Before Abraham was, I was." In other passages Jesus is said to have existed before creation (John 17:50) and "in the beginning" (John 1:1). Once again, John points out that the Jews in this instance understood Jesus to be claiming to be equal with God and "picked up stones to stone him." It is difficult to understand why they would have reacted in this way had they understood Him simply to be claiming to be a man who was older than Abraham. In that case they might have considered him a madman but hardly worthy of stoning.

Still other New Testament passages assume or imply the full deity of the Son in other ways. In Matthew 1:23

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Jesus is called Immanuel or "God with us." Matthew 11:27, 24:36; Mark 8:32; and Luke 10:22 stress the uniqueness of the Son in knowing and revealing the Father. Christ is the "image of God" and in His face we find the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 4:5-6; see also Colossians 1:15). In this vein Jesus claimed that those who have seen Him have seen the Father (John 14:9). Jesus and the Father are said to be "in" one another (John 10:38). Jesus said that He came not just from the presence of God (John 16:30), or even just from fellowship with God (John 16:27; 17:8), but "out of" God (John 8:42; 16:28). It is said that Jesus employs the Spirit of God and the "finger of God" to accomplish miracles (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20). Who but God could do this? Thomas addressed Jesus as, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28) In Revelation 5, the Lamb who was slain (certainly Jesus Christ) appears "in the center of the throne" (5:6; this is the throne of God, see 4:10-11; see also Rev 7:17) and has the "seven spirits of God." Paul, as recorded by Luke (Acts 20:28), said that the Church was redeemed "by the blood of God." In Philippians 2:6-11 Paul tells us that the pre-incarnate Christ "existed in the form of God" (was God both in essence and in faithful manifestation of His essence); that "He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (taken or held onto unjustly as in an act of robbery; equality with God was His own proper possession); and that His is "a name above every other name." In Colossians 1:16-20 Paul predicates a number of things of Christ which might only be said of God: all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, were created by Him and for Him; He is before all things; in Him all things hold together.

Within the assumption of Jewish monotheism, it is difficult to understand Hebrews 1 as anything but a reasoned proof that Jesus Christ is God. The author argues that Jesus is God because: 1) He alone is called God's Son in the Old Testament (1:5) 2) He is higher than the angels

and the angels are to worship and serve Him (1:6-7; assumption - God alone is higher than the angels) 3) He is called "God" and "Lord" in the Old Testament (1:8, 10) 4) His throne will last forever (1:8) 5) In the beginning (reference to Genesis 1:1) He created the heavens and the earth and at the end of time will dispose of them (1:10-11) 6) He will never change and is eternal (1:12).

Two additional lines of evidence that the Bible teaches that Jesus is God are provided in attachments 1 and 2. These are passages which attribute the same titles and actions to Jesus as those attributed to Jehovah in the Old Testament and New Testament passages which indicate that "worship" is properly given to Jesus.

Less attention is often given to the deity of the Holy Spirit than the deity of the Son both by attackers and defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover, some have raised the question of whether the Holy Spirit can be properly considered a "Person," as opposed to an impersonal divine force or power. There is ample evidence, however, that the Bible presents the Holy Spirit both as God and as a person.   The Spirit is said to possess the following attributes of personality: will (1 Corinthians 12:11); thought (Romans 8:27); knowledge (1 Corinthians 2:10-11); language (1 Corinthians 2:13); love (Romans 15:30); goodness (Nehemiah 9:20). As a person, the Holy Spirit can be lied to (Acts 5:3); grieved (Ephesians 4:30); resisted (Acts 7:51); outraged (Hebrews 10:29); blasphemed against (Matthew 12:31); and tempted (Exodus 17:2-7; Hebrews 3:7-9).[22]

Passages which demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is God include: 1) Acts 5:3-4, the Spirit is specifically called God; 2) John 14:16-26; John 16:5-15, the intimate relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit; 3) John 14:17, 23, in

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[22] Rene Pache's treatment of this point in *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, pp 11-13, is very helpful.

the coming of the Spirit, the Father and the Son will come to be with the believer; 4) 1 Corinthians 2:11, the Spirit of God is related to God as the spirit of man is to man   5) Romans 8:10ff, if the Spirit dwells in us, God dwells in us; 6) 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:20-22, because the Spirit dwells in us we are considered to be temples of God (see also 1 Corinthians 3:16); 7) 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, like the Father, the Spirit is omniscient, knowing even the "depths of God;" 8) Genesis 1:2; Psalms 104:30, the Spirit shares in the work of creation; 9) Exodus 17:2-7; Hebrews 3:7-9, the Holy Spirit is identified as Jehovah whom the Israelites tempted in the wilderness. 10) Isaiah 6:8-10; Acts 28:25-27, the Holy Spirit is identified as the Lord whom Isaiah saw seated upon His throne. 11) Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 10:15-17, the Holy Spirit is identified as the Lord who promised a new covenant.

The "three-ness" in God is assumed or specifically mentioned in numerous passages in the New Testament: 1) the annunciation accounts in Matthew 1:18ff and Luke 1:35ff , "the Holy Ghost will come upon you," "the power of the Most High will overshadow you," and "the holy thing which is to be born shall be called the Son of God." 2) the accounts of baptism of Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:16,17; Mark 1:10,11; Luke 3:21,22; John 1:32-34) where the Son is baptized, the Father speaks from heaven, and the Spirit descends as a dove. 3) the baptismal formula, Matthew 28:19. There is certainly a reference here to "the name," in the very Hebrew Old Testament sense (Deuteronomy 28:58; Isaiah 30:27; 59:19; Leviticus 24:11; Jeremiah 14:9; 15:16; Isaiah 63:19). 4) In Jesus' explanations of the coming of the Holy Spirit in John 14 and 16 He refers often to the Father, to Himself, and to the Spirit. 5) In Paul's writings: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Ephesians 1:3-14 (one sentence in Greek); 2:18; 2:20-22; 3:2-5, 3:14-17; 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 6) 1 Peter 1:2; 7) Jude 20,21.

These references and others establish this "three-ness" as more than merely three names for the same essence or merely three different modes of action of a single divine essence. The distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is appropriately described as the distinction between three different persons since attributes of personality (thought, speech, will, emotion, etc.) are attributed to each of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit individually.

The passages above demonstrate that the following propositions are found in the Bible: that there is one and only one God, that Jesus Christ is God, that the Holy Spirit is God, and that there is a three-ness in God. The teaching that God is one Essence subsisting in three Persons, or Three Persons who equally participate in one Essence, is helpful way of summarizing and coordinating these propositions without diminishing or denying their proper biblical force.

November, 1999
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A Comparison of Jesus As Jehovah

Of Jehovah	Mutual Title or Act	Of Jesus
Isaiah 40:28	Creator	John 1:3
Isaiah 45:22, 43:11	Saviour	John 4:42
1 Samuel 2:6	Raise Dead	John 5:21
Joel 3:12	Judge	John 5:27, cf. Matthew 25:31 ff.
Isaiah 60:19-20	Light	John 8:12
Exodus 3:14	I Am	John 8:58, cf. 18:5-6
Psalm 23:1	Shepherd	John 10:11
Isaiah 42:8; cf. 48:11	Glory of God	John 17:1, 5
Isaiah 41:4; 44:6	First and Last	Revelation 1:17; 2:8
Hosea 13:14	Redeemer	Revelation 5:9
Isaiah 62:5	Bridegroom	Revelation 21:2, cf.
Hosea 2:16		Matthew 25:1 ff.
Psalm 18:2	Rock	1 Corinthians 10:4
Jeremiah 31:34	Forgiver of Sins	Mark 2:7-10
Psalm 148:2	Worshipped by Angels	Hebrews 1:6
Throughout the Old Testament	Addressed in Prayer	Acts 7:59
Psalm 148:5	Creator of Angels	Colossians 1:16
Isaiah 45:23	Confessed as Lord	Philippians 2:11

Attachment 1
The use of the word "Worship" in the New Testament:

PROSKUNEO - to make obeisance, do reverence to (from pros, towards, and kuneo, to kiss) is the most frequent word rendered to worship.

It is used of an act of homage or reference to God the Father:

Matthew 4:10   "Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

John 4:21-24   "Jesus declared, 'Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and now has come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and truth.'"

1 Corinthians 14:25 "… and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you.'"

Revelation 4:10   "… the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever…"

Revelation 5:14   "The four living creatures said, 'Amen,' and the elders fell down and worshipped."

Revelation 7:11   "All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying …"

Revelation 11:6   "And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying… "

Revelation 19:10   "At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'Don't do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'"

Revelation 22:9   "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, 'Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!'"

It is also used for Christ:

Matthew 2:1-2   "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.'"

Matthew 2:8   "He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'"

Matthew 2:11   "On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and the bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh."

Matthew 8:2   "A man with leprosy came and knelt (proskuneo) before him and said, 'Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean.'"

Matthew 9:18   "While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt (proskuneo) before him and said, 'My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.'"

Matthew 14:33   "Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying 'Truly you are the Son of God.'"

Matthew 15:25   "The woman came and knelt (proskuneo) before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said.'"

Matthew 20:20   "Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling (proskuneo) down, asked a favor of him."

Matthew 28:9   "Suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him."
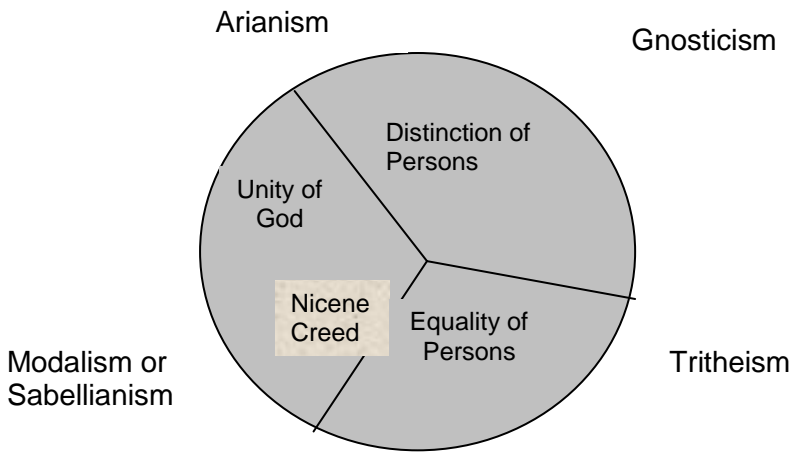
Matthew 28:17   "When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted."

John 9:38   "Then the man said, 'Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him."

Hebrew 1:6   "And again, when God brings forth his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'"

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TRINITARIANISM

Arianism

Gnosticism

Distinction of
Persons

Unity of
God

Nicene
Creed

Equality of
Persons

Modalism or
Sabellianism

Tritheism

Adoptionism
 Modalism/ Sabellianism/ Patripassionism – God
manifests Himself in 3 modes, as rays of light from the
sun. There are no distinctions within the Godhead.
"Father," "Son," "Spirit" are simply different names for the
same reality. One may even speak of the "Son-Father."
Ancient- Noetus of Symrna, Praxeus, Sabellius; Modern-
sometimes liberalism, Schliermacher's doctrine of God,
Paul Tillich, "Jesus only" Pentecostalism.

Adoptionism – That God "adopted" the human Jesus at
birth or at baptism and empowered him to accomplish his
purposes. Ancient- Theodotus, Artemon, Paul of
Samosata; Modern- deism, Unitarianism (Channing),
often liberalism, Schleiermacher's and Ritschl's doctrine
of Christ.

Tritheism – 3 distinct, but equally divine gods; never
seems to have been a live option in the early church,
probably because of the strong tradition of monotheism
within Judaism and aversion to Greek and Roman
polytheism.

Gnosticism – In most of its forms, Gnosticism was polytheistic, positing many, diverse supernatural beings, which might help or hinder man on his upward path to salvation from matter and evil. Ancient- Simon Magnus (?), Cerinthus, Satornilus, Basilides, Valentinus, others; Modern- Mormonism, "new age", Hinduism, some American Indian or other animist beliefs, occultism.

Arianism – Arius taught absolute monotheism, that the Father alone was eternal and uncreated. The Son was not an emanation of the Father or any part of His substance. The Son was rather created, begotten, or made "before the ages." The Son is unique in his glory and position because through him the Father created everything else. He was the "firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). The "Word" that was with God in the beginning (Jn 1:1) is an immanent reason within God, an eternal attribute of God, and different from the Son, who was begotten and therefore had a beginning. Ancient – Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Eunomius, the "Christian" Vandals, Visigothhs, and Lombards; Modern – Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormonism.

TRINITARIANISM

The Translation Problem

GREEK		LATIN
ousia	=	substantia
hypostatis		
prosopon	=	persona

As used in Nicene Creed the Greek terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* were synonymous, used to affirm the common essence of the Father and Son. Since both were translated by *substantia* in Latin, when the East sought to use *hypostasis* to describe the three individual subsistences, this sounded like tritheism to the West.

Prosopon, the Greek term usually used to translate *persona*, most often meant "character," "role, or "the mask of an actor. " Thus, when the West affirmed God in three persons, the East suspected them of Sabellianism,

The challenge for the East in affirming its Trinitarian faith was to clearly define the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis,* and to use *ousia* consistently of the common divine essence, while using *hypostasis* of the three subsistences or persons. This process was begun by Athanasius and completed by the three Cappadocians, Basil ("the Great") of Caesarea, his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory and Nazianzus.

Tertullian began the conscious development of Trinitarian doctrine in the West. He was the first to use the term "trinity." This development reached its climax in the ancient Latin church in Augustine's *On the Trinity.*

We believe in one God, Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of His Father as only begotten. . . . , that is of the essence of the Father, God; begotten, not made, of the same essence with the Father, by whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things in earth; Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and became flesh and became man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into the heavens and comes to judge the living and dead; and we believe in the Holy Spirit. But those who say there was when He was not, and before being begotten He was not, and He was made out of things that were not or those who say that the Son of God was from a different subsistence or being or a creature, or capable of change or alteration, these the catholic and apostolic church anathematizes.   *Creed of Nicea, AD 325*