

The Evolution of God

7. The Emperor's New Clothes

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The Christian assembly at Antioch was the Apostle Paul's home assembly, the launching pad for the entire Pauline mission to the Gentiles. Of the early writers quoted previously in support of the Son's origin at the beginning of creation as Word and Wisdom, some were bishops of the Antioch assembly. Ignatius, disciple of John, was the second bishop of Antioch, and Theophilus was the eighth. Both bishops held to a theology identical with that of Justin of Rome.

The assembly in Antioch continued to maintain the apostolic doctrines until about AD 260 when Paul of Samosata was appointed bishop. Paul began teaching an "adoptionist" view of Christ that He was not literally "begotten" out of God but was "adopted" as God Son at His baptism. This of course denied any pre-human origin and existence which had been a major part of the Christian Faith in the Antioch assembly and passed down by its previous bishops.¹ Synods of the surrounding bishops were called to examine Paul's orthodoxy as well as reports of his unchristian practices. At the third Synod of Antioch in AD 268 Paul was deposed from his office, but refused to leave the church and parsonage. The bishops had to appeal to the emperor in order to remove him by force.

At about the same time Lucian, a textual scholar, headed the Christian school at Antioch and was an associate of Paul. He was known as a nemesis and antagonist to Origen and his theological school at Alexandria where Trinitarianism was taking shape. Antioch opposed the Alexandrian syncretism with Greek philosophy and the heavy use of the allegorical method of exegesis of Scripture employed by them. Lucian was also deposed for a time because of suspicion of his views and association with Paul. But he was afterwards restored into fellowship with the Antioch church.

Arius of Alexandria:

Late in the third century, a presbyter in the church in Alexandria by the name of Arius sought to counter the spread of full-blown Trinitarianism in the Christian assemblies, including his own, especially the form presented by Origen and Gregory, which was also held by his own pastor, Alexander. Arius is said to have formerly been a student of the

¹ Socinian Unitarians (Biblical Unitarians) sometimes claim Paul of Samosata as holding their views and evidence that their "adoptionist" view is ancient.

Antiochian school in Antioch and was heavily influenced by their literal method of interpretation of Scripture. Living in Alexandria, Arius was faced head on with Origen's school and his own Alexandrian assembly where syncretism between Christianity and Platonism was running rampant.

Arius could not stomach the co-equal and co-eternal Trinity that had fully enveloped his Christian community at Alexandria. It was wholly incompatible with monotheism in his mind. However, in his zeal to defend monotheism, Arius went too far, deviating from the Antiochian view of Ignatius, Theophilus and Tatian on one critical point. The earliest writers insisted that the Son was "begotten" out of the Father's own substance as His first act – "the Beginning." He was therefore of the same substance, essence, or "kind" as God Himself, since kind begets like kind. The only-begotten Son's subordinate position to the Father in both origin and authority solved the monotheism problem in early second century Christianity as taught in the Antiochian school.

However, Arius did not think the subordination of the Son to the Father went far enough to maintain Christian monotheism against polytheism. Like Melito, Tertullian, and Novatian, Arius' mind was colored by the same incorrect philosophical presupposition that produced two natures in Christ at the same time (Christ being cloaked in human flesh).

The Christian historian Socrates described Arius' objection to the teaching of Alexander, his Trinitarian pastor, as follows:

"If," said he [Arius], 'the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows, that he had his substance from nothing.'"²

While the underlined statement is a necessary logical inference, the last sentence above is a logical leap without justification. And this leap was Arius' major error and departure from the Antiochian school. Socrates continued by including a general letter written by Arius' former pastor, Alexander, who excommunicated him, to the other assemblies warning them against Arius. Here is how Alexander described Arius' "heresy."

"The dogmas they [the Arians] have invented and assert, contrary to the Scriptures, are these: That God was not always the Father, but that there was a period when he was not the Father; that the Word of God was not from eternity but was made out of nothing; for that the ever-existing God ('the I AM' — the eternal One) made him who

² Socrates, Bk. I, ch. v

did not previously exist, out of nothing; wherefore there was a time when he did not exist, inasmuch as the Son is a creature and a work. That he is neither like the Father as it regards his essence, nor is by nature either the Father's true Word, or true Wisdom, but indeed one of his works, whereby God both made all things and him also. Wherefore he is as to his nature mutable and susceptible of change, as all other rational creatures are: hence the Word is alien to and other than the essence of God; and the Father is inexplicable by the Son, and invisible to him, for neither does the Word perfectly and accurately know the Father, neither can he distinctly see him. The Son knows not the nature of his own essence: for he was made on our account, in order that God might create us by him, as by an instrument; nor would he ever have existed, unless God had wished to create us.

Some one accordingly asked them whether the Word of God could be changed, as the devil has been, and they feared not to say, 'Yes, he could; for being begotten, he is susceptible of change.' We then, with the bishops of Egypt and Libya, being assembled together to the number of nearly a hundred, have anathematized Arius for his shameless avowal of these heresies, together with all such as have countenanced them."³

It is not difficult to see that at the core of the disagreement between Arius and Alexander was the very issue raised by Celsus more than a century earlier. It was the question of how the Son of God could undergo "change" to become Man. The Antioch bishops (and presumably the school headed by Lucian) taught Kenosis, stressing Christ's change to full humanity after having "emptied Himself," and that His miracles were done by the Father working through Him, not by alleged cloaked, inherent divinity. But instead of merely arguing for Kenosis, in which the Son's divine nature could and did undergo transformation to human nature, Arius instead sought to maintain the Greek axiom concerning the impossibility of change and to solve the problem another way. Arius denied that Logos the Son was begotten of God's own essence and thus of like "kind." Arius used the terms "begotten" and "created" as though there was no distinction.

Both Arius and his Trinitarian pastor Alexander had the same faulty presupposition that divinity by nature cannot be subject to change, thus a Son of like "kind" with God cannot be subject to change. Yet their solutions were completely different. Arius solved the problem by claiming that in the beginning, the Son of God was created out of an essence (unlike God's) which was subject to change. Alexander, on the other hand, following Melito, Tertullian, Novatian, and Origen, claimed that the eternal and alleged immutable substance or essence of God was also that of the begotten Son, solving the problem of change by accepting the Platonic version – "hyspostatic union" – the alleged two natures.

³ Socrates, Bk. I, ch. vi

Arius, however, sealed his own fate by demoting the preincarnate Son to the status of a created being. In doing so, Arius handed the Alexandrian Trinitarians sufficient ammunition to have him excommunicated from that assembly. His own pastor, Alexander, became his antagonist and accuser. Yet, excommunication did not stop Arius but propelled him forward. He gained many converts to his way of thinking by denouncing the many problems and inconsistencies of Alexandrian Trinitarianism and its two-natured human-divine Jesus Christ, so much so that the very public fight between Alexandrian Trinitarians and Arians threatened to tear Christianity apart.

It is important to stress, however, that Alexandrian Trinitarianism and Arianism accounted for only a fraction of the churches throughout the empire. Yet these two factions were making a lot of noise because of their ongoing public battle. In Rome, the subordinate Trinitarianism of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Hippolytus was the dominant view. The oneness view of Praxeas, Noetus, and Sabellius continued in some local assemblies, as did even Montanism itself in a few places. The oldest documented view which had been espoused by the several writers quoted previously had by no means disappeared. Just because some theologians embraced subordinate Trinitarianism or the newer co-equal, co-eternal Trinitarianism does not mean the trend towards Trinitarianism was monolithic. Many, if not most, were unaware or uninvolved in the theological fights or the evolution of Christianity that had been taking place in North Africa, Rome, and Alexandria. The earliest recorded view was still being handed down in many if not most Christian assemblies prior to the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.

Eusebius of Caesarea:

Eusebius of Caesarea, the famous Christian historian of the fourth century, figures prominently in the events leading up to the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 which addressed the Arian controversy. Most of what we know about the council and Constantine's involvement comes from Eusebius' works. Many have incorrectly claimed that Eusebius was an Arian. While it is true that Eusebius had many things in common with Arius, on the critical question of whether the preincarnate Son was begotten out of God and thus of like "kind" with God, Eusebius absolutely did not agree with Arius. This is shown clearly in his work, "*Proof of the Gospel*," written before the Council of Nicaea about AD 313.

"For God willed to beget a Son, and established a second light, in all things made like unto Himself. Since, then, the unbegotten and eternal light is one, how could there be any other image of it, except the ray, which itself is light, preserving in all respects its likeness to its prototype? And how could there be an image of the One itself, unless it were the same as it in being one? So that a likeness is implied not only of the essence of the first, but also one of numerical quantity, for one perfect

*Being comes of the one eternal light, and the first and only-begotten Issue was not different.*⁴

Thus, Eusebius was in full agreement with the earliest writers – Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Barnabas, Aristides, Justin, Tatian and Theophilus of Antioch, and even Irenaeus of Lyons regarding Kenosis. Eusebius' partial agreement with Arius concerned the claim that there was a time when the Father was not a "father," and that the Son had a definite origin of His Person. But this was also indicated by the earlier writers and explicitly stated by Tertullian before he became a Montanist and Trinitarian. The views of Eusebius accurately reflected the earliest views of those closest to the Apostles themselves! Eusebius' own thinking reflected the earliest tradition preserved down to his time in assembly at Antioch and elsewhere. Thus, it is clear that pristine apostolic monotheism still survived and flourished in many places despite the corruption introduced by pseudo-revelation and Greek philosophy. The following quotations from Eusebius "Proof of the Gospel" establish this without doubt. Prior to Nicaea, Eusebius was in full agreement with the earliest writers. Eusebius writes of God as follows:

*"Now common to all men is the doctrine of **God, the First and the Eternal, Alone, Unbegotten and Supreme Cause of the Universe**, Lord of lords, and King of kings. ... For since God, Who is alone good and the Source and Spring of everything good, had willed to make many partakers of His own treasures, He purposed to create the whole reasoning creation, (comprising) unembodied, intelligent and divine powers, angels and archangels, spirits immaterial and in all ways pure, and souls of men as well endued with undetermined liberty of Free-willed Choice between right and wrong, and to give them whatever bodily organs they were to possess, suitable to the variety of their lives, with countries and places natural to them all. (For to those who had remained good He gave the best places, and to those who did not He gave fit abodes, places of discipline for their perverse inclinations.)*

"He, foreseeing the future in His foreknowledge, as God must, and aware that as in a vast body all these things about to be would need a head, thought that He ought to subordinate them all to One Governor of the Whole Creation, ruler and king of the Universe, as also the holy oracles of the earliest Hebrew theologians and prophets mystically teach. From which it is to be learned, that there is one principle of the Universe, nay more, one even before the principle, and born before the first, and of earlier being than the Monad, and greater than every Name, Who cannot be named, nor explained, nor sought out, the good, the cause of all, the Creator, the Beneficent, the Prescient, the Saving, Himself the One and

⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea, Demonstratio Evangelica, Bk. IV, chs. iii, (Tr. W.J. Ferrar, 1920)

Only God, from Whom are all things, and for Whom are all things: 'For in him we live and move, and have our being'."

*"And the fact that He wills it, is the sole cause of all things that exist coming into being and continuing to be. For it comes of His will, and He wills it, because He happens to be good by nature. For nothing else is essential by nature to a good person except to will what is good. And what He wills, He can effect. Wherefore, having both the will and the power, He has ordained for Himself, without let or hindrance, everything beautiful and useful both in the visible and invisible world, making His own Will and Power as it were a kind of material and substratum of the genesis and constitution of the Universe, so that it is no longer reasonable to say that anything that exists must have come from the non-existent, for that which came from the non-existent would not be anything. For how could that which is non-existent cause something else to exist? Everything that has ever existed or now exists derives its being from the One, **the only existent and pre-existent Being**, Who also said: "I am the existent,"⁵ because, you will see, as the Only Being, and the Eternal Being, He is Himself the cause of existence to all those to whom He has imparted existence from Himself by His Will and His Power, and gives existence to all things, and their powers and forms, richly and ungrudgingly from Himself."⁶*

Regarding the origin and nature of the Son of God, Eusebius writes:

*"And then He makes first of all existences next to Himself **His child, the first-born Wisdom**, altogether formed of Mind and Reason and Wisdom, or rather Mind itself, Reason itself, and Wisdom itself, and if it be right to conceive anything else among things that have come into being that is Beauty itself, and Good itself, **taking it from Himself, He lays it Himself as the first foundation of what is to come into being afterwards, He is the perfect creation of a perfect Creator, the wise edifice of a wise Builder, the good Child of a good Father**, and assuredly to them that afterwards should receive existence through Him, friend and guardian, saviour and physician, and helmsman holding the rudder-lines of the creation of the universe. In agreement with which the oracles in theological phrase call Him, "God-begotten," **as alone bearing in Himself the image of the Godhead**, that cannot be explained in word, or conceived in thought, through which image (they say that) **He is God, and that He is called so, because of this primary likeness, and also for this reason, too, that He was appointed by the Father His good Minister, in order that as if by one all-wise and living instrument, and rule of art and knowledge, the universe might be guided by Him**, bodies and things without body, things living and things lifeless, the reasoning with the irrational, mortal*

⁵ This is the meaning of the Hebrew personal name for God, YHVH.

⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea, Demonstratio Evangelica, Bk. IV, ch. i (Tr. W.J. Ferrar, 1920)

with immortal, and whatever else coexists and is woven in with them, and as if by one force running through the whole, all things might be harmonized together, by one living active law and reason existing in all and extending through all things, in one all-wise bond—yea, by the very Word of God and His law, united and bound in one.

“And as the Father is One, it follows that there must be one Son and not many sons, and that there can be only one perfect God begotten of God, and not several. For in multiplicity will arise otherness and difference and the introduction of the worse. And so it must be that **the One God is the Father of one perfect and only-begotten Son**, and not of more Gods or sons. **Even so, light being of one essence, we are absolutely obliged to regard the perfect thing that is begotten of light to be one also.** For what other thing would it be possible to conceive of as begotten of light, but the ray only, which proceeds from it, and fills and enlightens all things? Everything surely that is foreign to this would be darkness and not light. **And analogously to this there can be nothing like unto, nor a true copy of, the Supreme Father, Who is unspeakable light, except as regards this one thing only, Whom we are able to call the Son.** For He is the radiance of the eternal light, and the unblurred mirror of the activity of God, and the image of His goodness. Wherefore it was said: “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.”⁷ Except that the radiance is inseparable from the light of sense, while the Son exists in Himself in His own essence apart from the Father. And the ray has its range of activity solely from the light, whereas the Son is something different from a channel of energy, having His Being in Himself. And, moreover, the ray is coexistent with the light, being a kind of complement thereof; (for there could be no light without a ray: they exist together and simultaneously. **But the Father precedes the Son, and has preceded Him in existence, inasmuch as He alone is unbegotten. The One, perfect in Himself and first in order as Father, and the cause of the Son's existence, receives nothing towards the completeness of His Godhead from the Son: the Other, as a Son begotten of Him that caused His being, came second to Him, Whose Son He is, receiving from the Father both His Being, and the character of His Being.** And, moreover, the ray does not shine forth from the light by its deliberate choice, but because of something which is an inseparable accident of its essence: but the Son is the image of the Father by intention and deliberate choice. **For God willed to beget a Son, and established a second light, in all things made like unto Himself.** Since, then, the unbegotten and eternal light is one, how could there be any other image of it, except the ray, which itself is light, preserving in all respects its likeness to its prototype? **And how could there be an image of the One itself, unless it were the same as it in being one? So that a likeness is implied not only of the essence of the first, but also one of numerical quantity, for one perfect Being comes of the one eternal light, and**

⁷ Heb. 1:3

the first and only-begotten Issue was not different or many, and it is this very Being to Which, after that Being which had no origin or beginning, we give the names of God, the Perfect, the Good: for the Son of a Father who is One must be also One. ... For what variation could there be from this complete likeness to the Father, except one that was a declension and an inferiority; a supposition that we must not admit into our theology of the Son: ***for He is a breath of the power of God***, and a pure effluence of the glory of the Creator."⁸

This last quote shows conclusively that Eusebius viewed the "first and only-begotten Issue" as being of the same kind as God Himself.

Eusebius apparently did not view the Spirit as a third Person prior to the Council of Nicaea, but rather an extension of God Himself, calling it the "prophetic Spirit," and the "anointing" of God upon Christ and upon God's prophets.

"Such are the many instances of the prediction of the Christ by name; but, as in most cases, the Sufferings of Christ are conjoined to His Name, we must return to what was said before about His Divinity, which I have showed previously to be touched on in the 45th Psalm, entitled FOR THE BELOVED, where Scripture, after first describing Him as King, proceeds to say other things about the Divinity of Christ:

'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated injustice: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.'

*"For, as I have already shewn, these words clearly imply that the God referred to is one and the same Being, Who loved righteousness and hated iniquity; and that because of this **He was anointed by another greater God, His Father**, with a better and more excellent **unction** than that foreshadowed by the types, which is called "**the oil of gladness.**" And what else could He be properly named but Christ, Who is anointed with this oil, not by man but by God Most High? The same Person, therefore, is shewn to be called God, as indeed I have already shewn in the proper places. And we should here again remember Isaiah, who said:*

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for whose sake he hath anointed me. He has sent me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and sight to the blind.'

⁸ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica*. Bk. IV, chs. ii-iii, (Tr. W.J. Ferrar, 1920)

*“And we have already shewn that the priests from among men, who in long distant times were consecrated to the service of God, were anointed with a prepared unguent. But he that is spoken of in the prophecy is said to have been **anointed with the Divine Spirit**. And this passage in its entirety was referred to Jesus the only true Christ of God, Who one day took the prophecy in the Jewish synagogue, and after reading the selected portion, said that what He had read was fulfilled in Himself. For it is written, that having read it:*

‘And closing the book, and giving it to the minister, he sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him. And he began to say unto them, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears”.’

“With all this we should again compare the records of Moses, who when he established his own brother as High Priest, according to the pattern that had been shewn to him, agreeably to the oracle which said to him: ‘Thou shalt make all things according to the pattern shewn to thee in the Mount,’ plainly shews that he had perceived with the eyes of the mind and by the Divine Spirit the great High Priest of the Universe, the true Christ of God, Whose image he represented together with the rest of the material and figurative worship, and honoured the person named with the name of the real Christ.”⁹

Thus, Eusebius viewed the Spirit as the “unction” or “anointing” from God both upon Jesus Christ as Man and upon the prophets who spoke by the “prophetic Spirit.” There is no point of variation between Eusebius’ pre-Nicene “Proof of the Gospel” and the works of the very earliest writers after the Apostles.

Eusebius & Matthew 28:19-20

In his pre-Nicene writings, Eusebius also repeatedly quoted from a variant reading of the Great Commission found in Mathew’s Gospel which did not contain the Trinitarian baptismal formula. Our copies which are all from the time of Eusebius or later read as follows:

Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)

*19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

The earliest quotation of this passage with the Trinitarian baptismal formula is from Irenaeus, who as pointed out earlier had sympathies with the Montanist movement and

⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Caesarea, Demonstratio Evangelica, Bk. IV, ch. xvi, (Tr. W.J. Ferrar, 1920)

its third-Person “Paraclete.”¹⁰ Other writers who tended towards the subordinate Trinity views of Tertullian also cited this verse as it appears in our versions. Especially important is Tertullian’s dependence on this reading for justifying the trine immersion practiced by the assemblies who tended to be pro-Montanism, while those who rejected Montanism (and its Third Person “Paraclete”) practiced a single immersion, no doubt in the name of Jesus Christ alone following the apostolic tradition recorded in Acts.¹¹

“After His resurrection He promises in a pledge to His disciples that He will send them the promise of His Father; and lastly, He commands them to baptize into the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, not into a unipersonal God.¹² And indeed it is not once only, but three times, that we¹³ are immersed into the Three Persons, at each several mention of Their names.”¹⁴

Reading Mathew 28:18-20 as a Trinitarian proof text (and the practice of trine immersion based upon it) became increasingly the accepted view of several influential writers after Tertullian. Yet the single immersion assemblies also persisted in Eusebius’ day.

Eusebius was the curator of the Christian library in Caesarea, not far from Jerusalem on the Mediterranean coast. Several of the very early Christian writers claimed that Matthew originally wrote his Gospel in the language of the Jews (Aramaic) and that the Greek version of Matthew was only a translation.¹⁵ Jerome wrote that a copy of the Aramaic original of Matthew’s Gospel was contained in the Christian library at Caesarea, of which Eusebius was keeper.

“Matthew also called Levi, apostle and aforesaid publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was afterwards translated into Greek though by what author is uncertain. The Hebrew itself has been preserved until the present day in the library at Caesarea which Pamphilus so diligently gathered. I have also had the opportunity of having the volume described to me by the Nazarenes of Beroea, a city of Syria, who use it. In this it is to be noted that wherever the Evangelist, whether on his own account or in the person

¹⁰ Irenaeus urged the Roman bishop not to excommunicate the Montanist assemblies to receive them.

¹¹ Acts 2:38;

¹² Note the allusion to Matt. 28:19-20 used as the basis for Tertullian’s trine immersion. See the 7th article in this series (pp. 9-15) for a discussion of the manuscript variant reading of this verse which omits the so-called Trinitarian baptismal formula.

¹³ The Montanist “spiritual” assemblies as opposed to the “carnal” assemblies

¹⁴ Tertullian, Against Praxeas, ch. xxvi

¹⁵ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk. III, ch. i:1; Origen, Commentary on Matthew I:1; Eusebius, Hist. Bk. III, ch. xxiv; Bk. V, ch. x; Bk. VI, ch. xxv.

of our Lord the Savior quotes the testimony of the Old Testament he does not follow the authority of the translators of the Septuagint but the Hebrew. Wherefore these two forms exist "Out of Egypt have I called my son," and "for he shall be called a Nazarene."¹⁶

Note that both in the Christian library in Caesarea (of which Eusebius was keeper) and in Syria (Antioch) where Aramaic was commonly spoken the original Aramaic version that Matthew himself wrote was available and still in common use. Antioch Syria was the place where the earliest tradition regarding the Godhead was still preserved down to Eusebius' day. As keeper of the library at Caesarea, Eusebius had access to and was familiar with the original version of Matthew in the Aramaic language.

It is hardly a coincidence that in all of his pre-Nicaean works, Eusebius quoted Matthew 29:19 many times, always without the so-called Trinitarian baptismal formula. Here are some examples, all written before the council in AD 325. These quotations are older than any surviving Greek copies of Matthew which include the Trinitarian baptismal formula.

Eusebius – Demonstratio Evangelica: (AD 313)

"And, moreover, the Mosaic Law was suited to the hardness of heart of the vulgar, gave ordinances corresponding to those under the rule of sense, and provided a form of religion, reduced and inferior to the old. But I summon all to the holy and godly life of the holy men of the earlier days. And in fine, it promises, as to children, a land flowing with milk and honey, while I make citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven those who are worthy to enter therein. Such was the message to all nations given by the word of the new covenant by the teaching of Christ. And the Christ of God bade His disciples teach them to all nations, saying: 'Go ye into all the world, and make disciples of all the nations teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you.' And in giving them to all men both Greeks and barbarians to keep He clearly revealed the nature of Christianity, the nature of Christians, and the nature of the Teacher of the words and instruction, our Lord and Saviour the Christ of God Himself."¹⁷

"With one word and voice He said to His disciples: 'Go, and make disciples of all the nations in My Name, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,' and He joined the effect to His Word; and in a little while every race of the Greeks and Barbarians was being brought into discipleship, and laws were spread among all nations opposed to the superstition of the ancients. But while the disciples of Jesus were most likely either saying thus, or thinking thus, the Master solved their difficulties, by the addition of one phrase, saying they should triumph 'In MY NAME.'"

¹⁶ Jerome, Lives of Illustrious Men, ch. iii.

¹⁷ Book I, ch. vi

For He did not bid them simply and indefinitely ***make disciples of all nations***, but with the necessary addition of ***'In my Name.'*** And the power of His Name being so great, that the apostle says: 'God has given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,' He shewed the virtue of the power in His Name concealed from the crowd when He said to His disciples: ***'Go, and make disciples of all nations in My Name.'*** He also most accurately forecasts the future when He says: 'For this gospel must first be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations.' But when I turn my eyes away to the evidence of the power of the Word, what multitudes it has won, and what enormous churches have been founded by those unlettered and mean disciples of Jesus, not in obscure and unknown places, but in the most noble cities – I mean in Royal Rome, in Alexandria, and Antioch, throughout the whole of Egypt and Libya, Europe and Asia, and in villages and country places and among the nations – I am irresistibly forced to retrace my steps, and search for their cause, and to confess that they could only have succeeded in their daring venture, by a power more divine, and more strong than man's, and by the co-operation of Him Who said to them: ***'Make disciples of all the nations in My Name.'***¹⁸

"And since the Word predicted that the prophet would be raised up for them of the Circumcision, our Lord and Saviour, being Himself the One foretold, rightly said: 'I am not come but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' 'And He commanded His apostles saying, "Go not into the road of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"' shewing clearly that He was primarily sent to them as the prophecy required. But when they would not receive His grace, He reproveth them elsewhere, saying, 'For I came, and there was no man, I called and there was none that heard.' And He says to them, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.' And He bids His own disciples after their rejection, ***'Go ye and make disciples of all nations in My Name.'***¹⁹

Eusebius – Theophania:

"Our Saviour said to them therefore, after His resurrection, ***'Go ye and make Disciples of all nations in My Name,'*** And these things He said, who formerly had commanded: 'In the way of the Gentiles go ye not' but (enjoined) that they should preach to the Jews only."²⁰

¹⁸ Bk. III, chs. vi-vii

¹⁹ Bk. IX, ch. xi

²⁰ Bk. IV, ch. xvi

*“Which of the magicians is it, whoever projected that which our Saviour did? But, if one did so project; still he dared not to advance this. But, if one so dared; still he brought not the matter to effect. He (the Saviour) said in one word and enouncement to His Disciples, **‘Go and make disciples of all nations in My Name, and teach ye them everything that I have commanded you.’** And the deed He made to follow the word. For thence, every race of the Greeks and Barbarians became at once, and in a short space of time, (His) Disciples: The laws too of our Saviour were not written in any Book of His; but, without book, were disseminated at His command among all nations;”²¹*

*“These things therefore, the Disciples of our Saviour would either have thought, or said. But He who was their Lord solved, by one additional word, the aggregate of the things of which they doubted, (and) pledged them by saying, ‘Ye shall conquer in my name.’ For it was not that He commanded them, simply and indiscriminately, **to ‘go and make disciples of all nations’**; but with this excellent addition which He delivered, (viz): **“in My Name.”** Since it was by the power of His name that all this came to pass; as the Apostle has said, “God has given Him a name, which is superior to every name: that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow which is in heaven, and which is in earth, and which is beneath the earth.” It is likely therefore, that He would shew forth the excellency of the unseen power, which was hidden from the many, by His name; and, (accordingly) He made the addition, **“in My Name.”** He thus accurately foretold moreover, something which should come to pass, (when) He said, ‘It is expedient that this my Gospel be preached in the whole world, for the testimony of all nations,’ ...”²²*

*“I myself however, investigating for myself with effort, and in the love of truth, this same thing (singly), should perceive not one virtue in it (making it) credible, nor even anything great, or worthy of faith, nor so persuasive, as adequate to the persuading of even one illiterate person, much less men wise and intellectual. Nevertheless, when again I view its power, and the result of its doings; how the many myriads have given their assent to it, and how Churches of tens of thousands of men have been brought together, by these very deficient and rustic persons; --nor that these were built in obscure places, nor in those which are unknown, but rather in the greatest cities, I say in the Imperial city of Rome itself, in Alexandria, in Antioch, in all Egypt, in Libya, in Europe, in Asia, both in the villages and (other) places, and among all nations; I am again compelled to recur to the question of (its) cause, and to confess, that they (the Disciples) could not otherwise have undertaken this enterprise, than by a Divine power which exceeds that of man, and by the assistance of Him who said to them, **‘Go, and make Disciples of all nations in My Name.’** And, when He had said this to them, He attached to it the promise, by which they*

²¹ Bk. V, ch. xvii

²² Bk. V, ch. xlvi

should be so encouraged, as readily to give themselves up to the things commanded. For He said to them, 'Behold I am with you always, even to the end of the world.'"²³

Eusebius – Commentary on the Psalms:

Psalms 59:9 "According to another explanation, the words Sichem, Galaad, Manasses, Ephraim, Juda, Moab, and Edom represent all nations indiscriminately. The Jews are mentioned in the first place, because to them first should the kingdom of God be announced; but after them Christ commanded his disciples to preach the Gospel 'to all the nations in his Name.'"²⁴

Psalms 65:5-6 "All nations are invited to come consider the awe-inspiring deeds, which God performed in behalf of his people, in Egypt, in the Red Sea, in the Jordan; and to reflect that he who could confute his enemies of old, is still powerful against them. Hence we should rejoice in him, who by his power endureth forever. We should understand these words of that saying of Christ: 'All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Going make disciples of all the nations in My Name.' Wherefore Aquila translates it: 'who exercises authority in his power forever.'²⁵

Psalms 67:34 "That Christ's voice was endowed with power is evident from his deeds; for when he said to his disciples: 'Come, follow me, and I shall make you fishers of men," he actually fulfilled this promise by his power; and again when he commanded them saying: 'Going make disciples of all the nations in My Name,' he manifested his power in very deed."²⁶

Psalms 76:20 "From the preceding verse we learn that the earth shook and trembled. This was realized when Christ entered Jerusalem, and the entire city was in consternation; also when the nations of the world trembled upon hearing the words of the Gospel from the lips of the Apostles. How should we understand the prophet when he says that Christ's way is in the sea, and his paths in many waters, and his footsteps will not be known? This passage receives light from his promise to his disciples: 'Going make disciples of all nations in My Name,' and, 'Behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world.' For throughout the entire world, invisibly present to his disciples, he traveled on the sea of life, and in the many waters of the nations. This he accomplished by his invisible and hidden power."²⁷

²³ Bk. V, ch. xlix)

²⁴ The Lord's Command to Baptise, Bernard H. Cuneo, 1923, page 77

²⁵ The Lord's Command to Baptise, Bernard H. Cuneo, 1923, page 78

²⁶ The Lord's Command to Baptise, Bernard H. Cuneo, 1923, page 78

²⁷ The Lord's Command to Baptise, Bernard H. Cuneo, 1923, page 79

Eusebius – Commentary on Isaiah:

Isaiah 18:2 "This command seems to be given to the disciples of our Savior. Since they are messengers of good tidings, they are called messengers, and light ones, to distinguish them from the apostles of the Jews. Wherefore the prophet addresses these messengers of good tidings thus: You disciples of Christ, go as the Savior himself has commanded you; 'Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' and **'Going make disciples of all the nations in My Name.'**"²⁸

Isaiah 34:16 "For he who said to them, **'make disciples of all the nations in My Name,'** also forbad them to establish churches in one and the same place."²⁹

Eusebius – Ecclesiastical History: (AD 324)

"But the rest of the apostles, who had been incessantly plotted against with a view to their destruction, and had been driven out of the land of Judea, went unto all nations to preach the Gospel, relying upon the power of Christ, who had said to them, **"Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in My Name."**"³⁰

Eusebius – Oration to the Nicene Council: (AD 325)

"Surely none save our only Savior has done this, when, after his victory over death, he spoke the word to his followers, and fulfilled it by the event, saying to them, **"Go ye, and make disciples of all nations in My Name."** He it was who gave the distinct assurance, that his gospel must be preached in all the world for a testimony to all nations, and immediately verified his word: for within a little time the world itself was filled with his doctrine."³¹

Eusebius was not the only one attesting to the Aramaic original version of Matthew that did not contain the Trinitarian baptismal formula. The copy used by Aramaic speaking Aphrahat (AD 280-345) also lacked it.

"This he showed beforehand with regard to Christ that the whole earth shall be filled with Him. For lo! by the faith of Christ are all the ends of the earth filled, as David said: — The sound of the Gospel of Christ has gone forth into all the earth. And again when He sent

²⁸ The Lord's Command to Baptise, Bernard H. Cuneo, 1923, page 79

²⁹ The Lord's Command to Baptise, Bernard H. Cuneo, 1923, page 80

³⁰ Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Bk. III, ch. v

³¹ Eusebius, Oration, Ch. xvi

*forth His apostles He spake thus to them: — ‘Go forth, make disciples of all nations, and they will believe on Me.’*³²

Chrysostom also, another student of the school at Antioch, Syria, writing after the Nicaean Council, omitted the Trinitarian baptismal formula in his quotation of Matthew 28:19.

*“For a single virtue alone is not enough to present us with boldness before the judgment-seat of Christ; no, we require it to be great, and various, and universal, and entire. Hear what Christ saith to the disciples, “Go, ye and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you.” And again, “Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, shall be called least in the kingdom of Heaven,” that is, in the resurrection; nay, he shall not enter into the kingdom;”*³³

All of Eusebius’ writings prior to the Council of Nicaea reflect the theology and Christology of the earliest writers, the same view held by the school and Christian assembly at Antioch, Syria. This was in direct conflict with Origen’s school in Alexandria, Egypt, and the Alexandrian assembly which was promoting a modified version of Tertullian’s “Trinity.”

Constantine & the Council of Nicaea in AD 325

The Roman Emperor Constantine was a worshipper of Sol Invictus, the Roman sun-god. Yet, he claimed that the Christ of Christianity had appeared to him in a vision, providing him with a major military victory which helped cement his sovereignty over the Roman Empire. Constantine immediately put an end to Christian persecution, and by this act became a benefactor to Roman Christianity. He saw Christianity’s widespread adherence and influence throughout the Empire as a chance to help unify his empire. While Constantine embraced the Christian God he did not abandon paganism or his devotion to Sol Invictus. His minted coins continued to acknowledge Sol Invictus as the god of Rome (particularly the army) throughout his reign, perhaps merging Sol Invictus and the Christian God. He postponed his baptism until he was on his death bed. Yet, during this period Constantine saw himself as an authority over the Christian religion, appointed by God Himself.

When the controversy between the Arians and the Alexandrian Trinitarians threatened to fracture Christianity and upset Constantine’s plans to use it to unite his empire,

³² Aphrahat, Demonstrations, Of Wars, ch. viii

³³ Chrysostom, Homily on Ephesians, iv

Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. This was his attempt to bring harmony among Christians concerning the doctrine of God and address the issues that Arius had raised against the Trinitarians. Constantine did not care which side was victorious. He only cared that there was a semblance of unity between the factions. He thought that the differences in theology were merely a matter of semantics, which could all be resolved with a face to face sit-down with the prominent pastors.

About 1,800 Christian pastors from all over the empire were invited to the council by the emperor and promised free travel and lodging at Nicaea. However, the vast majority snubbed the emperor's invitation, declining to attend the event. Perhaps they did not like the fact that the emperor was inserting himself into Christian internal affairs. Or perhaps they did not have a dog in this fight, their own theology not matching either side in this struggle. Of the approximately 300 bishops that attended,³⁴ most were neither Trinitarian nor Arian (both of which being extreme views emanating out of Alexandria). Many (probably most) continued to maintain what had been handed down to them in their particular assemblies from much earlier times, before these innovations sprang up.

The Nicene Council began with the emperor overseeing the proceedings, yet less than 20% of the invited bishops attended not to mention none of the uninvited bishops. Thus, a very small minority of all of the Christian bishops officially settled Christian dogma under pressure from the emperor. That Constantine himself was driving the outcome is evident from the account of Eusebius, as quoted by the ancient historian Socrates.

*“A variety of topics having been introduced by each party and much controversy being excited from the very commencement, **the emperor** listened to all with patient attention, deliberately and impartially considering whatever was advanced. He in par supported the statements which were made on either side, and gradually softened the asperity of those who contentiously opposed each other conciliating each by his mildness and affability. And as he addressed them in the Greek language, for he was not unacquainted with it, he was at once interesting and persuasive, and wrought conviction on the minds of some, and prevailed on others by entreaty, those who spoke well he applauded. And inciting all to unanimity at length **he succeeded in bringing them into similarity of judgment, and conformity of opinion on all the controverted points**: so that there was not only unity in the confession of faith, but also a general agreement as to the time for the celebration of*

³⁴ Theodoret, Book 1, Chapter 8; Vita Constantini; Ad Afros Epistola Synodica,

the feast of Salvation.³⁵ Moreover the doctrines which had thus the common consent, were confirmed by the signature of each individual.”³⁶

In the end, the Council sided against Arius' claim that the Son was created of a different essence or substance from the Father. The creed insisted that the Son was “*Light of Light,*” “*very God of very God*” and “*begotten not made.*”

The Creed did not, however, specifically endorse the three-Person Trinity view of Arius' Alexandrian opponent, either in the subordinate form of Tertullian or the co-equal and co-eternal form of Origen. It specifically denounced the key point against Arius, decreeing that the preincarnate Son was “*begotten not made*” by the Father before all human ages, and was thus “*very God of very God*” (of like kind) **in His pre-human state.**

- The Nicene Creed did not address the question of the humanity of Christ.
- The Nicene Creed did not address whether the Spirit of God was a distinct conscious Person or not.
- The Nicene Creed did not address whether the divine Persons were co-equal and co-eternal or hierarchical and subordinate.

All of these points were left vague enough so that Antiochian Christians, Alexandrian Trinitarians, Subordinate Trinitarians, and even Modalists could sign the original Nicene Creed. It was worded vague enough to accommodate virtually everyone except Arius and his followers. The anathema attached to the end of the creed certainly favored the Alexandrian Trinitarians. However, the language was still vague enough so that Subordinate Trinitarians and even Eusebius himself could interpret it favorably to their views.

Nicene Creed:

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, that is of the substance of the Father; God of God, Light of light; true God of true God; begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things were made both which are in heaven and on earth; who for the sake of us men and on account of our salvation descended, became incarnate, was made man, suffered, arose again the third day, and ascended into the heavens and will come again to judge the living and the dead. Also in the Holy Spirit. But the holy Catholic and Apostolic church anathematizes those who say “There was a time

³⁵ This refers to standardizing the celebration of Christ's passion and resurrection on Easter, and rejecting the practice of observing the Passover on the correct date.

³⁶ Soctrates, Bk. I, ch. viii

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when he was not," and "He was not before he was begotten"³⁷ and "He was made from that which did not exist," and those who assert that he is of other substance or essence than the Father, or that he was created, or is susceptible of change³⁸.'"³⁹

Eusebius of Caesarea, who bowed to the determination of the council under the emperor's pressure for unity, at first refused to sign the creed because he did not agree with the face-value interpretation of the anathemas at its conclusion. Socrates explains:

"At this time during the session of the Synod, Eusebius, surnamed Pamphilus, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, who had held aloof for a short time, after mature consideration whether he ought to receive this definition of the faith, at length acquiesced in it, and subscribed it with all the rest: he also sent to the people under his charge a copy of the Creed, with an explanation of the word homoousios, that no one might impugn his motives on account of his previous hesitation."⁴⁰

Eusebius was in a bit of a pickle because he did not fully agree with either side in this fight, Arius or the Alexandrian Trinitarians. In the letter that Eusebius addressed to his congregation at Caesarea, he explained his hesitancy and final acquiescence to the exact wording of the Nicene Creed. Eusebius definitely objected to the anathemas at the close of the creed. But in order to justify his signing it to his congregation at Caesarea, **he misrepresented the anathemas as though they referred to the birth of Christ instead of referring to His begetting out of God at creation:**

"And as to the anathematism published by them at the end of the Faith, it did not pain us, because it forbade to use words not in Scripture, from which almost all the confusion and disorder of the Church have come. Since, then, no divinely inspired Scripture has used the phrases, 'out of nothing' and 'once He was not,' and the rest which follow, there appeared no ground for using or teaching them; to which also we assented as a good decision, since it had not been our custom hitherto to use these terms. Moreover, to anathematize 'Before His generation He was not' did not seem preposterous, in that it is confessed by all that the Son of God was before the generation according to the flesh. Nay, our most religious Emperor did at the time prove, in a speech, that He was in being even according to His divine generation which is before all ages, since even before he was generated in energy, He was in virtue with the Father ingenerately, the

³⁷ Since He was "begotten" out of God, His substance and divine qualities (being out of God's own essence) necessarily always existed with God, albeit not as a distinct Person.

³⁸ With this comment the Nicaean Council sided with the Platonic idea of Incarnation first introduced by Melito of Sardis in opposition to the antagonist Celsus.

³⁹ Socrates, Bk. I, ch. viii

⁴⁰ Socrates, Bk. I, ch. viii

Father being always Father, as King always and Savior always, having all things in virtue, and being always in the same respects and in the same way. This we have been forced to transmit to you, Beloved, as making clear to you the deliberation of our inquiry and assent, and how reasonably we resisted even to the last minute, as long as we were offended at statements which differed from our own, but received without contention what no longer pained us, as soon as, on a candid examination of the sense of the words, they appeared to us to coincide with what we ourselves have professed in the faith which we have already published.”⁴¹

It is apparent that Eusebius signed the creed with great hesitation, and justified his signature by noting that he and the Caesarean assembly had not previously used the exact Arian phrases anathematized in the creed. Also, Eusebius could sign the exact wording of the anathemas by noting Constantine's own secondary explanation that the “virtues” of which the Son became the embodiment (“Wisdom” and “Word”) were always part of God's essence. The earliest writers had acknowledged this also. Thus, to Eusebius the anathemas did not necessarily condemn the idea that the Son as a distinct conscious Person had a beginning when He was “begotten.” The anathemas only specifically condemned the idea that the essence or substance of the Son was “created” and thus foreign to God's own essence or substance. Eusebius trusted the emperor, that outward unity was more important than precisely defining the nature of the Son of God.⁴² Eusebius knew that the language could be bent to accommodate more than one view, including his own.

Immediately after the Council of Nicaea, Constantine wrote a letter to Eusebius ordering him to oversee the production of fifty official copies of the Christian Scriptures to be delivered to him with haste at Constantinople.⁴³ Constantine was interested in urgently standardizing the text apparently so that variant readings, perhaps such as found in Eusebius' Aramaic copy of Matthew, would be taken out of circulation. He also ordered the burning of all of Arius' works, and ordered the death penalty for anyone caught hiding them.⁴⁴

The degree of Eusebius' acquiescence to the emperor and the official creed for the sake of unity and not offending the emperor is evident in his subsequent writings. After the

⁴¹ Post Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol. I, pp. 36-37

⁴² See Constantine's letter to Alexander and Arius urging unity and reconciliation, claiming that the dispute between them concerned “*matters of small or scarcely the least importance*,” and “*insignificant and vain contentions between you about words*,” and “*unimportant, and by no means essential*,” and “*this very insignificant subject of controversy*.” (Socrates, Bk. I, ch. vii).

⁴³ Socrates, Bk. I, ch. ix

⁴⁴ Socrates, Bk. I, ch. ix

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Council of Nicaea, Eusebius quoted the more common form of Matthew's Gospel found in the Greek copies which included the baptismal statement. This change in his writing betrays the behind-the-scenes revisionism that was taking place due to the official declarations of the Council of Nicaea under pressure from the emperor.

But rather than creating unity as Constantine envisioned, the Nicene Creed created more confusion by not clearly defining its terminology. The Nicene Creed was an attempt by the emperor to use inclusive enough language in order to bring superficial unity to the churches throughout the empire. It was not a genuine search for truth, and attempt to faithfully, decisively, and narrowly define the apostolic teaching on the Godhead.

The council of Nicaea was the first time a Roman emperor oversaw Christian affairs, exerting control over the bishops collectively. The subsequent Nicene Creed became Roman law, threatening punishment by confiscation of property, exile, and even death for all Christians who opposed it. In reality, a very small minority of bishops who had abdicated their authority to the emperor had created Roman Catholic dogma. This was the beginning of the marriage between the Roman Empire and Roman Christianity – Roman Catholicism.

In time the Roman church which had been empowered with the backing of the emperor not only codified in law what originated through the Montanist heresy, but gradually justified its formal decrees using the same argument that Montanus used to justify his prophecies, direct revelation by the third Person, the "Paraclete." Church councils of bishops became the sole channel for further divine revelation beyond the Prophets, Jesus, and the Apostles. Eventually the official declarations of the pope were portrayed as direct revelations. Roman Catholicism fully embraced not only the doctrines introduced by Montanus, but also his claim to be the conduit for new revelation, forming the doctrine of "Apostolic Succession" to justify it. But in reality, the pope became the successor of Montanus, not Peter.

Constantine miscalculated how the new Nicene Creed would be received. Rather than ending the debate with the obedience of all the pastors, strife continued between the Arians and the Trinitarians. Another council was convened by Rome at Constantinople in AD 381, this time adding a clause concerning the Son, "*begotten of the Father before all ages*" to the Nicene Creed. This was intended to specifically exclude the secondary explanation offered by Constantine in order to appease Eusebius (and elicit his signature) over his objections to the anathemas (that the anathemas could be applied to the birth of Christ). The addition clarified that the term "*begotten*" was not meant to refer to the Christ's conception and birth through Mary. Thus Eusebius' position, which was also the position of the earliest writers, officially became heresy in AD 381. This revised Nicene

Creed also codified a distinct personhood for the Holy Spirit, adding the statement: “*And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.*” While these additions anathematized those holding to the earliest view as well as the Arians, both versions of Trinitarianism were still accommodated, the subordinate version of Tertullian, and the co-equal and co-eternal version of Origen.

The Trinity in its Final Form:

These conflicts long outlived Constantine and became the problem of subsequent emperors. In AD 451, a council was convened at Chalcedon to address internal conflicts among Trinitarians concerning the humanity of Jesus Christ. The problem itself was created and driven by the earlier invention on the Platonic Incarnation, that Logos as a divine Spirit was temporarily confined to a prison of human flesh. But defining Christ this way without embracing Gnosticism was a real trick. In reality, the solution simply repackaged a form of Gnosticism with double-talk. The Kenosis view articulated by the earliest writers did not have the problem of a dual-nature for the Son simply because it accepted the idea of a total transformation from fully divine to fully human, “*The Word became flesh.*”

Rather than actually solving the paradox, the council officially adopted Melito’s “hypostatic union” as dogma, that Jesus Christ **as Man** had two natures at the same time, being fully God and fully Man (a logical contradiction of mutually exclusive ideas), divinity cloaked in humanity. The creed denied what is clearly taught in Scripture, that the Son chose to empty Himself of the form of God by submitting to full humanity through Kenosis.⁴⁵ Scripture is clear that Jesus had no inherent divine powers as Man, but His mighty acts were all performed through Him by the Breath and Power of the Father dwelling in Him.⁴⁶ With the Creed of Chalcedon, the inherent nature, essence, or substance of the pre-human Son was unchanged in the Man Jesus Christ, being cloaked within a body of flesh according to the Platonic principle.

Trinitarianism, in its final, official form is found in the Athanasian Creed of the sixth century. It was named for Athanasius of Alexandria who was Arius’ principle accuser at the Nicaean Council. This creed states that the Godhead consists of three Persons who are “co-equal” and “co-eternal,” both of which were denied by Tertullian and the early proto-Trinitarians. The creed itself is riddled with internal contradictions and mutually

⁴⁵ See: Justin, Dialogue, chs. xlvi; lviii; lxiii; lxvi; xlv; m, where he repeatedly refers to the Son’s “submitting to become man” as a willful choice. These statements can only be derived from Phil. 2:5-11 which claims that Christ chose to “empty Himself” to become Man.

⁴⁶ John 3:1-2; John 5:19,30; John 14:10; Acts 2:22; Acts 10:38

exclusive ideas. Yet, anyone who disagreed with it was anathematized, condemned to eternal torment.

*“... That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son unlimited; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost eternal. **And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated; nor three infinites, but one uncreated; and one infinite.** So likewise the Father is Almighty; the Son Almighty; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. **And yet they are not three Almighty; but one Almighty.** So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. **And yet they are not three Gods; but one God.** So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son Lord; and the Holy Ghost Lord. **And yet not three Lords; but one Lord.** ...”*

Despite the double-speak, the Roman Catholic Trinity is impossible to understand or reconcile with logic. The Athanasian Creed did not even attempt to solve the many internal inconsistencies. It could not make them disappear by attaching anathemas and threats of eternal damnation for all who opposed it. Instead, it was enforced as dogma by threat of excommunication, persecution, and even death.

Ever since the dogma of Trinitarianism was finalized in creedal form in the sixth century Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical Christians have continued to struggle to make sense of it and harmonize it with monotheism. For some, the irrational concepts proved too much to swallow, creating a steady stream of so-called “heretics” and “cults” which disagreed with Rome’s Trinity. But even for those who simply wanted clarity, willing to accept whatever the official councils decided, there was great confusion about the God(s) they worshipped.

The Evolution of God – 7. The Emperor's New Clothes

The irreconcilable contradictions in Rome's Trinity are "*The Emperor's New Clothes*." Constantine's and Rome's nakedness are best illustrated by the various attempts to portray "*The Holy Trinity*" in artwork. The most common early artistic depictions of the Godhead portrayed the form of an old man (the Father), a young man (the Son), and a dove between them (the Holy Spirit). Yet, this presented an implicitly hierarchal (subordinate) Godhead, since the disparate ages of the Father and the Son cannot be reconciled with co-equal and co-eternal Persons, a view that was rejected by the later Roman Church councils. Such artwork better illustrates a hierarchical Godhead, with the Son having been begotten at the time of creation. It is also not clear whether the dove represents a distinct Person or merely a manifestation of God's anointing since doves are not infused with the ability of reason. These kinds of depictions are really not a depiction of a Trinity as defined by the creeds, but rather more closely resemble the earliest view.



Some ancient artists, however, attempted to portray "*The Holy Trinity*" in ways that seemed more consistent with the views of Origen, articulated by Gregory Thaumaturgus, and eventually codified as Roman Catholic dogma in the subsequent creeds. These attempts stressed the oneness of the three Persons, trying very hard to depict the Christian God in ways that could be seen and claimed as consistent with monotheism. Yet these attempts could not avoid portraying the Trinity as a hideous and frightening creature in ways that hardly engendered devotion and worship. Instead, they were repulsive and an embarrassment to the Roman Church. Furthermore, these attempts did absolutely nothing to clear up the

logical contradictions. Instead, they highlighted them, rousing more questions for which there were no adequate answers. Does this monster have three minds or one? How does the Incarnation work in this model? Isn't this more consistent with Modalism? No wonder Jews and Muslims reject Catholic Christianity!

But more often, Trinitarian artwork attempted to portray the Christian God in less startling ways while still maintaining the co-equal and co-eternal status of the three Persons in the Athanasian Creed. Yet in doing so, these depictions necessarily sacrificed all pretense of monotheism, depicting the three Persons as separate and equal entities. The “oneness” is only hinted at by the virtually identical faces. But such depictions of the Christian God are impossible to distinguish from polytheism.



Protestant churches have maintained the Catholic Trinity without challenge. Christian artists such as Fridolin Leiber (1853–1912), have continued to unwittingly illustrate the inherent absurdities of Trinitarianism by their artwork. All of these depictions show plainly that three co-equal and co-eternal persons cannot be regarded as the “one God” of the Shema,⁴⁷ *“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*⁴⁸

“Monotheism” means one ultimate supreme source and ruler of creation. Unless hierarchy is maintained, with the Father being the ultimate authority and source of all things including His own Son, the Christian God is simply impossible to reconcile with simple logic. A subordinate divine “Son” who owes His very existence to the Father, who acts as the obedient Agent of the Father, was never a problem for the earliest Christians who had connections to the Apostles. Neither was the original Kenotic doctrine that He “became in the likeness of men.” The Jews of Jesus’ day did not object to a second Person who was God’s Agent or during the apostolic period, or the early post-apostolic period, as Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho shows. Even adding a third divine Person was not a significant problem for monotheists as long as He was considered subordinate to the one absolute authority, having His source of existence from the Father. But monotheism became and remains utterly impossible to maintain with a straight face once the divine Persons are made co-equal in authority and co-eternal Persons.

“One God” refers to a single, supreme, ultimate authority, one final judge. Three distinct minds who are peers cannot be a single ultimate authority or judge. Instead, they comprise a divine panel or council of judges. And if we claim a single ultimate authority, then we must have a single mind and a single divine Person. There is simply no alternative. Consequently, claiming that the Roman Catholic Trinity is “one God” while

⁴⁷ Deut. 6:4

⁴⁸ Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3

at the same time three co-equal and co-eternal divine “Persons” is just double-talk. There is simply no way to honestly reconcile Rome’s Trinity with monotheism with any logical explanation.

Rome’s response to the insurmountable problem has been to relegate the Trinity to a “divine mystery.” The human mind is allegedly not capable of comprehending the Deity. God’s statement in Isaiah is often quoted to end all discussion: *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*”⁴⁹

But a consideration of the context of this statement shows that God was speaking about how much His mercy surpasses human mercy! He was not in any sense claiming that man was incapable of understanding the divine revelation of Scripture about Him or His nature. Using this passage in this way gives it a meaning that was clearly not its intent. It is therefore a perversion of Scripture.

Such a position also clashes with God’s revelation of Himself to mankind. We are commanded to *“test all things; hold fast what is good.”*⁵⁰ This is only possible if God has provided us with both the ability to comprehend the Truth, and has provided us with the objective means of discovering Truth. He wants us to discover Him and to understand Him.

Acts 17:22-31

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

23 “for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

24 “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

25 “Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

26 “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

*27 “**so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;***

⁴⁹ Isa. 55:8-9

⁵⁰ 1 Thess. 5:21

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28 “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’

29 “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.

30 “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Paul also indicated that mankind is capable of understanding God’s nature and His attributes, but that his mind is darkened, and his understanding is perverted, by his own unwillingness to accept the evidence around him.

Romans 1:18-28

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who **suppress the truth** in unrighteousness,

19 because **what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.**

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, **being understood** by the things that are made, **even His eternal power and Godhead,** so that they are without excuse,

21 because, although **they knew God,** they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but **became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ...**

22 Professing to be wise, **they became fools,**

25 **who exchanged the truth of God for the lie,** and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ...

28 And even as **they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,** God gave them over **to a debased mind,** ...

Pursuing the objective Truth of God, to “grope for Him and find Him” is God’s desire for all of his rational creatures, as Paul indicated in his speech at Athens. This is the highest human endeavor. Gaining genuine knowledge by “testing” all things objectively is just the first step.

Groping for God is futile unless He has provided evidence that can be followed by inquiring minds. Romans 1 shows that a great deal about God, “**even His eternal power and Godhead,**” can be discerned from the creation itself if we approach it with an unpolluted

mind. The term “Godhead” is θεϊότης – a term that refers to the divine nature, the very essence of God.

Yet, God has not left us merely to “grope” for Him by observing the creation. He has graciously provided progressive direct revelation to illuminate the path. He has personally interacted with mankind through His Son, providing many statements describing Himself, and a long history of interacting with Israel. His revelation employs human language and concepts which He intended to be absorbed, processed, and tested by the logical human mind. He communicated to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Joshua through *“the Messenger of the LORD.”* He then spoke to rebellious Israel through the prophets. Finally, *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ...”*⁵¹

God has repeatedly appealed to human reason, a common theme in the book of Isaiah. *“Come now, and let us reason together says the LORD.”*⁵² In chapters 41 - 46 God presented His case to the Gentile nations, arguing from logic why it is foolish to worship idols, and reasonable to seek the God of Israel alone, the creator of heaven and earth. In these six chapters God provided a great deal of information about Himself, His qualities, and His uniqueness as the one true God, always appealing to human reason.

Isaiah 41:21-24

21 “Present your case,” says the LORD. “Bring forth your strong reasons,” says the King of Jacob.

22 “Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come.

23 Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see it together.

24 Indeed you are nothing, And your work is nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination.

In contrast to the pagan deities who can neither speak nor move by themselves, God declares His own greatness, repeatedly appealing to reason – the fact that He alone can declare the future.

Isaiah 46:9-10

⁵¹ Heb. 1:1-2

⁵² Isa. 1:18

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9 *"Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.'"*

He even declared His own Son repeatedly, as His "Servant."

Isaiah 42:1-4

1 *"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.*

2 *He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.*

3 *A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.*

4 *He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law."*

God has revealed Himself through human language, by human reasoning, expecting man to judge what He says, to test His words and measure the logic of His statements concerning Himself. Yet the proponents of false views of the Godhead hide the illogical nature and absurdities of their arguments behind the claim that God's words are incomprehensible, and that our minds are incapable of understanding what they have decreed is reality.

We should stop kidding ourselves. We should not fear the Roman Catholic anathemas and threats of eternal damnation. We should grope for God, not with the self-imposed blindness of theological presuppositions or tradition, but with fresh eyes in pursuit of the Truth at all costs. Let this brief summary of the evolution of God whet your appetite for discovery. Test God's revelation to man about Himself. See if His Word can be viewed through a clearer lens and can actually make sense when we do not try to impose foreign and pagan ideas upon the Scriptures. Investigate! Observe whether the pristine teaching of the Prophets, Jesus, and His Apostles is not thoroughly consistent and easy to comprehend rationally. See if all of the inconsistencies and absurdities which theologians have created by their syncretism of Christianity and Greek philosophy can vanish by simply going back to the earliest documented Christian view of God. Just be cognizant of the fact that you are leaving the safety of official denominational dogma and embarking on a journey that will earn you the label of "heretic." Prepare to be burned at the stake – metaphorically speaking, of course.

Yet, you should also be prepared to marvel at the magnificence of your God, to fall in love afresh with your Creator who so loved the word that He gave His only-begotten Son. And you should see your Savior, Jesus Christ, as the pattern you should follow.

Philippians 2:5-13 NASB

*5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,
11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;
13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

Not only will the true apostolic teaching concerning God and His Son transform your own relationship with God, but it will also equip you to make inroads in evangelizing both Jews and Muslims, and may even provide you with reasonable answers for atheists.