

Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity and of the Person Of Christ

30	100	230	381	500
Apostolic Era NT Documents	Early Doctrinal Formations	Trinitarian Formations	Christological Formations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key Trinitarian passages written <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matt. 28:19 • John 14-17 ▶ Key Christological passages written <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 1:1-18 • Hebrews 1:1-14 • Col. 1:15-16, 2:9 • Phi. 2:5-11 ▶ Early Gnostic denials of Christ's humanity begin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 John 4:3 • 2 John 1:7 ▶ Persecutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanhedrin (30) Jeru. • Saul (33-35) Israel • James martyred (54) • Nero (64-68) Empire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apostolic fathers(60-120) • Justin Martyr(100-166) • Irenaeus (120-200) • Clement (150-220) • Tertullian (150-230) • Origen (185-254) e ▶ Three Categories of Error ▶ Early Logos Doctrine ▶ Early Holy Spirit Doctrine ▶ Errors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gnosticism (80-250) • Cerinthus (100) • Ebionism (80-350) ▶ Persecutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trajan (98-117) • Marcus Aure. (161-180) • Septimus (193-211) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arius (? - 336) • Athanasius (303 - 373) • Constantine (306-337) ▶ Errors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monarchianism • Modalism, Marcellus • Arianism, Semiarianism ▶ The Arian Controversy Phase 1, 2, 3 ▶ Councils <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicaea (325) cr. sg Ln • Rome (340) • Sardica (343) • Constantinople (381) cr. ▶ The Holy Spirit ▶ Persecutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decius (249-251) • Valerian (258-273) • Diocletian (303-311) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augustine (354 - 430) • Nestorius, Cyril, John of Antioch, Theodoret • Leo the Great ▶ Introduction ▶ Errors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apollinarianism • Nestorianism • Eutichianism, adoptionism ▶ Councils <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexandria (362) • Ephesus (431) • Robbers, Ephesus II (449) • Chalcedon (451) cr. sg Ln • Toledo (589) ▶ Hypostatic Union ▶ Athanasian Creed cr 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Modern Errors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socinus, Liberal, Kenotic 				

Three Categories of Errors

- At the risk of over simplification most errors of the first five centuries can roughly be put into three categories:
- **1** A complete rejection of the historical Jesus (1 Cor. 1:22-23)
 - Jesus is a stumbling block to the Jews
 - Jesus is foolishness to the Greeks
- **2** *Jewish* attempts to integrate Jesus into a continuation of the Mosaic Covenant - Judaism.
 - This inevitably involved the rejection of much, but not all, of the New Testament.
- **3** *Gentile* attempts to interpret Jesus in line with Greek philosophy and Roman thought.
- The first of these approaches posed little *doctrinal* threat to the Christian church since it had no place for Jesus.
- The second two approaches posed *major* doctrinal threats to the teaching of the Old and New Testaments.
 - They both without reserve ignored what we have come to know as Tota Scriptura and Sola Scriptura.
- My purpose for introducing you to so many different ideas as to the Person of Christ is not to confuse you but to stimulate you to carefully think through these matters.
 - I will introduce and define technical terminology as we proceed. ♦♦

Why did it take so long to sort these matters out?

- Keep in mind that few people are carrying Bibles.
- For approximately three centuries the church operated with the Old Testament, oral tradition and circular New Testament letters. The New Testament canon was also being solidified during this time.
- Literacy rates are not near to what we are accustomed to. Why learn to read when few, if any, books are available?
- Ongoing persecution during the first three and a quarter centuries
- Gentile Christians did not have a clear view of the doctrine of scripture as believing Jews would have, thus the tendency not to know when-if-how the philosophy and teaching of the Greeks and Romans could be/should be? incorporated into Christianity.
- Realize that we face exactly the same situation today. However, instead of wondering how Plato and Aristotle affect our understanding of God and Christ it is now how Darwin and Sigmund Freud should - or should not. ♦♦

The Apostolic Fathers (40-120)

- “Apostolic Fathers” means “post apostolic fathers” - the first church teachers *after* the apostles who enjoyed some personal contact with the apostles.
- The written material we have consists mostly of brief letters containing simple assertions of faith and exhortations to holy living. Their writings are not “apologies”, i.e. defenses of the faith against Gentile persecutors and Gentile “learning”. Nor are they refutations of false teachings arising in the church - though at times they do address errors.
- **Clement** of Rome (??-105?) refers to “God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who are the faith and hope of the elect” and “have we not one God, one Christ and one Spirit?”
- **Ignatius** of Antioch^m (??-110?) speaks of the crucified Christ as God incarnate and can refer to Christ as God without qualification.

I glorify God, even Jesus Christ, who has given you such wisdom (ISm 1:1)

being united and elected through the true passion by the will of the Father, and Jesus Christ, our God: (IEp 1:1)

There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first possible and then impossible, even Jesus Christ our Lord. (IEp 7:2) ♦♦

The Apostolic Fathers (continued)

For our God, Jesus Christ, was, according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb by Mary, of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost. (1Ep 18:2)

- **Polycarp** of Smyrna^m (69-155) makes comments against the denial of Christ's true humanity by the Gnostics and refers to Jesus as the Son of God.
- **Papais** bishop of Hierapolis^m (75-155) wrote five volumes concerning the words of Jesus which were lost in the 13th century! The little we now know of his writing is from the references of others and these do not contain material relevant to the doctrine of the Trinity.
- **The Letter of Barnabas** (author unknown) was addressed to Christians in danger of relapsing to Judaism. It does not contain any direct statements relating to the Trinity.
- **The Shepherd of Hermas** (author unknown) is an allegory. It's teaching is moralistic and legalistic and reveals a very limited understanding of the gospel. It does not directly quote Scripture as its author claimed to be instructed by "the angel of repentance". In one passage Christ is referred to as the Son of God and pre-existent.
- **The Didache** and **the epistle to Diognetus** do not contain information directly relating to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. ♦♦

The Early Logos Doctrine of The Ante-Nicene Fathers

- Ante Nicene refers to the period *prior* to the Council of Nicea (325).
- The Apostle John's writings and teaching had a significant influence on the early church, especially his using the Greek term *logos* as a title given to Jesus.
- Logos was a common Greek term meaning "word" or "reason". It was also used with philosophical weight, especially as "reason", by the Jewish philosopher Philo.
- Imagine that you've never heard the term Trinity, you do not have a copy of the gospel of John, nor the rest of the New Testament, you are a monotheist, you have fairly easy access to an Old Testament via a synagogue, and you hear the following:

In the beginning was **the Word**, and the Word was with **God**, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men And the Word became **flesh** and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the **only Son** from the **Father**, full of grace and truth For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through **Jesus Christ**. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:1-4 nkj, 14 esv, 17 nkj, 18 esv).

- Who and what is this **Logos**? And what is His relationship to **God, the Son, the Father, flesh, Jesus**, and the **Christ** [Messiah]? Consider the early attempts of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Irenaeus, and Tertullian to answer these questions. ♦♦

The Logos doctrine of Justin Martyr (100-166)

- The Logos is the means by which God reveals Himself outwardly.
- The Logos is generated (begotten) yet without a diminishing of the Divine essence.
- The generation took place before the creation and was not an act of necessity on God's part, but an act of free will.
- The Logos is the only and absolute Son of God.
- The Logos is a person (real existence) distinct from the Father.
- The Logos is an agent (before the incarnation) of the creation, OT theophanies, and all that is rational in the world. Christ is the incarnation of the absolute and eternal reason.
- The Logos is a true object of worship.
- Justin sometimes decidedly subordinates the Son to the Father. ♦♦

The Logos doctrine Of Irenaeus (120-200)

- More Bible less philosophy
- Uses the terms Logos and “Son of God” interchangeably
- He distinguished rigidly the conceptions of generation and creation
- Though the Son is begotten (generated) of the Father He is still like the Father *without beginning and eternal*.
- He sometimes subordinates the Son to the Father but this is likely due to the lack of an accurate distinction between the eternal Logos and the actual (historical) Christ.
 - Statements like, “My Father is Greater than I” - which apply only to the Christ of history - he refers to the eternal Logos.
 - Two technical expressions:
 - Ontological Trinity** - ontology, having to do with being and essence
 - Economic Trinity** - having to do with God’s planing and executing creation and redemption. Things are “out of” the Father and “through the Son”. The Son always does the Father’s will. These are not statements about “essence of nature”. (old meaning - ordering activity)
- Irenaeus asserts the essential unity and the eternal personal distinction of the Father and the Son.
- He contends against the Gnostics for the full humanity of Christ. Christ must be man if he is to redeem us from corruption and make us perfect. ♦♦

The Logos doctrine of Clement of Alexandria (150-220)

- Clement speaks in very high terms of the Logos but you cannot tell if he is speaking of a person distinct from the Father or not.
- The Logos is the ultimate principle of all existence, without beginning, the revealer of the Father, the sum of all intelligence and wisdom, the educator of the human race who at last became man to draw us into fellowship with him and make us partakers of His divine nature.
- He idealized the body of Christ and raised it above all sensual desires and needs. He almost reaches Gnostic docetism.
 - Technical term: **docetism** - The teaching that the sufferings and human aspects of Christ were *imaginary or apparent*. If Christ suffered he was not Divine. If he were Divine he could not suffer.
 - Christ used food, not because He needed it, but simply to guard against a denial of his humanity.
 - Christ was incapable of emotions of joy and grief. ♦♦

The Logos doctrine of Tertullian (150-230)

- Subordinated the Son to the Father. The Father is the whole divine substance, and the Son a part of it.
- He illustrates the relation of the Father and Son by the figures of the fountain and the stream, the sun and the beam.
 - He would not have two suns, he says, but he might call Christ God, as Paul does in Romans 9:5.
 - The beam may be called sun, but the sun may not be called a beam.
- Tertullian defends the entire, sinless humanity of Christ against gnostics and modalists.
 - Gnostics - they make Christ a half lie and reduce all of his suffering into an empty show.
 - Modalists - God the Father is incapable of suffering and beyond the sphere of change.
Modalism will be defined and discussed in detail below. ♦♦

The Logos doctrine of Origen (185-254)

- He understood the trinitarian and Christological tensions that had arisen and trying to understand who-what really was Jesus Christ and grappled with these problems but obscured matters by incorporation of “foreign speculations” (P. Schaff).
- He succeeded Clement as catechist at Alexandria and to prepare himself for the work made a thorough study of neoplatonism which was then coming into favor.
- The one God is primarily the Father, but He reveals himself and works through the Logos, who is personal and co-eternal with the Father, begotten of Him by one eternal act.
- He recognizes the full divinity of the Son and in one passage applies the term “of the same substance” to the Son.
- But on the other hand he speaks of a difference in substance between the Father and the Son.
- His view of the generation of the Son is tied into his view of creation and as he cannot think of an almighty God without creation, and thus creation is ever on-going, this idea carries over into the generation of the Son as an ongoing, eternal, act of the Father. He cannot think of the Father without the Son. I.E. the Son is eternal as the Father.
- The Father is God in an absolute sense. The Son is God in a relative or secondary sense. He called the Logos *deuteros Theos* (second God) or just *Theos* without the article while referring to the Father as *the God*. ♦♦

The Logos doctrine of Origen (continued)

- He taught that the Son should not be addressed in prayer in formal worship. The incarnation was a gradual process
 - The Logos, before the creation of the world, took to himself a human soul (he believed in the pre-existence of the human soul)
 - This pre-existent human soul did not have a part in the fall of Adam.
 - This perfect human soul, joined to the Logos, obtained from the virgin Mary a true body.
- The body of Christ is gradually deified even to the point of becoming omnipresent in its exalted state.
- Origen was the first to apply to Christ the term “God-man”.
- L. Berkhof makes this statement regarding Origen

His teachings were of a very speculative nature, and in later life he was condemned for heresy. He battled against the Gnostics and also struck a decisive blow against Monarchianism. But this was all incidental to his main purpose, that of constructing a systematic body of Christian doctrine. His principal work, *De Principiis*, is the first example of a positive and well-rounded system of theology. Part of his teachings were afterwards declared heretical, but he had an enormous influence on the development of doctrine ... he maintained that nothing should be received that was contrary to Scripture ... yet his theology bore the earmarks of Neo-Platonism, and his allegorical interpretation opened the way for all kinds of speculation and arbitrary interpretation. ♦♦

Ante Nicene Fathers Regarding the Holy Spirit

- The doctrine of the Holy Spirit remained largely undeveloped during the second and third centuries.

So much so that in the Apostles Creed there is only one brief statement, “I believe in the Holy Spirit” and the early form of the Nicene Creed has only the statement “... and in the Holy Spirit”.

- Clement does not try to explain the relation of the Holy Spirit to Son or the Father but requires that thanksgiving be addressed to Him.
- Origen speaks of the Holy Spirit as the first creature made by the Father through the Son. He does not operate in creation as a whole but only in the saints, renews and sanctifies sinners and is an object of divine worship.
- Justin refutes the charge of atheism with an explanation the Christians worship first the Creator of the universe, second the Son, and in third rank the prophetic Spirit.

In another passage he seems to interpose a host of good angels between the Son and the Spirit. But in many other places he exalts the Spirit far above all other created beings.



Ante Nicene Fathers Regarding the Holy Spirit (continued)

- Irenaeus conceives that Wisdom in the book of proverbs (see chapter 8) refers to the Holy Spirit, not the Logos, and thus the Spirit is eternal. That he thinks of the Spirit as a person is also clear from his statement, “with God are ever the Word and the Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit.”
- There is ample historical data that demonstrates that most of the ante nicene fathers believed:
 - that the Holy Spirit was the agent in the application of redemption to sinners,
 - that He was a supernatural divine being,
 - that He was an independent person closely allied to the Father and the Son, but in essence different from the Father and the Son.

Any serious consideration of the baptismal formula given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19 would have demanded at least these conclusions. ♦♦

Gnosticism

- Only discussing here Gnosticism's view of the Person of Christ and the Trinity
- The two great “intellectual” or “philosophic” problems they grappled with were those of absolute being and the origin of evil. L. Berkhof comments, “problems not of Christian but of heathen religious thought”.
- When Christianity rose to a popularity affecting the masses by the second century gnosticism appealed to the words of Jesus explained in an allegorical way, and to a so-called secret tradition handed down from the times of the Apostles.
 - This “integration” of seemingly Christian thought with non-Christian philosophy & speculation makes for a deadly brew for the untaught.
- The Teaching
 - God is transcendent and can have nothing directly to do with the creation. A “Star Wars” type of dualism exists in the created universe between good and evil.
 - A subordinate deity, called the Demiurge, identified with the God of the Old Testament, as an inferior, limited, and vengeful being created the world. The world of matter having been created by the Demiurge is essentially evil.
 - Somehow our human souls or spirits got tangled up with the evil material world and need to find a way to escape.
 - The supreme God, the source of goodness, virtue and truth revealed Himself in Christ. ♦♦

Gnosticism (continued)

- Christ is either a celestial being appearing in a phantasmal (not real) body or as a earthly man with whom a higher power of spirit temporarily associated himself.
Since matter is in itself evil this higher spirit could not have an ordinary human body.
Jesus is “superhuman” in some sense but only one of the many aeons - the string of intermediate beings between the Supreme God and mankind.
- No interest in or hope based upon the resurrection since matter was evil. The goal was to get free of the body and for the spirit to be re-united with the supreme God. You might be able accomplish this in various ways given the correct knowledge and by practicing special rites.
- There was an early form of Gnosticism already impacting NT churches during apostolic times.
 - John refers to the spirit of antichrist of those who deny the true humanity of Christ (1 John 4:3 ✨).
 - What Paul confronts in Colossians chapters 1 and 2 has definite “gnostic” overtones;
- The church responded with:
 - Defining the limits of revelation - the Jewish Old Testament, Christ’s teaching, the Apostles and those directly associated with an apostle.
 - Establishing “Rules of faith” - short doctrinal statements of what is to be believed about Christ.
 - Determining the right relationship between the Old Testament and the New and to Christ. ♦♦

Cerinthus

- Appeared towards the close of the first century in Asia Minor and came in conflict with the aged apostle John.
- He was an Egyptian and a Jew by birth or conversion, perhaps one of the false “apostles” that Paul opposed (2 Cor. 11:4, 13) who taught “another Jesus”. He insisted upon circumcision.
- His views
 - Rejected all the gospels except a mutilated Matthew (Matthew is the most “Jewish” gospel)
 - Taught the validity of the Mosaic law and a millennial kingdom
 - Gnostic elements - the creator of the world was not God but an intermediary
 - The *earthly* man Jesus, the [natural] son of Mary and Joseph is distinguished from the *heavenly* Christ. The heavenly Christ descended upon Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove and left him in the passion but would rejoin him at the coming of the Messianic kingdom (millennium).
- The story is that John left a public bath when he saw Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, fearing that the building might collapse. ♦♦

Ebionites

- The name is derived from the Hebrew word for poor. They regarded themselves as the genuine followers of the poor Christ and His disciples.
- Used a Hebrew gospel, likely a corrupted (intentionally) version of Matthew
- Characteristics
 - Reduce Christianity to Judaism
 - The universal and perpetual validity of the Mosaic law. Circumcision and observance of the whole law are necessary for the salvation of all men.
 - Enmity against the apostle Paul, all his letters are to be discarded
 - Likely the successors of the Judaizers Paul opposes in Galatia
- Doctrine of Christ
 - Jesus is the promised Messiah, the supreme lawgiver like Moses.
 - Jesus is the natural son of Joseph and Mary, the son of David.
 - At Jesus' baptism a higher spirit joined itself to him.
 - Christ is soon to come again and introduce the glorious millennial reign with Jerusalem as its seat.
- Extent
 - Palestine and surrounding regions, island of Cyprus, Asia minor, and even in Rome.
 - Continued into the fourth century. ♦♦

Monarchianism

- Monarchianism - “One king” or “One reign”
 - Concerned with maintaining the unity of God and monotheism
 - The term was coined by Tertullian
 - Monarchianism can be seen in some manner as a reaction against the Logos doctrine of the second century. Especially to those who asserted that the Logos could be/should be called God in the fullest sense and that He was a person distinct from the Father.
 - This appeared to threaten monotheism and the unity of God. Is the Logos teaching in some sense a return to heathen polytheism?
- Technical terms to become familiar with:
 - **ousia** - Greek for substance or essence
 - **homoiousios** - Greek, of *similar* substance
 - **homousios** - Greek, of the *same* substance
 - **heterousios** - Greek, of *different* substance
 - **consubstantial** - English, of the same substance, likely the best English term for homousios
- Two varieties: Dynamic and Modalistic ♦♦

Dynamic Monarchianism

- The teaching of Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, 250 - 275, is representative
- The Logos was *consubstantial* with the Father but was not a distinct Person in the Godhead.
- The Logos was an impersonal power present in all men and especially operative in the man Jesus.
- This Divine power was present with Jesus from his birth which was of a supernatural conception.
- The man Jesus was gradually deified and thus worthy of divine honor but he cannot in a strict sense be regarded as God. ♦♦

Modalistic Monarchianism

- Far more influential
- Primarily interested in maintaining the full Divinity of Christ
- Commonly called **modalism**
 - The main idea is that the three “persons” represented in Scripture are three different *modes* in which God manifested Himself.
 - Also known as **Patripassianism** - Father - passion.
The Father Himself became incarnate in Christ and therefore also suffered with Christ.
 - Also known as **Sabellianism** after Sabellius, its most famous representative.
- The teaching
 - Tertullian says of Praxeas, “He drove out the Paraclete (Holy Spirit) and crucified the Father”
 - Noetus taught that, “Christ is Himself the Father, and that the Father Himself was born and suffered and died”
 - Sabellius - “According to him the names Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are simply designations of three different *phases* under which the one divine essence manifests itself” (L. Berkhof)
God reveals Himself as Father in creation, Son in incarnation, and Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification.
- An example of this teaching today is the United Pentecostal Church. They insist people should be baptized in the name of Jesus, not the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

Overview

- Relates primarily to the deity of the pre-existent Son - and not about the incarnation.
- Named after **Arius** who was a presbyter in Alexandria (313) and a chief defender of an unbiblical view of Christ.
- This controversy agitated the Roman empire and the church of the East and West for over 50 years. There were three major stages:
 - The beginning of the controversy to a temporary victory at the council of Nicea (318-325)
 - The Arian and semi-Arian response and its prevalence until the death of Constantius (325-361)
 - The final victory and completion of the Nicene creed at the council of Constantinople (381)
- Origen's "second God" expression regarding the Logos left the door open to go in the direction of making Christ a created being essentially different from the Father.
- Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, taught that the Son was of the same substance with the Father.
- Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, pressed (overstated?) Origen's view that the Son was subordinated in essence to the Father and accused Alexander of Sabellianism.
 - Arius taught that Christ was the creator of the world but still a creature of God and therefore not truly divine.
 - Arius' "famous" statement, "there was once when He [the Son] was not" ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

First Round (318-325)

- Arius and his followers were deposed and excommunicated for their denial of the true deity of Christ by a council of a hundred Egyptian and Libyan bishops at Alexandria in 321.
 - Arius continued to hold religious assemblies of his numerous adherents and when driven from Alexandria spread his doctrine in Palestine and Nicomedia.
 - He published an entertaining work of half poetry and half prose which popularized his views.
 - Several bishops, especially Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea (the church historian), who either shared his view or considered it innocent, defended Arius.
- Alexander issued a number of circular letters to all the bishops warning them of the apostates and called them Exukontians. It is helpful to think about this term.
 - Alexander coined this label from the Greek phrase ἐξ οὐκ οντων – ex ouk onton - out of nothing. The Arians were teaching that Christ had been created *out of nothing*.
 - Contrast this with the fact that some Ante Nicene fathers taught that the Son had been “begotten” *from the essence of the Father* - thus the Son is of the same essence as the Father.

The first version of the Nicene creed (325) contains this expression: “...And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, ...” ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

First Round (318-324) - continued

- The excommunication of Arius and Alexander's circular letters got virtually everyone involved in the controversy. Phillip Shaff writes:

Bishop rose against bishop and province against province. The controversy soon involved, through the importance of the subject and the zeal of the parties, the entire church, and transformed the whole Christian East into a theological battlefield.
- It has now been 10 years since the end of the Diocletian persecution and Christianity has been enjoying the protection of the emperor, **Constantine**. He began to intervene out of an interest in preserving the unity of the kingdom.
 - He first considered the controversy a futile war of words and tried to settle the matter in a diplomatic style by sending letters to all the bishops. He also sent the aged bishop Hosius of Spain to Alexandria. These efforts failed.
 - Then, by what he considered "divine inspiration" and with the advice of some bishops, he summoned the first universal council to represent the whole church of the empire.
 - The council's main task was to give a final decision upon the relation of Christ to God.
 - The council was to be held at Nicaea beginning on June 14 of 325.
- The Council of Nicaea was the first of what are called the "ecumenical" councils which represented all of regions of the known Christian church. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

The Constantinian Change of Authority

- The Council of Nicaea marks the beginning of the blurring of the lines of authority between “civil” and “religious” matters.
- Such “lines” never actually existed and “religion” had always been part of the “kingdom” - whether Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian, Israeli, Roman.
- Every kingdom honored their gods and for the first three centuries after Christ Christians had been severely persecuted for refusing to honor the Roman gods.
 - Cicero lays down as a principle of legislation that no one should be allowed to worship foreign gods unless they were recognized by public statute.
 - Maecenas counselled Augustus: “Honor the gods according to the custom of our ancestors, and compel others to worship them. Hate and punish those who bring in strange gods.”
- The post apostolic church had not yet thought through these matters. Was the church under Constantine now to become a new theocracy like Israel during the Old Testament era? Only now the theocracy extends over the entire Roman empire?
- Sadly that idea began to creep into the church’s thinking and emperors, and later Popes, began to see themselves in Christ’s stead, ruling over an earthly “kingdom”. Consider the expression “Christendom.” There is a *proper* relation between church and kingdom.
- The abuse of authority began very early after the Nicene creed was adopted as will be considered below. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

Council of Nicaea (325)

- In the twentieth year of Constantine's reign he summoned by letter the bishops of the empire to Nicaea to decide the matter of Christ's relation to God. All traveling expenses would be liberally covered from the public treasury.
 - Many came hoping to bring their private disputes before the emperor. He had all their papers burned, without reading them, and exhorted them to reconciliation and harmony.
- The bishops were to bring two presbyters and three servants (deacons?) with them.
 - Bishop - Greek *episkopos* - overseers (in most English Bibles)
 - Presbyters - Greek *presbuteros* - elders (in most English Bibles)
- There were at least 250 and at most 318 bishops present.
 - Bishops in the empire numbered approximately 1,800. 1,000 in the Greek provinces and 800 in the Latin Provinces.
 - Including the presbyters and deacons there were from 1,500 to 2,000 in attendance.
 - The eastern church was heavily represented, the Latin church was represented by only seven bishops (Spain, France, Carthage, Italy - Milan & Rome, and a persian and Gothic bishop)
 - The council ran from June 14 to July 25.
- The conference began with the stately entrance of the emperor. Eusebius of Caesarea gave a brief welcome and then Constantine addressed the delegation (P. Schaff III-625)

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

Council of Nicaea (325) - continued

- Some of the most influential persons present were Eusebius of Caesarea, Alexander of Alexandria with his young arch-deacon **Athanasius**, Hosius of Cordova, and Arius.
 - Some present still bore in their bodies reminders of the not to distant persecutions.
 - Eusebius and Hosius had the most influence with the emperor and likely sat at his left and right sides. The council was directed by the church presidents however the emperor constantly took an active part and exercised significant influence.
- The delegates could be divided roughly into three parties
 - The *orthodox party* that firmly believed in the deity of Christ. They were in the definite minority at the start of the council. But in talent and understanding were the stronger.
The leaders were: Alexander of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, Macarius of Jerusalem, Marcellus of Ancyra, Hosius of Cordova, and Alexander's arch-deacon Athanasius who already had a theological depth of understanding regarding this matter and an ability to articulate it.
 - The *Arian party* of about 20 bishops were led by Eusebius of Nicomedia and allied with the imperial family and Arius who attended at the command of the emperor and was often called upon to set forth his views.
 - The *Majority* whose main spokesperson was the historian Eusebius of Caesarea. These took a middle ground, leaned to the orthodox view, but had less discernment and could be easily swayed. Some had not formed convictions on the matter. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

Council of Nicaea (325) - continued

- The Arians first proposed a creed which was rejected with tumultuous disapproval. 16 of the 18 signers of it then left the position of Arius.
- Next Eusebius, in the name of the middle party, proposed an ancient Palestinian Confession which was very similar to the Nicene creed (not yet in existence).
 - Acknowledged the divine nature of Christ but avoided the term in question: consubstantial, of the same essence.
 - The emperor had “pre-approved” this statement and the Arian party was ready to accept it.
- The fact that the Arian party was prepared to accept Eusebius’ proposed statement was very suspicious to the orthodox party. Enough debate on the subject had already occurred to justify their suspicions.
 - They wanted a creed that no Arian could honestly subscribe to without having significantly altered their views.
 - They insisted on inserting the expression homoousios - “of the same substance” which the Arians hated and declared to be unscriptural, Sabellian, and materialistic.
- At this point the emperor stepped in - he knew Eusebius’ statement would not pass and he wanted as near a majority acceptance as possible so he gave his approval for the disputed word. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

Council of Nicaea (325) - concluded

- Hosius announced that a confession was prepared and would be read by the deacon Hermogenes of Caesarea, the secretary of the council.
 - Almost all the bishops subscribed the creed.
 - Eusebius of Caesarea, after a days deliberation, subscribed the creed.
 - Eusebius of Nicomedia (& another) subscribed the creed but without the closing condemnation. This appears to justify the “suspicions” of the orthodox party.
For taking this exception they were deposed and banished - but afterward consented and signed.
 - Two Egyptian bishops refused to sign. They were banished with Arius to Illyria.
 - The books of Arius were burned and his followers branded as enemies of Christianity.
 - The council issued a letter to Egyptian and Libyan bishops as to the council’s decision.
 - The emperor also issued several edicts ascribing the council’s decisions to divine inspiration and made them laws of the realm.

- P. Schaff comments regarding these events:

This is the first example of the civil punishment of heresy; and it is the beginning of a long succession of civil persecutions for all departures from the Catholic faith. Before the union of church and state ecclesiastical excommunication was the extreme penalty. Now banishment and afterwards even death were added, because all offenses against the church were regarded as at the same time crimes against the state and civil society. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

Arianism

- The Father alone is God but cannot create the world directly but only through an agent, the Logos.
- The Son pre-exists the creation but is himself created.
He was created out of nothing, not out of the essence of the Father.
“There was a time when He was not”
- The Son is distinct in nature from the Father and does not *fully* possess any Divine attribute.
- Regarding Christ’s humanity he had only a human body, but not a human soul. Because the Logos took up residence in Christ as the human soul or spirit.
- The Son is *heteroousios*, of a different substance from the Father.

Semiarrianism

- Describes Christ with the term *homoiousios* - He is *like* the Father
- The Son is not a creature, i.e. created, and is co-eternal with the Father
- But the Son is not of the same essence as the Father
- Eusebius of Caesarea proposed this doctrine at the Council of Nicaea. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

The Teaching of Marcellus of Ancyra (after 325)

- He originally defended the Nicene position.
- He agreed with the Arians that the idea of the eternal generation of the Son subordinated the Son to the Father and was incompatible with the Son being of the same essence as the Father.
- However, intending to defend the Deity of Christ he drifted back to a form of Sabellianism (modalism).
- Before the incarnation there was no Son of God, only an eternal, uncreated, Logos. See Luke 1:24-25
 - He *appears* to be struggling with how to explain Sonship without subordinating the Son to the Father in regard to being eternal and un-created.
- The Nicene theology addressed this by saying:
 - The Son was “begotten” of the Father by an “**eternal generation**”, not out of nothing, but out of the essence of the Father.
 - Eternal generation does not refer to time, i.e. something done in the past, but to an *endless* act in the Godhead, not of the free will of the Father, but of necessity. This act distinguishes the Father from the Son as separate persons. John 5:26 is referred to in support of etrnal. generation.
- How we are to understand the relation between Father and Son, and to what extent the eternal generation concept is taught in Scripture is still being discussed today. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

(Follow up to 12/5/2011) The Second Round (325-361) - the rise of Arianism

- Though the orthodox party prevailed at Nicaea Arianism grew significantly after the council.
 - Some bishops subscribed to the “same substance” language with reservation or out of deference to the emperor. History showed that many bishops at this time could be easily persuaded to change their view.
 - Nicaea and the imperial decrees established a precedent for major involvement by civil leaders in the doctrinal controversies of the church. And both sides in the controversy showed no reluctance in employing imperial powers in the east and west to support their causes.
- During the next six decades there were “council against council, creed against creed, anathema against anathema”. At various times both Arius and Athanasius were banished from Alexandria and deposed as bishops.
- Keep in mind that three major positions have now developed: Nicene view (of the same substance), Arianism (of a different substance), Semiarianism (of a similar substance).
- Constantine who was influenced by Eusebius of Caesarea (the historian), who took the semiarian position, and his sister Constantia, and a vague confession from Arius, recalled Arius from exile.
- Athanasius, who became bishop in Alexandria in 328, refused to re-instate Arius for which he was condemned by two Arian councils and banished by the emperor in 335.◆◆

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

The Second Round (325-361) - the rise of Arianism (continued)

- Arius was formally acquitted of heresy by a council in Jerusalem in 335 and was to be formally received back by the church at Constantinople.

However he died the evening before the formal procession was to take place of cholera like symptoms “while attending to a call of nature.” He was in his eighties.

- Some said this was a fitting act of judgement upon him, others said he had been poisoned by the orthodox party. Still others said he died because of being overjoyed by his triumph.
- Constantine died in 337 and the empire was divided between his three sons. Constantine II, Constans, Constantius.
- Constantine II recalled Athanasius from banishment in 338 and was murdered by his brother (Constans) in 340.
- Constantius had the rule in the east. He and his court were strongly attached to Arianism. Athanasius was deposed the second time (340) and went to Rome, held the “**council of Rome**” with 50 western bishops and affirmed the Nicene statement. At this point there is a breach beginning between the western and eastern church.
- Constans and Constantius summoned a general council to be held at **Sardica** in 343. The eastern bishops, opposed to the admission of Athanasius to the council, would not participate. Instead they held their own council in Philippopolis. Sardica confirmed the Nicene doctrine, Philippopolis confirmed an earlier Arian statement.◆◆

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

The Second Round (325-361) - the rise of Arianism (continued)

- Constans compelled his brother (Constantius) to restore Athanasius to his office in 346. The brothers had taken opposite sides in the controversy.
- Constans was murdered by a barbarian field officer and rival, Magnentius, in 350. Who later committed suicide after his defeat.
- This left Constantius, a fanatical Arian, sole emperor ☼.
- Constantius held three synods in favor of semiarianism, including one in Milan. He forced the decrees of these synods on the western church. Deposed a number of western bishops and drove Athanasius from the cathedral of Alexandria during a service with 5000 armed soldiers. He appointed an Arian in his place as bishop of Alexandria.
- *Semiarianism* gained the ascendancy in the entire Roman empire at this time.
- Bishop Hosius, a significant leader at Nicaea, was imprisoned at near the age of 100 regarding this controversy. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

The Second Round (325-361) - the rise of Arianism (concluded)

- Once arianism gained the upper hand the movement divided into two parties over the issue of whether the Son was of “similar essence” or “different essence” of the Father.
 - Many semiarians were wary of “same essence” as it appeared to be a return to Sabellianism or modalism.

How can the Son have the same essence as the Father and yet truly be a distinct person from the Father? He can be if we properly make a distinction of Persons in the unity of the Godhead, *with each person sharing the same (one) Divine essence.*
- There were 7 more councils occupied with this *internal conflict* of the *Anti-Nicene* party from 357 - 360. No significant unity was attained and Constantius tried to suppress the quarrel by his imperial-church power but to no avail. He died a natural death in 361. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

The Final Round (361-381) - the establishment orthodoxy

- The death of Constantius opened the way for the issue to be discussed and debated without the threat of a “sword” (of some form) coming your way.
- Julian the Apostate (nephew of Constantine the Great) tolerated all Christian parties with the hope that they would destroy each other. To this end he recalled all the orthodox bishops from exile.
- With the threat of paganism returning and the emperor no longer “enforcing” a particular doctrine, a more open debate and discussion could take place which helped the cause of the Nicene understanding - especially in the western church.
- Julian died after a two year reign at age 32 in a night skirmish struck by a single arrow.
- Athanasius died in 373 at which time Arianism regained dominion in Alexandria (east) and practiced various forms of violence upon the orthodox communities.
- After Athanasius’ death there were three Cappadocian bishops - often referred to as “the three great Cappadocians” - Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus. Without compromise they clarified and nuanced some of Athanasius’ expressions. By making clear that three separate *persons* does not mean three separate *essences*, rather each person shares the same essence and one being of God, they relieved semiarian fears of modalism. The Logos could be truly distinct from the Father, yet without destroying the unity of God. ♦♦

The Arian Controversy (313 - 381)

The Final Round (361-381) - the establishment orthodoxy (concluded)

- Wayne Grudem offers this helpful statement:

Somehow God's being is so much greater than ours that *within his one undivided being* there can be *an unfolding into interpersonal relationships*, so that there can be three distinct persons (emphasis mine).
- From 379 Gregory Nazianzen labored with significant success in a small congregation and published what became renown discourses on the deity of Christ clarifying that multiple persons *is not* intended to mean multiple essences.
- Also the rage of the Arian emperor Valens against both semiarians and the Nicene party caused the seminarians to move closer to the Nicene party and the banished bishops.
- Theodosius I, a Spaniard by birth, who had been educated in the Nicene faith became emperor in 379 (54 years after the council at Nicaea) and reigned 14 years.
- In 380 he issued an edict requiring all his subjects to confess the Nicene faith and threatened heretics with punishment.
- He also established Gregory Nazianzen as the head of all churches in Constantinople and drove the Arians out of all the churches of the capital city. Arians had dominated all churches in Constantinople for 40 years (they would ensure only Arian bishops would be appointed). ♦♦

The Arian Controversy

The Council of Constantinople (381)

- Theodosius called a second ecumenical council to give the forcible measures the sanction of law and to restore unity in the church of the empire (May 381).
- 36 semiarian Macedonian bishops did not attend. 150 bishops from the east attended. The Latin (west) church was not represented at all - however the vast majority of bishops in the west had been teaching the Nicene understanding at least since the council of Sardica (343).
- The council adopted a modified form of the original Nicene creed of 325. The most significant change was an expansion of the single statement concerning the Holy Spirit. This version of the creed did not originate at the council. A near identical version was already in use in the east in 374 and had already appeared in another document.
- Theodosius ratified the decrees of the council and in July of 381 enacted a law that all churches should be given up to bishops who believed in the equal divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. ♦♦

Development of the Doctrine Of the Holy Spirit (360-589)

- Up to the council of Nicaea the focus was the relation of the Father to the Son and the deity of the Son.

Regarding the Holy Spirit the Nicene creed contains only the statement “And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost”.

- The long and protracted discussion regarding the relationship between the Father and the Son naturally raised the question as to what was the relationship between them and the Spirit? And what/who was the Spirit? And how should the baptismal formula in Matthew 28 be understood?

The church always believed in the Holy Spirit - especially from Pentecost forward because the church so powerfully experienced His power, gifts, and presence.

- Arius held that the Holy Spirit was the first creature created by the Son. A view that was very much in harmony with Origen.
- Gregory Nazianzen, who taught that the Holy Spirit was of the same essence as the Father and the Son, made the following statement in 380 describing the situation:

Of the wise among us, some consider the Holy Ghost an influence, others a creature, others God himself, and again others know not which way to decide, from reverence, as they say, for the Holy Scripture, which declares nothing exact in the case. For this reason they waver between worshipping and not worshipping the Holy Ghost, and strike a middle course, which is in fact, however, a bad one (Schaff, Vol. III, pg. 664). ♦♦

Development of the Doctrine Of the Holy Spirit (360-589)

Continued

- Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, taught that the Holy Spirit was a creature subordinate to the Son. He and his followers were nicknamed **Pneumatomachians**.
pneuma - spirit, machomai - to speak evil against. “Those who speak evil of the Spirit”
- The bishops who met at Constantinople agreed to add the following statement to the Nicene creed. The western bishops, though not attending this council, would have been in agreement.

And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

- The Constantinople statement was better, but still not entirely unambiguous. The term “same substance” was not used however the Spirit is declared to be a Person of equal dignity and deserving of the same honor as the Father and the Son.
- From 381 until 1054 a long and protracted controversy took place between the church in the east and the west regarding the statement “who proceeds from the Father.”
- With **Augustine** (354-430) we move another generation forward from Gregory and almost 2 from Athanasius. He taught that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*. This was likely to ensure that there could be no compromising of the Son’s dignity and authority. ♦♦

Development of the Doctrine Of the Holy Spirit (360-589)

Continued

- The Nicene creed of 381 in referring to the Spirit proceeding *from the Father* was not only consistent with John 15:26 but was concerned to avoid any idea of subordinating the Holy Spirit to the Son which had been done by some for centuries.
- Augustine's view slowly gained acceptance in the west and it was inserted into the Nicene creed by the [council of Toledo](#) in 589.
 - This statement also contained an anathema against those opposing the *and the Son* inclusion. But this was intended to be against the Arians and not the Greek church.
 - The Greek church never adopted the Toledo version of the Nicene creed but a controversy regarding it did not break out until the middle of the 9'th century.
- In the case of the *and the Son* (Latin **filioque**) inclusion the eastern church, though the original framers of the Nicene creed, were never consulted regarding its inclusion. And once aware of its inclusion steadfastly opposed it.
- The controversy is bound up in how John 15:26 should be understood. P. Schaff summarizes the matter nicely:

The Greek church has ever protested against it since the time of Photius (867), and will never adopt it. She makes a sharp distinction between the procession, which is an eternal and internal process in the Holy Trinity itself, and the mission, of the Spirit, which is an act of revelation in time. The Spirit eternally proceeds from the father alone (though through the Son); but was sent by the Father and the Son on the day of Pentecost. ♦♦

Development of the Doctrine Of the Holy Spirit (360-589)

Concluded

Hence the present tense is used of the former (John 15:26), and the future [tense] of the latter (John 14:26, 15:26). (Vol. III, pgs. 688-689).

- It's not hard to see a parallel here between the Son's eternal generation and His *later* coming in the incarnation with the Spirit's eternal procession and His later coming on the day of Pentecost, being *sent* by the Son.
 - For the Greek church the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son sending the Spirit are two separate and distinct matters. One eternal and the other historical.
- The matters of the Son being begotten (defined as eternal generation from the essence of the Father) and the Spirit proceeding, are matters still under discussion today. Were these ideas necessary to defend and explain the deity and personhood of the Son and the Spirit? Were they necessary to explain the relationship between the members of the Godhead?
- The filioque inclusion became the main doctrinal issue in the **split between the eastern and western church** that occurred in 1054.
 - We know these churches today as Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodox.
- We are now ready to focus on the development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ.
◆◆

Introduction

- The questions regarding the nature of Christ are as old as the New Testament. Jesus Himself encouraged us to think these things through with statements like these:
 - Mat 16:13-17** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
 - Mat 22:41-46** While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “The Son of David.” He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?’ “If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.
- Jesus’ question to the Pharisees shows us that we are not going astray when we seek to understand the dual nature of the single person, Christ. He is the Son of David - but if we stop there we have fallen far short - He is also David’s Lord. ♦♦

Introduction

Continued

- We saw that in the second century how the gnostics denied Christ's humanity and that the Ebionites reduced Jesus to being *only* the "Son of David" - but not David's Lord.
- The Church soundly rejected both of these "low" views of Christ and came to understand that the eternal Logos was the eternally existing Son of God, sharing in the same essence as the Father, yet a distinct person from the Father. Indeed - He is David's Lord.
- Once the Deity of Christ was understood this led naturally to questions regarding the relationship of His Divine and human natures. These questions regarding the person of Christ are similar to but different from the Trinitarian questions.
 - With the Trinity we have *one* essence *unfolded* into and shared by *three* persons.
 - With the Person of Christ we have *two* essences, one Divine and one human, not unfolded into multiple persons but *united* into *one* Person.
- Often times the church has been more able to state that a teaching is incorrect as opposed to saying what it ought to be. The long struggle *within* the church over Christology is a history of rejecting incorrect views for nearly two centuries and finally articulating the correct view in the middle of the fifth century at the council of Chalcedon in 451.
- But as it was with Nicea in 325, so here, it took decades following Chalcedon for the understanding expressed there to be firmly established. ♦♦

Introduction

Continued

- This is not a pretty story of cool and calm theologians critiquing each other's views and participating in a series of moderated debates. The rancor and welcomed-by-the-church political meddling we saw during the Arian controversy is ratcheted up even more.
- There is little doubt that by the fourth and fifth centuries the visible Christian church has attempted to form itself into a massive hierarchy and with such an organization there is always ample opportunity for the works of the flesh to flourish. Bishops became more and more powerful and with persecution ended Bishoprics became more and more desirable. Further, with the union of Church and state, bishops functioned virtually as state officials.
- These negatives do not mean that the proper understanding of Scripture, as it teaches us who Christ is, was not advanced, proclaimed and defended. It was.
- Modern day opponents of Christianity point to this chaos as a means of discrediting the doctrine developed during these times. But if we find that the doctrine reflects a serious attempt to sit under the authority of *all Scripture*, as it informs us of how we ought to understand the Son of God who became man, then we will be the grateful recipients of it, and become the defenders of such doctrine in our generation.

Hopefully we will adorn the doctrine with a more consistent humility and long-suffering toward those who oppose it than some who have gone before us. ♦♦

Introduction

Concluded

- To me, the best thinkers and godly members of the early church appear to be as captivated by the incarnation as they were by the crucifixion and resurrection. I think this was good and it is something we've lost.
- This is not a slam on Christmas but the early church spent a great deal of time and thought considering what really happened at the incarnation. Who was Mary's Son? I think you will see this as we go through the historical development of the doctrine of the person of Christ.
- We have sentimentalized the whole matter and associated it with a group of "good human feelings" about various things. We do not have the capacities of angels, but let's remember that at the incarnation an angel appeared with
 - a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:13-14)In the incarnation the Angels had witnessed a stupendous work and mystery of God unfolding. ♦♦

Apollinarianism (362 - 381)

- This discussion began during the latter portion of the Nicene period.
- Named after Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea in Syria, who defended the Nicene faith and Christianity against the attempted resurgence of heathenism under Julian the Apos-tate.
- Apollinaris taught that man was **trichotomous** - consisting of three parts - physical body, soul, and spirit.
- Seeking to explain the union of the two natures in Christ he taught that the Logos took the place of the human spirit in Christ.
 - He's trying to maintain the idea that Christ is only *one* person and thought that this *unity of per-son* could be more easily maintained if the Logos took the place of the higher rational principle in man.
 - He also used this approach to defend the sinlessness of Christ since he regarded the human spirit as the seat of sin.
- A little reflection on this approach leads one to see that such a “christ” is certainly not truly man. William Shedd says, “if the rational part be subtracted from man, he becomes either an idiot or a brute.”
- This reaches a “God in the flesh” but not a true God-man. Christ becomes one part God and two parts man fused into a new nature. ♦♦

Apollinarianism (362 - 381)

Concluded

- Apollinaris' teaching was rejected at a **council in Alexandria** in 362 and was also rejected at Constantinople in 381 (the completion of the Nicene creed).

The council asserted that Christ possessed a reasonable soul.

- The question of the proper relationship between the divine and human natures in Christ was not answered or carefully defined at the council. However, the question was now clearly raised. ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

- If Apollinarianism sacrificed the true humanity of Christ to maintain His *single* Person and Deity, Nestorianism held the Divine and human natures in Christ so rigidly separated as to make Him a *double* person.
- Originally a monk, **Nestorius** became a presbyter in Antioch, and after 428 bishop of Constantinople.
- Before this controversy is over Nestorius appears both in a bad and good light and as you read this history you find yourself sympathetic with him at certain places.

Also it is not clear that the “Nestorianism” that was condemned at the council of Chalcedon was really what Nestorius himself taught, or simply what he was charged with by his opponents, especially Cyril. As recently as the early 20'th century documents have been discovered which lend credence to this view.

- Others prior to Nestorius held the Divine and human natures in Christ so rigidly separated so as to virtually make him a double person. Christ becomes a “we” not an “I”. Whether or not Nestorius is guilty of this teaching, others have been, and the error is now called Nestorianism.
- He was a zealot (in a bad sense) for orthodoxy and could misuse authority. In his inaugural sermon he addressed Theodosius II as follows: “Give me, O emperor, the earth purified of heretics, and I will give thee heaven for it; help me to fight the heretics, and I will help thee to fight the Persians.” ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

Continued

- Interestingly Nestorius came under attack in Constantinople when he openly opposed the expression, “mother of God,” applied to Mary.
 - **Theotokos** - “God bearer” - in popular language, “Mother of God.”
 - The term had already been applied to Mary by Origen, Alexander, Athanasius, Basil, & others.
 - P. Schaff explains what the expression was originally intended to convey:

The expression was intended only to denote the indissoluble union of the divine and human natures in Christ, and the veritable incarnation of the Logos, who took the human nature from the body of Mary, came forth God-Man from her womb, and as God-Man suffered on the cross.
 - With the beginnings of the exaltation or worship of Mary the expression had already passed into the devotional language of the people.
- The arguments against referring to Mary as the mother of God sounded like this:
 - Mary bore Jesus, not the Logos. The Logos is omnipresent and dwelt with Jesus.
 - Mary is strictly the mother of Christ, not the mother of God.
 - Theodore of Mopsuestia spoke in these ways:

Properly speaking, she gave birth to a man in whom the union with the Logos **had begun, but was still so incomplete** that he could not (till after his baptism) be called the Son of God.”... “not God, but the temple in which God dwelt, was born of Mary. ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

Continued

- We might at first think it strange that the issue of Christ not being two persons should arise in an argument over the appropriateness of calling Mary the “mother of God” but when we consider Theodore’s statement, “not God, but the temple in which God dwelt, was born of Mary,” you begin to see the problem.
 - The human Jesus is simply the container in which God dwelt. Jesus and God are two individuals dwelling in the closest proximity of each other.

There is essentially no difference between this “incarnation” and the promises Jesus makes to all His people in John 14-16 of His and the Paraclete’s dwelling with us.
 - In the minds of the Nicene fathers who used the expression, “mother of God”, the expression had far more to do with who Jesus was than with Mary.
 - What Mary bore was truly the God-man - at that time.
 - This is a controversy over how we are to understand the union of the human and divine natures in the “I” of which Christ is. ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

Continued

- In order to sharpen our thinking about this question consider this paragraph from one of Nestorius' discourses:

You ask whether Mary may be called mother of God. Has God then a mother? if so, heathenism itself is excusable in assigning mothers to its gods; but then Paul is a liar, for he said of the deity of Christ that it was without father, without mother, and without descent. No, my dear sir, Mary did not bear God; ... the creature bore not the uncreated Creator, but the man who is the instrument of the God-head; the Holy Ghost conceived not the Logos, **but formed for him, out of the virgin, a temple which he might inhabit.** The incarnate God did not die, but quickened him in whom he was made flesh ... **This garment, which he used, I honor on account of the God which was covered therein** and inseparable therefrom; ... **I separate the natures, but I unite the worship.** Consider what this must mean. He who was formed in the womb of Mary was not himself God, **but God assumed him, [i.e., clothed himself with humanity],** and on account of Him who assumed, he who was assumed is also called God.

- Is this a proper view of the Incarnation? No, it is not. It is God dwelling with man, but it is not God *becoming* man - without “unbecoming” God.
- There is nothing wrong with saying *Jesus* is God. And there was nothing wrong when *Jesus* said before Abraham was, I AM. Only saying that the man Jesus is a temple that God inhabits *does not* adequately reflect what these statements mean. There is a union of the two natures *in the one person whom Mary bore*. Though we do not need to call her the “mother of God” to make this point clear. ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

Continued

- Since at this time there was a growing veneration of Mary Nestorius set off the passions of many who had little patience for fine, but important, distinctions in theology.

As the word homoousios (of the same substance) was the watchword during the Arian controversy, the word theotokos (mother of God) became the watch word of this controversy.

- The monks insulted Nestorius in the pulpit and on the streets. And he returned evil for evil with corporal punishments and imprisonment and in a local council in 429 condemned their views.
- **Cyril** of Alexandria, a very learned though haughty and disputatious man, who most likely viewed Nestorius at Constantinople as a rival, rose up against him.

Although Cyril was theologically in the right, Schaff says of him:

In him we have a striking proof that the value of a doctrine cannot always be judged by the personal worth of its representatives. God uses for his purposes all sorts of instruments, good, bad, and indifferent.

- Cyril first wrote to Nestorius, then to the emperor, the empress, the emperor's sister, then to the Roman bishop Celestine and he warned bishops in the east and the west of the dangerous heresies of his rival Nestorius. ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

Continued

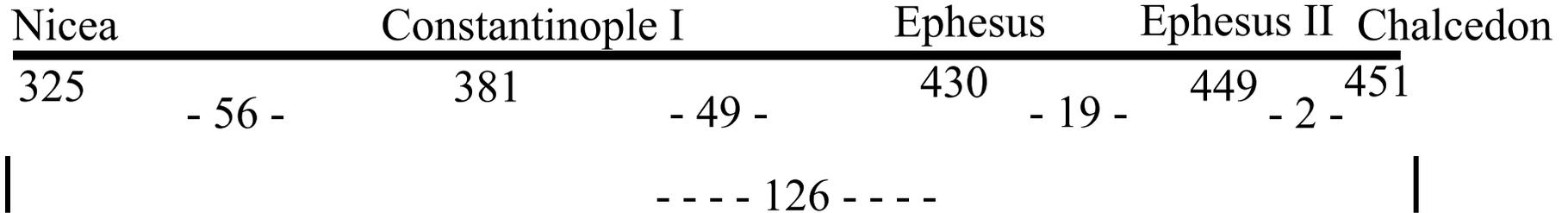
- Celestine deposed Nestorius from his position in Constantinople unless he repented in 10 days (430).
- John, bishop of Antioch, tried to mediate the conflict but the effort was despised by Cyril.
- Cyril hurled 12 anathemas against Nestorius by order of the pope and Nestorius replied with 12 counter anathemas.
- **Theodoret** of Cyros wrote against Cyril with the encouragement of **John of Antioch**.
- The controversy is now so widespread and in the east and the west Theodosius II (emperor in the east) and Valentinian III (emperor in the west) called a universal council to be held at Ephesus on Pentecost in 431. ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

The Council of Ephesus (431)

- It helps to have a sense of time and generations regarding these councils.

(Robbers)



- The council of Ephesus fell far below the dignity and spirit of Nicea and Constantinople. Its proceedings were uncharitable, violent, manipulative and disorderly.
- Nestorius came with 16 bishops and an armed escort.
- Cyril appeared with fifty bishops, and a great retinue of others, under the banner of “Saint Mark and of the holy Mother of God”.
- John of Antioch, a friend of Nestorius who earlier had tried to mediate the conflict, and the bishops with him were detained on the long journey.
- Memnon, the bishop of Ephesus, and the populace of Ephesus sided with Cyril.
- Cyril refused to wait for John and opened the council on the 22nd of June in spite of the protest of the imperial commissioner. ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

The Council of Ephesus (431) - continued

- Nestorius would not appear until all the bishops were present. The council proceeded without him, examined the point of dispute, and condemned Nestorius. The bishops unanimously cried:

“Whoever does not anathematize Nestorius, let himself be anathema; the true faith anathematizes him; the holy council anathematizes him. Whosoever holds fellowship with Nestorius, let him be anathema. We all anathematize the letter and the doctrines of Nestorius. We all anathematize Nestorius and his followers, and his ungodly faith, and his ungodly doctrine. We all anathematize Nestorius,”
- The following statement was put into writing and subscribed to by about 200 bishops:

“The Lord Jesus Christ, who is blasphemed by him [Nestorius], determines through this holy council that Nestorius be excluded from the episcopal office, and from all sacerdotal fellowship.”
- On June 27th John of Antioch finally reached Ephesus and with 42 bishops in agreement held a counter council under the protection of the imperial commissioner and a body-guard and deposed Cyril of Alexandria and Memnon of Ephesus from all priestly functions, as heretics and authors of the whole disorder.
- Long story short - both sides began to appeal to the emperor - he deposes Nestorius, Cyril and Memnon - statements are drawn up - emperor summons 8 spokesmen from each party to appear before him - after fruitless deliberations the council was dissolved in October 431 (it had begun in June). ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

The Council of Ephesus (431-433) - continued

- After two years a compromise was effected through the efforts of John of Antioch, using a statement which he had already presented, in shorter form, to the emperor. This statement was composed by Theodoret. 1,600 years later it is still worth reading and it shows us the questions they were grappling with:

We confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and body subsisting;¹ as to his Godhead begotten of the Father before all time, but as to his manhood, born of the Virgin Mary in the end of the days for us and for our salvation; of the same essence with the Father as to his Godhead, and of the same substance with us as to his manhood; for two natures are united with one another.² Therefore we confess **one** Christ, **one** Lord, and **one** son². **By reason of this union, which yet is without confusion**³, we also confess that the holy Virgin is mother of God, because God the Logos was made flesh and man, **and united with himself the temple [humanity] even from the conception**; which temple he took from the Virgin. But concerning the words of the Gospel and epistles respecting Christ, we know that theologians apply some which refer to the one person to the two natures in common, but separate others as referring to the two natures, and assign the expressions which become God to the Godhead of Christ, but the expressions of humiliation to his manhood.

1 - Against Apollinarianism, 2 - Against Nestorianism, 3 - Against expressions made by Cyril.

- This type of statement is the “bright spot” resulting from the humiliating behavior demonstrated at the council of Ephesus. ♦♦

The Nestorian Controversy (393 - 433)

The Council of Ephesus (431-433) - concluded

- What happened to Cyril, Nestorius and Memnon?
- All three deposed bishops were arrested when the emperor sent one of his highest civil officers to Ephesus. Nestorius, at his request, was assigned to his former cloister at Antioch. Cyril and Memnon were imprisoned at Ephesus.
- After the fruitless deliberations failed in October 431 (the council started in June) Cyril and Memnon were released from prison and the rest of the bishops directed to go home.
- In 433 Cyril assented to the confession drawn up by John of Antioch and Theodoret but insisted on the condemnation and removal of Nestorius as a condition of church union.
 - P. Schaff: “The Antiochians, satisfied with saving the doctrine of two natures, thought it best to sacrifice Nestorius to the unity of the church and anathematized his, “wicked and unholy innovations”.
 - Nestorius was forced to leave the quietness of his cloister and go into exile, first to Arabia, then to Egypt. He now became the object of the church’s practice of persecuting “heretics” - the very practiced he engaged in against Arians when he was in power.
He wrote his life under the title, “Tragedy” and died after 439. No one knows where or when.
 - In “modern” times since Luther Nestorius has found more sympathy. One historian wrote that “he would rather meet the judgment of the Divine Redeemer loaded with the errors of Nestorius rather than with the barbarities of Cyril.” ♦♦

The Eutychian Controversy (433 - 451)

- This controversy is named after Eutyches who stressed the divine in Christ but denied that the *two natures* could be spoken of *after the incarnation*.
He led a monastery of 300 monks and was “pulled” into this controversy as it’s theological spokesman by a notorious figure to be discussed in a moment.
- Eutyches taught that after the Lord’s birth He had only one nature. At the incarnation an impersonal human nature was assimilated and deified by the personal Logos, so that his body was by no means *of the same substance* as ours, but a divine body.
- This teaching was also called **monophysitism** - Greek *mono* - one & *physis* - nature.
Monophysitism is the opposite end of the spectrum from nestorianism. One person with one nature versus two natures functioning as two persons.
- A large portion of the Alexandrians led by Cyril were not satisfied with the union creed (Theodoret) and Cyril interpreted it in a manner nearly equivalent to monophysitism.
However, the Antiochians, under the leadership of John and Theodoret, understood the statement in the sense of two distinct natures continuing in the one person, Christ, *after His incarnation*. **Leo**, the bishop of Rome, in the west, was supportive of this view.
- Cyril died in 444 and his arch-deacon, Dioscurus, succeeded him as bishop of Alexandria and “surpassed him in all his bad qualities, while he fell far behind him in intellect and theological capacity.” P. Schaff. He wanted Alexandria to be supreme in the east. ♦♦

The Eutychian Controversy (433 - 451)

Continued

- In 447, in three dialogues, Theodoret attacked the Eutychian doctrine as “a beggar’s basket of docetistic, Gnostic, Apollinarian, and other heresies”.
Dioscurus accused Theodoret of “dividing the one Lord Christ into two Sons of God.” Both appealed to the court in Constantinople to justify their doctrine. The controversy became focused on the teaching of Eutyches in Constantinople.
- In a local synod in Constantinople in 448, under Flavian, bishop of Constantinople, Eutyches was charged with error.
 - Repeated attempts were made to convince Eutyches to admit that Christ possessed two natures *after his incarnation* and that *Christ’s body was consubstantial with ours*. He refused to avow either doctrine and was deposed.
 - One can see why Theodoret referred to his teaching on Christ’s person as docetistic - Christ was not really man like we are, He just *appeared* that way, and Gnostic - a denial of Christ’s humanity. Though Eutyches reached his conclusions for reasons very different from the Gnostics.
- Both parties sought public support for their views and appealed to Leo of Rome. Leo confirmed the Flavian synod (which deposed Eutyches) and in a letter to him gave a masterly analysis of the doctrine of two natures in one person.
- Eutyches had much influence among the monks and Dioscurus convinced the emperor Theodosius II to convene an ecumenical council. ♦♦

The Eutychian Controversy (433 - 451)

The Council of Ephesus II (Robbers) (449)

- If the first council at Ephesus was scandalous, the second, led by Cyril's "disciple", was much more so and became deadly.
- 135 bishops assembled with Dioscurus presiding, with brutal violence. He came with armed guards, an armed military unit, and fanatical monks who were not reluctant to use physical violence against those they believed to be heretical.
- Flavian and his friends hardly dared to speak and Theodoret was entirely excluded.
- Eusebius of Dorylaeum was presented to make a statement against the Eutychian doctrine and many voices shouted: "Let Eusebius be burnt; let him be burnt alive. As he has cut Christ in two, so let him be cut in two."
- Eutyches defended himself in person. The council affirmed his orthodoxy and condemned **dyophysitism** (two natures).
- The council also deposed Flavian (bishop of Constantinople), Leo (bishop of Rome) and Theodoret. The three Roman delegates sent by Leo dared not even read the letter sent to the council by Leo.

Flavian was treated with such brutality by furious monks that he died of his wounds a few days later.
- In Flavian's place an agent of Dioscurus was made bishop of Constantinople. ♦♦

The Eutychian Controversy (433 - 451)

After the Council of Ephesus II (449)

- After the conduct of those who dominated this council it has ever since been named the “Council of Robbers.”
- The eastern church, certainly not unified in the unorthodoxy of the monophysites, was subjugated under monophysite bishops at Constantinople and Alexandria and appealed to the west for help.
- Leo who combined a great mind and character, who thoroughly understood the questions being debated, urged the calling of a new council to be held in Italy.
- Once again a political change took place in the east which opened the door for a new council. Theodosius left no male heirs so Marcian, a general and senator, became successor by marriage to Theodosius’ sister who favored pope Leo and the dyophysite understanding.
- At this time the remains of Flavian were honorably buried and several dyophysite bishops were re-instated.
- In 451 to restore peace within the empire the eastern and western monarchs called for a general council to represent the entire church to meet, not at Italy, but at Nicaea.
- An edict was addressed to all the metropolitan bishops. Schaff, Vol. 3, 741. ♦♦

The Eutychian (Monophysitism) Controversy (433 - 451)

The Council of Chalcedon (451)

- The bishops assembled in 451 at Nicaea but due to their hostile behavior were commanded to appear at Chalcedon, near Constantinople, so the imperial court and senate might attend in person and repress the violent outbreaks of fanatics in both parties.
- The council ran from October 8 to November 1st there were five to six hundred Greek and Oriental bishops representing the East. The entire Latin west was represented by a papal (Leo) delegation.
- The proceedings were conducted by the imperial commissioners in the name of the emperor with senators present. The Roman delegates, for the first time at an ecumenical council sat as “spiritual presidents”.
- The proceedings were tumultuous. The “laymen” - i.e. the imperial commissioners and senators were compelled to repeatedly remind the bishops of their “clerical dignity” - “such tumultuous outcries were inappropriate for bishops, and were of no advantage to either side”

When Theodoret was introduced and greeted with enthusiasm by the Orientals the Egyptians cried out,

“Cast out the Jew, the enemy of God, the blasphemer of Christ!” The others responded with “Cast out the murderer Dioscurus! Who is there that does not know his crimes?”



The Eutychian (Monophysitism) Controversy (433 - 451)

The Council of Chalcedon (451) - continued

- Sentiment against Nestorius (two natures, but not one person) was so strong, that in the eighth session Theodoret had to utter an anathema against him, who was once his friend, and against all who did not call Mary “mother of God” and divided the one Christ into two sons.
- The court still despised Eutyches and the council of Robbers. Soon most of the Egyptians went over to the orthodox side, and confessed their error and excused themselves due to the violent measures brought upon them at the previous council.
- The decisions of the Robbers council were quickly annulled, the martyr Flavian declared orthodox, Dioscurus and some others of his party were deposed. The Orientals exclaimed:

Many years to the Senate! Holy God, holy mighty, holy immortal God, have mercy upon us. Many years to the emperors! [they called for the council] The impious must always be overthrown! Dioscurus, the murderer [of Flavian], Christ has deposed! This is a righteous judgment, a righteous senate, a righteous council!
- The Constantinople creed (381), two letters of Cyril (without the anathemas), and the famous “dogmatic letter” of Leo to Flavian were read before the council with loud applause. ♦♦

The Eutychian (Monophysitism) Controversy (433 - 451)

The Council of Chalcedon (451) - concluded

- With applause the bishops exclaimed:

That is the faith of the fathers! That is the faith of the apostles! So we all believe! So the orthodox believe! Anathema to him who believes otherwise! Through Leo, Peter has thus spoken. Even so did Cyril teach! That is the true faith.
- On the 22nd of October a positive confession was adopted almost in the words of Leo's letter to Flavian, two years earlier, which was never discussed at the second council of Ephesus.
- This confession is commonly known as the Chalcedon statement which we will look at in just a moment.
- On October 25th the statement was solemnly ratified in the presence of the emperor and empress who solemnly thanked Christ for the restoration of the unity of the faith and threatened all with heavy punishment who should hereafter stir up new controversies; The synod exclaimed, "You are both priest and king, victor in war, and teacher of the faith"
- The emperor issued edicts that all Eutychians should be banished from the empire and their writings burned. ♦♦

Monophysitism After the council of Chalcedon (451 - 553)

- The Chalcedon doctrine was passionately opposed in Palestine and Egypt. And these churches separated from communion with the then “catholic” (i.e. universal) church.
- They used the terms “nature” and “person” as the Nestorians did - rejecting the orthodox distinction between the two terms.
- They were willing to say there was one “composite” nature in Christ, but not two distinct natures. If there were two natures then there must be two sons.
- *Non* Greek Orthodox Christian churches in what we call the middle east today often have their roots in these monophysite groups that separated after the council of Chalcedon. The Coptic, Syrian, and Armenian Christian churches who distinguish themselves from the Greek Orthodox church today would be in this category.
 - Note the separation we refer to today between the “Greek Orthodox” church and the “Roman Catholic” church did not occur until 1054 (see discussion regarding the Holy Spirit).
- There were internal divisions within the monophysites worth noting as they illustrate for us the questions being grappled with.
 - There was a discussion on what was the *degree* of essential difference between the humanity of Christ and ordinary human nature.
 - Some taught that the body of Christ before the resurrection was mortal and corruptible.
 - Some asserted that the body of Christ was a created body, but others asserted that it was not.
- This leads us to briefly consider what is called the **hypostatic union**. ♦♦

The Hypostatic Union

- Schaff summarizes the situation regarding Christological errors very well (at least up to the middle 19th century when he wrote):

The Monophysites [only one nature *and therefore* one person], like their antagonists, the Nestorians [two natures, but not really one person] have maintained themselves in the East as separate sects under their own bishops and patriarchs, even to the present day; [mid 19th century] thus proving the tenacity of those Christological errors, **which acknowledge the full Godhead and manhood of Christ**, while those errors of the ancient church, which deny the Godhead, or the manhood (Ebionism, Gnosticism, Arianism, etc.), as sects, have long since vanished.
- Many theologians will agree that understanding the **union** of the two natures in **one** Christ is the most difficult aspect of the doctrines of the Trinity and the nature of Christ.
- Words used repeatedly in these discussions and in the creedal statements
 - Greek **ousia** - “**that which exists and therefore has substance, property, wealth**” (BDAG). See Luke 15:12-13 I’ve been using the terms **substance or essence**. Note ousia in homi-ousios (*similar* substance), homo-ousios (*same* substance), hetero-ousios (*different* substance).
 - Greek **phoosis** - “**the natural character of an entity, natural characteristic/disposition, nature**” (BDAG). See Romans 2:14, 11:21. I’ve been using the term **nature**.
 - “the sum total of all the essential qualities of a thing, that which makes it what it is” L. Berkhof
 - Greek **hupostasis** - “**the essential or basic structure/nature of an entity, substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality**” (BDAG). See Heb. 1:3. I’ve been using **being, i.e. existing one**.
 - Greek **prosopon** - Person. For person in English we mean, the *individual*, the *ego*, the *I*. ♦♦

The Hypostatic Union

Continued

- **Hypostatic union** means, “the union of Christ’s human and divine natures in one being” (W. Grudem), in one hypostasis.
- A brief summary of scriptural proof that Christ is one being, one person.
 - There is not a trace of evidence for multiple persons in Christ. There is no “I” and “thou” or “we”. Note how this is the opposite of the triune nature of God. “The Comforter Whom the Father will send in my name.” “Thou art My Son,” (Psa. 2:7), “I glorified you on earth having finished the work which you gave me to do.” (John 17:4).
 - Did Christ come down from heaven in the flesh? No. But He does not say, “My divine nature came down from heaven.” He simply says, I have come down from heaven. Nor does He say, “My human nature thirsts”, but simply I thirst.
 - It may seem like a strange proof of this doctrine but demon possession of humans gives an example of what it looks like when two natures *and two persons* inhabit one body.
Mark 5:9 Then He asked him, “What is your name?” And he answered, saying, “My name is Legion; for we are many.”
 - The apostles did not represent Christ as being multiple persons. In Romans 1:1-4 both natures here are mentioned but in reference to one person, *concerning His Son*. See also Gal. 4:4-5, Phil. 2:6-11. ♦♦

The Hypostatic Union

Continued

- Summary of scriptural proof that Christ is one being, one person (continued).
 - What is true of either nature is always attributed to the single person. “shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Act 20:28), “which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (1Co 2:8).
- It is thus not surprising that *Jesus* behaves like God and a man!
 - that is - like *undiluted* God, and like *undiluted* man. He speaks in absolute terms (consubstantial terms) regarding both of His natures.
- Helpful statements - I hope. You may or may not agree with all of these.

In the incarnation our Lord added to His divine nature, not another person (which would have given Him a double personality), but impersonal, generic human nature. L. Boettner

Anything either nature does the person of Christ does. W. Grudem

[I]n view of the fact that Christ has two natures, and depending on which nature we have in mind, it is proper to say that He is infinite or that He is finite, that He existed from eternity or that He was born in Bethlehem, that He was omniscient or that He was limited in knowledge. L. Boettner

We have said that the two natures in Christ are so united that the attributes or peculiarities of either nature can be predicated of the person. And since we mean exactly the same person whether we call Him Jesus or Christ, God or man, the Son of God or the Son of Man, it is perfectly correct to say that Jesus was thirsty or that God was thirsty, that

The Hypostatic Union

Concluded

Jesus suffered or that God suffered, that Jesus took man's place on the cross and died for him or that God took man's place on the cross and died for him, provided, *of course, that we keep in mind the particular nature through which the action is accomplished.* (emphasis mine.) L. Boettner.

The doctrine of the Two Natures supplies, in a word, the only possible solution of the enigmas of the life-manifestation of the historical Jesus. It presents itself to us, *not as the creator, but as the solvent of difficulties* - in this, performing the same service to thought which is performed by all the Christian doctrines. If we look upon it merely as a hypothesis, it commands our attention by the multiplicity of phenomena which it reduces to order and unifies, and on this lower ground, too, commends itself to our acceptance. But it does not come to us merely as a hypothesis. It is the assertion concerning their Lord of all the primary witnesses of the Christian faith. It is, indeed, the self-testimony of our Lord Himself, disclosing to us the mystery of His being. It is, to put it briefly, the simple statement of the fact of Jesus, as the fact is revealed to us in His whole manifestation. We may reject it if we will, *but in rejecting it we reject the only real Jesus in favor of another Jesus -- who is not another,* but is the creature of pure fantasy. The alternatives which we are really face to face with are, either the two-natured Christ of history, or -- a strong delusion. (B.B. Warfield, *Christology and Criticism*, p. 309, emphasis mine). ♦♦

The Athanasian Creed

- This creed was not produced by Athanasius nor during his lifetime as was believed from the 9th to the 17th centuries. On this both Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars agree.

It is not found in the writings of Athanasius or any of his contemporaries. And there is no reference to it by the councils of Nicaea (325) or Chalcedon (451). It first appears in the Latin church and not in the Greek church until the 11th century.

- It has two major parts - one on the doctrine of the Trinity and one on the person of Christ. It may have been two separate documents at one time.
- It thoroughly reflects the Nicene and Chalcedon Creeds and it also shows the influence of Augustine and/or the school he founded at Gaul (354-430).
- It has been dated anywhere from 420 to 804.
- Its most controversial aspect among orthodox churches are its condemnatory statements, at the beginning, middle, and close. ♦♦

Adoptionism (675 - 794)

- A new idea regarding Christ's nature and person appeared in the seventh and eighth centuries which has been called Adoptionism. Felix, bishop of Urgella, was its strongest advocate.
- The teaching
 - Christ as to His divine nature, as the Logos, was the Son of God in the natural sense.
 - Christ as to His human nature was a son of God by adoption.
 - The theory makes a distinction between a natural and an adoptive sonship.
 - The distinction between the two natures in Christ implied a distinction of two different types of sonship.
 - Believers are sons by adoption and are also called Christ's brethren.
 - The birth at Bethlehem was a natural birth and a spiritual birth occurred at Jesus baptism at which time he became the adopted Son of God.
- The council of Toledo in 675 had already declared that Christ was the Son of God by nature, and not by adoption.
- Felix was charged with dividing Christ into two sons.
- The error was condemned by the Synod of Frankfort in 794. ♦♦

Modern Errors (16th - 20th centuries)

16th century

- At the risk of over simplification the doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ within the “orthodox” church stayed “fairly” stable from the 5th to the 16th century.
 - By the 17th century (one century after the reformation) there are three major branches of the “Christian” church; Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant. Each of these churches held to the teaching expressed in the Nicene, Chalcedon and Athanasian Creeds.
 - All of this began to change, starting in the 17th, and especially in the 18th century.
- At this juncture we must acknowledge that religious freedom brings with it its own set of evils, however, these are much to be preferred to “orthodox totalitarianism” (my own expression). The 16th century reformation *began* to open the door to religious freedom, and this opened the door for people to really express what they thought or believed.

So, it is not surprising that the doctrine of the Trinity, which transcends human comprehension, would be more openly challenged.

- **Socinus** and his followers, beginning in the 16th century, declared the doctrine of three persons sharing a common essence to be contrary to reason and attempted to refute it using passages similar to those used by Arians.

They also viewed Christ as simply a man who possessed a peculiar fullness of the Spirit. And the Spirit is “a virtue or energy flowing from God to men.” They are the forerunners of present day Unitarians and Modernists. ♦♦

Modern Errors (16th - 20th centuries)

Brief Survey

- Modern (**Liberal**) denials in some ways are quite similar and in some ways quite different from the early centuries.
- Denials that are similar
 - The doctrine does not appear consistent with human reason and experience.
This objection has always been present and the church, when thinking most clearly, acknowledges that an infinite and transcendent God has revealed truths regarding Himself which are, while not truly irrational, yet beyond our comprehension, absolutely unique, and beyond any creaturely comparison. Given an infinite God, there is nothing unreasonable about this position. Almost all those who deny these doctrines put forward this objection. old and new, religious and non religious.
 - Religious groups that claim submission to the Scriptures and still deny the doctrine of the Trinity (there are some).
Their arguments and exegesis of Scripture are very similar to those of the past. These groups still claim to argue *from* Scripture and reason. ♦♦

Modern Errors (16th - 20th centuries)

Brief Survey - continued

- Denials that are different (these are “new” from the 17th century forward).
 - Denials associated with a denial of the Scriptures authority or “ability” to reveal God to us.
Simply put, the Scriptures are full of errors and the gospels *do not* accurately relate what Jesus said and did. Nearly every “high” Christological statement is judged to be “non-authentic”.
Proving to this group that the NT teaches the deity of Christ has no affect on their Christology since, in their view, generations after Christ exalted him to this position. There is a difference between “the Christ of history” and “the Christ of faith”. Explain.
Jesus was an extraordinary man, ahead of his time, and had extraordinary impact on the world.
 - Denials of most or all supernaturalism
The Deism of the enlightenment period (18th century)
Naturalism from Darwin forward (19th century)
- With Deism there is no *special* revelation from God. There is still a transcendent God but He expects us to figure things out with *natural* revelation only. I.E. our reason, experience, and experimentation. And the enlightenment philosophers and teachers emphasized that we are up to the task!
With no special revelation no one would ever come to know the triune nature of God nor how God joined himself to humanity in Jesus Christ. For Deists Jesus is only a man. ♦♦

Modern Errors (16th - 20th centuries)

Brief Survey - continued

- With naturalism the God of Deism is no longer needed since there is a natural explanation of creation. Naturalism attributes the attributes of externality and “being the uncaused cause” to the creation. Naturalists worship the creation rather than the Creator. This is the *faith* of the consistent naturalist or materialist.
- Pantheistic representations of the Person of Christ (Mid 20th - 21st century).
 - The resurgence of “pantheistic spirituality” - God is in everything, we are in God, we are a part of God.
 - New age “spirituality” - we need to grow to an awareness of our oneness with God - when more and more people do this it brings harmony and will usher in a new age.
 - All people are Divine because God is in all.
 - Jesus was a man who was especially aware of his oneness with God. We too can attain to this state.
 - This approach doesn't reject Jesus, but incorporates him into a very ancient and darkened way of thinking about God.
 - It appears to me the reason this happens (incorporation) over and over again, is that Jesus is such a significant figure that no system of thought addressing the “big questions” can ignore him and still have some semblance of credibility. He must somehow be “explained” and taken into account. ♦♦

Modern Errors (16th - 20th centuries)

Brief Survey - continued

The Kenotic Theories (late 19th, early 20th, century)

- This modern Christological error is not directly based upon a denial of Scriptures authority or supernaturalism. The Kenotic theories are similar to some errors of the earlier centuries in that they attempt to defend their view from Scripture.
- Named after the Greek verb *kenoo* used in Philippians 2:7 translated “emptied Himself” or “made Himself nothing” or “made himself of no reputation”. Philippians 2:7 and 2 Corinthians 8:9 became the basis for the theory.
- These passages were used to teach that at the incarnation Christ divested Himself of His deity.
 - The Logos literally became, that is, was changed into a man, de-godding himself.
 - Then gradually increased in wisdom and power until at last He again assumed the Divine nature.
- A careful study of Phil. 2:7 yields a strong case that what *ekenosen* means in Philippians 2:7 is that the Lord of glory made Himself of no account, or reputation, by becoming a servant. The ultimate example he who would be greatest let him become your servant and “not lording it over them”.

The point in Phil. 2 is that He indeed was God, *but did not insist on being treated as such*. The main argument of the paragraph collapses *if He was not God*. ♦♦

Modern Errors (16th - 21st centuries)

Brief Survey - concluded

- Awash in pluralism

Culturally - all ideas and practices are to be equally “praised” and valued.

- Awash in *religious* pluralism

Our American culture is not predominantly un religious.

We are religious pluralists.

Nearly every view of the Person of Christ we’ve seen we can find in our culture today.



Concluding Applications

- The creedal statements produced by the church *were not* attempts to satisfy “human reason”, etc. regarding the Trinity or the Person of Christ. They were attempts to summarize all of what was found in Scripture.

Nearly all, perhaps all, errors silence portions of God’s revelation given to us.

- The church by no means needs to or should start from scratch in every generation.
A study of the doctrinal history of the church helps us know what we believe and why we believe it. Thinking through the questions raised, the Scripture used to answer them, and the creedal statements drawn up to summarize what Scripture teaches is very beneficial.
- But every generation has to themselves believe. So each must hear God’s word and consider the nature of God and Jesus Christ. The understanding which took centuries to mature in the past can now be achieved in years for any serious student of Scripture.
- In every generation there will be those who fall away from the faith and destroy they faithful witness to Christ in some churches. Jesus speaks of false prophets and christs, John speaks of the spirit of antichrist, Paul speaks of “another gospel” and “another Jesus” and Peter speaks of false teachers. So, false views will be re-asserted in every generation and have to be refuted in every generation.
- Seeing how the church confronted errors (good and bad) is instructive for us. It’s now our turn - how will we do? ♦♦

Nicene Creed

Original Version - 325 A.D.

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, begotten¹ of the Father the only-begotten;² that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten,³ not made⁵, being of one substance⁴ with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

But those who say; 'There was a time when He was not'; and 'He was not before He was made'; and 'He was made out of nothing'; or 'The Son of God is created'; or 'changeable,' or 'alterable' -- they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.

1. γεννηθεντα, natum (Hebrews 1:5, 5:5, Acts 13:33, Psalm 2:7 LXX)
2. μονογενη, unigenitum (John 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18, 1 John 4:9, Luke 7:12, 8:42, 9:38, Hebrews 11:17)
3. γεννηθεντα, natum, 5. See hymn 208, "O come all ye faithful" verse 2.
4. ηομοουσιον, homoousion (Gk.), unius substantiae (Latin) ♦♦

Nicene Creed - *Adopted at the Council of Constantinople - 381 A.D.*

325 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, begotten of the Father **the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God**, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made **both in heaven and on earth**; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

But those who say; 'There was a time when He was not'; and 'He was not before He was made'; and 'He was made out of nothing'; or 'The Son of God is created'; or 'changeable,' or 'alterable' -- they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.

381 We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of **heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.**

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the **only-begotten²** Son of God, begotten¹ of the Father **before all worlds**, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten,¹ not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down **from heaven**, and was incarnate **by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin mary**, and was made man; **he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father**; from thence he shall come **again, with glory** to judge the quick and the dead; **whose kingdom shall have no end.**

And in the Holy Ghost, **the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen** ♦♦

Chalcedon Statement - 451 A.D.

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, **the same perfect in Godhead^a and also perfect in manhood^b**; truly God and truly man, **of a reasonable [rational] soul and body^c**; **consubstantial⁴ with the Father according to the Godhead^a, and consubstantial⁴ with us according to the Manhood^{b,c}**; in all things like unto us, **without sinⁱ**; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the Manhood; **one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten^d, to be acknowledged in two natures^{e 1}**, **inconfusedly^f, unchangeably^g, indivisibly^h, inseparably^h**; **the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union but rather the property of each nature being preserved^{f,g}**, and concurring in one Person² and one Subsistence³, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has been handed down to us. ♦♦

a - Against Arianism

b - Against Gnosticism

c - Against Apollinarianism

d - Against Nestorianism

e - Against Eutichianism and

monophysitism

f - The two natures do not mix and become a third

g - The two natures did not change at the incarnation

h - The two natures cannot be divided or separated

i - The one way He is not like us.

1 - phooson, 2 - prosopon

3 - hupostasin, 4 - homoousion

The Athanasian Creed (420?-804?)

1. Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith:
2. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity;
4. Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance [Essence].
5. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal.
7. Such as the Father is: such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.
8. The Father uncreate [uncreated]: the Son uncreate [uncreated]: and the Holy Ghost uncreate [uncreated].
9. The Father incomprehensible [unlimited]: the Son incomprehensible [unlimited]: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible [unlimited, or infinite].
10. The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.
12. As also there are not three uncreated: nor three incomprehensibles [infinities], but one uncreated: and one incomprehensible [infinite].
13. So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty:
14. And yet they are not three Almighty: but one Almighty.
15. So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.
16. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God. ♦♦

The Athanasian Creed (420-804) - continued

17. So likewise the Father is Lord: the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord.

18. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord.

19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord:

20. So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion: to say, there be [are] three Gods, or three Lords.

21. The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.

22. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten.

23. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.

24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

25. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater or less than another [there is nothing before, or after: nothing greater or less].

26. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal.

27. So that in all things, as aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped.

28. He therefore that will be saved, must [let him] thus think of the Trinity.

29. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly [faithfully] the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

30. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man. ♦♦

The Athanasian Creed (420-804) - continued

31. God, of the Substance [Essence] of the Father; begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance [Essence] of his Mother, born in the world.

32. Perfect God: and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

33. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood.

34. Who although he be [is] God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ.

35. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by

taking [assumption] of the Manhood into God.

36. One altogether; not by confusion of Substance [Essence]: but by unity of Person.

37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ;

38. Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell [Hades, spirit-world]: rose again the third day from the dead.

39. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father God [God the Father] Almighty.

40. From whence [thence] he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;

42. And shall give account for their own works.

43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

44. This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully [truly and firmly], he can not be saved. ♦♦

1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter 2:3 - on the Trinity

In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him. ♦♦

1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter 8:2 - on the Person of Christ

The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father's glory, of one substance and equal with him who made the world, who upholds and governs all things he has made, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her: and the power of the Most High overshadowing her; and so was made of a woman of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David according to the Scriptures; so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man. ♦♦

SGBC Statement of Faith Regarding the Trinity

- SGBC's official statement is paragraph 2:3 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of faith.

SGBC Simplified Statement of Faith

There are three coequal, coeternal yet distinct persons in the Godhead; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

SGBC Requirements for Membership

SGBC also believes, since many false Christs (1 John 4:1, 2 Pet. 2:1, 2 Tim. 4:3) have been proclaimed throughout the ages, there is an irreducible minimum of doctrinal convictions that a person must hold, or he/she cannot be considered to be a believer in Jesus Christ. This is not to say that a person is not a believer if he/she does not initially understand all of the following truths. However, when given a reasonable opportunity for instruction from the Bible, it is expected that any converted person would be willing to confess these truths.

c. The historic doctrine of the Trinity that the one God exists as three separate Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each person possesses all the essence of whatever makes God, God and therefore can be properly called God and worshipped as God. ♦♦

SGBC Statement of Faith Regarding the Person of Christ

- SGBC's official statement is paragraph 8:2 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of faith.

SGBC Simplified Statement of Faith

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, equal with God. As the Son of God He came into the world and took upon himself the nature of man yet without sin.

SGBC Requirements for Membership

f. That Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, possesses the true nature of God and man united in one person. His Divine nature was united to a human nature at his supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary. ♦♦

Luke 1:34-35 Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” 35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. ♦♦

1 John 4:3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. ♦♦

2 Corinthians 11:4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted-- you may well put up with it!

2 Corinthians 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ♦♦

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,

John 15:26 But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. ♦♦

Luke 15:12-13 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of **goods** [property, wealth, estate] that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his **possessions** with prodigal living. ♦♦

Romans 2:14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by **nature** do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ♦♦

Romans 11:21 For if God did not spare the **natural** branches, He may not spare you either. ♦♦

Hebrews 1:3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His **person**, [being (NIV), nature (NAS,ESV)]. "an exact representation of (God's) real being" (BDAG) ♦♦

Philippians 2:6-8 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but **made Himself of no reputation** [emptied Himself (NAS), made Himself nothing (ESV)], taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ♦♦

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. ♦♦

Evidence for an early belief in Christ's Divinity

- Some give the impression that the church did not confess the Divinity of Christ until the fourth century. This idea is proven to be false by the earlier excommunications of those who denied Christ's Divinity.
 - Theodotus who denied Christ in a persecution with the apology that he denied only a man was excommunicated by Victor bishop of Rome around 195.
 - Artemon who declared the doctrine of the divinity of Christ an innovation and relapse to polytheism was excommunicated by Zephyrinus around 210.

The Artemonites were charged with placing Euclid and Aristotle above Christ and esteeming mathematics and dialectics higher than the gospel.
 - Paul of Samosata was excommunicated in 268 at the third synod in Antioch which was attended by 80 bishops.
- Early modalism, although a serious error, is proof that many people believed in the Deity of Christ.
- Explicit statements from Ignatius.

Questionable Translations Have Contributed to Misunderstandings

- Proverbs 8:22
 - see Grudem pg. 230
- “Only begotten” in John 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18

Constantius

- Did not follow his father's policy of religious tolerance
- Launched a phase of violent suppression of heathen religion, pillaged and destroyed many temples and prohibited under penalty of death all sacrifices and worship of images in Rome, Alexandria and Athens.
- This caused many to “convert” to Christianity.
- He also applied much the same policy to adherents of the Nicene doctrine and punished them with confiscation of property and banishment.
- He meddled in all the affairs of the church, aspired to be renown as a theologian, and was fond of being called “bishop of bishops”. ♦♦

Follow up to 12/4/2011 Discussions

- Regarding the discussion we had on “eternal generation”
 - Note John 5:26
 - Also note that the idea of “eternal generation” is an attempt to explain the “only begotten Son” language used by John in his writings. An attempt not to simply ignore these expressions.
- Regarding the Greek term *monogenes*, traditionally translated *only-begotten* in English and *unigenitum* in Latin, read the Scripture references listed in notes 1 and 2 which I inserted in the Nicene Creed. Read them in an older version and also in a newer version, ESV, NIV.

Notice that John is not using the same Greek term which was used by other biblical writers (Psalm 2, Acts 1:5, Hebrews 5:) though this is not obvious to an English reader (prior to recent versions of the NT).

- Regarding my “challenge” to you regarding Luke 1:34-35, as to what does, “Son of God” mean in this passage, note:
 - Luke 1:34-35 could be (likely is) referring what is called Christ’s “**Messianic Sonship**” which did begin at the incarnation (and/or resurrection) (see Psalm 2:7 and its NT quotes).
 - When did the Messiah, **as the Messiah**, come into existence? When the God-man came into existence. Texts that indicate Sonship beginning at the incarnation do not deny eternal Sonship.
 - Messianic Sonship, occurring in history, can be distinguished from **Eternal Sonship** - of which Jesus often displays a consciousness of, i.e. He is the Son of God *prior* to the incarnation and was *sent* by the Father. But at the incarnation He is a Son of David in the truest sense also. ♦♦

Vocabulary Associated with the Doctrine of the Trinity and the Person of Christ ↑ ↑

Term	Meaning	Related to a person or creed	Aprox. Date
Arianism and semiarianism	See Error Summary	Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria	313-381
adoptionism	See error Summary	Felix, bishop of Urgella	8th century
apollinarianism	See error Summary	Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea	390
consubstantial	Sharing the same substance with. “The Son is consubstantial with the Father”. See Greek homoousios.	Used in Nicene creed.	325
docetism	The teaching that the sufferings and human aspects of Christ were imaginary or apparent. If Christ suffered he was not Divine. If he were Divine he could not suffer.	Gnosticism	2nd and 3rd centuries
dyophysitism	Two natures. Christ possesses two distinct natures, of man and of God. See also monophysitism.	Expressed in Chalcedon creed.	451
Eutichianism	See Error Summary	Eutichus, Cyril, Dioscurus,	433-451
eternal generation	The Son was “begotten” of the Father by an “eternal generation”, <i>not out of nothing, but out of the essence of the Father</i> . Eternal generation does not refer to time, i.e. something done in the past, but to an <i>endless</i> act in the Godhead, not of the free will of the Father, but of necessity. This act distinguishes the Father from the Son as separate persons. John 5:26 is referred to in support of eternal generation.	The expression derives from Origen. See first version (325) of Nicene creed.	

Term	Meaning	Related to a person or creed	Aprox. Date
filioque	Filioque is Greek for <i>and the Son</i> . The term was included in the later version of the Nicene creed (589, council of Toledo) regarding the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father <i>and the Son</i> . The eastern church, though the original framers of the Nicene creed, were never consulted regarding its inclusion. And once aware of its inclusion steadfastly opposed it.		
homoousios homoiousios heteroousia	Greek - of the same substance Greek - of similar substance Greek - of different substance		
hypostatic union hupostasis	“the union of Christ’s human and divine natures in one being” (W. Grudem), in one hupostasis. “the essential or basic structure/nature of an entity, <i>substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality</i> ” (BDAG lexicon)		
impassibility	The teaching that God cannot be acted upon or affected emotionally by anything in creation. This idea was sometimes used to deny the deity of Christ. It was also used to defend against modalism, i.e. God cannot suffer.		
modalism	See Error Summary	Sabellius	3rd & 4th cent.
monarchianism	See Error Summary		3rd & 4th cent.
monophysitism	See Error Summary	Eutyches, Cyril	4th & 5th cent.
monothelites and duothelites	mono - one + thelema - Gk. for will, <i>one will</i> . duothelites - two wills. These terms relate to the question, In Christ’s person were there two wills or one?	6th council of constantinople	7th century
Nestorianism	See Error Summary	Nestorius	4th & 5th cent.

Term	Meaning	Related to a person or creed	Aprox. Date
<p>ontological Trinity</p> <p>economic Trinity</p>	<p>Ontology - having to do with being and essence. The ontological Trinity refers to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their eternal relationship and existence apart from the creation of the world.</p> <p>Having to do with God's planing and executing creation and redemption. Works are "out of" the Father and "through the Son". The Son always does the Father's will. These <i>are not</i> statements about "<i>essence</i> of nature", i.e. about the ontological Trinity. They are statements about distinct <i>roles</i> of the persons of the Godhead in the carrying out of God's plan of creation and redemption.</p> <p>There is subordination or role in the economic Trinity.</p> <p>"Economic" is being used here in its archaic English sense, relating to ordering of activities.</p>		
ousia	Greek for substance or essence		
Patripassianism	See Error Summary.		
Pneumatomachians	pneuma - spirit, machomai - to speak evil against. "Those who speak evil of the Spirit". A nickname assigned to those who taught that the Holy Spirit was a creature subordinate to the Son		
Sabellianism	See Error Summary	Sabellius	4th century
Socinianism	See Error Summary	Socinus	16th century
Subordinationism	Teaching that assigns an inferiority of being, status, or role to the Son or the Holy Spirit. The orthodox church has generally insisted that there is no subordination in the ontological trinity, but there is subordination of role in the economic trinity.		

Term	Meaning	Related to a person or creed	Aprox. Date
theotokos	Greek for “God bearer”. In popular language, “Mother of God.” A title applied to the virgin Mary. Mary was called theotokos emphasizing that Jesus was Divine. See also nestorianism in the Error Summary.		
trichotomous	That man was consists of three parts, a physical body, a soul, and a spirit. This view of man has entered into discussion regarding Christ’s human nature in relation to His divine nature.		
trinity	tri-unity or “three-in-oneness”		
tritheism	Belief in three gods. Trinitarians are often charged with being tritheists.		◆◆

Councils and Synods ↑ ↑

Table entries are in chronological order.

Council	Subject	Date	Names
Council of Nicaea	The deity of the Son. Adoption of the expression that the Son is <i>of the same essence</i> as the Father. Produced the first version of the Nicene creed.	325	Arius, Alexander, Athanasius, Constantine the great
Council of Rome	When Athanasius was deposed the second time by Constantius (340) he went to Rome, held the “council of Rome” with 50 western bishops and affirmed the Nicene statement.	341	
Council of Sardica	Constans and Constantius summoned a general council to be held at Sardica in 343. The eastern bishops, opposed to the admission of Athanasius to the council, would not participate. Instead they held their own council in Philippopolis. Sardica confirmed the Nicene doctrine, Philippopolis confirmed an earlier Arian statement.	343	
Synod of Alexandria	A response to Apollinarianism. The synod asserted the existence of a human soul in Christ.	362	Apollinaris
Council of Constantinople	The council adopted a modified form of the original Nicene creed of 325. The most significant change was an expansion of the single statement concerning the Holy Spirit. This council also rejected Apollinarianism. This is the beginning of the rise of questions regarding how the two natures in Christ should be understood.	381	Basil the Great Gregory of Nyssa Gregory of Nazianzus. Theodosius
Council of Ephesus	Maintained that the term theotokos could be applied to Mary and asserted the doctrine of two distinct natures of Christ. Under the leadership of Cyril the council was violent, manipulative and disorderly.	431	Nestorius Cyril John of Antioch Theodoret

Council	Subject	Date	Names
Council of Ephesus II Robbers	Defended Eutichianism (monophysitism), Under the leadership of Dioscurus the council was violent and Bishop Flavian even died a few days later from wounds he had received from fanatical monks who had taken the side of Eutyches.	448	Eutyches Dioscurus
Chalcedon	Affirmed and expressed the doctrine that Christ possesses two distinct natures in one undivided person. Condemned the council of Robbers and disposed Dioscurus. Adopted the Chalcedon statement on the nature and person of Christ.	451	Leo the Great Theodoret
Council of Toledo	Declared that Christ was the Son of God by nature, not by adoption.	675	
6th council of Constantinople	Dealt with the monothelite and duothelite controversy regarding the will of Christ. Condemned the monothelite view.	680	
Synod of Frankfort	Condemned adoptionism	794	◆◆

Summary of Errors Associated with the Trinity and the Person of Christ ↑ ↑

Errors

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Judaizing | 6. Denying Deity of the Holy Spirit | 9. Not holding that Christ is <i>one</i> undivided person |
| 2. Adding “gentile wisdom” | 7. Denying Trinity | 10. Gnosticism or containint Gnostic elements |
| 3. Rejecting portions of Scripture | 8. Not holding the two natures <i>distinct</i> in Christ | |
| 4. Denying Christ’s true humanity | | |
| 5. Denying Christ’s true Deity | | |

Table entries are in chronological order

Name	Errors*	Notes	Name(s)	Date
gnosticism	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Basic tenet that matter is evil and must be escaped from, thus Christ could not have come in the flesh, i.e. have real human body.	Basilides Valentinus Marcion	First and second century
Cerinthus	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Jesus as a man was separate from the Christ. Christ descended on Jesus at baptism, left him at crucifixion. Taught the validity of the Mosaic law and a millennial kingdom.	Cerinthus	Late first century
Ebionism	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	Reduce Christianity to Judaism, taught the universal and perpetual validity of the Mosaic law. - Jesus is the promised Messiah, the supreme lawgiver like Moses and a king like David. Rejected all of Paul’s writings.	Name derived from Hebrew term for “poor”	Second - fourth centuries
dynamic monarchianism	4, 7, 8	The Logos was <i>consubstantial</i> with the Father but was not a distinct Person in the Godhead, rather an impersonal power present in all men and especially in the man Jesus. The man Jesus was gradually deified and thus worthy of divine honor.	Artemon Theodotus, Paul of Samosata	Third - fourth centuries
modalistic monarchianism, modalism, Sabellianism, patripassianism	7	Primarily interested in maintaining the full Divinity of Christ. Denies the existence of three separate persons in the Godhead. The one God reveals Himself as Father in creation, Son in incarnation, and Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification. Patripassianism was the teaching that the Father had become incarnate in Christ and suffered with Him.	Noetus Praxes Sabellius Marcellus	Third - fourth centuries

Name	Errors*	Notes	Name(s)	Date
Arianism	4, 5, 6, 7, 10?	The Father alone is God but cannot create the world directly but only through an agent, the Logos. The Son pre-exists the creation but is himself created out of nothing (not of the essence of the Father.). Christ's had only a human body, but not a human soul, because the Logos took up residence in Christ as the human soul or spirit. The Son is <i>heteroousios</i> , of a different substance from the Father.	Arius	Third and fourth centuries
Semiarrianism	5, 7	Describes Christ with the term <i>homoiousios</i> - He is like the Father. The Son is not a creature, i.e. created, and is co-eternal with the Father, but the Son is not of the same essence as the Father.	Eusebius of Caesarea	Third and fourth centuries
Apollinarianism	4	Man was trichotomous - body, soul, and spirit. In Christ the Logos took the place of the human spirit in Jesus. The Logos is God but Christ is not truly man.	Apollinaris	Fourth century
Nestorianism	9	Nestorianism held the Divine and human natures in Christ so rigidly separated as to make Him a double person. It led to a denial that Christ was <i>one person</i> . The controversy got bound up with the controversy over the expression Theotokos - "God bearer" - in popular language, "Mother of God." Nestorius strongly opposed this expression.	Nestorius	Fourth and fifth centuries
Eutichianism monophysitism	4, 8	Monophysitism is the opposite end of the spectrum from nestorianism. One person with one nature (monophysitism) versus two natures functioning as two persons (nestorianism). The divine and human natures of Christ are not kept separate but combined into a single (mono) new nature. Eutyches would not admit that Christ possessed two natures after his incarnation and that Christ's body was consubstantial with ours.	Eutyches, Cyril	Fourth and fifth centuries
Adoptionism	9	The teaching that Christ as to His divine nature was the Son of God in the natural sense but as to His human nature he was a son of God <i>by adoption</i> . The theory make a distinction between a natural and an adoptive sonship.	Felix, bishop of Urgella	8th century
Socinianism	5, 6, 7, 8	Revived arianism and went beyond it. Denied the pre-existence of the Son and held that Christ, as to His essential nature, was simply a man, though he possessed a peculiar fullness of the Spirit.	Socinus	Sixteenth century
Protestant liberalism	3, 5, 6, 7, 8	Considers much Scripture not authoritative and many of Jesus' sayings recorded in the gospels as not authentic. Makes a distinction between the Jesus of History and the Jesus of faith (i.e. what the church came to believe about Jesus). The Jesus of history was an enlightened moral teacher before his time. Revelation from God relates much more to experience rather than propositional truth, i.e. truth expressed in words.	Schleiermacher	Seventeenth - twentieth centuries

Name	Errors*	Notes	Name(s)	Date
Kenotic Theories	5, 8, 9	At the incarnation Christ divested Himself of His deity. The Logos literally became, that is, was changed into a man, de-godding himself. Then gradually increased in wisdom and power until at last He again assumed the Divine nature. Based on misunderstanding of Philippians 2:7 and 2 Cor. 8:9.	Thomasius Ebrard Martensen	Late 19th - early 20th century)
Pantheistic	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	God is in everything, we are in God, we are a part of God. New age “spirituality” - we need to grow to an awareness of our oneness with God - when more and more people do this it brings harmony and will usher in a new age. All people are Divine because God is in all. Jesus was a man who was especially aware of his oneness with God. We too can attain to this state.	New Age	Twentieth cen- tury

* The errors indicated are only the *main* errors of the teaching. There are often shades of other errors though the number is not indicated. ♦♦