

A Summary

of

The Trinitarian Faith

by

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Summarized by Les Galicinski

Chapter 1 - Faith and Godliness

The Council of Nicea (325 AD) and the subsequent Council of Constantinople (381AD) developed, reaffirmed and finalized the Nicene Creed, considering it a breathing of the “spirit of the Scripture” and a confession of the divine and apostolic faith. So profound was the experience and the result, that those who had taken part in its inception considered it in awe as the work of the Holy Spirit. Athanasius described the result as a devout exact rendering of the Holy Scriptures and a faithful handling of the apostolic tradition of the church. While the motivation was a response to the Arian and other heresies, the result was a devout act of faith made by the council in the presence of God. The creed became regarded as both an evangelical proclamation leading to faith in Christ as well as an instructive formulation of the capital truths of the Gospel as revealed in Scripture. It also represented a radical shift away from the center of thinking as in-turned human reason, to a center in God’s reveling Word in Jesus Christ, allowing faith to take its stand in God’s own being. Godly faith was held then to enable understanding, rather than the Hellenistic view that understanding lead to belief. This faith was held to involve recognition, apprehension and conception, in a responsible assent of the mind to the truth of God’s self-revelation to mankind. In addition, this faith is linked to the absolute priority of God over all human thought of Him. **We believe** of the Nicene confession, was characterized by a certainty of conviction based upon the truth that God Himself had trust upon it, while at the same time, was characterized by an ever expanding, semantic focus which answered to the unfathomable mystery and inexhaustible nature of God. In the first sense, it was *exclusive* of belief in any other god, or any other way to God but through Jesus Christ, or of any other Gospel other than the one preached by the Fathers. In the second sense, the God in whom we believe is a reality which infinitely transcends all that we can think or say about Him. This belief is the open to whatever may yet be known through the Spirit of Christ who has been sent to lead us into a deeper understanding of the truth. In this sense it has an *open range* to it which may be known by a movement of faith toward the infinity and ineffability of God. Thus the creed was seen as being necessary to correct heretics yet ever inadequate in describing the nature of the infinite God, and hence subject to revision in light of deeper and fuller understanding of God’s self-revelation.

Another element of Nicene theology is *godliness* which is given primacy alone with *faith*. Godliness is a right relationship with God through faith that gives a distinctive slant to the mind and molds life, thought and behavior in accordance with the truth of the Gospel. Ungodliness was synonymous with unbelief and error. As truth has its locus in Christ, the mystery of Godliness is Jesus Christ revealed in the flesh, preached, believed upon and established in the church. The Godly counterpart is the mystery of Christ and His body, the church. Thus godliness was tied to living in community with the church as evidenced by the fruits of apostolic teaching and preaching, faith and living within the godly tradition of the church. For Irenaeus, the knowledge of the truth of God was not abstract or detached, but concretely embodied in the unity and community of the church, the Body of Christ, which was itself rooted in Jesus Christ, the incarnate truth. At the same time, this knowledge was not final in that the church could see only “in part” the whole truth of an infinite God. Hence the creed’s role was not final but partial, not closed but open, yet carried the compelling claims of divine truth entrusted to the church to preserve and hand it on according to the mystery of godliness. Origen’s approach to theology illustrates the safeguard of godliness deposited in the church. His dualistic approach to theology stressed an heavenly counterpart to a bodily or sensible Gospel which sought to lift up believing minds to a higher level of understanding in the spiritual realm. This could slide dangerously into mythologizing, however was tempered by his priestly devotion to Christ and the Word in personal godliness and worship. Origen stressed Christ centered and Christ mediated worship as the conditioning agent of his theology. In this way Godliness conditions revealed truth. Hillary likewise stressed that theological activity must be constantly interlaced with prayer, so that we believe and express God and Christ as taught by the apostles, the scriptures and as revealed in reverence and fidelity to the truth. Thus we find in these centuries a continuing tradition of intertwining faith and godliness, understanding and worship, under the creative guide of convictions imprinted upon the mind of the church through revelation of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The creed was then a confession of faith before God of the knowledge of the truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit, the Word written and incarnate imparted to the church as a partial revelation of the infinite God, which was to be according to personal godliness and worship of Almighty God is to be more adored than expressed.

Chapter 2: Access to the Father

As the Christian faith spread out into the world, it came up against both a radical dualism that dominated Graeco-Roman thought as well as Hebrew concepts of the transcendent God who was unknowable in the way that Christians declared to be known in Christ. Greek thought, articulated by Arian, saw God as utterly, eternally alone and immutable. This God could not create matter directly, as this would require Him to “get his hands dirty” with matter. Thus, Arian saw Christ as a created son, who came into being, in order to do the work of creation. Hence, “there was when he was not”.

Athanasius opposed this vehemently and proclaimed that the scriptures reveal Him as everlasting Son, always with the Father, the Wisdom and Word of God, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things, including ages, were made. Athanasius saw that to approach God as Father, though the Son was a more accurate and devout way of comprehending Him than to see Him as Unoriginate Creator. As “no one knows the Father but the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him” (Luke 10:22, Matt 11:27), we must approach God through the Son, that we may have a point of access that is within God, in order to apprehend God. Without the Father-Son relationship, we invariably know God imperfectly and fall into the Arian trap of seeing the son as a created being. If we worship a created being, we fall into idolatry. But seeing God as the Father in the Son and the Son as fully in the Father, we know Him as He is in Himself and our knowledge becomes godly and precise. Our apprehending of God, in this way, forces us to fall on our knees and worship, as we are overcome with devotion and begin to share in the knowledge which God has in himself. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us communion in this mutual relationship of Father and Son making us partakers of the divine essence through the Spirit. We thus know God devotionally. Accurate and precise knowledge of God is gained by allowing our thought to be informed and determined by the truth of God to which the scriptures direct us. This must not be done, except with much trembling, prayer and reverence. Thus, Athanasius, Hilary and the Nicene fathers sought to articulate the truth and substance of the evangelical message, to protect the scriptures from arbitrary interpretation and distortion. Fundamental to this knowledge of God, is cognitive union with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Thus Christocentrism and Theocentrism are coincident. The form of the Godhead in being is the Son, who comes to us through the Holy Spirit in oneness of being with the Father, so that God gives us access to the Father by sharing with us His Sonship.

The Nicene doctrine of God, was undoubtedly Hebraic in character, but clearly rejected any conception of God so transcendent that He cannot accommodate himself to natures other than his own and does not interact with the world. The doctrine picked up the soteriological conception of God in Judaism, as the one who saves and provides the ultimate sacrifice for Sin. This saving work breaks down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, giving access by one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18). Yet, to unregenerate Jews, any claim to know Him thus was rejected in horror as ultimate impiety. The Nicene fathers were not slow to recognize the basic revolution in knowledge of God that had taken place in Christ. Yet they were not saying that we could know what God is, but that we could have a conceptual grasp of God in his own internal relations through union with Christ in the Holy Spirit.

In coming up against Hellenism, the Christian doctrines had the effect of transforming many of the philosophical concepts of Hellenism, thus Christianizing it. However, there were critical areas of conflict, as with the Arians. Greek thought gave primacy to sight over other senses, so the Concept of Father/Son, brought to mind images from Greek mythology. The Arians kept stressing that just as a human begets a son, God so too begot the Word, hence, a period that He was not. If God could thus beget a son, could not the son beget his own son also? This led to polytheistic notions of God. The Nicene fathers stressed that God was in himself Father and Son and Spirit immanently. Athanasius stressed not only that the Son is the sole form of the Godhead but also that the Spirit is the image of the Son, making clear that God is to be thought of in an imageless way. The Father/Son relationship is essentially a relationship in the Spirit, and that does not allow us to read material images back into God.

Also the Greek notion of *Logos* was Christianized by having applied to it the Hebrew notion of God’s Word. God is never without his Word, and through his Word all things were created and exist. Hence the Word of God and the Being of God coincide mutually and indivisibly. So also, God is never without his activity, which is intrinsic to His very being. Thus, the incarnation is the personal embodiment in space and time of God’s providential and redemptive interaction with mankind.

Chapter 3 – The Almighty Creator

The Nicene Council gave primacy to the Fatherhood of God, as Athanasius proclaimed “It would be more godly and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father than to name Him from his works and call him Unoriginate”. To know God from his Word is to recognize that God is ever with His Son and that what the Son does is from the Father. To know God from his eternally begotten Son, was to know Him as He is in concert with His own activity which is through the Son in the Holy Spirit. To know God as Father is to know Him intrinsically according to His very being. It is because God is immanently productive and creative within Himself that we may know Him as Creator. Whatever the Father is the Son is, except ‘Father’. What the Father does, the Son does in and through the Holy Spirit, one God eternally coinciding in being and activity. Thus, the eternal triune God is the Origin of all things created which are inherently different from what He is in Himself. Hilary expressed this as His being the eternal Source, in contrast to all else being self-existent. While words and human thought cannot describe or comprehend Him, He is revealed to us as ‘Father’ by the ‘Son’, who alone knows Him and reveals Him to us. It is only by what He has done and continues to do through the Son in the Holy Spirit that we can understand what divine almightiness really is. Through the Son’s incarnation, we see the economic form of God acting in concert with God the Father, to create the Archetype of all God’s providential and redemptive work toward us. It is through His as ‘The Way’ that we are led back to a true understanding of God the Father and Creator. This Christocentric approach to God as creator reveals several things to us about Him and his creation. These are:

God was not always Creator. The Son is begotten and without beginning, yet the created order did not always exist but was created *ex nihilo*. The Arian concept of placing the Son in the created order had its roots in the blurring of God within Himself and his external creation which was suggested by Origen. This blurring had both the Son and creation coming from the will of the Father. It was Athanasius that rejected the notion of the eternity of creation and hence differentiated between the eternally begotten Son, who was ever with the Father and the created order that had a beginning in the will of God. Hence begetting was primary, but creation was secondary. The Word became the creator of all things, in the same way that He became flesh. Hence God in himself was revealed as willing creation and the incarnation as “something new”, external to Himself but contingent upon Himself. The breath-taking implications are that God is free to do and become what He has never done or become before, the eternal God of new possibilities.

God does not will to exist for Himself alone. God is intrinsically free of space and time in Himself. Hilary described Him as not solitary, but eternally in communion within Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. His planting of rational creatures, in His image, demonstrates his intrinsic goodness and desire to be known relationally. Creation is the product of His will and the Activity of His love. Creation was not brought about without reason, but as a rational product of the Word and Mind of God, the eternally begotten Son or *Logos*. The whole reason for the existence of the universe is that God wills not to be alone, but to pour out His love and goodness on His creation and His creatures.

Hebrew thought and scripture testify that God created creation *ex nihilo*. While God is unbounded, He created a bounded universe linked to Himself through His eternal Word, his Son. Athenagoras posited that the resurrection was the starting point testifying to God’s total control over all creation, life and being. Furthermore, the incarnation was the wonderful union of the eternally begotten Word with created things, that showed their intrinsic transience. Creation has no stability apart from union with the Word of God. Thus creation was shown to be contingent upon the creator Word and Spirit. Creation was in such a precarious state that the Son had to unite it to himself in order to save it. Creation out of nothing also implied a distinction between the rationality of God and the rationality of creation. The rationality of the created order mirrored the rationality of the creator and testified to the intelligibility of creation. Greek Dualism had to be rejected. Due to its coming into being through the incarnate Word, a single rational order pervaded the universe. Reliability and constancy could be counted on as well as natural laws that were rational, predictable and discoverable. In addition, creation from nothing carried with it declaration of the freedom of the universe. Because it was rooted in God’s love and rationality, it was contingent on His active grace and goodness and shares in His inherent freedom. Hence it is rational, ordered, predictable and discoverable as well as united through the Word to God himself.

Chapter 4- God of God, Light of Light

The Nicene Fathers sought to protect the understanding of the true relationship between the Father and Son from both a Graeco Roman dualism and a Hebraic theistic transcendence but from 'ebionite' and 'docetic' types of Christianity which resulted from the predominant world view. Ebionite Christianity (from a Jewish community) believed that Jesus was elevated to a divine sonship by the descent of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, still placing him in the created realm. They sought to show how God acted in Jesus, without compromising the oneness and transcendence of God. Docetic Christianity claimed that as God, Jesus' body was not real but only seemed to be. They sought to maintain the dualistic separation of spirit and the material. The apostolic message and scriptures clearly presented Jesus as fully divine and fully human in the flesh. If He were not God, He could not reveal God fully, nor could He secure man's salvation. If He were not human, He could not fully relate to man's condition. Thus, Athanasius rejected the teachings of the Arianism and Sabellianism by formulating in the creed that the Son was 'begotten from the Father, only begotten, that is from the being of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father'. Thus the Arian view that Jesus was created "*ex nihilo*" was rejected. The Arian view implied that Jesus was not equal to God, of different substance, could offer no direct knowledge of God, and as a being, was not sufficient to save. The church would be guilty of idolatry. Athanasius and the Nicene fathers, saw Him as only begotten, stressing the ineffable, intrinsic, eternal relation of the Father and Son. In adopting the concepts of light from light, true God from true God, they prevented any projection of creaturely images onto the nature of this relationship. In using the word '*homoousios*' in place of '*homoiousios*', they affirmed the unity of being and essence '*ousia*' of the Father and Son, rejecting the notion of 'likeness' which would have implied some difference. For Athanasius, Jesus is everything the Father is except 'Father'. This *homoousion* also implied a differentiated unity. Something cannot be *of the same substance and being* as itself, without implying a differentiation. This concept of "oneness" between the Father and Son was a bulwark against all sorts of heresies. Ephiaphanius later described it as 'the bond of faith'.

The Nicene council also established the primacy of scripture as a hermeneutical principle. The Apostolic faith had been preserved through the canon of truth embodied in this apostolic deposit of faith. The primacy of the Holy Scriptures was established in a hitherto unprecedented way. It was Athanasius, to whom we are indebted for the first definite account of the books to be included in the canon. In addition, the Nicene fathers established the careful examination of scripture as a method to guard against error. The necessity of interpreting the meaning behind the scriptures was established. Thus the Nicene creed became a hermeneutical as well as a theological instrument.

The evangelical significance of *homoousios* was profound. If there was no oneness in being, the implications for salvation were such that they would destroy the heart of the Gospel message. If Jesus was not fully God, then the Gospel was a dry stream. The church would be left with a self projected understanding of God that would fall into mythology and not theology. God would then still be unknowable and not even desiring to be known. There would be no revelation of the love of God, but a flagrant contradiction of the Gospel message. The message of *homoousion*, however, is that God himself became fully human and, as such shares in our humanity and models God's love for us as a that of total selflessness and self-giving. In addition, Jesus, as God, has full authority in telling us how we should live. His words are the very words of God. In addition, as God, he is fully able to secure our salvation by offering up Himself as a fully adequate atonement for sin. As a creature, he would be unable to do so. Moreover, he is able to unite us to God, by virtue of his full divinity and full humanity. Through Him we can become 'partakers of the divine nature' and be 'seated with Him in the heavenly realms'. If He were not both fully God and fully Man, this just could not be so. His role as Mediator, requires that He be both. This self giving of Himself is in unity with the action of the Holy Spirit who is the 'Lord and Giver of Life'. The grace of the Son is given in the love of the Father in communion with the Holy Spirit, one unity of love, grace and active giving. The healing, forgiving reconciling, and redeeming action of God is a unity of love and action that is truly described by the *homoousion* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Son became both Priest and Sacrifice who gave himself, died, was buried and was raised, in order that we might be raised with Him into eternal life. Thus, the incarnate Son, of one essence with the Father was put to death so that we might live, not of ourselves but through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the one Mediator between God and man because, He himself is fully God and fully man. As the Nicene fathers contemplated the full meaning of *homoousion*, they were indeed overwhelmed by the full implications.

Chapter 5 – The Incarnate Saviour

In order to establish and preserve the very heart of the Gospel message, the Nicene father's asserted that the *homoousial* relation of the Father to the Son was very much that of the Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, who '*for us men and for our salvation*' became flesh. The soteriological orientation of the creed was such that both Jesus divinity and humanity must be fully secured. If Jesus Christ, is not true God, then we are not saved, but if He is not fully man, then salvation does not touch our human condition. God did not simply come to man in Jesus Christ, but came and acted as man, in full integration with human existence and experience. Yet, dualistic notions challenged the extent to which this was true. Apollinarius taught that Christ took that which was without mind that he might be mind in it. Yet for the full man to be saved, Jesus Christ must have become full man, mind and all. Athanasius pointed out that He not only became Man but also became a servant, humbling himself in human form, precisely to become our Saviour, prophet and priest, ministering the things of God unto us. As Head of creation, in whom all things consist, He took human nature upon himself and in complete somatic solidarity, offered himself as an atoning sacrifice instead of all and for all, uniting our existence in Him and delivering us from the sentence of death and perdition. This salvation is both personal and ontological. He has made us one with Him, taking our sin, guilt and death sentence, substituting Himself in our place, making our death His own, destroying the power of sin, and so redeeming and rescuing us from its dominion. The soteriological work of Christ had to be protected from elements of dualistic Arianism that sought to attach an external moral activity, in place of full ontological unity with Christ. Cyril of Alexandria pointed out that if Christ were not fully man, body, mind and soul, but only an organ of Deity, He could not have redeemed us divinely or humanly. The act of reconciling at-onement is simultaneously from God to man and from man to God. Also this work, involved the redemption of the complete moral order, re-grounding it in Christ himself. As the Apostle Paul points out, God has united himself with us in our very existence so that we might partake of His divine life and righteousness. Yet, in this union, Christ was not contaminated by sin, but triumphed over the forces of evil entrenched in us, condemning sin and delivering us from its power. Complete deliverance required that He became the whole of man, body, mind and soul. The principle had to be stressed that only that which is taken up is saved. The redemption of man's mind implied that reconciliation was mediated in and through Jesus Christ, the Logos. The knowledge and experiential truth of God in Christ brings light and life, freedom and salvation. This prophetic office cannot be separated from His Priestly office that brings union and communion. Also implied is the redemption and sanctification of all stages of human life. The Nicene fathers thus confirmed the representative and substitutionary elements of salvation. The redemptive concept comes from three Hebrew terms. *Pdh*, meaning redemption from oppression and evil, as Israel from Egyptian bondage. *Kpr*, the expiatory form of redemption by way of mitigating sacrifice where sin and guilt are removed, and *G'l* meaning redemption from destitution and forfeited rights undertaken by a kinsmen redeemer, who does for one what one cannot do for oneself. These meanings overlap with each other with respect to the particular relationship between God and his people. Thus, the Exodus event provides a framework within which to expound on the saving work of Christ. Irenaeus particularly stressed the *G'l* aspect of Christ's redemption as part of the covenantal bond of reconciliative union and communion with Himself, accomplished by His dramatic victory over evil and the hostile powers of darkness. This was accomplished through the self sacrifice of Christ where He became both priest and victim, servant and lamb. As high priest, He cleanses us from our sins in His own blood. Thus both Athanasius and Gregory N. describe Christ as both the offeror and the offering, a theme strongly carried through in the Eucharistic celebration. Another aspect of redemption is the translation of man from one state to another, whereby Christ takes what is ours and imputes what is His. Hence Christ as gives his all for us, we are compelled to give our all for Him. Continual sanctification and a life devoted to Him is the result. All of this shows us, the infinite worth of Christ and his inexhaustible love for us. This exchange also involves a redemption of suffering. The impassible God takes upon himself passibility, suffering and dying in order to transmute our sufferings within the embrace of His own immutable peace and security. By sharing in our suffering, He makes us share in His imperturbability. The same can be said of ignorance and wisdom. By His self-abasement, subjecting Himself to human limitations in knowledge, He is able to now transmute to us His own wisdom. Yet, in His earthly state, He refused to transgress the limits of His self-assumed creatureliness. This concept also applies to *Theopoiesis*, whereby He partakes fully of man, that we might fully partake of His divinity. Thus, we are lifted up to enjoy a new fullness of the life in blessed communion with divine life. It is through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us that we are made partakers of the divine nature. It is because of the Incarnation that this is made possible. The Holy Spirit is mediated to us through the humanity

of Christ. As the Holy Spirit descends upon Him humanly in Jordan, so we also share in His anointing spirit as we share in his atoning life death and resurrection.

Chapter 6 – The Eternal Spirit

The Nicene Council spoke of the Holy Spirit in the single sentence “We believe in the Holy Spirit. This brought into sharp focus the personal and divine nature of the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and Son is both subject and object of faith. The Spirit is not just something akin to God emanating from Him, but God in Himself acting upon us and giving us Himself, so that Gift and Giver are one. The word “Holy” (*Qadosh* in Hebrew) had been used in scripture to speak of the utterly transcendent, unfathomable nature of God. (Holy, Holy, Holy....) Moreover, this word carried with it an active and concrete sense so that linking of Holy and Spirit indicated the mighty living God who is both an intensely personal and dynamic reality, that convicts, converts, regenerates, sanctifies, gives life (quickens) redeems, establishes and gives gifts to men. In linking belief in one God...and in one Lord Jesus Christ... and in the Holy Spirit, the Nicene fathers solidified the Trinitarian frame of their belief handed down from the Apostles. This was not just a after thought addition for it stressed the New Testament teaching that God is Spirit and is truly known and worshipped as such. Because the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are of one and the same essence, it must be in an ineffable, imageless and wholly spiritual way that we are to think of Him. This had a dramatic effect of preventing creaturely or material ways of thought regarding the Godhead that would have been tempting for Greeks to mythologize about. *Homoousion* of the Spirit together with the Father and Son highlighted the relational being of the Holy Trinity, and served as a bastion of defense against Arian creaturely thought of the Son and Holy Spirit. Moreover, scripture presented a variety of formulae that varied the order of the three persons in terms of active role. The Baptism formula was in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The benediction formula of 2 Cor. 13:14 was: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit. The gift formula of 1 Cor 12:4 was gifts from the Spirit, administrations of the Lord and operations of the same God. The order used did not detract from the full equality of the divine three Persons. Further more the consubstantiality of the three persons carried with it the concept of the coinherence of the three Persons in the one being of God. Once the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father was established, the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit was intertwined with it. Thus the Holy Spirit was placed on the divine side of the creator/creature line. In addition, the concept of the coactivity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was established, as the Father does all things though the Word and in the Holy Spirit. The unity of activity of the Godhead is preserved. Also, the self revelation of God is through the Holy Spirit, for it is by the Spirit, sent to us by the Father through the Son that knowledge of God is mediated and actualized within us. While God is Spirit, specific reference to the Holy Spirit as distinguished from the Father and the Son is always qualified as “the Spirit”, “Holy Spirit”, or “of the Father/Son”. Athanasius pointed out that knowledge of the Holy Spirit is from His internal relation within the Godhead. For us to be in the Spirit, or to have the Spirit means that we are partakers of God and share in His being, so God becomes the content of His giving. Also the Holy Spirit shows us the face of the Father in the Son and the face of the Son in the Father. The Holy Spirit is the radiant light that illuminates the Son and Father, yet the radiance and the illuminated faces are one. It is through the Spirit that we receive knowledge of and the mediated truth of God, for the Spirit searches the very depths of God’s being. Yet the Holy Spirit is a distinctive personal reality along with and inseparable from the Father and Son, not an impersonal created, emanating force like the Arians held. The Didymus of Alexandria reasserted the coinherent consubstantiality of the Spirit within the Godhead while preserving the relational differentiation of the three persons, maintaining perfect equity in power and honour. He also regarded the Holy Spirit as personally subsisting in all God’s gifts so that the gift and Giver are one. Cyril thought of the Holy Spirit as spiritualizing, enlightening and rationalizing in a personal way, interacting and sustaining the relation with Himself, yet gently. Basil saw the Father as original cause, the Son as operating cause and the Holy Spirit as perfecting cause, bringing to completion the creative purpose of God. Augustine saw the Holy Spirit as the consubstantial communion of the Father and the Son and the mutual love with which they love one another. In terms of how and whence the Holy Spirit proceeds, Athanasius saw this as bound up in mystery as is the begottenness of the Son. The Cappadocians made the distinction between the begottenness of the Son and the spiration (breathing) of the Spirit. The Spirit proceeds from the Father as breath proceeds from the mouth, yet the Spirit is attached to and inseparable from the Son. The unity of activity was preserved. Yet they emphasized the uncaused origin of the Father and the derived causality of the begotten Son and spirated Spirit. Yet, they could not call the Father greater. Cyril of Alexandria rejected derivation in terms of Deity, but could speak of derivation in terms of relational Persons. This lead to some confusion as

to the use of the term Father. For the Eastern theologians, Father was the Godhead, yet in the west, Father was used for the distinctive Person. Thus developed the procession controversy. Athanasius' original position was built upon that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, but receives from the Son (hence comes through the Son) became the Western view. In the East, procession was seen as from the Father (Godhead) alone.

Chapter 7: The One Church

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed reaffirmed belief in one "holy, catholic and apostolic church" as a necessary consequence of belief in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The church was the Body of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit. Just as there was "one baptism" and "one faith" so too there was "one body". This was "the empirical community of men, women and children, called into being through the proclamation of the Gospel, indwelt by the Holy Spirit in whom it is united to Christ and through Him joined to God". All members of the universal church are united to Christ and cohere through Him in the Spirit to the Godhead. Entrance into the church was through faith in Christ and through baptism. This baptism was in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and invoked full union and communion with the Holy Trinity. Irenaeus proclaimed that this union and communion was by the Holy Spirit and mediated through the Son, so that where the Spirit was, there was the church and it was the church that was constituted by Christ to be the receptacle of the Gospel proclaimed and handed down through the apostles. Irenaeus called the church a continuously "rejuvenating deposit" of the Gospel through the Spirit, the pillar and ground of the church. This "deposit of faith" was the "cannon of truth" and was a sacred deposit enshrined by the apostles and founded by and upon Christ Himself. It spanned both the whole saving economy of the incarnate, crucified and risen Christ as well as the reception and interpretation of the Gospel under the Holy Spirit's inspiration. In addition, the church was anchored into the very being and continuing work of Christ. By its very nature it is tied up with the tradition of the apostolic message handed from generation to generation through baptism and faithful instruction in the faith. This baptism is more than just obedience to the Lord's command. It defines who and what we are as founded and rooted in the Trinity, and demands constant confession of the Triune God. Thus, the true church is marked by its unity, holiness and fidelity to the holy Trinity. It is internally related to Christ as He is internally related to the father and Holy Spirit. As the incarnation involved the union of God and Man, so we are made partakers of the divine by our adoption as sons of God in Christ. We have now become God's Temple in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. Basil added that the church exists and is defined in its worship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit through which individual believers are knit into unity with one another in Christ. Hillary expanded this view saying that He himself is the church and that the church more than an external fellowship but is the very Mystical Body of Christ. Cyrilian developed this into the Roman view of the unity of the church as likened to the seamless robe of Christ, which was inviolate. While he stopped short of suggesting apostolic succession, he did uphold the authority of the bishop. In the East, primacy was given to the truth of the Gospel, to which organizational and judicial questions were subordinate, but the authority of bishops was also emphasized, as they were seen as fellow servants of Christ. Another issue was the temporality of the incarnation. Was it a temporary episode in the economic purpose of God or was it permanent? The Constantinople Council rejected the temporality view and affirmed that the "kingdom shall have no end". The church was part of a sanctified, eternal community, united with Christ through the Holy Spirit to the Godhead. Its structure was lodged in Christ Himself. Another dualistic notion was understanding of a physical church, subject to the laws of society and a mystical church which was the spiritual reality. This along with Arianism was rejected, and affirmed was the internal reality of the church as united in Christ through the Spirit by whose breath it is continually made alive. This Holy Spirit was affirmed as the same Holy Spirit that spoke through the prophets, building a continuity of faith across the Old and New Testaments. So also the Church receives its sanctification and Holiness not from its members but from the very nature of God into whom it is united. It demands veneration not for its own sake but due to the God in whom it exists. In addition the church is universal. It embraces all dimensions of the people of God throughout all space and time as founded by Christ himself. Cyril saw that it unites all men, regardless of rank and class and is rightly called the church as it assembles and calls together all men. Its Apostolic foundation was also affirmed. Jesus commissioned it through his disciples as he said: "As the father has sent me, so send I you." Because of the apostolic foundation, the exposition and application of scripture continually occupy the church. Moreover, it is through baptism that the church maintained its doctrinal center as the "rule of truth". The "one baptism" signified union with the "one Lord, one Body, one Spirit, one faith, one God and Father". Through baptism, people are initiated into all the divine blessings of Christ. Cyril saw this also as a mystical replica of what took place in Christ. Athanasius saw it as partaking in the one unrepeatable baptism of

Christ, not only in Jordan, but in his life, death and resurrection. Baptism is therefore the reality of the Gospel proclaimed, the sacrament of that reconciling and atoning exchange in the incarnate savior. It is necessary once for all and is not to be repeated. Baptism is also evangelical in that it announces the remission of sins, our union with the triune God, and the new birth by the Spirit by which we are no longer sons of mortal men, but of God. It proclaims with the church deliverance from the powers of darkness and faith in His coming again to bring finally to His bride, inheritance and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Chapter 8: The Trinity of God

Athanasius proclaimed the one form of Godhead existing in Trinity as one Glory “which is also in the Word, and one God the Father, existing in himself as He transcends all things, and manifest in the Son as He pervades all things, and in the Spirit as in Him He acts in all things through the Word.” It is through the Trinity that we believe in the unity of God, *Trinity in Unity* and *Unity in Trinity*. And this has been, is now, and ever will be, eternally so. To know God thus, is more Godly than to know Him as unoriginate. Moreover, the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father, so that they are but one substance and peculiarity of nature. This form of God, (the Son) is not partial, but the fullness of the Father is in the Son. So also the Holy Spirit was of one essence with the Father and the Son and so the Gift which God bestows in giving is Holy Spirit is in fact Himself. The gift and giver are one. Yet the three persons are distinct. The Son is not the Father, nor is He the Holy Spirit, nor is the Holy Spirit the Father. The unity is a differentiated unity of three *persona* who are one. The oneness in being carries with it the mutual coinherent relations between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Arian creatureliness of the Son and the Holy Spirit was rejected. To hold thus was to have the substance drop out of the Gospel. Because they are of one essence, we have a divine, and not a creaturely relationship in the Godhead. The Holy Trinity is unitary and homogeneous, not only in oneness of being but in *activity* towards us. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit act as one. Moreover, God is Spirit and we can not think of Him in the Graeco Roman tradition of mythological deities. With regard to the Son, Athanasius pointed out that the Son is the one Mediator between God and Man, who is Himself God and Man. Thus, having fulfilled his human economy, the incarnate Son now sits at the right hand of the Father, being in the Father as the Father is in Him as always was and is forever. This union, far from being a transient episode in time is ontologically real and eternal in the Godhead. In later letters, Athanasius was concerned with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit based on the teaching of Christ Himself. From our knowledge of the Son, we have true knowledge of the Spirit, for the relation of the Spirit to the Son is as the relation of the Son to the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and belonging to the Son, is given from Him. As the being of the Son is proper to the Father, so the being of the Spirit is proper to the Son, thus the Spirit is in nature *homoousion* with the Son and Father and thereby also with the Holy Trinity. Thus, “the Father creates all things through the word in the Spirit”. All the activity of God is one activity through the Son in the Spirit who is indivisibly one toward us in self revelation and self giving of Himself. “The Trinity praised, worshipped and adored is one and indivisible and without degrees....Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord”.

Basil focussed on the Christian way of life and the transforming power of the divine energies. The Holy Spirit has an ineffable mode of existence in the divine nature of the Father and Son. ‘Paternity’, ‘Sonship’ and ‘Sanctity’ were used to describe modes of existence. This emphasis on the differentiating particularities of the three persons, led the Cappadocians to anchor the unity of God in the Father as the one Principle or Origin or Cause of the Son and the Spirit. While they held that the eternal causation implied no separation between cause and effect, it did introduce causality into the conception of inter-hypostatic relations in the holy Trinity. The Father had become the ground of unity. Gregory Nazianzen worried about the implied subordination of the Son and Spirit and taught that the three must be thought of as *relations* eternally and substantially subsisting in God. This understanding of the coinherence of subsistent Trinitarian relations of God has implications for the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was seen as issuing from the Father not as an offspring but as a procession out of the midst of the relation between the Father and Son. The exact nature of this procession led to the *filioque* question. Didymus could speak of the procession of the Spirit from the Person of the Son as well as the Person of the Father within the indivisible consubstantiality of the Trinity. Athanasius taught that the Holy Spirit is ever in the hands of the Father who sends and of the Son who gives Him as His very own. Epiphanius saw procession as out of the Father through the Son, but as out of the same being. Thus it could be said that the Holy Spirit proceeds as Light from Light *from both* the Father and the Son. However, the Constantinopolitan creed stated that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father”, and while the word *only* was left out, it did imply the Father as the source or cause. Thus the grounding of the Father as the source of unity in the Godhead, led to the difference between East and West. Western theologians found themselves constrained to maintain that the Holy Spirit proceeds from ‘the Son also’ if they were to believe that the Holy Spirit is “true God of true God” like the Son. Eastern theologians felt constrained to insist that the procession was from the Father only, in order to preserve the unity of the divine monarchy which they considered to be undermined by the double procession.

The Cappadocian theologians under the leadership of Basil made an immense contribution to the Church in spiritual understanding of the Nicene Faith. In the doctrine of the Holy Trinity they concentrated thought upon the one *ousia* and three *hypostasis* in such a way as to bring out the objective particularities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in their dynamic unity of being, activity and community with one another. Thus they reaffirmed the “oneness in being and nature, will and activity, power and sovereignty, of the

consubstantial Trinity, perfectly expressed in each divine person”, and so brought to full expression the **Monarchia** and **Triunity** of God.