

## Did the Early Christians Teach/Believe a “Trinity” Doctrine?

Although most every scholar will readily admit to the fact that the Bible does not contain an actual clear-cut teaching of the Trinity Doctrine, many of these will still insist that there yet remains within the body of Scripture the framework for just such a radically different view of God<sup>1</sup> – that is, by the collective implication of such scriptures. Even so, in order to avoid accusations of having misquoted any of the sources below, it must be acknowledged that, before or after the portions we cite, a number of these had expressed as much within their discussions of this subject, conveying their opinion that this was, in fact, how the Doctrine of the Trinity had been introduced, even to the earliest, first century, Jewish disciples of the Messiah, Christ Jesus.

On the other hand, there any number who have interpreted such developments in a much different way. Since, within the “New Testament,” there can be found no trace of such a belief as ever having been explicitly *taught, explained* or *defended*, the reason for its eventual emergence was that this was direct evidence of a corruption – yes, as an ever growing degeneration of the true, original teachings of Jesus – all in pointed fulfillment of some very specific Bible prophesies.<sup>2</sup> Thus, to many, this would easily explain why it had taken some 350+ years for such a radically modified view of God to have eventually found its way into some later Church statements of faith. Therefore, the most reasonable explanation as to why there can be found no such thinking – even as having ever been entertained within any of the earliest of Christian contemplations about Jesus, the Messiah/Christ, nor even of his own God and Father – is simply because, as new Christians themselves, such strangely new, unusual concepts about God had never been included within the corpus of what they were ever expected to believe, much less, to teach. (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 15: 20-28).

[ It must be noted that, of the references we have quoted below, this should in no way be taken as our full endorsement of their other religious/theological views, some of which are in direct opposition to our own personal beliefs. Furthermore, although we also possess quite a number of additional similar comments, if readers know of any others, we would greatly appreciate your emailing us with that information – including any suggestions for editorial changes: [john1one@earthlink.net](mailto:john1one@earthlink.net) Thank you. ]

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<sup>1</sup> Our mention of the “Trinity Doctrine” as being a “radically different view of God” comes from the fact that, when this teaching is fully appreciated as being quite a departure from what, for centuries, the Jews had been taught and believed about their God, YHWH (“Yahweh” *or*, in English, “Jehovah”) – especially in what is stated about Him within Deuteronomy 6:4, “Listen, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah” – it stands to reason why, according to all known histories, it was not until the initial, official adoption of this teaching (Nicea, 325C.E.), that the Jews can be ever found to express opposition to such a different view of their God. If some may know of any of an earlier date, please, we welcome you to inform us.

Scripture quotations are taken from the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. 1984 Revised Reference Edition. (Brooklyn, New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1984). BS195 .N4 1984 / 84-191013. Within this work, SMALL CAPITALIZED LETTERING represent plural terminology which had been utilized within the wording of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek.

<sup>2</sup> Though often overlooked, to name a few, see: Acts 20:30 – “From among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

1 Timothy 4:1 – “The inspired utterance says definitely that in later periods of time some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired utterances and teachings of demons.”

2 Peter 2:1, 3 – “There will also be false teachers among you. These very ones will quietly bring in destructive sects and will disown even the owner that bought them . . . Also, with covetousness they will exploit you with counterfeit words.”

See also the following sober cautions: 2 Thessalonians 2:3 – “Let no one seduce you in any manner, because [the day of Jehovah] will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness gets revealed, the son of destruction.”

Colossians 2:8 – “Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry YOU off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ.”

Consider also Jesus’ illustration/parable in Matthew 13:24-30, along with His explanation, at Matthew 13:36-43.



- 1833 Norton, Andrews (b.1786-d.1853). *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing The Doctrines of Trinitarians, Concerning The Nature of God and The Person of Christ*. Ezra Abbot (b.1819-d.1884), D.D., LL.D., Editor. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Brown, Shattuck, and Company; Boston, Massachusetts: Hilliard, Gray, and Company, 1833), pp. 38, 39. BX9841 .N7 1833 / unk83-14874.

...the unbelieving Jews, in the time of the Apostles, opposed Christianity with the utmost bitterness and passion. They sought on every side for objections to it. There was much in its character to which the believing Jews could hardly be reconciled. The Epistles are full of statements, explanations, and controversy, relating to questions having their origin in Jewish prejudices and passions. With regard however to this doctrine [the Trinity], which if it had ever been taught, the believing Jews must have received with the utmost difficulty, and to which the unbelieving Jews would have manifested the most determined opposition, – with regard to this doctrine, there is no trace of any controversy. But, if it had ever been taught, it must have been the main point of attack and defense between those who assailed, and those who supported Christianity. There is nothing ever said in its explanation. But it must have required, far more than any other doctrine, to be explained, illustrated, and enforced; for it appears, not only irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Unity of God, but equally so with that of the humanity of our Saviour; and yet both these doctrines, it seems, were to be maintained in connexion with it. It must have been necessary, therefore, to state it as clearly as possible, to exhibit it in its relations, and carefully to guard against the misapprehensions to which it is so liable on every side. Especially must care have been taken to prevent the gross mistakes into which the Gentile converts from polytheism were likely to fall. Yet so far from any such clearness of statement and fulness of explanation, the whole language of the New Testament in relation to this subject is ... a series of enigmas, upon the supposition of its truth. The doctrine, then, is never defended in the New Testament, though unquestionably it would have been the main object of attack, and the main difficulty in the Christian system. It is never explained, though no doctrine could have been so much in need of explanation. On the contrary, upon the supposition of its truth, the Apostles express themselves in such a manner, that if it had been their purpose to darken and perplex the subject, they could not have done it more effectually. And still more, this doctrine is never insisted upon as a necessary article of faith; though it is now represented by its defenders as lying at the foundation of Christianity.

- 1845 Newman, John Henry (b.1801-d.1890), Catholic Cardinal. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (1st-1845). (London, England: J. Toovey, 1846), (italics his). BT21 .N5 1846 / 26-022128.

Let us allow that the whole circle of doctrines, of which our Lord is the subject, was consistently and uniformly confessed by the Primitive Church, though not ratified formerly in Council. But it surely is

otherwise with the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity. I do not see in what sense it can be said that there is a *consensus* of primitive [Church authorities] in its favour...the doctrine of our Lord's divinity<sup>3</sup> itself partly implies and partly recommends the doctrine of the Trinity; but implication and suggestion belong to another kind of proof...the Creeds of that early day make no mention in their letter of the Catholic doctrine [of the Trinity] at all. They make mention indeed of a Three; but that there is any mystery in the doctrine, that the Three are One, that They are coequal, coeternal, all increate [uncreated], all omnipotent, all incomprehensible, is not stated, and never could be gathered from them.<sup>4</sup> Of course we believe that they imply it, or rather intend it. God forbid we should do otherwise! But nothing in the mere letter of those documents leads to that belief...it may be questioned whether any Anti-nicene father [before the Nicene Council of 325C.E.] distinctly affirms either the numerical Unity or the Coequality of the Three Persons;...

- 1857 Ellis, George Edward (b.1814-d.1894). *A Half-Century of the Unitarian Controversy, With Particular Reference to its Origin, its Course, and its Prominent Subjects Among the Congregationalists of Massachusetts*. (Boston, Massachusetts: Crosby, Nichols, and Company; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Metcalf and Company, Printers to the University, 1857), Appendix VIII, "The Doctrine of the Trinity," pp. 464, 465. BX9841 .E5 / 33-022268.

The doctrinal statement of the Trinity leads off the Orthodox creeds: no vague, inferential implication of the contents of the doctrine is thought to be satisfactory. Doubt about it is dangerous; a rejection of it is fatal. The doctrine is obtruded [meaning, forced or imposed] upon us in its stiffest literal terms, though, strange to say, many of its champions affirm that they dislike its terms, and wish that they could express it more adequately. Here certainly is no backwardness, no hesitation, on the part of those who, believing the doctrine, think it ought to be reiterated and emphasized. Now, how comes it that Christ and his Apostles furnish us not one single announcement of it? If anything can be inferred with certainty as to the belief of the Jews concerning the

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<sup>3</sup> "Some modern writers hold that even the *Didache* [of the late first/early second century], or 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,' the oldest literary monument of Christian antiquity outside of the New Testament canon...contains no formal profession of faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ..." – Pohle, Joseph (b.1852-d.1922). *The Divine Trinity, A Dogmatic Treatise; Authorized English Version, with Some Abridgment and Numerous Additional References*. Preuss, Arthur (b.1871-d.1934), Translator. Notes: *Dogmatic Theology II*. (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder, 1912, 1950), p. 150 (italics his). BT111 .P75 / 12001227.

<sup>4</sup> As perhaps even said as 'Inspired Anticipation' about just such a later development, the Apostle Paul clearly warned: "I marvel that YOU are being so quickly removed from the One who called YOU with Christ's undeserved kindness over to another sort of good news. But it is not another; only there are certain ones who are causing YOU trouble and wanting to pervert the good news about the Christ. However, even if we or an angel out of heaven were to declare to YOU as good news something beyond what we declared to YOU as good news,\* let him be accursed. As we have said above, I also now say again, Whoever it is that is declaring to YOU as good news something beyond what YOU accepted, let him be accursed." – Galatians 1:6-9.

\* In view of the fact that, within Acts 20:27 (italics bold ours), Paul had informed us that he had "...not held back from telling [us] *all* the counsel of God," when examining the full content of Paul's preaching and teaching, nowhere can it be found that he had ever expounded upon any Trinity doctrine.

mode of the Divine existence, it is that they knew nothing of the Orthodox<sup>5</sup> dogma of the Trinity. Surely then we might expect that their first Christian teachers would have been at least as careful to declare it to them as a new revelation of truth, the basis of all Christian doctrine, as modern Christian teachers are to demand a faith in it from their pupils. It will not do to say that the Apostles left other essential Christian doctrines without any direct, explicit statement of them. It is not true. They had a commission from their Master, and they discharged it. Whatever they have not taught plainly, must be pronounced to be no part of their teaching, however positively their successors may have taught it.<sup>6</sup> Peter, who preached to the Jews the first Christian discourse after the Church had risen from the grave of its Founder, told them that “Jesus of Nazareth,” “whom they had put to death,” was “a man approved of God by works which God did by him,”<sup>7</sup> and that God had raised him up. [Acts 2:22-24] Words could not

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<sup>5</sup> “As to orthodox, I should be glad to know the meaning of the epithet. Nothing, you say, can be plainer. The orthodox are those, who, in religious matters, entertain right opinions. Be it so. How, then, is it possible I should know who they are that entertain right opinions, before I know what opinions are right? I must therefore unquestionably know orthodoxy, before I can know or judge who are orthodox. Now, to know the truths of religion, which you call orthodox, is the very end of my inquiries; and am I to begin these inquiries on the presumption that without any inquiry I know it already?... There is nothing about which men have been, and still are, more divided. It has been accounted orthodox divinity in one age, which hath been branded as ridiculous fanaticism in the next. It is at this day deemed the perfection of orthodoxy in one country, which in an adjacent country is looked upon as damnable heresy. Nay, in the same country, hath not every sect a standard of their own? Accordingly, when a person seriously uses the word, before we can understand his meaning, we must know to what communion he belongs. When that is known, we comprehend him perfectly. By the orthodox he means always those who agree in opinion with him and his party; and by the heterodox [heretical], those who differ from him. When one says, then, of any teacher whatever, that all the orthodox acknowledge his orthodoxy, he says neither more nor less than this, ‘All who are of the same opinion with him, of which number I am one, believe him to be in the right.’ And is this any thing more than what may be asserted by some person or other, of every teacher that ever did or ever will exist?... To say the truth, we have but too many ecclesiastic terms and phrases which savor grossly of the arts of a crafty priesthood, who meant to keep the world in ignorance, to secure an implicit faith in their own dogmas, and to intimidate men from an impartial inquiry into holy writ [i.e., the Bible].” – Campbell, George (b.1719-d.1796), D.D., F.R.S. Edinburgh, Scotland; Professor of Divinity and Principal of Marshal College, Aberdeen. *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence*. (London, England: 1807), pp. 112-115. 1810 Edition: (Boston, Massachusetts: W. Wells and T. B. Wait & Co. [etc.], 1810). BT75 .C2 1810 / 31-011673.

<sup>6</sup> Again, in view of the fact that, within Acts 20:27 (italics bold ours), Paul tells us that he had “...not held back from telling [us] *all* the counsel of God,” when examining the full content of Paul’s preaching and teaching, nowhere can it be found that he had ever expounded upon any Trinity doctrine. As has been remarked on by many others, it stands to reason that, in view of Paul’s concerted interest in giving explanations on so many of the other issues at hand – especially regarding those confronting the Jews’ acceptance of Jesus as the promised Messiah – if this was, indeed, ever a teaching of Jesus and his followers, then the apostle Paul would have certainly appreciated the need to address this as well, one of even of *greatest* importance. The mere fact that he does not, speaks volumes!

“That Paul ever confounded Christ with God himself, or regarded him in any way as the supreme Divinity, is a position invalidated not only by direct statements, but also by the whole drift of his epistles.” – Paine, Levi Leonard (b.1837-d.1902), Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Bangor Theological Seminary. *A Critical History of the Evolution of Trinitarianism*. (Boston, Massachusetts; New York, New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1900), p. 22. BT111 .P2 / 00-002733.

“There are...several statements in Paul and the other letters, which might be read as describing Jesus as God (ὁ θεός), though in each case it is not a deliberate, unambiguous affirmation, but depends upon texts which are problematic in various ways, either in their grammar and translation or in establishing the correct text itself.” – Behr, John (b.?-d.?). *The Way to Nicaea*. Series: *The Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), p. 58. BT23 .B47 2001 / 2001-019386.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, to the question of how Jesus could have performed the miracles that he did but, yet, was not himself (continued...)

be more explicit. Yet not from them, and from no other words spoken by the Apostles to the Jews, as recorded, could they have gathered a plain statement of the Trinity. As to the Gentiles, we find traces, among a school of philosophic dreamers, of a sort of Trinitarian conception, far unlike that, however, which Christian divines now receive, though the dogma came into the Church by that channel.<sup>8</sup> No direct announcement of the doctrine was made by the Apostles when they preached to Gentiles, who certainly were ignorant of it, and might claim to be distinctly informed about the first fundamental doctrine of the Gospel.

1860 Lamson, Alvan (b.1792-d.1864), D.D. *The Church of the First Three Centuries: or, Notices of the Lives and Opinions of the Early Fathers, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of the Trinity; Illustrating its Late Origin and Gradual Formation.* (London, England: British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 1860<sup>9</sup>), pp. 52, 70, 71, 75, 76, 284, 341. BR165 .L3 1860 / unk81-037404.

We maintain that the doctrine of the Trinity was of gradual and comparatively late formation; that it had its origin in a source entirely

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<sup>7</sup>(...continued)

God, such a clear Scriptural explanation as the above (i.e., Acts 2:22) should certainly settle such inquiries. Interestingly, this had also been alluded to by Jesus himself: “Do you not believe that I am in union with the Father and the Father is in union with me? The things I say to YOU men I do not speak of my own originality; but **the Father** who remains in union with me **is doing his works.**” – John 14:10 (bold ours). Furthermore, even in connection with the very things of which Jesus taught, he repeatedly made clear that these were also things of which he had received from the One who “sent” him, the One he was faithfully doing the will of; e.g., John 7:16; 8:28; 12:49, etc. Compare also John 5:19, 30.

<sup>8</sup> “The New Testament gives no inkling of the teaching of Chalcedon [the more final form of the Trinitarian Doctrine, as adopted in 451 C.E.]. That council not only reformulated in other language the New Testament data about Jesus’ constitution, but also reconceptualized it in the light of the current Greek philosophical thinking. And that reconceptualization and reformulation go well beyond the New Testament data.” – Fitzmyer, Joseph Augustine (b.1920-d.?), S.J. (Jesuit Priest), Academic Studies, Loyola University of Chicago, Facultes St-Albert de Louvain, Belgium; PH.D. Johns Hopkins University; S.S.L. Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome. *A Christological Catechism: New Testament Answers.* (New York, New York: Paulist Press, c1982), p. 102. BS2555.2 .F49 1982 / 82-080160.

<sup>9</sup> See also Lamson’s “Revised and Enlarged Edition” (Boston, Massachusetts: Horace B. Fuller, 1873), comprising, in total, 410 pages (with “Index”).

Interestingly, on the last page of this work, there is this: “After what has been said in the foregoing pages, we are prepared to re-assert, in conclusion, that the modern doctrine of the Trinity is not found in any document or relic belonging to the church of the first three centuries. Letters, art, usage, theology, worship, creed, hymn, chant, doxology, ascription, commemorative rite, and festive observance, so far as any remains or any record of them are preserved, coming down from early times, are, as regards this doctrine, an absolute blank. They testify, so far as they testify at all, to the supremacy of the Father, the only true God; and to the inferior and derived nature of the Son. There is nowhere among these remains a co-equal Trinity. The cross\* is there; Christ is there as the Good Shepherd, the Father’s hand placing a crown, or victor’s wreath, on his head; but no undivided Three, – co-equal, infinite, self-existent, and eternal. This was a conception to which the age had not arrived. It was of later origin.” – p. 396.

On Lamson’s mention of the “cross,” it may interest some to know that, of recent, there has been published the findings of a number of years in research on this very topic: Samuelsson, Gunnar (b.1966-d.?). *Crucifixion in Antiquity: An Inquiry into the Background of the New Testament Terminology of Crucifixion.* Edition Information: Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Theology in Religious Studies, University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden. (Göteborg, Sweden: Department of Literature, History of Ideas, and Religion, University of Gothenburg, 2010), comprised of 413 pages, with an extensive “Bibliography.” ISBN: 9789188348357; 9188348350. Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.) Control Number: 2010457114.

Within this work, Samuelsson, in eventual discussion of the Scriptures’ base meaning of *σταυρός* (Greek, *starous*) as ‘referring to a “pole” in general’, also says that this has been “zealously and apparently correctly stressed by Jehovah’s Witnesses.” – p. 306.

foreign from that of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; that it grew up, and was ingrafted on Christianity, through the hands of the Platonizing Fathers; that in the time of Justin [Martyr (b.ca.100-d.ca.165)], and long after, the distinct nature and inferiority of the Son were universally taught; and that only the first shadowy outline of the Trinity had then become visible....The inferiority of the Son was generally, if not uniformly, asserted by the ante-Nicene Fathers....That they viewed the Son as distinct from the Father is evident from the circumstance that they plainly assert his inferiority.... They considered him distinct and subordinate....The modern popular doctrine of the Trinity ... derives no support from the language of Justin: and this observation may be extended to all the ante-Nicene Fathers; that is, to all Christian writers for three centuries after the birth of Christ. It is true, they speak of the Father, Son, and prophetic or holy Spirit, but not as co-equal, not as one numerical essence, not as Three in One, in any sense now admitted by Trinitarians. The very reverse is the fact. The doctrine of the Trinity, as explained by these Fathers, was essentially different from the modern doctrine. This we state as a fact as susceptible of proof as any fact in the history of human opinions....They occasionally make use of a phraseology, which, in the mouth of a modern Trinitarian, would imply a belief that the Son is of one numerical essence with the Father. But this they never thought of asserting. The most they meant to affirm was that the Son, as begotten of God, partook in some sort of the specific nature (that is, a divine), just as an individual of our race partakes of the same nature or essence with the parent from whom he sprung (that is, a human). At the same time they taught that he was relatively inferior to the Father from whom he was derived, and entitled to only inferior homage....We challenge any one to produce a single writer of any note, during the first three ages, who held this [Trinity] doctrine in the modern sense.

- 1883 Gibbon, Edward (b.1737-d.1794). *History of Christianity: Comprising all that Relates to the Progress of the Christian Religion in "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and A Vindication of Some Passages in the 15th and 16th Chapters, with a Life of the Author, Preface, and Notes by the Editor, Including Variorum Notes by Guizot, Wenck, Milman, "An English Churchman," and Other Scholars.* (New York, New York: P. Eckler, 1883), "Preface." BR170 .G4 / 32-030333.

If Paganism was conquered by Christianity, it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism. The pure Deism<sup>10</sup> of the first Christians...was changed, by the Church of Rome, into the incomprehensible dogma of the trinity. Many of the pagan tenets,

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<sup>10</sup> It must be pointed out that the work of which we quote was taken from the following, much earlier edition: Gibbon, Edward (b.1737-d.1794). *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. New Edition. 12 vols. (London, England: W. Strahan [etc.] 1783-1790). DG311 .G42 / 04-03393.

Please keep in mind that, because Gibbon's work was originally published in the 1700's, in order to appreciate the way in which he would have used this term, it is important to consider the meaning associated with its use during the same time period in which he wrote. Hence, in providing some help in this regard, even according to the 1911 Edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, this word, first and foremost, had this simple, basic meaning: "DEISM (Lat[in] deus, god), strictly the belief in one supreme God." See its later, more developed use at: <http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Deism>

invented by the Egyptians and idealized by Plato, were retained as being worthy of belief.

- 1896 Harnack, Adolf von (b.1851-d.1930). *History of Dogma*. 7 vols. Translated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> German Edition. vols. 1-2, translation by: Buchanan, Neil (b.?-d.?): vols. 3 & 5, translation by: Millar, James (b.1857-d.?): vol. 4, translation by: Speirs, Ebenezer Brown (b.?-d.?) and Millar, J. (b.?-d.?): vols. 6-7, translation by: M'Gilchrist, William (b.?-d.?). Bruce, Alexander Balmain (b.1831-d.1899), Editor. (London, England: Williams & Norgate, 1896-1899), vol. 3, p. 135. BT21 .H33 / 23-015420.

The idea of the subordinate God [in reference to Jesus] is indeed as old as the theology of the Christian Church; even the Apologists<sup>11</sup> shared it, and Origen [b.ca.185-d.ca.254], with all caution, adopted and justified it in working out his doctrine of the Son.

- 1957 Werner, Martin (b.1887-d.1964), D.D., Professor of Systematic Theology, History of Doctrine and Philosophy, University of Bern, Switzerland. *The Formation of Christian Dogma; An Historical Study of its Problem. Rewritten in Shortened form by the Author from his Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas, and Translated, with an Introduction by S[amuel] G[eorge] F[rederrick] Brandon [b.1907-d.1971].* (New York, New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 122, 125. BT23 .W413 / 57-010528.

In the Primitive Christian era [during the first century] there was no sign of any kind of Trinitarian problem or controversy, such as later produced violent conflicts in the Church. The reason for this undoubtedly lay in the fact that, for Primitive Christianity, Christ was...a being of the high celestial angel-world, who was created and chosen by God for the task of bringing in, at the end of the ages,...the Kingdom of God....That relationship was understood unequivocally as being one of "subordination", i.e. in the sense of the subordination of Christ to God. Wherever in the New Testament the relationship of Jesus to God, the Father, is brought into consideration,...it is conceived of and represented categorically as subordination.<sup>12</sup> And the most decisive Subordinationist of the New Testament, according to the Synoptic record, was Jesus himself<sup>13</sup>....This original position, firm and

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<sup>11</sup>The 'Apologists' are those who wrote about Christianity (*explaining* and/or *defending* it) during the second and early third centuries C.E. These include Justin Martyr (b.ca.100-d.ca.165), Athenagoras of Athens (b.ca.133-d.190), Tertullian (b.ca.155-d.ca.230), and Irenaeus (b.ca.125-d.ca.202).

<sup>12</sup>What could be more clear a statement indicating Christ's subordinate position relative to God than the following: "But I want YOU to know that the head of every man is the Christ; in turn the head of a woman is the man; in turn the head of the Christ is God." – 1 Corinthians 11:3.

Furthermore, when explaining how Christ will finally accomplish God's purpose for him, we are then told of the time, "...when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has brought to nothing all government and all authority and power. For he [Christ] must rule as king until [God] has put all enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing. For [God] 'subjected all things under his feet.' But when he says that 'all things have been subjected,' it is evident that it is with the exception of the one who subjected all things to him. But when all things will have been subjected to him, then the Son himself will also subject himself to the One who subjected all things to him, that God may be all things to everyone." – 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

<sup>13</sup>At the tomb where the Christ had been buried but was now resurrected, "Jesus said to [Mary]: 'Stop clinging to (continued...)'

manifest as it was, was able to maintain itself for a long time. All the great pre-Nicene theologians represented the subordination of the Logos to God.

- 1957 *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Embracing Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology and Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Biography from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, Based on the Third Edition of the Realencyklopädie Founded by J[ohn] J[akob] Herzog [b.1805-d.1882], and Edited by Albert Hauck [b.1845-d.1918], Prepared by More than Six Hundred Scholars and Specialists Under the Supervision of Samuel Macauley Jackson [b.1851-d.1912] (Editor-in-Chief) with the assistance of Charles Colebrook Sherman [b.1860-d.1927] and George William Gilmore [b.1858-d.1933] (Associate Editors), and [Schaff, Philip (b.1819-d.1893)], Joint Editors].* 13 vols. (New York, New York; London, England: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1908-c1914), vol IX [9], p. 91. BR95 .S43 / 08-020152.

The doctrines of the Logos and the Trinity received their shape from Greek Fathers, who...were much influenced, directly or indirectly, by the Platonic philosophy....That errors and corruptions crept into the Church from this source can not be denied.

- 1963 *Dictionary of the Bible.* Hastings, James (b.1852-d.1922), Editor. Revised Edition by: Grant, Frederick Clifton (b.1891-d.1974) & Rowley, Harold Henry (b.1890-d.?). (New York, New York: Scribner, 1963), pp. 337, 338. BS440 .H5 1963 / 62-021697.

Considering how strongly conscious the Jews were of their monotheism, it is interesting to note that as far as the N[ew] T[estament] evidence goes the Jewish opposition did not charge the Christians movement with tritheism or polytheism, a common Jewish criticism [some 300+ years] later.<sup>14</sup>

- 1967 Richard, R. L. (b.?-d.?). "Trinity, Holy." Article appearing within: *The New Catholic Encyclopedia.*

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<sup>13</sup>(...continued)

me. For I have not yet ascended to the Father. But be on your way to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and YOUR Father and to my God and YOUR God." – John 20:17.

<sup>14</sup> A similar observation: "The Trinity] is not a biblical doctrine in the sense that any formulation of it can be found in the Bible...What is amazing, however, is that this [later, fourth century] confession of God as One in Three took place without significant struggle and without controversy by a people [the Jews] indoctrinated for centuries in the faith of the one God, and that in entering the Christian church they were not conscious of any break with their ancient faith." – *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary.* Douglas, James Dixon (b.1922-d.2003), Editor. Hillyer, N. (b.?-d.?), Joint Editor. (Leicester, England; Sydney and Auckland, Australia: InterVarsity Press; Tyndale House Publishers; Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), pp. 1597, 1598. OCLC: 7285769.

OUR NOTE: The more reasonable explanation as to why a concept of God "as One in Three" was able to take "place without significant struggle and without controversy" (especially so among first century Jews), is simply because of the fact that no such unusually radical ideas about God had ever been introduced. When Jesus spoke about the role he was playing in the outworking of God's will and purpose, it stands to reason that if, along with this, he was also introducing any new, expanded notions about their "God" – especially with any hint of being a "Trinity," to be suggesting their consideration of a serious modification to their view of God – such could have never taken place without some immediate notice, without some level of discussion – and, certainly, never to be allowed "without significant struggle and without controversy." As this scholar has certainly made clear, there is no evidence that any of such intimations about God had ever taken place, thus providing one of the greatest proofs against any notion of the introduction of such a radically new teaching/thinking/belief about God.



Prepared by an Editorial Staff at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967-c1989), vol. XIV [14], pp. 299 (*italics his*). BX841 .N44 1967 / 66-022292.

The formulation “one God in three Persons” was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title *the Trinitarian dogma*. Among the Apostolic Fathers,<sup>15</sup> there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective.

- 1969 Henderson, Ian (b.1910-d.?), University of Glasgow, Scotland. “Trinity.” Article appearing within: *Encyclopedia International*. 20 vols. (New York, New York: Grolier, 1969), p. 226. AE5 .E447 1968b / 69-010050.

The doctrine of the Trinity did not form part of the apostles’ preaching, as this is reported in the New Testament.

- 1969 Dawe, Donald G. (b.?-d.?). *No Orthodoxy But the Truth; A Survey of Protestant Theology*. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 21. BX4805.2 .D34 / 69-10424.

In its finished form the Trinitarian doctrine went beyond the biblical materials in both form and content. It was deeply indebted, as indeed was the Christological dogma, to the philosophical and religious thought of Greco-Roman antiquity.

- 1971 Wilken, Robert Louis (b.1936-d.?). *The Myth of Christian Beginnings; History’s Impact on Belief*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 177-183. BR145.2 .W5 / 71-123712.

From the very beginning, the Christian tradition had struggled with the question of Jesus’ relation to God....Very early Christians tried to account for his extraordinary life and accomplishments and his Resurrection, and it was not long before he was called Son of God – then God. Even so, He was not God in the sense in which the Father was God – or was He? Was he creator, was he eternal, should he be addressed in prayer? These and other questions troubled thoughtful Christians for almost three centuries. During these years, most Christians vaguely thought of Jesus as God; yet they did not actually

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<sup>15</sup> The import of such a statement becomes all the more significant when we appreciate the fact that “the Apostolic Fathers” are those who are said to have lived during the same time period as the Apostles themselves; perhaps, with some having even been taught by them as well. Therefore, if even among “the Apostolic Fathers” “there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective,” and, especially, for this teaching to not have ever been a part of the Christian “profession of faith,” that is, as expressed within any Christian ‘declaration of belief’ until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, then this would unequivocally substantiate the fact that neither the Apostles nor any of the earliest of Christians had ever *believed* and/or been *taught*, nor, in turn, had ever sensed the need to *defend* any such radically new concept about God.

“...by the end of the periods of the Apostolic Fathers there was no belief in a preexistent Trinity.” – Wolfson, Harry Austryn (b.1887-d.1974), Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy, Emeritus, Harvard University. *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*. vol. 1 – *Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 191. BT25 .W62 / 64005600.

think of him in the same way that they thought of God the Father. They seldom addressed prayers to him, and thought of him somehow as second to God – divine, yes, but not fully God....When the controversy over the relation of Jesus to God the Father broke out in the early fourth century, most Christians were “subordinationists,” i.e. they believed that Christ was God but not precisely the Same way that the Father was God.

- 1976 *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*. 15<sup>th</sup> Edition. 30 vols. (Chicago, Illinois: Encyclopædia Britannica, c1976, 2003), *Micropædia*, vol. X [10], p. 126; vol. XI [11], p. 928 (respectively). AE5 .E363 1976 / 74-025488.

Neither the word Trinity, nor the explicit doctrine as such, appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the Shema in the Old Testament: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord [Jehovah] our God is one Lord [Jehovah]” – Deut[eronomy] 6:4...The doctrine developed gradually over several centuries and through many controversies....The council of Nicaea in 325[C.E.] stated the crucial formula for that doctrine in its confession that the “Son is of the same substance...as the Father,” even though it said very little about the Holy Spirit....By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century...the doctrine of the Trinity took substantially the form it has maintained ever since.

- 1976 Boer, Harry R. (b.?-d.?). *A Short History of the Early Church*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, c1976), pp. 108-110. BR165 .B645 / 75-025742.

The Apostolic Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers<sup>16</sup> wrote between A.D. [C.E.] 90 and 140. Their discussion of the person of Jesus Christ simply repeated the teaching of the New Testament. None of the Apostolic Fathers presented a definite doctrine on this point. In this respect the New Testament, the Apostolic Fathers, and the Apostles’ Creed<sup>17</sup> stand in one line.

- 1978 Buckley, J. A. (b.?-d.?). *The Work Comprising a Detailed Study of the Trinity Doctrine in the Teaching of the Second Century Church Fathers and Entitled Second Century Orthodoxy*. (Publisher - Redruth, Cornwall, England: J. A. Buckley; Printer - Camborne, Cornwall, England: St. George Printing Works, Ltd., 1978), pp. 114, 115. OCLC: 36730744; 263182942.

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<sup>16</sup> The “Apostolic Fathers” are those who are said to have lived during the same time period as the Apostles themselves; perhaps, with some having even been taught by them as well.

<sup>17</sup> Even so, it must be pointed out: “So far, then, from being composed by the Apostles in person, we have no reason to assume that the Creed which bears their title appeared less than five hundred years after their time.” – *The Faith of Christendom, A Source Book of Creeds and Confessions*. Gerrish, Brian Albert (b.1931-d.?), Distinguished Service Professor of Theology, Union Theological Seminary; Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology in the Divinity School, University of Chicago, Editor. Series: *Meridian Books, A Living Age Book*. (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Company, 1963). BT990 .G4 / 63-012322.

“...a statement of Christian belief which approximately agrees in wording with the Apostles’ Creed cannot be found in any surviving writing earlier than A.D. 340.” – Stead, G. C. (b.?-d.?). “Foundation Documents of the Faith: I. The Apostles’ Creed.” Article appearing within: *The Expository Times*. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, v. 1–, Oct. 1889–), vol. 91 (1979), pp. 4-8. BS410 .E8 / 54-43327 r82.

Up until the end of the second century at least, the universal Church remained united in one basic sense; they all accepted the supremacy of the Father. They all regarded God the Father Almighty as alone supreme, immutable, ineffable and without beginning....With the passing of those second century writers and leaders, the Church found itself....slipping slowly but inexorably toward that point....where at the Council of Nicaea the culmination of all this piece-meal eroding of the original faith was reached. There, a small volatile minority, foisted its heresy upon an acquiescent majority, and with the political authorities behind it, coerced, cajoled and intimidated those who strove to maintain the pristine purity of their faith untarnished.

- 1979 Cupitt, Don (b.1934-d.?), University Lecturer in Divinity and Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, England. *The Debate About Christ*. (London, England: SCM Press Limited, 1979), p. 108. ISBN: 0334003032. BT220 .C860. OCLC: 5882386.

But Jewish faith in God rules out any arrangement of this kind [referring to a teaching of the co-equal deity of Jesus with God]. It was held that God, the God of Israel, is absolutely sole in his power, cannot be divided or co-equally shared. The New Testament writers never questioned this principle nor think of themselves as possibly infringing upon it. They never distinguish [or, give discussion to a] co-equal persons within one God; the idea was unthinkable. It was also unthinkable to say Jesus was identical with one God. So it was very difficult to see how they could have entertained the ideas of the divinity of Christ and the Trinity.

- 1980 *The Trinitarian Controversy*. From the series: *Sources of Early Christian Thought*. Rusch, William G. (b.?-d.?), Director of the Commission of Faith and Order, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., Translator and Editor. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, c1980), introduction, pp. 2, 3. BT109 .T74 / 79-008889.

No doctrine of the Trinity in the Nicene sense is present in the New Testament ....There is no doctrine of the Trinity in the strict sense in the [writings of the] Apostolic Fathers, but the trinitarian formulas are apparent. The witness of this collection of writings to a Christian doctrine of God is slight and provides no advance in synthesis or theological construction beyond the biblical materials.

- 1980 Hanson, Anthony Tyrell (b.?-d.?): Hanson, Richard Patrick Crosland (b.1916-d.?). *Reasonable Belief, A Survey of the Christian Faith*. (New York, New York; Toronto, Canada; Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press, 1980), chapter IV [4] – “The Holy Trinity,” section 9 – “The Doctrine of the Trinity,” subsection a – “The Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity,” pp. 174, 175. BT77 .H264 / 80-40481.

[The adoption of the Trinity doctrine came as a result of] a process of theological exploration which lasted at least three hundred years....it would be foolish to represent the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as having been achieved by any other way....The Arian controversy in the fourth

century tested, shook and altered [the] doctrinal tradition of the Son/Logos. This was a long, confused, process whereby different schools of thought in the Church worked out for themselves, and then tried to impose on others, their answers to the question, “How divine is Jesus Christ?” It is quite misleading to represent this controversy as a contest between self-confident, well-defined orthodoxy on the one hand and blind, perverse heresy on the other. At the beginning of the controversy nobody knew the right, most satisfactory answer. This is one reason why the controversy lasted more than sixty years and gradually involved every conceivable authority; general councils, Popes, Emperors, bishops alone or in parties, and the faithful at large (who tended to make their contribution in the form of riots). If ever there was a controversy decided by the method of trial and error, it was this one.

1984 Lindbeck, George A. (b.?-d.?), Professor of Historical Theology, Yale University. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post Liberal Age*. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, c1984), p. 92. BT19 .L55 1984 / 83-027332.

In order to argue successfully for the unconditionality and permanence of the ancient Trinitarian Creeds, it is necessary to make a distinction between doctrines, on the one hand, and on the terminology and conceptuality in which they were formulated on the other....Some of the crucial concepts employed by these creeds, such as “substance”, “person”, and “in two natures” are post biblical novelties. If these particular notions are essential, the doctrines of these creeds are clearly conditional, dependent on the late Hellenistic milieu.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Meaning, as having been eventually influenced by the social environment of the “Hellenistic” thinking, attitude and philosophies: “Hellenistic Christianity was the attempt to reconcile Christianity with Greek philosophy, beginning in the late 2nd century. Drawing particularly on Platonism and the newly emerging Neoplatonism, figures such as Clement of Alexandria [b.?-d.ca.215] sought to provide Christianity with a philosophical framework.” – “Hellenistic Christianity,” as taken from the following website: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic\\_philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_philosophy)

Quite interestingly, there is this: “The conflict between the two modes of thought is recorded in scripture, in Paul's encounters with Epicurian and Stoic philosophers in Acts 17:18, his diatribe against Greek philosophy in 1st Corinthians 1:18-31, and his warning against philosophy in Colossians 2:8.\* Over time, however, as Christianity spread throughout the Hellenic world, an increasing number of church leaders were educated in Greek Philosophy. The dominant philosophical traditions of the Greco-Roman world at the time were Stoicism, Platonism, and Epicureanism. Of these, Stoicism and particularly Platonism were readily incorporated into Christian ethics and theology.” – “Hellenistic philosophy and Christianity,” found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic\\_philosophy\\_and\\_Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_philosophy_and_Christianity)

\* Acts 17:18 – “...certain ones of both the Ep'i'cu're'an and the Sto'ic philosophers took to conversing with him controversially, and some would say: ‘What is it this chatterer would like to tell?’ Others: ‘He seems to be a publisher of foreign deities.’ This was because he was declaring the good news of Jesus and the resurrection.”

1st Corinthians 1:18-31 – “For the speech about the torture stake is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is God's power. For it is written: ‘I will make the wisdom of the wise [men] perish, and the intelligence of the intellectual [men] I will shove aside.’ Where is the wise man? Where the scribe? Where the debater of this system of things? Did not God make the wisdom of the world foolish? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not get to know God, God saw good through the foolishness of what is preached to save those believing.

“For both the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks look for wisdom; but we preach Christ impaled, to the Jews a cause for stumbling but to the nations foolishness; however, to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because a foolish thing of God is wiser than men, and a weak thing of God is stronger than  
(continued...)

- 1986 Grant, Robert McQueen (b.1917-d.?). *Gods and the One God*. 1st Edition. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, c1986), pp. 109, 156, 160. BL785 .G69 1986 / 85-011443.

The Christology of the apologies,<sup>19</sup> like that of the New Testament, is essentially subordinationist. The Son is always subordinate to the Father, who is the one God of the Old Testament. ...What we find in these early authors, then, is not a doctrine of the Trinity....Before Nicaea, Christian theology was almost universally subordinationist.

- 1987 *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*. Myers, Allen C. (b.1945-d.?), Revision Editor. John W. Simpson, John W., Jr. (b.?-d.?)...[et al.], Associate Editors. Translation of: *Bijbelse Encyclopedie*.<sup>20</sup> Revised Edition, 1975. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 1020. BS440 .G7613 1987 / 87-013239.

Triadic formulas in the New Testament are often regarded as implying a developed doctrine of the trinity, but this is to read too much into them. 1 Cor[inthians] 12:4-6; 2 Cor[inthians] 13:14<sup>21</sup> are implicitly subordinationist since they use the formula “Lord (i.e., Christ) – Spirit – God,” differentiating the first two from God.

- 1988 Hanson, Richard Patrick Crosland (b.1916-d.1988), Lightfoot Professor of Divinity, University of Durham; Professor of Theology, University of Nottingham; Professor of Historical and Contemporary Theology, University of Manchester; Bishop of Clogher, Ireland (1970-1973). *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, c1988), pp. xix, 64, 274. BT1350 .H36 1988 / 89-151990.

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<sup>18</sup>(...continued)

men.

“For YOU behold his calling of YOU, brothers, that not many wise in a fleshly way were called, not many powerful, not many of noble birth; but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put the wise men to shame; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put the strong things to shame; and God chose the ignoble things of the world and the things looked down upon, the things that are not, that he might bring to nothing the things that are, in order that no flesh might boast in the sight of God. But it is due to him that YOU are in union with Christ Jesus, who has become to us wisdom from God, also righteousness and sanctification and release by ransom; that it may be just as it is written: ‘He that boasts, let him boast in Jehovah.’ [Jeremiah 9:24].”

Colossians 2:8 – “Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry YOU off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ;...”

<sup>19</sup>The “Apologies” comprise the writings of the earliest of Christians, those composed for the purpose of providing *explanations* and/or a *defense* of Christian theology (teachings/beliefs), commencing shortly after the last of the Inspired Christian Greek Scriptures (“The New Testament”) had been written.

<sup>20</sup> This is: *Bijbelse Encyclopedie*. (Dutch Language). vol. 1 – *A-Hor*. vol. 2 – *Horam - Z*. (Kampen, Overijssel, Netherlands: Kok, 1975). OCLC: vol. 1 - 312167955; vol. 2 - 312168032.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 – “Now there are varieties of gifts, but there is the same **spirit**; and there are varieties of ministries, and yet there is the same **Lord**; and there are varieties of operations, and yet it is the same **God** who performs all the operations in all persons.” – (bold and underline ours).

2 Corinthians 13:14 – “The undeserved kindness of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** and the sharing in the **holy spirit** be with all of YOU.” – (bold and underline ours).

As intimated above, within these two verses, instead of the Apostle Paul employing “Father,” the title “**God**” is clearly being utilized in a “differentiating” way from the other two – the “Lord” Jesus Christ and holy “spirit.”

With the exception of Athanasius [b.ca.296-d.373] virtually every theologian, East and West, accepted some form of subordinationism at least up the year 355; subordinationism might indeed, until the denouement [meaning, the final resolution] of the controversy, have been described as accepted orthodoxy.... There is no theologian in the Eastern or Western church before the outbreak of the Arian controversy, who does not in some sense regard the Son as subordinate to the Father.... Many... could not... abandon completely a subordinationism that had been hallowed by long tradition.





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