

3. EARLY CHURCH DOCTRINE AND WORSHIP

Jude 1:3, “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

1. WORSHIP, BIBLE AND LEADERSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH

(a) Gathered worship

- How do we know? The *Didache*, Pliny, Justin Martyr
- Order of Service... Lord’s Day... Baptism... Lord’s Supper... Bible...

Pliny, to Trajan: “They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed, but to abstain from all fraud, theft and adultery, never to break their word, or deny a trust when called upon to honor it.”

Justin: “At the end of our prayers, we greet one another with a kiss. Then the president of the brethren is brought a bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he takes them, and offers up praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and the Holy Ghost, and gives thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at his hands. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their joyful assent by saying Amen... Then those whom we call deacons give to each of those present the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and carry away a portion to those who are absent. We call this food “Eucharist.”

Justin: “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president [pastor] verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.”

(b) The “Canon” of Scripture (what ends up in the New Testament? – how... why?)

- Very early recognition (see 2 Pet. 3:16)... not invented but self-attested authority... then formalized in response to heresies of Marcion and Montanists
- Rule of thumb: by apostle or associate... agrees with doctrine of undisputed epistles... functioning widely as Scripture
- Athanasius’ Easter Letter of 367 lists all our 27 N.T. books

(c) Leadership in the early church

- Church leadership: changing practices... and seeds of error
- Key names

Apostolic fathers: Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp

Apologetic fathers: Justin Martyr (d.165), Irenaeus, vs. the Gnostics, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Cyprian of Carthage

2. SIN: AUGUSTINE VS. PELAGIUS

Pelagius: denies original sin... humanity basically good... no need for saviour or substitute... we *can* follow Christ’s moral example... we only need Law

Semi-Pelagianism: we human beings take the first step towards God – then he responds in grace.

Augustine: sinful nature (not just behaviour), because a child of Adam... God takes initiative in electing and saving his people... faith itself is his gift.

Key scriptures = Romans 3:12, Matt. 15:19, John 8:34

Monergism, NOT synergism

Augustine, *On the predestination of the saints:*

“If anyone dare to say, ‘I have faith of myself, I did not, therefore, receive it’, he directly contradicts this most manifest truth, - not because it is not in the choice of man’s will to believe or not to believe, but because in the elect the will is prepared by the Lord.”

“The fact that faith is not given to all ought not to disturb the believer, who believes that from one [Adam] all have gone into a condemnation, which undoubtedly is most righteous; so that even if none were delivered therefrom, there would be no just cause for finding fault with God.”

3. TRINITY: THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA (325 / 381AD)

Arius (booooo!!!!)... “there was a when when he was not”

Nicaea, 325AD... Athanasius (hurray!!!).... Creeds (325 / 381)

Nicene Creed of 381 AD

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

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

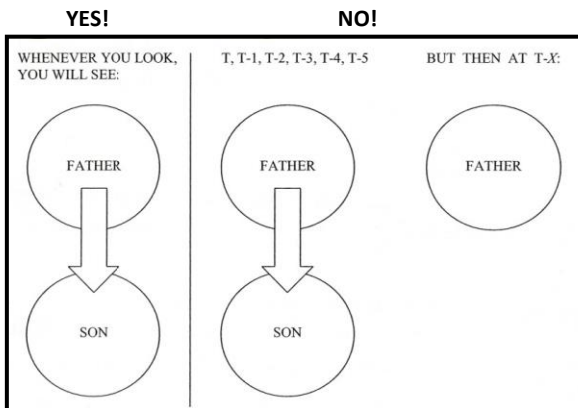
And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Athanasius: *“The Father is God, The Son is God, The HS is God; And yet there are not three Gods, but one God.”*

Matthew 28:18-19, “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

God the Son is **eternally begotten not made.** He is **consubstantial with the Father.**



4. CHRISTOLOGY: THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (451AD)

THINK: Would it matter if Jesus...

- merely *appeared* to be a human. (Docetism)
- was a man, who at some point was *adopted* by God and infused with divine characteristics (Adoptionism)
- was a "*mask*" worn by God who sometimes wears a Father mask, sometimes a Son mask, sometimes a Spirit mask (Modalism / Sabellianism)
- was *not fully God* (Arianism)
- only possessed an *animal soul* (Apollinarianism)
- his divine and human natures were utterly *divided, and* only appeared to be one person (Nestorianism)
- divinity and humanity was mixed together in one nature (Monophysitism/Eutuchianism)

Theodosius dies... Council of Chalcedon called... Triumph of Cyril of Alexandria (d.444)

Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to his manhood.

This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us.

It was a corrective ... a unifying ... a clarifying (but not exhaustive) statement

Two natures... united in one person... by personal/hypostatic union.