

15 MINUTE LEARNING SERIES

15 Minute Creedal Theology

A Survey of Christian Creedal Theology

Stephen Kirsch

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Edited, Compiled, and Written 2013-2014 by Stephen Kirsch

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¹ Or in the words of Qoheleth “*There is nothing new under the sun.*” (*Ecclesiastes 1:9*)

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Thanks

This series relies on the impetus of two people and a series of philosophical lunchtime ‘lecture-discussions’, but it is founded in the gift of so many. So first to Julien and Allison, thanks for the *Food For Thought* challenge. To my parents and everyone else, thanks for showing and giving me the love of God and later of art, critical thinking, and philosophy. Thanks especially to my wife, Alice, who married me even though I had a degree in philosophy and a minor in religious studies. Finally, as always, an apology to my kids, as they had no choice in the matter.²

As for the philosophy and theology itself, I also owe a debt of gratitude to the saints, priests, nuns, sisters, preachers, Monks of St. Joseph Abbey, and the Jesuits of The Pontifical Gregorian University and to the many others who spent their time giving us all such a rich foundation of Love and Faith; what more can I say?

By Way of Introduction...

If one agrees with Hegel on this matter³, then this preface will be short.

So why write another book about the theology of creeds?

Despite the moniker, as with any work in this series, there is no promise that it will only take 15 minutes to understand all of the myriad theologies contained within the Creed! The idea of the original lectures was to take about 15 minutes of reading and a lifetime of understanding. Not too much to ask or expect? I have tried to translate the spirit of those weekly lunch-time lectures into this printed format.

As for this work, it will pretend to be at first no more than an historical survey of theology and theological thought but may end up with some survey of overall concepts and people through time. The religious thought and theology presented here is in fact much deeper and wider than we discuss, and to a much deeper degree than is shown in the book. The pericopes included in this work show the limited nature of the limited nature of this discussion.

As for myself, at the risk of repetition, I hold but a mere undergraduate minor in this field. Why do I feel qualified to produce such a work? Well, I hold a mere undergraduate minor in this field.

As for the subject matter, this work follows the maxim of ‘write what you know’, or at least what you think you know. It is focused on introducing the elements of Judeo-Christian theology contained within the Creed. With that in mind, this work calls upon St. Francis De Sales (the patron saint of writers) for guidance and seeks to emulate his love and moderation. For as he puts it, “*whoever wants to preach effectively must preach with love.*” ()

Dedication

I dedicate this book to everyone who seeks to expand their belief, and especially to those who struggled to teach me the fine art of theology.

² “*THE appearance of this volume demands more than the usual amount of apology.*” Introduction to *Humanism*, by F.C.S. Schiller

³ And one should; c.f. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1, Georg Hegel

PROLOGUE

Introduction to Creeds



Credo

The *raison d'être* of this work is to extend the previous discussion of general philosophical language in theology as laid out in *15 Minute Theological Philosophy*. In that way it is reliant upon the framework of all the previous *15 Minute* works and as such really cannot stand alone. Yet the work we condensed in *15 Minute Theological Philosophy* merely began the journey of the movement from intellectual, philosophical, and anthropological speculation into the realm of Judeo-Christian mystery and Revelation and our human, speculative attempts to understand it. Examining Creeds is the next step in a deeper exploration of that revealed Truth. This work is not an apologetic or attempt to convince the non-adherent but to explore the Truth as it stands and has been passed on.

Mysterion

While we will examine creeds in general, the final goal will be the examination of what is popularly called the *Nicene Creed*, the de facto standard for Christians of several denominations' profession of Faith. In that form, the creed begins with a statement of belief in God. So, let us wander back to the basic concept at the heart of this exploration which is God and the understanding that the word for "God" rises from a much broader notion. We fathom, at a visceral level, that there is something other than us. We are able to know of God from the world around us and our innate Nature. In the previous work we gave this concept the name 'the Sacred'. We are now moving forward in this work to directly address the 'the Sacred', which has been revealed as "God". As also has been discussed in the past we know God to be the 'first cause' (*causa prima*). As the 'cause of itself' (*causa sui*) and of all things, God is now not just the one unquestioned assumption we have but is its sole focus. Theology is not a journey into *if* there is a God: it is the *study of* and *human speculation about* "God" – that which is totally other than us and which we know only because that other has revealed knowledge about the Other to us. We can know *of God* through our own faculties but we can only *know God* through His Revelation. Creeds then are the statements, not of human *belief* but of the *Revealed Truths*, i.e., Faith; the Truths which are beyond all human understanding, i.e. *Mystery*.

Creed

That said, let us embark and define our basic term. The word "creed" comes from the Latin *credo*, meaning "I believe" and is tied to the naming convention of using the first words of any statement to 'name' the text. Hence things like the "Our Father" that come from the first two words of the Latin Scripture passage ("*Pater Nostra*") and "Creed" from the first word of that statement, "*Credo*." Basically a creed is an attempt to codify, in authoritative language, a brief statement of the *tenets* or the basis of religious belief. It really has two forms, a broad one which points to the understanding of all the beliefs held by believers, and the sense we are looking at here, as the summary of the principles of that Faith. A creed is also sometimes referred to as a "symbol of Faith" signifying a "token" by which others of shared belief recognize fellow believers.

The attempt to put revealed mysteries (such as "God is three in one") into words is difficult. It requires a language which is sufficient to express (not necessarily explain) the inexpressible. Creeds are the repository for such language, and therefore, while not self-defining, are both the basis of and the end result of the discussions about the nature of God and Revelation. In the end, historically at least, the purpose of a creed is the emphasis of "orthodox" (Greek for "*right-teaching*") beliefs in opposition to the non-standard speculations that are being taught at the time of their creation. That is to say, the earliest creeds are "teaching" creeds but at the same time are statements of orthodoxy. The Apostles' Creed, composed during the first or second century, heavily emphasizes the true humanity of Jesus, since that is what the early heresies of the time denied. The Nicene

Creed, promulgated in the 4th century, adds the companion affirmation of the divine nature of Christ, because the Arians denied it saying that Christ was created and therefore not fully God. The creedal statements of the Council of Trent or statements like the Augsburg Confessions, which came about in the 16th century, codified those beliefs that Roman Catholics and Protestants groups were arguing about at the time.

So creeds address both substantial and insubstantial things. The stabilities of empires and spiritual communities depend on both the everyday and the esoteric. Everyone has to know where they stand. So, we will also touch on the idea of “certainty” inherent in creeds, in terms of knowledge and in terms of belief. As spoken of elsewhere, ‘knowledge’ in this sense is understood as more of a rational perception than a scientific proof or certainty; an understanding rather than a foregone conclusion. The insight that this kind of knowledge exists is somewhat based in rational speculation. This is not to say there is no degree of certainty, but that it is not a certainty in a secular, modern scientific sense. Mystery implies a connection to something that we do not fully understand yet of which we are aware and can acknowledge and seek, and so, as per Aristotle it must be something which is ‘real’ (having *substance*) and therefore something of which we can have a type of knowledge.⁴ We might think of it as we think of the scientific theories of relativity or black holes. We did not have, for many years, certain ‘proof’ of black holes, except speculative, logical, or rational mathematical ‘proof’, i.e. enough certainty to act upon.

Mystery and proof may seem at odds, and are often put there, but mystery is the very human trait of accepting things we cannot directly rationally grasp, see, smell or touch. Quantum physics is all about accepting things which seem at odds with physical science’s facts.

Professions And Confessions

On that note, before we go any further and to sweep some of the overgrowth of time out of the way, let us go ahead and examine up front a couple more of our main terms. Creeds as we know them are “*professions of faith*” but they also involve “*confessions*” about certain beliefs.

To confess is to “make known or admit” things that are known internally; to profess is to declare openly and in this case to openly declare one’s Faith. Confession does not have to be a public event. In the case of the Sacrament, it can be done within the heart or within the privacy of a confessional (although public confessions are practiced today and were not unknown within the early Church).

They are *public*. This is probably the prime aspect. Professions make something widely known. We as a body of believers profess the truths we know together within the larger group.

As profession involves certainty, confession involves a certain amount of confidence, not bravado but as in a confidence in the faithfulness or mercy of God, per our previous statement. When I confess my sins, I confess my trust in God’s forgiveness; when I profess the creed, I profess external Truths. “...for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.” (Rom 10:9-10)

So very basically, one confesses as an individual and professes as a group. Confession divulges the depth of the heart, profession is an external statement which guides the heart.

Creeds profess revealed truths and are not a summation of human beliefs; we confess belief in individual truths. God reveals, we believe. So while creeds are statements creeds are also prayers, in that they are professions of this intimate encounter with God.

⁴ Most modern thinkers, while embracing his methods, would reject the metaphysical side of Aristotle’s thought by putting it down to his overall ignorance of the world. This is a baby and the bathwater problem though, following the formal logical fallacy of the “undistributed middle” where if one part is wrong all must be wrong, ironically given that Aristotle is the founder of logic. What we believe is that the Truth and the ideas we get from it do not have expiration dates. The soundness of an argument or correctness of a statement has nothing to do with its age or the relationship to other ideas.

A History Of Creeds

The earliest written creedal statements come to us from Scripture. The most basic of these (for Christianity) come to us in the epistles of Paul, most of which were written between the early 50's and the mid to late 60's AD. That fact means that there is approximately twenty years between the death of Christ and these earliest of Christian writings. Until then much of what existed was oral Tradition, that is, stories about Jesus, the Apostles, and their teachings. Paul is not afraid to build theologically on these existing oral and community beliefs, hymns, as well as other writings. As such the epistles of Paul contain copies of early Christian creedal statements which can possibly date from as early as 35 AD, approximately two to five years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

A prime example of this is *1 Corinthians* 15. This epistle is chock full of creedal statements, and in fact are the "gospel" which Paul *"preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand."* (15:1) We also see in *Philipians* 2:6-11 his reuse of a hymn which contains creedal statements. Finally we see them in more codified forms within the later epistles like 1 Timothy *"Undeniably great is the mystery of devotion, Who was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed to the Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory."* (3:16) The next written construct, the gospels, also contain statements in the form of sayings as in *Matthew* 16:16 with Peter's statement *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* or statements within the Prologue of John's very late 1st century gospel *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."* (1:1-2)

While most modern creeds are "declarative" (*"I believe..."*), in the post-Apostolic period we see "interrogatory" (question and answer) creedal statements often used in Baptisms with content approaching the more familiar later formal creeds. *"When the person being baptized goes down into the water, he who baptizes him, putting his hand on him, shall say: 'Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty?' And the person being baptized shall say: 'I believe.' Then holding his hand on his head, he shall baptize him once. And then he shall say: 'Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was dead and buried, and rose again the third day, alive from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?' And when he says: 'I believe,' he is baptized again. And again he shall say: 'Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy church, and the resurrection of the body?' The person being baptized shall say: 'I believe,' and then he is baptized a third time."* (Hippolytus, early 3rd century)

They also had a more practical reason, as in what is known as Irenaeus' (~ 130-200) "Rule of Faith" that was developed not just to share the Faith but also to preserve the Tradition for those without access to written Scriptures⁵. *"The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven and the earth and the seas and all the things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who made known through the prophets the plan of salvation, and the coming, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily ascension into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and his future appearing from heaven in the glory of the Father to sum up all things and to raise anew all flesh of the whole human race"* (Against Heresies, 1.2)

All that said, the more formal and familiar creeds are listed below:

The Apostles' Creed: The Apostles' Creed, considered the earliest official profession of faith, is basically a concise statement of the fundamental Christian beliefs. While at one point it came to be considered to have been written by the Apostles, it is merely a compilation of apostolic teachings, which is the actual origin of the name.

⁵ In this case the word "rule" simply means a standard by which something can be tested, and the "rule of faith" means that it is something that serves as its norm or measure

The Nicene Creed: The best-known of all of the creeds, the Nicene Creed was adopted at the Council of Nicea (a city in present-day Turkey, close to Constantinople/Istanbul) in 325, in response to the Arian heresy but the final form we recognize developed over time. Finalized in 381 at Constantinople.

The Athanasian Creed: The longest of the creeds, the Athanasian Creed focuses heavily on the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Chalcedonian Creed: The fourth ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), returned to the question of whether Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man. The Chalcedonian Creed affirms that Christ is one Person with two natures, human and divine.

The International Herald-Triune

Ecumenical Councils are meetings of all of the world's bishops, and they bring with them not just the overall pressing questions but also those of their local churches. While they deal with the persistent questions of the times in which they are held, the structure of the creeds reflects the most basic beliefs of the Church as well as a certain hierarchy of revelation about the nature of God. Its structure relates the understanding of God as Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, but also the actions of that Trinity in Church and in Salvation. .

The concept of God, as it comes to us through the Judaic tradition, is of ONE GOD. But as we have discussed in the past, even that concept was an evolution based in the ability of the Israelites to understand the Revelation given to them. Still it is a major stumbling block in the early relationship between Jews and the "Jesus Sect" . It was one of the arguments against Christianity being part of Judaism and therefore not subject to protection under the Roman laws on ancient religions.

The Jewish development of understanding about God is seen in several aspects of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament). The names of God, the Tetragrammaton ("YHWH") and "Elohim", speak to different characteristics of God. One seems to come from an understanding of God as filtered through a warrior vision, the other through a farmer's lens. The Jews themselves constantly struggled with having just their God versus all of the other gods. *"For the LORD is the great God, the great king over all gods."* (Psalm 95:3) The prophets constantly rebuke them for straying from God to follow other gods.

Gen starts with a statement of Creator, Spirit, and Word. Christians seized on these distinctions and pointed to the further revelation as explaining their triune distinction.

It comes down to a simple question: *"If God is ONE, how can He be THREE?"*

The Cult Of Personality

God as three in one, three persons in one God. This simple idea made in a series of statements within the Creed, relies upon the definition of "person." We will explore this idea later but realize now that the word "person" that we use today has a different connotation than the theological term "person."

The Godhead

This section may sound like the name of an Indie band or the title of a gangster movie, neither is the case. This is the term for "God", as Father, Son, and Spirit in unity. As we might say "God the Father", "God the Son", and "God the Spirit", so we might say Godhead for "God the Trinity" or "the One God." It is a later theological term invented by John Wycliffe in his early English translation of the Bible (for which he got into a lot of trouble – but that is a later discussion). He uses it in an encompassing way where we might use the word "deity", or "divinity", or "divine nature", but which we usually just translate as "God." It can be useful when distinguishing the idea of God from the idea of each Person in the Trinity.

Putting It All Together

The subject of God is not for the faint-hearted.

Judeo-Christian theology has a specific purpose, milieu, and language. It is bound up in human thought and experience, but it speaks of an experience which is beyond human thought and experience. We will use the framework of metaphysics to structure our arguments but an idea not spoken of here – that of ‘economy’ – plays deeply into our theological journey; it is the canyon of our theological river. Economy in this sense has nothing to do with the exchange rate in Heaven, but is more about ‘how something is accomplished’. The ‘Economy of Salvation’ talks about how salvation happens, what means and vehicles contribute to and facilitate the action of God to repair the fall. Just like the study of monetary economics, it is the game board on which we want to understand the dynamics and causes as well as the outcomes.

“To show that a faith or a philosophy is true from every standpoint would be too big an undertaking even for a much bigger book than this; it is necessary to follow one path of argument; and this is the path that I here propose to follow. I wish to set forth my faith as particularly answering this double spiritual need, the need for that mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar which Christendom has rightly named romance. For the very word "romance" has in it the mystery and ancient meaning of Rome. Any one setting out to dispute anything ought always to begin by saying what he does not dispute. Beyond stating what he proposes to prove he should always state what he does not propose to prove. The thing I do not propose to prove, the thing I propose to take as common ground between myself and any average reader, is this desirability of an active and imaginative life, picturesque and full of a poetical curiosity, a life such as western man at any rate always seems to have desired. If a man says that extinction is better than existence or blank existence better than variety and adventure, then he is not one of the ordinary people to whom I am talking. If a man prefers nothing I can give him nothing. But nearly all people I have ever met in this western society in which I live would agree to the general proposition that we need this life of practical romance; the combination of something that is strange with something that is secure. We need so to view the world as to combine an idea of wonder and an idea of welcome. We need to be happy in this wonderland without once being merely comfortable. It is this achievement of my creed that I shall chiefly pursue in these pages.”

G. K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy

PART I

In The Beginning...



Peter, Paul, And The Apostolic Age

“Wait,” you may ask after reading the title of this chapter “aren’t you missing something?” and rightly so. But this work is an examination of theology and not so much of the details of theology. We might want to take a minute and examine Jesus as a theologian, but only if he were one – instead we will go the route that he is the Son of God, and not really a theologian but a *means of Revelation*. Therefore, after Judaism, one of the earliest direct influences on Christian theology is Paul and the Apostles.

Paul The Man

“Wait,” you may well ask again. How can Paul be ahead of the Apostles? Without discounting Oral Tradition, the earliest contributor to the written Tradition of Christianity is Paul, and so we will start here rather than with the Apostles. Outside of his own writings our main source is Luke the evangelist’s ‘second’ book, what is known as the *Acts of the Apostles* (Acts 9-28). Paul, born Saul, was from “Tarsus of Cilicia” (Acts 22:3) in the south of what is present-day Turkey. As credentials he states that he was of the tribe of Benjamin (the youngest son of Jacob/Israel) and he tells us he was a Pharisee, ‘zealous for the Law’ in his religious/political leanings. If we know our Christian history, then we know that he explains the effects of that zealousness. The story goes that he was exposing Jews who followed Jesus and was even acting as the official witness for their stoning until one day on the road to Damascus (in Syria) he had some sort of vision of Jesus, was ‘blinded’ and then secured within the very community he was persecuting. After this change of heart, what he calls a “transformation”, his previous zealousness was put into exposing the message of the gospel to the gentile world. He became a prolific writer and traveler until his death in about 64 AD in Rome under the Emperor Nero.

What defines him as a theologian though? How did he grow up and what formed his understanding of Judaism, and therefore of Jesus? Fortunately we can turn to some of his ‘own’ words. While he says he is a Pharisee (*Phil* 3:5), Pharisaism was more a rule of conduct rather than a system of dogmas, and great diversity of opinions existed among Pharisees; in addition, for the most part, it did not exist outside of the Palestine region. Paul declares though that he was taught by Gamaliel (c.f. Acts 22), a famous Pharisaic rabbi who was active between 22 and 55 A.D. Several of whose rulings appear in the *Mishnah* (which in turn also identifies him as one of the holiest teachers in all of Judaism), mostly having to do with marriage and divorce (c.f. Paul’s comments on marriage in *1 Cor* 7) though a somewhat misguided 12th century Christian tradition credits him with the whole of the *Talmud*. He is also considered by both Orthodox and Roman tradition to be a convert and saint, though that too may be of dubious validity.

Gamaliel was a Pharisee in the tradition of the great Hillel⁶, who was more open to ‘Hellenism’ (Greek influenced Judaism) than the other more prevalent (at that time) and conservative school of Shammai. This is an important note in understanding the overall influence of Gamaliel because within the first decade after the birth of Jesus the Hillelite view was the prevailing one, as reflected in the *Talmud*. Hillel espoused a broader interpretation of the Law, which produced rulings based on concern for the day-to-day welfare of every Jew. As is still the case, it was difficult for the poor and powerless to get justice and Hillel’s attitudes produced what were considered fair and just results for the marginalized. Several aspects of Jesus’ message reflect Hillel’s attitudes and writings (Hillel considered ‘love of man’ the kernel of Jewish teaching, if that sounds familiar at all). We can see this same emphasis on justice in Paul’s writings as well as the principles of scriptural exegesis⁷ used by the rabbis of his time. It is possible then that Paul’s earlier militarism against the followers of Jesus is

⁶ In fact, by Jewish tradition, he is the grandson of Hillel.

⁷ the process of critical examination of a text, using one or several methods like looking at it within its historical context or searching for the meaning of a word at the time of its use as opposed to later meanings in order to help in the interpretation of the text.

perhaps based in his ‘traditional’ Jewish upbringing outside of Palestine before he went to learn under Gamaliel in Jerusalem and speaks to an influence from the conservative Shammai school as well.

That said, on a final note, Gamaliel also appears as a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish elder court/council, and is seen as supporting leniency in regards to the early preaching of the apostles (Acts 5:34-39).

As a man, from his writings and descriptions about him by others, Paul seems to be full of inconsistencies—arrogant but also humble, a fervent believer but a probing, critical thinker, inflexible yet accommodating, a mystic but also a missionary and builder/supporter of communities. It has been postulated from statements he makes about himself that Paul was an epileptic, something which would have influenced both himself and his Jewish and non-Jewish listeners (Jews saw it as ‘demonic’ while Romans would have seen it as ‘touched by the gods’).(c.f. 2 Cor. 7:7; Gal. 4: 13) (comp. 2 Cor. 5:13; 10:10; 11:1, 16; 7:6) This and other ‘unreliable’ behavior such as his reliance upon the Septuagint rather than ‘Hebrew’ scriptures, has led groups throughout time to discount him and his works.

Paul The Thinker

Along that line, some take the line that Paul ‘hijacked’ Christianity from Jesus and the Jewish converts, especially through his Hellenism which seems to triumph soon after his death and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. He certainly was actively hostile to ‘Judaizers’ working in ‘his’ missionary realm, and had several things to say about the ‘old’ Law. But there is no denying his charisma and brilliance, so before we tackle these things let us take a moment and summarize his thought as we can see it in his “own hand”.

It is Paul’s writings, some of the earliest in Christian hagiography (earlier even than the Gospels), which reveal the most about his theology. As a quick note, the order of Paul’s letters (or any of the epistles for that matter) in the Bible has nothing to do with history and more to do with length; they go from longest to shortest, hence *Romans* is first. While we will not get into this, fourteen of the twenty-one letters have been traditionally attributed to Paul, but as of now only about seven are undisputed (dates in bold below: *Rom*, *1 Cor*, *2 Cor*, *Galatians*, *Phil*, *1 Thessalonians*, and *Philemon*) with the six others continuing to bear his name and certainly the marks of his influence.

Work	~Date	Themes
1 Thessalonians	51	The second coming and those who have died.
Galatians	48-55	Harsh on backsliding, big on grace.
2 Thessalonians	50-52	Similar to the themes of the first letter.
1 Cor	56	Factions and in-fighting; behavior, especially at the Lord’s Supper and the nature of that sacrament.
Rom	56-58	Brilliant summation of all of Paul’s teaching; very influential in doctrine.
2 Cor	57	The nature of the Christian life and ministry, authority and apostleship.
Phil	55-58	Unity and his joy in captivity/hardship.
Col	55+?	Heavy Christology.
Philemon	61-63	This shows Paul’s pastoral side balancing rules with love, using the situation (the returning slave: a broken law) to contrast Roman law with Christian law – the law of love.
Eph	61-100	Very similar to Col, may be a copy of it.
1 Timothy	60-100+	Ministry, authority and orthodoxy.
Titus	61-67	Same as 1 Timothy.
2 Timothy	60-100+	Possibly written before 1 Timothy; same themes.

We can also get a feel for Paul the thinker from his arguments on the Areopagus in Athens, as related in Luke's book of Acts (*Acts 17:16-34*). Spurred on by Epicureans and Stoic philosophers, Paul mounted the Areopagus (a large flat hill above the agora and just beneath the Acropolis: the soapbox of its day) and was challenged to a discussion of ideas. The outcome was mixed, and while some derided his thought (most probably the Epicureans because of his Hellenized discussion of the soul) some did follow his teaching which means he had some rhetorical ability and had to have some knowledge of their thought.

Hellenized Judaism

Hellenistic Judaism was a movement which developed in the post-Alexandrian Jews who through the diaspora were spread out across the Greek world and the Holy Land. It sought a kind of update of the Jewish religious tradition within the culture and language of the Greek world. Perhaps the longest lasting and most influential impact of this effort is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the *Septuagint* (begun in the 3rd century BC), known to Jesus and the Apostles.

As a Jew trained in this way of thinking by Gamaliel, Paul then would not be considered as being in the Jewish main stream – even at the time – and most likely despised by many of the early Jewish followers. For most, 'Hellenized' Jews were the cause of the earlier Maccabean revolt⁸ (167-164 BC, *think Hanukah*) as much as were the Greeks themselves. These Hellenized Jews went as far as to subject themselves to an 'un-circumcision' operation, the very physical sign of the covenant with God; we can only imagine the chaos that kind of thinking must have caused among traditional Jews. In fact, much of the Jewish apocalyptic literature conveys a picture in which the Jews were violently opposed the imposition of Hellenistic culture, especially from within (the apocalyptic book of Daniel dates from this time) yet the idea of Resurrection is mentioned for the first time in Jewish Scripture (c.f. *Daniel 12:1-2*). Even the Hasmoneans are influenced by this thinking (c.f. 2 Maccabees).

So it is perhaps ironic that Greek influence is seen in the deepening of Jewish religious beliefs. Prior to the Hellenistic period the Jewish concept of the afterlife had been drastically different, as we discussed earlier. We now see the development of the concepts like the immortality of the soul and life after death and/or some sort of resurrection and through that the idea of Jewish eschatological salvation (still, an idea which was not shared by everyone). Think about it this way: eternal salvation is impossible without an immortal soul, which is a Platonic concept, thus a Greek Platonic concept of an immortal soul is central to any belief in eternal salvation. And so, while not shared by everyone even hundreds of years later, the use of Greek concepts by the Jews (within a Jewish context) points to a development in the Jewish system. Additionally, in a testament to Jewish thought, at about the same time (the third century), Greek writers began to take notice of the Jews. Theophrastus (a student of Aristotle) characterized the Jews as "philosophers", probably in the same way that Justin Martyr classified Christianity as a 'philosophy'. Judaism was becoming an 'accepted system.'

This should not be surprising because the Jews, while very much genetically oriented, were never a completely closed religion and as they dispersed around the known world they spent great effort to invite in and train converts. Many of the documents they used for this purpose were so effective they were later adapted by the Christians for the same goal.

Philo Of Alexandria

As an example, a brief mention here of a Jewish theologian Philo of Alexandria (~20-50 AD) and while that may seem odd, do not forget that everyone involved here is Jewish. Philo was not a Christian though, and for all intents and purposes seems to know nothing of Jesus, the Apostles or Paul. Instead we know of him mainly from a short trip he took to Rome to meet with Caligula in an effort to stop the persecution of Jews in Alexandria in about 38 AD.

⁸ Which resulted eventually in the occupation by the Rom

So why bring him up? We do have a smattering of his writings, and as a Hellenized Jew he puts forth some ideas we will see in Christianity, especially in terms of the *Logos*. Philo saw this Greek concept present throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and argued that there was compatibility between Greek philosophy and the Scriptures. For him, God's 'son', the *Logos*, is the means by which the world was created and as such is both transcendent *and* immanent. That is to say that Philo felt that the *Logos* was both in God's presence and yet also in the world. We hear this echoed in the prologue of the Gospel of John. That said Philo saw the *Logos* as subordinate to the Father, not co-existent with Him as does John.

Paul's Thinking

It is nothing new then that Hellenistic influences are far from alien to the message of Christianity. We can understand then that while he was so Jewish Paul was also so anti-'Judaizers', that is against those folks who were probably still anti-'Hellenistic'. This position gets to the heart of some of the objections to Paul, both then and now. Many of the Jewish converts (in this case groups with names like Ebionites and the Nazarenes) followed the apostle James and were not Hellenists like Paul, consequentially they tended to think of Jesus the Jewish terms discussed in the previous chapter. Ultimately because of the fact that God was God alone, Jesus was not divine – how could he be if there were just one God? This idea does not work for Paul, especially since the death and resurrection of Jesus, that post-life Jesus who appeared to him and is so central to his theology.

Paul's Hellenism and theology about the Christology of Jesus does not mean that Paul has stopped being a Jew. Certainly, there is only one God, and God is that God. But because of his lens, he begins to explore how that could be; how can God be one yet Jesus be divine? Mind you, these early explorations have caused centuries of conflict. That in mind, Paul quotes what appear to be existing hymns (already being sung within Christian liturgies), meaning that they were established understandings of Jesus' nature, especially now that he has passed from death to life. If we examine these hymns in Phil 2:5-11 and Col 1:15-20 it is clear that Paul agrees with them, why quote them otherwise; God the Father exists and Jesus is both human and pre-existent; Creation could not be without Jesus. At the same time there is a Spirit, the Spirit of God as Jesus is the Son of God. Creation is not sustained without the life-giving Spirit. So we also have a developing Trinitarian doctrine (c.f. 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:13; Eph 4:4-6). God is still one, but He seems to manifest Himself in different ways.

This has ramifications for the early believers. The Cross, the Resurrection, and the Parousia (the 'second' coming of Christ), central ideas of Paul's soteriology, are tied into his eschatology and his ecclesiology, because as we discussed earlier these are hard to separate. There are certain things he wants to emphasize, especially if Jesus is coming back soon, things like why follow a dead man? Essentially, Paul answers these questions with that practical theology. The logic is pretty straight forward:

The Lordship of Christ – he has power over life and death. this comes from the fact that:

He both suffered death and experienced the Resurrection – truly human, truly with God; because of that power over life and death, and the nature of Jesus' new life as granted by the Spirit:

We are that same mystical Body of Christ – the body, raised still operates – just somehow differently; our baptism is the participation in that body; the Eucharist plays into this mystery; which means we are "holy as God is holy" because we share Christ's holiness; ergo:

Through that death and resurrection we have Justification – that which we need for salvation, i.e. eternal life; everything comes from God:

It comes in the form of undeserved Grace – grace offered but not always taken; grace with known, 'pre-destined' benefits but also known consequences for its refusal. Ergo:

Christ, fulfillment of the Law and Prophets, is the center of the Faith, we need believe in nothing else because he contains it all – ergo the fullness of Revelation.

For Paul, Jesus is alive but Paul is not 'Jesus oriented', that is to say, he carries on the Jewish tradition of practical theology, focused more on the Christ and living Body, the present needs of the Church, as opposed to

any long-term hair-splitting theology. Still, that does not mean that he is not providing apostolic teaching (kerygma) on Jesus and using Jesus' words to do so. In 1 Thessalonians 4:15, Paul alludes to the eschatological teachings of Jesus, as a basis for his teachings that Jesus will return soon; in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Paul quotes the commands of Jesus that married couples should not be divorced as the basis for his teachings on marriage and sexuality; in 1 Cor 11:23-25, he describes the actions and quotes the words of Jesus over the bread and wine at the Last Supper, as the basis for his teachings on the correct understanding of the Eucharistic agape meal.

But for all of this, Paul is very adamant that what he teaches is not from him. He really wants (most of the time) that everyone understands that he is not the source or the summit of the message – only the Christ is. *"I mean that each of you is saying, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I give thanks [to God] that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say you were baptized in my name. For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning."* (1 Cor 1:12-17; c.f. also 1 Cor 3:4-23)

Apostolos

Paul was an evangelical preacher, a preacher of the 'Good News', the gospel of Jesus Christ. He challenges even the Twelve with his teaching (c.f. *Galatians 2, Acts 15*) – but how? What weight and authority does he carry? When Paul declares himself an apostle what is he saying and why is it important that he does so? (c.f. *1 Cor 15:9*) The basic meaning of the word is "one who is sent" but it is applied to a very few of Jesus' disciples. In addition, if we look at the Scripture references, the use of the word '*apostle*' differs between the Gospel and Acts writers and Paul. The authors of the Gospels and of Acts use the term strictly to identify those disciples in the inner circle, the 'Twelve', who were specifically chosen by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. *Acts 1:21-26* seems to further suggest that only those who were with Jesus from the time of John the Baptist at the beginning of his ministry could become Apostles. Paul, however, seems to use the term in its basic and far more broader sense, as that of ones sent to preach. By that thinking he is able to include himself and his helpers.

When we take it in its more restrictive and common use, the meaning of the term 'Apostle' we usually are thinking about denotes the Twelve. In that way the term 'Twelve' represents that specific understanding of 'Apostle', such that the two are interchangeable. By that, one could argue against Paul because he had never even 'seen' Jesus alive, much less been there during his ministry. He did not live with Jesus or directly hear his teachings and explanations. But in a sense we can see it as perhaps Paul does, as the "apostle to the Gentiles" (*Rom 11:13*). To Paul, Jesus *did* appear to him. The argument becomes that Paul sees himself as the apostle of the Christ whereas the Twelve are the apostles of Jesus. In that sense the Twelve have Authority directly from Jesus and the post-resurrection Christ (c.f. *Matt 16:17-19, 28:16-20*) who received it from the Father, but Paul has it directly from the post-ascension, kingly Christ.

Peter

Speaking about that limited sense of 'Apostle', when we think about the Apostles, especially as presented in the Gospels, we are usually drawn to Peter by the authors. First, because in the role of spokesman (Greek chorus if you want) he is the one we probably know the most about.

Why Peter though? Where Paul seems to have a reckless disregard for traditional Judaism, Peter seems to have an appalling lack of knowledge of Judaism as a whole. In addition it really is James (possibly a very close relative of Jesus) who is the bulwark of Jewish Christianity but, in the end, it is Peter to whom all appeal or defer.

And if that is the case why is it that James is the head of the Church in Jerusalem? Why not Peter? He does not seem to found any churches though he is traditionally seen as the bishop in several. Why does Peter wander and not settle in one place? Could it be for the very reason that he is the spokesman, the head-honcho? If one looks at the Gospels and Acts then it certainly seems that way. Reading the Letters of Peter, even though they

seem to be later in origin, one gets a sense of a universal (catholic) Church which seems to be his focus. Peter will define the doctrines of the Church by his very words, not of one community or another. Peter speaks the Truths upon which even Paul builds.

And so we argue about the broader understanding of Scripture and against those who would denigrate the Church but reducing it only to Paul. Paul and Peter are indispensable to the early Church, but Peter is the rock and foundation, expressing the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Even so, the Apostolic Age is larger than even them, as captured in the Gospels from memories and stories of other eye-witnesses as well. In the end, though, it is Peter's proclamations which are the basic *kerygma* upon which the Church rests.

Death

But all good things must come to an end and when it comes time to begin to wind down the Apostolic Age, both Peter and Paul look to Rome. At this point we make assumptions about the nature of both Peter and Paul from the early writings but what do we really know about this time? Was Paul really a Roman citizen? Acts makes clear on several occasions that he was. Twice Paul uses this with regard to being flogged (Acts 16:37; 22:25), since it was illegal to flog a Roman citizen, and Paul on both occasions dramatically (and rather tiresomely) announces his citizenship chiefly to embarrass the Roman authorities. It is also the grounds for his being taken to Rome for trial (Acts 25:11). But why is there no sign of any appeal process during his time in Rome? On the other hand, Paul himself writes that he was three times beaten with rods (2 Cor 11:25), a known Roman penalty yet nowhere makes mention of his Roman citizenship though this may be because by this time it is more important to him that his "citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20). Was Peter really in Rome? Tradition and now archeological evidence at the site beneath the Vatican main altar seems to prove that he was. In the end, while Paul's Roman citizenship may be a reference for the many citizens who were becoming Christian, it is like Peter's specific request for crucifixion: not really worth worrying about.

What has to be worried about is whether their deaths and the deaths of the other Apostles created any sort of crisis of authority. The answer appears to be "no". The line continues to be traced in all centers of Christianity. The basic design of the Church's authority, as described in the letters of Paul and the Catholic Epistles, show that the transfer was fairly smooth and well understood. It is heavily based in both Jewish and Roman structures of power. The Synagogue system is well established and practiced by many of the Jews and their converts. The Roman system of dioceses and parishes is easily adopted to this urban religion.

We can see extra-scriptural examples of this in St. Ignatius of Antioch (?-107). He was the second bishop of Antioch after St Peter (who by tradition was not the first, that one being a man named Evodius). He was arrested, condemned to death, and transported to Rome to die in the arena. In the course of his journey there he wrote seven letters to various churches over which he had authority, where he highlights the organization of the Church, and makes binding moral pronouncements about the Christian life.

Probably the main thing to take away from this is the nature of authority. Remember this is not authority as we might think of it, rather it is one who speaks with the words of God. Jesus handed on authority to the Twelve. We see that in their ability to teach and heal among other things. The Twelve begin to disperse their authority to others, first recognizing in Paul that authority. Peter has the authority to proclaim the truth about Jesus; Jesus never says that he is the Messiah – it is Peter who does so. Peter stands and declares the special Apostolic dogmas of the Church (*kerygma*), and from that come the doctrines or the teachings. The initial derived authority of bishops and the like is mainly a doctrinal or teaching authority. The Apostles supply the dogma and the bishops teach it. With the end of the Apostolic Age though, the necessity of declaring dogma is continued through that same authority, but is seen through the collegial council.

Authority then is couched within the transitions of this age. First we see the Apostles with their declarations of *kerygma*, what we would call oral Tradition, and the movement into Paul, who both proclaims dogma and doctrine with the first real theological steps into the Gospels, which are theological explorations of Jesus' message as proclaimed by both Jesus and the Apostles.

Authorship

Authority and authorship have the same root, and our sense of authority which develops with the Apostles and is claimed by Paul depends upon these writings. But that was a long time ago. In some cases we have early fragments or quotations within other early fragments but in others we have later documents which purport to be based exactly on the originals. That aside, we have scholarship which doubts the authorship of many works, and if that is true calls into question the time-frame for the work and therefore its authority.

But that is a modern twist. When we talk about authorship in this time (and probably until 'modern' times), we have to be aware of the idea that one might write quotes from or 'in the thought or vein of' the character mentioned as the author. That is to say, *this is what so-and-so said or would have said had they said it*, so we can 'attribute' it to that person, ergo they are the 'author'. This was a widely accepted practice.

After the seven accepted Pauline letter, most of the epistles then, were probably written by someone other than they are directly attributed to, either a scribe being dictated to or a later disciple from memory or even, as said in a manner quite common for the day, someone claiming the name because of similar messages or desire for 'authority'. Because of style, content, or other reasons, several seemed to at least be written by close associates, like *Ephesians* or the three *Johns*, but some are placed too late in time for even that (especially if James is dead by ~62 and Peter and Paul are dead by ~64-67).

We see this also in many apocryphal (Greek "*of dubious origin*" different from *apocalyptic* meaning "uncovering") works which cropped up in the first four centuries. What we must understand, and why the Church Fathers eventually settled on the Canon (Latin for *list*) we have, was that the early Church saw the purpose of the Christian Scriptures was to be the written repository of apostolic faith. The Canon would be the authoritative statements of the Church and so there is an intense desire; therefore, they wished to include only the testimony of apostles. Consequentially this was not easy process, and the New Testament Scriptures did not just fall out of the sky as we have them. There are many lists of possible books, used by early theologians to make arguments with the one of Irenaeus (~125-202) ending up being one of the most 'authoritative' and consequentially closest to what we have now. Still the finalization of the Canon came only after a great many discussions and disagreements about the validity of books which were selected. That said, it is only today we bother to distinguish between the historical authorship of a work and its canonicity. In their day the point was that even though written by other, later witnesses than the named author, they still testify to the apostolic faith to which they are attributed and are seen as inspired.

Early Documents

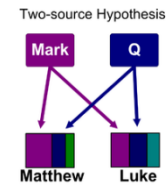
The oldest full text of the Christian Bible that we have dates from the 5th century, which makes sense if you realize that the canon was not really set before that time. Before that all we possess are fragments of the New Testaments books and letters.

Paul's Letters:

We have already spent some time with these but it is always good to see where they fit into the overall mix. They are the earliest *known* writings, but probably stand ground with a rich Oral Tradition of the time as evidenced by his use of established hymns. The authorship of some of these letters is questioned, and some of the unquestioned ones are seen as perhaps conglomerations of other letter fragments. The availability of original papyrus is limited to copies of copies. Aside from early quotes in other works, about 800 early copies of letters exist and no two copies are completely identical. The oldest fragment found so far of Paul's letters is from about 200 AD.

The *Logia* or 'Q' Source:

Part of that rich tradition may be a large early collection of oral and written principally, what are recollections of the sayings of Jesus (with some stories) Matthew and Luke but apparently not available to Mark. The first designation (think '*logos*') and the second is from the first letter of the German word meaning "source". This view is disputed, and a more complex one has been put relies less on a 'source' of sayings and more on actual eye-witness accounts and latter is advanced by those who place the date for the Gospels earlier. There are no extant fragments of any such document.



material, used by both means "words" '*Quelle*', forth, one that memories. The

The Gospels:

The term 'gospel' means "good news" . The first three are known as 'synoptic' (Greek "one eye") meaning that they are very similar and can be laid side-by-side and viewed with 'one eye'. The dates listed are the generally accepted earliest possible dates, though there are some who argue five to ten years earlier for the synoptics. The following quick reference chart is by no means authoritative or exhaustive.

"Author"	Date	Construction	Focus
Mark	~60 AD	Probably written in Rome to a Roman Gentile audience unfamiliar with Jewish customs. Possibly written by someone or someone(s) acquainted with both Peter and Paul.	The kingdom of God now breaking into human life as good news and Jesus himself as the gospel of God. Jesus is the Son whom God has sent to rescue humanity by serving and by sacrificing his life. Help current followers to persevere on in the face of persecution as Jesus did.
Matthew	~70 AD	Based on Mark and "Q", probably written in Antioch, possibly originally in Aramaic or Hebrew to a mixed Greek speaking audience of Jewish Christians and Gentile, or a Jewish community which was becoming Gentile. Most frequently quoted in the non-canonical literature of earliest Christianity. Highlights the continuity of OT & NT but a definite turn into a new, final age.	Jesus as fulfillment: breaking-in of the new and final age through the ministry but particularly through the death and resurrection of Jesus; the demands of discipleship, the nature of the Church and how obedience will play out in the final age.
Luke/Acts	~70 AD (post-destruction of Jerusalem)	Based on Mark and "Q", possibly also written in Antioch or somewhere in the eastern part of the Roman Empire to mainly non-Palestinian Gentile Christians. Stated to be 'historical' in nature; the first part of a two-volume work that shows the continuity of Jesus and the Church with the biblical history of God's dealings with humanity found in the OT.	The preaching and teaching of the representatives of the early church directly from the preaching and teaching of Jesus, who prepared his specially chosen followers and commissioned them to be witnesses to his deeds and resurrection. Also looks at the place of Gentile Christians in the Kingdom.
John	~90 AD	Traditionally written in Ephesus or some such place in the east like Antioch. Not based in any other gospel. Organized completely differently than the synoptics; more of a theological rather than 'historical' work; highly literary and symbolic.	The divine nature of Jesus. Jesus is always in the know and always in charge of the situation. Anti-gnostic leanings, opposition to the synagogue, and to any group who would down-grade Jesus.

Table 1: Gospel Synopsis

There are also other 'gospels' which were not considered canonical, many of which are the stuff of modern conjecture. Most are later creations (post-first century) and they have never been 'lost' but they have always been considered outside of the Canon. Many are referenced for their legend value but not used to create doctrine. Others are considered completely outside of orthodoxy and would never be used for doctrinal purposes. The oldest fragment found so far of the New Testament is a piece of the Gospel of John dated to the first half of the 2nd century, about 125 AD.

Apostolic letters:

These 'catholic' epistles (Eusebius, 260–340 AD, used the term to refer to these letters for their 'universal' messages) differ from Paul's and carry (for the most part) specific references to different authorship. Aside from 1 Peter and 1 John early thinkers were reluctant to include most of these letters in the canon because questions as to whether they had been written by the apostolic authors to whom they are attributed. Still many were included in lists and quoted by theologians. By the late 4th early 5th century, most thinkers put aside these objections and included all seven of the letters in the New Testament Canon.

- Hebrews – to Jewish Christians; the addressees are in danger of apostasy from their Christian faith not from any outside persecution but because of weariness and a growing indifference to the demands of Christian life.
- James – non-Palestinian Jews settled throughout the Greco-Roman world though some argue that it was initially a Jewish document; concerned almost exclusively with sound teaching ethical conduct especially good works. Authority of elders.
- 1 and 2 Peter – Christians there are encouraged to remain faithful to their standards of belief and conduct in spite of threats of persecution.
- 1, 2, and 3 John – Combats false ideas, especially about Jesus who is true man and true God; deepen spiritual and social awareness of the Christian community; knowledge of God and love for one another are inseparable, and error in one area inevitably affects the other.
- Jude – Warning of the dangers from false teachers worming their way into the community.

Revelation:

Christian apocalyptic work. Addressed to the churches of Asia Minor, it encourages them to hold fast in the face of horrific persecution. Great influence upon liturgical expression.

Didache:

~50-110 AD most likely an adaptation of an existing Jewish document used for converts to Judaism which could account for its earliest date adapted by the Christian community. Contains early liturgical and creedal statements, as well as instructions for neophytes.

My Apologies

These sections are slim at best and I give my apologies for that but that is not what we are talking about in this chapter. Apologetics is not the art of debasement but of explanation. The transition of Christianity away from Judaism, out of the Apostolic age and into an accepted religion thought which is really the hallmark of the faith. The ability of its disciples to convince others through word as well as deed depended upon their ability to couch the message within understood language – mainly, as stated, the language of Greek philosophy.

Since we have spoken of this in some brevity already we will not dwell for long on this subject. What is of note is the development of Scripture Tradition which starts in this period. From the end of the Apostolic age in the beginning of the second century, the use of both the established Hebrew and the fragmented Christian letters and Gospels is a great aid in seeing both the maturing of theology and the that of the canon of the Bible.

Creeds

Okay, so I brought it up, so I have to deal with it. We can make these claims because of the power of Tradition, Tradition which was laid out in the Oral days of Christianity and in various ways made it into the Written Tradition of the Scriptures. We will talk more about creeds later but in terms of authority, establishing orthodoxy, and spreading the message, creeds are the main vehicle even before Scripture.

Putting It Together

When we consider the first century of Christianity, theology must be seen as a transition from the earlier Jewish practical theological thought to a new focus on more speculative thinking. In the first century, the point is Christology – who is Christ, not just for the Jews, but for Gentiles as well. The practical guide for living is not lost but added to it is a certain amount of less practical thinking: How does one introduce the native concepts to the wider world? Judaism had already made inroad there, albeit in a more Hellenized fashion, and that created fertile ground for the expansion of Christianity outside of the Palestine region from whence it arose.

While many would argue that the Church is essentially Pauline in nature, they would be incorrect. The problem comes in the over-emphasis of Paul's theology over every other theology contained within not just Scripture but Tradition as well. It is through the even-handed examination of all of the sources of Revelation that we arrive at a truly balanced understanding. If the other were true, if Paul was the only thinker in Christianity, then the Gospels would never have been written; his writings would have been sufficient. But we see that that thinking is not enough – it was not even enough for the Gospels, which is why we have four.

This type of thinking reinforces the unquestioned fact that the early Christians appropriated/borrowed heavily from Judaism. Certainly one can find Jewish roots within the early Christian Church and the early Church documents. The question is whether one can consider them mainstream roots or actually branches from further up the tree. Paul is not the perfect Jew in some definitions, but in the larger world he may be considered so by some. Peter's traditional Judaism is of perhaps a less sophisticated nature than that of Paul's, and his knowledge of a wider set of Jewish literature may be lacking, but taken together, they form the head (Paul) and the heart (Peter) of Christianity.

Most of the conflict comes from the interpretation of Paul. *Antinomianism* (Greek 'against law'), is the idea that moral law is *trumped* by grace. The Law is no longer a sufficient groundwork for salvation. Luther sees this one way, the Church another (loosely based in the idea of ritual law which Luther feels Paul is agin', verses divine law, which he is fer). This argument ties to the idea of unearned grace versus good works (*orthodoxy* – *right belief* versus *orthopraxy* – *right practice*). The number of passages which support both views is part of the problem (c.f. *Col* 2:13-14 and *Acts* 26:19-20). It is the decision of one over the other which causes the problem. Luther shows the danger of the all-or-none approach. Believing that several of his doctrines were refuted by passages in James, he ventured that the Epistle must be a forgery. By this decision he was able to relegate it to an appendix in his German translation of the Bible. Eventually he came to accept its canonicity and re-included it. But its exclusion affected his theology. What we must learn is that it is only with the failure to take the whole of Tradition into account that these divisions develop – not just later in Luther, but throughout Church history.

It is ironic though that Paul, who so often called for unity, is the source of so much division in Christianity.

"We reject God's love and then we wonder 'where will I find love?'; we reject God's forgiveness and then we spend years looking in all the wrong places for expiation for our sins; we reject God's salvation and put hope in things which will kill us; we reject eternal life and then try to find joy in nothingness."

Anonymous

Plato

If you got past skipping Jesus, then it may still seem strange that we leap into earlier pagan philosophy instead of continuing from Judaism into Christianity. You might consider it as a parallel side path, where we can see (and therefore examine) Judaism and Christianity and Greek philosophy from either path.

Plato's (427-347 BC) philosophical language grounds much of what we think of as Western thought.⁹ If you have read the previous philosophy survey in this series then some of this, and next the few chapters, will be something of a repeat, but hopefully there will be some new nuances which come to light in the all theology version.

Most of Plato's thought is based in his mentor, Socrates (470-399 BC), who is used by Plato to argue and state his own case (sometimes for and sometimes against Socrates). Socrates wrote nothing down while Plato used Socrates as his protagonist in what are known as 'dialogues' but really were Socrates just asks questions which are designed to teach the point as much as explore it. In that sense, almost everything we know about Socrates and his thought is filtered through Plato, and for that reason we treat the two as one.

Plato's Stepchildren

As said, Plato who lived in Athens during the early heyday of Greek mainland culture, was Socrates' student. It is still a time of transition from the development of Athens as a cultural center for Greece to becoming the cultural center of an empire. Athens has triumphed and its form of democracy, though denounced by Socrates, has given a fertile field to the arts and the sciences.¹⁰ The influence of the philosophers of this age on Western thought cannot really be measured. In addition it also produces an impressive pedigree: Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) was the student of Plato's student Aristotle (384-322 BC) whom we will meet later. A fantastic perfect storm of history, but at this time this protégé was not yet at the height of his power, and the world still had yet to meet Greek culture on a large scale. For now, Socrates has challenged all of the thinkers of his time and found them wanting; Plato takes up the challenge and brings it to fruition; Aristotle changes the game and Alexander introduces it to the world.

The final offspring of Plato is the Academy, an institution he created for the study of mathematics, philosophy, the natural sciences, law and government, where Aristotle and many others studied for 900 years until it was closed by the Christian emperor Justinian in 529 AD.

Plato's God

At the time of Plato's though the Jews have not been Hellenized, meaning there has been no real exchange of cultures, so the question can be rightly asked (as did Tertullian) what does an ancient pagan philosopher have to tell us about the Judeo-Christian God? As discussed in the earlier work on religion and in our earlier chapters here, God, at least the one we know, did not suddenly pop into human consciousness with the appearance of the Jews. We are created with a sense of God. It stands to reason that all of humanity was created with that sense. We saw earlier that Justin Martyr came to Christianity through Plato so there must be something, right?

In this quest the first question one usually asks after reading Plato is "*what the heck is he talking about?*" The second one, basic to our theological journey, is more along the lines of "*how does he uses the word 'god'?*" Plato actually utilizes several terms for 'god', and he employs them very specifically, something often lost in translation. When he speaks of the traditional 'gods' (*hoi theoi*), or 'the god' (*ho theos*) he does so in a somewhat

⁹ "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." Alfred North Whitehead - *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (1929)

¹⁰ Philosophy being a science.

conversant way, as in, more down to earth and less up in heaven, using the word as a generic description of some idea. This probably reflects less a movement toward monotheism and more a personal disenchantment with the old Greek myths. Instead he replaces these with the idea of 'the divine' (*to theion*), that is, a sense of something which is beyond us yet at the same time is embedded within us, a sense of something which became known as the 'divine spark'.

So, when it comes to Judeo-Christian theology you have to be somewhat careful when you read Plato. What 'god' you are looking at, his or ours? Is it the concept of a single, monotheistic 'god' of Judeo-Christianity? Is it the Judeo-Christian Creator concept of "...God the maker of heaven and earth, of all that is visible and invisible"? Is it the concept of the '*Logos*', as in Jesus, that was in the beginning 'with God and was God', or simply Plato's sense of Reason and Order and the 'divine spark'? While we do not want to get caught in the trap of saying that Plato is talking about the Judeo-Christian God, we can, like Justin Martyr apply the language of Plato about the god to our understanding of God; we just cannot expect Plato to be talking about God as we understand Him.

The Divine Sense

In order to explore this sense of 'god' we need to examine (in brief) Plato's concept of cosmology. Plato has a sort of dual notion of reality: the world of '*becoming*' and the world of '*being*' (c.f. *Symposium*). The world of *Becoming* is the physical world we perceive through our senses. This world is always in motion, which is his way of saying that it is always changing. We are very familiar with this world, in that we spend the majority of our time there. The world of *Being* on the other hand, is the place of ideas, not sensation. It is absolute, independent, and transcendent. Unlike the world around us, it never changes and is the objective template of things we perceive here in the world of *Becoming*. Because he is more concerned with the 'effect of' than the 'reasons for', Plato was sometimes vague about the exact relationship between the two worlds. In a sense we humans are the boundary between the two layers. Through our reason we can understand that objects in the material world are imperfect copies or imitations of those in the ideal. Following from that, is the objects participating in the essence of the Form they are representing. This knowledge is key.

On a final side note, for Plato the world of Being precedes the world of Essence, meaning that *essence* precedes *existence* – that the definition, the Form, comes before an instantiation of that Form. That is to say, the Forms, the perfect ideals are already in place before something comes into being. There can be not physical table if no such Form already exists. Plato is seeking to describe reality in terms of ideals that are the real essence that is dimly reflected in physical existence.

All of that said, what is the meat of some of the concepts and language of the divine which Plato brings to the table that have theological bearing? While we can find many within his works, we will highlight a few here with a brief description.

The Forms: Despite being a very down to earth kind of fellow, especially as seen in his discussion of the old gods¹¹, Plato thinks the material world we see, hear, taste, and touch is NOT the real world. That is to say not that there is nothing real around us, but that for him the world of sense and sensation is a kind of shadow world, imperfect and only one in a state of *Becoming*, one that is a pale reflection of the other, *true* world. Plato calls this true world of *Being*, the *Forms*, things which are the 'actual form of' and foundation of the shadows of this world. Sense and sensation can deceive us which is why the things of this world cannot be trusted to be the actual things; they are created, they age, they break, they are flawed. The Forms are the perfect form of the imperfect things we see around us, like circles, or tables, or dogs. There is not a Form for every example of a dog, but every dog is a reflection of that Dog Form – we are able to recognize that something is a dog because Dog Form is inherent in each example of dog. That means that since the forms are beyond sense (how we perceive 'dog'), the world of the Forms can be apprehended only through reason or intelligence (I *know* that every dog is a Dog).

¹¹ And parties. (c.f. the *Symposium*)

Logos: This is the source of that reason and intelligence. The *Logos* is a Greek term we translate as “the Word” but for the Greeks it has several meanings. Plato uses it to signify not only the spoken word but also of the unspoken word, the words in our mind, reason. The verb *lego* means both ‘to speak’ and to ‘put together’; logos can mean the words spoken, ‘an accounting’, that is, an enumeration of a thing’s elements, or even the definition of how one thing is different than another. You can get the sense of versatility of the term in describing an epistemological system. Words are how we convey meaning. But it is more than that; it is how we use words and thoughts. Plato uses *logos* to make a distinction between his proposed newer kind of thinking about ‘the divine’ (*to theion*) and the traditional thinking put forth in *muthos* (what we transliterate into ‘myth’) which we have already discussed as signifying a ‘true’ story that makes clear the ‘truth’ about creation and humans. Plato broke to some extent from the philosophical tradition of the previous two centuries of Greek thought in that he uses both traditional myths *and* myths he invents to promote his philosophy. By doing so, he gives the impression of trying to bring *muthos* and *logos* together. He seems to be saying that both are necessary to understand the divine.

Demiurge: In a kind of definition of this notion of ‘divine’ Plato produces a *muthos* using the ‘demiurge’ (a Greek word initially meaning “artisan” or “master craftsman” and later “producer” and eventually “creator”) who is the source of order (which is another way of saying ‘reason’). It is the basis for why the divine spark is within us – not in a direct way, as with the sense of a Form but perhaps more like a ‘rational form’, an indirect result of the order it created. According to Plato once the demiurge came into being it wanted to make the world like in its image. That is to say, because he is good, he wants the world to be good like him. The Greeks, similar to most cultures around them, did not have a concept of creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), but of a sort of primary god who rises out of the muck of primordial soup and sets things in motion. The demiurge is that primary god, the force which changes “disorder into order” (*Timeaus*). In order to engender the good, it creates a world which is “a living creature with soul and reason” in “which all other living creatures are parts.” (ibid) That is to say that everything is created with order in mind, and that order is imparted to everything created.

The Demiurge creates because being good, the Demiurge wishes to expand that goodness to something outside of himself, desires order and perfection for everything. What source within the chaos can he use to do so? Why the objective, perfect Forms of course. So, using the Forms as a model, he shapes the initial chaos into the best possible image of these eternal and immutable archetypes. E voila! The result is the visible world around us. In order to accomplish this, it makes the world out of the four basic elements: earth, air, fire, and water, each, on their own, unformed and chaotic. By combining them, order is brought forth.

But alas the imperfections of creation also show us the Demiurge’s limitations as well. Even though he is the primary god and the primary cause of the visible world he is nonetheless part of the stuff that he molds. The goodness of the Demiurge is relative to the Good. He is the primal god who creates the world and the other gods who run the world but is not above the stuff of creation; the material he shapes isn’t created by him and, because it is disorderly and indeterminate, it partially resists his ordering. In the end the demiurge is lower than the Forms, even the Form of the Good of which he is the best representative.

Plato’s Man

Humans have a special place in creation. We possess a somewhat different nature than the rest of creation. While we, like the rest of creation is based in the Forms, we have the unique ability to discern the Forms, to rise above the shadows on the cave wall and move into the light of the Forms, to see both the world and the Forms for what they are. We have the ability to live in two worlds you might say, on the one hand part and parcel of the imperfect physical world of Becoming and yet intellectual, rational beings who can seek perfection guided by the Forms which takes us beyond this world of Becoming. This is because Humanity was created by the children of the Demiurge which has produced in us this ‘dual nature’. Just like the Demiurge is limited because he is from the primordial stuff, since we are not directly created by the Demiurge, we have the limitation of not

being gods ourselves. Nonetheless there exists within us something ‘divine’ and ‘immortal’ because of this heritage: our rational souls, which are *god-like*.

Humans are sandwiched between the realities: the ever-changing material, physical realm of sensation and the Forms, the eternal, unchanging realm of rationality. By this two-edged sword we have desires, what he calls ‘appetites’, born of both realms. This is how it works: because we have one foot in the material realm we desire material sensation and pleasures and because we have the other foot in the immortal, divine realm, we desire to understand the eternal and unchanging truths of the Forms. But therein also lays the problem. We may be a duality, body and soul, but we cannot separate our souls from our bodies. From our sensual foot we are subject to physical ‘appetites’: food, money, power, sex. We are subject to emotions, anger, envy, and the like that cloud our rational judgment and drag us away from the world of Being. Fortunately from our other foot, we have a hunger for the things not of this world: mathematics, the concepts of justice and goodness, and other such good things of the Demiurge. This is the soul, and our soul is the Logos within us (divine spark).

The Path Of Wisdom

This reflects a Judeo-Christian concept known as “Natural Law”. In a nutshell, within each of us lies an innate, hard-wired knowledge of how things should be, and a rational ability to discern it. This law differs from derived or ‘secular’ or ‘human law’ in that human law is imposed from the outside. Natural Law is often used as basis for secular law. To the Sophists a contemporary natural enemy of Socrates from which we get the term ‘sophomoric’, Natural Law meant “the right of the stronger” (*Republic*), that is the one who can impose his will (*usually* through rhetoric). Plato saw it more as an innate understanding of right and wrong.

Before we jump into the follow up to this idea, Grasshopper, let us take a short side path of understanding into one more aspect of Plato’s thinking. We first encounter the idea of Wisdom when Socrates is told by the Oracle that he is the wisest of men. In all humility¹² Socrates sets out to find out how that can be because he is so ignorant. What he discovers is that he is the wisest because he knows that he knows not.

But just what is Wisdom and why is it important to us? Through his *Allegory of the Cave* from the *Republic*, Plato tells us that wisdom is enlightenment, the tossing off of the chains of sensual perception and seeking rational knowledge of the Forms and understanding them as *the* reality. In his rendition of Socrates’ *Apology*, he tells that “...*the unexamined life is not living...*” and so we see the truth of his statement “...*when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know.*” (ibid)

But is that Wisdom? No not really. What Plato is talking about is the understanding that knowledge does not come from within us, we merely ‘re-collect it’. For Plato Wisdom is a Virtue, a thing or goal to be striven for. What that means is that knowledge i.e. the Good, is an objective thing as it comes from the Forms and is therefore within our semi-divine nature, is the goal of the Demiurge and by extension of ourselves. Wisdom is the result of the search for the knowledge of the Forms. This seeking of perfection is the goal of our actions and informs our actions.

The Journey Of A Soul

Our purpose then is to seek perfection and it is ignorance that is the definition of evil. The question becomes is perfection something we find and then we are done? Wisdom and knowledge of the Good are all well and good but to what end? And that is the question, right? What good is knowledge if there is no consequence for knowing or not knowing. Epicurus (341 BC – 270 BC) in a reaction to this kind of thinking later taught that there was no tomorrow, that the teachings of the gods and the afterlife were the true evil. Friendship was the ultimate truth and good, not some un-knowable intangible idea. Acting well now meant that you had good friends and

¹² At least with all the humility that Socrates can muster....

therefore all of the happiness you needed. But Plato, not so much. The soul was on a journey through not just this life but toward a larger goal. The soul seeks perfection and not just perfection as an end in itself but that the more perfect souls return to continue to teach and aid other souls to perfection.

What is perfection? Let us wander back for a moment. For Plato, when it came to questions of morality, the old *muthos*, the old gods, because of their chaotic and arbitrary ways were of no use; what could they teach us about morality? Their reality of conflicting, unbridled by reason passions created only chaos. Instead, the universe was guided not by capricious gods but by a god with a sense of purpose, the Demiurge, the source of both consciousness and morality in humans. The Demiurge used knowledge of the Forms to craft the world of living beings from the chaos of the primal soup. So basically, a knowing, rational god created the world based on perfect ideals, and that gives the world order and order is the means of establishing the good. Knowledge of the Good therefore gives knowledge of right action. Evil on the other hand, as said, is the absence of knowledge. This entire rehash becomes important because Plato espoused the idea that humans possessed immortal souls distinct from their bodies. This is known as the concept of *dualism*, a ‘duality’ of a spiritual and a physical aspect of human beings. This notion ties directly into the ideas of order and purpose.

For Plato, the immortal human soul possesses pre-existing knowledge, knowledge known to the Demiurge and passed to us in our nature, which it is our duty to re-collect¹³. Since we have a soul, something which sits in the spiritual outside and of the physical and its appetites and yet is still attached to the physical, we have goals in life, mainly to learn. We can see evidence of this objective *logos* knowledge in the very make-up of the universe. We see it in animals automatically adapting to their environments in order to flourish. Since the Demiurge echoed the perfect order of the Forms in the material world, that the proper goal for human beings is to seek perfect order and purity in their own souls. We do so to offset the imperfection of the material, shadow-of-the-Forms Becoming world by making rational desires control their irrational counterparts.

The soul is the vehicle for perfection. The body, material and imperfect must be held in check to allow the soul to flourish. It is drawn to the Good. The soul therefore moves toward perfection and has the ability to move toward perfection because of this inherent knowledge. The problem is in the irrational desires of the material body, the ones that can rule us before we recollect the rational knowledge within us. To not live an ‘examined life’ is to be governed instead by these irrational desires. To fail to do so is to miss the purpose for life, which is perfection and immortality or some vague drifting off into nothingness because you are of no use to the Demiurge. To do so is to imperil both the body and the soul. Wisdom alone helps the soul to remain immortal.

The immortality of the soul plays itself out in something called the “transmigration of souls” (*metempsychosis*), the movement of the soul from one living thing to another, the rebirth of the soul in a new body mainly for the purpose of leading other souls to perfection. The imperfect body on the other hand is not immortal, but if we live right now, our imperfect physical existence is only one passing phase in the life of our soul.

Platonic Themes

So for our purposes, you can see that we focus on things like Plato’s language and concepts of the body and soul; the mystical nature of Creation and of the Demiurge; his concept of good and evil, the purpose of the human soul and the nature of the *logos*. This is not to say that Plato did not say a bunch more about things like societal makeup and laws but he was kind of vague about some of the issues which later thinkers took on. For this reason we consider him an ‘ethical philosopher’ in that morality and right action are what concern him most, not essence or being. While he does address them it is only through the *muthos*, and for the purpose of understanding why we what to do the right thing. What the wise man does is virtue and what the virtuous man does is wisdom. Ignorant and unwise people are not virtuous because they cannot act virtuously. Still, they are

¹³ The basis for the Socratic Method®, which is the asking of a series of questions by the teacher until the pupil remembers what they already know.

not evil, because since they are ignorant they are not responsible. It is really impossible to do wrong voluntarily because once you 'know,' you would really only do good voluntarily. Any discussion of things like the soul is more for understanding morality.

At the same time some of his language is contrary to the Judeo-Christian Tradition. The idea of transmigration or reincarnation is foreign to the nature of the soul in Scripture. The same is true of the idea of Creation. God is one God and God creates all things, He is not the product of something else, and He does not create lesser gods to do His work for Him. The sense of God a subject to something else, the Forms for instance, is completely alien in that the mind of God would be the source of the Forms. Any discounting of the material world in favor of only a spiritual plane is to lessen both the meaning of Creation and God's power.

Putting It Together

We can see the appeal of Plato's thinking and language to the Hellenist Jews, early Christians, and early Christian Apologists and theologians like Augustine. We can also see some of the struggles that his thinking can instigate. Early gnostic groups latched on to ideas like reincarnation or other such 'mystical' aspects which crossed over from secular philosophy and mystery cults.

His greatest asset to theology was that Plato was more of a 'virtue-centered' thinker. The problem for Plato is not existence but *relations*. How do we interact? How do we know what is right and wrong? What is our purpose? How do we accomplish the Good? Virtue is right action and right action is right thinking and right thinking is Virtue. He is not concerned with the parsing of words or the nature of how we exist. We are, and we are wonderfully made, but at the same time we are flawed, clouded by emotions and desires. To the extent we wallow in the material world is the extent we are unhappy and that evil can exist. Because we turn a blind eye to the reality, we desire more to wear the chains of ignorance and apathy and be fed on shadow images. The struggle with the material world is a quandary for Plato; we are physical beings but it is only by controlling and rising above our material natures that we reach true fullness.

Plato seeks to explain the ineffable, immaterial side which we sense but can miss while being bound up in the cares and desires of the world. He seeks to wrench meaning away from outside, arbitrary agents and bring it more down to earth; we know what we should do, we just cannot remember it. This pulling of thinking out of the older mystical, *muthos* of myth and placing it within each person using a new *muthos/logos*, is itself imperfect. There still exists an objective reality beyond us of which we are but a shadow. This transition in Greek thought from *muthos* to *logos* is held tightly in Christian thought, with both being combined in Christ, who is mystical and physical.

WANDA: What would Plato do?

OTTO: Apologize.

A Fish Called Wanda (1988)

Aristotle

Next to Plato, Aristotle is considered one of the greatest thinkers in Western history. Without the revolution in thinking which Aristotle ushers in, we would not enjoy the level of thought or science which we take for granted today. In terms of theology, Aristotle brings clarity, logic, and specific definitions to the table, as well as a sense of the world which Plato down played.

Aristotle The Man

Considering the time in which he lived we know a quite a bit about Aristotle's life (384-322 BC)¹⁴. In the interest of space, the highlights¹⁵ are that his father was a physician to the king of Macedonia but he is orphaned early. Around 17 he winds up at Plato's *Academy*. Plato was impressed with the lad, so impressed that he called him "the mind of the school", which probably sounds much more poetic in Greek. He was eventually summoned to educate the young son of a certain Macedonian ruler named Phillip. This young man, Alexander (356-323 BC) by name, eventually became known as 'the Great' (which sounds pretty good even in English) and also went on to have some influence on the thinking patterns of a large number of people, at least the ones he left alive.

However, with the death of Alexander, Aristotle, like his protégé, fell out of favor and in due course died of natural causes in self-imposed exile about a year later.

Son Of Plato

While he was like the mind of the school to Plato, as with all children there comes a time when they must break out and make it on their own. So it was for Aristotle, who left the Academy and philosophically spread his wings to branch out and explore his differing take on things. One of the first things he rejects is Plato's dual nature idea of a flawed material world and the perfect world of the Forms on which it was based. It is not that there is no duality, it is merely that for Aristotle, the world was enough. The things around us were sufficient in themselves to exist and allow us to understand them. We no longer had to seek out immaterial "Forms" through our minds in order to know something; instead we can use our senses and our power of observation to do the same. It is not that our senses are flawed, just that we simply are not using them correctly.

Ergo this also affected the way he saw knowledge. Plato really had no use for what we might call the 'hard sciences'. Because what we came to know were the perfect things, to him knowledge only had one purpose: to help us to understand 'right action' and in fact the two were the same thing. For Aristotle, *observation* leads to knowledge. The world then is knowable and everything in it can be categorized and placed in a hierarchical structure. If, per Whitehead, all of Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato, all Western science is a footnote to Aristotle. He canonizes the analytical/deductive method, observing with the senses to understand and know something, creating the movement from *a posteriori*, *deductive* thinking to *a priori*, *inductive* thinking. He divided the 'sciences' (think of the word as meaning "understanding/knowledge" not necessarily how we use it today) into three categories: the *theoretical*, the *practical* and the *productive*. Science gives us information, but still, like Plato, that information has corresponding ultimate ends: *knowledge*, *right conduct*, and the *making of 'beautiful' objects*.

Yet Aristotle breaks ranks again with his mentor and separates out 'knowledge' and 'right (moral) actions', teaching that life is larger than just our moral actions. This means that along with the contemplation of more esoteric things the quantification and qualification of the world about us also requires a portion of our thought. There is still a segment of knowing that involves right action but knowing has other purposes as well. It *guides*

¹⁴ We even have his will.

¹⁵ "Let me 'splain. No, there is too much. Let me sum up." Inigo Montoya, *The Princess Bride*

and *informs*. That is to say, in the end, all three types of knowledge are bound together. We might be able to do ingenious things but just because we can do something does not mean we should if it is not ethical.¹⁶

Knowledge has a dual purpose; not just knowledge for knowledge's sake as Plato might say but knowledge for use. With his emphasis on definition, which the thing-in-itself can give, Aristotle sees the world as being able to explain itself and give us sufficient reasons for and against actions. Plato is concerned with knowledge which comes from *re-calling*, not so much the formation of the words or their particular meaning. For Plato, words have no real meaning as we define them only as the concept of the Form defines them; their truth or falsity relies on the Forms, not on any use of the language. Not so for Aristotle. Word meaning and definition is important, and so the final deviation we look at is the use of language. Words have to be understood. The words we use for communicating ideas must be understood. Word forms and their definition such as nouns, verbs and the like are what he is concerned with. Truth and falsity are derived here by combining words together, which like thoughts have neither validity nor non-validity in and of themselves, they just are. Only in context of an 'argument' (their 'predication'), do they acquire some truth or falsity.

Logic

Which brings us to Aristotle's rules of definition, what we call 'logic'¹⁷. Where Plato is concentrating on big-picture ideas as defining truth and showing ignorance as error, Aristotle saw that not being exact led to errors in his (and everyone else's) thinking, so he set out to formalize thought and thinking. To help in the defining the rules of the game, Aristotle introduces the word *categories*. The Greek word is probably best transliterated as 'predicate' as in *subject* and *predicate*. So, at their simplest, categories are those things which can be the predicate or subject in a statement or an argument or that one thing is predictable of or predicated on another, as in "this sentence is predicated in the idea that I know what I'm talking about."

As a diversion from that point, let us now look at the discipline in terms of the man. Aristotle never formally assigned a work to the science of Logic, nor did he actually ever use the word. It comes to us later, probably from Cicero. Aristotle's word would be more correctly translated 'analytics', hence the idea of "logic" being the persuasion by rational argument. He saw logic not so much as a science but a function of every human being and society. That is to say, it is an *instrument* of science and the necessary basis of science and therefore all rational human interaction. He took it for granted that it had to be understood and practiced in order to do any of the sciences.

Still we brazenly assign the moniker 'Aristotelian Logic' to it because he did wax at length on the subject because it was so fundamental to his system. He introduces the *syllogism*, meaning "conclusion" or "inference", as the basis for all reasoning. For Aristotle the reasoning for anything in the sciences was based in true-false statements in structured relationship to one another. The form of the syllogism, based on 'truths', is chiefly statements predicated about a subject, or more succinctly what are called *propositions*. Aristotle believed that the flaw in so many explanations was the lack of logic. The formal idea and imperative nature of logic meant that consistency is assured and that 'foundational truths' or *demonstration* can be established. As with the categories, this just means that you do not have to go back and re-prove everything in order to proceed in an argument. You also avoid confusing yourself and others by committing an identifiable logical fallacy (some sort of error against the rules introduced into an argument).

Without going deeply into it here, this is where his concepts about communication come into play. By reducing language down to these simple ideas, Aristotle makes it easier to create the categories, which help to limit and define the argument. Keeping the rules in mind helps us to know when we *actually know*. If you desire a more full discussion, then consult the first work in this series (or any other book on the subject for that matter). For us here and now just be assured that it is important.

¹⁶ What we must constantly keep in mind is that while he categorizes for understanding, he does not separate form or function.

¹⁷ Notice that it has the same root as *Logos*...discuss....

Metaphysics

Logic leads to definition; definition leads to objective knowledge. Objective truth which exists within and without and object is important. While there are no 'perfect forms' and 'imperfect material', Aristotle does not dismiss intangible knowledge while seeking to prove the truth of the material world. There are things which "all men desire to know" (*Metaphysics*) but even this fundamental function within humans requires of us much thought – if it were straightforwardly accessible then everyone would know it. Obviously the physical things around us are easily open to definition, but what about those things which are intangible yet still affect us. If Nature is the physical world around us, what is the nature of what is beyond Nature which, though intangible, we still perceive? What knowledge is best characterized as 'Wisdom', and how do we acquire it? While he takes a slightly different approach than Plato, the subject remains similar.

Aristotle has two works which describe his two aspects of reality: *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. *Physics* describes the things which are of the material world and *Metaphysics* discusses the things which are 'beyond' (*meta*) the physical world. Whereas Plato would segment the world, this partitioning into two subjects is not a case of there being one material world and another non-material world but is merely a distinction in order to allow for definition, which if you recall for Aristotle is the foundation of knowledge. It is important to keep in mind (because it has been often forgotten) that Aristotle did not pigeon-hole things into separate boxes where nary the twain shall meet; he merely separates the parts out to be examined and understood. They remain parts of a *whole*. Consequently things, whether physical or metaphysical, still impact and inform one another. Aristotle begins with a very physical, practical kind of philosophy and once he feels he has a handle on that, he tackles the speculative side of reality.

Substance And Accidents

All of this has bearing in the differentiation of what "being" means and that is our ultimate goal here. *Physical* things (nature) are the things that have *form* (*substance, matter*) but do not have within themselves *causes* (*action*), that is, they are acted upon externally not internally. In the study of physical things, the first level of knowledge/study is that of *matter* and *form*. For example, define "star". Stars have attributes which make them stars (their substance) like hydrogen and fusion as well as attributes which are particular to individual stars (their accidents) like color, or size. If you take away accidents it does not stop the thing from being the thing-in-itself; if you take away substance then it ceases to be that thing. A star that shines red is still a star; a star without fusion is a planet or to put it another way, a dog with three legs is still a dog; a dog that meows is a cat.

But that begs several questions. What about a child and an adult? When a child grows up is that adult still that child? Aristotle takes on the idea of change by talking about cause. Causality then, is the next aspect of physical things, and it has two primary aspects. First the idea of 'movement' (what we might call "change") itself and finally the *cause* of movement (what is the source of the change/movement). Knowledge comes from spending time studying what we would usually think of as the physical attributes of a thing but in order to fully understand it we must also understand the forces which work upon it. Let us go back again to the illustration of stars. Simply put, along with hydrogen and fusion, the motion of heavenly bodies is part of who they are. If we merely look at the substance and accidents of stars but do not look at planetary motion and the relationship of that to the star itself our knowledge is incomplete. Further, if we do not understand the causes of planetary motion we still do not understand stars and their significance. *N'est-il pas?*

Motion And Change

Do not worry, not only will there be limited French phrases, we have not left that question of the child/adult. As far back as we can reckon the Greek notion of *motion* is tied up with *being* in the age old idea of *something* or *nothing*. But if motion implies *something* and if motion stops, then the thing stops being *something*, right?

But that is not the behavior of life that we observe, is it? Accordingly, according to Aristotle, *motion* is basically the *same thing* as *change*, but not just presto-chango change, as one thing into another. He postulates four types of motion: *substantive* (of the thing as the name implies, particularly at a thing's beginning and its ending), *qualitative* (changing qualities), *quantitative* (increasing and decreasing it), and *locomotive* (changing its place). Add to that the notions of *potentiality* (non-actualized substance contained within a thing) and *actuality* (substance instantiated) thrown in to round out the idea. By doing so Aristotle more closely defines all motion and change with 'being' but goes one step more and trumps motion *with* being: any activity (potential, actual, or any other quality) can be thought of as something just being itself. So if you broaden out the meaning of motion, then just 'be-ing' can be thought of as being in an 'active' state. *Couch Potato Alert*: you are what you are (aside from just being a slug) even at rest, because rest itself does not stop you from being what you are. In that way being is greater than motion, and the something or nothing argument is no longer driven by whether something is observable merely as active.

All this makes sense when one asks a question or better, makes a statement like Bono does in *Mysterious Ways*, that we should "*see the boy inside the man*": is the man the same as the boy was or has the boy disappeared and stopped being and been replaced by the man? We can see that the *ideas* and *words* used are intricately linked. Change/Motion/Activity then is more than just a movement from here to there, i.e. of position (bat to ball) but also of state (child to adult, egg to chicken) or quality (brown hair to gray hair) or even quantity (chubby to skinny, short to tall). This idea of remaining the same even in change relies on the thing's *substance* category not any other category. The man lies potentially within the boy, gray hair lies within the brown, regardless of the present state of the person.

But what about 'unchanging' things like genes¹⁸ – technically, aside from things like cancer and such, they do not change. Static states rely upon and are the result of some activity of the thing as well. We must see the potential as well as the active within the thing. Substance then, that property/group of properties which makes something what it is, has within itself the ability to flux *as part of that substance*. Growing up is part of what makes us human, so to speak. He distinguishes these attributes of substance (not *accidents*) with the designators *primary* and *secondary*. Primary substance defines the thing and secondary substance(s), which might be static, rise from that. Think of it as: human is primary and male and female are secondary.

Soul Man

Being then, is an action – *potential* or *active*. Hence our words for life are active (e.g. *animated* from Greek for spirit). But could you argue though that someone sleeping is not truly alive? Do the things which define and explain a thing all have to be present *and* active in order for the thing to be the thing? This is where the singular view of Aristotle must be kept in mind. Nothing can be pigeon-holed, except that the pigeon-hole is part of a cote. Though we categorize, we categorize to separate for understanding, not for isolation.

That said, let us pull the last few sections together. We derive such terms as kinetic energy from the Greek word Aristotle uses to define '*cause within the thing*' – *kinêsis*. Cause within the thing is probably best re-worded as the ability within the thing to change. We even tend to think of it that way. For instance a yo-yo has potential or kinetic energy stored within it and we attribute its return up the string to that internal force not to some external force working upon it. Of course, we also use the other word he uses for 'actuality' – *energeia*. *Using some word-play we could use the term 'kinetic energy' to describe the whole of Aristotle's thought on the subject.*

Actuality is to potentiality, Aristotle tells us, as "*someone waking is to someone sleeping, as someone seeing is to a sighted person with his eyes closed, as that which has been shaped out of some matter is to the matter from which it has been shaped*". (*Metaphysics*) As with reading Plato we are driven to ask "what the heck does that mean?" Ultimately and for our purposes, it means that the thing remains itself regardless of the state in

¹⁸ Do not forget that no such idea was available to Aristotle, but it shows how his thinking prefigures understandings like 'genes'; if that is too great a jump then think about it in terms of fingers and toes.

which it finds itself. This is true of the ineffable as much as it is of the observed: what is true of the physical world must also be true of metaphysical things.

How is this different from Plato? Aristotle is not going to go outside of the thing in order to understand it. In terms of *substance*, what is true for one thing of a class must be true for all things in that class. For humans the physical and the metaphysical must be seen as part and parcel of the whole. Following from that, just as you can study the body you can study the soul. For Aristotle the study of the soul is *Psychology* (think *Psyche* not *brain*); therefore the end of Psychology is to study and reach an understanding “*first of [the soul’s] essential nature and secondly its properties*” (*De Anima*). As he presents it, the study of how and why we understand is the greatest of all the sciences. In this way he still reflects Plato: what is the end of knowledge except that we should live better?

As said, he tells us that while metaphysics is the *first science*, the study of the soul is the *primary* first science. This is because he sees the soul as the reason for the body. Substance and essence are closely identified with each other in Aristotle’s thought. In terms of primary and secondary substance, being, and the animating force which powers it, is still called substance but is more like *be-ing*. What this is really saying is that in the category of substance, regardless of the study (physics or metaphysics), *the thing is what the thing is (being qua being)*. The Soul defines the Body and asking if they are separate is as, Aristotle says, like asking “*whether the wax and the shape given it by the stamp are one...*” (*De Anima*) The soul then must be understood.

As the shaper of the body, the soul in a way transcends the body. Like Plato, Aristotle believes that the soul does survive the body, at least *parts of it* do. In the interest of time and space, let us just say that the soul has several parts, and those parts are cumulative. “*The soul in living creatures is distinguished by two functions, the judging capacity which is a function of the intellect and of sensation combined, and the capacity for exciting movement in space.*” (*ibid*) Suffice it to say, everything alive has a soul arranged in a hierarchy from lowest type of soul to highest. Plants, animals, humans – it is just humans though who have what is called a *rational* soul in addition to lower, “appetites”. The lower level appetites have no need to continue on after death.

As to how and where, well there is some discussion on that. This author falls into the camp that this is in relationship to the Prime Mover. The Prime Mover is something from which we are separate (not of the same substance else we would be that thing) and yet we participate within it via our soul, our mind, and wisdom.

Will, But Not Grace

This connection brings up the next tidbit of interest to us. When talking about the soul, a specific aspect is “the will.” This is not so much the will as we think of it, or perhaps the better way to look at it is as the basis of the way we think about it, as the motivator, the mover, the impetus for action. It is not just confined to the soul, but is anything which ‘moves’ the person. “*These two things then, appetite and mind, are clearly capable of causing movement...Both of these, then, mind and appetite are productive of movement in space. But the mind in question is that which makes its calculations with an end in view, that is, the practical mind: it differs from the speculative mind in the end that it pursues. And every appetite is directed towards an end; for the thing at which appetite aims is the starting point of the practical mind, and the last step of the practical mind is the beginning of the action. So these two, appetite and practical thought, seem reasonably considered as the producers of movement; for the object of appetite produces movement, and therefore thought produces movement, because the object of appetite is its beginning. Imagination [a kind of thinking for Aristotle] too, when it starts movement, never does so without appetite. That which moves, then, is a single faculty, that of appetite. If there were two movers, mind as well as appetite, they would produce movement in virtue of a common characteristic. But, as things are, mind is never seen to produce movement without appetite (for will is a form of appetite, and when movement accords with calculation, it accords also with choice), but appetite produces movement contrary to calculation; for desire is a form of appetite.*” (*De Anima*)

Okay, a long quote but it gives a sense of that ‘wholeness’ thinking of Aristotle’s as well as how ‘motion’ fits into this. The will is about actions. Appetite is desire which motivates us; the will is a motivator *but it has the*

elements of rationality and choice. Still, we must understand that the will, as an appetite, can motivate us various ways, not all of which are rational or optional. In his work *Ethics* (Book 3), Aristotle divided actions into three categories (which I ~~steal~~ paraphrase here):

- **Involuntary** or ‘un-willing’ acts, which are best understood more as actions in which the person is not accountable, something we would neither praise nor blame them for. There is no choice in such things, like getting blown about in the wind or blinking your eyes or even misunderstanding something. There is no choosing of the right or the wrong thing. This is not the same thing making a bad choice out of habit, i.e. ignorance in that sense. This is action without the will being involved. As he says: "*Acting on account of ignorance seems different from acting while being ignorant*".
- **Voluntary** or ‘willing’ acts which are ‘good’ acts based in rational choice. This kind speaks for itself, but bears an explanation – thinking back to our earlier discussion, like Plato, if one is rational, knowing, then one chooses the right thing. This is the true rational soul at work.
- **Non-voluntary** or ‘non-willing’ actions which are ‘bad’ acts done by choice, but can also include the idea of choosing the ‘lesser of two evils.’ It can be seen in the light of the idea that one would not go out of ones way to ‘choose’ bad things, so if one choses something ‘bad’ then one is not really ‘willing.’

Actions then are in a sense quantifiable, and that the same action taken at different times can be the result of or result in different things. We are the vehicle of the outcome of ‘voluntary’ actions which can in a sense be categorized, measured like everything else such that good and bad are understandable within a scale. Moral virtues (distinguished from intellectual virtue, a kind of wisdom acquired by teaching) are actions which fall down the center between extremes, not too much and not too little. Moral virtue has to do with feeling, choosing, and acting well, meaning that the ideas of virtue and vice are dependent not on external forces but are dependent on us. Vice is too much or too little of something. This does not include the involuntary actions and when we remove them from the equation, we can say with some confidence that no one goes out of their way to be unhappy, that is to say that our decisions are aimed at making us happy.

That does not mean that every decision makes us happy. Why do we do things which we know will not really bring us happiness, in its fullest sense: not just momentary pleasure but actions which will bring us long term happiness? Or, why do we believe that decisions which lead to detrimental short term actions are the means to happiness? This is where the all the ideas comes into play. Vice, like Virtue, involves actions which were decided upon *willingly*. Vice (which is not a judgment of happiness or unhappiness) is the development of habitual bad actions and intentional direction of the will to bad things. One is never deliberately aiming to be unhappy. Just the same, we cannot blame unhappiness on ‘just being human’.

Let us examine that. Ethics is the conscious, rational decision to live well. Like Plato he is somewhat confident that people naturally gravitate toward the good behavior because that understanding is an innate objective understanding present in every person. When one makes a bad decision one would naturally avoid that decision later on. He asserts that you would have to be unconscious (even being locked in a box would be insufficient) to not realize the effect that bad actions have in your life. This understanding leads to what he terms ‘self-mastery’ or the difference between what you decide to do, and what you actually do. It is a discipline of sorts, training toward ‘good’ habits rather than ‘bad’ ones. But it is not just an instinctive learned response. All of this takes within the rational soul, and at that level very few things are blamable upon ‘instinct’. Instinct is involuntary, part of the ‘animal soul’, but humans have the ability to be rational meaning that a decision is made *to not restrain oneself*, turning oneself over to one’s base appetites. This is not to say that self-mastery is a given or that every decision is acted upon or correct, but that when someone behaves in a purely animal-soul-like way, then for better or worse they have in a sense ‘chosen’ to relinquished rational control and are no longer acting upon any conscious choice.

Good To Be Here

So let us turn it around. Everything by its nature is aimed toward the good, so it must be that the good is that toward which everything is aimed. I wished I had said that and people would be quoting me instead of the first line of his *Ethics*. That aside, what this means is that “the good” is part of the definition of the thing. While keeping with Plato’s idea of the soul, this pulls away from his completely objective, re-learned notion of the good and places it more within the being of each thing, while at the same time keeping that sense of objective measurements of good. This also lends itself to placing the good into specific (hierarchical) instances where some goods are ‘subservient’ to other goods (this is strictly a non-relativistic notion which pits goods against goods, not goods against appetites).

If everything is focused toward the good (and that good is not necessarily completely outside of the individual thing), as are our non-relativistic rational decisions, then it begs the question, “*what is the Good toward which all is oriented?*” Virtue, as Plato saw it, involved the whole of the person, thought and action, working toward the Good. Aristotle, never content to let the discussion of whole things be whole, dissects virtue back into those two parts: the *intellectual* (thoughts) and the *moral* (actions).

Ethics for Aristotle, is tied to his understanding of human nature/substance (our being). Everyone, by that very nature, is intent upon the good (which we might call happiness, but only carefully), and that which is good is good in and of itself. The soul, and specifically the human (rational) soul, has one end. To that end, the activity of the rational soul guided by virtue is (hierarchically) the *supreme* good (“happiness”).

How do we know when we have reached that goal? That is to say, how and when do we gauge happiness? Remember that for Aristotle, as for Plato, some part of the soul survives death. So we can examine happiness or goodness of both the living and the dead but when talking about happiness, we have to consider a person's life as a whole, not just the highlights reel. Does this mean that a person can then only be considered to have been happy after they have died, that is, once we can examine the person's life as a whole? We know from Plato that a good person will always live virtuously manner. Aristotle feels the same way, but carries it even further: even when faced with great misfortune, a good person will bear themselves well and will not descend into bad choices, especially in relation to others. At these times what we might call the “human spirit” displays itself and we call it virtuous. Therefore the term happiness must be able to be applied to a person during life. But what about *after* death?

Yes we can say that someone is happy after death, but it probably will be based on your life, that is to say it is not based in any *new* happiness but the happiness you had from how you lived because once you are dead the accolades or ridicules placed upon you (or the actions of your children who are a reflection of you) can only have minimum effect on your ‘present’ post-death happiness.

All that is just further proof of the case for happiness. So the argument goes something like this: we know that Plato saw knowledge as virtue, and knowing oneself as probably the greatest of virtues. Aristotle, as we have seen, likes to remove the idea of the Forms of Plato by tying them to the reality of everyday life, thereby placing virtue all around us. We know that all things have an end, both the idea of a goal and a final ceasing to be. Happiness comes from living virtuously because that is the goal of the human soul. We accomplish that by defining those virtuous actions and aiming for it. Logically then, virtues are really the middle ground between positive and negative traits. If we use Aristotelian logic and set up a contraries square of opposition, we always find that what lies in the crossroads is a virtue. Let us take for example, *Courage*. Courage is a virtue placed between *Rashness* and *Cowardice*. Rashness can be defined as too much confidence and not enough fear; Cowardice as too much fear and not enough confidence. Where the contraries cross, there you have Courage. It is the right balance of fear and confidence.

Ethics, the teachings about living virtuously and finding happiness, simplistically stated consists of grasping the middle ground in a situation. This does not mean the path of least resistance or even compromise. Middle

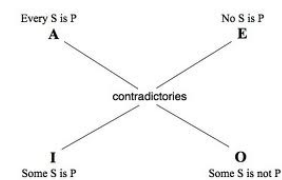


Figure 1: A contraries square of opposition

ground does not mean giving up but seeking the equilibrium, finding the truth, the balance: the virtue. Think about it this way: we only recognize and call certain actions courage. We do so because we know those actions to be courageous; other actions we recognize as not courageous or almost courageous but not *as courageous* (by their substance...right?).

The Wider World

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) takes the ideas instilled in him by his teacher and introduces them to the world. At the same time the world introduces itself to Alexander. There begins a period of cultural exchange which outlives the short-lived Alexander and through his generals begins the period of 'Hellenization' we have discussed already. Greek thought enters the Near East. The immensity of this period on the thinking of the Western World is not within the scope of this work, so suffice it to say that it was...big – mainly within the two foundations of religious thought in the West: Judaism and Christianity, and within the secular foundations of the coming Roman Empire.

Putting It Together

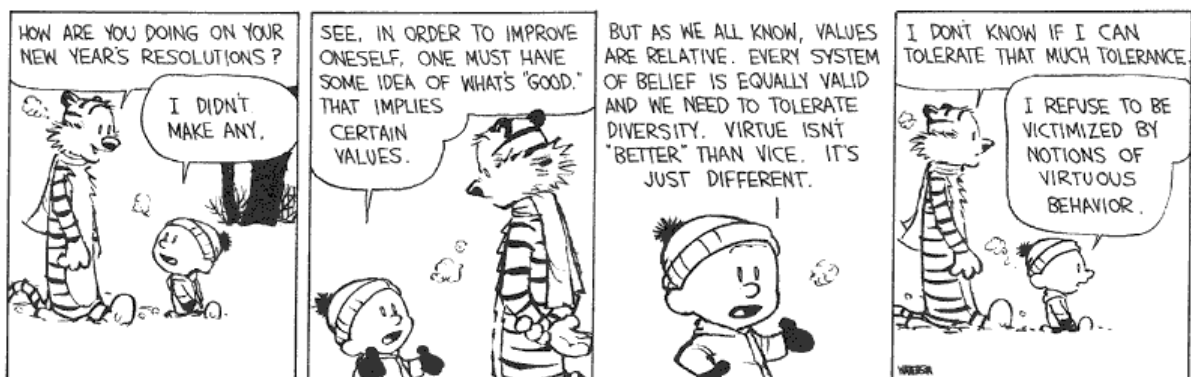
With Aristotle we gain that final major piece of philosophical linguistic foundations of Western (including Islamic) theology. Not that there are no innovative thinkers to come, merely that the language is consistently based in both Plato and Aristotle. Thinking about the nature of Nature as Aristotle did, not as a deficient material world and a better someplace else, but within Nature, the thing-in-itself, will not have the initial influence that Platonism has. There is perhaps a need early on for more esoteric definitions and discussions, and Plato's thought lends itself to a more living oriented thought, more in line with the early Church's discussion of 'The Way'. At the same time that is not to say that while Aristotle discusses physical things that he is not being completely speculative about them. The understanding of Metaphysics is developed by Aristotle, and while it has twisted and turned (and been thrown out) over the years, it is the one which informs Christian theology.

We can also hear the echoes of Creation as good, the nature of the judgment of the soul, and other Jewish understandings about life and sin. What we can say in retrospect is that Plato tends to give us a sense of God and Aristotle a sense of humanity's relationship to God and to one another.

We can see this 'perfected' in Thomas Aquinas.

"Bernard of Chartres used to say that we are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant than they did, not because we have keener vision or greater height than they, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft by their great stature."

John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, III



Stoicism and Other Influences

Plato's and Aristotle's thinking on notions of law, of morality, of the 'greater good', of asceticism, even some aspects of God gave a language and a basis for discussing the larger human situation. While most of their 'scientific' thinking has subsequently been dismissed, it has been hard to shake their 'scientific' moral discussions, or the thinking that within each of us lays a certain amount of knowledge and the ability to discern it somehow which we can then use to act correctly or at least discover how to act correctly and the responsibility to do so. Their influence was great and not just confined to two separate schools. As with any good idea people try to integrate the best ideas from disparate sources to try to come up with a cohesive whole; sometimes they succeed, most times not.

The Rome into which Christianity begins its adolescence is governed by Marcus Aurelius (121-180, a Stoic and philosopher king and a bit of a Christian basher himself, except he used real clubs). Marcus declared that there were four chairs of philosophy: Platonic, Aristotelian, Epicurean, and Stoic and he encouraged the teaching of each. So if we wish to discuss the milieu into which Christianity comes of age, we have to consider at least these four schools. Having explored the first two, we now move into the broader world.

Enter Zeno of Citium (336-264 BC). Kind of an eccentric, he espoused a fusion of Plato and Aristotle which became known as Stoicism. While the school of thought is based on the philosophical musings of one man on the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, it really has a life of its own. Technically I said that with Plato and Aristotle are set the philosophical foundations of Western theology, and that is still true; Stoicism brings yet another aspect to the table – a language of spirituality as well.

Stoicism

Stoicism is essentially a system of ethics (like Plato) which is guided by logic (Aristotelian inspired) and has physics (observable phenomena like Aristotle) as its foundation with the thinking of Zeno thrown in. The name comes from the '*stoa*' (Greek for "column") of the Agora (marketplace) in Athens from around which they spouted their philosophy. This Agora lies just below the hill of the Areopagus below the Parthenon where Paul preached the message of the Gospel to the crowd a few hundred years later.

The main teaching is that life should be lived in accordance with Nature and controlled by Virtue. The way to reach that was considered stern even by standards of that day; it is an ascetic system, teaching self-denial, restraint, and renunciation of worldly pleasures which releases the soul from bondage to the material appetites of the body. Once one has cleansed oneself of this bondage it permits its union with the divine. Today our world has a dour view of this thinking as self-denial for pointless purposes. Not so for the Greeks; we must remember that Virtue was a prize, the *greatest good*. To accomplish this prized goal they urged a *perfect indifference* (Gk. *apathea*: "apathy") to everything external, for external things are not considered to be either good or evil. Hence to the Stoics both pain and pleasure, poverty and riches, sickness and health, were equally unimportant.

The Logic Of Action

This 'apathy' is not about not caring or even having no emotions at all, but about keeping our emotions in check, balanced by the rational mind such that nothing distracts one from Virtue. It is probably better thought of as 'indifference' but in an even-keeled sort of mindset – good or bad it does not really matter. In a deviation from earlier thinkers, knowledge is not *the* Virtue. Instead, simply put, Virtue is 'the Will in tune with Nature'. One seeks to eliminate the destructive aspects (*appetites*) of one's life not so much by mere physical asceticism per se but asceticism as more of a discipline of will. Stoicism is a system based in rationality *and* action. In the *Faith vs. Works* discussion we can consider them part of the *Works* camp.

Logic then, as the method for rational discovery, is a major component of this system, but not necessarily as Aristotle would have recognized it. As we have mentioned, for Aristotle it was based in predicates, the combining of words (no combination of which has conclusive truth or falseness contained within it – though it can be considered a ‘truth’ from a previous argument) into statements which are evaluated in a syllogism. Stoic Logic on the other hand, is based in statements and connects propositions together via logical operators to produce ideas and reflects the Stoic propensity to action. *The Earth is round; Paris is the capital of France.* Those are *statements* or *propositions*. For Stoics, to spend time on the individual terms, as does Aristotle, is to waste time on *incomplete ideas*. That is to say, “the Earth is round” and that “the Earth rotates” (definitions for Aristotle) tell us about things which in and of themselves we do not have to worry about defining. It is the *connecting* of things which is important. So, to say “*The Earth is round AND the Earth rotates*” means “*Therefore the Earth is a round thing which rotates*”. Logical statements depend upon their connections. We can see it in this quote from Zeno: “*No evil is honorable: but death is honorable; therefore death is not evil.*” (As quoted in *Epistles*, by Seneca)

Stoic logic then, is the means of putting things in *relationship* to one another. This logic is essentially about how the statements (*propositions*) connect together. The logical ways of combining or altering statements or propositions to form more complicated statements or propositions is the main focus of this type of logic. For that reason Stoic or *propositional* logic can be thought of as (primarily) the study of *logical operators*, i.e. any word or phrase used either to modify one statement to make a different statement, or join multiple statements together to form a more complicated statement. For example “and”, “or”, “not”, “if-then”, “because”, and “necessarily”, are all *operators*.

Reasoning About Reality

Aristotle’s physics was a system for discussing reality. Stoics have a sense of physics which is similar but with a few twists. Similar to their logic of action, the universe is a tangible place of relationships, characterized by cause and effect; everything is material (solid), even things like God, the soul, and justice, i.e. they are ‘real’. Essentially this means that everything is ‘real’, there is no speculative, unknowable, ungraspable Form thing and everything is connected by cause and effect, not by essence and existence. This differs from Plato in the first and Aristotle in the second. For our needs we will point out that causes fall into two categories: *antecedent* causes and *principle* causes. Think of it like a bowling ball. Your flinging of the ball down the lane is the antecedent and the roundness of the ball (which allows it to continue rolling) is the principle. If you flung a square box down the lane you would not have a principle which would allow it to continue down the lane; you would observe a different effect where it slides for a moment and then stops, usually without reaching the pins. Again, this makes sense in terms of their logic.

So the relationship between the antecedent and the principle is very important, and they must go together for a specific effect to happen. But is this just a random connection of things, which we are lucky enough to have had work out in our favor? Is there something which connects everything together for proper effects? For the Stoic, the cause and effect universe has a sort of central core, a ‘prime mover’, a universal or ‘divine’ reason, which can be called ‘God’ (or ‘Zeus’ or whatever you feel so inclined to call it). For Aristotle this force is outside of Nature, it is ‘pure mind’ and as such has no *physical* substance. Stoics, by making ‘God’ physical, place ‘God’ *within* the world. Nature is God, or at least the bit of what we can understand of God. Something (everything) participates in God because it is part of the universe (i.e. Nature) and vice versa. This nature is therefore ruled by reason (*Logos*). This means that it has laws and the world adheres to these laws. Physics for the Stoics is the study of the workings of Divine Reason, which is the relation of causes to effects (again, just as logic is the study of relations).

Pretty Is As Pretty Does

So, for the Stoic, our actions and the effects of our actions are related, meaning that physics and ethics are also tied together: “*God is not separate from the world; He is the soul of the world, and each of us contains a part of the Divine Fire. All things are parts of one single system, which is called Nature; the individual life is good when it is in harmony with Nature...Virtue consists in a will which is in agreement with Nature.*” (Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, Speaking about Stoicism) The human will disciplined and in tune with Nature is Virtue. Still, what does that have to do with how we act toward one another?

If God is Nature (in a somewhat pan-theistic way), then when we follow Universal/Divine Reason (the *Logos*, what we can call the Natural Law which is also within us), we are in tune with God’s Will. We have virtue. “*Happiness is a good flow of life,*” said Zeno¹⁹, and this can only be achieved through the use of right Reason coinciding with the *Logos* which governs everything. A bad feeling “*is a disturbance of the mind repugnant to Reason, and against Nature.*”²⁰ This rational conscience, this soul, this convergence of ‘God’ and the mind out of which morally good actions spring is Virtue; true good can only consist in Virtue. We seek to do the good for one another, because that is the Natural Law, the divine Will, the structure of the universe or however you want to portray it.

Similar to Plato and Socrates’ idea of evil rising from ignorance, Stoics taught that evil rose from the *rejection* of right Reason. Differently, it is all black and white for the Stoics. Actions are either good or bad, they cannot be both nor can they even be a little of one and a lot of the other. All errors must be rooted out, not merely set aside, and replaced with right Reason. The suppression/eradication of the negative emotions which cause suffering and sorrow (*desire, fear, pleasure and pain*) produces moral actions and immoral actions are those not guided by right Reason. Period.

As a foundational aside, the idea of ‘freewill’ fluctuates within Stoic thought but basically boils down to (because it is the one I want to emphasize): following the Will or choosing to not follow the Will. There is a certain deterministic view present in the Stoic discussion, based in their black and white view of things, as shown in the example of a dog tied to a cart. If the dog chooses to go with the cart when it moves, *va bene*. Or he can choose to not go with the cart, but in the end will be drug along anyway.

True freedom is freedom from emotional control and attachment. As said earlier, indifference is not apathy as we think of it but a refusal to be mastered by the thing, an indifference to it. Functionally, they are not nihilists because when you think about it, if one did not care at all then what is the point of living? *How* one cares and acts is the rub. One does not want to help someone out of pity (an emotion) but out of the rational understanding of the good. For Stoics, freedom is merely the choice between right Reason and well, frankly, stupidity. Happiness will only come from (rational) moral actions. This would also imply a certain amount of social interaction and Stoics as a whole are encouraged to participate and even lead, in the Platonic philosopher king vein.

Eat Drink And Be Merry

If we can get a sense of how Stoicism can be appealing to Christian theologians, then we can see how perhaps Epicureanism does not fit into the Christian milieu and would therefore not be much of an influence, except in a *via negativa* perhaps. But at the same time they say that one is judged by one’s enemies. Opposite of the Stoics, Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) believed ethics should be guided by feelings as Physics is guided by our senses. He was a real go with the flow kind of guy, ranting against both the gods and any sense of an afterlife mainly because there is no *rational* proof. Where Stoics would teach the control of emotion in order to find happiness Epicurus sees happiness in letting go and not being bound by external forces, like gods or the afterlife because they cause only anxiety.

¹⁹ As quoted by John of Stobi – 5th century AD

²⁰ As quoted by Cicero, *Tusculanae Quaestiones* – 1st century BC

Epicurus' Physics has only use within the scope of action (*praxis*). He feels that the only use for 'natural science' (the study of 'natures') is the healing of people's ills. All speculation of other life forms and rocks (Aristotle) only has use if it can be applied to human suffering. Knowledge, as for Plato, has no value in and of itself whereas for Aristotle all knowledge has value in and of itself. So take a moment and think again about Plato and Aristotle and set their understanding of knowledge and its purpose (*telos*). Knowledge leads to virtue and that is its main goal. Not so fast Epicurus says. What good are the platitudes of philosophers to heal the ills of the world? Knowledge must have a pragmatic purpose.

Interestingly, he attributes most sickness and suffering to superstitious beliefs which rise from external forces and the incessant worry it causes. One tries to be what one is not or else seeks constant escape from the reality of who one is to the final detriment caused by the hatred of the self which one is trying to escape. He does point out a problem which can easily arise in Christianity: *scrupulosity* – the obsession with sin and one's sinfulness. If Jesus "*came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly*" (Jn 10:10) then to dwell in fear and anxiety is not very abundant. That caveat and selfish hedonism which had developed under the guise of Epicureanism floated like a lead balloon with Christian theologians.

I Don't Know So

So one could say the Christians would be skeptical of the Epicureans, but that would be inaccurate. Skepticism does not have to do with sussing out negative gut feelings associated with the statements of another, but in the fullest sense of doubt. The word comes to us from a group active in Greece and mildly popular later in Rome. The Skeptics, like Stoicism, were based in the thought of one man, Carneades (214-129 BC), but broadened into a whole school of thought. Carneades, who headed Plato's *Academy*, had a problem with both the Epicureans and the Stoics in that they focused on sensory experience as the basis for knowledge. He felt that was fraught with an inability to have exactitude. Our senses and emotions can mislead us. Instead, one should hold off on any judgment on *anything*, as a nod to the fact that we can truly know nothing. For Skeptics, one must have rational doubt, but not as we would define rational doubt today. One does not just mistrust the senses, one mistrusts the intellect as well. All of our experience, both rational and sensual, tells us of the weakness of both to tell us anything about what is real or true.

The secret then is to *suspend judgment*, not to a paralysis of inactivity, but relying instead on *probability*, that one can come to reasonably accurate ideas by which one can then operate. The secret then is to doubt *certainty*, not reasonableness. By holding off on final judgment, one can see if any better information comes along which can aid in a better understanding. In terms of the Christian theology of the early Church, Skepticism would have no place as there could be no doubt, or approximation of the truth. Paul speaks in terms of certitude and that our assurances rest not in vague hope but in the certainty of the truth. However, Skepticism will continue to develop and have an influence in later medieval theology.

The Language Of Love

I mentioned at the beginning but did not really follow up on the idea of spiritual language. Asceticism is a big word and while broached by Plato and Aristotle, it is very central to the Stoic mindset – without discipline and self-denial there is no happiness. It does not lie in merely knowing, or merely acting out one's nature but through conscious, rational actions based in rational choices about the relationship between things.

Asceticism and Christianity, aside from obviously odd association with the thought of one of its persecutors, make less than strange bed fellows. One can see how the idea of freedom and happiness not lying within fleeting, subjectivist things or some sort of ill-formed will but in an external, rational realm, one of disciplined selfless service could have a certain appeal to the early Christian thinkers. This language echoes the spiritual life of the Christian; a certain indifference to personal pain but at the same time happiness in calm, rational hope, a joy coming from Paul's statement that he decrease as Christ increases. The mystics of later times will call upon

this; the saints will sing its praises. At the same time, it can lead one to excesses of privation or discipline bordering on self-abuse, and by extension abuse of others. There is a fine line in spirituality between what gives dignity and what diminishes it. Still, we must embrace all that we are and the language of these philosophers gives us a wide range of human emotion and thought to draw upon.

Plato took an idealist view of the world, where the perfect was in the ideal; Aristotle a rational one where perfection was found within the thing. Epicurus' epistemological view embraced feeling and emotion as the foundation of knowledge (we 'know' what we 'sense') and the Stoics took the opposite view: emotion was the flaw which produced all suffering. Christian spirituality, at its best, embraces the whole of the person. Destructive emotions, such as anger or jealousy keep us from happiness and therefore have to be kept in check. Logic and reason rule the day, but we have incense and bells to stimulate the senses. Self-control and fortitude are the means of overcoming these destructive emotions. We take joy in our control of the appetites, molding the will to God's will. The purpose of Christian spirituality is similar to that of the Stoic: is not a denial of emotions or the physical world but is a system based in rationality and action.

Putting It Together

The Stoics reinforce the idea of stability and objectivity over relativism and subjectivity. Like Plato and unlike Aristotle, they arrive there by a lot of conclusion and minimum of argumentation. The level at which Aristotle addresses the world is not necessary, but his thinking about how to think about things is. Without addressing the rational, one cannot overcome the emotions. From Plato they teach that happiness does not come from random emotional feelings but through rational judgment and the denial of random emotional feelings. From Aristotle they conclude that everything is real, and that reality is infused with meaning.

The conclusion that everything is in relationship is a powerful teaching, and the fact that all relationships go back to a central core relationship provides a powerful image of the God and Creation. The idea that we are rational beings guided by an objective design and capable of overcoming base appetites and bettering ourselves reflects the nature given us at Creation.

Again, we are looking more at the influence of the language of these thinkers as much as the influential thought. That is to say, the language is often the adapted portion, more so than the thought. Plato's transmigration of the soul will never make it into orthodox Christian thought, but his language of the soul will.

"Physical reality is consistent with universal laws. Where the laws do not operate, there is no reality -- we judge reality by the responses of our senses. Once we are convinced of the reality of a given situation, we abide by its rules."

Spock, Specter of the Gun

Philosophy Or Theology?

The last chapter hints at some of the language we use to discuss ideas, and so this chapter begins to explore the sources and controversy of that language. The chapter title seems to intimate that it is one or the other, but what is the difference? Is philosophy truly the ‘handmaiden of theology’ or is as other see it, the Devil’s hand in the corruption of the Truth? This is a constant and unresolved struggle. At times, philosophy lends a language to theology which allows it to soar and at others the means of ripping it apart. So, at the risk of beating a dead horse let us take another moment and put things into context.

Philosophy

When most people think of ‘philosophy’ they often confuse it with *ideology*, which is not “the love of wisdom” but the subjective framework for opinion. Philosophy is actually the systematic study of what the Greeks call ‘wisdom’, a word which has various interpretations, but for those said Greeks basically²¹ means the knowledge of right and wrong behavior that is based in the discovery of the truths upon which the universe is constructed. It is a language and a system of knowledge which allows for the cogent discussion of the world, both physically and speculatively. To put it another way, “*Philosophy is the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience – everything of which we are aware, which we enjoy, perceive, will, or think – can be interpreted.*” (Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*)

Philosophy is rooted deeply within the desire to *know*, to be *certain*. As Whitehead points out it touches everything we are, or at least what we think we are, and the desire to make sense out of the senseless, to give us order from chaos. We understand that knowledge is action, that is, within knowledge lies our ability to act, to love, to hurt, to excel. The earliest philosophers wanted to show that human experience and human reason could make sense of the world around us, show that the world had patterns and could in some things be predictable aside from arbitrary gods – and with that, ourselves as well.

It is based in logic (for the most part) which is the rules by which any discussion or debate must take place. For this reason it held for millennia the prominent place in the way we talk about the world around us, replaced in the last 100-150 years or so by the language of the physical, and most recently the theoretical sciences. In a way, it similarly replaced the mytho-religious language that previously was used to understand the world around us, yet at the same time it is based in that same language and explores many of the same questions. Philosophy assumes that the ‘truths’ discovered through logical exploration can in fact be used as universals in order to further the discussion and deepen understanding.

But philosophy, like theology, has a weakness: it is based within human reason and experience. While it relies on objective rules, it examines what can only be known by the human mind, either through reason or experience and runs the risk of being taken for ‘fact’ rather than ‘truth’. At its root level, it is indistinguishable from what today we call ‘science’ (remember that the Greeks considered science a subset of philosophy) where basic fact/truths are determined. Scientifically we might say that the Earth circles the Sun, yet we still think ‘factually’ about sunrise and sunset and the notion of time that image evokes. Scientific experimentation, the ‘scientific method’ as it is called, has helped us to know many of the wonders of Creation, yet it has also produced just as many false leads and dead-ends. In the effort to determine our internal ability to wrest a chaotic life from the gods, we over-achieve, believing that all patterns have no meaning aside from that which we give.

Theology

²¹ Very basic; for a more in-depth basic see our first work *15 Minute Philosophy*.

Theology on the other hand frames everything within Revelation. In theology we rely not only on human reason and experience but on what God has told us, that is to say we approach, like Aristotle, with “wonder and awe” and like Anselm “seeking understanding”. We defer our own ability to reason and understand to God’s wisdom. *“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor? Or who has given him anything that he may be repaid?’ For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”* (Rom 11:33-36)

Theology, contrary to its detractors, does not deny human reason but puts it in its proper place in relationship to the mysteries of God. Philosophy seeks to create a system in which answers and understanding can develop but these systems eventually fall to Gödel’s (1906-1978) *Principle of Incompleteness*: every system eventually produces questions which are unanswerable by that system. What that means is that, as a human, you eventually find propositions which you cannot prove or disprove using the system you develop. You can envision this in terms of math or physics; math needs geometry, algebra, calculus; quantum physics answers questions that physics cannot. The implication is that *all* logical (and therefore human in origin) systems of any complexity have, by definition, a level of *incompleteness*; that is, each of them contains more ‘truths’ than can possibly be proved by the methods and rules of *that* system. In other words, in and of themselves, they will always be incomplete systems for demonstrating truth.

Truth in human systems is derived through logic. In theology, the Truth exists as Revelation, and there exists no need to ‘determine’ a truth. Consequently what we really seek is an *understanding* of Truth that is *derived through* logic.

Additionally, in general there is no founding principle for philosophy; this is only the claim of theology. Philosophy recognizes simply that there is a need to draw a line, a point beyond which, *ad infinitum*, we are merely spinning our intellectual wheels; we make an agreement that logically we have reached an idea/truth which everyone can subscribe to and which is pretty basic and, from which, argumentation can proceed.²² But this is not universal for every system. Theology on the other hand, starts from the point of God. It seeks not to bring order out of chaos, or sense out of senselessness, for there is no need for that; Creation tells us that God has already done all of that for us. Theology then seeks to make sense of *that which already is established*. Philosophy seeks to impose meaning *on* the world around us whereas theology seeks to glean meaning *from* the world around us.

Putting Them Together

So it seems that at times the two are at cross purpose. Ah, and with these two it has never really been an easy relationship; you know the problems, evident in any romantic comedy...everyone in her family loves him but some in his family are suspicious of her...but they love each other in a quirky on-again-off-again manner...so it is with Theology and Philosophy. There are many who reject one or the other out-right, refusing to admit that they even know the other, much less owe the other any sort of debt. Most fully embrace the other, relying on the strengths and shoring up the weaknesses of the other. The problem is that, as in any romantic comedy, one just cannot seem to get along without the other.

So let us take a moment and look at two approaches to theology using two very early Church Fathers from the 2nd century.

❖ Justin Martyr

²² Leibniz, a 17th century philosopher distinguishes several principles, two of which are: **Identity of Indiscernibles** which is the paring down of something until it is undistinguishable from another thing, meaning that the things themselves are for all practical purposes the same and **Sufficient Reason**, which is the accepting of a premise because at this point no reasonable argument can be made *against* it.



Justin Martyr was born at the beginning of the second century (~100-~165) in Nablus (in what is now the West Bank), of a pagan Greek family. In his early life he explored many systems of philosophy before arriving, through Plato, at Christianity. He eventually moved to Rome and opened a school for Christian apologetics and theology *as well as* secular philosophy. As a teacher, Justin was keen on showing to both his students and especially the Roman authorities how Christianity was nothing new²³ but brought completeness to the already existing accepted pagan philosophies (similarly to his feelings in relation to Judaism,).

Starting as a secular philosopher, he recounts a chance meeting with a Christian who spoke to him. It was then that *"...a flame was immediately kindled in my mind, and I was seized with an ardent love of the Prophets, and of those men who are the friends of Christ; and reflecting with myself on what I had heard, I saw that theirs was the only sure and valuable philosophy: thus it was that I became a Philosopher, and I could wish that all men were of the same mind as myself, not to turn from the doctrines of the Savior; for they inspire a certain dread, and possess a power to overawe those who are turned from the right way; but they become the most pleasant resting place to such as fully practice them."* (*Dialogue With Trypho*, 8) So Christianity as the philosophy supplants all other philosophies in his mind, but even with its flaws he does not completely abandon secular philosophy, nor the rational path which led him to Christianity; indeed, for him, philosophy and theology are one in the same. *"Philosophy is indeed one's greatest possession, and is most precious in the sight of God, to whom it alone leads us and to whom it unites us, and they in truth are holy men who have applied themselves to philosophy. But, many have failed to discover the nature of philosophy, and the reason why it was sent down to men; otherwise, there would not be Platonists, or Stoics, or Peripatetics, or Theoretics, or Pythagoreans, since this science of philosophy is always one and the same."* (*Dialogue With Trypho*, 2) We can see from this quote that at the time there is no sense of 'theology' as being different from basic human rational exploration (philosophy). Metaphysics is metaphysics in his book. It is just that there is a right and a bunch of wrong philosophies.

During his lifetime, Christianity is experiencing some serious persecution. He was an open champion of Christianity to the Roman population at large, and was especially ardent about stopping the persecutions and defending the Faith. He wrote extensively (much of which we still have), unabashedly challenging the Roman leaders to be 'wise' (in the philosophical sense) and see the value of Christianity by appealing to the general philosophical language and logic understood by the general population. *"Reason directs that all who are really pious and truly philosophers should love that alone which is true, and refuse to follow the opinions of the ancients should they prove to be worthless; for sound reason requires that we should not only reject those who act, or teach anything contrary to that which is right; but that by every means an before his own life, the lover of truth ought even threatened with death, to choose to speak and to do is right....For it is our maxim that we can suffer harm from none, unless we be convicted as doers of evil, or proved to be wicked you may indeed slay us but hurt us you cannot."* (*First Apology*, 2) He argued that if the Romans already allowed philosophers to say whatever they wanted without fear of reprisal, even if they were the worst of human beings, why then is Christianity a crime?

So if Plato, for example, could be accepted, then they merely had to see that Plato was simply an incomplete understanding now provided by Christianity. *"And that you may learn that Plato borrowed our teachers, (I mean the account which is given by Prophets,) when he said that God altered shapeless matter, and created the world; hear how the same things expressly taught by Moses, who has been mentioned as the first Prophet, and older than the Greek writers; by whom the Spirit of Prophecy, declaring how, and from what, God in the beginning created the world, spoke thus: 'the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; and earth was invisible, and unfurnished, and darkness was the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved over waters. And God said*

²³ Briefly: this was the charge against Christianity – that it was new and therefore not protected by law from additional necessary civic practices like sacrifice to idols or the emperor.

Let there be light and it was so.' So that both Plato, and those who agree with him and we ourselves, have learnt, and you may be persuaded, that by Word of God, the whole world was created from matter which was described before by Moses. That which your poets call Erebus [a sort of primordial deity], we know to have previously mentioned by Moses." (First Apology, 59) In the end he did not have much success with changing any civic officials' mind on the subject but he was lucky enough to be a Roman citizen and so in the persecution of 165 (under Marcus Aurelius) he was merely arrested and beheaded.

While he apparently operated his school in the open and wrote letters to officials, it is not until he is *formally* ratted out as being Christian that he runs afoul of the law. We have a second century observer's transcription of his trial:

"The saints were seized and brought before the prefect of Rome, whose name was Rusticus. As they stood before the judgment seat, Rusticus the prefect said to Justin: 'Above all, have faith in the gods and obey the emperors.' Justin said: 'We cannot be accused or condemned for obeying the commands of our Savior, Jesus Christ.'

Rusticus said: 'What system of teaching do you profess?' Justin said: 'I have tried to learn about every system, but I have accepted the true doctrines of the Christians, though these are not approved by those who are held fast by error.'

The prefect Rusticus said: 'Are those doctrines approved by you, wretch that you are?' Justin said: 'Yes, for I follow them with their correct teaching.'

The prefect Rusticus said: 'What sort of teaching is that?' Justin said: 'Worship the God of the Christians. We hold him to be from the beginning the one creator and maker of the whole creation, of things seen and things unseen. We worship also the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was foretold by the prophets as the future herald of salvation for the human race and the teacher of distinguished disciples. For myself, since I am a human being, I consider that what I say is insignificant in comparison with his infinite godhead. I acknowledge the existence of a prophetic power, for the one I have just spoken of as the Son of God was the subject of prophecy. I know that the prophets were inspired from above when they spoke of his coming among men.' [Trinitarian ref]

Rusticus said: 'You are a Christian, then?' Justin said: 'Yes, I am a Christian.'

The prefect said to Justin: 'You are called a learned man and think that you know what is true teaching. Listen: if you were scourged and beheaded, are you convinced that you would go up to heaven?' Justin said: 'I hope that I shall enter God's house if I suffer that way. For I know that God's favor is stored up until the end of the whole world for all who have lived good lives.'

The prefect Rusticus said: 'Do you have an idea that you will go up to heaven to receive some suitable rewards?' Justin said: 'It is not an idea that I have; it is something I know well and hold to be most certain.'

The prefect Rusticus said: "Now let us come to the point at issue, which is necessary and urgent. Gather round then and with one accord offer sacrifice to the gods.' Justin said: 'No one who is right thinking stoops from true worship to false worship.'

The prefect Rusticus said: 'If you do not do as you are commanded you will be tortured without mercy.' Justin said: 'We hope to suffer torment for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so be saved. For this will bring us salvation and confidence as we stand before the more terrible and universal judgment-seat of our Lord and Savior.'

In the same way the other martyrs also said: 'Do what you will. We are Christians; we do not offer sacrifice to idols.'

The prefect Rusticus pronounced sentence, saying: 'Let those who have refused to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the command of the emperor be scourged and led away to suffer capital punishment according to the ruling of the laws.' Glorifying God, the holy martyrs went out to the accustomed place. They were beheaded, and so fulfilled their witness of martyrdom in confessing their faith in their Savior."

A bit long perhaps but the exchange is interesting for its description of the contact of two different theological systems and for how Justin's mind and Roman law worked. In this case, it is not so much that Justin depends upon understood philosophical concepts to explain doctrine or other Christian beliefs and practices but that he wants his audience to see his certitude in the Revelation that he has studied and that what they believe, via the secular philosophers, is the *basis for* and *contained within* and perfected by belief in Christ. "...in order that we might not remain the children of necessity and ignorance but of choice and of knowledge and that we might obtain remission of the sins we had formerly committed in the water, there is called over him who chooses the new birth and repents of his sins the name of God the Father and Lord of all things..." (61)

Theology is the perfection of philosophy. The philosophical concept of the Logos represented absolute truth to secular thinkers, and as the Gospel of John states, Jesus is the Logos.

❖ Tertullian



Tertullian (~160~220), from Carthage in North Africa and son of a centurian, saw on the other hand this incompleteness of human philosophy as indication of its complete hooieness²⁴. It was the reason for all the wrong thinking that was taking place. *“For philosophy is the material of the world’s wisdom, the rash interpreter of the nature and dispensation of God. **Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy...What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?** What has the Academy to do with the Church? What have heretics to do with Christians? Our instruction comes from the porch of Solomon, who had himself taught that the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. **Away with all attempts to produce a Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic Christianity!** We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after receiving the gospel! When we believe, we desire no further belief. For this is our first article of faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.”* (Heretics, 7 – all emphasis my own)

Yet even Tertullian himself could not help but refer to and discuss philosophers and philosophical notions as a means of making his point. *“But the special ground of dislike to the sect is, that it bears the name of its Founder. Is there anything new in a religious sect getting for its followers a designation from its master? Are not the philosophers called from the founders of their systems – Platonists, Epicureans, Pythagoreans? Are not the Stoics and Academics so called also from the places in which they assembled and stationed themselves and are not physicians named from Erasistratus, grammarians from Aristarchus, cooks even from Apicius?”* (Apology, 3) and *“I do not dwell on the philosophers, contenting myself with a reference to Socrates, who in contempt of the gods, was in the habit of swearing by an oak, and a goat, and a dog. In fact, for this very thing Socrates was condemned to death, that he overthrew the worship of the gods.”* (Apology, 14)²⁵

Somewhat of a contemporary of Justin, whereas Justin represents the close of the first century, Tertullian lived in the last half of the second century. Like Justin he too was an apologist, hoping to convince the powers that be to not destroy Christianity, though as a lawyer he took a much more historical/rule-of-law path, therefore not really needing the philosophers. Similarly he too takes the Roman officials to task for treating Christianity differently than other crimes, and pointing out their own legal hypocrisy when it came to their rituals and beliefs. *“Rulers of the Roman Empire, if seated for the administration of justice on your lofty tribunal, under the gaze of every eye and occupying there all but the highest position in the state, you may not openly inquire into and sift before the world the real truth in regard to the charges made against the Christians; if in this case alone you are afraid or ashamed to exercise your authority in making public inquiry with the carefulness which becomes justice; if finally the extreme severities inflicted on our people in recently private judgments stand in the way of our being permitted to defend ourselves before you, you cannot surely forbid the Truth to reach your ears by the secret pathway of a noiseless book.”* (Apology, 1) And further, *“You say ‘You do not worship the gods’ and ‘you do not offer sacrifices for the emperors.’ Well we do not offer sacrifice for others, for the same reason that we do not for ourselves, – namely that your gods are not at all the objects of our worship. So we are accused of sacrilege and treason. This is the chief ground of charge against us – nay, it is the sum total of our offending; and it is worthy then of being inquired into, if neither prejudice nor injustice be the judge, the one of which has no idea of discovering the truth and the other simply and at once rejects it. We do not worship your gods because we know that there are no such beings. This, therefore, is what you should do: you should call on us to demonstrate their non existence, and thereby prove that they have no claim to adoration; for only if your gods were truly so, would there be any obligation to render divine homage to them.”* (Apology, 10)

²⁴ Technical term.

²⁵ Though the latter is perhaps not a good argument for keeping the authorities from killing you.

Just as we can see Justin's thinking and style through his work, when we read Tertullian we sense the similar brilliance. Whereas Justin understood the language of philosophy, Tertullian understood the language of the law. Both use that brilliance to produce theological works of timeless power and depth.

Tertullian eventually fell into Montanism somewhere around 200, a heresy started around 150 or so by a new convert from Phrygia who apparently had been an earlier priest of an ecstatic pagan cult which believed that the Holy Spirit was giving *new revelations* to the Church, through himself and two women. Its followers were required to follow a rigorous asceticism, including not marrying. Without spending a lot of time on the point, suffice it to say that at this time there were several groups who attacked the structure and practices of the Church. Tertullian eventually left the cult and many of its followers were later re-integrated into the Church by Augustine.

Interestingly enough in all of this, it is Tertullian who is known as the father of Western theology, not Justin.

The World At War

For all what seems to be antagonism, we must realize is that Tertullian is fighting a similar yet different battle than is Justin. Certainly they are both trying to end persecution but they are also beginning to fight battles from within: *heresy* or basically 'wrong thinking'. But they are different kinds of heresy. For Justin the heresies are like Marcion's (rejection of OT) and the Gnostics (two Gods, among other things) which are more religious and culturally based, whereas Tertullian is battling more philosophically based ones, like Docetism (aimed at the Christological nature). For that reason we can perhaps understand the difference in their approaches as well as their feelings about secular philosophy and theology. Justin wants to fight fire with fire, Tertullian wants to pour water on it.

Let us take a moment and place this battle into the wider human undertaking. Mysticism versus rationalism, charismatic versus traditional...these battles of interpretation and expression pepper not just theology but all of history like a blunderbuss. Each side takes potshots at the other, with individuals stepping between the parties to try and broker compromises which just seems inflame one side or the other, or provoke yet a third interest to suddenly be spurred to action in opposition to the compromise. It is the struggle of both the Church and her theologians to promote while preserving. Diversity is to be encouraged, but it is diversity of expression, not of belief and the language must be clear to keep the Faith true. Unfortunately we are a belligerent race – 'pig-headed' I believe is what Moses meant when he said 'stiff-necked.' Words sometimes carry only the weight we give them, and our expectations of others' ability or need to interpret the way we do are just that – *our* expectation.

The battle of words has quieted but will never go away.

In that way both Justin and Tertullian use language with which they are familiar to argue and explore the meaning of the Revelation they both deeply embrace. How does one articulate truth which one has come to understand in both the head and the heart? That is the challenge to theology, to find and use language which is unambiguous to the meaning it is trying to convey.

Putting It Together

Theology seeks to make known the truths on which it is based. It has its own language, a language of Faith It is not designed to remain within an esoteric venue though, but to be spread about, to make those truths known to the wider world. When theology seeks a language which can be understood outside of the 'faith language' of Tradition, it often turns to secular thinking, what we would call philosophy. if you will, which has a very specific vocabulary.

The benefit of using philosophical language and vocabulary is that it provides a common standard venue that is both available and familiar to most people. On the other hand 'dumbing things down' and abandoning theological language for a philosophical one introduces the danger of the confusion of the philosophical

language and vocabulary with the theological ones, and that danger is as devastating as the benefits which can be derived. Keeping these truths in mind helps us to keep theology rooted not in human reason but in God's Revelation.

"Fruitful discourse in science or theology requires us to believe that within the contexts of normal discourse there are some true statements."

Kenneth Lee Pike, *With Heart and Mind: a personal synthesis of scholarship and devotion*

PART II

It's The Economy...



Heresy

One of the hallmarks of Christianity is its celebration of all aspects of human reality, the physical, the sensual, the emotional, and the intellectual. This leads to many great minds enhancing the understanding of the Faith. At the same time one of the things we have to struggle with in theology is when speculation crosses the line between illuminating the truth and straying into error. At that moment, when theology begins to usurp Faith (usually due to human meddling), people become confused between speculation and truth. The ability of the individual to rationally or emotionally come to grips with a mystery often dictates the level of 'belief' the individual can have. When this happens the 'beliefs' which one postulates are the only 'logical' truth they can reach, but they fail to realize that they have limited truth to personal belief. Still, it is one thing to believe something in error, and quite another to teach it as if it is the Faith.

Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy

How does one identify heresy? What is the measure of correct speculation about the truth? Before we tackle this slippery slope, let us start with a few definitions. The word *Orthodoxy* (Greek "*right-teaching*") conjures up a sense of the straight and narrow. It speaks to holding on to Tradition and Scripture with a tight rein and within a set of boundaries and having a traceable authentic tradition. Another term we might use is *accepted belief*. *Heterodoxy* (Greek "*other-teaching*") on the other hand is a less familiar and tougher term. For some it strictly means 'unorthodox' as in *anti-orthodox* or *heresy*; for most others it falls more into the realm of 'disagreement' or, more on a lower level, a difference of opinion but not something outside of the accepted norms of orthodoxy. Another word we might use is *diversity*.

The strength of orthodoxy is stability and stability counts for a lot. It has helped the Jews hold their message together for thousands of years and through hundreds of cleansings and hard times. It speaks to the fidelity of God who does not change and to the message which remains unchanged. Heterodoxy speaks to the human condition, one where mysteries, those things only revealed by God, are not fully penetrated and can be explored by each generation. Orthodoxy would say that the mystery is the mystery – let it go. Heterodoxy says that there may be something more we can understand of/from that mystery. So what is the balance? For its first thousand years the Church tolerated much diversity as long as it remained within the boundaries. Unfortunately, with much diversity comes much margin for error – and orthodoxy, as protection for the truth, begins to play a larger role.

The idea of heterodoxy as something positive typically goes with a tolerance about beliefs mainly on subjects which are not fully defined, or are possible understandings of loosely defined existing teachings. While not everyone would agree with this definition, heterodoxy describes beliefs that differ from strictly orthodox views but that fall short of *heresy*.

Where does this struggle arise? As time goes by and less and less effort was needed to convince the populous of the Truth, and so the writings and argumentation turned from apologetics toward ideas and the discussion of whether or not ideas had merit within the Christian ethos. These theological discussions and practices ran the range from things in terms of orthodoxy to lunatic fringe kind of issues. Most were the product of sincere and intellectually honest efforts to reach understanding, often using the philosophical/religious concepts and language of the day.

Smorgasbord

There are many ways to approach the many evolutionary lines of thinking which died out or were hunted to extinction. There is the strictly historical route where one just follows the thinkers in a line; then there is the

thematic path, where the thinkers are lumped together by the basis of their thinking. Perhaps the best course for our needs is a combination, lumping them together by theme, but in a progressive manner.

One caveat to this quick parade is that many of these are related, that is, thinking in one area led to a broadening of that thinking to some of its logical ends, for example *Macedonianism* which was set forth by an Arian bishop, who was already denying the divinity of Christ.

Salvation

- **Gnosticism (1st and 2nd Century)**
 - Dualism of good and bad (a good god and an evil god) and ‘special’, hidden knowledge for salvation owned by an elite group. An example being *Valentinianism*, who lived in Rome between 136 and 165 and taught that the visible world had been created by the evil god of the Old Testament and that now only the invisible world was real. Christ came to deliver mankind from its bondage to matter and the evil physical world; unfortunately most would be unable to rise above matter and end up in eternal perdition (seen even today in groups like the Christian Scientists). Irenaeus (~125-~202) wrote against Valentinianism in particular in his work *Against the Heresies*.
- **Ebionism (1st Century)**
 - Jesus was an ordinary human who was just a really great guy and so was *adopted* by God because he was so zealous for the Law. They are often associated with the Judaizers of that Paul speaks of (c.f. *Galatians*). This can be seen in several modern groups, most definitely in places like *The Jesus Seminar*.
- **Albigenses (13th Century)**
 - Technically this one falls under a couple of categories but we will drop it here because it teaches reincarnation – and two gods, one good and other evil – a modern re-visiting of *Gnosticism*.

God/Godhead's Nature

- **Marcionism (2nd Century)**
 - A fairly important dispute where they rejected the Old Testament and much of the New Testament, except for the Gospel of Luke and ten of the Letters of St. Paul. Only virgins, widows, and celibates were baptized; married people were unclean/unworthy and could not advance beyond the catechumenate which makes for somewhat limited growth.
- **Monarchianism (2nd and 3rd Century)**
 - This has become a catch-all title for several of the ideas mentioned here, but basically it applies to the meaning of *monarch*: literally ‘one rule’ or ‘one beginning’ but mostly: unity. It was actually an attempt to refute early versions of *Tritheism* (6th- below), but failed to keep the fullness of the Trinity stating that God is *one person*, that is there is no Father/Son/Spirit Trinity.
- **Sabellianism/Modalism (3rd Century)**
 - Similar to Monarchism, where God is one person but in three ‘modes’, that is He was Father, *then* Son, *then* Holy Spirit – like He was just wearing a mask each time He revealed Himself.
- **Manichaeism (3rd Century)**
 - A gnostic synthesis of many of the religious systems of the time, mainly Zoroastrian Dualism, Babylonian folklore, Buddhist ethics, and some small and superficial, additions of Christian elements. Augustine started out as an adherent but turned into one of its greatest opponents.
- **Patricianism (3rd century)**

- The Father, not Jesus, suffered on the cross.
- **Subordinationism** (4th Century)
 - Generic name for many errors; only God the Father is God, the Son is subordinate to the Father, that is, lesser than the Father in essence and or attributes.
- **Macedonianism** (4th Century)
 - Denies the divinity of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit does not proceed from the Father but is a creation of the Son.
- **Tritheism** (6th century)
 - A sub-sect of 5th century *Monophysitism* (5th- below), where because Jesus is only divine, and as the name suggests the Trinity is really three separate gods.
- **Socinianism** (16th and 17th Century)
 - A kind of modern revival of *Ebionism* (1st - above) but included definite denial of the Trinity. Jesus is just a deified man.

Christ's Nature

- **Adoptionism** (2nd Century)
 - God granted Jesus powers and then adopted him as a Son; Revived by Peter Abelard in the twelfth century.
- **Docetism** (2nd Century)
 - Jesus was only divine, and only seemed to be human.
- **Apollinarianism** (4th Century)
 - Jesus' human rational soul and will was replaced by the divine Logos, meaning that he was not 'free' to accept death on the Cross among other things.
- **Arianism** (4th Century)
 - , An extremely influential and damaging disagreement; Jesus was not God but a lesser, *created* being.
- **Anomeanism**. (4th Century)
 - A radical variant of Arianism, the Son was "unlike" (Greek: *anomoios*) the Father.
- **Nestorianism** (5th Century)
 - Overemphasis on the human side of Jesus, who was considered to be two *distinct* persons; Jesus had to be human because we cannot even begin to conceive that God could be born, crucified, and died; further therefore, Mary could not be the Theotokos (*God-bearer*) but only the mother of a human being who was then conjoined to God.
- **Monophysitism** (5th Century)
 - Overemphasis on the divine side of Jesus; believed Jesus had only one nature/will and it was not the human one; rose up as a reaction against *Nestorianism*.
- **Monothelitism** (7th Century)
 - An attempt to accommodate *Monophysitism* where it was acknowledged that Jesus had two natures, divine and human but that these two natures had only 'one will'.
- **Kenosis** (19th Century)
 - Greek for 'emptying'; Based in a line from Phil; Jesus gave up his divine attributes while on earth.

Human Nature

- **Priscillianism** (4th Century)

- Combination of *Modalism* and *Gnosticism*; denied Christ's divinity *and* real humanity, holding that human souls were united to bodies in punishment for their sins.
- **Pelagianism (5th Century)**
 - Man is unaffected by the fall and can keep all of God's laws; in order to do good, grace already had to be present in the soul. Denies freewill and Original Sin.
- **Semi-Pelagianism (5th Century)**
 - An attempted compromise where humans and God cooperate to achieve man's salvation where the initial act belongs to humanity and everything after that is grace alone; this term is used in various ways through time.

The Church

- **Montanism (2nd Century)**
 - Kind of an early patent medicine man of Christianity he claimed to be the Paraclete and that he and two women had new (and superseding) Revelation; with an emphasis on ecstatic prophecy. Christians who fell from grace could not be redeemed, emphasized chastity, forbade remarriage; as talked about in the last chapter, influenced Tertullian though he eventually left the cult. Augustine (4th) successfully rejoined most of its followers with the Church.
- **Encratitism (2nd Century)**
 - Another early highly aesthetic temperance movement that forbade marriage and taught abstinence from meat; accepted the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospels, but rejected the Book of the Acts and cursed St. Paul and his Epistles.
- **Donatism (4th Century)**
 - Only the most worthy could serve; validity of sacraments depends on the character of the minister; condemned extensively by Augustine.
- **Iconoclasm (7th and 8th Century)**
 - A violent religious/political movement which, like Arianism, rocked all levels of the Church. Any images were considered sacrilege and had to be destroyed. Influenced by the rise of Islam and its prescriptions against graven images.

So what makes all of this so bad? At first glance it seems that the third through fifth centuries become hot beds of innovation and error, with the legitimization of Christianity by Constantine dead in the center. But that is not the final word – we see these ideas resurface and gain followers even today so let us take a look at a couple of them.

In The Know: *Gnosticism*

What that means is that, as Mark Twain said, there will never be a dearth “*of experts who knew the Deity's mind and were willing to reveal it.*” If you recall back, the previous chapter on philosophy versus theology highlighted Justin Martyr and Tertullian. In a passing remark I said that while they were both dealing with persecution they were also both dealing with internal struggles. The point being that during their timeframes, Justin was dealing with more social/religious heresy while Tertullian was dealing with more philosophical ones.

In terms of that, there arose a particularly insidious practice called Gnosticism, a broad umbrella name given to various and sundry systems which pop up fairly early on in the Christian story (within the first century) and continue in various forms. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, or as we might translate it, ‘knowing’. It finds its roots in several mystery cults and religious revivals already taking place in the first and second centuries in Roman society. Many of these groups, like the Cybele cults (a popular mother-goddess cult to which

the founder of Montanism belonged) Basically it refers to the belief that there was secret knowledge that only the chosen few were privy to, meaning that salvation only comes through some special kind of knowledge, usually knowledge claimed by a special elite group. There is also an element of Zoroastrian belief in that the good and evil powers are in conflict. In general Gnosticism appears to be what can be thought of as a ‘unification’ type of religion, as Stoicism or Eclecticism was to philosophical systems, trying to create a cohesive system from a variety of systems, combining what they consider to be the best ideas of each. Elements of Platonism, Christianity, mystery cults – whatever provides a reasonable idea of meaning. As a general rule, at the core is the conviction that matter is evil and hostile to the human spirit and thereby drags it down and condemns it to Earth and only the initiated know this. It denied the Christian basic truths about the nature of Christ, the Church, and of salvation because they conflicted with this approach.

Gnosticism per se is long extinct, but Gnostic ideas persist and surface in some form in nearly every major heretical version of the Christian faith. This kind of socio-religious approach was not new. The rise of Isis cults and their like and the increased interest in Greek philosophers in Roman society show that the idea of secret knowledge and elite groups existed before Christianity. The Gnostic groups adapted the Gospels to their own views and for their own purposes, even composing pseudo-gospels (like the *Gospels of Thomas* and *Judas*) which embodied each group’s particular secret ideas and doctrines.

So while this one starts early and rumbles through for quite a while, even into today, mainly through ‘New Age’ groups and surprisingly enough is easily identifiable in Wicca (based in John Crowley’s 18th century works which, to this observer, seem very heavily influenced by a hodge-podge of Gnostic thinking and ideas). In his book *The Age of Constantine the Great* historian Jacob Burckhardt succinctly presents the Gnostics as “speculative enthusiasts...who sought to make of Christianity a framework for Platonic and Oriental ideas.” This sentiment goes to the heart of this chapter; Gnosticism embodies the idea that the truths of Christianity are insufficient in themselves and, like Plato’s ‘insufficient’ thought can be used as a framework for working with Christian ideas, Gnosticism wants to make Christianity the language for its beliefs not the other way around, at which point it ceases to be Christianity.

Arianism

After Gnosticism probably the single most contentious heresy in the history of Christianity, at least before the Western Schism of the 16th century, is Arianism. It arose amidst efforts to begin to solidify some of the teachings about one of the most central and important doctrinal areas: *Christology*. Who is Jesus? Who is the Christ? How is Jesus the Christ? By what power did he do miracles? By what power was he raised? If he is God, how is he God? And so on. Christology is so central because it goes to the heart of Christianity (so to speak). Salvation completely revolves around the question of Christ’s nature.

Arius (256-336), a priest from Alexandria, advanced a theology based in a philosophical argument²⁶ that ultimately denied that there were three divine Persons in God. Arius determined that there was only one Person – the Father – meaning that the Son was *created*.²⁷ He appealed to Scriptural passages such as *John 14:28: “the Father is greater than I”* and *Col 1:15: “the firstborn of all creation.”* In his thinking Christ was only a ‘son’ of God, not by nature, but only by *grace* and *adoption* (i.e. not The Son).

The doctrinal effect of this was stunning, stripping the Incarnation of all meaning, effectively overturning major tenets of the Faith. As his opponents saw it, if this were true and God did not become man, then the

²⁶ Arius’ bishop Alexander was instructing them about the Trinity when Arius countered “*If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows, that he had his substance from nothing*” (Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*) – meaning that he was created.

²⁷ Spawning the early flash mob chants of “*There was a time when he was not*” – but in Greek of course; “*we shall overcome*” it is not but it is what passed for a pretty radical statement in that day, certainly enough to get you punched, if not killed.

world has not been redeemed and the whole Faith itself crumbles because its foundation has been removed.²⁸ For Arius and his followers, it provided a simpler answer to the problem of the Trinity, and who Christ was. There was no need for any great mystery when there was a perfectly simple and easy explanation, in fact one which was in opposition to another heresy: *Sabellianism* (see above). Because of the effect of this, the emperor Constantine called for the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 to settle the question which formally condemned Arianism and officially formulated the orthodox belief in the original version of the *Nicene Creed*.

Aside from the political and social chaos its broad acceptance caused, what makes this such a problem? First, Arius was just a priest and not a bishop: so the whole question of authority rises up: can a priest, an extension of a bishop, determine what a bishop should teach (and by extension, are theologians able to define doctrine)? Second the struggle for orthodoxy: for roughly 20 years the Church was actually Arian in its confession.²⁹ Many of the aforementioned heresies had effect, but not really at the level of Arianism. In about 350 the emperor Constantius (337-361) backed the Arian notion of the relation of Jesus' nature to God's and the banished bishops were returned and the creed changed. The world "*awoke with a groan to find itself Arian.*" (Jerome, *Dialogus contra Luciferianos*) Politically and theologically the Church was thrown into chaos. This led to the exile and condemnation of formally respected doctors and fathers (some to their deaths) and the installation of sympathetic bishops. It is not until 379, with the help of emperor Theodosius, who literally outlawed the doctrine, that the orthodox bishops finally wrested control back and Arianism's formal condemnation from the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea was upheld and further reinforced.

Lingering Doubt

So let us take a moment and think about the ramifications of un-orthodox thinking. The above mentioned *Semi-Arianism* was a modification that developed and flourished after the Council condemned Arianism in 325. It was started by those who wanted to end the bitter (and deadly) struggle by creating a compromise between the orthodox teaching of the divinity/con-substantiality of Christ's with the Father and those who followed Arius's begotten-from-nothing non-consubstantiality. The idea was to substitute the term *homo-i-ousios* ("of like substance") or *homoios* ("similar") for *homo-ousios* ("of one substance") within the Nicene Creed.³⁰ This was probably Constantius' position more so than 'true' Arianism, but did it help? Even after Theodosius' condemnation in 379 the thinking lingers throughout the Empire, East and West, such that the West felt the need to add the filioque ("*and the Son*") clause to the Nicene Creed in the 6th century. Many good men on both sides were censured or killed and the one Church was put into peril.

It makes sense then if you ponder the nature of Christianity that you would find this desire for compromise, which can apparently be just as dangerous as the thinking it is trying to overcome. Doctrine is not technically open to debate, and compromise is really not an 'acceptable' means of coming to doctrine. If doctrine is teachings about the Truth, then it is neither open to debate or to compromise. Theology, on the other hand, is a bit more flexible but in the end still must bow to and correspond with established doctrine and the Faith. We see here also the effects of partially or loosely defined doctrine in such cases. When the mystery is so deep, how do we talk about it? What are the effects of the limitations of human language to express the deepest of mysteries? One misspoken word and *whamo*, the disagreements start.

²⁸ Think about it this way – if Christ is created then he is part of Creation, and unlike God, is not outside of Creation and therefore unable to transform it.

²⁹ This is a broad generalization of history, and does not mean that the controversy did not still rage, any more than thinking that the Council of Nicaea was the final word at that time.

³⁰ This subtly may seem senseless to our modern ears, especially in the Post-Reformation times of 'no compromise', but if we listen we still hear echoes of it in Luther's "*con*-substantiation" being proffered against Aquinas' "*trans*-substantiation."

What makes one position more tenable than another? Theological, philosophical, and logical agreement must all come together, but there has to be something else as well. There must be a certain level of humility in the face of great mystery.

Credo

So how do you solve a problem like Maria?³¹ The pivotal Council of Nicaea (and the follow-ons of Constantinople and Nicaea) shows the importance of defined doctrinal statements to the stability of doctrine. The main outcome of Nicaea was its Creed. Obviously the creedal statements are very important, but why? Let us answer that by backing away from doctrinal controversy and focusing on something much more basic.³² Initiation into any group requires a certain amount of knowledge about that group and that knowledge needs to be consistent (the Gnostics certainly understood this and made it part of their sales pitch). Baptism is the primary initiation used in mainstream and historical Christianity, but the early Church identified the endowment of the Spirit and participation in the deepest mysteries of the Faith as well. In the footsteps of the greatest of Jewish Traditions, knowledge of the Faith is important in order to participate fully – it is both head and heart. This means that simply being baptized is not enough, one must have familiarity (not necessarily perfect knowledge or understanding) of the mysteries which are embraced and entered into by that initiation. The catechumens were ‘handed’ the Faith through instruction over time and then, before Baptism, they ‘handed it back’ by acknowledging it through profession.

The solution then? Public declaration of the truths which one accedes to. A Creed then, is an extremely important facet of Christianity. It gives both the Faith foundation to Baptism and invites the participant to declare the economy to which one commits oneself in Baptism. Its very name holds both concepts. *Creed* is from the Latin word *credo* meaning “I believe”, the first two words of any Creed. Creeds should not be confused with the later idea of *Confessions* (not the Sacrament) used by many Protestant re-formers, which can be classified as more coercive statement of beliefs (many seem to have gone through as much fighting in their acceptance). Creeds on the other hand are properly used as expressions of *worship*; they are in this sense *prayers* and not merely a rote list of doctrinal propositions to which one is compelled to believe. They are summaries of Salvation, the biblical story of the Triune God, compiled from Scripture, which one affirms. If you want to be crass and put it into secular terms, the creed functions less as a “loyalty oath” and more as the “Pledge of Allegiance,” the things in which one believes and commits oneself to. In that sense, creeds are the measure of the Faith which one lives.

They also fulfill the important role of codifying the beliefs of the Church in lieu of an agreed upon, or even available, canon of Scripture, the situation which existed in the early Church. The development of the final canon (Latin for “list”, from the Greek, more toward “official list”) of the books of the Christian Scriptures (and the settling of which Hebrew Scriptures would make up the Old Testament) did not begin in earnest until the legitimization of Christianity by Constantine in 313 but its development really spans the first four centuries of Christianity, and was a long continuous process involving the collecting, sifting, and rejecting of the many writings associated with Christianity. We have discussed most of this earlier, but we must remember that the Bible as a book, or a collection of ordered books in one place, was not an all-at-once thing (i.e. did not appear out of thin air in King James’ English). Scriptures of all sorts did exist and were referenced before, up to, during, and after that time and many are so often touted today (cf. works like *The Hidden Books of the Bible*), but that they were not universal in acceptance or in distribution and as such were rejected from the canon.

Until such time as the official attempt at doing so, “*psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*” (Eph 5:19), homilies, and oral teachings as well as any circulated writings of the Apostles, Paul, the evangelists, and early

³¹ Think about it...or don't.

³² Again, as with most discussions in this work, the following statements in no way capture the history or the subtlety of the notion of creeds but is instead a high level collection of ideas about creeds within the context of our discussion.

Church leaders formed the reciprocal basis for the Truths. Those Truths are formally articulated in creeds and those creeds were as essential to the construction, articulation, and spread of the Faith then as Scripture is now, and in fact give basis to canonic Scripture. As such they warrant as much attention as does the canon of Scripture.³³ As oral statements they also held much authority in a time when written books or scrolls were scarce. Many pre-date any written material (c.f. *Phil* 2:6-11 which shows Paul's use of an existing song which contains doctrinal statements).

This makes sense in the historical/doctrinal development of Christianity. Creeds are the assembly proclaiming the Truth at the core of its actions, like the *Schema* ("Hear, O Israel, The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!" Dt 6:4) in the synagogue liturgy. The early foundation of the creeds are found in the *kerygma* ("proclamations" or "teachings") of the Apostles, something like Peter's declaration in the Gospels "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God," (*Matt* 16:16) or Paul's "Jesus is Lord!" (c.f. *1 Cor* 12:3 or *Rom* 10:9) In fact the Creed labeled the "Apostle's Creed" can be traced back to the Apostolic age, and though not written by the Apostles, reflects the 12 basic teaching of the Apostles. Creeds therefore cannot be discounted. They perform a complimentary but different function than Scripture. Once again, Oral and Written Tradition are both necessary.

We can sense all of the elements discussed here in a pericope from Paul, "Now I am reminding you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me." (*1 Cor* 15:1-9)

Say What?

Creeds are more than just confessions of faith, though a confession can be a part of the creedal profession (i.e. "I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins"). The creed is an Oral Tradition with two basic modes: *declarative* and *interrogative*. The earliest form usually took place within a baptismal ritual (interrogative) but have always had a place within established liturgy (declarative). Creeds then are meant to be spoken, to be professed. They may be read, but are really designed to be proclaimed aloud and in the assembly.

The ultimate strength of creeds goes to the problems which arise from *eisegetical* (reading *in to* text) interpretation versus *exegetical* (interpretation *from* text), which we will not really get into at this time. Suffice it to say that in the end theological disagreements and disputes are not the main threat to the stability of the Faith. The problem comes from not having decisive doctrinal determinations, that is, a good solid understanding and definitive statements of the Faith. Without such authentic expressions, theology, in its effort to bring about clarity, can bring about potentially community destroying positions. "...we make our own the profession of the faith that we carry in our heart...We have the catholic faith in the creed, known to the faithful and committed to memory, contained in a form of expression as concise as has been rendered admissible by the circumstances;" (Augustine of Hippo)

Putting It All Together

The ancient idea of the Body of Christ speaks to the idea of *unity*. To believe is to belong. So the profession of that belief is a "symbol of Faith" which shows that one belongs. This flies in the face of Gnosticism which speaks not of open proclamation but of secret, hidden belief. Creeds, as open statements of belief would only be made by those who were together.

³³ As per our earlier Oral/Scriptural Tradition discussion.

At the same time, we also see the results of trying to compromise or over-correcting for other errors. Each heresy is not necessarily the result of 'wrong thinking' but sometimes is the result of trying to fix wrong thinking. Of the many, the *filioque* 'controversy' is probably a good example. While this is not the time to go into the many intricacies of this disagreement between the western Catholic Church and the eastern Orthodox Church suffice it to say that sometime in the 6th century (589, at a Western Church Council in Toledo, Spain), the phrase "and the Son" (*filioque* in Latin) was used to combat several forms of heresy including Arianism and variations on Arianism which had developed in the West and was finding footholds throughout the Western Empire due to the Emperor Theodoric (491–501) and his Arian leanings. The East vacillated on the need for the distinction and things went back and forth for about the next 6 centuries.

"It is my purpose also to give the names and number and times of those who through love of innovation have run into the greatest errors, and, proclaiming themselves discoverers of knowledge falsely so-called have like fierce wolves unmercifully devastated the flock of Christ."

Eusebius (~260-341), *Church History*

Patristics

This word is a broad one and basically means the “study of the Fathers” with the Fathers being the teachers who ‘fathered’ the faith along its way from the earliest post-Apostolic times. The canon of Scripture and the Creeds of the Church are the direct result of the efforts of these Fathers. We also mention the “Doctors of the Church” here, with the difference between the two mainly being that the Fathers lived within the first six centuries and participated in the first seven ecumenical councils, and the Doctors span the history of the Church; that said, every Church Father is a Church Doctor but not every Doctor is a Father.

Who’s The Father?

There are probably close to 70 people who could be considered ‘Church Fathers’ because of their writings, but only a few are designated such by the East and the West. The early Church Fathers fall into three basic categories corresponding to pivotal times in the Church, specifically the Apostolic times and the Council of Nicaea which we mentioned in the last chapter. They are therefore designated as *Apostolic Fathers*, *ante-Nicene Fathers*, and *post-Nicene Fathers*.

The *Apostolic* Church Fathers are the earliest writers who were contemporaries of the apostles and probably heard them preach if not having been directly taught by them. They take up and uphold the tradition and teaching of the apostles themselves, in effect continuing on as their direct successors. Examples of Apostolic Fathers would be Clement of Rome and Polycarp.

The *ante-Nicene* Fathers are the group who came after the apostolic fathers and before the Council of Nicaea in 325. Irenaeus and Justin Martyr are ante-Nicene fathers. Their work lays the framework for the decisions made at the Council.

The *post-Nicene* Fathers are such noted men as Augustine, John Chrysostom, Jerome, and Eusebius. They represent the orthodox thinking solidified at the Council and yet they are not limited by that thinking but freed by it to expand on the solid theology and doctrine.

Fatherly Advice

After the apostolic kerygma, there develops the need for exposition on that kerygma. If we think back we might see similarities in the development of the Hebrew Scriptures and the rabbinic books which developed around the Torah. So, in tandem with the ideas presented in the last chapter these men began to expand, solidify, and define doctrine from the earliest days of the Church.

The difference being that they retain an air of orthodoxy. Certainly they were inspirational, but so was Arius. Why were they chosen over Arius? The solidness of their arguments may have played a part, but let us be a bit more basic than that. Along with being the most respected pastors and theologians of their day, their teachings set the standard for what is to be considered orthodox Christian teaching. You might say that is a bit of circular thinking, they set the standard and so became the standard but it is larger than that. They became the standard because they remained true to the accepted teaching of their time. Where they strayed they were not accepted. So, while the Fathers were not infallible and even wandered theologically, their widely accepted thinking and the consensus of their peers on significant issues give weight to the theological positions they taught.

Who’s Your Daddy?

Why is it important to have Fathers? As said, there is a two-fold aspect to this answer. First is the idea of authority – it is important to have orthodoxy when teaching. These men garnered the respect of their peers and their flocks not just for their thinking but for their holiness as well. So secondly, they are important because of

the chain they represent back to the Apostles and back then to Jesus himself. Their solid and orthodox teachings which spoke to unity among all Christians everywhere could only be because they were in line with Jesus' original teachings. Therefore they were faithful to Jesus, and as such holy men who were worthy to be followed. Many suffered greatly at the hands of arbitrary decisions but remained true to the teachings they had been handed.

So perhaps we can reduce it back to the usual father-as-head-of-the-household thing, where the father is both a leader and an authority. The faithfulness of these men inspired others to levels of faithfulness on both an intellectual and a spiritual level. It is important to have a lineage, to have an unbroken chain back to the origins of the faith and in fact we see that in many denominations which claim an 'unbroken' lineage back to the Apostles even though they bypass the post-Apostolic age and jump straight to the 18th or 19th centuries.³⁴

Why are there no mothers? Well, not to be sexist but at the time they were just not acknowledged, not in a theological way at least. This is not to say that there were no female leaders – that is just not true. Women performed spiritual leadership of a level we learn to appreciate only when we look at the role of the Saints, and see the women who populate it and why.

Name Dropper

The unofficial list of Fathers is longer than my arm so there are far too many to even bring up here. There is no time to give real due to the unfathomable gift given the Church by so many, so let us just examine a few.

Some, whom we still reference, do not make the list like Origen (185-254) who, though influential in the Church, got a bit too Platonic and held views on the pre-existence, transmigration, and *apokatastasis* (Gk. *restoration to the original condition*) of souls that were condemned. Of course the same could be said of several of these guys, but most were well reformed before the ends of their lives. Once again the idea of the difference between theology and doctrine should always be kept in mind. Origen allowed Plato's philosophy to dictate his later theology rather than the other way around. Still he has been lately reformed, with the understanding that not all of his thought was heretical and therefore worthy of consideration. Note, most early dates used here are approximate and are so designated with a tilde (~).

Clement of Rome



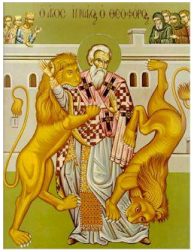
Clement of Rome is known from an early epistle he wrote (somewhere about the mid-90's) to the Corinthians which was widely circulated and even considered for inclusion in the canon. Tertullian, writing about one hundred years later in 199, says that the Roman Church claimed that Clement was ordained by St. Peter. His epistle to the Cor contains Old Testament references, showing the importance of understanding the Hebrew Scriptures. In addition his is some of the earliest references to Paul's epistles to the Rom, Galatians, Eph, Phil, and First Cor. His statements about resurrection and the after-life rely upon OT references more than NT ones.

"If any one will consider these things with sincerity and one by one, he will recognize the magnificence of the gifts that were given by him. For from Jacob came the priests and all the Levites that serve the altar of God. From him came our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh; from him came the kings and rulers and governors of the tribe of Judah; and the remainder of his tribes are of no small glory, since God hath promised, Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven. All these, therefore, have been glorified and magnified, not through themselves or through their works, or through the righteousness that they have done, but through his will. And we who through his will have been called in Christ Jesus are justified, not by ourselves, or through our wisdom or understanding or godliness, or the works that we have done in holiness of heart, but by faith, by which all men from the beginning have been justified by Almighty God, to whom be glory world without end. Amen. What, then, shall

³⁴ Ironically they claim Scripture as that unbroken link.

we do, brethren? Shall we cease from well-doing, and abandon charity? May the Master never allow that this should happen to us! But let us rather with diligence and zeal hasten to fulfill every good work. For the Maker and Lord of all things rejoices in his works."

Ignatius of Antioch

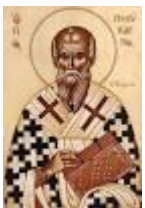


Ignatius of Antioch (35 to 50-107 to 117) third bishop of Antioch, believed to have been instated by Peter. Identified as a disciple of the Apostle John, martyred in Rome, and author of author of at least 7 letters that had exceptional influence in the early Church. Eusebius (263-339) and Jerome (342-420) mention his letters. Ignatius is important because he has some of the earliest quotes from Matt, Lk, Acts, First Thessalonians, First Col, First Cor, Rom, and Eph as well as insights into early Church governance *"It is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold a love-feast"* (Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 8) and Eucharistic theology (causing Calvin to completely reject him). Ignatius' Eucharistic theology is very physical, describing it as the *"medicine of immortality and the antidote against death, enabling us to live forever in Jesus Christ."* (Letter to the Eph) Aside from John chapter 6, this is some of the earliest expressions of belief in the reality of the Sacrament. *"The heretics abstain from Eucharist because they do not allow that the Eucharist is the flesh of Christ."* (Letter to the Smyrn., 6) Zeal for martyrdom.

He is often thought to be a bit anti-Semitic but is probably more against "Judaizers" as was Paul and was more protest against a return to Judaism which had sought to separate itself from the Christian sect. *"It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practice Judaism, for Christianity did not believe in Judaism but Judaism in Christianity."* (Epistle to the Magnesians, 10) In addition to the older internal struggles he also fought the new doctrinal heresy of the Docetists, emphasizing Jesus' humanity over their belief in a 'phantom' body. Christ *"was truly born and ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate...was truly raised from the dead."* (Letter to the Trallians, 9) *"I know that He was in the flesh even after the resurrection, and when He came to Peter and his company, He said to them, 'Lay hold and handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit'"* (Smyrn, 3).

To make his arguments Ignatius is the earliest extra-Scriptural writer to use the philosophical language of his day. *"There is one only physician, of flesh and of spirit, generate and ingenerate, God in man, true life in death, son of Mary and son of God, first passible and then impassible."* (Eph., 7) Along that vein he is also the first writer outside the New Testament to mention the Virgin Birth, which for reasons of combating the Christological heresies he particularly emphasizes. *"Hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary and her child-bearing and likewise also the death of the Lord, three mysteries to be cried aloud, the which were wrought in the silence of God"* (Eph., 19)

Polycarp

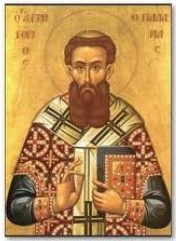


Polycarp (69-155) was bishop of Smyrna and the first post-New Testament (non-Scriptural) recorded martyr in Church history. Friend of Ignatius and also thought to be a disciple of the Apostle John, he is best known for his epistle to the Phil, one of the earliest surviving Christians writings, and several references by Ignatius and Irenaeus. Irenaeus regarded the memory of Polycarp as a link to the apostolic past, an important fact, along with his long age made him a much sought after teacher. Little is really directly known of his teachings but more of the effect of those teachings, which were obviously powerful. We can see creedal and anti-heretical statements as well as statements which give an idea as to the structures in place in the early Church, including the sharing of epistles among the Churches.

"Wherefore, girding up your loins,' 'serve the Lord in fear' and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and 'believed in Him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory,' and a throne at His right hand. 'To Him all things in heaven and on earth are subject. Him

every spirit serves. He comes as the Judge of the living and the dead. His blood will God require of those who do not believe in Him. But He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness; 'not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing,' or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing, but being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged; forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you; be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again'; and once more, 'Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.'" (Epistle to the Phil)

Irenaeus



Irenaeus (~130-~200) is considered by most to be the father of Christian theology. A student of Polycarp, Jerome and others state that he died as a martyr in the persecution under the Septimus Severus (145-211) of the arch fame, but there is no certainty about this and probably more doubt as even his death date is unknown.³⁵ Aside from some fragments, he is known mainly through his apologetic five volume work *Against the Heresies* and a catechumenate book titled *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*.

A broad and brilliant thinker, his discussion of evil and death probably merits its own section, but we will not be so kind here. Suffice it to say that salvation is part of a process of growing up, that part of the reason for freewill is that we grow fully into the "image and likeness" of God. The Fall in the Garden was more of a childish desire to have it all and have it now. The penalty for sin is death, hardship, and corruption but we should not go the route of the Gnostics and realize the less harsh view that we are merely spiritually maturing. Death and suffering appear evil, but without them we could never come to know God.

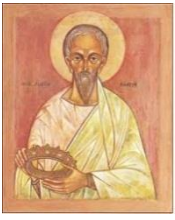
Gnostics wanted to break God apart and made the Cross a bridge to a secret salvation. Irenaeus instead emphasized that God created the world and is still overseeing it and so we can see that there is a unity and the goodness of God. As a proof of the idea he stresses the idea of Jesus as *Logos*, which also shows the unity of all of salvation history (the idea of Jesus as always with God, being God, being an instrument of Creation, and the Incarnation as the high point of salvation – as seen in John's Gospel and in Paul). God is unity, is immortal, and is incorruptible; we gain those benefits from the Incarnation. That simple act unites human nature and God's nature. In Christ God conveys those qualities to us: they spread, as it were, like a benign infection. The atonement by Christ happens through Incarnation rather than crucifixion, though one is unable to be separated from the other.³⁶ Salvation comes about, essentially, through the incarnation of God as man.

He also promoted the idea of apostolic succession as a proof for orthodoxy. *"The Lord of all gave to His apostles the power of the gospel, and by them we also have learned the truth, that is, the teaching of the Son of God—as the Lord said to them, 'He who hears you hears Me, and he who despises you despises Me, and Him Who sent Me' [Lk.10:16]. For we learned the plan of our salvation from no other than from those through whom the gospel came to us. The first preached it abroad, and then later by the will of God handed it down to us in Scriptures, to be the foundation and pillar of our faith. For it is not right to say that they preached before they had come to perfect knowledge, as some dare to say, boasting that they are the correctors of the apostles. For after our Lord had risen from the dead, and they were clothed with the power from on high when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they were filled with all things and had perfect knowledge. They went out to the ends of the earth, preaching the good things that come to us from God, and proclaiming peace from heaven to all men, all and each of them equally being in possession of the gospel of God."* (*Against the Heresies*, III)

³⁵ His reported remains were placed in the Church of St. John (later renamed St. Irenaeus) but that tomb demolished by Calvinist sympathizers in 1562 and the remains apparently scattered.

³⁶ The concept that Jesus was "born to die" is based on many biblical statements in both the Old and New Testaments.

Justin Martyr



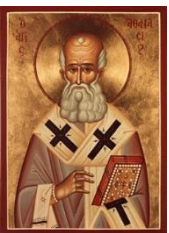
Justin Martyr (~100~165) is someone we met back in chapter 5, so there is no need to go deeply into his thought, except perhaps where it fits into the history. He was a big Platonist who saw Christianity as *the* philosophy. As an apologist he sought to make Christianity understandable to the non-Christians around him. He believed that any rational, intellectual expression of the Christian faith would unfailingly demonstrate its harmony with that same reason, hence making it the soundest of all the philosophies of the day. The same would have to be true for the teachings of Christianity as based not just in rational argument but in existing Scripture, both Hebrew *and* secular. For Justin the Old Testament and Greek philosophy met to form the single stream of Christianity. God, as the creator of all things, means that anything humans could come up with is merely a reflection of that divine thinking. All human thought pointed toward Christ. Jesus therefore is both the messiah announced by the Old Testament prophets and the preexisting *Logos* of the philosophers through whom God revealed himself in the Scriptures. This progressive idea of knowledge of God (influenced by Paul) was also reflected in his belief that the gentiles have been chosen to replace Israel as God's chosen people.

As an early writer, his arguments for martyrdom and his descriptions of the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are very important because they articulate some of the earliest non-Scriptural theological thinking on those tenets, especially the sacraments.

"Our doctrines, then, appear to be greater than all human teaching; because Christ, who appeared for our sakes, became the whole rational being, both body, and reason, and soul. For whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some part of the Word. But since they did not know the whole of the Word, which is Christ, they often contradicted themselves. And those who by human birth were more ancient than Christ, when they attempted to consider and prove things by reason, were brought before the tribunals as impious persons and busybodies. And Socrates, who was more zealous in this direction than all of them, was accused of the very same crimes as ourselves. For they said that he was introducing new divinities, and did not consider those to be gods whom the state recognized. But he cast out from the state both Homer and the rest of the poets, and taught men to reject the wicked demons and those who did the things which the poets related; and he exhorted them to become acquainted with the God who was to them unknown, by means of the investigation of reason, saying, "That it is neither easy to find the Father and Maker of all, nor, having found Him, is it safe to declare Him to all." But these things our Christ did through His own power. For no one trusted in Socrates so as to die for this doctrine, but in Christ, who was partially known even by Socrates (for He was and is the Word who is in every man, and who foretold the things that were to come to pass both through the prophets and in His own person when He was made of like passions, and taught these things[Jn 1:9]), not only philosophers and scholars believed, but also artisans and people entirely uneducated, despising both glory, and fear, and death; since He is a power of the ineffable Father, not the mere instrument of human reason." (Second Apology, 10)

❖ **N.B. Fathers of the time of Nicaea**

Athanasius

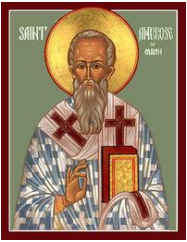


Athanasius (296-373) was the first person to uniquely identify the 27 books of the New Testament that, after being ratified by a series of synods, are in the canon today. By all rights an impressive youth he wrote a treatise entitled *On the Incarnation*, affirming and explaining that Jesus Christ was both God and Man. About the time Athanasius was 23 and still but a deacon, as we previously discussed Arius began his teaching that Jesus was but another creature, that there was a time before God the Father 'begat' Jesus and he did not exist. Athanasius responded that the Father's begetting of the Son, the action of uttering of the Word, was an *eternal* relationship between them,

not an event that took place *within time*. We can call this the “shot heard ‘round the world” signifying the beginning of Christianity's fight against the heresy of Arianism.

“The body of the Word, then, being a real human body, in spite of its having been uniquely formed from a virgin, was of itself mortal and, like other bodies, liable to death. But the indwelling of the Word loosed it from this natural liability, so that corruption could not touch it. Thus is happened that two opposite marvels took place at once: the death of all was consummated in the Lord's body; yet, because the Word was in it, death and corruption were in the same act utterly abolished. Death there had to be, and death for all, so that the due of all might be paid. Wherefore the Word [Logos], as I said, himself being incapable of death, assumed a mortal body, that he might offer it as his own in place of all, and suffering for the sake of all through his union with it...” (On the Incarnation, 20)

Ambrose



Ambrose (330-397) is notable as one of the Fathers from what could be considered ‘the West’ and is therefore known as one of the four “Latin Fathers” (Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great being the other three). He was born in the Gaul region and finally ends up in Milan in northern Italy. His is a fascinating story. He was a politician by birth, you might say, and was well studied in the liberal arts especially philosophy. In fact he reluctantly gave up his political post when, as only a catechumenate still preparing for Baptism, he was elected bishop of Milan. He succeeded an Arian bishop, but had mediated the sides so well in the decision up to the election that he was chosen instead of the other candidates. He fled but eventually gave in. His great ability was as a teacher and orator.

Ambrose fought Arianism at great cost to himself, but he always seemed to come out in the end. As such his many writings contain a very Christ-centered theology, and he laid the foundation for Marian thinking in the West. As such the focus is on Christ as the means of salvation and therefore justification. Twelve hundred years later Luther grasps these teachings as the justification for some of his own ideas on justification. Of additional note is his idea of the Church building its foundation on the ruins of the declining Roman Empire, an idea his student Augustine would pick up later in his work *City of God*. Ambrose (speaking from his own personal experience) saw the role of Christian emperors as dutiful servants of the Church – making them, therefore, subject to the influence of church leaders. Luther apparently failed to follow up on this path.

Along that path, he held to the Nicene beliefs and persuaded the emperor Gratian (359-383) to accept the Nicene Creed as well as convincing him to depose Arian bishops. Finally, he wrote hymns which became the model for hymns in the Church and he introduced the idea of antiphonal (alternating sides) singing.

“Do you not recognize who this is? Can a man be King of righteousness, when he is hardly righteous himself? Can he be King of peace when he can hardly be peaceable? It is he who is without mother, as touching his Godhead, because he was begotten of his Father who is God, being of one substance with the Father; without father, as touching his incarnation, for he was born of the Virgin; not having beginning, and end, because he is the beginning and the end of all, the first and the last.

Perchance you may say, ‘I see something different; how do you claim that it is the body of Christ which I receive?’ It still remains for us to prove this also. What precedents, then, shall we employ? Let us prove that this is not what nature formed but what the blessing consecrated, and that there is greater force in a blessing than in nature, because by a blessing even nature itself is changed.

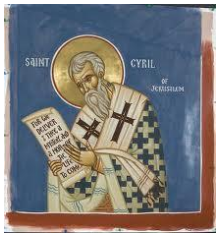
We observe, therefore, that grace is of greater power than nature; and yet it is only the grace of a prophet's blessing of which we are so far taking account. But if a human blessing was powerful enough to change nature, what do we say of the divine consecration itself where the very words of the Lord and Savior act? For the sacrament which you receive, is consecrated by the word of Christ. But if the word of Elijah was powerful enough to bring down fire from heaven, will not the word of Christ be powerful enough to change the characters of the elements? You have read of the works of the whole creation that he spoke the word, and they were made; he

commanded and they were created. The word of Christ could make out of nothing that which was not; cannot it then change the things which are into that which they were not? For to give new natures to things is quite as wonderful as to change their natures.

'Christ is in that Sacrament, because it is the Body of Christ. Wherefore it is not corporeal, but spiritual food.' What can be plainer? What more manifest? What more divine? For he says, 'Christ is in that Sacrament.' He [Paul] does not say, 'That bread and that wine is Christ'; had he said that, he would declare that Christ was mortal and subject to corruption, (which God forbid.) For whatsoever is in that food the object either of corporeal sight or taste, is of a surety subject to corruption.

He adds, 'Because it is the Body of Christ.' Here you will start up and say, See he openly confesses that the bread and the wine are the Body [and Blood] of Christ. But mark how he concluded, 'Wherefore it is not corporeal, but spiritual food.' Do not then apply your bodily senses; they can discern nothing here. Of a truth it is the Body of Christ, yet not His corporeal, but His spiritual Body; it is the Blood of Christ, yet not His corporeal, but His spiritual Blood. Nothing then is to be understood here corporally, but all spiritually. It is the Body of Christ, yet not corporally; it is the Blood of Christ, yet not corporally." (On the Mysteries, 46, 50, 52, 59, 60)

Cyril of Jerusalem



Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386) wrote 24 lectures known as the *Jerusalem Catechesis* the earliest record of the systematic teaching of the Church on the creed and the Sacraments as well as being another important sources for how the church celebrated the liturgy and sacraments during the first few decades after the legalization of Christianity. He professed the Nicene orthodoxy, which caused him great trouble at the time, and was present at the Council at Constantinople (381) where the Nicene Creed was finalized. Not surprisingly, because he is writing a catechism, he takes the orthodox positions previously articulated by other. Still he does make a few deeper insights as in the emphasis he lays on the freedom of the will especially in relationship to sin. To him sin is the consequence of freedom, not a natural condition. The body is not the cause, but the instrument of sin and the remedy for it is repentance.

At this point, there is a small throw back reference here. Recall the influence of Judaism on this fundamentally Jewish sect. Christianity is still in its 'practice' stage, very pragmatic and less dogmatic. While this is changing because of both its legitimization and the rise of so many doctrinal clashes, at this point like many of the other Fathers, he sees Christianity as having an essentially moralistic constitution. There is less of an emphasis on speculative theology and more on the physical nature of things. But this is changing and Cyril is one of the ones introducing this new concept while still retaining a link to the more physical and practical side. We can see this in his doctrine of the Resurrection. It is more mystical and speculative and not quite as realistic as that of other Fathers, both his antecedents and his contemporaries but at the same time his conception of the Church is decidedly empirical with the physical, orthodox Church form, the completion of the 'people of God' of the Old Testament, being the true one, that is, the one intended by Christ. His doctrine on the Eucharist is also noteworthy especially as an example of these two forms of thought coming together. At one moment he seems to put forth a more symbolic understanding, and at other times he emphasizes a strong realistic doctrine where he bread and wine are not mere elements, but the true body and blood of Christ.

"The Church is called catholic or universal because it has spread throughout the entire world, from one end of the earth to the other. Again, it is called catholic because it teaches fully and unfailingly all the doctrines which ought to be brought to men's knowledge, whether concerned with visible or invisible things, with the realities of heaven or the things of earth. Another reason for the name catholic is that the Church brings under religious obedience all classes of men, rulers and subjects, learned and unlettered. Finally, it deserves the title catholic because it heals and cures unrestrictedly every type of sin that can be committed in soul or in body, and because it possesses within itself every kind of virtue that can be named, whether exercised in actions or in words or in some kind of spiritual charism.

It is most aptly called a church, which means an 'assembly of those called out,' because it 'calls out' all men and gathers them together, just as the Lord says in Leviticus: Assemble all the congregation at the door of the tent of meeting. It is worth noting also that the word 'assemble' is used for the first time in the Scriptures at this moment when the Lord appoints Aaron high priest. So in Deuteronomy God says to Moses: Assemble the people before me and let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me. There is a further mention of the assembly in the passage about the tablets of the Law: And on them were written all the words which the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire, on the day of the assembly; it is as though he had said, even more clearly, 'on the day when you were called out by God and gathered together.' So too the psalmist says: I will give thanks to you in the great assembly, O Lord; in the mighty throng I will praise you." (Jerusalem Catechesis)

Gregory of Nyssa



Gregory of Nyssa (335-395) is one of the great thinkers on both the theological and the spiritual aspects of Christianity. Gregory was a great influence at many of the councils of this period, like the Council of Constantinople, which added the final section concerning the Holy Spirit to the Nicene Creed. Tireless in his efforts and writings, he continued to attend church councils, discuss doctrinal matters, combat various heresies, and provide great insight into the spiritual life especially as laid out in Scripture. His older brother Basil and their mutual friend Gregory Nazianzus also deserve mention for both their influence in the development of his thought but also as Fathers in their own right, but again that is perhaps a weakness of this chapter.

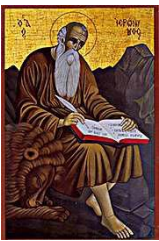
That said, it is on the power of his dual thinking which makes him stand out. On the theological front, his thinking on the Trinity is without measure. Gregory teaches that the three Persons of the Trinity can be understood along the model of three members of a single class: thus, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three in the same way that Peter, Paul, and Timothy are three men. But those are each separate men so why do we not there are three Gods? Essentially, we can distinguish between different members of the same class by the fact that they have different shapes, sizes, and colors. Even if they are identical, they still occupy different points in space. But that is only true for created things, like humans. This is not true for incorporeal beings like God. Even lesser spiritual beings like the angels can still be distinguished by their varying degrees of goodness, but this does not apply to God either. The only means of telling the three Persons in the Godhead apart is by the relationship between them. This is not as in their relationship to us; to us they are indistinguishable, one God. For example, the difference between the Father and the Son is that the one is the Father of the other and vice versa. It is simply impossible to think of one member of the Trinity without thinking of the other two: they are like a chain of three links, pulling each other along. We may be Christians but our relationship is with God; we cannot separate any of the three out and attribute all of salvation to that one.

His spiritual thinking is equally compelling, with a sense of mysticism which will characterize mystical thinkers to come. As an example, to see how the one thinking influences the other, earlier arguments had been made which paint God as *limited*, because that is the only way something could be *knowable*. Gregory broadens the thinking beyond human knowledge and argues that God is unlimited otherwise he would have to be limited by something greater than himself; ergo he is therefore without boundaries. The idea had already been developed by Neo-platonic philosophers like Plotinus – you remember Plotinus, right? For Gregory, conversion was a journey, one of constant progress toward the perfection of God. And as for knowing God, we progress in stages but not to a limited known quantity, which therefore could be owned, but toward an ineffable mystery. We start our journey in 'darkness' (ignorance), then reach spiritual illumination which leads finally to another type of darkness, a 'darkness of the mind' where we come to contemplate the God who cannot be comprehended. As an illustration of this he uses the life of Moses. Moses wanders blindly into the desert and first meets God in the burning bush, a moment of light and illumination when he understands that it is God; when fleeing from the Egyptians he meets Him again, but this time in the cloud, where he realizes that God cannot be seen by the

eyes. Eventually upon ascending Mount Sinai to receive the ultimate teaching, the Law, he finally comes to that "divine darkness", and the realization that God cannot be known by the mind either.

"The soul has followed Moses and the cloud, both of these serving as guides for those who would advance in virtue; Moses here represents the commandments of the Law; and the cloud that leads the way, its spiritual meaning. The soul has been purified by crossing the Sea; it has removed from itself and destroyed the enemy army. It has tasted of the waters of Marah, that is, of life deprived of all sinful pleasure; and this at first had seemed bitter and unpleasant to the taste but offered a sensation of sweetness to those who accepted the wood. Next it enjoyed the beauty of the palm trees of the gospel and the springs; it filled itself with the living water, that is, the rock. It took within itself the bread of heaven. It overwhelmed the foreign host—a victory due to the extended arms of the Lawgiver, which thus foreshadowed the mystery of the Cross. Only then can the soul go on to the contemplation of transcendent Being." (The Life of Moses)

Jerome



Jerome (342-420) is one of the four Latin Fathers, and is best known for his translation of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures into Latin, what is known as the *Vulgate* (where we get the word 'vulgar', meaning low or base but in the case meaning 'the common language'). This translation and its canon became the standard text (and canon) for the Western Church. While he was a prolific writer and defender of orthodoxy, it is for this monumental feat that he is best known. He was taught Greek, but undertook the learning of Hebrew in order to translate as close to the originals as possible for both Scriptures.

By choosing to translate the Hebrew Scriptures from their original Hebrew rather than the Greek of the Septuagint, he was one of the first to remove a layer of confusion when translating. That said, Jerome is a quizzical character, at once pious and humble and yet irascible and contentious. An eminent scholar and astute moralist he could also be cantankerous, argumentative, stubborn, and vain all of which probably made him well suited to the tasks he performed. He lived at a time of great turmoil, and one might be able to forgive some of his faults in light of his zeal and accomplishments.

"While the Origenistic heresy was flourishing here in Jerusalem, a terrifying rumor reached us from the West. Rome had been besieged. Citizens were ransoming their lives, we were told, and after being stripped of their wealth, they were once again attacked: first material possessions, then their very lives were lost in the sack of the city. My voice sticks in my throat, words fail as I dictate this.

The city which had captured the whole world is captured herself. Indeed, Rome perished from hunger before being put to the sword. Only a handful were found living to be taken captive. Hunger's frenzy, erupting, sent men to feed on strange, hideous food: they tore and gnawed at each other's limbs; the mother did not spare the infant suckling at her breast, but devouring it, took back into her stomach flesh and blood which her womb had just brought forth. 'In the night Moab was captured, in darkness her walls tumbled down.' And with the Psalmist we may lament: 'O God, the heathens have come into Your inheritance. They have polluted Your Holy Temple, and made Jerusalem into a barren orchard. To feed the birds of heaven they have thrown the corpses of Your servants, and to the beasts of the earth the flesh of Your saints. Blood has flowed like water round Jerusalem. Nobody was there to bury the dead.'

Barbarians burst in; but Marcella met them with an unperturbed countenance. When they demanded gold and hidden valuables, she merely pointed to her shabby dress. Refusing to believe such voluntary poverty, they beat her with clubs and riding-whips. She felt no pain. Instead, flinging herself at their feet, she begged them with tears not to snatch you from her, or to force that young body of yours to endure what she, because of her age, had no reason to fear. Christ softened their iron hearts. Even among bloody swords, natural piety somehow revealed itself. So they escorted you and Marcella to St. Paul's Church, where you might find either a sanctuary or a tomb. There Marcella bursts into tremendous joy, thanking God for having kept you unmolested; and she is

grateful that the capture of the city has found her a poor woman, not made her one, for now, even though she will have no bread, hunger shall not make her suffer: she is full of Christ. Both in word and deed she will be able to sing, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the .Lord." A short while later she fell asleep in the Lord Jesus. To the very end she remained sound in mind and body.

Shame on us Christians! The whole world crashes down in ruins, and still we remain firm in our sins. Head of the great Empire, the glorious city blazes in one tremendous conflagration. No part of the earth lacks exiles from Rome. Churches once held sacred collapse, broken down into cinders and smoldering ashes. Yet our minds are buzzing with schemes to accumulate money! Live for today, tomorrow you may die this is our attitude. But we continue to build homes as if we were going to reside in this world forever: our walls glitter with gold; gold shines from the ceilings and radiates from our pillars. Yet huddled among the famished, naked, destitute people at our doors, Christ Himself lays dying." (from a letter written in 412 to the nun, Principia, friend to Marcella)

Augustine



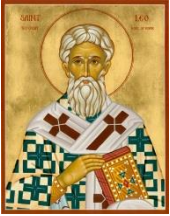
Augustine (354-430). It is hard to estimate the effect of Augustine, not just on theological matters but on Western thought in general. His reception in the East is mixed; although he is acclaimed a Father by the Council of Constantinople (553) many profess him as a great spiritual writer but a rotten theologian seeing in his works the impetus of error in the West, especially the *filioque* as added to the Western Creed.

What can be said about Augustine in such a short space? The range of his writings alone is enormous: comprising moving and profound discussions of Christian doctrine in works like *On the Trinity*. They contain relentless yet carefully crafted arguments against heresies especially Manichaeism, a dualistic religion to which he had once adhered. He fought Donatism and Pelagianism. His *Confessions* is at once an autobiography and a spiritual and doctrinal discussion. *The City of God* is perhaps the least self-serving and most penetrating study ever made of the theology of history bundled within the fundamental contrast between Christianity and the world. Every issue he tackled was scrutinized at a depth still argued about today. The problem of evil, sin, creation, grace, freewill, the nature of the Church, you name it and people are still debating not just those doctrines but his presentation of them. And as a final wonder, he wrote it all in Latin when Greek was the scholarly language.

"To Nobilius, My Most Blessed and Venerable Brother and Partner in the Priestly Office, Augustine Sends Greeting.

So important is the solemnity at which your brotherly affection invites me to be present, that my heart's desire would carry my poor body to you, were it not that infirmity renders this impossible. I might have come if it had not been winter; I might have braved the winter if I had been young: for in the latter case the warmth of youth would have borne uncomplainingly the cold of the season; in the former case the warmth of summer would have met with gentleness the chill languor of old age. For the present, my lord most blessed, my holy and venerable partner in the priestly office, I cannot undertake in winter so long a journey, carrying with me as I must the frigid feebleness of very many years. I reciprocate the salutation due to your worth, on behalf of my own welfare I ask an interest in your prayers, and I myself beseech the Lord God to grant that the prosperity of peace may follow the dedication of so great an edifice to His sacred service." (Letter 169, probably one of the last he ever wrote)

Leo (Pope) The Great



Leo (400-461) was bishop of Rome 442-461. Leo is considered 'great' because he was pretty courageous on all fronts. Not only did he provide doctrinal stability but in 452, by mere words he stopped Attila the Hun from pillaging Rome and again in the year 455, when the Vandals (a Germanic tribe) sacked Rome, Leo persuaded them not to pillage, burn buildings, or spill *any* blood.

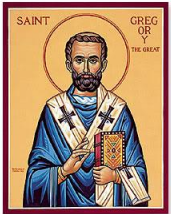
On the doctrinal front, and probably because of the continuous/impending decent of the hordes on all borders he repeatedly called for the convening of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), to among other things, condemn the heresy of Monophysitism which had been growing steadily, lending to both spiritual and political instability. Once convened it was a letter from Leo which set forth the definitive teaching about the two natures of Christ, divine and human. The bishop of Rome had always enjoyed a central role of "first amongst equals" and aside from a call by the Eastern bishops to proclaim the primacy of see at Constantinople, because of Leo's letter the Council apparently cried out: *"This is the faith of the fathers, this is the faith of the Apostles.... Peter has spoken thus through Leo...."* (Acts of the Council, Session II) and overcame the Eastern assertion and gave the distinction of 'universal bishop' to the bishop of Rome, an understanding which, combined with many of his own efforts, led to the development of the understanding of the primacy of Rome and the modern understanding of the Papacy.

"Having read your...letter, the late arrival of which is matter of surprise to us, and having gone through the record of the proceedings of the Bishops, we have now, at last, gained a clear view of the scandal which has risen up among you, against the integrity of the faith; and what at first seemed obscure has now been elucidated and explained. By this means Eutyches, who seemed to be deserving of honour under the title of Presbyter, is now shown to be exceedingly thoughtless and sadly inexperienced, so that to him may apply what the prophet said, 'He refused to understand that he might act well: he meditated unrighteousness on his bed.' What, indeed, is more unrighteous than to entertain ungodly thoughts, and not to yield to persons wiser and more learned? But into this folly do they fall, who, when hindered by some obscurity from knowing the truth, have recourse, not to the letters of the Apostles, nor to the authority of the Gospels, but to themselves; and become teachers of error, just because they have not been disciples of the truth. For what learning has he received from the sacred pages of the New and the Old Testament, who does not so much as understand the very beginning of the Creed? And that which, all the world over, is uttered by the voices of all applicants for regeneration, is still not apprehended by the mind of this aged man.

If, then, he knew not what he ought to think about the Incarnation of the Word of God, and was not willing, for the sake of obtaining the light of intelligence, to make laborious search through the whole extent of the Holy Scriptures, he should at least have received with heedful attention that general Confession common to all, whereby the whole body of the faithful profess that they 'believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.' By which three clauses the engines of almost all heretics are shattered. For when God is believed to be both 'Almighty' and 'Father,' it is found that the Son is everlasting together with Himself, differing in nothing from the Father, because He was born as 'God from God,' Almighty from Almighty, Co-eternal from Eternal; not later in time, not unlike Him in glory, not divided from Him in essence; and the same Only-begotten and Everlasting Son of an Eternal Parent was 'born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.' This birth in time in no way detracted from, in no way added to, that divine and everlasting birth; but expended itself wholly in the work of restoring man, who had been deceived, so that it might both overcome death, and by its power 'destroy the devil who had the power of death.' For we could not have overcome the author of sin and of death, unless He Who could neither be contaminated by sin, nor detained by death, had taken upon Himself our nature, and made it His own. For, in fact, He was 'conceived of the Holy Spirit within the womb of a Virgin Mother, who bare Him, as she had conceived Him, without loss of virginity. But if [Eutyches] was not able to obtain a true conception from this pure fountain of Christian faith, because by his own blindness he had darkened the brightness of a truth so clear, he should have submitted himself to the Evangelical teaching.... And he should not have spoken idly to the effect that the Word was in such a sense made

flesh, that the Christ who was brought forth from the Virgin's womb had the form of a man, but had not a body really derived from His Mother's body. Possibly his reason for thinking that our Lord Jesus Christ was not of our nature was this,—that the Angel who was sent to the blessed and ever-Virgin Mary said, 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, and therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called Son of God;' as if, because the Virgin's conception was caused by a divine act, therefore the flesh of Him Whom she conceived was not of the nature of her who conceived Him. But we are not to understand that 'generation,' peerlessly wonderful, and wonderfully peerless, in such a sense as that the newness of the mode of production did away with the proper character of the kind. For it was the Holy Spirit Who gave fecundity to the Virgin, but it was from a body that a real body was derived; and 'when Wisdom was building herself a house,' 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,' that is, in that flesh which He assumed from a human being, and which He animated with the spirit of rational life." (excerpt from "The Tome")

Gregory (Pope) The Great



Gregory (540-604) was bishop of Rome 590-604. Gregory is really the last of the Latin Fathers, though some would argue that ended with Augustine and Leo. But looking at the establishment (or re-establishment if you will) of the Western Church, Gregory stands out as the transition to the Middle Ages. He participated in the courts of the East during the end of the decline of the West, certainly indicated by the collapse of Hippo around Augustine but also the rise of a more self-sufficient West.

Gregory went to Constantinople in 578 as part of the Roman delegation that ventured there to ask the Eastern emperor for military aid against the Lombard tribes invading Italy. The attempt was unsuccessful but it did put him in the unique position of participating in both worlds and had the added bonus of endearing him to many within Constantinople. By the time he left he successfully defended the corporeal nature of Christ's resurrected body. But it was the beginning of the end in the full exchange between the East and the West, which for both political and doctrinal reasons would become more and more strained, especially as the East began its decline.

A great ascetic, and perhaps a bit of a bump on a log, Gregory is generally accredited with laying the foundations of the medieval papacy as well as the beginning of medieval spirituality. The chant used in Western liturgies is also attributed to him (by name), or at least his refinement and consent. He held tight to an orthodoxy which held the West together, bringing about the conversion Clovis the Frankish king and the reconversion of England, an act which some in the East see as the destruction of Orthodoxy in England, though I am unsure about the validity of such a claim in the long term.

Some of this animus is probably the result of his opposition to the relationship between the Eastern Emperors and the bishops and their claim to be the leaders of the Church. He saw their claim based more in the tie to the Emperor (a passing thing) rather than to Peter as did the 'old Rome' but some of it may have had to do with his ascetic, monastic life and the horrible calamities which best Rome during his life as well as his experiences in Constantinople.

"One coming from Sicily has told me that some friends of his, whether Greeks or Latins I know not, as though moved by zeal for the holy Roman Church, murmur about my arrangements [i.e. of the divine liturgy], saying 'How can he be arranging so as to keep the Constantinopolitan Church in check, when in all respects he follows her usage?' And, when I said to him, 'What usages of hers do we follow?' he replied: 'you have caused Alleluia to be said at mass out of the season of Pentecost; you have made appointment for the sub-deacons to proceed disrobed, and for Kyrie Eleison to be said, and for the Lord's Prayer to be said immediately after the canon'. To him I replied that in none of these things have we followed another Church.

For, as to our custom here of saying the Alleluia, it is said to be derived from the Church of Jerusalem by the tradition of the blessed Jerome in the time of pope Damasus of blessed memory; and accordingly in this matter we have rather curtailed the former usage which had been handed down to us here from the Greeks.

Further, as to my having caused the subdeacons to proceed disrobed, this was the ancient usage of the Church. But it pleased one of our pontiffs, I know not which, to order them to proceed in linen tunics. For have your Churches in any respect received their tradition from the Greeks? Whence, then, have they at the present day the custom of the subdeacons proceeding in linen tunics, except that they have received it from their mother, the Roman Church?

Further, we neither have said nor now say the Kyrie Eleison, as it is said by the Greeks: for among the Greeks all say it together; but with us it is said by the clerks, and responded to by the people; and as often as it is said, Christe Eleison is said also, which is not said at all among the Greeks. Further, in daily masses we suppress some things that are usually said, and say only Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, so as to devote ourselves a little longer to these words of deprecation. But the Lord's prayer (orationem Dominicam) we say immediately after the prayer (mox post preeem) for this reason, that it was the custom of the apostles to consecrate the host of oblation to (ad) that same prayer only. And it seemed to me very unsuitable that we should say over the oblation a prayer which a scholastic had composed, and should not say the very prayer' which our Redeemer composed over His body and blood. But also the Lord's Prayer among the Greeks is said by all the people, but with us by the priest alone. Wherein, then, have we followed the usages of the Greeks, in that we have either amended our own old ones or appointed new and profitable ones, in which, however, we are not shown to be imitating others? Wherefore, let your Charity [an honorary title], when an occasion presents itself, proceed to the Church of Catana; or in the Church of Syracuse teach those who you believe or understand may possibly be murmuring with respect to this matter, holding a conference there, as though for a different purpose, and so desist not from instructing them. For as to what they say about the Church of Constantinople, who can doubt that it is subject to the Apostolic See, as both the most pious lord the emperor and our brother the bishop of that city continually acknowledge? Yet, if this or any other Church has anything that is good, I am prepared in what is good to imitate even my inferiors, while prohibiting them from things unlawful. For he is foolish who thinks himself first in such a way as to scorn to learn whatever good things he may see." (Epistle 12)³⁷

Putting It All Together

When we look at these guy historically we can see some of the development of theology and by combining it with the previous chapter's timeline of heresies, we can come to see their greatness within the challenges of their ages. Would Augustine been as effective in the 2nd century as he was in the 5th? Would the nature of Polycarp's 2nd century martyrdom have inspired much or would it have been viewed as a waste by the 6th century? Perhaps...perhaps not; one cannot truly say, but trusts to the will of God. What one can say is that even today one and one half to two *millennia* later, these men have as profound an effect now as they did then. They provide rationale for continued belief in the Faith, as well has a solid foundation defending orthodox doctrine. In the end they provide a solid link back through those millennia to the foundations of the Christian Faith.

Certainly the Father's emphasis was on the nature of Christ, but this calls for statements about the Trinity, the Virginity of Mary, and a host of other 'related' doctrines. It also had the effect of bringing forth the practical questions of authority and who had it.

"It is not necessary to seek the truth among others when it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth. . . . Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear?"

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*

³⁷ For a great contrast also read his *Epistle 49 To Anastasius*, Bishop Of Antioch

Clean Up Your Acts

Like the book of Acts, this section is about tying up loose ends and looking to what comes next. The Apostles gave us the official climbing wall of Faith, and pointed us the way in which we should follow them up to the top. There have been some side trips though, missteps and even some falls. We began this work setting a foundation for understanding creeds. We have come full circle and are now about to explore the creed, but let us take a moment and integrate the theory and the history we have spoken of so far in order to give a firm footing for exploring the language and meaning of the creed. The climb can be treacherous so good footholds are a must!

God

And we might as well start at the beginning. We have spoken together briefly on this subject but we should say that before we begin anything we can say, all of our language, is focused on a mystery that said language is insufficient to fully grasp much less comprehend. This will not be a scientific explanation of God, or one word explanations, or trite euphemisms, or platitudes. These are hard concepts and they are not completely understood by anyone.

Thomas Aquinas said that there are basically three ways to talk about the mystery. He basically starts by saying that anything we say about God is basically automatically wrong, because our language comes from our experience which means that it can only express human experience and understanding. We would call his thinking *via negativa*, wherein we can really only say with certainty *what God is not*. To understand this better we can take a moment and expound on his thought. He logically lays it out in three easy to follow steps. The first, based in Medieval Skepticism is that every positive statement about God must be discounted. That is to say, as soon as we say something like “God is good” we are applying our understanding of human “goodness” which by definition is nothing compared to God’s goodness. The second step is, after discounting the positive statement in and of itself we can now make a *limited* statement which is based in the *similarity* of Creation to the Creator. We can say that God must be good because there is a current of goodness which is observable within His Creation. The final step is to then extrapolate that idea of similar goodness out to the nth degree and make that our understanding of the goodness of God. The idea being that we go beyond the language we use to the mystery we cannot fathom.

That said, there is another important fact that we must keep in mind: monotheism. There is only one God. I guess we can technically ignore Thomas on this statement, and go with the positive here. Not only is there one God that God is one (*Dt 4:35, 6:4; Mk 12:29&32*). While this is not an innovation just by the Jews, it does come to us definitively as Revelation from them. The Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) tells us this and show again and again that any other gods have no power and are empty, inferior, human controlled understandings and are not the mystery of the One God.

Greek and Roman understandings of God and the nature of Creation differ greatly from this Hebraic understanding. The Demiurge and Logos exist within the universe as something created from the ether. With the Hebrew God we speak of God as separate from Creation. We use the term *ex nihilo*, as everything which is not God as coming *from nothing*. God creates and is not created. Once He creates, He cares for that Creation, which leads us to our next topic.

The Economy

As the political sign said “It’s the economy, stupid” and salvation is no different, except probably for the ‘stupid’ part.

If you recall, “economy” in this sense has nothing to do with the “wages of sin”, but is more about *how something is accomplished*. The ‘economy of Salvation’ talks about how salvation happens, what means and vehicles contribute to and facilitate the action of God to repair the Fall. It also includes our role and responsibilities as the Church.

But just what is that “economy”? Two terms come first: Soteriology and Eschatology. Soteriology is the study of salvation and Eschatology is the study of the ‘ends’ or purpose of something. Each looks at the questions of the economy from different angles but it ends up being the same truth. And speaking of terms, the term “economy” itself comes from the Greek word *oikonomia* which literally means “management of a household” (or “stewardship” as it would also be understood in Jesus’ time). It would be the word used to describe how someone conducts their household’s affairs as well as how they manage the aspects of their life. Theologically then, it refers to God’s management of Creation and humanity, through His self-Revelation to the world, in the context of time, for the sake of the salvation of said Creation and humanity in particular.

What that means is that we couch the economy within the actions of God. One of the first actions we see is His covenants with individuals and eventually with the whole people of Israel. A covenant is a contract, a solemn agreement between two parties, usually a ruler and any vassals they have, involving mutual commitments and/or guarantees. God takes that human contract and understanding and uses it to help us understand our relationship with Him. There have been many covenants between God and humans; specifically we can see those made with Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, David, and Moses and the whole people of Israel. In this last one, known as the Sinai Covenant, God reveals His Law, its commitments and guarantees. This theme is carried on through the Prophets. We Christians see Jesus as the next (and final) step in the covenants of God – what we call the “New Testament”. Christ establishes this new and eternal covenant through his sacrificial death and Resurrection. Our Christian understanding is that this economy has been carried out, continues today, and will never pass away. Finally, because this is true, no new public revelation is to be expected before we die and Christ returns to call all things back to himself and return them to the Father.

At the risk of beating this idea to death, the Church Fathers, who teach us about the economy, distinguish *oikonomia* from theology. *Oikonomia* refers to God’s actions: creating and governing as well as the places it is manifest – in Jesus and his Body the Church; *theologia* refers to the mystery of the internal life of that God, especially in the form of Trinity.

Creeds

Okay so what does that have to do with the price of tea in China?³⁸ We have bandied the term about in this work but now we get down to it. To refresh our memories, Creeds generally have statements that clarify beliefs, and they perform two major functions: one, to catechize and the second and most often used, to oppose the “errors” popular at the time. The Apostle’s Creed of the 1st-2nd centuries focuses heavily on refuting Gnostic teachings; the Nicene Creed, composed about 3 centuries later, is mainly directed against the Arian teachings popular at the time.

Creeds then are the profession of the Faith, external, public declarations. When Tertullian (2nd century) professes the nature of his Faith before the Roman authorities, he is not fighting heresy but he is emphasizing the tenets of the Faith in contrast to Roman legal and religious belief.

...worship the God of the Christians. We hold him to be from the beginning the one creator and maker of the whole creation, of things seen and things unseen. We worship also the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was foretold by the prophets as the future herald of salvation for the human race and the teacher of distinguished disciples. For myself, since I am a human being, I consider that what I say is insignificant in comparison with his infinite godhead. I acknowledge the existence of a prophetic power, for the one I have just spoken of as the Son

³⁸ “It’s the economy, stupid!” – ha, ha; I kill myself...

of God was the subject of prophecy. I know that the prophets were inspired from above when they spoke of his coming among men. (Tertullian's trial ~165)

When Cyprian (3rd century) comes forward it is really a statement of orthodoxy.

There is one God, and Christ is one, and there is one Church, and one chair founded upon the rock by the word of the Lord. Another altar cannot be constituted nor a new priesthood be made, except the one altar and the one priesthood. Whosoever gathers elsewhere, scatters. Whatsoever is appointed by human madness, so that the divine disposition is violated, is adulterous, is impious, is sacrilegious. Depart far from the contagion of men of this kind and flee from their words, avoiding them as a cancer and a plague, as the Lord warns you and says, "They are blind leaders of the blind. But if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch." [Matt 15:14] (Epistle 39)

One of the points we keep in mind with Tradition and things like the creeds is that if Jesus had returned quickly, as many in the Early Church anticipated, then there would have been no need for anything else other than the Hebrew Scriptures and Tradition of the "Old Testament" and Apostolic teachings. Christianity (and its variants) is probably the only religion which relies upon creeds. They are important because they are the part of the mystery of our Communion.

We need to think of creeds in the whole sacramental context. We are a Body of individuals. This mystery reflects the mystery of the Trinity. As one Body we share in the mystery of the Body and Blood. Creeds are part and parcel of our unity of our comm-unity, our common unity. Creeds then are *statements* of Communion just as the Eucharist is the *action* of Communion.

Personae

The Trinity, which comprises the first three-quarters of the Creed, is, as the name implies, a triad of "persons". But just what is "personhood". The term 'person' (*prosopon* in Greek, *persona* in Latin), while an old word, is not an old term theologically. This is one case where the notion rises strictly out of Christian theology; that is to say, it developed from the interchange between the Revelation of the mystery of God (Faith) and human thought, not from a philosophical tradition.

While there is a difference between "*individuum*" and "*personae*", in ancient Greek and Roman thought there was really no concept of person as we use it today (as denoting an individual) or as in the Christian theological sense (denoting a person of the Trinity). If we think back to Plato or Aristotle, the community was everything. In that sense then, there is no philosophical counterpart to the notion. It is not that there are not individual things like people or souls, it is just that those things are in relationship to whole. Initially, the term "person" denoted a mask, or the wearer of the mask, during theatrical or religious festivals in honor Persephone. On the stage, "persona" could be used to mean either the actor who wears the mask, or the role the actor is playing. Eventually it also came to have a legal sense as well, but it is the idea of "role" which most probably lends itself to the later use.

The Fathers preferred the term *hypostasis* to *prosopon* for designating the divine persons. We will deal a bit more with this later, but suffice it to say *hypostasis* has a more ontological flavor than does *prosopon* and so would have more appeal to the Fathers. In that way it is more of a 'Unity of Three' where it is understood that while God is one, each person is distinct. Gregory of Nazianzus (4th century) puts it this way: "*The Son is not the Father, because there is only one Father, but He is what the Father is; the Holy Spirit, although he proceeds from God, is not the Son, because there is only one Only Begotten Son, but He is what the Son is.*" (Orationes)

Tertullian (2nd century) seems to be the first to use the term "person" in a theological way stating "*one being in three persons*" (*una substantia tres personae* – *Against Heresy*) and using the term several time in his work *Against Praxeas*. Still the term is not utilized by the early Fathers.

And while we are on about understanding words (and by way of example of the premise), the attribution of masculine and feminine genders to God confuses many people today. Looking back to our note from Thomas, we must move beyond our statement of God as “He”³⁹ and look into the mystery of God. The limitation of language is real, and many times heresy has arisen from taking the words we use at face value. So for this and any other linguistic conundrums, we can reflect the exasperation of Gregory of Nazianzus (4th century) when he was discussing things with the Arians and arguing against the used word as having only the meaning contained within the word “...you would supposed our God is male...because the word [Father] is? Or the Spirit neuter because he neither begets nor bears? Or that God cohabited with his own will [a feminine word in Greek]...” (Orations 31)

Ecclesia

The last quarter of the Creed deals with the Church, *ecclesia* in Greek – hence the name *ecclesiology* for the study of the Church. Odd as this may seem, the nature of the Church is also Revelation. The Church is more than a gathering of like-minded people who share a common interest. It is not a book club but an entity which, together, makes up the Body of Christ. Like God⁴⁰, it is a real thing, immanent in the World yet transcendent of it.

That the Church is part of the Creed tells us that its definition was also problematic.

The Pertinent Points

Historically and theologically, the Creed plays several roles:

- It is a narration of our sacred stories.
- It is a means and foundation of our interpretation of Scripture.
- It firmly places our understanding of *everything* within a Christian context.
- It guides all of our practices by establishing orthodoxy and orthopraxis.
- It serves (liturgically) as a transition from statement to action.

Each of these statements bears some necessary explanation but at the same time it is also a snapshot of the Church at various times in its development. So we will start with explanation. The main explanation is that everything is related. There is nothing which does not have bearing on anything else. If God is the God of all then all things are because of God. It is not a fragmented human will that creates but the will of God. Everything comes from God and everything is going back to God. Naturally then, all things are related. So anything which is of God reflects everything else which is of God.

As the narration of our sacred stories, it is our Seder recitation if you will. Just as the Seder is not the Exodus but is the re-membling of that Ex, the Creed is a bringing forward the Revelation we have been handed. Like the Seder it not only lays out the economy of salvation, it makes the economy of salvation real, here and now. Just as the Old Testament is guided by the events of the Covenant, so the legitimacy and understanding of both the Old and the New Testaments is guided by the Faith which we profess.

When we speak about reality we are speaking about God. All we know God creates – we can only know what God has taught us – through Creation and Revelation. Everything we talk about everything that matters has to do with God. Our Creed focuses us on that fact – we forget and think that what we think about the world is not the Truth nor is it reality. All reality belong to God, not us. So everything we teach and do is in terms of God, not our own thought. The Creed grounds and guides because it only speaks of God and God’s Revelation.

³⁹ Of course that does not apply to the human Jesus – he was definitely male.

⁴⁰ And Coca-Cola...

Creeds in Time

There have been several creeds used throughout the history of the Church, but the two that people know the best are the “Apostle’s Creed” developed in 2nd century Rome and the Nicene from the 4th century in Constantinople; still the history of even those two creeds is convoluted.⁴¹ The Apostle’s seems to have been constructed in Rome but different places in the West had different forms of the Creed. It really reflects the theological formulations of the first century Roman Church; by 180, Christians had developed an early form of the Creed to refute Gnostic errors. Later versions from the 4th and 5th centuries added statements like “*I believe in the forgiveness of sins*” and the addition of “*holy*” and “*catholic*” to the description of the Church. Specifically in Gaul, the phrase “*he descended to the dead*” came into the creed which is why you do not always see that one. By the eighth century, the creed had attained its present form.

The Nicene Creed has a more direct history, being first promulgated at the Council of Nicaea (325) which was called by Constantine to settle issues which were causing great and therefore political unrest. The Creed though did not appear out of thin air just because Constantine religiously called a council. Several other older creeds were considered by the Council Fathers (even an Arian one was presented), but it seems that a creed Eusebius (bishop of Caesarea) submitted (whether he wrote it is doubtful) appears to have formed the basis of the initial creed of the Council. The final version we have was actually compiled over several councils and at least four variations had been set out by local councils by 341. But even that was not the last word. After Constantine's death in 337 his son Constantius II became emperor in the East. Constantius actually had Arian sympathies and set about reversing the Nicene Creed or at least adapting it so that it included Arian statements instead of Anti-Arian ones. He overcame opposition by making an Arian ally bishop of Constantinople. Constantius then used his power to exile bishops adhering to the Nicene Creed. Many lost their lives in exile but some like Athanasius of Alexandria, fled to places like Rome and were given asylum. In 355 Constantius became the emperor in both the East and Western empires and extended his pro-Arian policy toward the western provinces, frequently using force to push through his creed. At least fourteen creeds were developed between 340 and 360 in order to compromise or replace this creed. With his death in 361, forces overcame the opposition and the tables turned on the Arian bishops who themselves were forced out of office or exiled.

In the end, one more council was held in order to put the matter to rest once and for all. For this reason its official name is Nicene-Constantinopolitan for additions made at the Council of Constantinople in 381. It was revisited at the Council of Ephesus (431) but it was finally and formally adopted at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Creeds are the product of development but the core truths they express are set long before pen is put to paper. Because of their origins, the West employs both the Apostle’s Creed and the Nicene Creed. Their use is determined liturgically.

Putting It All Together

Trying to understand God is hard...well for us anyway. We spend intellectual capital to try and figure it out. Unfortunately we often try to do it from a human foundation. The Creed reminds us of the Truth about the mystery of God, something which is beyond our rational capability to deduce. It helps us explore the nature of God’s actions in the world, heck, in our everyday lives, and it also gives us the means of praising that mystery and those actions. It is the “symbol” of living within God’s economy. The “economy of salvation,” then, is basically “what God is doing” at every moment. It is the understanding within human hindsight/insight of how He is guiding the course of human history towards salvation. When we think of this economy, we can think of it

⁴¹ A third, known as the “Athanasian” (Archbishop of Alexandria – late 3rd early 4th) for its author – though that is unlikely and is more in terms of the attribution like the Apostle’s Creed – is more extensive on the matters of the Trinity and Christ’s nature and not as well known. It mainly concentrates on the Trinitarian issues of its time and place of its development. Its origin and history is also convoluted.

in economic terms, as God's "investment" in His Creation. And just look at what He invests in this Creation: Jesus His Son. That is "what God is doing" every moment of every day.

"While, however, the Scriptures are from God, the understanding of them belongs to the part of men. Men must interpret to the best of their ability each particular part of Scripture separately, and then combine all that the Scriptures teach upon every subject into a consistent whole, and then adjust their teachings upon different subjects in mutual consistency as parts of a harmonious system. Every student of the Bible must do this, and all make it obvious that they do it by the terms they use in their prayers and religious discourse, whether they admit or deny the propriety of human creeds and confessions. If they refuse the assistance afforded by the statements of doctrine slowly elaborated and defined by the Church, they must make out their own creed by their own unaided wisdom. The real question is not, as often pretended, between the word of God and the creed of man, but between the tried and proved faith of the collective body of God's people, and the private judgment and the unassisted wisdom of the repudiator of creeds."

A. Hodge, The Confession of Faith

PART III

The Creed.



The (God) Father

As discussed, God as a concept is extremely broad, but the concept of Father is not so. The idea of God as “Father” really does not appear often in the Old Testament, only about 11 times (*Dt* 32:6; *Isaiah* 63:16, 64:8 for example) and then not as an address. In the New Testament Jesus constantly refers to his “Father”, some 170 times and mostly as an address, with the familiar term “*Abba*” (“Daddy”) being prominent (cf. the *Our Father*, *Mt* 6:9ff). But just what does it mean for God to be “Father”?

The Words

Nicene Creed

*I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.*

Some Biblical References

Dt 6:4; *Rom* 10:8-10; *1 Jn* 4:15; *Mk* 12:29; *Eph* 4: 6; *Jm* 2:19
Ex 6:3; *Mt* 6:9
Gen 1:1; *Ps*
Col 1:15-16

The Problems

The problems being dealt with have a historical aspect, as do the Creeds themselves. While we are focused on the Nicene Creed, it did not develop in vacuum. The Church and its struggle to establish itself in a mainly non-Christian world relied heavily on the tools each community had at their disposal. Ultimately, the Truths she professes are timeless, but it took time to bring orthodox beliefs together. The Nicene Creed stands on its own beyond the previous creeds because it is purely ecumenical, dealing not just with local problems of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, but with the foundation of the universal Church. Even so, we will attempt to look at the problems being expressed in this and the following chapters from both an incremental/historical and a theological path. With that in mind, we spoke earlier of the two main creed shaping heresies as Gnosticism, and Arianism, so they will be the boundaries of our approach. As Gnosticism is the earlier of the two we will look at its effect first and then move to other controversies.

Creation Myths: As we have discussed in the past, the majority of pagan creation myths centered on the ether, a formless, chaos. Within that ether, something forms, sometimes an island – some sort of separation from the ether. On that island, the proto-god, usually a single god or a pair (male and female), forms who then forms the other gods from the ether. Usually these gods are focused on anthropomorphic things like the wind or the sun, something like the Titans for the Greeks. From that group is spawned the groups of gods we are most familiar with like Osiris and Isis, or Zeus and Hera. Ultimately god is inseparable and somewhat indistinguishable from Creation.

Household gods: The Romans had spirits, sometimes ancestors who helped around the house. Early Roman religion was very *totem-based*, built less around mighty gods and their exploits and more around a reliance on spirits who exert good or evil influence in daily life which helps to explain why it did not develop great mythologies like the Greeks and was so slow to adopt them.

What that means is that there is a deep-seated sense of *patronage*, that is, Romans saw the gods more as ‘patrons’, with every Roman god watching over a particular part of life. They each had a job to do, some useful office to perform. The sense of ‘household gods’ means that they were a part of everyday life. There were divinities who presided over events like the birth and nursing of an infant, and at the proper time of birth or infant care they were worshipped, in hope for the reciprocal benefits which they would bestow. Every vocation, every household transaction, every action of daily life had its patron Roman god. This is the thinking which in part lent itself to their ‘borrowing’ other gods from the cultures they ‘encountered’. If there was an established patron god of something then that god could be adopted.

Two Gods: Polytheism is not the only game in town. Sometimes it is less about multiple gods and more about good and evil. For religions like Zoroasterism, it is a fight against the forces of good and the forces of evil, light and dark, male and female. This kind of Zen thinking, while pointing toward physical beings, is more about concepts in opposition.

Mystery Cults: The idea of hidden knowledge, while using a similar definition of mystery, is less about the fullness and transparency of Revelation and more about ‘revealed’ secrets. Gnostics generally combined various and sundry religious and philosophical beliefs into an amalgam of “secret truths”. They believed things like the physical universe is evil and God did not make it. Evil is personified, just as good is personified in God. There is a god of the Old Testament who is material (and therefore evil) who creates the material world and a God of the New Testament who is spiritual (and therefore good) who creates a “new heaven and a new earth.” There were also groups that hailed Mary as the Mother goddess, and that Jesus was born of her not the Father.

Atheism and Agnosticism: Yeah that is right, nothing new about this one. People have stopped looking beyond the ends of their noses for a long time. There are various and sundry reasons but in the end they all add up to a failure to see God as the architect of everything around them, or even see anything as possible beyond the momentary experience.

Okay, that was just a sampling of the environment in which Christianity arrived and grew up. God is not an easy concept. The idea of approaching God using the method of *via negativa* (the negative way) has a certain appeal. But not in a creed. We must make the statements of Truth, not the statements of human reasoning. These are Revelation, not speculation.

The Solutions

This section is not really about solutions to problems but more about how the Truth is way ahead of them. Our Tradition teaches us that first (and this may seem silly) *there is a God* and second, that this God, is not only *the* God, but is the *only one*. So the concept of God is greater than the concepts of gods, meaning that God is the only creator. All other gods are not lesser because God is the meanest and the baddest god there is, but because He does not belong to the physical universe – He is literally above and beyond all other beings. The physical world around us is real and is the result of a gracious and loving God, not anthropomorphized spirits or beings related to physical objects. The spiritual world is not separate from the physical world; God creates it all, but at the same time one cannot make a graven image of God because God is not contained within the physical world. All that we experience and all that we can reason was created by the one God. And God is not hidden such that we cannot know Him. No, His creation shouts out His name. We know Him by His works, but His works are not Him.

Ultimately, there must be a God for all else to make sense. Still these popular beliefs can cause confusion and the Creed is a way of not so much answering them but more of a way of directing the conversation. That is to say, they are the framework, the premises from which we begin our profession and therefore our practice. So we will begin to discuss each statement while keeping in mind the problems which exist while they were being promulgated.

God Is One

So not only does God exist, there is only one God. Scripture tells us "*Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!*" (Dt 6:4) These words are tacked to the door post of every Jewish home, and are revered upon entering and exiting the home. Other possible translations are "*the Lord our God is one Lord*"; "*the Lord our God, the Lord is one*"; "*the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.*" God is one and He is the only one. This is the truth which foils the arguments of polytheists, dualists, and pagans. We understand all that is to come in this fact about God. It also speaks to the understanding of the nature of God in three persons. They are not separate, with separate wills, but one will working in concert.

Ultimately, as with Israel, this statement is really about our response to God. This singleness of God means a singleness of mind for us. We, like Israel, must love him with an undivided heart, mind, soul, our very being, and with every ounce of our strength. *"Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength."* (v. 5) Jesus will reiterate this.

It also means that nothing other than God has the *abilities of* or the *ability to be* God. This leads us to the next profession.

God Is Almighty

What are the theological and practical ramifications of this title? We pretty much take this idea for granted. Even those who oppose God work from the idea that any god must be all powerful. This is not a Christian title but comes to us from the Old Testament. In Hebrew the term is *El Shaddai*; *El* is the reference to God Himself, like *El-ohim*, *El-i-jah*, or *Micha-el*. *Shaddai* comes from the word for breast, which implies one who nourishes, provides, and satisfies. Overall the picture of God in the Scripture gives us the sense that He is all-powerful. There is no other person or so-called god who compares with His power. Additionally this title speaks not just to the Father's power but to our response to that power, to the sense of wonder and awe that we must feel in His presence. There is no act of strength too big for Him and in our wonder and in our awe we would never ask questions like *"Can God make a rock too big for Him to move?"* Instead it invokes a response like *"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."* (Job 42:2)

So once again it is in the end a title about our response to God the Father – a response of worship and awe.

Creation

We have briefly touched on this idea, and it really flows from God being the Father, the Almighty. When we think of creation, we think of the first chapter of Gen: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* And the meaning has been long debated, especially now in scientific terms, but we have to think differently. Creation is *everything*. The heavens and the earth, the visible and the invisible are *everything*, from every subatomic particle to every thought. God is the author, the poet (if we think of Him in a Hebraic way), and Creation is His masterpiece. God is the one with the power to create everything! He makes everything come into being. Everything has essence within the mind of God and His will brings it into existence. God is therefore separate from His creation. We are the creature, He the Creator. We are part of it, He is not. He is in complete control of His creation.

God As Father

The Greek/Latin *pater* denotes one who is both progenitor and caretaker. The Hebrew Scriptures really focus on this role, in opposition to the understandings of gods in the cultures around them. Jesus, on the other hand, speaks to the Father directly, not as a description of his role but in a conversational tone. *"Father..."* (cf. *Jn 17*, among others) There is a shift in the point of the term within Jesus, a fulfillment of its meaning, if you will. The Father begets, initially Creation, but ultimately Jesus, and eventually a new heaven and a new earth – and in different ways. But as we will deal with Jesus more in the next chapter, we will turn toward the primary Hebrew definition, especially as it is applied to the Father in this first section.

So here is where our discussion of "person" comes into play, but it does bear some expansion at this point. Each person of the Trinity has a role to play but it must be played in concert with the other persons because God is one. The Father is not independent of the Son and the Spirit, nor they from him, but each is interdependent. Each of the persons still only accomplishes God's one will. God's will plays out differently in each person, but it is still *God's will*. Philosophically and theologically the term "will" is not base desire, as with Aristotle's vegetable and animal souls, nor is it merely as with the human rational soul – though the rational soul is certainly a reflection of God's will. God's will play into the purposefulness of His actions. Unlike the

ancient gods, like Plato's Demiurge, or the gods of the Gnostics who create somewhat arbitrarily, God creates with a purpose. Nothing external compels God to create (as the Gnostics taught) – He does it from love, because of the fact of Himself.

We can see echoes of God's oneness and His title of Almighty within this title. Again, we should not infer that there is a "god of" sense in the Creed as the Gnostics teach.

All of salvation history plays into the act of Creation, it is part of the Economy of Salvation.

The Fathers and Doctors speak of the Father as *the absolute (single) source of divinity* meaning that the Father has a sort of pre-eminence within the Trinity having within him a sort monarchical role. We will look at how this applies to the other persons of the Trinity a bit more in the next chapters but use it now to strictly discuss the person of the Father. Basically everything comes from the Father, that is to say, since the Son is begotten of the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the Father, the Father is the eternal source of eternal begetting of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit. There are many dangers in this discussion such as the demotion of the other persons *beneath* the Father (not just as distinct), and the Creed directly addresses those in these seemingly simple statements.

God As Creator

Because the will is one (because God is one) God creates. As we understand this action of the one God, the Father is *the Creator, with the Son, and through the Spirit* – all in concert, each with the other. *"God did not stand in need of... [other beings], in order to the accomplishing of what He had Himself determined with Himself beforehand should be done, as if He did not possess His own hands. For with Him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things, to whom also He speaks, saying, 'Let Us make man after Our image and likeness;' [Gen 1:26] He taking from Himself the substance of the creatures [formed], and the pattern of things made, and the type of all the adornments in the world."* (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4) It is the role of the Father to initiate creation. It is the role of the Son and the Spirit to help the Father create, but it is the Father who is the Creator.

The term "creator" as used in the Creed seems to imply a past action. *"God created the heavens and the earth."* (Gen 1:1) But that is not the full truth. If we examined the Hebrew words used (*bara* – "to fatten", which we translate as "to create, fashion, or shape" and *asah*, "to make or do" – a fascinating discussion in its own right), we would see that they do not merely define a past event. The Hebrew points to the *mystery* of Creation and therefore *beyond* time. It is not so much that God *created* but that God *creates*. When we read the first chapter of Gen, at times He creates and at others He makes and sometimes the two are interchangeable – again, a fascinating discussion in its own right but not for this time. The point is, that we must understand that creation happens all of the time, not just once. Every moment of every day God *sustains* creation through creating. He is not the God of the Deists, who winds up the clock and then disappears. God is eternally and intimately involved in the creative process. Creation does not exist without His constant intervention.

Secondly, God is Creator, and He creates new. This is not a process of assembling existing pieces together, but creating from scratch. It can imply *ex nihilo* but it can also imply forming something new from something else, like Eve from Adam's rib. This also may not seem like much to those of us sophisticated 20th century science types but what we have to remember is that this type of creation is different from the creation of other religions at the time, or even the science/religion of today. Those old gods create from within the ether using the forces of the ether, and are themselves a product of that ether (just like the conservation of matter and energy). But with the Father, there is no magic in the old sense (taking the power and material from one place and using it to create in another) or science in the new sense but *will*, God's will to create from nothing. Things which had no existence, He gave/gives existence.

Lastly God creates *for us* – humanity. That is the plan (cf. Gen 1:26-30). This too is in terms of our response. Our dominion over Creation is not *carte blanche* to do as we please with Creation but like God's role (as we are

His image and likeness) to do what is best for Creation. This is not just about recycling, though that is part of it, but more about making sure the right/good things happen.

Heaven And Earth

But just what does He create? Here the Creed introduces two phrases: “heaven and earth” and “visible and invisible”. These may seem redundant but they are not, though they are related. The term “Heaven and Earth” tells us that they are not part of God, but a creation of God, sustained by God. Through them, even though they are not God, they reveal God through their very existence. So this sets God the Father apart from so many of the pagan notions of creator gods. This statement grounds all of the other statements to come, similarly to the way “one God” founds everything.

God creates all there is, all that we can know. We obviously live in a world, on a solid planet circling a gaseous sun. Physical, quantifiable, sensible. But we also know of something more, of another place a place which is not this solid earth on which we stand or the gaseous sun in the sky we see. Something beyond all of that; a place where the non-solid happens. Heaven. The word “Heaven” carries with it the double meaning of the heavenly bodies such as the planets and the stars, and the dwelling place of all things spiritual (angels, saints, etc.).

This profession mirrors the understanding of the Trinity. As there is one God in three persons, all is one creation but there is also a distinction. I will cheat here and fall back on the language of the Catechism: *“The Scriptural expression heaven and earth means all that exists, creation in its entirety. It also indicates the bond, deep within creation, that both unites heaven and earth and distinguishes the one from the other: ‘the earth’ is the world of men, while ‘heaven’ or ‘the heavens’ can designate both the firmament and God’s own ‘place’—‘our Father in heaven’ and consequently ‘the heaven’ too which is eschatological glory. Finally, ‘heaven’ refers to the saints and the ‘place’ of the spiritual creatures, the angels, who surround God.”* (CCC 326)

God makes things. That is what we know from the first words of Scripture onward. It is attested to again and again by the psalmists and the prophets. And from that derives the second statement.

Visible And Invisible

While last, this is certainly not least. This is important; it may not seem an important distinction but it is. Just like it is important to confess what we have done and what we have *failed* to do. God creates everything, and so everything created is *good*, both the spiritual *and* the physical. There is the problem of the spiritual versus the physical though. If God is all that is good and He is non-corporeal or as we might also say spiritual and we who are physical beings are, let us say, not so good, then there is a direct correlation between the invisible and good and visible and not good.

So this also answers the arguments that can be fought from a Platonic material/evil – immaterial/good by various and sundry groups over the years. The material world is corruptible and passing and therefore cannot be good. This statement tells us instead that 1) anything that can be created has been, whether material or immaterial, and 2) since God created it, it is all *good*. *“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected when received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the invocation of God in prayer.”* (1 Tm 4:4-5)

But these lines profess that it is more than a simple light/dark, material/immaterial creation. Not only does God create the heavens and the earth, He creates all of the things we can and cannot see. As Shakespeare points out, *“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than [sic] are dreamt of in your philosophy.”* (*Hamlet*) Shakespeare, like me and like the Creed, is not pointing out ignorance or things unknown but the paltry nature of our thought in comprehending larger things. It is not just what we can see but also what we cannot see – in a word, *everything*.

Putting It Together

Okay – these chapters keep getting longer and longer. Because of the comprehensive nature of the Faith and the theology which explores it, it is difficult to keep the points contained to small sound-bites.

God the Father is distinct from the Son and the Spirit, without being separate from them. God the Father creates and creates constantly. Heaven and Earth and things visible and invisible are just the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. God the Father creates, nurtures, sustains. He creates anew, from nothing, heaven and earth; in Jesus, a new humanity; and eventually, from this heaven and earth, a new heaven and a new earth (cf. *Rev 21:1-5*).

Many groups fought the nature of God and Creation. What the Creed is telling us is that all things, whatever their nature, owe their origin and continued existence to God the Father.

We should probably end as we began *“Is he not your father who begot you, the one who made and established you?”* (*Dt 32:6*)

“One does not hunt for God as if He were some sort of quarry such that when one finds God, one hides off in the shadows, furtively glancing and aiming with the hopes of capturing, subduing, devouring, and hanging on a wall in triumph; to find God is just the opposite: one exposes oneself to God – to be captured, subdued, and devoured – subduing one’s self and submitting like the lost sheep allowing God to find them and carry them home on His shoulders in triumph.”

Anonymous

The Son

Jesus as the recognized messiah presents several intriguing avenues of exploration, none of which we will take here, of course. The professions about the Son make up the bulk of the Creed. If just the idea of the Trinity was enough to cause trouble, then the nature of Jesus only exacerbates and complicates things. These statements turn us more toward the Arian controversies of the 4th century. Still, the problem is not with the Revealed nature of Jesus but in our ability to comprehend the mystery of the Christ.

The Words

Nicene Creed

I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten
Son of God
born of the Father before all ages;
God from God
Light from Light
true God of true God,
begotten not made
consubstantial with the Father,
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was
incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate,
He suffered death, was buried

and rose on the third day in
accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of
the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

Some Biblical References

Acts 11:17; Eph 4:5; Phil 2:11
Mt 14:33, 16:16; Jn 1:14,18, 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9
2 Cor 1:19
Jn 1:2, 17:24
Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 5:20
Ps 27:1; Mt 17:2,5; Jn 1:4-9, 8:12; 1 Jn 1:5
Jn 17:1-5; 1 Jn 5:20
Heb 1:5
Jn 10:30; 14:10-11
Jn 1:1-3; Eph 3:9; Heb 1:1-2
Jn 12:47; Rom 1:16; 1 Tim 2:4-5
Jn 6:33,35, 16:28
Lk 1:30-31,35

Jn 1:14; Phil 2:7-8; Heb 2:16
Mk 15: 25; Jn 1:14, 9:15-16; Acts 13:28; 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Tim 6:13

Mk 8:31; Jn 19:30; Acts 17:2-3; Heb 2:18; 1 Pt 2:21; Mk 15:46;
Mt 27:59-60; Lk 23:53-58; Jn 19:41-42; 1 Cor 15:4
Ps 16:10; Hos 6:2; Mk 16:6; Mt 28:6; Lk 24:1-7; 1 Cor 15:3-4

Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9-10
Mk 16:19; Lk 22:69; Acts 7:55-56; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 1 Pt 3:22

Mt 24:27-30; Mk 13:26; Lk 21:27
Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1; 1 Pt 4:5; Rev 20:12
Lk 1:33; 2 Pt 1:11

God As Son

If the Father is the Creator who creates and sustains everything, then why do we need the Son anyway? What role does the Son play? What does it mean to be "Son"?

The biblical title "son" is used throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. In the New Testament, while such titles are applied to him by others, Jesus uses the word himself, for example "*Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.*" (Lk 9:58) Of course the titles of Jesus are mostly post-

Resurrection imposed but as we can read, Jesus does use some himself and especially places himself as “Son” when he refers to “my Father” (cf. *Jn* 5:17, for example⁴²).

Initially in the Old Testament, “son of Man” is used to distinguish humans from other created beings like angels but in later Jewish apocalyptic literature (like *Daniel*), the “*Son of Man*” is a figure of divine judgment. Jesus appears to use the title in terms of his earthly ministry, pointing to his physical nature (i.e. “*the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head*”). The title “son of God” is a title given initially to the angels, is eventually applied to the whole of Israel after the Sinai Covenant (the “Chosen People”), and finally directly to their kings and denotes a very special relationship, and its application to Jesus in the New Testament may only be in that sense. But according to the fullness of Revelation in Jesus, we also see development of the understanding of Jesus as more, especially in the use during Peter’s confession of Jesus as “*the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (*Mt* 6:16). Paul especially uses this sense of Jesus’ earthly titles.

Just from a legal point of view, the son is the heir. Upon the death of the Father, the son gets *everything*. In Jewish terms, that includes the whole household: all its goods, chattel, and its people. Additionally, and probably most importantly, it includes the covenant with God. The Son has been handed the Kingdom by the Father. There is obviously a special relationship beyond Creator/Created between Jesus and the Father. We are introduced to God the Father, the Creator and the one who sustains in the first chapter of *Gen*, but there we also see God’s Word as being spoken. From that we understand Jesus as God the Word, the *Logos*, per *Jn*. This implies existence before creation, and therefore both a divine nature as well as a human nature to the ministry of Jesus.

“Son” then has two meanings, on the one hand the earthly, physical, human Jesus and on the other, the heavenly, spiritual, divine Jesus. Probably the most confusing part of Christianity is the understanding of Jesus as both God and as human.

Christology

Which brings us here. This is not only a real term it is what we are talking about in this chapter. “Christ” is Greek for the Jewish word “Messiah” meaning “anointed one” (think *chrism* – the oil used in anointing). So what we are talking about here is not really the historical Jesus but the “anointed one”. Priests, prophets, and kings were all anointed in the Old Testament, so the idea is not new. It is the transformation of this title that we study, Jesus as the Messiah, the *post-resurrection* experience of the Apostles and early disciples. This event created many questions as to what they understood before the Resurrection and what they understood after the Resurrection (all dealing with Jesus’ teaching). The earliest disciples were Jews (and “lovers of God” – Greek converts) for the most part and so their understanding of God was monotheistic. Ergo most early Christians wanted to retain that understanding of God – as one. They were still monotheists. Per Judaism there was only one God, the God of the Creator, the “God of Israel” the one Jesus called “Father.”

But if there was only one God, what was Jesus? If there is only one divine, and Jesus acknowledged him as Father, how could the “Son” also be divine? What was the precise relationship between the Father and the Son? If Jesus was divine, what was the nature of the Jesus they knew, who was obviously human, who needed nourishment, could be beaten, bleed, and die. And then, in their post-Resurrection experience, he could be solid, eat, and yet pass through walls, or appear and disappear at will?

How did the human and the divine fit together, as they must from their experience both pre and post Resurrection? If Jesus had been divine when they knew him, then how could he also be human? Such questions about the nature of Jesus and his relationship with God the Father were not solved right away (remember the Apostles only had 50 days to ask questions – all the while being taught in light of the Resurrection, and in total and complete awe of the situation, I defy you to do better) meaning that this Revelation was hotly debated in

⁴² You might notice that many references to the divine Jesus come from the Gospel of *Jn*, and Paul.

the first few centuries. As we can tell from our earlier chapter on heresy, many different opinions, arguments, and solutions were put forth. Hence the need for hefty Christological studies (not Jesusological studies).

The main point, reiterated over several lines of the Creed, is that the Son, though “*in human form*” is God. Jesus accepts Peter’s confession of “*Christ*” and “*Son of the Living God*” because he understands it in terms of the Economy – he accepts it and then immediately places it within the context of his imminent death and resurrection.

The Problems

There is really no need to rehash all of the heresies we mentioned before, but if you recall that short list, then you remember that they were Legion. The two problems we have been focusing on deal with Jesus’ dual nature, as both God and human. The Gnostics could not accept Jesus’ human nature and the Arians could not accept his divine one, the former based in human practice the latter on human reason. An additional benefit to their adherents was the removal of the prickly problem of the Trinity. If not human no need to wonder how God works as Trinity; if not divine then no need to define how Trinity works either. There is no need for the mystery of the Trinity because it becomes completely rational, not revealed.

We have covered this before but it probably bears a retelling within the present context. As with trying to get a handle on Gnosticism as a whole body of belief, their notions about the material/divine nature of Jesus fall into several lines. While as a whole Gnostics thought that the orthodox teaching that Jesus became human was wrong, why they thought it was wrong comes in several flavors with the only common driving point being the fallen, evil nature of the material. The exact nature of Jesus was fuzzy, with some differentiating base on the title “Christ”. There were some who vaguely understood the Christ to be the divine and the Jesus to be some sort of human mouthpiece through whom the divine Christ spoke to humans. Some saw Jesus as a human vessel, merely imbued with the Spirit during his ministry and bereft of the Spirit before his death. This keeps the divine from being overly tainted by the flesh, making it a tenuous relationship at best. For others, there was never a material version of Jesus, only a non-material being with the appearance of a human. This vessel was similar to the angels of the Old Testament who were merely the mouthpieces of God, being of human appearance but remaining corporeal beings. For others it was more about Jesus’ death and suffering as being an event outside of normal time and space, or only an appearance of suffering and death.

Arianism, comes later, is more cohesive, and focuses more on the divine nature. Arius, for whom the heresy is named, was a priest in Alexandria in the early 4th century. Whereas Rome of the earlier centuries was a clearing house for mystery cults and various religious beliefs, Alexandria was the center of learning and rational debate.⁴³ Arius was bothered by the logic of Jesus being *begat* and countered with a more rational argument. He argued that there was the Father, who alone existed before all time, and who then first created (*begot*) the Son, and that the newly created Son, in conjunction with the Father, proceeded to create heaven and earth. By this, the Son was not God at all but a created being, like us or the angels – problem solved. Rational, though it echoes of the earlier Gnosticism in that it reflects some of the mystery cults which relied upon pagan beliefs in the structure of their gods. There is also the echo that the perfect immaterial God would not be part of the material world, relying upon more material intermediates to reveal Himself.

That said, the Bishop of Alexandria, coincidentally name Alexander, banded with the other Egyptian bishops in questioning, condemning, and eventually excommunicating Arius for this line of thinking. So Arius high-tailed it out of there and headed into Asia Minor where he taught and wrote at length. Bishops as well as faithful began to fall under his sway, which caused political as well as religious unrest and eventually prompted Constantine to call the Council for the Creed we now examine.

⁴³ Recall the famous Library of Alexandria which was burned to the ground by Julius when he invaded and conquered Egypt.

The Solutions

Historically, in terms of creed development, the earliest statements are those about Jesus' humanity, that is, the ones we say in the 'second part' if you will, which in their own way address the Gnostic material/evil issue. The Arian development though is focused completely upon the divine nature, the statements made in the 'first part'. So it makes sense that the human Christ is determined first and the divine second. We can also see this though in the experience of the disciples. They first knew the human Jesus, knew him "*in human likeness; and found human in appearance*" (Phil 1:7b) and after the Resurrection came to know him in his divinity. As said, the Early Church is a post-Resurrection entity⁴⁴ and so that same hymn quoted by Paul starts with "*Who, though he was in the form of God...*" (ibid 1:6a). So, our human knowledge of Jesus moved from his humanity to his divinity, whereas the Church moves from his divinity to his humanity (and back again) because, once again, we are professing the economy of salvation.

But his divinity did not really become an issue until challenged by the Arians, and so creeds do not focus on it for centuries. But remember that the creed is not just concerned with repudiating the Gnostics and the Arians. The flow speaks to us of both the two natures of Jesus, first of his relationship with the Father and second of his Incarnation *and* mission among humanity. They are, in the same sense that Jesus is one, two sides of the same coin.

The solution to the problems lie in the words we use. Words are what we need. As we have discussed earlier, one of those words is *Logos*, but interestingly enough it is not one of the ones used in the Creed. The words of the Creed are carefully chosen and bear great meaning.

The One Lord

As we profess "*one God*", so we profess "*one Lord*". As the three persons are in concert one God so the two natures in Jesus are simultaneous. He is "*one Lord*". Additionally the proclamation of "*Lord*" also carries some significance. "*Lord*" is not a new title, but comes from the Old Testament, and is ascribed to God (the replacement for *YHWH*, *Adonai* in Hebrew, *Kyrios* – think *Kyrie Eleison* – in Greek), in lieu of using His *name*. The title is given to one who is recognized as in charge of things, especially life and death.

So we tie in life to the Creation. "*...through him all things were made*" also points to the relationship within the Trinity. The Word, as Genesis and Paul tell us, was there at the beginning. Life depends upon him and his role in the constant creating of the Father; without the *Logos*, there is no Creation.

On the other side, when we think about the Resurrection, then Jesus' statement "*I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father*" (Jn 10:18) puts him squarely in the realm of someone who has the power over life and death, given to him by the Creator, the Lord God. Death now comes in two flavors, in light of the Resurrection: "the death that leads to life" which comes from following Christ and 'the death that is once and for all' which comes from sin (i.e. not following Christ).

From a legal point of view, for the Christians to call Jesus "*Lord*" meant that they were in conflict with the Roman lord – the emperor – who also apparently had some power over your life and death – but not for as long as God.

The Begotten

We read in the Old Testament that 'so-and-so begat so-and-so, who begat so-and-so' and so on. We understand begetting to mean that so-and-so was the father of so-and-so, in terms of human generation. So if the main beef with Arius was that Jesus was a created creature born, then why would you go to the effort of using a word which means "*born*"? Genesis tells us that the Word was with God before creation. Paul reiterates

⁴⁴ Post-Pentecost if you really want to push it, but we are talking of the Son here, not yet the Spirit.

that, clarifying that *"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."* (1 Col 1:17) and John bluntly states that *"the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* (Jn 1:1) So how is he "begotten"?

One of the ideas being combated by the notion of being born deals with *Adoptionism* – where God 'adopted' the human Jesus. This says that God merely granted Jesus powers and then "adopted" him as a Son. But in terms of our discussion we are fighting with Gnostics and Arians. The Son though, is begotten before all ages, or as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews puts it *"passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation"* (9:11). If this tabernacle of which the author speaks is not of Creation, then it must be from *before* Creation. Jesus had to be before and therefore could not be just human.

While the Father and the Son are one, the Father sends his Son. We can see this statement throughout the New Testament, in the epistles and even in Jesus' parables (cf. Mt 21:33-39). The idea that the Father sends the Son does not remove the Son's free decision to become human. It does play into that decision though. The Father speaks the Word but the Word acts freely – in concert with the Will. That is to say, in terms of the economy, how else would he act?

Consubstantial

This word comes to us courtesy of the new translation of the Creed. Previously the phrase was *"one in being"* which I think may have cause confusion due to the modern meaning of the word *"being"*. This term harkens back to the difference between essence and existence. Think back to Aristotle's definition of substance as that which makes a thing what it is. Being means existence not essence and essence (substance) precedes existence. So if the Father existed before time (as Creator, the one who holds both his essence and his existence within himself), Arius believed that if the Father had "begotten" the Son, then the Son must be inferior to the Father, as existence springing from essence, material from spiritual is inferior. He likened it to a prince (the son) being inferior to a king (the father).

So that oneness of will and substance means that not only is the Son of God but that the Son will be returning to God. *"I came from the Father and have come into the world. Now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."* (Jn 16:28) But herein lies the problem with words. Athanasius returned that a son is precisely the same sort of being as his father using the word *"homoousios"* (Gk meaning "same essence")⁴⁵, and that the only son of a king is destined himself to be a king – in other words, king was more the substance than was father/son genetics. A human son is certainly younger than his father he is only has the potential of what he will be within him (think back to Aristotle). But we are not talking about a human father and a human son. So when we say that a human prince *may* someday hope to become a king like his father is now, we are talking about potential. God is fully realized and has no potential within Him. What we are saying of God the Son is that He is from all eternity what God the Father is – fully realized.

This is because God is not in time or space. Humans deal in the physical particulars. Time, as Augustine tells us, only comes into existence within Creation and has meaning only in the context of the physical universe. When speaking about God though, when saying that the Son is "begotten" of the Father, we are not talking about a Creation event. Still, just as we see the Father in relationship to His creation creating, sustaining we come to understand the nature of the relationship within the Trinity. With the Father and the Son we are speaking about an external to Creation realm, the eternal and timeless relationship between the Father and the Son, creative and nourishing. They are of the same substance (con-substantial).

True God and True Man

So when we keep the discussion in context, God becomes human but human does not become God. The Son *assumes* humanity, enters within human time and space. This human nature is as important to us as is his divine.

⁴⁵ Eusebius of Caesarea argued for the term *"homoiousios"* meaning *"similar essence"* – but Athanasius would have none of it.

It goes back to creation and the goodness of the material world. God creates the heaven and earth, visibly and invisibly. Without this fact, we question the reality of reality and therefore the Truth of the Economy. If we can question the existence of the physical world and our relationship to it, then we have to question our relationship with the Creator and whether or not Jesus the Son even dwelt among us. It starts a cascade failure which causes the Economy of Salvation itself to fall into doubt. So, if we believe that Revelation is Truth then we must maintain the Truth. Jesus is both God and human.

We can easily understand Jesus as Son, mainly because the events of his life happened so long ago. But distance can also make the heart grow confused. The previous section addresses many of the divine aspects so we will dwell mainly here on his human self. We must remove from our minds the image of two souls/wills crammed into one body at odds with one another or controlling one half of his body while the other controlled the other half, or of the divine will suppressing the human will. Instead, what the divine did was take on (*assume*) all of the human aspects, our human substance. This means that he had a true human physical body – a body which scratched and grew. It also means that he had a human mind and human knowledge – *limited* knowledge, which was bounded by the geological, political, scientific, and historical conditions of his *time*. All that means he experienced all that we experience and that he "*advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.*" (Lk 2:52). He had to learn from experience just as we do. He had to bend his human will to the divine will through effort.

All that said, Arius held to the material/immaterial incompatibility stance. It is a rational, legitimate common-sense approach to the problem of Jesus – water and oil do not mix. He also objected to the non-biblical term *homoousios* being used to explain the God/Man. Let us face it. This is a tough idea. The Fathers sought to come up with a word which satisfied the meaning of what Revelation tells us about Jesus. Like *personae*, this is a theological word, a word of explanation and therefore an imperfect solution at best. But Arius was actually not alone in the latter position, and many saw it as a non-orthodox *innovation* – cause for heresy. When it made it into the Creed it helped to fuel Arius' position and popularity. Many rejected the Nicene Creed because of it. Ironically then, Athanasius, who proposed the word in opposition to Arius, was actually seen as the liberal radical because he was trying to stretch the understanding which was obviously deficient – as seen by Arius' argument.

But I digress. Humanity falls back under that whole creation discussion we had in the last chapter and section, on Heaven and Earth as well as Visible and Invisible. All things created are good. Period. That is what has been revealed. While there may be a struggle between the spiritual and the material it is more in terms of practice, in recognizing sin not in substance. There is not a dualism between material and spiritual, where one is evil or imperfect and the other good or perfect. We are body *and* soul, head and heart, so, while there was a fall where the flesh and soul are pulled down, there is ultimately restoration within the God/Man. This is the Economy of Salvation.

We use the word "will" here. Jesus *assumed* humanity and therefore a human will, meaning that he freely took on a human nature but without surrendering his divine nature (which gave him the freedom to take on human nature). There is a joining of the fully realized (divine) with the potential (human). Without loss of freedom (Jn 10:18) he became human. His human will he turned toward his Father's will (the divine will). Basically that means that he submitted his human will to his divine will – which is nothing radical; it is something Mary did and something we are called to do as well.

Mariology

So, speaking of Mary, Christology begs a study of Mary. Mary is "virginal", and not just that but "ever virgin". We will not spend a lot of time here, this being a course all in itself, but it is important to the Creed, important enough to be mentioned. Mary is instrumental in the Incarnation, the "in-fleshing" of the Son. Without her, and not just someone like her, there would be no Salvation. We will not address the titles of Mary here but it bears remembering that there are many. In and through Mary, Jesus "became man". Mary was fully human and gave to Jesus his human form.

At the same time, *Theotokos* is the generally accepted title of Mary. It means “God bearer” in Greek and speaks not to the human aspect of Jesus but to his divine. The Creed keeps up the tension between the divine and the human, keeps it before us by stating that at one and the same time he was by the Holy Spirit and “of the Virgin Mary” “incarnate” and “and became man” – two separate things. It is the power of God and the true human nature that the Creed emphasizes by mentioning Mary.

It's The Economy...

Incarnation. “*For us and for our salvation*” – what more needs to be said?

Covering A Multitude Of Sins

So speaking of the Economy of Salvation, why is it necessary for Jesus to come as “*expiation for our sins*” (1 Jn 2:2)? What is the nature of sin and evil? The Gnostics present that dualism as the explanation. Loosely stepping through each profession, orthodoxy counters with the statements which affirm that Jesus was human, that he was conceived through the action of the Holy Spirit, with whom he, with the Father, was always one. This physical conception implies also a physical birth which countered the Gnostic teaching that Jesus humanity was just an appearance. This also counters the teaching by other Gnostics that the Spirit had nothing to do with Jesus until his Baptism. Next, contained within and following from that, the nature of the person who conceives is that of a virgin, not just virginity in the physical sense but also in the spiritual sense, of someone who was totally devoted to God. That physical response to God, with mind, heart, and womb speaks to the special nature of the woman who said “Yes” and the special nature of the child in her womb, from the first moment of his life, and not just from the baptism on.

So the Incarnation, life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus are important events both in and out of time. They all emphasize the dual nature of the Son, and the insertion of God into His Creation, creating and sustaining it. Still the cultures at the time had many stories that came to them of the god who is killed but rises again. Within the culture at the time, they had become stories more than religious myth and practice, tied more to the physical death and rebirth of the seasons. The Creed on the other hand takes great pains to say that Jesus is a historical figure, not a myth or story. He lived and died under a known historical figure – “*Pontius Pilate*” who we know was Procurator of Judea from 26-36 AD while Tiberius (16-37) was Emperor. Cold, hard facts. The other cold, hard fact was that “*he suffered death and was buried*” under said Pontius Pilate. A real human body that felt pain, died horribly, and could in fact be buried in a tomb. He did not swoon, or fall unconscious, or in a coma, or only seem dead, or slip down off the Cross, or get replaced, or any of the other possible explanations offered because of the confusion over his dual nature.

As Lord, he will also return “*to judge the living and dead*” and a new Heaven and new Earth, a “*kingdom*” with “*no end*”, will be created. The Father has given him the power (as the single source of divinity). In the Western *Apostle's Creed*, he is also said to have descended to the dead. This bit of theology is not covered in the Nicene Creed, but bears a bit of mentioning. The ramifications of this are two-fold. First, in that he really did die, such that he entered *Sheol*, the Jewish realm of the dead (not Hell per-se, just the place where the dead souls go – but that is another class) and that the souls there, who were locked out of Paradise after the fall, people like “*our Father in Faith*” – Abraham, Isaac, Moses, David – all of those who trusted in the Covenants of God and followed His divine will, that they were finally able to come into Heaven. Once again: Jesus is the fullness of Revelation – everything God publicly reveals comes to fulfillment in him.

Putting It Together

Okay this was a long one. Even so, it barely scratched the surface of the power and meaning of these professions. The most important thing is that Jesus is both a physical and a spiritual being. His Church, his Body, which we are, is therefore a physical and a spiritual thing. Our profession of Faith, our expression of the action

our belief and the action of our response has both a divine and a physical nature. We like the human Jesus bend our human will, our limited human rationality, our flawed “earthen vessels” (2 Cor 4:7) toward the divine will. We are created in the “*image*” and “*likeness*” of God. Our sin causes us to lose that likeness, but Jesus, because he is true God and true man, restores us to the Created state.

God undertakes the task of creating and sustaining – a part of which is restoring Creation and the humans who have dominion over it.

We follow Christ because that is how God ordains it. The Economy of Salvation was written long before we came on the scene and will continue long after we have gone to our eternal reward. But we profess and hand on this mystery because it is the Truth, and we guard it jealously.

“We have all heard people say that the Jesus of the New Testament is indeed a most merciful and humane lover of humanity, but that the Church has hidden this human character in repellent dogmas till it has taken on an inhuman character. The truth is that it is the image of Christ in the churches that is almost entirely mild and merciful. It is the image of Christ in the Gospels that is a good many other things as well. [...] There are a great many things about the Gospels which nobody would have invented, things which have remained rather as puzzles. It is anything but what these people talk of as a simple Gospel. Relatively speaking, it is the Gospel that has the mysticism and the Church that has the rationalism. It is the Gospel that is the riddle and the Church that is the answer.”

G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*

The Spirit

This third section of the Creed is, like the Father's, short and to the point. Of course this is a theological point, so there really is nothing short about it. The importance of Trinity to the understanding of Revelation and the Economy of Salvation cannot be stated often enough or strongly enough. Often the Spirit seems to be the Ringo of the Trinity, everyone seems to know there is a Holy Spirit but no one really talks about or knows much about the Spirit.

The Words

Nicene Creed

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is adored and
glorified,
who spoke through the prophets.*

Some Biblical References

Jn 14:26
Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor 3:17; Gen 1:2; Jn 3:5
Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:14-15
Mt 3:16-17, 28:19; 1 Jn 5:7
I Sam 19:20; Ez 11:5, 13; 2 Pt 1:21

God As Spirit

Before we just jump into this one, we probably need to understand the word 'Spirit' in order to discuss this very important person. "Spirit" is used in various ways throughout the Scriptures. At one time it is used for the "soul" or the animating thing within us (which God put there). At others it means the power of God. And finally it is used in a *personae* way, indicating the third person of the Trinity.

Like the word "Son" this means that the word "spirit" is used throughout the Bible and to various meanings, not all of which can lead us to understand the third person. The term "*Holy Spirit*" does not always appear even when the author is speaking of the said person. To top it off, the New Testament gives us no clear teaching on the Holy Spirit. What we do know is that the term "*holy*" tells us of the nature and origin of the Spirit. "*No one is good but God alone*" (Lk 18:19) Jesus tells us. So in kind of a circular argument, if the Spirit is God's then it must be holy and if it is holy then its origin must be with God.

The understanding of the Spirit as God is driven by the very nature of God as we have discussed it so far. God is a living God, not just a God of the past, but a God who creates and sustains.

The Problems

Usually most problems with the Spirit tend to come from those who in some form or fashion deny the divinity of Jesus. For the Sabellianists of the early 3rd century, God the Father and Jesus the Son and God the Spirit were not distinct persons but basically modes of the same person who appeared when we needed them; the three persons of the Trinity only existed in God's relation to humanity, not in substance. The Arian's insistence of the non-divinity of Jesus begged the question that if Jesus is not divine, and the spirit is given by the Son (cf. Jn 20:12), how could a non-god give us God? In fact, another Arian-based denial was part of the impetus for the Council of Constantinople in 381 (Nicene-Constantinople Creed – remember?) and its update of the Creed. Not only was the Arian heresy was finally cleansed from the Creed, the Council also condemned the Arian bishop Macedonius (late 4th century) and his followers. They denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit because the Spirit was a creation of the Son and therefore did not to proceed from the Father.

But even more, Paul's letters, so essential to Christianity, often deal with the Spirit within the communities he is addressing. In fact, we can look at it this way – without all of the problems in those communities, their lack of/mis-use of the "gifts of the Spirit" many of those letters would *never have been written*.

The Solutions

The actions of the Spirit throughout Scripture give us the clue as to the nature of the Spirit. From Creation even unto today in the Church, we rely upon the Spirit. One cannot speak about Jesus or the nature and actions of the Church without understanding the Spirit. As with the Son, the only solution is to declare Revelation, that the Spirit is God as well. So against Macedonius' thought, the Council Fathers forced the profession of the consubstantial nature of the Spirit with the Father and the Son that we say today. But the question remains: if the Spirit is not really well defined in Tradition, then what drives this profession?

The Lord

Wait, have we not heard that before? Twice? Of course we have and so we understand that right off the bat we are declaring the One God once more. This title carries with it all that we have said about the Father and the Son. But it also carries the unique nature of the Spirit.

But, in the end, is the Spirit God? Before we answer that, we must answer if the Spirit is God like the Son, that is, is the Spirit another Son? Gregory Nazianzus answers both questions this way *"What then, say they, is there lacking to the Spirit which prevents His being a Son, for if there were not something lacking He would be a Son? But the difference of manifestation, if I may so express myself, or rather of their mutual relations one to another, has caused the difference of their Names. For indeed it is not some deficiency in the Son which prevents His being Father (for Sonship is not a deficiency), and yet He is not Father. According to this line of argument there must be some deficiency in the Father, in respect of His not being Son. For the Father is not Son, and yet this is not due to either deficiency or subjection of Essence; but the very fact of being Unbegotten or Begotten, or Proceeding has given the name of Father to the First, of the Son to the Second, and of the Third, Him of Whom we are speaking, of the Holy Spirit that the distinction of the Three Persons may be preserved in the one nature and dignity of the Godhead. For neither is the Son Father, for the Father is One, but He is what the Father is; nor is the Spirit Son because He is of God, for the Only-begotten is One, but He is what the Son is. The Three are One in Godhead, and the One Three in properties; so that neither is the Unity a Sabellian one, nor does the Trinity countenance the present evil distinction.*

What then? Is the Spirit God? Most certainly. Well then, is He Consubstantial? Yes, if He is God..." (On the Deity of the Holy Spirit, 9-10)

We state that the Spirit is *"the Lord the giver of life"* meaning that without the Spirit, in concert with the Father and the Son, Creation would not happen. This fact we see in the very beginning. As the Word was with the Father at Creation, so is the Spirit: *"with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters"* (Gen 1:2). The term we translate as "might wind" is the Hebrew word *ruah*, which literally means *"spirit or breath of God"*. The whole of the Economy of Salvation involves the Spirit. *"...nobody speaking by the spirit of God says, 'Jesus be accursed.' And no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the holy Spirit."* (1 Cor 12:3)

Procession

We are not talking about an Easter Parade here. What we explore here is the "how" of the Spirit. How is the person of the Spirit manifested? If the Father is the creator/sustainer, and constantly interacts with Creation, and if the Son is begotten of the Father before all ages, and the Son enters Creation through the Incarnation, how does the Spirit enter the world? Through Revelation we know the Spirit to be there as well, but the sense of how the Spirit operates is sometimes somewhat beyond our grasp.

We definitely want to fight the human inclination to compartmentalize God and keep to the Revelation, the mystery of the Trinity. We might feel that there are individual relationships with each of the persons, or may be drawn to a particular person due to personal preference. We might want to think in human terms of the progression of a relationship but we always end up with the same problem – modalism. Think about many of

the prayers of the Liturgy: we pray to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. The whole of the Trinity is in concert and we pray to one God.

So as the Son is “begotten” of the Father, the Spirit too “comes from the Father.” A better way to think of it is “comes *out of* the Father.” Like the Son, the Spirit comes out of the Father, out of the same substance. Go back to Genesis 1. The Spirit is the breath of the Father and the Son is the Word the Father speaks. This is the idea of “procession.” Of the many we could (and should) look at in John we see two passages in particular that I will point out: “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate...*” (Jn 14:16-17) which speaks to the Spirit coming from the Father and “*he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the holy Spirit.'*” (Jn 20:22) which mimics the Father’s breathing out of the Spirit. The fathers of the Council of Constantinople chose the phrase from yet another passage to place directly into the Creed “*When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that **proceeds from the Father**, he will testify to me*” (Jn 15:26 – my emphasis) because they felt that it spoke for itself. But in context of the full pericope one can see where even that phrase causes problems.

Filioque

Okay so that can cause some confusion, right? In fact Paul often alludes to the fact (cf. *Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19*). Without delving deeply into the language, the idea of “double procession”, i.e. from the Father *and* the Son (filioque), while not new, was not a necessary doctrine by the Council of Nicaea. It is later controversies (religious and political) which bring it to the forefront. Several Western Fathers, like Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose adhered to it. In the East, Epiphanius of Salamis and Cyril of Alexandria, also used the idea to offset various groups. It is also opposed at the same time by several Eastern Fathers. It really is not until the Council of Chalcedon (451) when things are hammered out.

The problem comes in, as spoken of above, with the lack of definition of the mystery within Tradition. The passages about the Holy Spirit do not provide sufficient proof against the various heresies. Some felt that by adding “and the Son” one reinforced the divine nature of Jesus, in opposition to Arian and Arian-like sects. It was a more precise wording of the mystery of the Trinity, and fell into line with Scripture. Others felt that it unnecessary and removed a function of the Father, lessening God. In this case it is unnecessary hair-splitting. We return to the idea of the “*absolute source of divinity*” that we spoke of in chapter 9 when thinking about the Father.

It is not until the West officially adds it to the text of the Latin translation of the Creed at the Third Council of Toledo (589) that any official sanctioning of the idea takes place. While it was the subject of some debate, it is only later, during the political struggles of the East and West during the 9th century that the phrase brokers any kind of official condemnations⁴⁶, and only in the East. In the West the thinking is that it points to the one-ness of God, that is, there is a commonality between the Father and Son which must extend to the procession of the Spirit. In the East the thinking is that the one-ness implies the single source of divinity and just as the Son is begotten of the Father alone, the Spirit must proceed from the Father alone. Both positions fall within the viable realm of stating the one-ness of God in three persons.

Several compromise phrases have been put forward, the most popular being “*proceeds from the Father, through the Son*” which seems to answer the problems with the Scriptural references.

The Trinity

The problem lies in the approach. In the West these are seen as semantic differences, not really substantive whereas in the East it is seen as involved in the very nature of God, and not semantic at all. Both hit on the main idea of Trinity – that of relationship. If we think of the Spirit, as Augustine says, as the Love that binds the Father

⁴⁶ Officially official in 864, when the Patriarch of Constantinople condemned it as completely contrary to all the teachings of the Church Fathers (at least all of the Eastern ones).

(Love) and Son (the Beloved) together (cf. *The Trinity*, 8) then we see the nature of the relationship of each person to the other as they work in concert. But if you think of the Father as the source of the relationship then to place the Son between the Father and the Spirit is to imply that the Father is not the source of anything. All that means is that theologians often talk at cross purposes, using the same language but meaning different things, hoping to reach the same conclusion.

So again, all of this can only be understood in light of the Revelation of the mystery of the Trinity. Without the Three in One, none of the other teachings make sense. The Economy falls flat and we lose the richness of salvation. The Trinity must exist, each person must be distinct in their role and yet each must act together and be of the same substance in order to be able to do so. Each role must remain distinct and each must be thought of as related to the other. Being distinct does not imply independence. The nature of the Trinity implies an interdependence which requires the constant effort of all three. Of course, when Love is the driving principle, there really is not a problem with that.

The Speaker

So once we establish the nature of the Spirit and the Spirit's place in the Trinity we can explore the actions of the Spirit. We see the action of God the Spirit d Scripture and every day in the Church. Again, this history of the Spirit before and throughout created time only reinforces the necessity of understanding the mystery of the Trinity as part and parcel of our understanding of the one God.

Prophecy is a staple of Judaism and Christianity. It is hard to understand either if you do not understand that they are religions of prophecy. But what is the nature of prophecy such that the Spirit is the responsible party for it? Prophets are inspired to make God's will known to the world. Not just the one in which they live, though that is certainly their primary function, but due to the nature of God, at all times in all places.

We speak of in-spiration, the infusion of the Spirit within someone to make known God's will, usually through human words. So for that reason the writers of Scripture and the prophets speak God's Revelation, and so we call the Scriptures "inspired." But the allegory of the prophets and the stories of Scripture are at best still only as good as the human words used. We know that human words fail to describe the fullness of God. We also know that God does not let His word return to Him until it has done His will (*Is* 55:11). The nature of Revelation, those truths which are beyond our rational ability to discover or communicate, means that the Spirit has completely told us everything about God, but through human vehicles. *"The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. ...God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, hey, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted."* (*Dei Verbum*, 11)

The gifts of the Spirit to write, to read and understand, to speak in tongues and to understand such speech, etc., energized the Early Church. They spoke to the presence of the Spirit, the gift the Son presented them, within the community. But, as we saw with Montanus and his prophetesses, being charismatic is not the same thing as having charisms. The idea of being a prophet meant that you spoke for God, but at the same time those same inspired Scriptures and teachers warned of false prophets.

So *"whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious"* (*Phil* 4:8) is the focus of the prophet, not new public revelation. *"Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers: all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change."* (*Jm* 1:17) The prophet reminds, cajoles, exhorts but does not create. The Spirit both speaks the truth and guides us in understanding what is true and what is not.

Putting It Together

We cannot speak of the Spirit without speaking of the Father and the Son. We also cannot speak of the Spirit without speaking about the Church. In order for the Incarnation to happen, in order for the constant nature of creation to make sense there must be some aspect of God which maintains the intimate relationship with Creation. It is the gifts of the Spirit which inform us of the nature of God, of the truth about the persons of the Trinity, and of God's will for us.

The totality of God is something that human words cannot contain, whether they be the words of teaching or the words of Tradition, including inspired Scripture, and especially in terms of theological speculation. We must not limit God or ourselves by human words. We must however seek out God's Spirit in order to understand God's will and Revelation.

So as for the scar of the *filioque* that divides East and West, we must look to the overtures of Fathers to express the understanding as expressed in Scripture and in the recent popes to re-cast the problem and show a willingness to update or even remove the language as the indicator of the importance of the words we use to express this mystery.

"The hocus-pocus phantasm of a God like another Cerberus, with one body and three heads, had its birth and growth in the blood of thousands and thousands of martyrs... In fact, the Athanasian paradox that one is three, and three but one, is so incomprehensible to the human mind, that no candid man can say he has any idea of it, and how can he believe what presents no idea? He who thinks he does, only deceives himself. He proves, also, that man, once surrendering his reason, has no remaining guard against absurdities the most monstrous, and like a ship without a rudder, is the sport of every wind. With such persons, gullibility which they call faith, takes the helm from the hand of reason, and the mind becomes a wreck."

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to James Smith discussing his hate for the doctrine of the Trinity, 1822

"I perceived or thought of the Light of God and in it suspended one small mote (or millions of motes to only one of which was my small mind directed), glittering white because of the individual ray from the Light which both held and lit it...And the ray was the Guardian Angel of the mote: not a thing interposed between God and the creature, but God's very attention itself, personalized...This is a finite parallel to the Infinite. As the love of the Father and Son (who are infinite and equal) is a Person, so the love and attention of the Light to the Mote is a person (that is both with us and in Heaven): finite but divine, i.e. angelic."

J.R.R Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*

The Church

The final part of the Creed is the discussion of the on-going nature of God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) places this section under the teachings on the Spirit, which should tell us almost everything we need to know. The Church is not merely a building designed by humans to try to keep the kids quiet on Sundays or make them be good until Christmas. The life lessons learned are more than those from Kindergarten, with all apologies to Robert Fulghum. If we profess God as Father, then we acknowledge the *on-going* creative power of God; if we profess God as Son, then we acknowledge the *on-going* salvific event of God; if we profess God as Spirit, then we acknowledge the *on-going* sanctification of God. The Trinity accomplishes all things in concert and the Church is the human vessel of each of these activities of God.

The Words

<i>Nicene Creed</i>	<i>Some Biblical References</i>
<i>I believe in one,</i>	Mt 16:18; Eph 4:5
<i>holy,</i>	Eph 5:27; I Pt 2:5, 9
<i>catholic,</i>	Mk 16:15; Col 1:5-6
<i>and apostolic Church.</i>	Acts 2:42; Eph 2:19-22; Rev 21:14
<i>I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins</i>	Acts 22:16; Eph 4:5
<i>I look forward to the resurrection of the dead</i>	Jn 5:28-29, 11:24; Acts 24:15; I Cor 15:12-49
<i>and the life of the world to come.</i>	Mk 10:29-30; Rev 21:3-5, 22:1-5
<i>Amen.</i>	Ps 106:48

God And Church

What is the relationship between God and His Church and why is it important to profess it? It is certainly impossible to speak about the Church without bringing in the Son and the Spirit. If the Son and the Spirit are both God then the Father is intimately involved in the workings of the Church. Jesus himself established it; the Holy Spirit guides and sustains it; the Father gave Jesus as ransom for it and gave the Spirit as its advocate. If the Church were not important to Him, then why go to all of the trouble? Through Jesus and the Spirit God has an intimate, loving relationship with His Church. The Church, then, is an integral part of the Economy of Salvation. It is therefore impossible to understand God and the Economy of Salvation without the Church.

The Problems

But that is not the nature of human nature. The nature of the Church, its structure and its authority, as well as its purpose spawned various and sundry responses. People separate the love of God from the established religion which professes, ministers, and spreads that love. They also describe the relationship between God and Creation not as a unity but as a division. As we have (hopefully) seen thus far, this is reflected in most of the heresies, and therefore within the structure and wording of the Creed.

Picked from its humble beginnings she still uses the term “home church”, *domus ecclesia*. It speaks to the intimate nature of the Church. Not as a huge institution but as a gathering of family. The term “*ecclesia*” reflects the nature of God’s relationship to humanity throughout history. It literally means “*to call out*” but “*assembly*” or “*convocation*” are the more common translations. The use of the word speaks to God’s *gathering* action, and is heavily used with the Sinai Covenant. God selects, God chooses, God gathers (“*To you all flesh must come*” – Ps 65:3; Is 2:2, 66:23; Mt 23:37; Acts 2:17...just to name a few instances). The Church specifically took on this term to describe itself.

But many challenge the nature of the Church and this description. The Gnostics believed that the most important Christian doctrines were reserved for a select few. The Creed reflects the orthodox belief that the fullness of the Gospel was to be preached to the entire human race. Hence the term "catholic" (*universal*) to distinguish the Church from the Gnostics. But they are not the only groups. From the beginning there were disputes about who can be part of the Church and how initiation was to be accomplished. Eventually there was a challenge to who could *stay* in the Church as well.

Ebionites (~1st-2nd): This is an early problem which was "settled" at the Council of Jerusalem mentioned in Acts. Basically, and logically, it was composed of Jews who insisted that Jesus was a physical messiah and not divine. So to follow Jesus one would still have to be Jewish and follow Jewish religious law and rites. The difference being that their understanding of that practice was in light Jesus' teachings on the Law. They were really separate from both mainstream Judaism and from the Church.

Montanism (2nd): We have spoken of these guys before, but as a reminder, and specific to this section, they touted a new "Church of the Spirit" and that they enjoyed the direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit. They then were the true Church and any Christians who fell from grace could not be redeemed.

Gnosticism: Most Gnostic sects focused on enlightenment, the secret knowledge which lead one beyond this world and sin. As with Plato, ignorance, not sin, was the problem. So enlightenment was what signaled who was saved and who was not, the differences were in how one achieved that enlightenment. Whatever way they taught, it reflected this Platonic notion of sin and so the Church's claims to the power of and the need for forgiveness were unknown to them. In addition, their Platonic non-material meant that they totally rejected any idea of the resurrection of the body. And so anything associated with the material world had no value in this quest. A physical Church of all believers also failed to meet their expectations.

Novatianism (3rd): Novatian, a Roman priest who eventually became an antipope, was appalled by Pope Cornelius' acceptance of lapsed Christians back into the fold. What started out as a schism on differing ideas became a heresy when his rigid moral theology caused him to declare that anyone who had committed a serious sin (*mortal*) could not find way back into the Church – ever. He refused to give absolution to such sinners (especially murderers and adulterers) which effectively cut off sinners from the sacraments.

Euchites/Messalians (Late 4th): the word means "those who pray." Among several other issues they had, their main focus was for the believer to reach a state of perfection, free from the world, passions, and appetites. They taught that this state is attained solely by prayer and not through the Church. This of course removes the need for any specific Church trappings or functions. Baptism (or any of the sacraments), any rituals or liturgies, have no effect on the influence of evil body and world on the soul. Only constant and ecstatic prayer released one from the passions and appetites.

Donatism (4th-5th) Starting in Carthage it held that the effectiveness of a sacrament for someone depended upon the moral character of ministers of the sacrament. They also felt that sinners cannot be true members of the Church or even tolerated by the Church if their sins are publicly known. Donatists were "*rigorists*", meaning that the holiness of the Church depended upon its members. That meant that everyone in the Church had to be saints. No sinners allowed. They were especially hard on the priests and bishops who had recanted and returned forgiven to posts of authority. Any sacraments, such as baptism, administered by them were invalid.

Pelagianism (Late 4th-5th): Pelagius (355-425) was an un-ordained but very ascetic monk from somewhere in the British Isles. Among other things, he argued against the teaching on Original Sin because God created us good, and so we had the power of freewill by which we can avoid sin. God's grace, as such, came "built-in" for us in the form of our freewill, which was formed by the Law of Moses and the teachings of Jesus. Any "fall" that occurred happened only to the individual, in the first case Adam and was not transferred to all. Infant Baptism was therefore not really needed for cleansing of sin because infants were all born good. Our own efforts save us or damned us.

The Solutions

So we can see that overall, the controversies are about the question of “who can be/is saved?” In a broader sense it comes down to who can be part of the Church, the elect, the remnant of Israel, the chosen few. You can see then why the Creed considers it necessary to profess the Church to be so important to the understanding of God and His plan. If salvation is only for the few, what does that say about God?

The relationship between God and His people must therefore be laid out with as much care as the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. Just as each person has a specific relationship with the other persons, so each person has a unique relationship with the Church. The CCC describes the relationship thusly:

- *The People of God*
- *The Body of Christ*
- *The Temple of the Holy Spirit.*

Each of these is fairly self-explanatory. The Scriptures use all of these images and titles to talk about the relationship of God to His people, the Church, from its inception with Israel to its presence today. The arguments come down to the intimate type of relationship that we have with and through the triune God. Again, if we do not profess all of these persons then the Economy falls flat. So the profession of the Church is also important to re-inforce the teachings on the Trinity. God reveals not just himself as Father, Son, and Spirit, but also through each person in the assembly. This revelation of unity and tri-unity also underpins all of the doctrines on the Church. The Church makes no sense if the Trinity is not revealed and revealed to be in unity. The Church must exist as it does because of the nature of the Trinity. As with the one God in the Trinity, nothing based on that Trinity can be separated from the other.

People often joke about the “smells and bells” when it speaks about the nature of the Church. It emphasizes the engagement of the whole person, physical *and* spiritual. The Catechism tells us “*The Church is in history, but at the same time she transcends it.*” (CCC 770) Like God, she is part of history but at the same time beyond history. This emersion (Gk: *baptizo*) in God is important to explaining the mystery which is the Church. As the Trinity is mystery so the Church is mystery. There is a physical and a spiritual side to the Church and the dual nature of Christ is the dual nature of the Church.

As the “Body” of Christ it is not surprising then that there is emphasis on the role of the Church in not just gathering together but administering the forgiveness of God. The Creed stresses the connection between the Trinity and the Church, especially the love of the Father, example of Jesus, and the actions of the Spirit.

That Is Going To Leave A Mark

The Creed lists four aspects or “marks” of the Church. That is to say, it is by these *marks* that you will know her. Each one is important because they are the proof of all of the teachings and revelation about the mystery of God. They are permanent signs, specific and purposeful actions by God which reveal the salvation He has provided to Creation. We are the purpose of Creation and God’s love. The Church is the way God accomplishes salvation in the world and it is also the end goal of salvation. Everything is linked.

One

It is our source that makes us one. As God is one, so we are one. As the two halves of Jesus are one, so we are one. One not just in place but in spirit, practice, and the Faith. We profess “*one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*” (Eph 4:4-6) It all goes together. The one God we profess at the onset of the Creed makes one at the end of the Creed.

Holy

It is our source which makes us holy. As God is holy, so we are holy, because the Church is not the members within it but the holy “Body of Christ” which contains flawed, human, actors. Our holiness is manifest in our saints, who let the light of Christ shine through them.

Catholic

Our source is catholic. The term *catholic* means *universal*. As God is everywhere at all times, so we are in all places at all times. Certainly there is a physical presence throughout the world, but the presence of the Spirit is everywhere, and we, as the Body, go where the Spirit is. We also profess a universal Faith that covers everything we need to know for salvation. We profess that faith in all languages, to all peoples, at all times. This is the Faith which we believe in.

Apostolic

Our foundation is Apostolic. Everything we know is finalized within the Apostolic period. The Church traces its existence through authority to this period. God has given authority to His Apostles (*Jn 20:23*) and they, in turn, passed that authority on to others. *“And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.”* (*2 Tim 2:2; 1 Tim 4:14; Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5*, among others) This is also part of the apostolic aspect of the Church. Not only did the apostles teach and guide the Church but their Tradition continues on and is not lost.

Baptism And Forgiveness

Which brings us back to this: *It's the economy....* When we look back at the Old Testament and then we look specifically at Jesus' message then we understand that when Jesus establishes the Church, he commissions it to continue the will of God – that everything should be completed in God. If it is the will of God that all be saved and brought into the Kingdom then these two aspects are vital. Salvation is accomplished through the Church because one is part of it and one can remain part of it no matter what.

This section is all about how one gets in and then how one stays in. To be baptized is to be immersed into the Trinity (cf. *Mt 28:19*), into the life of the Trinity. We receive the love and forgiveness necessary to live as Children of God. That is the nature of God and so it is the nature of the Church. Baptism and forgiveness are integral parts of reaching eternal life.

The Resurrection And Life Everlasting

And so, this is really the beginning of things. New Spirit-filled life in Christ is the final gift of God to us. But it is more than that – we are raised to new life. It is what makes sense of all that God has revealed to us. The Sadducees of Jesus' time rejected the idea of resurrection⁴⁷, and Jesus challenged them on it. It is the act of overcoming death which shows the full meaning of Jesus' life and death for the remission of our sins. *“Jesus, the Son of God, freely suffered death for us in complete and free submission to the will of God, his Father. By his death he has conquered death, and so opened the possibility of salvation to all men.”* (CCC 1019)

Docetists rejected the physical body and physical death of Jesus and therefore a physical resurrection. The ramifications of this are that we are not fully saved, that is, there is no redemption of the whole person. The human body of Jesus is necessary for our redemption. Our death though, like his, is not an end. The life creating/giving/restoring nature of the Trinity does not allow for that. The death of Jesus would be meaningless without the Resurrection which followed it. Our deaths would be meaningless without the fulfillment of heaven which follows it. Death of that type would make life meaningless. (cf. *1 Cor 15*)

Teleology

Which leads us to the end of things. Our purpose, our end, is to be with God. Why else would God create us? Our death must lead us to God. The Church, in all its modes, is that place where the Economy of Salvation is

⁴⁷ That is why they were sad, you see....

both contained and expounded. The Church exists here on Earth, in Purgatory, and in Heaven. It is part of the plan to get us to the end we were created for, to be with and in God.

We decide our own end, by living our purpose. Sin has brought death into the world. That death has two forms: eternal life and eternal death. The sinner dies forever, unable to share in the life of God. We must seek communion with the Assembly, participate in the healing power of love and forgiveness it possesses as gifts, and reach glory in the resurrection of the dead, to live forever with God. That is our purpose, to do the will of God until such time as we can spend eternity with Him. While the Church is filled with individuals, this is not something alone. This is something accomplished by the community, the assembly of God, the *ecclesia*.

The end of our physical bodies is not their end either. While they may decay, we await the new body, which like Christ's will be transfigured and know no corruption. We will rise like him and rise with him. So our "end" is not really the end but the beginning of something which will start with every tear being wiped away and continue past eternity. The World too will, like our bodies, pass away and, like our bodies, be replaced with something new. This is the world to come, one that will be the fulfillment of all of God's promises to us.

"At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Then the just will reign with Christ forever, glorified in body and soul, and the material universe itself will be transformed. God will then be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28), in eternal life." (CCC 1060)

Putting It Together

When looking at the Creed as a whole, we must see it as a whole, even in its parts. There is no division in the Faith and there is no purpose in separating out its parts, except to help us understand them as whole. The Truth is not something we can piecemeal together from our own limited experience. That is the first benefit of the Creed: the Truth, laid out simply and powerfully.

We may want to fight the Truth of the Faith through our own reason or emotional judgment, but the Creed reminds us to look away from ourselves and toward God. It reminds us to live in wonder and awe of mystery, not wallow in the limitation of human knowledge and pride. It calls us together, to be one in mind, heart, and spirit – that is, to be like God. We profess this truth of joy and life to ourselves and to others that all may be one, as God is one. That all might be saved and live in God. And that is the second benefit of the Creed: the focusing of our minds and hearts toward God for the salvation of all.

The nature of the Economy of Salvation is continuous. There is not a "before" and an "after", there is one long creation, salvation, and inspiration event, and the Creed expresses that. What God has revealed in the past is just as relevant as what He reveals today. We do not become smarter and suddenly understand any better than did Peter, or Augustine, or Ignatius, or Elizabeth Ann Seton, or John XXIII, or John Paul II. The Truth is the Truth, and it is ageless, timeless, unbounded by physical or rational limitations.

"Ignorance is no reason to believe ignorance."

Anonymous

Bible Creedal Statements

Okay, technically this is the kerygma on which the profession is based, but I thought you should see it in context

Deut 6:4	<i>Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!</i>
1 Kings 18:39	<i>Seeing this, all the people fell prostrate and said, "The LORD is God! The LORD is God!"</i>
Mt 16:16	<i>Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."</i>
Mt 28:19-20	<i>Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."</i>
Jn 1:49	<i>Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."</i>
Jn 6:68-69	<i>Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."</i>
Jn 20:28	<i>Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"</i>
Acts 2:22-38	<i>...Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. ... God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the holy Spirit from the Father and poured it forth, as you (both) see and hear. ... Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." ...Peter [said] to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit."</i>
1 Cor 8:4,6	<i>we know that "there is no idol in the world," and that "there is no God but one." ...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things are and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are and through whom we exist.</i>
1 Cor 15:3-7	<i>For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to Jam, then to all the apostles.</i>
Phil 2:6-11	<i>Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (early Christian hymn)</i>
1 Tim 3:16	<i>Undeniably great is the mystery of devotion, Who was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed to the Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.</i>
Hebr 6:1-2	<i>Therefore, let us leave behind the basic teaching about Christ and advance to maturity, without laying the foundation all over again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, instruction about baptisms and laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.</i>
1 Jn 4:2	<i>This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God...</i>

Some Applicable Core Teachings of Jesus from the Gospels:

Initial Message	Mk 1:15	<i>This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.</i>
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Repentance & Forgiveness	Lk 17:3-4; cf. Mt 18:15-22	<i>If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, 'I am sorry,' you should forgive him.</i>
Jesus' Purpose	Mk 8:31; cf. Mk 9:31; 10:33-34; Mt 16:21-27; Lk 9:22-26	<i>The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days.</i>
Jesus' Identity	Mk 14:61-62; cf. Mt 26:63-64	<i>Again the high priest asked him and said to him, 'Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One?' Then Jesus answered, 'I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.'</i>
Jesus and the Father	Mt 3:16-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22 Lk 10:22; Mt 11:27	<i>After Jesus was baptized... a voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'</i> <i>All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.</i>
Jesus and the Holy Spirit	Lk 4:18-19 (citing Is 61:1-2)	<i>'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.'</i>

The Apostles' Preaching (*kerygma*) from the Acts of the Apostles:

The apostles preach some or most of the following points in various speeches recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. Acts 2:14-41; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 7:2-53; 8:26-38; 10:35-49; 13:16-41; 16:30-34; 17:22-34; 19:1-7; 20:17-35; 22:1-21; 23:1-6; 24:10-21; 26:1-23; 28:23-28):

- Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Christ, sent by God, as promised in the Scriptures, as foretold by the prophets, for the forgiveness of sins, for the salvation of the world;
- He was rejected by the people, condemned by the authorities; he suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. Yet God exalted him on high, raised him up to new life; and he will one day return to us in glory.
- In response, people must repent, believe, be baptized, receive the Holy Spirit and join the community of believers.

Some Short Creedal Statements in the New Testament (NAB translations):

Mt 28:19	The oldest "Trinitarian Formula": <i>Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit.</i>
Matt 16:16; cf. Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20	<i>Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."</i>
Jn 1:49	<i>Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."</i>
Jn 6:68-69	<i>Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."</i>
Jn 11:25-27	<i>Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."</i>
Jn 20:28	<i>Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"</i>
Jn 20:30-31	<i>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.</i>
Rom 1:3-4	<i>the gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh, but established as Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.</i>
Rom 10:9	<i>...for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.</i>

1 Cor 8:6	<i>...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things are and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are and through whom we exist.</i>
1 Cor 12:3	<i>Therefore, I tell you that nobody speaking by the spirit of God says, "Jesus be accursed." And no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the holy Spirit.</i>
1 Cor 15:3-5	<i>For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.</i>
2 Cor 13:13	<i>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you.</i>
Eph 4:4-6	<i>one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.</i>
Phil 2:5-11	<i>Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.</i>
1 Thess 4:14-17	<i>For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord.</i>
1 Tim 2:5-6a	<i>For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as ransom for all.</i>
1 Tim 3:16	<i>Undeniably great is the mystery of devotion, Who was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed to the Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.</i>
Heb 6:1-2	<i>Therefore, let us leave behind the basic teaching about Christ and advance to maturity, without laying the foundation all over again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, instruction about baptisms and laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.</i>
1 John 4:2	<i>This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God.</i>

Johannine Texts for the Development of Christology and Doctrines on the Trinity:

Jesus and the Father:	
1:1	<i>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.</i>
17:1b-5	<i>My Father is at work until now, so I am at work." For this reason the Jews tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but he also called God his own father, making himself equal to God.</i>
5:17-18	<i>The Father and I are one.</i>
10:30	<i>Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works.</i>
14:9b-10	<i>Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you, just as you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to all you gave him. Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began.</i>
The Holy Spirit:	
1:33	<i>On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit.</i>
14:16-17	<i>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth...</i>
14:26	<i>The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name--he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.</i>

15:26	<i>When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.</i>
16:7, 13	<i>But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you... But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.</i>

Creed Texts

Here are also several texts which predate or clarify the creeds:

The Didache:

...pour water three times upon the head in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The "Rule of Faith" by Irenaeus:

this faith: in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven and the earth and the seas and all the things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who made known through the prophets the plan of salvation, and the coming, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily ascension into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and his future appearing from heaven in the glory of the Father to sum up all things and to raise anew all flesh of the whole human race

Hippolytus's baptismal service:

When the person being baptized goes down into the water, he who baptizes him, putting his hand on him, shall say: "Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty?" And the person being baptized shall say: "I believe." Then holding his hand on his head, he shall baptize him once. And then he shall say: "Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was dead and buried, and rose again the third day, alive from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?" And when he says: "I believe," he is baptized again. And again he shall say: "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy church, and the resurrection of the body?" The person being baptized shall say: "I believe," and then he is baptized a third time.

Athanasian Creed:

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all One, the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-Eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father Uncreated, the Son Uncreated, and the Holy Ghost Uncreated. The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal and yet they are not Three Eternals but One Eternal. As also there are not Three Uncreated, nor Three Incomprehensibles, but One Uncreated, and One Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not Three Almightyies but One Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not Three Gods, but One God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords but One Lord. For, like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion to say, there be Three Gods or Three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father, and of the Son neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is One Father, not Three Fathers; one Son, not Three Sons; One Holy Ghost, not Three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore or after Other, None is greater or less than Another, but the whole Three Persons are Co-eternal together, and Co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting Salvation, that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the substance of His mother, born into the world. Perfect God and Perfect Man, of a reasonable Soul and human Flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood. Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but One Christ. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by Unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one Man, so God and Man is one Christ. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into Hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, He sits on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.

The Chalcedonian "Creed" (Definition)

Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and in humanness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul and a body. He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we ourselves as far as his humanness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these "last days," for us and behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer in respect of his humanness.

We also teach that we apprehend this one and only Christ-Son, Lord, only-begotten in two natures; and we do this without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the "properties" of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one "person" and in one reality. They are not divided or cut into two persons, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of Fathers has handed down to us.

Historical Creeds Timeline

Note.

Apostolic Period (~1 st century- ~2 nd century AD)		
~33	Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit (<i>Acts 2</i>). Sometimes known as the Birthday of the Church.	
~48	Council of Jerusalem (<i>Acts 15</i>). Gentile Christians accepted alongside those in the Jewish tradition.	
~50-70	Paul’s letters.	
	~50 AD	Quoted professions & hymns
70	Jewish rebellion against the Roman empire ends. Destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Center of Christianity moves to Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome.	
~60-100	Age of the Gospels.	
	~60-80	Synoptic Gospels
	~60-110	Catholic Letters
	~90-100	The Gospel of John, Book of Revelation
~150	End of Apostolic Age.	
Early Church (~2 nd century – 3 rd century AD)		
2 nd century	~150	Didache.
	161-80	Widespread persecution of Christians under Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius.
	~215	Hippolytus baptismal service
3 rd century	~180	Irenaeus <i>Rule of Faith</i>
	249-251	Severe persecution under the emperor Decius.
	284-305	Major persecution under the emperor Diocletian.
Church Fathers (> 3 rd century AD)		
4 th century	312	Roman emperor Constantine receives a vision of a flaming <i>Chi Ro</i> with the words “ <i>In hoc signo vinces</i> ” (by this sign conquer). Defeats Maxentius and become Emperor.
	313	Edict of Milan issued by Constantine - Christianity becomes a legal religion within the Roman empire.
	325	Constantine calls the ecumenical council at Nicaea
	367	Saint Athanasius is the first to list all 27 New Testament books in his festal letter.
	381	Ecumenical Council at Constantinople revises the Nicene creed to its current form. – Clarifications on Spirit
	~382	Saint Jerome begins a translation of the Bible into Latin.
	397	Synod at Carthage ratifies the 27 books of the New Testament as sacred scripture.
5 th century	431	Ecumenical council held at Ephesus refutes Nestorianism. (The doctrine that Christ was two persons (one human, the other divine) in one body). Mary is declared <i>Theotokos</i> i.e. 'God-bearer' or more commonly, 'Mother of God'.

	449	At Ephesus, Pope Leo I delivers his 'Tome', defending orthodox Christian belief. Leo also asserts Papal supremacy.
	451	Ecumenical council at Chalcedon affirms Christ as having two distinct natures united in one person (known as the 'Hypostatic Union').
6 th century	553	Ecumenical council at Constantinople affirms teaching of previous councils.
	563	Columba establishes a monastery at Iona.
	589	Insertion of the <i>filioque</i> (Latin: <i>and the son</i>) into the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed at a council in Toledo.
7 th century	680-81	Ecumenical council at Constantinople rejects Monothelite heresy of one will in Christ.
8 th century	787	Ecumenical council at Nicaea ends the controversy over the use of icons in worship.
9 th century	800	Charlemagne is crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire by Pope Leo III. Stabilization of the West, uniformity of liturgy, including <i>filioque</i> clause in Creed.
	864	Patriarch of Constantinople condemns <i>filioque</i> clause
11 th century	1054	Great Schism - Eastern Orthodox and Western Catholic churches separate. Creeds remain separate.

The Nicene Creed: Scripture References

As statements of Faith (not confessions, though they contain confessions) Creeds are integral to the expression of Tradition; Oral and Written Tradition go hand in hand as demonstrated by the following annotated Nicene Creed.

<i>I believe in</i>	Rom 10:8-10; 1 Jn 4:15
<i>One God</i>	Dt 6:4; Mk 12:29; Eph 4: 6; Jam 2:19
<i>The Father</i>	Mt 6:9
<i>Almighty,</i>	Ex 6:3
<i>maker of heaven and earth,</i>	Gen 1:1
<i>of all things visible and invisible.</i>	Col 1:15-16
<i>I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,</i>	Acts 11:17; Eph 4:5; Phil 2:11
<i>the Only Begotten</i>	Mt 14:33, 16:16; Jn 1:14,18, 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9
<i>Son of God</i>	2 Cor 1:19
<i>born of the Father before all ages;</i>	Jn 1:2, 17:24
<i>God from God</i>	Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 5:20
<i>Light from Light</i>	Ps 27:1; Mt 17:2,5; Jn 1:4-9, 8:12; 1 Jn 1:5
<i>true God of true God,</i>	Jn 17:1-5; 1 Jn 5:20
<i>begotten not made</i>	Heb 1:5
<i>consubstantial with the Father,</i>	Jn 10:30; 14:10-11
<i>through him all things were made.</i>	Jn 1:1-3; Eph 3:9; Heb 1:1-2
<i>For us and for our salvation</i>	Jn 12:47; Rom 1:16; 1 Tim 2:4-5
<i>he came down from heaven,</i>	Jn 6:33,35, 16:28
<i>and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,</i>	Lk 1:30-31,35
<i>and became man.</i>	Jn 1:14; Phil 2:7-8; Heb 2:16
<i>For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,</i>	Mk 15: 25; Jn 1:14, 9:15-16; Acts 13:28; 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Tim 6:13
<i>He suffered death,</i>	Mk 8:31; Jn 19:30; Acts 17:2-3; Heb 2:18; 1 Pt 2:21
<i>was buried</i>	Mk 15:46; Mt 27:59-60; Lk 23:53-58; Jn 19:41-42; 1 Cor 15:4
<i>and rose on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.</i>	Ps 16:10; Hosea 6:2; Mk 16:6; Mt 28:6; Lk 24:1-7; 1 Cor 15:3-4
<i>He ascended into heaven</i>	Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9-10
<i>and is seated at the right hand of the Father.</i>	Mk 16:19; Lk 22:69; Acts 7:55-56; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 1 Pt 3:22
<i>He will come again in glory</i>	Mt 24:27-30; Mk 13:26; Lk 21:27
<i>to judge the living and dead,</i>	Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1; 1 Pt 4:5; Rev 20:12
<i>and his kingdom will have no end.</i>	Lk 1:33; 2 Pt 1:11
<i>I believe in the Holy Spirit,</i>	Jn 14:26
<i>the Lord</i>	Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor 3:17
<i>the giver of life,</i>	Gen 1:2; Jn 3:5
<i>who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],</i>	Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:14-15
<i>who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,</i>	Mt 3:16-17, 28:19; 1 Jn 5:7
<i>who spoke through the prophets.</i>	1 Sam 19:20; Ez 11:5, 13; 2 Pt 1:21
<i>I believe in one,</i>	Mt 16:18; Eph 4:5
<i>holy,</i>	Eph 5:27; 1 Pt 2:5, 9
<i>catholic</i>	Mk 16:15; Col 1:5-6
<i>and apostolic Church.</i>	Acts 2:42; Eph 2:19-22; Rev 21:14
<i>I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins</i>	Acts 22:16; Eph 4:5
<i>I look forward to the resurrection of the dead</i>	Jn 5:28-29, 11:24; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor 15:12-49
<i>And the life of the world to come.</i>	Mk 10:29-30; Rev 21:3-5, 22:1-5
<i>Amen.</i>	Ps 106:48

Creedal Comparisons





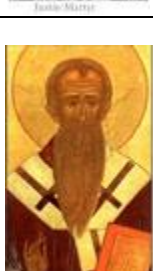


Ecumenical Creeds:



Eusebius (325)	Nicaea (325)	Cyril of Jerusalem (~ 348)	Epiphanius (374)	Constantinople (381)
I believe in one God, the Father almighty, the maker of all things visible and invisible.	I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible.	I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.	I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible	I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God,	And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten generated from the Father, that is, from the being (<i>ek tes ousias</i>) of the Father,	And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, generated from the Father,	And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, generated from the Father before all ages, that is, from the being (<i>ek tes ousias</i>) of the Father,	And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, generated from the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light, Life from Life the only-begotten Son, first born of all creation, begotten from the Father before all ages, through whom all things were made.	God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being (<i>homoousion</i>) with the Father, through whom all things were made those in heaven and those on earth.	true God before all the ages, through whom all things were made.	Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being (<i>homoousios</i>) with the Father, through whom all things were made, those in the heavens and those on earth.	[God from God.] Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being (<i>homoousios</i>) with the Father, through whom all things were made.
For our salvation He became flesh and lived as a man, He suffered and rose again on the third day and ascended to the Father. He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.	For us men and for our salvation He came down, and became flesh, was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day. He ascended to the heavens and shall come again to judge the living and the dead.	He came down, became flesh, and was made man, was crucified [and buried]. He rose again [from the dead] on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, and took his seat at the right hand of the Father. He shall come in glory to judge the living and the dead;	For us men and for our salvation He came down from the heavens, and became flesh from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, was made man. For our sake too He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried. On the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures. He ascended to the heavens and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead;	For us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and became flesh from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake too He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried. On the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, He ascended to the heavens and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead;
		to His Kingdom there will be no end.	to His Kingdom there will be no end.	to His Kingdom there will be no end.
We believe also in one Holy Spirit.	And in the Holy Spirit.	And in one Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, who has spoken in the prophets,	And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.	And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son] ² , who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
		and in one baptism of conversion for the forgiveness of sins, and in one holy and catholic Church, and in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.	[And] in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen	[And] in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.
	As for those who say: "There was a time when He was not" and "Before being begotten He was not"; and who declare that He was made from nothing ³ ; or that the Son of God is from a different substance (<i>hypostasis</i>) or being (<i>ousia</i>) [than the Father], that is, created (<i>ktistos</i>), or subject to change and alteration, [such persons] the Catholic Church condemns.			

Western Creeds:

Hippolytus (~215-217)	Apostles' Creed (<390)	Ambrose (d. 397)	Rufinus (~ 404)
Do you believe in God, the Father almighty? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, has been crucified under Pontius Pilate, died [and was buried], who, on the third day, rose again alive, from the dead, ascended into heaven, and took His seat at the right hand of the Father, and shall come to judge the living and the dead? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Church, and the resurrection of the body?	I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. ¹ And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, ² who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, ³ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He went down to the dead. ⁴ On the third day He rose again from the dead. ⁵ He ascended to the heavens, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father almighty, ⁶ wherefrom He shall come again to judge the living and the dead. ⁷ I believe in the Holy Spirit, ⁸ the holy catholic Church, ⁹ the communion of saints, ¹⁰ the forgiveness of sins, ¹⁰ the resurrection of the body, ¹¹ and the life everlasting. ¹²	I believe in God, the Father almighty. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, died and was buried. On the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, wherefrom He shall come to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Church, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection of the body.	I believe in God, the Father almighty, invisible and impassible, And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried. He went down to the dead. On the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. From there He shall come to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Church, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection of the body.
<p>Translations: <i>The Christian Faith, in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church</i>, edited by J. Neuner & J. Dupuis (6th edition, 1996).</p> <p>Notes 1-12: A medieval legend claims that when the twelve apostles met to discuss their faith, each of them contributed one article.</p>			

Church Fathers Who's Who

	Name(s)	Birth	Death	Role(s)	Works	Overview
	St. Clement of Rome; Clement I; Pope St. Clement	unknown	~101 Rome	Bishop of Rome	<i>1 Clement</i>	Considered fourth Pope by Catholics; might be mentioned in Phil. 4:3. Probable author of <i>1 Clement</i> , a letter once considered for the NT canon.
	Ignatius of Antioch	unknown	~110 Rome, Italy	Bishop of Antioch	seven letters	Wrote letters on his way to be martyred; opposed Docetism.
	Polycarp	69 Smyrna	155 Smyrna	Bishop of Smyrna	<i>Letter to the Phil</i>	Disciple of the Apostle Jn, martyr, rejected the teachings of Marcion and Valentinus
	Justin Martyr	~100 Flavia Neapolis, Palestine [now Nablus]	~165 Rome, Italy (feast: June 1)	apologist, philosopher	<i>Apology; Dialogue with Trypho the Jew</i>	A convert from paganism and Greek philosopher, Justin represents the first positive encounter between Christianity and Greek philosophy.
	Irenaeus of Lyons	~140	~200 France	Bishop of Lyons	<i>Against Heresies</i>	Disciple of Polycarp. Developed idea of "recapitulation." Writings were formative in the early development of Christian theology. <i>Against Heresies</i> is a detailed description and refutation of Gnosticism.
	St. Clement of Alexandria	~150	~215	theologian; professor	<i>Exhortations; Teachings; Miscellanies</i>	Interpreted Christian teachings in the context of Greek philosophy.
	Tertullian	160 Carthage	220	theologian, apologist	<i>Against Praxeas; Apology; On the Soul</i>	Coined theological terms such as Trinity, person, and substance; argued that faith and reason do not mix. "Father of Latin Theology."

	Origen of Alexandria; Origenes Adamantius	~185 Alexandria	~254 Caesarea or Tyre	apologist, theologian, teacher	<i>Against Celsus; Commentaries; Homilies</i>	Taught universalism and preexistence of souls. Eventually condemned by Council in 533, though still influential.
	St. Athanasius	~296 Alexandria, Egypt	May 2/3, 373 Alexandria	Bishop of Alexandria	<i>On the Incarnation; Life of St. Anthony</i>	Opponent of Arianism, defender of Nicene Christology; supporter of monasticism.
	Gregory of Nazianzus	329/30 Nazianzus in Cappadocia	389/90	Cappadocian father, monk, preacher	<i>Five Theological Orations</i>	Studied at Athens. Influenced outcome of Council of Constantinople (381) by his eloquent preaching.
	Basil the Great	~330 Cappadocia	~379	Cappadocian father, monk, Bishop of Caesarea	<i>Philocalia; On the Holy Spirit; Against Eunomius</i>	Involved in Arian controversy.
	Gregory of Nyssa	~330 Cappadocia	~395 probably Constantinople	Cappadocian father, Bishop of Nyssa, monk, preacher, theologian	<i>Against Eunomius, Against Apollinarius, Catechetical Oration; On Virginity</i>	Brother of St. Basil. Influenced by Platonism.
	Jerome	~342 Slovenia	420 Bethlehem	scholar, theologian, translator	<i>Vulgate; Against Jovinian; Against Vigilantius; Commentaries</i>	Translated Bible into Latin known as the <i>Vulgate</i> – basis for most translations until 15 th century
	St. Augustine of Hippo; Aurelius Augustine; "The Doctor of Grace"	354 Thagaste, N. Africa	430 Hippo, N. Africa	Bishop of Hippo, theologian	<i>City of God; Confessions; On Free Will; On the Trinity; Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love</i>	Developed orthodox doctrines of grace, original sin, soul, Trinity, the church.

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