

## HOW THE TRINITY DOCTRINE CAME TO BE FORMULATED

By [Nancy Mattley](#) on [Friday, 30 November 2012 at 03:43](#)

### How the trinity doctrine came to be formulated

#### A 4th century theological disagreement

We have already noted it was not until the 4th century that the trinity doctrine was formulated – which was over 200 years AFTER the canon of Scripture was closed. It came about because of a disagreement between the Bishop of Alexandria (namely Alexander) and one of his presbyters – an elderly man by the name of Arius. This was around AD 318. **Later that same century the trinity doctrine was formulated, albeit there were stages in its development.** From what we can read of the history of this dispute, it is more than likely that the initial debate was only between Arius and his fellow presbyters but eventually, after listening to both sides of the argument (because it was obviously causing a rift), Alexander chose NOT to accept the views of Arius. **Arius made public his objections to Alexander's reasoning. He had many supporters.** This was not only from his fellow presbyters but also from many bishops. The dispute grew so big it was splitting the church. Alexander called a local synod of his bishops who exiled Arius because of his beliefs. If Alexander believed this would silence Arius (and resolve the problem) then he made a very big mistake. This is because Arius continued to promulgate his views – the outcome of which the division in the church continued to grow. In fact it grew so big that the Roman Emperor Constantine became involved. It was no small matter. Constantine had nominally accepted Christianity. Many say he had hoped that the Christian religion would stop his ailing kingdom from 'falling apart at the seams'.

**In AD 321 (which was about 3 years into this Godhead dispute) it was Constantine who issued a decree (an edict) ordering the first day of the week (Sunday) to be a public festival. This was the first 'Sunday law'.** It was also the result of the state becoming involved with the affairs of the church. **This is how the trinity doctrine became established in Christianity.** We shall see this now.

**The Council of Nicaea** In 325 AD (approximately 7 years after the dispute began), because by then the dispute had caused so much division and disruption in the church, also because the attempts he had made to bring reconciliation between the vying factions had failed, Constantine called a council of all the bishops of Christianity. This was held at Nicaea (now Iznik Turkey). In comparison to the total number who could have attended, only a small percentage accepted

the invitation. Most came from the east. **The council itself lasted for over 3 months (many things were discussed), the outcome of which (in opposition to what was believed by Arius and his followers) the belief was formulated saying that Christ was of the one and the same substance as the Father (as in trinitarianism). This is the belief that Arius could NOT accept. The formulation of this belief, albeit the council had to go outside of Scripture to achieve it, became the basis for the later formulated trinity doctrine.**

\*\*\*\*\*To achieve (formulate) the 'one substance' belief, the Greek word 'homoousios' was used. Jesus was described as being 'homoousios with God the Father'. **The fact of the matter is that no matter what word had been used it would have been wrong. This is because the ontology of the Godhead (how God and Christ have their existence together) has NOT been revealed. IN OTHER WORDS, THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA ATTEMPTED TO EXPLAIN WHAT GOD HAS CHOSEN TO KEEP TO HIMSELF. \*\*\*\*\***

The result of this decision (the decision of Nicaea) was that Arius was once again condemned for his faith and exiled. Constantine ordered the writings of this presbyter to be destroyed. This is why almost nothing of his original works exists today. This is also why his 'enemies' have found it so easy to misrepresent his beliefs. **The Council of Nicaea CANNOT be credited with the formulation of the trinity doctrine. This is because in the creed depicting what was voted at Nicaea, the Holy Spirit was NOT stated as belonging to the one substance of God. It simply said, "We believe in the Holy Spirit". Nothing else was said of the Holy Spirit. It was only later, at the first Council of Constantinople in AD 381 (the second ecumenical council), that the Holy Spirit was included in this 'one substance of God' belief.**

**Thus it was that as the 4th century was drawing to a close, the trinity doctrine was 'given life'.** It was also as the Church of Rome (now the Roman Catholic Church) was coming to the forefront of Christianity. **As we have already noted above, the trinity doctrine is now the central teaching of the Papacy.** At the Council of Jerusalem in AD 335, Arius, now over 80 years of age, was cleared of the charges of heresy. He was admitted to full communion with the church although the Alexandrians would still not permit him back into ecclesiastical office. Constantine, in response, ordered the then

Bishop Alexander to admit Arius. As it says in the New Catholic Encyclopedia "It is certain that the assembly of Jerusalem (335) decided to readmit him [Arius] into the church. Constantine ordered a solemn reinstatement in Constantinople, but Arius died suddenly on the eve of the appointed day, early in 336." (New Catholic Encyclopedia 1967, page 814, 'Arius')

**Some (mainly trinitarians) say the sudden demise of Arius was the 'hand of God' (against heretics) but others say it was the work of men. In other words, the latter believe that in order to stop Arius from being re-instated, his enemies poisoned him – which is more than likely.** Following the death of Arius, the dispute continued to flourish. In fact the truth of the matter is that Arianism (as it is commonly called today although this designation is often very ambiguous), almost won the day. **In other words, as time progressed, it was Arianism that was steadily gaining the ascendancy over the Nicene faith (the one substance theory).** So what brought the Nicene faith back into the ascendancy – which eventually developed into trinitarianism? **As has been said earlier, it was the intervention of the state into the affairs of the church – which is something that should NEVER have happened. Church and state should always remain separate.**

**The state defines and establishes Christian orthodoxy** The establishment of the 'one substance' theory as Christian orthodoxy came about when Theodosius became Emperor of Rome. This emperor (known as 'Theodosius the Great') was an ardent believer in the Nicene (one substance) faith. When he became emperor he issued decrees that only supporters of it should be allowed in the pulpit - or take office in the church etc. **In fact he issued threats against all who would NOT accept the faith of Nicaea. In other words, he used secular power (Roman power) to enforce and establish what became known as 'Christian orthodoxy'.** The historian Edward Gibbon wrote "In the space of fifteen years, he [Theodosius] promulgated at least fifteen severe edicts against the heretics; more especially against those who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity; and to deprive them of every hope of escape, he sternly enacted, that if any laws or rescripts should be alleged in their favor, the judges should consider them as the illegal productions either of fraud or forgery. The penal statutes were directed against the ministers, the assemblies, and the persons of the heretics; and the passions of the legislator were expressed in the language of declamation and invective." (Gibbon, The decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", Volume 3 page 9)

**These "heretics" of course were those who would NOT accept the 'one substance' faith drawn up at the Council of Nicaea.** E. Glenn Hinson summed up the situation this way "Theodosius himself, therefore, deserves credit for turning the empire into a fully Christian state." (E. Glenn Hinson, The Early Church, page 214-215, chapter 19, 'Church and state after Constantine') He then said "In sum, that would mean to believe in "the doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one deity of equal majesty and pious trinity." **Those who adhered to such faith could call themselves Catholic Christians, BUT OTHERS MUST BE DESIGNATED DEMENTED AND BARBARIAN AND HERETICAL AND BE STRICKEN FIRST BY DIVINE VENGEANCE AND THEN BY IMPERIAL ACTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WILL OF HEAVEN.** (Cod. Theod. XVI.1.2.). (Ibid)

**Note that all who would NOT accept the 'one substance' theory of Nicaea (that later developed into trinitarianism) were designated "demented and barbarian and heretical".** On the same page Hinson wrote "Shortly after his arrival at Constantinople, at any rate, Emperor Theodosius began to remove Arians and replace them with bishops who accepted the Nicene Creed. In Constantinople itself, Arianism had gotten a strong grip, and Theodosius had to weather a popular storm against his replacement of Demophilus with Gregory of Nazianzus. Soldiers had to protect the saintly Gregory on his way to the Church of the Apostles." (Ibid) It can be seen here that in Constantinople, Arianism "had gotten a strong grip". This was during the latter stages of the 4th century. This was over 50 years after the Council of Nicaea had devised the 'one substance' theory.

In his 'Truth Triumphant', Benjamin Wilkinson noted "**The burning question of the decades succeeding the Council of Nicaea was how to state the relations of the Three Persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The council had decided, and the Papacy had appropriated the decision as its own. The personalities of the Trinity were not confounded, and the substance was not divided. The Roman clergy claimed that Christianity had found in the Greek word homoousios (in English, "consubstantiality") an appropriate term to express this relationship.**" (Benjamin Wilkinson, Truth Triumphant, Chapter 7, 'Patrick, organizer of the church in the wilderness in Ireland')

He continued **“THEN THE PAPAL PARTY PROCEEDED TO CALL THOSE WHO WOULD NOT SUBSCRIBE TO THIS TEACHING, ARIANS, WHILE THEY TOOK TO THEMSELVES THE TITLE OF TRINITARIANS. An ERRONEOUS charge was circulated that all who were called Arians believed that Christ was a CREATED being. This stirred up the indignation of those who were not guilty of the charge.”** (Ibid)

**TODAY, EVEN WITHIN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, THOSE WHO REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE ‘ONE SUBSTANCE’ THEORY (the trinity doctrine) ARE STILL BEING MISREPRESENTED AS BELIEVING THAT CHRIST IS A CREATED BEING WHILST IN REALITY THEY BELIEVE HE IS GOD IN THE PERSON OF THE SON.**

**As we have seen, the trinity doctrine, albeit only an ASSUMED teaching, WAS ‘FORCED’ INTO CHRISTIANITY BY THE SECULAR POWER OF ROME. If this had not happened, this teaching would probably never have become established.** It is no wonder that J.N. Andrews, whom many believe was one of the most ablest theologians of the Seventh-day Adventist Church said regarding the trinity doctrine **“This doctrine destroys the personality of God and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”** (J.N. Andrews, Review and Herald ‘The Fall of Babylon’ March 6th 1855 Vol. 6 No. 24 page 185) We can see from the above why J.N. Andrews made this statement. The trinitarians do not accept that God and Christ are two separate persons each with a form of their own. He then added **“The infamous, measures by which it was forced upon the church which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.”** (Ibid) This is my belief exactly – also the belief of countless numbers of non-trinitarian Seventh-day Adventists. ~~ A SIMPLE GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE TRINITY DOCTRINE by Terry Hill ~~ [Caps added for emphasis]

#### **Questions:**

**1- Can anyone see the way it was FORCED upon the church? Does God work in this way?**

**2- Why would anyone want to believe something that was FORMULATED instead of BIBLICAL?**

**3- Anyone notice how the Papal church LIED about the Ariens to cause people to hate them?**

**It seems to me, NONE of these tactics are Christian, so how can the FORMULATED doctrine be either?**