

THE ROAD TO NICEA

A SURVEY OF THE REGIONAL DIFFERENCES INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY



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Introduction

During the opening centuries of Christianity, the early church quickly came to realize that certain ideas had to be settled if it was going to survive. The first of these foundational doctrines addressed how Christ related to the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Early Christian theologians understood that the development of a deeper concept of God was required. The establishment of Christianity as monotheistic, while maintaining the divinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit, was at issue. But how could God be one and three? The answer found a voice in the doctrine of the Trinity.

In AD 325 bishops gathered to draft a document intended to explain definitively Christ's role in the Godhead. The doctrine of the Trinity, however, did not begin in Nicea. The issue had been burning for centuries.

The question before the church essentially was a Christological one: Who is Jesus in relationship to God? This question leads to the obvious dilemma. If Jesus is God, how can Christianity claim to be monotheistic? And if Jesus is not God, how can Christianity claim to be theistic?¹ Furthermore, while the Nicene Creed emphasized the Christological question, and included the Spirit—thus maintaining a trinitarian over a binitarian doctrine—most debate centered on the relationship between the Father and the Son. The works of the Ante-Nicene Fathers bear this out.

As Christianity developed, cities were able to start theological traditions capable of serving as a framework for future thought. By the second century, new ideas began circulating. Theological experimentation was prevalent. Over time a rule of faith was established by the more influential churches, setting the standard for what would and would not be accepted as orthodox. These

¹R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 164.

influential churches grew into important Christian centers developing their own theology. Regional traditions became strong. In this way, each Christian center developed its own brand of the Christological trinitarian theology.

One assumption upon which this paper depends is that regional influences stem from centers, which are represented in cities that produce a legacy of learning and teaching. Cities, such as Irenaeus's Lyons and Eusebius's Nicomedia, that do not produce a series of influential thinkers do not fall into the definition of an important Christian center.² The establishment of catechetical schools is another indicator that the city was important. According to W. H. C. Frend, "Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Carthage were already the leading sees in Christendom in the first quarter of the third century."³ Because each city produced a series of Christian thinkers and because each established catechetical schools, Rome, Carthage, Antioch, and Alexandria will serve as stops along the road to Nicea.⁴

The purpose of this paper is to examine the development of the doctrine of the Trinity within the four major Christian centers, observing the regional variations in order to see the extent to which geography played a role in its development. During this period, the empire essentially was divided into two halves: the Latin West and the Greek East. This isolation allowed each to develop its own answers to the Christological question.⁵ In order to incorporate this cultural division into the research, I have divided this article into two halves; the first describes the journey through the Christian centers of the West, and the second, through the East. The paper unfolds as a journey, traveling from one major Christian center to another where we will encounter each city's important players, their theologies, and their impact on the progression toward Nicea.

In the West

The road to the first ecumenical council begins in the West. The two cities serve as weigh stations along the road. The development of the doctrine begins in the city of Rome but reaches its zenith in Rome's historical enemy, Carthage.

Rome

In the West, the road to Nicea starts in Rome. The church in the Imperial city began looking

²W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 284; New Advent, "Nicomedia," [online]; available at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11070a.htm>; accessed 22 March 2011.

³Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 284.

⁴Ibid., 285-86.

⁵W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 75-6.

into the question of Christ's role in the Godhead very early. Four figures were prominent in the development of the doctrine in Rome: Clement, Justin Martyr, Theodotus and Hippolytus.

The first person we encounter on the road is the early church father, Clement. Although written in only the first century, I Clement contains a clear trinitarian phrase: "Have we not one God, and one Christ and one Spirit of Grace poured out upon us?"⁶ Despite the omission of the name "Father," this sentence clearly is a proto-trinitarian statement. Elsewhere in I Clement the term Father is stated and is consistent with subsequent authors. First Clement clearly is steeped in the Septuagint, leaning heavily on Scripture for moral and ethical guidance. Even at such an early date, the concept of a triune God had begun.⁷

The second Roman we meet is Justin Martyr. Focusing on practical theology over theoretical, Justin stressed the inseparability of the essence of the Word and the Father. When he concluded, however, that the Father was the source of the Godhead and that all else, no matter how divine, must be inferior, he appears as a subordinationist; but in reality, his theology was much more complex, holding the Godhead to be one and inseparable.⁸ Because Jesus Christ was capable of growing, learning, and suffering, and because he also contained the full power of the Logos, Justin concluded that He was equally human and divine.⁹

The founder of Dynamic Monarchianism, Theodotus, is next. Despite his label as heretic, Theodotus held strongly to many orthodox beliefs; however, it was in his Christology that he veered from the orthodox path. Dynamic Monarchianism, also known as Adoptionism, makes the claim that Jesus merely was a very good man who, at his baptism, was adopted by the Holy Spirit and then was able to perform many miraculous works of God.¹⁰ Millard Erickson summarizes Theodotus's Christology: "Jesus was an ordinary man, inspired but not indwelt by the Spirit."¹¹ Needless to say, this non-orthodox position caused a stir within orthodoxy.

⁶Clement, *I Clement*, 46.6, as quoted in Frend, *The Early Church*, 42.

⁷Frend, *The Early Church*, 42.

⁸Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 358; Karen O'Dell Bullock, *Shepherd's Notes: The Writings of Justin Martyr* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 18-19; Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Amsterdam: Philo, 1968), 140-141.

⁹Leslie William Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 105, 120.

¹⁰Erickson, 358-59; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 116-17.

¹¹Erickson, 359.

The last important figure in Rome is Hippolytus, who became presbyter around 200. His over-emphasis on the distinction between the Logos and the Father in *The Refutation of All Heresies* rightly drew a charge of ditheism from the Roman Bishop Callistus. The passage in question included, “Therefore this solitary and supreme Deity, by an exercise of reflection, brought forth the Logos first; not the word in the sense of being articulated by voice, but as a ratiocination of the universe, conceived and residing in the divine mind.”¹² Hippolytus, however, also claimed that the created Word was the incarnate Christ, part of the Godhead but distinct from the Father. In *Contra Noetum* he claimed that “The Father is over all, the Son is by all, and the Holy Spirit is in all.”¹³ We can see that a trinitarian formula was taking shape.

The Roman trinitarian tradition began with Clement and grew with Justin, was challenged by Theodotus but was restored by Hippolytus. With the emergence of Hippolytus, the journey to Nicea heads out of Rome, across the Mediterranean to Carthage, where great things are brewing.

Carthage

The second stop on the road to Nicea is the historical city of Carthage. Two hundred years before Augustine, a cohesive theory of the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated and applied in the ancient African city. Two men were most responsible for its propagation. The first is Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, better known to us simply as Tertullian; and the second is his bishop, Cyprian.

Immediately following Hippolytus, Tertullian developed what might be considered the apex of ancient trinitarian thought. In *Against Praxeas*, he explains how the Son and the Father were both separate, yet eternally united with the Father; therefore, God must be three persons in one substance.¹⁴ In his study of Tertullian, Eric Osborn suggests that the Carthaginian borrowed his ideas of interpenetration of the Godhead from the way the Stoics understood mixtures:¹⁵ “Stoics distinguished three different sorts of mixtures. . . . The third kind of mixture was a total blending . . . which preserves the natures, which unite. The persistence of the blended constituents was proved from the fact that they could be separated artificially. An oiled sponge, when placed in a blend of water and wine, will absorb water and leave the wine.”¹⁶ By incorporating the Stoic

¹²Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, X.29; quoted in *ANF*, vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 150. The emphasis was added by the editor of *ANF*.

¹³Hippolytus, *Contra Noetum*, XIV.5; quoted in Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 345.

¹⁴Tertullian, *Contra Praxeas*, I-III, XXVII.

¹⁵Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 120-133; Eric Osborn, “They Speak to Us Across the Centuries 8: Tertullian,” *The Expository Times* 109.12 (1998): 357-58.

¹⁶Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian*, 139.

concept of interpenetration of physical bodies, Tertullian struck a balance between the threeness of the Godhead and the oneness of God.¹⁷

Though no North African tradition had developed to this point, Tertullian's theory was put into practice by the Bishop of Carthage.¹⁸ Cyprian regarded Tertullian as the Master, and he held Scripture and Tertullian as his only authorities.¹⁹ The bishop was not a scholar but was first and foremost a pastor, applying his theology to the troubles of the day. One of the main controversies of this time were the Donatists, who were dividing the church. Cyprian's understanding of the Trinity was a prime example of how the church must also be united. With this triune model in mind, the bishop worked unceasingly to hold the church together.²⁰ Unity in the church was Cyprian's goal, but as he applied Tertullian's legacy throughout his ministry, he solidified the North African theological tradition, ensuring that Tertullian's doctrine of the Trinity would grow hardy and strong.

The road to Nicea ends in the West at Carthage. There is no need to continue. The matter is settled. Tertullian's theology essentially put the matter to rest. Nothing more was developed, probably because nothing more needed to be developed.²¹ Things, however, were different on the other side of the empire. The Eastern Church, which was separated from the West by both language and culture, had to find its own solution to the question. We continue our journey in the East, in the first-century city of Antioch.

In the East

We pick up the road to Nicea in the East. Life was different in the Greek side of the Empire. It contained many more churches and many more opportunities to hear different interpretation of what it means to be a Christian. For these reasons, politics played a much greater role in the East than in the West. The most important Christian centers in the East, Antioch and Alexandria, provided the fuel for the machinery that paved the road to Nicea.

¹⁷Ibid., 141; While Tertullian felt free to use Stoicism for his own ends, Osborn points out that Tertullian "repudiates the idea of a Christian Stoicism" (Eric Osborn, "The Subtlety of Tertullian," *Vigiliae Christianae*. 52.4 [1998]:369).

¹⁸Peter Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church* (London: Cassell and Collier Macmillan, 1974), 116.

¹⁹Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 187; Hinchliff, 36.

²⁰Hinchliff, 116.

²¹There is no evidence to support the idea that any trinitarian debate continued after Tertullian. Since, however, there is a plethora of evidence of the debate prior to Tertullian, the argument from silence has merit. The conclusion that Tertullian's theology was accepted throughout the West, thus ending the debate in the West, is likely.

Antioch

The first stop in the East is the Syrian city of Antioch. Over the centuries, it produced four important characters in the trinitarian debate. As time passed, the theology of this Apostolic See began to veer more and more afield. Antioch indeed was a hotbed of theological thought.²²

The earliest figure in the story of the doctrine of the Trinity is the martyr Ignatius. His theology was primitive and rudimentary, as one would expect for a first-century bishop. Ignatius, however, made reference to a trinitarian model three times in his letters.²³ His understanding of the Godhead, despite the early date, is complex. While he does not equate the Holy Spirit with Christ, but only as God's divine power, he formulates a clearly paradoxical understanding of the two-nature Christology.²⁴ Unfortunately, in his letters, he does not explain how the flesh and the spirit interact or join in Christ. Ignatius also wrote that he held Christ to be an ingenerate, pre-existent being, whose Sonship began in the incarnation. His views, sadly, do not seem to have been passed down as part of an Antiochene tradition.²⁵

The second person we encounter in Antioch is the Greek-speaking apologist, Theophilus.²⁶ Though only several generations after Ignatius, little remains of the theology of the first-century martyr. Theophilus developed a Logos doctrine in which he equated the Word with the Son; however, he did not hold Christ as pre-existent. Instead, as the Word, He was *prophorikos*, an idea in the mind of God who was "expressed" at the moment of creation. Theophilus's main contribution to the advancement of the doctrine of the Trinity was in the way he understood the Godhead itself. Applying the word triad in relation to the Father, Word, and Wisdom, he was the first to present God as a triune being.²⁷

The third Antiochene figure, Paul of Samosata, arguably is the most colorful character that we will meet along the road. Drifting further from the divine view of Christ established by Ignatius and from the triune view of Theophilus, Paul maintained the idea that God was dynamically-present in Jesus. His Origenist views, however, provided the grist for his opponents' mill; and in 268, Paul was

²²Paul Woolley, "Antiochene Theology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2d ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 72-3; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 129; Kelly, 230.

²³The trinitarian model can be found in his letters to Ephesus, IX.1, and Magnesia, XIII.1; XIII.2.

²⁴M. D. Goulder, "'Ignatius' 'Donatists,'" *Vigiliae Christianae*, 53.1 (1999): 30.

²⁵Kelly, 92-3; William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 20-21.

²⁶Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 252.

²⁷*Ibid.*; Woolley, 72-3; Kelly, 109; Gonzalez, 52-3; Pelikan, 189.

excommunicated. This is the first extant example of a council imposing a test of orthodoxy.²⁸ For Paul, the Logos was stronger in Jesus than in anyone else, but that did not make Him divine or worthy of worship. God and the Son were homoousios, but not equal. Furthermore, not only did he hold that Christ's humanity had no soul because it had been replaced by the Spirit at His birth, he also was a Dynamic Monarchianist.²⁹ The Antiochene tradition was taking a turn away from the established norm.

The last Antiochene thinker was a student of Paul and a teacher of Arius.³⁰ Lucian followed the teachings of Paul, but saw Christ on a higher plane than his instructor. One of his main teachings and one that became a central theme with Arius was that Jesus was soma apsychon—a body without a soul. Ephiphanius of Salamis reports that Lucian and his followers all denied that Jesus had a human soul and so were able to attach human experiences to the Logos.³¹

The leading thinkers in Antioch drifted from an understanding of the divinity of Christ to a Monarchian-Origenist theology. Ignatius established a biblical understanding of the Trinity, but Theophilus began denying certain aspects of a trinitarian model, and Paul, with his student Lucian, questioned the divinity of Christ. To see the reactions to the “heretical” doctrines building in Antioch, we head south to Alexandria.

Alexandria

The Egyptian Christian center in the Nile delta is our last stop before Nicea. Alexandria, with its Greek academic heritage, continued its status for scholarship within the Christian context. In this city, two groups of thinkers had an impact on the trinitarian doctrine. The controversy that began here provided the impetus for the First Ecumenical Council.

The first group of figures in Alexandria is made up of Clement, Origen and Dionysius. In the late second century the founder of the catechetical school in Alexandria, Pantaenus, turned to philosophy as a way to connect with the lost in his city. His lead was picked up by his successors, Clement, then Origen, and finally Dionysius. These three church fathers turned to philosophy for help in their battle against Gnosticism and were the main figures responsible for developing

²⁸Woolley, 72-3; Erickson, 359; Kelly, 117; New Advent, “Paul of Samosata,” online encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11589a.htm>; accessed on March 22, 2011.

²⁹Pelikan, 198; Frend, *The Early Church*, 113-14; Erickson, 359; Woolley, 72-3; Arland J. Hultgren and Steven A. Haggmark, eds. *The Earliest Christian Heretics: Readings from their Opponents* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1996), 136.

³⁰Kelly, 230-31; Frend, *The Early Church*, 122; New Advent, “Lucian of Antioch,” online encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09409a.htm>; accessed March 22, 2011; Woolley, 72-3; Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 162.

³¹Hanson, 26-7, 80-3; Woolley, 72-3; Kelly, 230-31.

Christian Platonism. This turn to Hellenism, however, was to have a devastating effect on Church unity, driving a wedge between East and West, and between Alexandria and Antioch.³²

Clement was not a systematic theologian, but he was widely read³³ and an eloquent speaker. He soon realized that unless he was able make his teachings understandable to his audience, his mission would fail. He turned to philosophy in order to connect with the people.³⁴ For Clement, even though God completely was transcendent he could be known through the Son and the Spirit: “God, then, being not a subject for demonstration, cannot be the object of science. But the Son is wisdom, and knowledge, and truth, and all else that has affinity thereto. He is also susceptible to demonstration and of description. And all the powers of the Spirit, becoming collectively one thing, terminate in the same point—that is, in the Son.”³⁵ While he emphasized the differences between God and the Son, he never promoted any form of dualism. The Word reflects rather than contrasts God.³⁶

Continuing the Alexandrian tradition of melding Christianity with philosophy, “Origen saw Christianity as a movement of spiritual and moral reform, building sometimes on existing philosophy as well as on Scripture, but always leading the individual forward by its own merits toward a truer understanding of one’s self and of the divine world.”³⁷ In contrast to the Platonic and Hermetic monad, who held the passive qualities of beauty and goodness, Origen explained that God could not be without the active qualities of Wisdom, Word, and Power. He went on to say that Wisdom was co-eternal with God and was known to humanity as the Son, who had joined with God through the perfection of love.³⁸ At other times he was not so egalitarian. In his work against Celsus, he seems to demote the Son to a status less than full divinity.³⁹ And since

³²Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 368-69.

³³Frend attributes around 360 classical texts are referenced in Clement’s *Miscellanies*, many of which are not extant and have not survived elsewhere (Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 369).

³⁴*Ibid.*, 370; Gonzalez, 70-1.

³⁵*Ibid.*, IV. 25, as quoted in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 438.

³⁶Williams, 129; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 371.

³⁷Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 289.

³⁸Origen, *De principiis*, I.2.1-4; II.6.4; Gerald Bostock, “Origen: The Alternative to Augustine?” *The Expository Times* 114.10 (2003): 327.

³⁹Khaled Anotolios, “Christ, Scripture, and the Christian Story of Meaning in Origen,” *Gregorianum* 78.1 (1997): 60-1.

Origen does not treat the Spirit as having the same power and majesty as the Son, we are led to believe that Origen did not include the Spirit in the Godhead.⁴⁰

The third Alexandrian Christian Platonist is Dionysius, who followed along the same thoughts as his teacher. This Bishop of Alexandria, 247–264, was able to continue Origen’s work, setting the theological tradition for the area. Under his reign, the Alexandrian See expanded its control over all of Egypt and Cyrenaica. Around 255, the Monarchians in Cyrenaica came to the attention of Dionysius.⁴¹ Frustrated with their obstinacy, he wrote the bishop in Rome, Pope Sixtus II, rebuking the Monarchians; but while explaining how they were wrong he affirmed the Alexandrian tradition that the Son was a creature. This sparked a fire between the two Sees, and the debate intensified under a new Roman pope—also named Dionysius.⁴² During this controversy, the Cyrenaicans coined the now familiar term, homoousios, which the Alexandrian Bishop rejected as non-scriptural.⁴³ W. H. C. Frend explains: “Dionysius moved Origen’s Trinitarian teaching further along the road toward Arianism. Indeed, with Dionysius’s letter in mind, Arius became explicable.”⁴⁴ The Alexandrian Dionysius set the table for the Arian controversy that followed.

The next group of three characters we meet is made up of two churchmen and one politician. The last two church officials are a bishop and a presbyter, Alexander and Arius, but without the third person, the Emperor Constantine, Nicea never would have happened. All three figures play an important role in the events leading directly to the confrontation in Nicea.

The Alexandrian tradition that took root with Origen was supported by the educated upper class, but the majority of Egyptian believers were developing a distaste for modalism and Manicheanism. A chasm was widening between the intelligencia of Alexandria and the rest of the Egyptian flock.⁴⁵ Arius, a gifted orator, used his eloquence to rally the disenfranchised Alexandrians by challenging the Saballian views apparent in Alexander’s theology. He seems to pick up where Origen and Lucius, his mentor, leave off.⁴⁶ According to Athanasius, Arius held

⁴⁰Kihan McDonnell, “Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?” *Gregorianum* 75.1 (1994): 34.

⁴¹Kelly, 133-34.

⁴²Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 383.

⁴³Kelly, 135.

⁴⁴Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 383.

⁴⁵Ibid., 493-94.

⁴⁶Williams, 31-2.

that God is completely transcendent, and that the Word was not just subordinate but also created. In *De Synodis*, Athanasius quotes Arius's monotheistic perspective: "We acknowledge one God, alone Ingenerate, alone Everlasting, alone Unbegun, alone True, alone having Immortality, alone Wise, alone Good, alone Sovereign."⁴⁷ Arius also emphasized that because the Word had entered Jesus' physical body replacing his soul, Christ was neither fully human nor fully divine. He could not create, could not redeem. He had neither communion with nor knowledge of God. He merely was an empty vessel used of God so deserved no worship as God.⁴⁸

In 318, Arius directly challenged what he saw was the Sabellianism of Alexander. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Socrates recorded Arius's most recognizable quote, "there was a time when the Son was not."⁴⁹ The disagreement, however, probably would have ended here. Alexander was first and foremost an Origenist and held that the Word, while eternal, was generated. But, political rivals pressured Alexander to denounce the presbyter as a heretic.⁵⁰ Buckling under the pressure, the Alexandrian Bishop called a council of one hundred bishops, condemned Arius's teachings, and exiled him. Arius proceeded to Nicomedia, the home of his close friend and fellow Lucianite, Eusebius.⁵¹

In 324, once Constantine finally removed his Eastern rival, Licinius, and consolidated power across the entire empire, he turned his attention to items that were disrupting peace in his land. Hearing of the trouble brewing in Egypt, he sent an envoy in the person of Hosia of Cordoba to quiet the bickering Alexandrians. After an investigation, Hosia sided with Alexander, eventually excommunicating Eusebius—friend to both Arius and the emperor.⁵² In January of 325, the emperor read Hosia's report. Seeing himself as Pontifex Maximus, Constantine decided to call an empire-wide ecumenical council to put an end to the matter. The first ecumenical council was held that year at Nicea.⁵³

In the end, theology did not play a prominent role in the development of the doctrine of Trinity. The ideas that were being argued in Alexandria already had been discussed earlier. The main factor in Egyptian Africa was politics. In Carthage, they had been using a fully realized

⁴⁷Athanasius, *De Synodis*, XVI, as quoted in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 4. *Athanasius: Select Works and Letters* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 458.

⁴⁸Erickson, 711-12; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 494-95.

⁴⁹Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, I.5, as quoted in Roberts and Donaldson, vol. 2, 3; Erickson, 713-15.

⁵⁰Williams, 32-41; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 495; Frend, *The Early Church*, 135-38; Socrates, I.15.

⁵¹Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 495; Gonzalez, 161-62.

⁵²Gonzalez, 161-62; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 496-97; Frend, *The Early Church*, 138.

⁵³Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 497; Gonzalez, 158-59.

trinitarian doctrine by the middle of the third century, but in the East, politics, not theology, held sway. So, it is probably most fitting that the solution to the political problem in Alexandria was resolved by Emperor Constantine, the top politician.

Conclusion

The journey along the road to Nicea began in Rome, where a rudimentary Christological trinitarian doctrine was being developed. Hippolytus, a contemporary of Tertullian, however, found himself running into difficulty as he struggled to remain within the very restrictive parameters of orthodoxy. Too far to one side or another was heresy. From Rome, our journey takes us to Carthage where Tertullian, a more gifted theologian than Hippolytus, was able to develop a fully realized doctrine of the Trinity. The West, however, is separated from the East by language and cultural barriers, effectively insulating the gains made in the West from having an impact on the East. Because Tertullian provided a satisfactory solution, the West had no need to continue to Nicea, and this is where the Western leg of the road stops. In order to travel the entire road to Nicea, we must pick up the journey again in the East. We have to make our way to first-century Antioch, where the second leg of the road begins, then to Alexandria, where things come to a head.

Along the journey, different forces made their presence known. In the West, politics played only a minor part. While secular politics wreaked havoc on the Western Church, the Eastern Church had the double blessing of being torn apart by both secular and ecclesiastical politics. In this way, politics may have played a more important role even than theology in the Eastern Empire.

Geography also played a large part in the development of the Christological trinitarian doctrine. In the West, Rome and Carthage essentially developed unhindered from the East. Only after Tertullian produced a thorough resolution to the trinitarian question was there any indication of a shared tradition in the West. In the East, however, Antioch promoted an independent spirit within the Syrian See and so veered from orthodoxy. Alexandria's geographical location provided it with the academic wealth and geographic centrality necessary to amplify all its controversies to the rest of the Roman world.

Our journey along the road to Nicea has shown that geography has had a significant impact on the way the doctrine of the Trinity developed in the Ante-Nicene period. The resulting doctrine may or may not have turned out the same given different geographical restrictions, but that is another question.