

AFTER NICAEA

By Juan Baixeras

Most people who believe in the Doctrine of the Trinity claim that at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, all the church did was to officially declare a doctrine that had always been the teaching of the church. But if this is true, ask yourself why? Why would the church have to make any kind of official declaration about a doctrine that was supposed to be established from the beginning? There is no doctrine on whether Jesus resurrected or not. It was an established teaching. The idea that Jesus was God, was not. This is why the church required an official declaration to formally establish this as orthodox. It was a developing idea. It was not a teaching of the early church that had been established by the apostles. An important thing to note in support of this fact is that even at Nicaea when with Emperor Constantine's help, they rammed this doctrine through as orthodox, they did not include the Holy Spirit as part of the formula. Again, why not? How could they forget that the trinity included the Holy Spirit? Because it was a developing idea, and at this point in time (Nicaea), all the church was willing to concede to was a binity. It would have to wait until the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD to include the Holy Spirit in their formula and thus complete the trinity.

An excellent proof that the Doctrine of the Trinity was not an established teaching of the early Christians is in a letter by one of the trinity's greatest exponents, Tertullian of Carthage. Even though his understanding of it was that the Son was subordinate to the Father, which is contrary to today's Doctrine of the Trinity, his writings were unfortunately, very influential in the development of this doctrine. He wrote about it profusely.

The fact that he believed the Son to be inferior to the Father can be easily seen in his letter Against Praxeas. In it, he states:

Chap. IX. *"Thus the Father is distinct from the Son, being greater than the Son."*

Chap. VII. *"And while I recognize the Son, I assert his distinction as second to the Father."*

Again, ask yourself why was his view of the trinity different from today's view if it has always been taught by the church? The reason is because it was a developing idea.

Tertullian himself gives us the greatest proof of the fact that it was a developing idea in the same letter. He states:

Chap. III. vv. 1. *"The majority of believers, are **STARTLED** at the Dispensation (of the Three in One)...They are constantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods...While the Greeks actually **REFUSE** to understand the oikonomia, or Dispensation" (of the Three in One).*

These are incredible statements! Tertullian is acknowledging that the majority of believers did not agree with the Doctrine of the Trinity. They accused him of being a polytheist. The Greeks

(either Greek Christians or Christians that spoke Greek in different lands) refused altogether to believe him. These statements are probably the best proofs that the Doctrine of the Trinity was not taught by the Apostles. If it had been taught by them, the majority of believers would have known about the Dispensation and would not have been startled by it, neither would they have accused him of worshipping two gods. This doctrine was something new, it was not the established belief of Christianity as you can see. It was starting to work itself out and trying to gain popularity, especially with Hellenized Christians. But it was not in the majority. In fact, it was very much in the minority.

Now back to the subject of Nicaea. For those that think that Nicaea just formalized an already established teaching, think again. Let us now look to the events that followed after the Council of Nicaea. It will shed some light on the matter.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AFTER NICAEA

325 AD - Constantine convenes the Council of Nicaea in order to develop a statement of faith that can unify the church. The Nicene Creed is written, declaring that "*the Father and the Son are of the same substance*" (homousios). Emperor Constantine who was also the high priest of the pagan religion of the Unconquered Sun presided over this council. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica:

*"Constantine himself presided, actively guiding the discussions and **personally proposed the crucial formula** expressing the relationship of Christ to God in the creed issued by the council. "of one substance with the Father."*

The American Academic Encyclopedia states:

*"Although this was not Constantine's first attempt to reconcile factions in Christianity, it was the first time he had used the imperial office to **IMPOSE** a settlement."*

At the end of this council, Constantine sided with Athanasius over Arius and exiled Arius to Illyria.

- **328 AD** - Athanasius becomes bishop of Alexandria.
- **328 AD** - Constantine recalls Arius from Illyria.
- **335 AD** - Constantine now sides with Arius and exiles Athanasius to Trier.
- **337 AD** - A new emperor, Constantius, orders the return of Athanasius to Alexandria.
- **339 AD** - Athanasius flees Alexandria in anticipation of being expelled.
- **341 AD** - Two councils are held in Antioch this year. During this council, the *First*, *Second*, and *Third* Arian Confessions are written, thereby beginning the attempt to

produce a formal doctrine of faith to oppose the Nicene Creed.

- **343 AD** - At the Council of Sardica, Eastern Bishops demand the removal of Athanasius.
- **346 AD** - Athanasius is restored to Alexandria.
- **351 AD** - A second anti - Nicene council is held in Sirmium.
- **353 AD** - A council is held at Aries during Autumn that is directed against Athanasius.
- **355 AD** - A council is held in Milan. Athanasius is again condemned.
- **356 AD** - Athanasius is deposed on February 8th, beginning his third exile.
- **357 AD** - Third Council of Sirmium is convened. Both *homoousios* and *homoiousios* are avoided as unbiblical, and it is agreed that the Father is greater than His subordinate Son.
- **359 AD** - The Synod of Seleucia is held which affirms that Christ is "like the Father," It does not however, specify how the Son is like the Father.
- **361 AD** - A council is held in Antioch to affirm Arius' positions.
- **380 AD** - Emperor Theodosius the Great declares Christianity the official state religion of the empire.
- **381 AD** - The First Council of Constantinople is held to review the controversy since Nicaea. Emperor Theodosius the Great establishes the creed of Nicaea as the standard for his realm. The Nicene Creed is re-evaluated and accepted with the addition of clauses on the Holy Spirit and other matters.

If you believe that Nicaea just formalized the prevalent teaching of the church, then there really should not have been any more conflicts. Why should there be? If it were the established teaching of the church, then you would expect people to either accept it, or not be Christians. It would be like me being a member of the Communist Party. I would join it knowing that they do not believe in the ownership of private property, no conflict. But now, say after I have been a member of the party for a few years, someone decides to introduce a proposal that we allow the ownership of private property, not everyone in the party is going to agree, the result is conflict. This is similar to what happened in the church. It was not the established teaching, and when some faction of the church tried to make it official, the result was a major conflict.

It was mainly a theological power grab by certain factions of the church. The major complication throughout all this was that the emperors were involved. At Nicaea it was Constantine that decided the outcome. Then as you can see, we have the flip-flopping of opinion with the result that Athanasius is exiled and recalled depending on which emperor is in power. We even have in **357 AD** the declaration that *homoousios* and *homoiousios* are **unbiblical**, and that the Father is

greater than His subordinate Son. This is 180 degrees from Nicaea. It is definitely not the Trinitarian formula.

In 380 AD Emperor Theodosius declared Christianity to be the state religion. One can come to the conclusion that whichever way Theodosius favors, is the way in which it is going to end. This is exactly what happened next. In 381 AD the struggle was finally ended by the current emperor, Theodosius the Great, who favored the Nicene position. Just like at Nicaea, the EMPEROR again decided it. What is plainly obvious is that the emperors were dictating the theology of the church. The big difference now being was that there was not going to be any more changing of sides. It was now the state religion. You cannot make Christianity the state religion and then change its beliefs every few years, it would undermine its credibility as the true faith. The Trinity was now the orthodox position, and the state was willing to back it up. Conflicts and debates continued for centuries.

In 529 AD Emperor Justinian revamped the Roman Civil Law and heresy was big on his list of crimes. The two heresies that were now punishable by death were not accepting the Nicene Creed and rebaptism. Here is a brief article that was sent to me on this topic. It lists the actual law with the penalties for breaking the law. It is quite interesting.

HOUSMAIL HM#076 by Allon Maxwell- 30 June 2001

THE JUSTINIAN CODE

The Council of Nicaea is best remembered for its introduction of the first version of the Nicene Creed, which was written in an attempt to resolve the Arian controversy. However, it was also the source of another less known, but amazing development in the history of the Church! For the first three centuries of its existence, the Church had endured regular outbreaks of fierce persecution for its faith. At Nicaea it gained a measure of political influence, (and a seared conscience!) which allowed it to employ "legal" persecution as a measure to protect the "faith" -- such as it had become.

Down through the centuries countless thousands have been persecuted and martyred, for their refusal to pay dishonest lip service to the Creeds of the Mainstream Church.

Despite vigorous attempts to eliminate them, Arian beliefs survived, mainly in the northern regions of the Empire, for several centuries afterwards.

They were still a force to be reckoned with, when the Emperor Justinian came to the throne in the sixth century AD.

It is not surprising therefore, that when Justinian commissioned a review of Roman Law, harsh measures against anti-trinitarianism came to be written into the Civil Laws of the Empire.

In the interest of accuracy, it should be recognized that the Code of Justinian was NOT primarily written for this reason. Its major purpose was a massive overhaul of the Roman Civil Law, which at that time it was in a very disorganized condition. It was so costly to reproduce the entire mass

of laws promulgated over previous centuries, that even public libraries did not contain complete collections.

Justinian appointed a Commission of 16 eminent lawyers to undertake the task of compiling, clarifying and simplifying. The results were published in 533AD in 50 books. Over the following years, until his death in 565AD, Justinian issued a great number of new ordinances, some of which seriously altered previous laws. All of this work is collectively known as the "Corpus Juris Civilus". (Source Encyclopedia Britannica 1999, CD-ROM Standard Version.)

Although enforcing Christianity as the State Religion was not the only concern, "heresy" did appear high on the list of "crimes" which incurred severe penalties, and Church authorities were not slow to invoke them.

These same attitudes were also adopted into the laws of other countries. In England, the last public execution for anti-trinitarianism took place in Edinburgh, in 1697.

"The Imperial law code from Justinian's time (A.D. 529) on, made rebaptism one of the two heresies penalized by death, the other being Anti-Trinitarianism."

Quoted from - <http://www.anabaptists.org/history/mennoen1.html>
(From the Mennonite Encyclopedia)

The following extracts are taken from **Book 1 of the Justinian Code**. They reveal the hearts of men who thought Religious Conviction could be imposed by force! But, how very far they are from the heart of the Jesus revealed in the Gospels, whose teaching made obedience conditional on LOVE! (John 14:15)

They can be found on-line at - <http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/jus-code.htm>

QUOTE:

"We desire that all peoples subject to Our benign Empire shall live under the same religion that the Divine Peter, the Apostle, gave to the Romans, and which the said religion declares was introduced by himself, and which it is well known that the Pontiff Damascus, and Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity, embraced; that is to say, in accordance with the rules of apostolic discipline and the evangelical doctrine, we should believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute a single Deity, endowed with equal majesty, and united in the Holy Trinity."

"We order all those who follow this law to assume the name of Catholic Christians, and considering others as demented and insane, We order that they shall bear the infamy of heresy; and when the Divine vengeance which they merit has been appeased, they shall afterwards be punished in accordance with Our resentment, which we have acquired from the judgment of Heaven."

"Let no place be afforded to heretics for the conduct of their ceremonies, and let no occasion be offered for them to display the insanity of their obstinate minds. Let all persons know that if any privilege has been fraudulently obtained by means of any rescript whatsoever, by persons of this kind, it will not be valid. Let all bodies of heretics be prevented from holding unlawful assemblies, and let the name of the only and the greatest God be celebrated everywhere, and let the observance of the Nicene Creed, recently transmitted to Our ancestors, and firmly established by the testimony and practice of Divine Religion, always remain secure."

"Moreover, he who is an adherent of the Nicene Faith, and a true believer in the Catholic religion, should be understood to be one who believes that Almighty God and Christ, the son of God, are one person, God of God, Light of Light; and let no one, by rejection, dishonor the Holy Spirit, whom we expect, and have received from the Supreme Parent of all things, in whom the sentiment of a pure and undefiled faith flourishes, as well as the belief in the undivided substance of a Holy Trinity, which true believers indicate by the Greek word amousios. These things, indeed do not require further proof, and should be respected."

"Let those who do not accept those doctrines cease to apply the name of true religion to their fraudulent belief; and let them be branded with their open crimes, and, having been removed from the threshold of all churches, be utterly excluded from them, as We forbid all heretics to hold unlawful assemblies within cities. If, however, any seditious outbreak should be attempted, We order them to be driven outside the walls of the City, with relentless violence, and We direct that all Catholic Churches, throughout the entire world, shall be placed under the control of the orthodox bishops who have embraced the Nicene Creed."

"Source: Corpus Juris Civilis (The Civil Law, the Code of Justinian), by S.P. Scott, A.M., published by the Central Trust Company, Cincinnati, copyright 1932, Volume 12 [of 17], pages 9-12, 125."

END QUOTE

Conclusion

The Doctrine of the Trinity was not an established teaching of the early Christians. It was a doctrine that developed and spread throughout Christianity between the 3rd and 4th centuries. There was much resistance to it from the majority of believers as Tertullian himself admits. But in the end, with the might of the Roman state to back up the state held Councils and the state imposed articles of faith, this new doctrine became the orthodox position of the church. Many thousands of people were killed by the state in the following centuries for their refusal to accept this doctrine as Biblical. Even as late as the 1700's, people were still being burned at the stake for their denial of this man-made doctrine (Servetus was burned at the stake by Calvin for this reason). Does that sound like something that Jesus and his apostles would approve of? Did Jesus ever say, "believe what I say or I will have you killed?" Of course not! But this was the only way to enforce this most unbiblical and most illogical pagan belief. If this doctrine is not the great apostasy that Jesus warned us about, then I do not know what else it could be.

This is an unpalatable aspect of history which is largely unknown, or ignored, by the current generation of the Christians.

The Trinity has lasted as long as it has because of oppression. The church with the state to back it up obliterated anyone who had opposing views to any so-called Orthodox doctrines. They also destroyed any writings or books that opposed their views.

Three other reasons have helped to keep this unbiblical belief as a cornerstone in mainstream Christianity. The first is the fact that most people until the middle of the 19th century could not read. There was no way for the average person to verify what his priest was telling him as fact. The second reason is the fact that Bibles until the 17th century were too expensive and too rare for the average person to own, again making it very difficult for the average person to see through the mistake. The third reason is that until it was changed in 1962 at the Second Vatican Council, it was considered a sin for Catholics to read the Bible. So by the time that the Protestant Reformation occurred which allowed people to finally be able to read the Bible, the Trinity had already had 1200 years to entrench itself. That, coupled with the simple fact that Catholics today still account for 85% of Christians worldwide completes the picture of why it is still here today.

But in today's world things are starting to change. Most Bible scholars are aware that the Trinity is unbiblical. There are scores of articles and books stating this fact. I have a paper called "Who is Jesus" on this web site which gives you a list of some of the most prominent ones. It is well known in the scholarly levels and it is slowly working its way down to the masses.

Someday it will be known for what it is, a pagan belief that worked its way into Christianity in the early years of the church when it was reaching out to pagans all over the world.

Search the Scriptures for the word of God. Do not accept man's word of tradition. Remember what Jesus thinks of man's traditions:

Mark 7:7 – *"You disregard God's commandment but **cling to human tradition.**"*

May God bless you always.

In Christ,
Juan Baixeras

[Jesus The Messiah And His Kingdom](#)