THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE IN THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY

Introduction

The study of doctrinal development concerns the description and explanation of the growth of Christian teaching since its inception with Jesus Christ and His apostles. The idea of "development" outrules a static view of the Church's doctrine. Doctrinal change is a fact taken for granted by modern historians.[1] But "development" also signifies more than just change. Since the idea of "development" signifies a *positive* change and excludes negative changes (i.e. "corruptions"), two questions force themselves upon the modern historian: (1) What is Christianity's principle of continuity? (2) What are the criteria which determine whether a change is faithful to that principle, and so qualifies as a development? These questions can be answered in two ways—either with a ruling from theology, or with a precedent from history. The latter method will be followed in this study by examining the development of trinitarian doctrine in the Arian controversy.[2]

The Arian controversy (318-381 A.D.) has often been the midwife for various modern theories of doctrinal development.[3] For example, John Henry Newman (1801-1890) first considered this question

[1] A fine overview of the birth of the modern concept of doctrinal development is given by Owen Chadwick, in his pleasant book *From Bossuet to Newman*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). In the age of the counter-Reformation, Protestants and Catholics argued with each other based on two common assumptions: first, true doctrine has never changed (therefore, anything novel is heretical *de facto*); and second, only the other side has changed in doctrine. Given these presuppositions, variations in orthodox teaching was described as either a clarification of the faith in better language (the Gallican apologetic, ibid., 19) or as a logical deduction (the Spanish development of the scholastic solution of Thomas Aquinas, ibid., 25). When the patristic documents proliferated enough to avenge their exploitation by polemicists, both Protestants and Catholics were forced to acknowledge their differences with the early church. In this way, "the development of historical theology …was in many ways a by-product rather than a product of Reformation theology" (Jaroslav Pelikan, *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971], 34).

[2] Normally a definition of "doctrine" would have to be given by any study of doctrinal development. Jaroslav Pelikan does a fine job of explaining the differences between the overlapping terms "historical theology," "history of dogma," "history of theology," "history of Christian thought," and "history of doctrine" (see *Historical Theology*, xiv-xviii). Since all of these definitions include the trinitarian formulations of the fourth century, there is no need to limit this study to any one label.

[3] There is good reason for uniting these investigations. The Trinitarian formulas coming out of the Arian controversy became "a precedent for all subsequent developments" (from the preface to John Henry Newman, *Roman Catholic Writings on Doctrinal Development*, ed. and trans. James Gaffney [Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1997], xiii). In this controversy we find the first ecumenical statements of authority in the church since the Bible,

while researching for his first book, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*.[4] Ian Ker (a Newman authority) claims that Newman's later work, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, has become "the classic text for the theology of the development of doctrine."[5] The king of the German school of *Dogmengeschichte*, Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), made the Arian controversy the centerpiece of his seven-volume classic, *The History of Dogma*.[6] This focus aligned with Harnack's belief that the center of gravity for dogmatic history is the patristic era. The recent American rival to Harnack, Jaroslav Pelikan, has echoed that sentiment in writing his five-volume history, *The Christian Tradition*.[7] Finally, several

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yet in a language and style very different from the Bible. Just the sheer importance of the Trinity, as the king of dogmas, makes the study of its development important.

[4] From the preface to Newman, *Roman Catholic Writings*, xii-xiii.

[5] From the foreword to John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6th ed. (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), xxi. Pelikan calls Newman's *Essay* the "almost inevitable starting point for investigation of development of doctrine" (Jaroslav Pelikan, *Development of Christian Doctrine:Some Historical Prolegomena* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969], 3).

[6] Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, 7 vols., 3rd ed. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1905).

The simple thesis of Harnack's *magnum opus* is his famous maxim, "Dogma in its conception and development is a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel" (ibid., 1:17; cf. 1:x). Harnack has a narrow definition of church dogma: "These dogmas are the doctrines of the Christian faith logically formulated and expressed for scientific and apologetic purposes, the contents of which are a knowledge of God, of the world, and of the provisions made by God for man's salvation. The Christian Churches teach them as the truths revealed in Holy Scripture, the acknowledgment of which is the condition of the salvation which religion promises" (ibid., 1:1). Please note, Harnack does not deny the need for verbal symbols in Christianity. Such a situation would be "inconceivable" (ibid., 1:22). What Harnack thinks is foreign to Christianity is the urge to give *rational* explanations, which are then *authoritatively* imposed on all Christians.

These two observations regarding rationality and authority point to a general characterization of Harnack as a *liberal Lutheran*. As a liberal, Harnack assumes a strong dichotomy between faith and knowledge, i.e. between "piety" and "science". The Gospel about Jesus is not a message to believe (especially since Harnack denied the historical factuality of the incarnation and the resurrection), but rather a life to imitate. Taking his cue from Matthew 11:28-30, Harnack claims that we should imitate the humble Jesus, so that we too can experience the same filial trust that he had as a man toward God (see, e.g., ibid., 1:49; 1:57, n. 1; and 1:71). Those with true piety have a "marked conviction of sin, complete renunciation of their own strength, and trust in grace, in the personal God who is apprehended as the Merciful One in the humility of Christ" (ibid., 5:74). True piety is simple. Impulses to reconcile Christian tradition and science come from other sources than piety, and lead (as Ambrose's doctrine of sin did) to "an irreconcilable mass of contradictions" (ibid., 5:50; cf. 5:98).[6]

As a Lutheran, Harnack stresses a strong dichotomy between morality and religion, i.e. between Law and Gospel. To Harnack, "…religion is bound up in faith in forgiveness of sins" (ibid., 5:89). Linking ideas of goodness or obedience to faith is contrary to the Gospel. For example, Augustine compromised the Gospel when he made faith an act of obedience by saying, "To me to cling to God is a good thing" (ibid., 5:80). Given this view that *any* demand of obedience is law and so opposed to the Gospel, it is no surprise to find Harnack labelling doctrinal statements as *lex* when they are imposed upon others as necessary for entering heaven. Away with such Dogma! But since the *form* of piety can be separated from its *spirit*, Harnack endeavors to find the kernel of the Gospel in every era of the church. The atmosphere of dogma makes piety difficult, but not impossible.

[7] Pelikan expands Harnack's center of gravity to include the documents of the New Testament (*Historical Theology*, 131). His life work is *The Christian Tradition*, 5 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971-1990). Pelikan wrote this set to describe historically how doctrine has developed. Since doctrinal

patristic specialists have directly commented on doctrinal development: the late Anglican bishop and scholar R. P. C. Hanson (1916-1989),[8] and the Cambridge revisionist Maurice Wiles (1923-2005).[9] This

development is a fact, the chief task for the Church is to define the legitimate limit of development (*Development*, 41). This task should be carried out by the historians. Much of Pelikan's work is devoted to this insistence. The reason for this is simple: Christian doctrine developed within the context of the total life of the Church (ibid., 144).

Pelikan's chief strength lies in his *balance*. Compared to most modern historians, Pelikan is not extreme. He aims at being neither too subjective nor too objective. He hopes to avoid both the dogmatic and relativistic extremes. In method, Pelikan proposes a compromise between the German *Dogmengeschichte* and the modern sociological approach. Both context and a succession of ideas should be considered (ibid., 46). Pelikan's chief contribution to the discipline seems to be the reminder that the history of Christian doctrine is much more than the history of the theologian's ideas. Within the churches there is much in the prayers and preaching that is taken for granted by the theologians. More often than not, this quiet theology never enters the polemical arena. Given this understanding, Pelikan provides one of the best modern definitions of Christian doctrine: "Christian doctrine, then, may be defined as what the Church believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the Word of God" (based on Romans 10; see *Historical Theology*, 95).

[8] R. P. C. Hanson wrote two books on doctrinal development specifically. In the first of these books, *The Continuity of Christian Doctrine* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), Hanson espouses a *via media* between fundamentalism's denial of development in favor of Scripture and the historicist's denial of Scripture in favor of development (see Joseph F. Kelly's introduction to *Continuity*, ix-x). According to Hanson, there were two major patristic developments in doctrine. The first occurred when eschatology gave way to Christology because Jesus did not return as soon as expected and the Church became predominately Gentile (ibid., 34, 39-40). The second involved the "revolution" of the fourth century, when two developments occurred in Trinitarian thought—a contradiction and a reduction. Regarding the contradiction, Nicene Trinitarianism was "the formal abandonment of the economic concept of the Trinity." Regarding the reduction, Athanasius and Hilary claimed that the traditional use of the Logos doctrine to keep God from contacting the world was not proper.

Hanson's second book, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, is both a summary of all modern scholarship on the Arian controversy and a case study into the nature of doctrinal development. The thesis of this massive work is that the Arian controversy is actually not a controversy between orthodoxy and heresy, but a *search* to answer the question, "How divine is Jesus Christ?" (*Continuity*, 54). The mode of this search was one of trial-and-error. As an ecumenical Anglican, Hanson insisted that a theory of doctrinal development must be broad enough to include all the empirical manifestations of the church seen today. Older theories of logical sequence and Newman's biological analogy are too narrow. The best analogy lies with the critical approaches of other scientific disciplines (ibid., 84-88).

[9] Maurice Wiles is perhaps the most radical of the four historians under consideration, but maybe also the most interesting. In strong contrast to any traditional approach to doctrine, Wiles advocated a general revision to Christian doctrine with his book, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1967). He later attempts to fulfill his own call for revision by the work, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (London: SCM Press, 1974). Taking his cue from the nature of paradigm shifts in science, Wiles argues for a complex principle of continuity in the subject matter: "The element of identity…will have to be looked for in the sources to which reference is made, the kinds of concern which direct that reference and the general pattern or characters of the affirmation made" (ibid., 7). Doctrinal continuity will not be found in "a set of unchanging and unchangeable dogma" (*Making*, 171-172). Because the world changes, doctrine must continually change and be in essence only temporary (*Remaking*, 2). In other words, while the *content* of doctrine changes, the *intent* of the doctors stays the same—to do justice to "the record of Scripture, the activity of Scripture, and the experience of salvation" in the modern world (*Making*, 173). This leads to Wiles' most basic plea. The Church needs a Copernican revolution in doctrine. Objectification should give room to "the role played by the human observer" (ibid., 175). The modern world's new understanding of anthropology should enlighten the modern church's doctrine. In Christology especially, the modern emphasis on salvation in a relationship with God and the Bible's emphasis on the function (rather than the nature) of Christ should lead the Church to create, and not conserve, a new Christological doctrine.

study will interact with four of these modern historians of doctrinal development: Harnack, Pelikan, Hanson, and Wiles.[10]

In keeping with modern practice, this study will proceed in two parts. First, the historical *process* of development will be examined. The goal of this section will be to identify the main changes to trinitarian doctrine. This part will argue that there were at *root* two recognizably different theological parties from the onset of the Arian controversy—the orthodox Nicenes and the heretical Arians. Second, the *principle* of continuity will be identified. Though the four modern historians under consideration at first appear to disagree sharply with each other, it will become apparent that fundamentally they all agree that the principle of continuity in Christian doctrine is *experience*. In contrast to this consensus, a defense will made for the fact that the Scriptures were sufficiently clear to determine the fourth century's trinitarian doctrine. The true principle of continuity in Christian doctrine is the written word of God.

Issues in the Process of Trinitarian Development

The notion of development presupposes a starting place. For growth to occur, there must first be a seed. What were the key doctrinal issues at the outbreak of the Arian controversy (318 A.D.)?

The Original Debate and the Nicene Definition

The traditional understanding of this period is that there was a clear position of orthodoxy at the very beginning of the controversy, which made Arius' views manifestly wrong. This understanding has been strongly contested by Hanson and recent revisionists of Arius.[11] To Hanson, the Nicene question was not a matter of right or wrong, but a matter of *degree*: "How divine is Jesus Christ?"[12] Proof

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[10] It is regretted that the limits of this study will not permit interaction with John Henry Newman. His poetic method and Catholic disposition do not fit well with the four men under consideration. The reader is encouraged to read Newman's *Essay* for its smorgasbord of concepts, which can be modified to fit any theory of doctrinal development.

[11] In an article which summarizes briefly the argument of his large work, R. P. C. Hanson claims that English-speaking students have been led by the lack of English histories of the "Arian controversy" into an outdated view of the affair. The "controversy" was not "a contest between known orthodoxy and manifest heresy" because (1) there was not a universally recognizable answer in AD 318 to the question of how divine Jesus is; and (2) there was not even a universally recognized terminology to carry on the debate. Though all sides excluded certain extremes (e.g. Jesus was a mere man, or there is only one God in three aspects), Arius' views could be regarded as a radical version of tradition (see R. P. C. Hanson, "The Achievement of Orthodoxy in the Fourth Century A.D.," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 144).

[12] Hanson, *The Continuity of Christian Doctrine*, 54. According to Adolf von Harnack, the chief question was, "Is the Divine which appeared on the earth and has made its presence actively felt, identical with the supremely Divine that rules heaven and earth?" This question sets the issue in the anti-Sabellian context of the third century (Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 4:1). Pelikan agrees that the chief issue was over the divinity of Christ, rather than strictly the doctrine of God: "The point at which the Arian understanding of God called forth a controversy

for this revision has been manifold. Pelikan cites the later controversy and the pro-Nicenes' search for terminology.[13] Hanson follows the English trend of claiming Arius had a legitimate soteriological concern: "The Arians were among the few theologians of the early church who seriously understood the scandal of the cross."[14] In summary, although most would not deny the existence of two *ecclesiastical* parties, modern historians often argue against seeing that the *nature* of those parties as orthodox and heretics.

Does this modern revision have merit? (Before answering, it should be noted that this paper cannot attempt to justify its claims *fully*. The purpose is to delineate the main course of doctrinal development.) First, Trevor Hart has identified the logical deficiency of the soteriological (partial) vindication of Arius: If they truly held to the scandal of the cross, why did they deny that Jesus was *true* God?[15] Second, the matter of orthodoxy and heresy is a dead question, for throughout the controversy Arianism was under the Church's *anathema*.[16] Third, since the Alexandrian condemnation of Arius occurred without the help of civil rule, it is not wise to interpret the Nicene agreement as mere deference to the emperor.[17] Would such a deference befit Christians who gloried in the stands of past martyrs

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was, then, not in the doctrine of God as such, but in the doctrine of the relation between God and the divine in Christ. In asking a question about Christ, Arius was really asking a question about God" (Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, vol.1 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971], 1:195).

[13] Pelikan, *Emergence*, 1:200. The outbreak after the emperor's death shows that the earlier "consensus" was more political than real. Moreover, the orthodox embarrassment over Marcellus and the interchangeability of the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* point to this confused state (ibid., 1:203, 207-209).

[14] Hanson, "The Achievement of Orthodoxy in the Fourth Century A.D.," 145. According to Hanson, the "heart of Arianism" has this concern: "The Arians want to have a God who can suffer, but they cannot attribute suffering to the High God, and this is what (with some reason) they believed the Homoousian doctrine would entail" (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 112).

[15] According to Trevor A. Hart, "The next result of Arianism is precisely an undermining of the real *skandalon* of the cross and not its skillful preservation. For what Arianism does is to capitulate in the face of an Hellenic doctrine of impassibility and absolute transcendence, predicating suffering and death not of the God, whom the Bible tells us became flesh for our sakes, but rather of a demi-god, a creature sent by God in order to undergo such pain for our sakes. Thus, far from succeeding in the purpose which Hanson imputes to it, Arian Christology cuts the nerved of the gospel message" (review of *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, by R. P. C. Hanson, *EQ* 64 (1992): 160-161).

[16] Athanasius makes this point in his great conciliatory work of 359, *De Synodis*: The Arians excited agitation and trouble in the Church in the vain hope that "at length they will undo the sentence which has been passed against the Arian heresy. But here too they seem ignorant, or to pretend ignorance, that even before Nicaea that heresy was held in detestation, when Artemas was laying its foundations…" (*De Synodis*, 20). Let none forget that Arius and his company were "expelled from the Church by the blessed Alexander" (ibid., 15).

[17] Aided by the general ignorance of the bishops, the *homoousios* in the Nicene Creed passed because "the will of the Emperor decided the matter" (Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 4:56).

before emperors?[18] As for terminology, there was *enough* terminology to at least condemn Arius, for the inclusion of the word *homoousios* was sufficient to exclude Arius. Both the anathemas and the Nicene statements show that the fundamental issue was clear and not a matter of degree: The Son of God was "begotten, not made."[19] This issue of the creaturehood of the Son of God runs like a fault line beneath the whole controversy.[20]

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[18] Pelikan imputes a lack of principle to a good share of the council members: "All the rest [of the bishops] saluted the emperor, signed the formula, and went right on teaching as they always had" (*Emergence*, 203).

[19] Proof for this assertion is fourfold. First, as already stated, the Nicene Creed boldly announces this fact, while the later Arian creeds shun it. Second, the debate upon the central text, Proverbs 8:22, swarms around the understanding of "begetting" and "creating" (see Book 2 of Athanasius' *Oration Against the Arians*, 18-82). Third, the chief argument of the Arians shows the importance of this issue, viz. the inference from the Son's title of "Only-begotten" to calling the Father "Unoriginate". Fourth, the pro-Nicene antagonists themselves cite this as the ground of their coalition. Alexander's post-Nicene letters stressed that "the Son was coeternal, immutable, and not a creature" (Stuart G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 133). According to Athanasius, "the Bishops who anathematized the Arian heresy" asserted that the Son was *homoousios* with the Father because (among other things) "the Word was not a creature, but an offspring from the essence" (*De Synodis*, 45). The issue was clear at Nicea: "For if He is a Son, he is not a creature; but if a creature, then not a Son" (ibid., 36).

[20] In 359, Athanasius sees a fundamental agreement with Basil and the Homoiousians because they were "in controversy with those who say that the Word is a creature, instead of allowing Him to be genuine Son…" (*De Synodis*, 41). Similarly, when the storm widened to include the Holy Spirit, the 362 A.D. Synod of Alexandria made one of the two terms of church membership "to anathematise also those who say that the Holy Spirit is a Creature and separate from the Essence of Christ" (*Tomus ad Antiochenos*, 3). Likewise, Basil challenged his Pneumatomachian opponents, "Let them say whether it is more proper to rank Him with God or to thrust Him forth to the place of the creature" (*De Spiritu Sancto*, 37). To place the Holy Spirit on equal rank with the creatures is to blaspheme Him (ibid., 50). "If He is a creature of course He serves with all the rest, for 'all things,' it is said 'are thy servants,' but if He is above Creation, then He shares in royalty" (ibid., 51). Therefore, we should ask, "What reason is there for robbing of His share of glory Him Who is everywhere associated with the Godhead; in the confession of the Faith, in the baptism of redemption, in the working of miracles, in the indwelling of the saints, in the graces bestowed on obedience?….Where then are we to take Him and rank Him? With the creature? Yet all the creature is in bondage, but the Spirit maketh free. 'And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'" (ibid., 55). Basil gives three proofs that the Holy Spirit is not a creature: He is good by nature; He knows the deep things of God; and He gives life (ibid., 56).

Several modern historians have given a general assent to this point. For example, according to Harnack, the main articles of by the school of Lucian ("the Arius before Arius") were "the creaturehood of the Son, the denial of his co-eternity with the Father, and the unchangeableness of the Son achieved by constant progress and constancy" (*History of Dogma*, 4:5). The main thrust of Arius' teaching is that "God, the Only One, is alone eternal, and that besides Him there exists only what is created, and that this originates in His will, that accordingly the Son also is not eternal, but a creation of God out of the non-existent" (ibid., 4:14). Pelikan notes that "the creaturely status of the Logos (and of the Son of God) was a cardinal doctrine" of the Arians (*The Christian Tradition*, 1:196). Moreover, Proverbs 8:22-31 was not really driving the Arians, for their exegesis was made "in the light of a particular set of theological a prioris which produced the Arian doctrine of Christ as a creature" (ibid., 1:194). In summary, Pelikan says, "The ultimate outcome of the Arian system was a Christ suspended between man and god, identical with neither but related to both: God was interpreted deistically, man moralistically, and Christ mythologically" (ibid., 1:198). Based on the 325 A.D. Antiochene statement of faith, Stuart Hall identified the same three major issues as Harnack did: "the co-eternity of the Son with the Father, his status as begotten not created, and his immutability" (*Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church*, 127). The "most sensitive" of these was "the eternity of the Son" (ibid., 124). Interestingly, Hall later claims that the real issue at stake was "as yet only obscurely seen." Behind the debates on eternity and creaturehood stood the issue of how God had revealed Himself graciously in His Son (ibid., 135-36). To be honest, this issue sounds too modern to be the central issue at stake in the fourth century.

The Significance of the Mid-Century Creeds

The twenty years between 340 and 360 spawned eleven creeds.[21] The central issue for the study of doctrinal development concerns whether these creeds testify to a *search* for true doctrine or to an *evasion* of the Nicene standard. This issue is a bishops' squabble which spans several centuries, pitting the Anglican bishop R. P. C. Hanson against the Alexandrian bishop Athanasius.

Hanson advocates his search motif by describing a state of genuine theological *confusion*. First, Hanson denies that the deposition of practically all the pro-Nicene bishops coupled with the rise of the Eusebian party implies a state of political intrigue.[22] Second, Hanson claims that the Antioch creeds of 341 was not designed to permit Arian doctrine, but to rule out the Sabellian tendencies of the *homoousios* doctrine, as witnessed in Marcellus.[23] This viewpoint is confirmed by the Sardican Creed (343), which reveals the West's Sabellian tendencies. Third, Hanson highlights the differences between the several creeds.[24] Fourth, following Richard Klein's solo run, Hanson whitewashes Constantius' reputation of oppression.[25] And finally, Hanson exhibits Eusebius of Edessa and Cyril of Jerusalem as mid-century theologians who show that there were no clear theological lines between orthodoxy and heresy in the middle of the fourth century.[26]

The central issue was the creaturehood of the Logos. Eternality and immutability were corollaries of the central issue.

[21] The proliferation begins with four creeds from the Dedication Council of Antioch (341), followed by an unofficial Nicene creed from the Western bishops at Sardica (343), then the Macrostich from Antioch (344), the first creed of Sirmium (351), the second creed (a.k.a. "Blasphemy") of Sirmium (357), the third creed of Sirmium (358), the Dated Creed (359), and the Nice-Constantinople Creed (360).

[22] Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 274-284.

[23] Ibid., 287-288, 290.

[24] For example, while the "ancestors" of the Dedication Creed of 341 includes Origen, the Macrostich of 345 is "remarkable for firmly refusing Origenist thought" (ibid., 290, 311).

[25] Ibid., 318-325.

[26] Hanson writes that these two men "illustrate well the variety and diversity of opinion which prevailed in the Eastern Church in the mid-fourth-century and bring home to the reader how unwise it is to divide theological opinions at that point into 'orthodox' and 'Arian'" (ibid., 387).

It should be noted that in asserting this theory Hanson is (again) going against the mainstream of older scholarship. For example, according to Harnack, the proliferation of Arian creeds in the mid-fourth century is rank with political intrigue. The Eusebian party had one main goal—to "get the Nicene Creed actually out of the way, or to render it ineffective by means of a new formula" (*History of Dogma*, 4:64). With serpentine guile, the Eusebians refused to openly attack the faith of Athanasius; instead, they attacked his character and complained about the form of the church's confession. Once the *homoousios* was sufficiently evaded (and finally ruled out by the second Sirmium Creed in 357), the debate shifted to the *degree* of likeness between the Father and the Son: no likeness (Aetius and Eunomius), like according to all things (the Homoiousians), and indefinitely alike (the Homoians, who won for a day in 360).

Most of this theory flies right in the face of Athanasius' testimony. The Alexandrian bishop claims that the creeds come from *one* party (viz. the Arians), who quarrel against the Nicene Creed while yet "studiously writing much which may be likely by their officious display and abundance of words to seduce the simple and hide what they are in point of heresy."[27] In addition, the Alexandrian bishop denies that the sole Western "creed" (from Serdica) had any official status.[28] The Anglican bishop claims that the other bishop is fibbing.[29] Which bishop is right? When Athanasius claims that there is not "a Church that is not at this moment lamenting the success of [the Arians'] plots against her Bishops" and then lists twenty-eight bishops, should we not conclude political intrigue?[30] If we join Hanson in charging Athanasius with the guilt of the situation, are we not imitating the ludicrous charges of the Arian persecutors who charged Athanasius with guilt for fleeing their persecution?[31] Given the piety of Athanasius exhibited in his *Vita Antoni* and his letter to Marcellinus *On the Interpretation of the Psalms*, the conscience is hard pressed to charge him with a habit of lying! When this personal evidence is added to the twin witnesses of the Meletian-Eusebian debacle of charging Athanasius with murder at the 335 Council of Tyre, the case is cinched for seeing a state of political intrigue and not a search for true doctrine.[32]

This state of political intrigue contributed little to doctrinal development. Instead of development, the Arian creeds exhibit a *degeneration* into complete vagueness, when at last the dreaded

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[27] Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 32.

[28] Athanasius, *Tomus ad Antiochenos*, 5.

[29] Hanson writes that Athanasius "in 362 violently denied that the Council of Serdica had produced any such statement, though he certainly knew that it had" (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 304; cf. 444). It should be remembered that *Tomus ad Antiochenos* is a synodal letter; thus, if Athanasius is not telling the truth, so are several other bishops.

[30] Athanasius, *Apologia de Fuga Sua* 3, 7.

[31] Ibid., 2.

[32] The twin witnesses are the encyclical letter of the Council of Egypt and the letter of Pope Julius to Antioch (Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos* 3-35). It is worth noting Julius' testimony to the official status of the Arians as excommunicated and the occasion for their intrigue—the passing away of many of the Nicene fathers (ibid., 23).

Both Kelly and Hall deny that the Antiochene Creeds are designed to supplant the Nicene Creed (see Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 274; and Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church*, 140-141). Hall claims that we should accept their denial of Arianism and see them as being in continuity with Eustathius' creed from the Antiochene Council of 325. Two things argue against this. First, if these bishops were satisfied with the Nicene Creed, why did they publish more? Kelly believes that the Marcellus threat justified the creed. Given the Council of Tyre and the rise of Arius' friend Eusebius to the capital, one suspects that the Marcellus threat is more of a pretense than the primary reason for writing the creed. Second, both the continual use of the Fourth Antiochene Creed and the manifest similarity of the ten Arian creeds (when one reads them in a row out of Athanasius' *De Synodis*) shows that we should see the same party at work all along.

word *ousia* is outlawed from the discussion and all that can be said is that somehow the Son is "like to the Father that begat Him according to the Scripture."[33] Only two points about doctrinal development can be made. First, the addition about Christ's kingdom having no end to the creeds shows a doctrinal change. Though this was probably more of a pretext than a real cause of the initial creeds, the threat of Sabellianism was real (e.g. Photinus).[34] Second, the Serdican confession of one *hypostasis* in God shows that the West lacked a good term to designate the Three persons of the Godhead. Though this could have been interpreted by some along Sabellian lines (so Marcellus), a better explanation lies close at hand. In Latin, the one term *substantia* translated both Greek terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*.[35] Athanasius seems to share this terminological handicap.[36] This is not surprising given the apparent interchangeability between *ousia* and *hypostasis* in the Nicene anathema.

The Role of Athanasius and Orthodox Continuity

The previous discussion has led us to see the central place Athanasius holds in the discussion of the development of trinitarian doctrine. Athanasius is one of the only living bridges between the earlier Western-Alexandrian orthodoxy of Alexander, Ossius and the Nicene Creed, and the later Cappadocian settlement. Most modern historians take it for granted that the young Athanasius faithfully carried on the tradition of Alexander.[37] If that is so, the extent of doctrinal development from Nicea to Constantinople is

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[33] Athanasius, *De Synodis* 30.

[34] The question of Marcellus' orthodoxy need not be answered, for the question itself proves the point at hand. Pelikan has done a fine job in showing that Sabellianism was the most recent threat that the universal Church had faced before Arianism arose (see *Emergence*, 177-182, 190). In fact, it appears that a door was left open for the subsequent Arian heresy by the anti-Sabellian overuse of Proverbs 8:22-31 to prove the distinction between the Father and the Son (ibid., 1:192).

[35] The text of the Serdican confession is corrupt. The textbooks rely on the compilation made in the early twentieth century by Friedrich Loofs (see "Das Glaubenbekenntnis der Homousianer von Sardica," reprinted in Friedrich Loofs, *Patristica: Ausgewählte Augsätze zur Alten Kirche* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999], 189-224). Stuart G. Hall has called the standard translation of this corrupt text "misleading" in that it "fails to make clear that the Creed seems also to repudiate the idea of the begetting of the Son before the ages, and to identify the Holy Spirit with the Logos" (*Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church*, 142-143). Since this is the only statement from the Western coalition in the mid-century, its confusion over the Logos and the Spirit (if true) calls for a fresh study (which would lie outside the scope of this paper). It was Harnack's notice of the significance of this confession for doctrinal development studies which first led Loofs to compile the creed (see Loofs, *Patristica*, 189).

[36] Hanson makes this point repeatedly (see *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 429, 443-444). Harnack also claims that for Athanasius, there was only one *homoousios* and only one *hypostasis* in the Godhead. Athanasius "had no word to describe Father and Son as different subjects, and indeed he never felt it necessary to seek for any such word" (*History of Dogma*, 4:34-35, n. 1). Moreover, the key word *homoousios* "signified oneness of substance, not likeness of substance….It is in fact equal to *tautousios*…." (ibid., 4:36, n. 1).

[37] For example, Harnack says regarding the doctrine of Athanasius that "his point of view coincides essentially with that of Bishop Alexander" and went through "no development" (*History of Dogma*, 4:26).

significantly tied to this man's life. Accordingly, both the *influence* and *stability* of Athanasius have come under scrutiny by the historians of doctrinal development. Regarding influence, Hanson has spurned Athanasius' character. Regarding stability, many have impugned Athanasius' orthodoxy. For example, Hanson has stressed that Athanasius lacked an orthodox Christology. In a sense, he is kind of an Apollinaris before Apollinaris. These will be considered individually.

Regarding influence, Hanson has (as it were) dug up Athanasius' bones and renewed the charges levelled against Athanasius in the mid-330s. Acting on the slenderest of evidence, Hanson has pulled the old modernist trick of claiming that a new discovery of evidence has called forth a complete revision of the older consensus—Athanasius is caught "behaving like an employer of thugs." As the effect of his "gangsterism," it is clear that "for at least twenty years after 335, no Eastern bishops would communicate with Athanasius."[38] In response, it is difficult to believe in the truthfulness of these charges, knowing that the new evidence comes from the Melitians (who severely hurt their credibility when they framed Athanasius for murder) and is hard to square with either Athanasius' piety or his popularity in Egypt.[39] A better explanation is beckoning us. It was doctrinal differences which made Athanasius such a threat.

In opposition to Hanson, Harnack praises Athanasius' vigor as that which saved (not destroyed!) the Church.[40] But under the guise of this praise, Harnack is actually belittling Athanasius' theology as that which did *not* save the Church. Athanasius' ideas, while orthodox, are hopelessly incoherent and ignore the historical Christ.[41] The Arians were right in viewing Athanasius as a Sabellian.[42] Wiles sounds a similar horn when he casts Athanasius as a practical bishop, rather than a true thinker.[43]

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[38] Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 254-255.

[39] Even Hanson is forced to admit this: "The fact that all attempts to arrest Athanasius failed is a tribute to the remarkable and widespread popularity which he had attained among the ordinary people not only of Alexandria, but of Egypt" (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 343).

[40] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 4:46. To Harnack, Athanasius alone stood in the East "like a rock in the sea" (*History of Dogma*, 4:62). Indeed, against any charge of "hierarchical imperiousness" (such as Hanson charges Athanasius), Harnack says that there is something "naïve" about such a charge (ibid.).

[41] Harnack begins his evaluation of Athanasius' doctrine by stating, "Nothing can more clearly illustrate the perverse state of the problem in the Arian-Athanasian controversy than the notorious fact that the man who saved the character of Christianity as a religion of living fellowship with God, was the man from whose Christology almost every trait which recalls the historical Jesus of Nazareth was erased" (*History of Dogma*, 4:45; cf. 4:49). On the next page, Harnack claims that Athanasius "fell into an abyss of contradictions" (ibid., 4:46).

[42] Ibid., 4:47.

[43] Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine*, 131.

This judgment is really quite astonishing. The maturity of thought in *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* are not given enough weight. These works contradict Harnack's assessment of Athanasius in two respects: (1) they are quite systematic, i.e. intellectually coherent;[44] and (2) they focus quite a bit on the historical Jesus.[45] It is highly significant, that regardless of whether this two-part work was written before or after the Nicene Council, all sides agree that it was written before Athanasius' polemical works.[46] This shows that all Athanasius' later works were written with a fixed system in mind. The later arguments were not simply exegetical expediencies for polemics' sake. Moreover, the system espoused in this two-part treatise does not stand or fall on one leg—deification. Every modern historian of doctrinal development seems to assume this.[47] Athanasius gives *two* main reasons for the incarnation—redemption and revelation. And under redemption, only half the Word's mission pertains to incorruptibility (i.e. deification). The other half pertains to suffering to maintain the just claims of God! These two works stand like two strong legs, quietly supporting all of Athanasius' polemical theology.

By comparing these works to his later writings, can we detect a development in Athanasius' doctrine? Many of Athanasius' key themes[48] are present as well as his key imagery.[49] Hanson is right in seeing a "reduction" in theology, for Athanasius does reject the notion of the "seminal Word."[50] But what about Athanasius' Christology? Did the younger Athanasius believe that Jesus had a human soul?

There are no doubt passages in the earlier works which seem docetic.[51] Based on these passages, Hanson claims that "it is now widely admitted that this realization of the necessity of allowing a

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[44] Harnack claimed that "Athanasius did not draft any system of theology or christology" (*History of Dogma*, 4:28).

[45] Athanasius devotes several sections to the role of Jesus' miracles, and the details of Jesus' crucifixion, three-day burial, and resurrection (see *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 20-32). Perhaps Harnack's refusal to acknowledge this material stems from Harnack's conception of a "historical" Jesus who did *no* miracles and who did *not* rise from the dead!

[46] Hanson follows the more recent trend in dating these works in 338 or 339, but definitely before "his series of polemical theological works" (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 272-73).

[47] E.g. Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 106, 110; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 4:26-27. Pelikan allows for some differences in soteriology among the orthodox (*The Christian Tradition*, 1:205).

[48] Themes include the idea that the Son of God is the Word, Wisdom, and Power of the Father.

[49] Imagery includes the fact that the Word is "the one and only-begotten God, Who proceeds in His goodness from the Father as from a good fountain" (*Contra Gentes*, 41).

[50] According to Hanson, both Athanasius and Hilary "directly refuse and deny this philosophical use of the Logos doctrine" (*The Continuity of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 56-57). E.g. Athanasius writes, "But by the Word I mean, not that which is involved and inherent in all things created, which some are wont to call the seminal principle…" (*Contra Gentes*, 40).

[51] Hanson has cataloged many of these in *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 446-58.

human soul to Jesus came to Athanasius only late and had no effect at all on his thinking before the year 362."[52] Hanson wryly labels this "Space-suit Christology."[53] Other explanations are possible. Athanasius could have adopted the term "flesh" from John 1:14 to describe becoming a man.[54] Or Athanasius could have emphasized the deification of the Jesus' human soul to such an extent that the impassibility is truly *human* and not just the divine Logos replacing the human soul. In the final analysis, we cannot judge, for Athanasius does not tell us. How does this effect doctrinal development? One should not conclude from the silence of earlier works (in which the human soul of Jesus was not the point of debate) to the later mention of Jesus' human soul in the *Tomus ad Antiochenos* that Athanasius' Christology developed. A parallel case bids us caution here. For in the same *Tomus*, there is also a clear mention of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. If we did not have Athanasius' letters to Serapion, we may have concluded—wrongly—from Athanasius' earlier silence that his pneumatology developed. This much is certain from the *Tomus*: the Athanasius who affected the Cappadocians believed in both the full humanity of Jesus and the full divinity of the Spirit. This leads to our next consideration.

The Relationship between Athanasius and the Cappadocians

The Arian Controversy closes with a critical change of the baton from Athanasius to the Cappadocians. In this change it is tempting to see an *ex*change. Did the Cappadocians continue Athanasius' theology or is there a doctrinal development from Alexandria to Cappadocia or a departure? Two theories of exchanges will be examined—Adolf von Harnack and Maurice Wiles.

One major tenet of Harnack's history of trinitarian development is the discontinuity between the earlier Homoousians and the later Cappadocians. In a word, Homoiousian concepts triumphed by making peace with Homoousian vocabulary.[55] The key difference between these later theologians and

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[52] Ibid., 452. In opposition to this alleged consensus, J. N. D. Kelly concludes his section on the Christology of Athanasius by stating, "On the whole, the case for the view that Athanasius did not modify his Christology about the time of the synod of 362 must be reckoned the more weighty" (*Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. [San Fransisco: Harper, 1978], 289).

[53] Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 448.

[54] At times "become flesh" and "become man" seem synonymous in Athanasius (e.g. *Orationes contra Arianos* 45; cf. Hart, Review, 161-64).

For a qualified defense of Athanasius' belief in the full humanify of Christ, see Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius* (Harrisburg, PT: Morehouse, 1995), 121-35. Pettersen argues that the appearance of a soulless Christology in Athanasius is due mainly to the context of his writings (109). In his writings, the term "flesh" refers to "humanity" (115, 120) and the passions of the body belong to the Logos as well (113). Yes, "certain passages do raise questions as to whether Athanasius wholeheartedly and consistently admitted Christ's true humanity," but he does mention the virgin birth and the assumption of "an imperfect body," and "only late in his career did he expressly acknowledge Christ's human soul's presence, although maybe not its functions" (121).

[55] He writes, "We may still further say *it was not the 'Homousios' which finally triumphed, but on the contrary the Homoiousian doctrine, which fixed on the terms of agreement with the 'Homousios.'* The doctrine

Athanasius occurs in how they reasoned. As an original Homoousian, Athanasius reasoned down from the unity of the Godhead to the three persons. In contrast, the Cappadocians, as original Homoiousians, reasoned up from the coordination of the persons to find a unity.[56] Therefore, instead of the unity being clear and the plurality a mystery, the plurality now became clear and the unity a mystery! A *trinity* replaced a threefold unity as the official dogma of the East.[57]

Harnack gives three lines of proof for this discontinuity between Athanasius and the Cappadocians. First, the terminological settlement came from former Homoiousians, not Homoousians. Second, the Cappadocians had interest in theological science (mainly, Gregory of Nyssa in Origenism), whereas Athanasius showed none. Third, the so-called Creed of Constantinople (381 A.D.) is a fraud. Contrary to what the fathers claimed, it is not an expanded version of the Nicene Creed.[58] Acceptance of this fraudulent creed shows that the East had abandoned the homoousian theology of the original Nicene Creed. Surprisingly, "The father of the official doctrine of the Trinity, in the form in which the Churches have held to it, was not Athanasius, nor Basil of Caesarea, but Basil of Ancyra."[59]

Harnack's arguments will be handled in reverse order. First, J. N. D. Kelly has shown that Harnack's over-precise handling of the ancients' language led him to his fraud theory.[60] The only

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which Hosius, Athanasius, Eustathius, and Marcellus had championed at Nicaea, was overthrown. The new Origenism which was based on the 'Homousios' succeeded in establishing itself. A form of doctrine triumphed which did not exclude scientific theology, a subject in which Athanasius and the Westerns of the older days never showed any interest" (ibid., 4:82). The Cappadocians saved scientific theology, and along with it—dogma!

[56] Harnack makes this point in several places. For example, in Homoiousian creeds, "The *likeness* of the qualities of Son and Father was more and more recognised here; on the other hand, the substantial *unity* was disallowed, so as to avoid getting on the track of Marcellus; *i.e.*, these theologians did not, like Athanasius, advance from the unity to the mystery of the duality, but, on the contrary, still started from the duality and sought to reach the unity by making Father and Son perfectly co-ordinate" (*History of Dogma*, 4:74-75).

[57] In short, "The community of substance in the sense of equality or likeness of substance, not in that of unity of substance, was from this time the orthodox doctrine in the East" (ibid., 4:97).

[58] Harnack's theory was that the so-called Creed of Constantinople was really the Jerusalem baptismal creed, put forward from Cyril of Jerusalem. The council of 381 did not put forward any new creed (see *History of Dogma*, 4:98-99, n. 1).

[59] Ibid., 4:100.

[60] In response to both Hort and Harnack, Kelly has argued that the officials at the Council of Chalcedon were not lying when they claimed that the Constantinopolitan Creed (C) came from the council of 381, for when it said (in other sources) that that council promulgated "the faith of Nicaea" it does not necessitate a republication of the Nicene Creed. We have disgruntled testimony from Gregory Nazianzus that additions were made to the Nicene formula, in light of the recent controversies over the Holy Spirit. The conclusion of Kelly's research is: "The council of Constantinople, did in fact, at some stage in the proceedings, endorse and use C, but in doing so it did not conceive of itself as promulgating a new creed. Its sincere intention, perfectly understood by contemporary churchmen, was simply to confirm the Nicene faith. That it should do this by adopting what was really a different formula from that of Nicaea may appear paradoxical to us until we recall that at this stage importance attached to the

significant subtraction is the phrase *ek ths ousias* as an explanation of *homoousios*. The additions answer the 340s threat of Marcellan doctrine and the 370s threat of Pneumatochian teaching.[61] Second, as shown earlier, Athanasius' two-volume work, *Contra Gentes-De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, vindicates his claim to theological science.[62] Third, it is readily conceded that the Homoiousian party provided the terminology which was capable of destroying the Arian evasions. The letter of George of Laodicea, which Hanson calls "an Homoiousian Manifesto", testifies to the linguistic power of Basil of Ancyra's school.[63] However, it was not the Homoiousians who initiated the theological solution. The leader in the movement for peace and reconciliation was *Athanasius*, with his pivotal work *De Synodis*.[64] Moreover, the specific solution Athanasius proposed was to focus on the meaning of the terms and not on the terms themselves.[65] Ironically, history appears to be the exact opposite of Harnack's dream. Homoousian

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Nicene teaching rather than to the literal wording of N" (J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. [London: Longman Group, 1972], 325).

Another example of Harnack's over-precise handling of ancient language is his interpretation of Eusebius of Caesarea's letter after the Nicene Council (see Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 221, 225).

[61] Kelly gives reasons for these changes and argues (in my opinion weakly) against also seeing an anti-Apollinarian statement in C (see ibid., 332-41).

Hanson has given his endorsement as well to Kelly's "magisterial authority on the creed of Constantinople" (see *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 812-820). Since the council of 381 saw themselves as reaffirming the Nicene Creed through their enhancement of a different creed, Hanson draws this useful insight about the apparition of C omitting "from the *ousia* of the Father" from N: "In their view, and in the view of their contemporaries, this clause was not 'omitted' because it was still in N, of which C was a re-affirmation. C did not in their eyes cancel N, but rather enhanced it" (ibid., 820).

[62] This second reason only has weight if Harnack's overall scheme of theological science having its origins in Origen is true. This is not the occasion to discuss the merits or demerits of such a scheme.

[63] Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 366. The letter's linguistic power can be clearly seen in Hanson's excerpts (pp. 366-70).

[64] Basil of Caesarea attributes the hope of peace in the church to Athanasius, to whom he writes, "I remember that our Lord has appointed you to be physician of the diseases in the Churches" (Ep. LXXXII, *NPNF* 8:172). Athanasius' mind can see the situation like a man on a tall tower overlooking the ships on the sea!

[65] See especially, Athanasius' arguments in *De Synodis*, 41-54. In this section, Athanasius reasserts the sufficiency of the Nicene Creed to abolish the Arian controversy. To the Homoiousians, such as Basil of Ancyra, Athanasius claims that they are both in substantial agreement, despite the apparent difference in terminology. The key issue is whether the Son is a creature or not. Both the Homoiousians and the Homoousians agree that He is not. Regarding terminology, Athanasius holds that the key thing is the *meaning* of the terms, rather than any dispute about a word. Essentially, *homoousios* signifies the same meaning as "like-in-essence" (41). The best term for this meaning is still the Nicene *homoousios*, for the word "like" most naturally applies to two different essences. Happily, this treatise convinced Basil of Caesarea to adopt the Nicene *homoousios*, leading finally to the Cappadocian resolution of the Arian Controversy (see Basil's epistle IX to Maximus the Philosopher, in which he writes, "If I must give my own view, it is this. The phrase 'like in essence,' if it be read with the addition 'without any difference,' I accept as conveying the same sense as the homoousion, in accordance with the sound meaning of the homoousion. Being of this mind the Fathers at Nicaea spoke of the Only-begotten as 'Light of Light,' 'Very God of Very God,' and so on, and then consistently added the homoousion" (*NPNF* 8:123)).

thought prevailed in Homoiousian terminology (other than the key word *homoousios* itself).[66] This leads us to Wiles' theory.

Wiles finds fault with the Cappadocians' Platonic urge to objectify and systematize religious truth, while simultaneously trying to retain the Platonic unity and simplicity of God. This attempt inadvertently created three difficulties.[67] First, they created an epistemological crisis, for if the unity of the godhead is manifested in God's united external action, while the differences between the Three lie only within the godhead, how are these differences known to us? Second, in unashamedly using the language of causation for the Son and Spirit (whether of being or hypostasis), the Cappadocians imply that the Son and Spirit are inferior to the Father. The principle of co-equality in the godhead is contradicted. Third, the Cappadocians in effect nullify the previously arguments against the Sabellians. If there is unity in the three hypostases' activities *ad extra*, how do we really know that the three hypostases are more than just names for particular modes of God's work?

This epistemological crisis is an illusion. Though the entire godhead is involved in God's *ad extra* actions, each Person is not involved in the same manner. But the united effort of all Three in both knowing God and receiving from God enabled Basil to affirm both the One and the Three.[68] Like Basil's two doxologies, we should keep the Three and the One side-by-side. Regarding the Sabellian danger, if Basil's arguments for coordination of the Spirit with the Son and with the Father stood alone, there may be some weight.[69] But in the actual debate, the three hypostases were presupposed by all sides. Moreover, Basil's use of "with" guaranteed that more than one Person subsisted in the Godhead.[70] But if this is not enough, we can see from works like Gregory of Nyssa, *Concerning We Should Think of Saying*

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[66] Pelikan agrees with this overall assessment. According to his view, there are two causes for the Cappadocian success: the terminological break-through (*ousia-hypostasis*) and Athanasius' pursuit of peace by uniting upon meaning. "Speaking doctrinally rather than politically, the homoousios was saved by the further clarification of the unresolved problems of the One and the Three and by the recognition of a common religious concern between the partisans of homoousios and those of homoiousios. The spokesman for that recognition, after various kinds of hesitation, was Athanasius himself.…" (Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 1:210).

[67] Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 117-140.

[68] In the middle of *De Spiritu Sancto*, Basil summarizes, "Thus the way of the knowledge of God lies from One Spirit through the One Son to the One Father, and conversely the natural Goodness and the inherent Holinees and royal Dignity extend from the Father through the Only-begotten to the Spirit. Thus there is both acknowledgment of the hypostases and the true dogma of the Monarchy is not lost" (47).

[69] For example, read *De Spiritu Sancto*, 38.

[70] Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 59.

That There Are Not Three Gods, that contemporaries saw tritheism as the Cappadocian danger, not Sabellianism.[71]

Therefore, Harnack seems to be correct on one point—that of orientation. It does seem that whereas Athanasius started with the homoousian unity (and was charged with Sabellianism), the Cappadocians started with the three hypostases (and were charged with tritheism).[72] But rather than seeing this as a reversal, it is better to see it as a *development*. The Cappadocians continue and perfect many of the devices of Athanasius, such as the *genema/gennema* distinction[73] and the Scripture catenae on the divinity of the Son.[74] The Cappadocians (and I believe Athanasius) had learned from the Marcellus that affirming only one hypostasis was dangerous. However, they also believed that the *homoousios* doctrine was essential to trinitarian doctrine. As a result, we see mature trinitarian thought affirms both the Three and the One interchangeably, stressing neither more than the other. As Gregory of Nazianzus expresses it, let us hope "that one illumination may come upon us from the One God, One in diversity, diverse in Unity, wherein is a marvel."[75]

The Cappadocians are really the great theologians of the *Trinity*. Athanasius was publicly contending for one point—the Word of God is not a creature. He is God! Thus most of the bishop's models used to illustrate this point were binary, such as sun and light, fountain and stream, mind and speech, archetype and image, and (especially) father and son.[76] Difficulties arose when theologians tried

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[71] Pelikan has grasped this better than Wiles: "The conception of three hypostases effectively removed the taint of Sabellianism from the Nicene confession, but it did so by raising another specter, at least equally terrifying to Christian faith—the threat of tritheism" (*The Christian Tradition*, 1:220).

[72] Consider Basil's seminal work on the Holy Spirit. When Basil answers the charge that both the Son and the Spirit should be subnumerated, but not connumerated with the Father (*De Spiritu Sancto* 13, 41ff), he treats the unity as more of a mystery than the trinity. The three hypostases are obvious in the baptismal formula of Jesus (Matthew 28:19). Basil must then argue against drawing false inferences based on numbering or mode of existence to say that they are three Gods: "We proclaim each of the hypostases singly; and, when count we must, we do not let an ignorant arithmetic carry us away to the idea of a plurality of Gods" (ibid., 44). Similarly in the next section, he writes, "Thus the close relation [of the Three] is made plain, while the mode of the ineffable existence is safeguarded," i.e. how the Three really exist as One is an ineffable *mystery* (ibid., 46).[72] Thus Harnack seems to be correct.

[73] Gregory of Nazianzus' lucid paragraph on the Arian sophistry far excels Athanasius' early attempts (cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations*, 29.3 and Athanasius, *Orations*, 1.33-34).

[74] E.g. Basil cites in one fast sentence 1 Corinthians 1:24, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3, and John 6:27 (*De Spiritu Sancto*, 15).

[75] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations*, 28.1; cf. his later comment: "…it is by the grace of the Trinity, and of the One Godhead in Three Persons" (ibid., 28.31).

[76] From reviewing the literature, it seems apparent that the notion of eternal begetting was the chief theological notion of the Nicene party.

to expand these binary models into a trinary model. Sometimes it could be done.[77] But most of the time, the expansion seems artificial and vague.[78] This failure seems to have led Gregory of Nazianzus to despair of models altogether. In the final analysis, the models could only illustrate one aspect of truth while Scriptural testimony substantiated the whole.[79]

This discussion still has not captured the greatest contribution of Athanasius and the Cappadocians to doctrinal development. This contribution is in language and meaning. Terminology lies at the heart of the controversy. Originally, the Arians seemed to have succeeded in condemning the term *ousia* from church documents on several grounds—its disturbing effect of confusing people, its lack of Scriptural usage, and its reference to issues above our heads.[80] Moreover, terminological differences also separated the Homoiousians from the Homoousians. It was the dual wisdom of Athanasius to *both* stress the commonality of concepts and still search for and adhere to the best term possible—the *homoousios*! The ensuing Cappadocian debate with the Neo-Arians only perfected the correct way to see language as signs to the realities out there and not as boxes which enclose those realities inside linguistic definitions.[81] Praise God for the Athanasian-Cappadocian settlement!

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[77] One of the best expansions is Basil's light model. Instead of being the Lightray from the Lightsource, the Son is the Image of the Father, while the Lightray is the Spirit of vision (see *De Spiritu Sancto* 47, 64). Basil's proof for this imagery is Matthew 11:27 with 1 Corinthians 12:3.

[78] Marius Victorinus provides a fine example of this awkwardness. His philosophical model of Potential and Motion seems to work well with the Father and the Son. To account for the Holy Spirit, Victorinus differentiates between the Son as revealed motion and the Spirit as secret motion. Thus "the Holy Spirit is the secret Jesus." Due to this pairing of the Son and the Holy Spirit, Hanson does well to question how the Son is the *only*-begotten (see Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 551-552 for the quotations from Victorinus' works).

Gregory of Nazianzus actually takes advantage of this difficulty, for the Neo-Arianism mainstay of Begotten and Unbegotten like all exact opposites has no door to let in a third principle (viz. procession) (see *Theological Orations*, 31.8).

[79] Gregory concludes his fifth theological oration by stating, "Finally, then, it seems best to me to let the images and the shadows go, as being deceitful and very far short of the truth; and clinging myself to the more reverent conception, and resting upon few words, using the guidance of the Holy Ghost, keeping to the end as my genuine comrade and companion the enlightenment which I have received from Him, and passing through this world to persuade all others also to the best of my power to worship Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the One Godhead and Power. To Him belongs all glory and honour and might for ever and ever. Amen" (*Theological Orations*, 31.33).

[80] These three are taken from the second Sirmian Creed of 357 (*De Synodis*, 28). The original arguments against the term *homoousios* were even more weighty: (1) the notion of "substance" materializes God; (2) the term smacks of Sabellianism; (3) Holy Scripture does not use it; and (4) the term had already been condemned in Antioch. Thus Harnack concludes that the uniqueness of the Nicene Creed lies in its doctrinal jurisdiction over all later ages and in its innovative "elevation of two unbiblical expressions to the rank of catchwords of the Catholic Faith" (*History of Dogma*, 4:59).

[81] Historians differ over the reason why a settlement was reached. According to Harnack, victory was achieved for two reasons. First, the Cappadocians adapted the language of the Nicene Creed to Origenistic-subordinationistic science (*History of Dogma*, 4:88). "Men dreamt the dream of an eternal league between Faith and Science" (ibid., 4:89). Second, the death of Valens and the rise of Theodosius made it politically possible to

Overview of the Doctrinal Development

From the very onset of the Arian controversy, there were two ecclesiastical parties. Because of the condemnations of the early synods and the Nicene Council, the nature of these two parties is that of an orthodox group and a heretical group. Recognizing this, the heretical group spent twenty years creating creeds to nullify the Nicene Creed. Though these ten creeds effected a degeneration of doctrine, they did contribute one significant doctrinal development. Statements were inserted against any quasi-Sabellian economic Trinitarianism (such as Marcellus' theology). This probably alerted the Nicenes to the danger of lacking a terminology for the Three within the Godhead. In about 362, the controversy enlarged to include the full humanity of the Incarnate Word and the full divinity of the Spirit. In that same era, the Cappadocians responded to Athanasius' plea to first unite over meaning and then exclude heresy with the proper term. The controversy ended with a balanced emphasis on both the One and the Three, with an adequate terminology to support both. Looking back, one can see that the nature of doctrinal development did not involve what to *believe*, for that basic issue was clear from Scripture. The Son of God was "begotten, not made." The Scripture proofs just became fuller and more routine. Rather, the nature of doctrinal development in the fourth century centered on how best to *confess* this belief. Therefore, the trinitarian development of the fourth century was chiefly in terminology.

The Principle of Continuity and the Criterion of Development

The principle of continuity in Christian doctrine is the word of God. This statement stands firmly on the theme of Acts: "The word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing" (Acts 19:20). God's word (i.e. message) will spread to all cultures (cf. Acts 1:8). What God has spoken will never disappear from human history (Isaiah 40:8).

On the surface, it appears that this spread of the word of God disallows any development of doctrine. Since the message has been given by revelation, the only task left seems to be to parrot that message. Two facets within this spread of the word allow for development of doctrine. First, living men spread the message. They must first believe what God has spoken, reach maturity in understanding (Ephesians 4:13-15), and then teach others. Because of death, this process must be repeated generation after generation. From this we learn that at the very least, there is a doctrinal development within every

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succeed (ibid., 4:93; cf. 4:101). According to Pelikan, it was the discussion of the Holy Spirit which brought to light the correct terminologically distinctions between *ousia* and *hupostasis*, coupled with Athanasius' effort at peace based on meaning which led to the settlement (Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 1:210, 211, 218-219). "What was needed was a term for the One and another for the Three" (ibid., 1:219). To both historians, the terminology issue plays a key role. This seems to be a consensus.

Christian teacher. We also learn that the human mind is implied in the spread of the word.[82] The preacher needs wisdom. But even more is implied. Second, interactions with new cultures, the march of time, and the challenge of new heresies will force preachers to exceed what the Bible specifically addresses. Even in apostolic times, we see how the circumcision heresy provoked both a church council and new literature.[83] Thus standing alongside the principle of continuity (viz. the word of God), there is also the possibility of doctrinal development, both in more precise language (to exclude heretics) and in increased subject matter (to address new historical situations).[84] In simplistic terms, the *faith* remains unchanged (as Jude 3 requires), while *confession* gains precision and breadth. In Isaiah's terms, the New Covenant promises not only that God's word will remain, but that these words "shall not depart from your mouth" for all generations (Isaiah 59:21). The living nature of God's word guarantees that it will be continually be preached (see 1 Peter 1:23-25's use of Isaiah 40:8).

The distinction between faith and confession leads us to the criterion for legitimate doctrinal development—does this change in our confession agree with the word of God, which we believe implicitly? This agreement is not a bare repetition of words, but an accordance of concepts. Jesus and the apostles continually back up their fresh assertions with the phrase "as it is written" followed by a quotation from the written word of God. Conversely, a doctrinal corruption contradicts what God has spoken, as Isaiah well knew when he cried out, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn" (Isaiah 8:20). Since heretics try to hide this contradiction with vague language, church leaders must search for precise terminology to expose the lies.

This is precisely what occurred in the Arian controversy. The central issue was clear. Arius claimed that the Son of God was created; yet he concealed his heresy under references to Christ as

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[82] The point being made here shows both the strength and weakness of John Henry Newman's theory of doctrinal development. In citing Mary as an example of faith seeking understanding (based on Luke 2:19), Newman hits at the root and reality of doctrinal development. Christians believe much that they do not yet understand well. Newman fumbles when he applies this principle to an imaginative corporate mind, which the Church possesses. The Church has no such mind. Only individuals have mind. See his fifteenth Oxford sermon, "The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine," in *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 and 1843*, 3rd ed. (London: Rivington, 1887), 312-51. Newman's famous *Essay* relies extensively on this sermon for its outlook (see, e.g., *Essay*, 54-57).

[83] The new literature obviously includes the so-called Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:23-29) and Paul's letter to the Galatians. The controversy may also have caused Peter to write a letter similar to James' letter, but with more recent Pauline language (see 1 Peter).

[84] Historically, there are at least two issues, which the New Testament could not address directly because Christianity was too recent at that time. These issues were patristic theology and modern liberalism. Doctrine on the relationship between tradition and the Bible implies that sufficient time has passed for tradition to become a tempting contender for implicit faith. Even more time is required to make Christianity appear old-fashioned, as modern liberalism assumes Christian doctrine is.

"God."[85] Therefore, Athanasius has one task: "Scripture does not provide them with an excuse. It has often been shown, and will be shown now, that these things are alien to the divine authors."[86] After twenty years of skirmishing with the Arians (who all the while kept refining their evasions), Athanasius makes the situation very plain in his work, *De Synodis*. The Arians are scurrying around from council to council as if *Christians* were in need of "seeking how best to learn to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ."[87] In reality, Athanasius claims that the Arians are trying to nullify the Nicene Council.[88] This leads to the heart of Athanasius' view of councils. Since the Scriptures are "sufficient above all things" for faith, councils are not needed to *learn* what to believe.[89] The Catholic faith is static, having been given once for all time with the apostles. Councils are needed to destroy heresies. New heresies demand a fresh confession of the ancient faith! Athanasius then appeals to the Homoiousians to return to the Nicene Creed, because it is sufficient to abolish the Arian controversy. In particular, the terminology of essence is defended (despite its explicit absence from Scripture). The biblical base for the structure of the Creed (viz. I Corinthians 8:6) also shows the pious coordination of the Father and the Son. Both are not in the realm of the "all things" which have been created.[90] The Scriptures are clear on this issue.[91] To the Homoiousians, such as Basil of Ancyra, Athanasius claims that they are both in substantial agreement, despite the apparent difference in terminology. The key issue is whether the Son is a creature or not. Both the Homoiousians and the Homoousians agree that He is not.[92] Regarding terminology, Athanasius holds that the key thing is the *meaning* of the terms, rather than any dispute about a word. Essentially,

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[85] Athanasius asks, "Is not this heresy worthy of hate for this very reason? It is concealed by its own followers because it does not have freedom of speech, and is fostered as a serpent. …For who is there of humankind, Greek or barbarian, who confesses this one to be God, whom he dares to say is one of the creatures and 'he was not before he was made'?" (Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.10).

[86] Ibid.

[87] Athanasius, *De Synodis* 2.

[88] Ibid., 7.

[89] Ibid., 6.

[90] Ibid., 35.

[91] Ibid., 40.

[92] The ultimate agreement between the Athanasius and the Homoiousians came when Athanasius recognized that despite the terminological differences, the Homoiousians were really not "Ariomaniacs" because they were "setting themselves in opposition to those who say that the Logos is a creature" (Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 41.1; as quoted in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 1:210).

homoousios signifies the same meaning as "like-in-essence."[93] The best term for this meaning is still the Nicene *homoousios*, for the word "like" most naturally applies to two different essences.

One more point should be made before considering the modern rival for the principle of continuity in Christian doctrine. Since confessions address specific heresies, we should never expect any confession to contain all of the faith. Should a modern historian exhibit the development of doctrine like a pyramid in which the bricks are the church's confessions, we should remind him that the clay in the bricks came from a boundless supply of ground undergirding the pyramid. Or, to switch the analogy, instead of seeing the development of doctrine as a stream which starts small but grows larger over time,[94] we should see the developments as storm clouds which draw their moisture from an endless ocean (the mystery of Christ in the written word of God!) and cast their rain where it is most needed.

The Rival Principle of Continuity in Christian Doctrine

Modern theories of doctrinal development often locate the principle of continuity in something other than the word of God. Instead of affirming the truth that Scripture is able to give wisdom which will equip church leaders to do any task, including doctrinal formulation and heresy eradication (2 Timothy 3:15-17), these theories imply that the written word of God is too obscure to settle controversies. Only an old-fashioned fundamentalist could still have confidence in the written text![95] Something else guides the church leaders to a resolution.

Two Witnesses for the Rival Principle

Some modern historians cite Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus as proof that the theologians of the fourth century were forced to find a deeper principle of continuity than the written word of God. If Scripture is so powerful, why do these church fathers rely on other sources? In particular, to prove the divine *hypostasis* of the Holy Spirit, why did Basil appeal to unwritten tradition and Gregory of Nazianzus to the church's experience of the Holy Spirit? These two facts seem to argue

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[93] Athanasius, *De Synodis* 41.

[94] One patristic scholar uses exactly this image for doctrinal development: "In the second century, the Christian tradition is like a young stream, coming down from the mountains, which can now for the first time spread itself on a broad landscape and extend into a lake. The landscape becomes wider and more varied, but at the same time less noble. The lake threatens to lose itself at the edges and to form stagnant water. But then at last the river again re-forms, to go on its way more strongly and more swiftly than before" (Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2nd and rev. ed., trans. John Bowden, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1965, 1975], 53-54).

[95] Both Hanson and Wiles present views in explicit opposition to "fundamentalism" (see Joseph F. Kelly's preface to Hanson, *Continuity*, ix-x; and Wiles, *Making*, 15).

against the *sufficiency* of Scripture to formulate a complete trinitarian doctrine. This is exactly the inference drawn by both Maurice Wiles[96] and R. P. C. Hanson.[97] In fact, Hanson's conclusion shows how much his overall thesis of a trial-and-error search relies on this appeal to the Cappadocian example.[98] Is there strong warrant for such an appeal?

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[96] Wiles writes, "Indeed the paucity of scriptural evidence was somethings of an embarrassment to the Church's theologians when they sought to demonstrate the Spirit's full divinity in the closing years of the fourth century." Wiles then cites Gregory of Nazianzus' "special doctrine of development" and Basil's weak argument from Scripture as proof of how "difficult" it was to establish the full divinity of the Spirit on scriptural grounds alone (*The Making of Christian Doctrine*, 78-79).

[97] Hanson describes Basil as being "troubled" by the Bible's inability to fully prove his doctrine of the hypostatic existence of the Spirit. From this characterization, Hanson generalizes: "The Cappadocians had enough understanding of the Bible to realize that even the very loose and subjective methods of interpretation employed by almost everybody in the fourth century could not derive any and every doctrine from the pages of Scripture….They recognised, not that the Bible witnessed to a created and inferior Holy Spirit, but that taken alone its evidence was not sufficient to support what they realised was the logical outcome of acknowledging the full divinity of the Spirit as a distinct reality within the being of God—that is the full divinity of the Spirit as a third *hypostasis*" (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 777-78). Note the key phrase "not sufficient". A little later in the book, Hanson describes Gregory of Nazianzus as acknowledging (like Basil) "the necessity of supplementing the orthodox doctrine of the Holy Spirit from some other source than that of Scripture" (ibid., 782). The key text here is the Fifth Theological Oration, which according to Hanson shows that "for the divinity of the Holy Spirit the witness of Scripture must be supplemented by, or interpreted in the context of, the religious experience of the church and of the Christian individual" (ibid., 783).

[98] The final chapter of Hanson's work is entitled, "The Development of Doctrine". In this chapter, Hanson attempts first to "identify the forces" at work in the trinitarian controversy, and then to "draw some conclusions about what was one of the most remarkable instances of the development of doctrine in the history of Christianity" (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 825). The chapter examines three contestants for the role of chief determiner of trinitarian doctrine: Scripture, the emperor, and philosophy. Hanson strongly rejects the last two. Theodosius achieved the success which eluded his predecessors because his religious policy "was supported by a genuine widespread consensus of opinion in the church. Sheer coercion would not have achieved this" (ibid., 855). Likewise, the influence of philosophy is found primarily in its provision of a technical vocabulary, and secondarily in influencing some presuppositions. The fathers' eclectic exploitation of philosophy argues against Harnack's Hellenization thesis (ibid., 870-71). Having dismissed politics and philosophy, one would expect Hanson to assign Scripture the honor of determining the Church's trinitarian doctrine. Indeed, Hanson provides a wonderful compilation of fourth-century exegesis on many passages. The influence of Scripture is limited mainly to the pro-Nicene openness to "appeal behind the words of Scripture to their intention or drift (*skopos*)" (ibid., 827-28). A stellar example of this readiness is Athanasius, "who had a firm grasp of the ultimate drive or burden of the New Testament at least" (ibid., 843). Over the course of the controversy, the fathers slowly realized that "in forming their doctrine of God they could not possibly confine themselves to the words of Scripture, because the debate was about the meaning of the Bible, and any attempt to answer this problem in purely Scriptural terms inevitably leaves still unanswered the question 'But what does the Bible mean?'" (ibid., 848). The chief factor determining the trinitarian doctrine was *church experience*. This is where Hanson shows his reliance on Basil and Gregory: "Nothing could perhaps show more clearly that the pro-Nicenes were following the inner drive and genius of the Christian religion than the development at the end of the process of the doctrine of the Spirit. No philosophical necessity pressed here….The acknowledgement of the full divinity of the Son was certainly assisted by and partly promoted in response to the religious experience of the faithful. This was even more true of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit" (ibid., 874-75). Being true to this "inner drive and genius" meant that the pro-Nicenes had "to some extent emancipate themselves from the tradition, even from the orthodoxy, of the past" in order to discover the doctrine of God by a process of trial-and-error (ibid., 873). Reading the primary sources gives "the impression that as long as the two opposed parties are on the ground of Scripture they seldom come seriously to grips with the real issue" (ibid., 844).

When considering *De Spiritu Sancto* as a source for constructing Basil of Caesarea's theology, one should keep in mind how the historical background has colored presentation. Basil was in the habit of praying two forms of doxology: at one time praising the Father "with the Son together with the Holy Spirit" while at another time "through the Son in the Holy Spirit."[99] His opponents charged him with innovation.[100] Given this context, it is not surprising to find Basil both appealing to the liturgy of the Church to justify a liturgical practice, and appealing to tradition to offset charges of innovation. To infer from these facts, as Wiles does, that Basil thought little of Scripture's testimony to the Spirit is most unfair. Two facts about the unwritten tradition argue against its importance in forming a patristic doctrine of development. First, Basil sees *both* written and unwritten tradition as apostolic. There is not room in Basil's mind for growth with respect to the faith.[101] Second, Basil justifies the unwritten tradition by an appeal to written Scripture![102]

Truthfully, it becomes quickly apparent to any reader that Basil's argument is chiefly grounded on Scripture. The book has two main strings of Scriptural arguments. In the first, Basil defends his doxology's coordination of the Spirit with the Son and the Father. Much more than Jesus' baptismal formula is cited.[103] In the second string, Basil transcends his earlier goal to show directly that the Spirit is divine, and thus should not be ranked as a creature in any sense.[104] Only a prejudiced reader can deny that Basil did not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture to establish the Church's doctrine of the Trinity.

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[99] Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 3.

[100] Ibid., 13.

[101] See ibid., sections 65-75. Basil traces his own "with" doxology back several generations to Origen and his pupil, Gregory the Wonder-Worker (ibid., 73-74).

[102] See ibid., section 66. This aligns with Basil's express goal for this section: "It remains for me to trace the origin of the word '*with*,' to explain what force it has, and to shew that it is in harmony with Scripture" (ibid., 65).

[103] See ibid, sections 37-40. Basil gives six observations from Scripture which show that "in all things the Holy Spirit is inseparable and wholly incapable of being parted from the Father and the Son" (ibid., 37): the Spirit of prophecy is coordinated with God's presence (1 Corinthians 14:24,25); the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira show that "the sins against the Holy Spirit and against God are the same" (ibid., 37); in describing the gifts of the Spirit, Paul coordinates "same Spirit" with "same Lord" and "same God" (1 Corinthians 12:4-6); Psalm 33:6 attributes the work of creation to the "Lord" (i.e. the Father) in conjunction with His Word and His Breath (ibid., 38); after Jesus was anointed by the Father with the Holy Spirit, "every operation [of Jesus] was wrought with the co-operation of the Spirit" (ibid., 39); and finally, "the greatest proof of the conjunction of the Spirit with the Father and the Son is that He is said to have the same relation to God which the spirit in us has to each of us" (1 Corinthians 2:11).

[104] See ibid., sections 48-57. Three main lines of approach are given for proving the Spirit's divinity: His titles (e.g. "another Comforter") (ibid., 48); His operations, which show His holy nature and authoritative power (49-52); and His gifts, which are gifts only the divine can give (ibid., 53-57).

Wiles mentions none of this large amount of solid argument from Scripture, except the few references Basil gives for ascribing the epithet "Lord" to the Holy Spirit (ibid., 52; see Wiles, *The Making of Christian*

Keeping the context in mind also helps clarify Gregory of Nazianzus' position on the sufficiency of Scripture. The Fifth Theological Oration is directed against those who deny that the Holy Spirit is God on the grounds that the Scriptures do not expressly state that the Holy Spirit is *G-O-D*. Gregory tries to convince them that "their love for the letter is but a cloak for their impiety."[105] (31.3). Gregory gives a comprehensive theological argument for the Holy Spirit's personal divinity, which relies on the broad record in Scripture of His activity.[106] Gregory then offers an historical explanation for Scripture's reticence about calling the Holy Spirit "God": Just as the Son's manifestation as God had to wait until idolatry was destroyed, so now the Spirit's manifestation as God had to wait until the Son's exaltation.[107] Gregory concludes, "Now the Spirit Himself dwells among us, and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of Himself."[108]

We should not misunderstand Gregory at this point. On the surface, Gregory appears to be developing the doctrine of the Holy Spirit on the basis of the church's ongoing experience, rather than on the letter of Scripture. This is really not the case. For in the first place, it is *Pentecost* which marks the full manifestation of the Holy Spirit's personal divinity.[109] Rather than something discovered in the fourth century, Gregory is claiming that the first century apostles and writers of Scripture knew by experience this same divine Person in the first century. In the second place, Gregory is not really deprecating the "letter" of Scripture. When words *imply* a meaning which could be expressed in a specific term, it is sophistry to deny the presence of that meaning on account of the absence of the specific

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Doctrine, 78-79). Wiles calls Basil's three citations "the best he can do". How unfair! With these three sections, Basil is not trying to prove that the Spirit is "fully divine", but only the subargument that the Spirit is not a slave. He is Lord. The end of the previous section makes Basil's purpose clear, for there he writes, "If he is a creature of course He serves with all the rest, for 'all things,' it is said, 'are thy servants,' but if He is above Creation, then He shares in royalty" (Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 51). Moreover, in the section before that, Basil writes, "Do you call the Spirit a servant? But, it is said, 'the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth,' and yet the Spirit knoweth the things of God, as 'the spirit of man that is in him'" (ibid., 50). But these are just subarguments included within the overall three-fold argument for the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Wiles has most unfairly presented Basil's argument and method.

[105] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations*, 31.3.

[106] To prove that the Holy Spirit is personal and not just a name for God's activity, Gregory asks, "How is it then that He acts and says such and such things, and defines, and is grieved, and is angered, and has all the qualities which belong clearly to one that moves, and not to movement?" (ibid., 31.6). To prove that the Holy Spirit is divine, Gregory invokes both the worship He receives and the deification He causes. Neither is properly ascribed to a creature (ibid.). Towards the end of the oration, Gregory also cites the unpardonable sin and Ananias and Sapphira's quick death. Only someone "extraordinarily dull" could miss these proofs! (ibid., 31.30).

[107] Ibid., 31.25-28.

[108] Ibid., 31.26.

[109] See the two gradual progression mentioned in section 31.26.

term.[110] Rather than adhering to the letter, in denying the meaning of the letter Gregory's opponents are in fact "contending against the letter."[111] Third, it should not be overlooked that Gregory discusses the church's experience *after* he has fully proven from Scripture the divine personality of the Spirit to such an extent that only someone "extraordinarily dull" could miss those proofs.[112] The church's experience is merely an answer to a sophistical objection. Should any doubts persist over Gregory's reliance on Scripture for his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the "swarm of testimonies" at the end of the oration should suffice to put those doubts to rest.[113]

The Centrality of Experience

The bottom line behind the modern arguments is the assumption that the written word of God is not strong enough to resolve the Church's controversies. Instead, modern historians appeal to Christian experience as the principle of continuity. This is obviously the case with Adolf von Harnack, who has the credit of being forthright about his appeal to piety.[114] But it also true of R. P. C. Hanson, who at the core of his motif of *searching* for the doctrine of God locates a "genuine compulsion" in the fathers, who were

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[110] Ibid., 31.23-24.

[111] Ibid., 31.18.

[112] Ibid., 31.30.

[113] Ibid., 31.29-30. The truthfulness of the perspective presented here is confirmed by both the theological content and theological method presented in all five Theological Orations. Regarding content, though Gregory of Nazianzus is known as the "Theologian" because of these orations, it is remarkable that these orations do not give many philosophical descriptions of the Trinity. Gregory does not rely on analogies of the Trinity. He dismisses them all "as being deceitful and far short of the truth" (ibid., 31.33). Instead of analogies, Gregory rests content in the conception he has obtained by enlightenment from the Holy Spirit (ibid.). On this matter, Gregory is much different than his younger contemporary Augustine, who spent twenty years searching for better analogies of the Trinity. Though the orations have occasional sections on the Trinity (e.g. ibid., 29.2), Christology (e.g. ibid., 29.19), and soteriology (e.g. ibid., 30.6), the main thrust of the orations are to silence the unprofitable dialectics of the Eunomians with the clear testimony of holy Scripture. This leads us to consider his method. Gregory has two pillars which support his arguments: the history of the real world (as seen both in Scripture and in the ordered natural world) and divine testimony to the heavenly world. The history of the real world teaches that man is unable to comprehend even this world by reason; hence, to understand the mysteries of God man must rely on faith. This does not mean that we are left with apophatic theology, that is, with only the ability to describe what God is *not*. No, it just means that in our positive (though partial) knowledge of God, we must not "leave off believing, and protect ourselves by mere strength of argument…. For faith is that which completes our argument" (ibid., 29.21). Preachers should make men "faithful instead of rhetoricians" (ibid.). Even Hanson, who makes much of Scripture's need to be interpreted, has to admit Gregory's "common sense" approach to the holy Book (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 846). When one realizes the historical significance of these orations (viz. being delivered in the Capital at the close of the Arian Controversy), one has a satisfactory sense that it was the ability of Scripture to speak its own mind which ultimately determined the Church's trinitarian doctrine.

[114] For example, Harnack's assessment of the relative worth of Athanasian and Arian theologies is unashamedly based on what he terms their "religious" value (*History of Dogma*, 4:38-49). This piety is the "Gospel" soil out of which the dogmas grow.

"following the inner drive and genius of the Christian religion." Though this fact can be seen in the doctrine of the Son's divinity (since this doctrine's acknowledgement was "certainly assisted by and partly promoted in response to the religious experience of the faithful"), the strong force of experience is most clearly seen in the doctrinal development of the Spirit. According to Hanson, it is here that we see the real *revolution* of the fourth century.[115] The argument is weak. As we saw earlier, Hanson's chief witness is Gregory of Nazianzus, but he only appears to support the modern thesis. At bottom, Hanson's appeal to experience is really a claim that the Cappadocians recognized the insufficiency of Scripture to defend the divinity of the Holy Spirit.[116]

Jaroslav Pelikan also joins the modern historians in denying the sufficiency of Scripture to determine the church's doctrine. This is surprising, given his wonderful definition of doctrine as "what the Church believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the word of God."[117] Yet both Pelikan's definition and methodology show his subtle exaltation of experience. The definition significantly places belief before teaching. From Pelikan's discussions it becomes clear what Pelikan means by "belief." He does not strictly mean *individual* faith (which must precede sincere teaching), but rather a *corporate* faith (which more properly should be said to follow teaching, i.e. revelation from God). This corporate faith is found most often in liturgy and popular devotion.[118] In particular, the driving constant behind the Arian controversy was chiefly the Church's devotion to Christ.[119] The chief difference between Pelikan and Harnack is not their view that experience has guided the church, but what *type* of experience this has been. For Pelikan, the experience is corporate (liturgy); for Harnack, the experience is individualistic

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[115] Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 874-75; cf. 779, 783, 739.

[116] Ibid., 777, 875. It is the general drift of Scripture, and not the exact wording, which is important to Hanson (ibid., 820). Accordingly, Hanson praises Athanasius for catching the main *skopos* of Scripture (ibid., 871).

[117] Pelikan, *Historical Theology*, 95.

[118] For example, consider Pelikan's treatment of modalistic Monarchianism: "As a liturgical utterance or even as an exegetical tool, the simplistic identification of Jesus Christ as God could be said to make a certain kind of Christian sense. Great difficulties arose, however, when the identification was transposed from belief to teaching, even greater difficulties when it was transposed from teaching to confession" (*The Christian Tradition*, 1:178). Here we see that "belief" embodies the *vague* utterance of liturgy. The Church has no clear statement. Thus Pelikan allows for modalistic Monarchianism to be seen as "an effort to provide a theology for the language of devotion" (ibid.). Though the language of the New Testament brought down Sabellianism, the "intuition it represented" could not be quieted (ibid., 1:181-182). Thus it is liturgical devotion which drives the Church, while the Scripture only restrain the Church from going to extremes. Moreover, the liturgy of the Church is clearer than Scripture: "The dogma of the Trinity was enshrined in the liturgy and, if one read them aright, documented in the Scriptures" (ibid., 1:223).

[119] As Pelikan writes, "The question [of the Arian controversy] was how what the church taught in its exegetical and catechetical work and what it confessed in its apologetics toward Jews or pagans and in its creeds was to be related to what it believed in its prayers" (ibid., 1:199).

(piety).[120] This generalization is confirmed by Pelikan's method. Pelikan has argued repeatedly that a study of history should precede theological assertions because Christian doctrine developed within the context of the total life of the Church.[121]

Surprisingly, the idea of doctrinal development depending on Christian experience also undergirds Wiles' theory. Wiles claims:

> True continuity with the age of the Fathers is to be sought not so much in the repetition of their doctrinal conclusions or even in the building upon them, but rather in the continuation of their doctrinal aims. Their doctrinal affirmations were based upon an appeal to the record of Scripture, the activity of worship, and the experience of salvation. Should not true development be seen in the continuation of the attempt to do justice to those three strands of Christian life in the contemporary world?[122]

Of the three grounds for doctrine (the record of Scripture, the activity of worship, and the experience of salvation), Wiles whittles them down to one—personal experience of salvation. Regarding Christology, for instance, Wiles first dismisses appeals to Scripture as valid but never decisive, for the interpretive effort implies that the Scriptures are unclear.[123] Next, Wiles dismisses the principle of worship, for popular piety unduly influenced the early church to affirm Jesus' divinity. Finally, with respect to salvation, since we cannot appeal to how God *must* have acted (for how can man judge that?) or even how God *did* act (for Scripture must be interpreted), we are left with "an appeal to the present experience of salvation."[124]

Modern historians should not be written off without considering their observations. For those who see the continuity of Christianity as consisting in God's message about His Son, i.e. the *word*, research should be given to the use of Scripture in the fourth century. When did the original message of the Messiah *determine* trinitarian doctrine? Having said that, the truth remains. Modern theories of doctrinal development misrepresent Christianity, when the principle of continuity is awarded to Christian experience and not to the external revelation. If the *skopos* of the New Testament teaches us anything, it at least teaches us that the ground of Christian experience is belief in a message—to be sure, a message about a Person, but a message nonetheless. Christians should become suspicious when the shift from

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[120] Pelikan explicitly chides Harnack for his lack of sensitivity to the importance of liturgy within Church history (see *Historical Theology*, 105-106).

[121] Pelikan, *Development*, p. 144.

[122] Wiles, *Making*, 173.

[123] Ibid., 163.

[124] Ibid., p. 165.

continuity of word to continuity of experience leads men like Wiles to ask more about relevance than about truthfulness.[125] Something is awry. So how should Christians respond to these modern theories of doctrinal development?

Christians should do at least two things. First, they should ask God to restore to their hearts the grandeur of Isaiah's affirmation that though men die and their personal formulations perish, the word never dies (Isaiah 40:8). The faith has been once-and-for-all-time "delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Christianity is stable. Second, the modern assumption of a *new* world should be challenged at its root. Wiles' whole argument hangs on the assumption that the contemporary world is radically different than the ancient world. To support this claim, Wiles appeals to T. S. Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts in the natural sciences.[126] In reply, Wiles should be asked whether "all the contemporary changes in man's understanding of himself and his world" should be equated with actual changes in man's world or in man himself?[127] Though recognizing technological advance, the Bible insists concerning the fundamental issues of man's spiritual life: "There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Moderns have much more in common with the ancients than they have that is different from them. The haunting ability of the Bible to convict us of our sins is a living reminder that we are at core the same people—living in the same world under the same God—as the ancients. We moderns can learn much from them.

Conclusion

The Arian controversy had two basic positions—either the Son of God was created or He was not. Those who held to the former view were heretics, while those of the latter view were orthodox. The chief doctrinal advance made during the course of the debate was in terminology and in the abandonment of binary models for balanced trinitarian formulas. The controversy as a whole demonstrates that the fundamental principle of continuity in Christian doctrine is the word of God, not Christian experience. May the Church once again sing with the psalmist, "I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Psalm 119:96).

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[125] E.g., see ibid., 9.

[126] Ibid., 170. Hanson is similar to Wiles (whom he cites with approbation) in finding great value in "the analogy [for doctrinal development] from the progress of some humane study, such as Shakespeare criticism" (*Continuity*, 84, 86).

[127] Ibid., 174.

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