

SESSION #7

EARLY CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND FORMATION

- ▶ Septuagint - Greek translation of the Old Testament; Council of Jamnia 100 A.D.
- ▶ Transition from Oral to Written - What writings were authoritative?
- ▶ Canon - Measuring Rod

CANONICITY CRITERIA

- ▶ Inspiration
- ▶ Apostolicity
- ▶ Antiquity
- ▶ Applicability to the whole church
- ▶ Read in church
- ▶ Right Doctrine

THE NEED FOR A CANON

- ▶ Marcionism - A.D. 160 - considered Hebrew God to be barbaric, believed the N.T. should be a portion of Luke, and 10 of Paul's letters. His foundational argument is Galatians 3:19-20. Jesus separated from the law. Further used Luke 6:43 to defend his position. Believed Jesus was a fully divine being who only appeared to be human. The Pauline Letters included: Galatians, Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, 1-2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Philippians, Philemon and Colossians.

THE NEED FOR A CANON CONTINUED

- ▶ Montanism (172 A.D.) - Montanus claimed that he was the Paraclete described in John. He began what we would consider a pentecostal movement (ecstatic outbursts, speaking in tongues, prophetic utterances. Two women prophetess (Priscilla and Maximilla)
 - ▶ Belief in the imminent return of Christ
 - ▶ Believed new Jerusalem would be established in Turkey - making the new movement very attractive in Carthage, Rome, Gaul, North Africa, and Asia Minor.
 - ▶ Rigorous asceticism

THE NEED FOR A CANON CONTINUED

- ▶ Gnosticism - developed its own forms of literature to claim secret teachings of Jesus and other viewpoints.
- ▶ Colossians, 1 Timothy, Titus and 1 John - speak about how the Gnostic influence was disrupting the church. The New Testament writers argued against the dualistic belief system proposed by the Gnostics.

CANON FORMATION

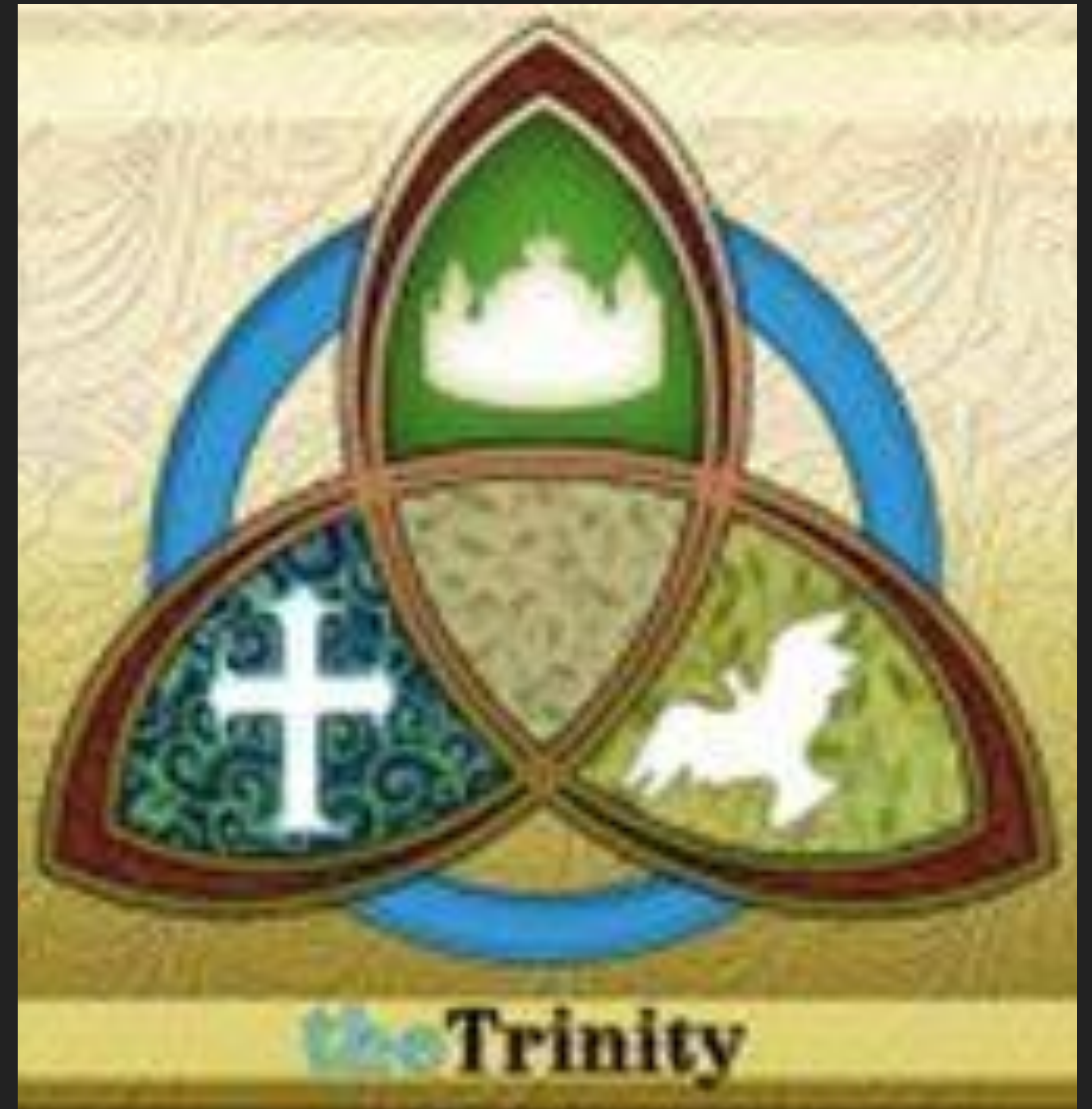
- ▶ Middle of the 2nd Century Orthodox Christians believe that the NT is comprised of: 4 Gospels, 13 Pauline Letters, and the Acts of the Apostles
- ▶ Document called "Muratorian Canon" dated around 180 A.D. found in 1740 by Muratori, listed 4 Gospels, Acts, 13 Letters of Paul, Epistles of John, Jude, and the Book of Revelation
- ▶ Irenaeus and Origen - both Bishops also had lists, 4 Gospels, all of Paul's epistles, Acts, some of John's epistles, and the Book of Revelation. Both excluded Hebrews and James

CANON FORMATION CONTINUED

- ▶ Eusebius' List - A.D. 325
 - ▶ Homologoumena - Universally recognized by the church as canonical. 4 Gospels, Acts, 13 of Paul's Epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John, and parts of Hebrews and Revelation
 - ▶ Antilegomena - Generally accepted by there are some questions. These would include James, Jude, 1,2 and 3rd John and 2 Peter. Again parts of Hebrews and Revelation included.
 - ▶ Beneficial, but not part of the canon - Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, First Epistle of Clement of Rome, Epistle of Polycarp
 - ▶ Athanasius - 367 A.D. provides the first list that contains all 27 books of the New Testament

THE TRINITY

- ▶ Baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but what did that mean?
- ▶ The question that was being asked - What is the relationship between the Father and the Son?
 - ▶ Dynamic Monarchianism - simply understood that God bestowed divine powers upon the pious Jesus
 - ▶ Theodotus of Rome - 3rd Century, Jesus received His power when He was baptized as a reward for His piety.



THE TRINITY CONTINUED

- ▶ Paul of Samosata - Prominent Christian Bishop in Antioch. Taught Jesus was a mere mortal, experienced a virgin birth, God bestowed both divine status and divine power.
- ▶ Adoptionism - God adopted Jesus and then exalted Him and granted Him divine status
- ▶ Modalistic Monarchianism - one person, three modes of activity, three different titles, same person (Father, Husband, Pastor)
- ▶ Arius and Sabellius - "There is one unified God who manifests Himself as the Father in creation, the Son in redemption and incarnation, and as the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification"—hence, one God, three activities.

**THERE WAS A TIME
WHEN CHRIST WAS NOT!**

BISHOP ALEXANDER AND THE PREACHER ARIAS

- ▶ The year is A.D. 318 and the location is Alexandria the 2nd largest city in the Roman Empire, named after Alexander the Great.
- ▶ Arius taught that Jesus and God had a different essence.
 - ▶ Jesus was divine, but not divine like God.
 - ▶ Jesus was a created being, but He was also the Creator of the World
 - ▶ Colossians 1:15-16
 - ▶ John 14:28

BISHOP AND ARIUS CONTINUED

- ▶ Bishop calls for a meeting of 100 other Bishops to refute this teaching.
- ▶ A.D. 321 Bishop's rule in favor of Bishop of Alexander. Arius is excommunicated.
- ▶ But not the end of the story - Bishops in Caesarea, Constantinople, Antioch, and Nicomedia all agree with Arius
- ▶ Emperor Constantine intervenes Council of Nicea
 - ▶ A.D. 325 - 300 bishops from all over the empire gathered

“DISCORD IN THE CHURCH I CONSIDER MORE FEARFUL AND PAINFUL THAN ANY OTHER WAR.... WHEN I HEARD OF YOUR DIVISION, I WAS CONVINCED THAT THIS MATTER SHOULD BY NO MEANS BE NEGLECTED ... [SO] I HAVE SUMMONED YOU WITHOUT DELAY. I SHALL, HOWEVER, FEEL MY DESIRE FULFILLED ONLY WHEN I SEE THE MINDS OF ALL UNITED IN THAT PEACEFUL HARMONY WHICH YOU, AS THE ANOINTED OF GOD, MUST PREACH TO OTHERS.”

Emperor Constantine

THE COUNCIL OF NICEA

- ▶ Religious harmony equaled political harmony
 - ▶ Faction #1 - Coequal and Coeternal - Bishop Alexander
 - ▶ Faction #2 - Neither Coequal nor Coeternal - Arian Coalition
 - ▶ Faction #3 - Coeternal but not Coequal - The mediating party headed up by Eusebius of Caesarea

THE COUNCIL DECISION

- ▶ Functional versus Essential Subordination
 - ▶ Jesus in His humanity functioned in a subordinate role to the Father
 - ▶ There was never a time when the essence of Jesus was subordinate to the essence of the Father
 - ▶ Homousis - the same essence/the same substance
 - ▶ Emperor Constantine said it was so and it was so
 - ▶ Theonos and Secundus dissent - banished and excommunicated. Arius banished, works were burned, labeled an enemy of Christ.