THE ROAD TO NICEA: A SURVEY OF THE REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

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November 18, 2005

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

During the opening centuries of Christianity, the early Church soon realized that certain theologies needed to be established if it was going to survive. The first of these foundational doctrines addressed how Christ related to the Father. The discussion soon came to include the Holy Spirit. The establishment of Christianity as monotheistic; therefore, maintaining the divinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit, was an issue. But how could God be one and three? The answer found a voice in the doctrine of the Trinity.

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

The question before the church was a Christological one: Who is Jesus in relationship with God? If Jesus is God, how can Christianity claim to be monotheistic? And if Jesus is not God, how can Christianity claim to be theistic?[1] The works of the Ante-Nicene Fathers bear this out.

By the second century certain cities were able to start theological traditions capable of serving as a framework for future thought. As the Church matured, new ideas began circulating. Theological experimentation was prevalent. Over time a rule of faith was becoming established by the more influential churches, setting the standard for what would and would not be accepted as orthodox. These influential churches grew into important Christian centers developing their own

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

theology. Regional traditions became strong. In this way, each Christian center developed its own brand of the trinitarian theology.

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

The purpose of this paper is to examine the development of the doctrine of the Trinity within each of the major Christian centers, observing the regional variations in order to see if geography played a role in its development. During this period, the empire was essentially divided into two halves: the Latin West and the Greek East. This division allowed each to develop their own answers to the Christological question.[5] In order to incorporate this cultural division into the research, this paper is divided into two parts, the West and the East. The paper unfolds as a journey. We travel from one major Christian center to another encounter the important figures of each city, their ideologies, and how they influenced the overall progression toward Nicea.

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[2]W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 284; New Advent, "Nicomedia," on-line encyclopedia, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/ 11070a.htm; accessed March 22, 2005.

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

[4]Ibid., 285-86.

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

CHAPTER TWO: IN THE WEST

The road to the First Ecumenical Council begins in the West. The development of the doctrine begins in Rome, but reaches its zenith in her historical enemy, Carthage.

Rome

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

At the beginning of our journey we meet the early church father, Clement. Although only the first century, *I Clement* contains a clear trinitarian phrase. "Have we not one God, and one Christ and one Spirit of Grace poured out upon us?"[6] Despite the omission of the name 'Father', this sentence is clearly a proto-trinitarian statement. Elsewhere in *I Clement* the term Father is stated and is consistent with subsequent authors. Clement, steeped in the Septuagint, leans heavily on Scripture for moral and ethical guidance. Even at such an early date, the concept of a triune God is obvious.[7]

Our second Roman is Justin Martyr. Focussing on practical over theoretical theology, Justin stressed the inseparability of the essence of the Word and the Father. However, when he concluded that the Father was the source of the Godhead, and that the Son and the Spirit must be inferior, he is condemned as a subordinationist. In reality, his theology was much more complex, holding the

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[6]Clement, *I Clement*, 46.6, as quoted in Kelly, *The Early Church*, 42.

[7]Kelly, *The Early Church*, 42.

Godhead to be one and inseparable.[8] Because Jesus Christ was able to grow, learn, and suffer, and

also had the full power of the Logos, Justin concluded that he was equally human and divine.[9]

The founder of Dynamic Monarchianism, Theodotus, is the third person in we find in

Rome. Despite his label as heretic, Theodotus held strongly to many of the orthodox beliefs being

established, however, when he claimed that Jesus was merely a very good man who, at his baptism,

was adopted by the Holy Spirit and was then able to perform many miraculous works of God, he

veered from the orthodox path that was being established.[10] Millard Erickson explains Theodotus's

Christology: "Jesus was an ordinary man, inspired but not indwelt by the Spirit."[11] This non-

orthodox position caused a stir within the burgeoning orthodoxy.

The last important Roman we meet is the presbyter Hippolytus, who became presbyter

around 200. His over-emphasis on the distinction between the Logos and the Father in *The Refutation

of All Heresies* rightly drew a charge of ditheism from the Roman Bishop Callistus. The passage in

question included, "Therefore this solitary and supreme Deity, by an exercise of reflection, brought

forth the Logos first; not the word in the sense *of being articulated by* voice, but as a ratiocination of

the universe, conceived and residing *in the divine mind*."[12] But Hyppolytus also claimed that the

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

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

[10]Erickson, 358-59; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, an imprint of Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 116-17.

[11]Erickson, 359.

[12]Hippolytus*, The Refutation of All Heresies*, X.29, as quoted in *ANF*, vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004), 150 (italics author's).

created Word was the incarnate Christ, part of the Godhead but distinct from the Father. In, *Contra Noetum*, he explained that "The Father is over all, the Son is by all, and the Holy Spirit is in all."[13] A trinitarian formula was taking shape.

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

Carthage

The second stop on the road to Nicea is the ancient African city of Carthage. Two hundred years before Augustine, a cohesive theory of the Trinity was being formulated and applied. The two men most responsible for this theology were Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus and Cyprian.

Contemporaneous with Hyppolytus, we first encounter Tertullian, who was working at what might be considered the apex of ancient trinitarian thought. In *Against Praxeas,* Tertullian explains how the Son and the Father were both separate, yet eternally united with the Father; therefore, God must be three persons in one substance.[14] According to Eric Osborn, Tertullian incorporated Stoic concepts into a trinitarian framework,[15] "Stoics distinguished three different sorts of mixtures. . . . The third kind of mixture was a total blending . . . which preserves the natures, which unite. The persistence of the blended constituents was proved from the fact that they could be separated artificially. An oiled sponge, when placed in a blend of water and wine, will absorb water and leave

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

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

[15] Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 120-133; Eric Osborn, "The Speak to Us Across the Centuries 8: Tertullian," *The Expository Times*. 109, no. 12 (1998): 357-58.

the wine."[16] By incorporating the Stoic concept of interpenetration of physical bodies, Tertullian

struck a balance between the threeness of the Godhead and the oneness of God.[17]

Tertullian's theory was put into practice by the Bishop of Carthage.[18] Cyprian regarded

Tertullian as the Master, and held Scripture and Tertullian as his only authorities.[19] No North

African tradition had developed until Tertullian. The Bishop was first and foremost a pastor,

applying his theology to the troubles of the day. Cyprian's understanding of the Trinity was a prime

example of how the Church must also be united. With this triune model in mind, the Bishop worked

unceasingly to hold the Church together solidifying the North African tradition.[20]

The road to Nicea ends in the West at Carthage. There is no need to continue. The matter is

settled. Tertullian's theology essentially put the matter to rest. Nothing new was developed, probably

because nothing more needed to be developed. However, things were different on the other side of

the empire. The Eastern Church, which is separated from the West both by language and by culture,

had to find its own solution to the question. To continue on the road to Nicea, we must return to

the first century and begin in the East in the city of Antioch.

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

[17]Ibid., 141; While feeling free to use Stoicism for his own ends, Osborn points out in article in *Vigiliae Christianae*, that Tertullian "repudiates the idea of a Christian Stoicism." Eric Osborn, "The Subtlety of Tertullian," *Vigiliae Christianae*. 52, no. 4 (1998): 369.

[18]Peter Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage: And the Unity of the Christian Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, and imprint of Cassell and Collier Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1974), 116.

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

[20]Hinchliff, 116.

CHAPTER THREE: IN THE EAST

Skipping back in time to the first century, we pick up the road to Nicea in the East. Life was different on the Greek side of the Empire. The East had many more churches and many more opportunities to hear different interpretations of Christianity. Also, politics played a much greater role. Antioch and Alexandria, provided the fuel for the machinery that paved the road to Nicea.

Antioch

Our first stop is Antioch. We will meet four important characters in the trinitarian debate: Ignatius, Theophilus, Paul of Samosata, and Lucian. As time passes the theology of this Syrian city begans to veer more and more afield. Antioch was indeed a hotbed of theological thought.[21]

The oldest person we meet along the road is the famous martyr Ignatius. His theology was primitive and rudimentary, as one would expect for a first century bishop. However, Ignatius did make passing reference to the trinitarian model three times in his letters.[22] While, on the one hand, he does not equate the Holy Spirit with Christ, but only as God's divine power, on the other hand he does formulate a clearly paradoxical understanding of a two-nature Christology.[23] Unfortunately in his letters, he does not explain how the flesh and the spirit interact or join in Christ. Ignatius also

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

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

[23]M. D. Goulder, "Ignatius' 'Donatists'," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 53, no. 1 (1999): 30.

wrote that he held Christ to be an ingenerate, pre-existent being, whose Sonship began in the incarnation. Sadly, his views were not passed down as part of the Antiochene tradition.[24]

The second person we encounter in Antioch is the Apologist, Theophilus. He developed a Logos doctrine equating the Word with the Son; however, he no longer held Christ as pre-existent, but as *prophorikos*, an idea in the mind of God who was 'expressed' at the moment of creation. His main contribution to the advancement of the doctrine of the Trinity was in the way he applied the word *triad* in relation to the Father, Word, and Wisdom. He was the first to present God as a triune being.[25]

Our third Antiochene is Paul of Samosata, arguably the most colorful character along the road. Drifting further from the divine Christology of his predecessors, Paul maintained the idea that God was dynamically present in Jesus. However, his Origenist views provided the grist for his opponents' mill; and in 268, Paul was excommunicated, being the first extant example of a council imposing a test of orthodoxy.[26] For Paul, the Logos was stronger in Jesus than in anyone else, but that did not make him divine or worthy of worship. God and the Son were *homoousios*, but not equal. He also held that Christ's humanity had no soul and that it had been replaced by the Spirit at His birth, and to a Dynamic Monarchianist view.[27] The Antiochene tradition was turning from the established norm.

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

[25]Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 252; Woolley, 72-3; Kelly, 109; Gonzalez, 52-3; Pelikan, 189.

[26] Woolley, 72-3; Erickson, 359; Kelly, 117; New Advent, "St. Ignatius of Antioch," on-line encyclopedia, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11589a.htm; accessed on March 21, 2005.

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

The last Antiochene thinker was a student of Paul and a teacher of Arius.[28] Lucian followed the teachings of Paul, but saw Christ on a higher plane. One of his main teachings, and one that became a central theme with Arius, was that Jesus was *soma apsychon*—a body without a soul. Ephiphanius, and so is able to attach human experiences to the Logos.[29]

The leading thinkers in Antioch drifted from an understanding of the divinity of Christ to a monarchian-Origenist theology. Ignatius established a biblical understanding of the Trinity, but Theophilus began denying certain aspects of a trinitarian model, and Paul, with his student Lucian, called into question the divinity of Christ. In order to see the reactions to the "heretical" doctrines building in Antioch, we will head South to Alexandria.

Alexandria

Alexandria, our last city before Nicea, continued its reputation for scholarship within the Christian community. Two groups of thinkers had an impact on the trinitarian doctrine. The controversy that began here provided the impetus for the First Ecumenical Council.

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

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[28]Kelly, 230-31; Frend, *The Early Church*, 122; New Advent, "Lucian of Antioch," on-line encyclopedia, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09409a.htm; accessed March 22, 2005; Woolley, 72-3; Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 162.

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

Christian Platonism. However, this turn to Hellenism was to have a devastating affect on Church unity, driving a wedge between East and West, and between Alexandria and Antioch.[30]

We first encounter Clement, who realized that unless he was able make his teachings understandable to his audience, his mission to defeat Gnosticism would fail. He turned to philosophy in order to connect with the people.[31] For Clement, God was completely transcendent but could be known through the Son and the Spirit. He writes, "God, then, being not a subject for demonstration, cannot be the object of science. But the Son is wisdom, and knowledge, and truth, and all else that has affinity thereto. He is also susceptible to demonstration and of description. And all the powers of the Spirit, becoming collectively one thing, terminate in the same point—that is, in the Son."[32] While he emphasized the differences between God and the Son, he never promoted any form of dualism. The Word reflects rather than contrasts God.[33]

The second Alexandrian on our journey, Origen, continued to meld Christianity with philosophy. Frend explains, "Origen saw Christianity as a movement of spiritual and moral reform, building sometimes on existing philosophy as well as on Scripture, but always leading the individual forward by its own merits toward a truer understanding of one's self and of the divine world."[34] For Origen, God could not be without the active qualities of Wisdom, Word, and Power. Wisdom was co-eternal with God, known as the Son, and joined with him through the perfection of love.[35]

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[30]Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 368-69.

[31]Ibid., 370; Gonzalez, 70-1.

[32]Clement, *Miscellanies*, IV. 25, as quoted in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, vol. 2, 438.

[33]Williams, 129; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 371.

[34]Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 289.

[35]Origen, *De principiis*, I.2.1-4; II.6.4; Gerald Bostock, "Origen: The Alternative to Augustine?" *The Expository Times*. 114, no. 10 (2003): 327.

However, in his work against Celsus, he demotes the Son to a status less than full divinity. [36] And since Origen does not treat the Spirit as having the same power and majesty as the Son, he probably did not place Him in the Godhead.[37]

Our third Alexandrian Christian Platonist is Dionysius. Following along the same thoughts as his teacher, Dionysius, was able to continue Origen's work, setting the theological tradition for the area. Under his reign, the Alexandrian See expanded its control over all of Egypt and Cyrenaica. Around 255, the Monarchians in Cyrenaica came to the attention of Dionysius.[38] In a fit of anger he wrote the bishop in Rome, Pope Sixtus II, rebuking the Monarchians. However, in the letter he affirms the Alexandrian tradition that the Son was a creature, sparking a fire between the two Sees, which intensified with the new Roman pope—also named Dionysius.[39] The Cyreniacans coined the now familiar term, *homoousios*, which the Alexandrian Bishop rejected as non-Scriptural.[40] About this Frend summarizes, "Dionysius moved Origen's Trinitarian teaching further along the road toward Arianism. Indeed, with Dionysius's letter in mind, Arius became explicable."[41] Dionysius set the table for the controversy that followed.

The next group of three characters is made up of two churchmen and one politician. The last two two church officials were the Bishop and a presbyter, Alexander and Arius, but without the

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[36]Khaled Anotolios, "Christ, Scripture, and the Christian Story of Meaning in Origen," *Gregorianum*. 78, no. 1 (1997): 60-1.

[37]Kihan McDonnell, "Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?" *Gregorianum*. 75, no. 1 (1994): 34.

[38]Kelly, 133-34.

[39]Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 383.

[40]Kelly, 135.

[41]Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 383.

third person, the emperor Constantine, Nicea would have never happened. All three figures play an important role in the events leading directly to the confrontation in Nicea.

The Alexandrian tradition that took root with Origen was supported by the educated upper class; however, the majority of Egyptian believers were developing a distaste for modalism and Manicheanism. A chasm was widening between the intelligencia of Alexandria and the rest of the Egyptian flock.[42] Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter, used his eloquence to rally the disenfranchised Alexandrians by challenging the Saballean views apparent in BishopAlexander. He seems to pick up where Origen and Lucius leave off.[43] According to Athanasius, Arius's held that God is completely transcendent, and that the Word was not just subordinate but also created. In *De Synodis*, Athanasius quotes Arius, writing, "We acknowledge one God, alone Ingenerate, alone Everlasting, alone Unbegun, alone True, alone having Immortality, alone Wise, alone Good, alone Sovereign."[44] He also held that because the Word had entered Jesus' physical body replacing his soul, Christ was neither fully human nor fully divine. He had neither communion with nor knowledge of God. He was merely an empty vessel used of God, so deserved no worship as God.[45]

In 318, Arius directly challenged what he saw was the Sabellianism of Alexander. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Socrates recorded Arius's most recognizable quote, "there was a time when the Son was not."[46] The disagreement would probably have not gone any further. Alexander was first

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[42]Ibid., 493-94.

[43]Williams, 31-2.

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

[45]Erickson, 711-12; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 494-95.

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

and foremost an Origenist and held that the Word, while eternal, was generated; however, political

rivals pressured Alexander to denounce the presbyter as a heretic.[47] Buckling under the pressure,

Alexander called a council of one hundred Bishops condemning Arius's teachings, and exiling him.

Arius proceeded to Nicomedia, the home of his close friend and fellow Lucianite, Eusebius.[48]

By 324, Constantine had finally consolidated his power across the entire empire, he turned

his attention to items that were disrupting peace in his land. Hearing of the trouble brewing in

Egypt, he sent an envoy in the person of Hosia of Cordoba to quiet the bickering Alexandrians.

Hosia sided with the bishop, and eventually excommunicated Eusebius, friend to both Arius and the

emperor.[49] In January of 325, the emperor read Hosia's report. Seeing himself as Pontifex Maximus,

Constantine called an empire-wide ecumenical council in order to put an end to the matter. He

called the first ecumenical council to be held that year in the city of Nicea.[50]

In Alexandria, theology played less of a role in the development of the doctrine of Trinity

than did politics. The ideas that were being argued in Alexandria had already been discussed earlier.

The main force in Egyptian Africa was politics. Carthage had been using a fully realized trinitarian

doctrine by the middle of the third century, but in the East, politics, not theology, held sway. So, it is

probably most fitting that the solution to the political problem in Alexandria was resolved by the

Emperor.

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

[48]Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 495; Gonzalez, 161-62.

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

[50]Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 497; Gonzalez, 158-59.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

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

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

Geography also played a large part in the development of the trinitarian doctrine. In the West, Rome and Carthage essentially developed unhindered from the other. Only after Tertullian produced a thorough resolution to the trinitarian question was there any indication of a shared

tradition in the West.[51] However, in the East, Antioch promoted an independent spirit within the

Syrian See and so veered from orthodoxy. Alexandria's geographical location provided it with the

wealth and centrality necessary to amplify all its controversies to the rest of the world. The cultural

divide between East and West promoted two different paths to the same end. On both sides of the

empire, the development seems to have begun in the North and finalized in the South. A causal

connection cannot be made to geography for the way the doctrine developed, but knowing the way

it grew helps us understand how the doctrine that we have today.

Our journey along the road to Nicea has shown that geography has had an enormous impact

on the way the doctrine of the Trinity developed in the Ante-Nicene period. The resulting doctrine

may or may not have turned out the same, given different geographical restrictions, but that is

another question. The central thesis of this paper focused on the development of the doctrine, the

journey—the road to Nicea.

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[51]In the West no evidence has been found to support the idea that any trinitarian debate
continued after Tertullian. However, since we have a plethora of evidence of the debate prior to
Tertullian, the argument from silence has validity. Therefore, we are safe to conclude that
Tertullian's theology was accepted throughout the West, ending the debate in the West.

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