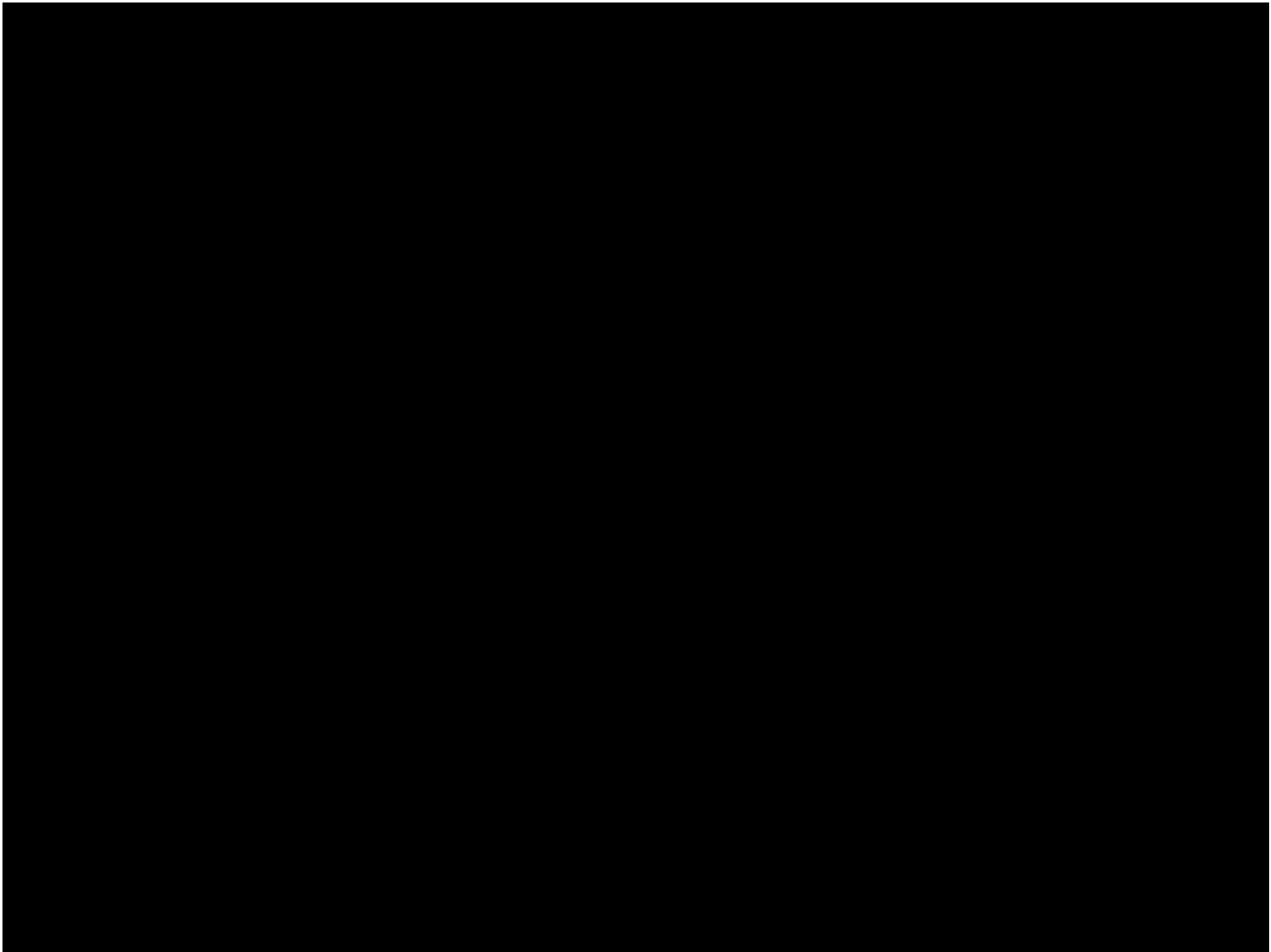
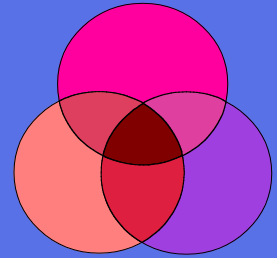
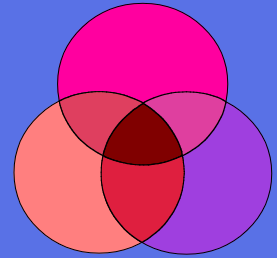




My personal struggle.



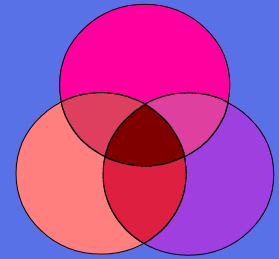
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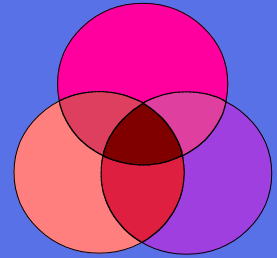


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“Why do you call me good?...no one is good — except God alone.” (Luke 18:19)

How can the Son be the “Firstborn,” “only begotten”? On the Cross, if Jesus is God, how could he cry “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Mk 15:34

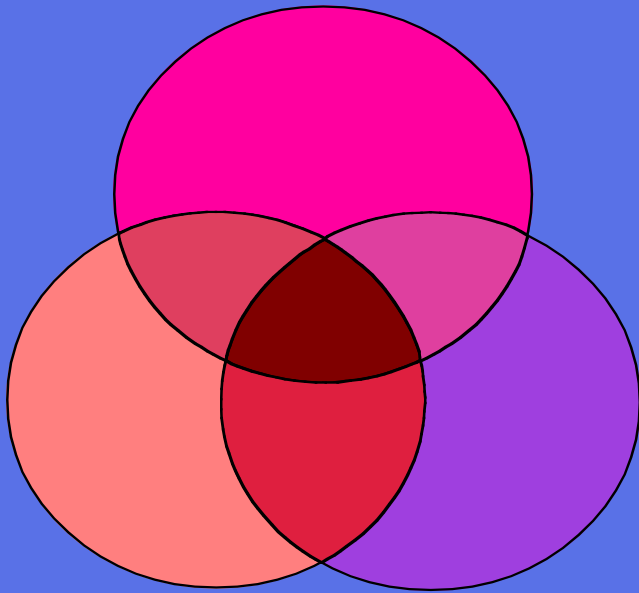
OUR inner questions.



Of self-professing evangelicals, 97% believe in Trinity.

But 28% say Jesus was a great teacher, but not God.

53% believe the Holy Spirit is a force not a personal being. (“2025 State of Theology,” Lifeway, Oct 10’25)



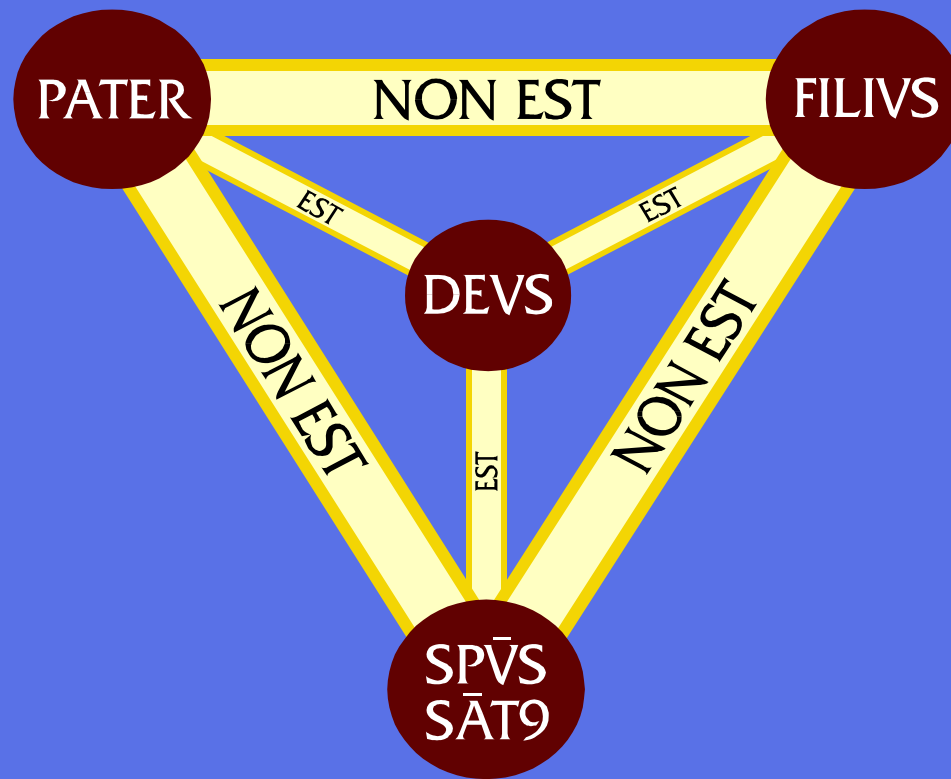
Almost all Christians say they believe in God as Trinity.

But what is the Trinity?

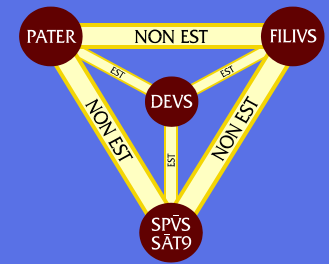
HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN
YOUR BELIEF IN THE
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THE HOLY TRINITY

BEDROCK OF OUR FAITH, REASON FOR OUR JOY



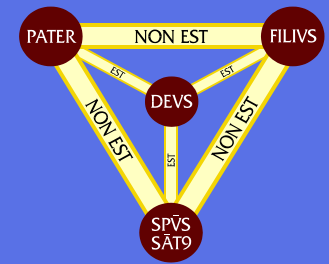
THE NICENE CREED: BEDROCK OF CHRISTIAN FAITH



2025 is the 1700th year anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), the first Universal Council of the Christian Church.

Constantine seems to have converted to Christian Faith (312AD) before he conquered all the Greco-Roman world (324). Later he called for the Council to meet in Nicaea (Iznik) near Constantinople (Istanbul) as 318 bishops gathered.

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After the initial Creed in 325, a Second Universal Council convened in 381 to refine and expand form of the earlier creed and it is this that we call “The Nicene Creed,” the primary statement of faith for all historic Christianity.

Kevin DeYoung, *The Nicene Creed* (Crossway, 2025) 9:
“After the Bible, the Nicene Creed may be the most important Christian text ever written. Since the fourth century, the Nicene Creed has served as the most influential, most ecumenical, and arguably the most widely used statement of faith in the history of the church....



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...the Nicene Creed, unlike the Apostles’ Creed, was officially adopted at an ecumenical council and declared to be binding on the whole church. The Nicene Creed also differs from the Apostles’ in that we know where it came from, when it originated, and why it was written.... it summarizes and defines orthodoxy itself.”



I. Right Steps, Wrong Steps: Why is the Nicene Creed essential?

A. Right Steps:

The mainstream church in the earliest centuries got it right: Jesus is God (John 20:28, 1:1-18).



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Justin Martyr (165), Athenagorus (170, Gk. *trias*), Irenaeus (190), Tertullian (210, Lat. *Trinitas*, “Three persons, one substance.”



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B. Six Wrong Steps:

Jesus Christ is the most renown figure of human history; every philosophy, every religion, finally every person has to interpret him. Missteps.



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Today: modern liberalism, humanist philosophy, other religions (Judaism, Islam),

But John 8:58; 10:30; Matthew 26:63-64; 28:19.

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2. Jesus was an emanation of God, not really human. **Docetism** (Gnosticism).



Graham Sutherland, "Christ in Glory: The Tetramorph," 1953

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But already NT warnings: 1 Jn1:1-4; 4:1-3.

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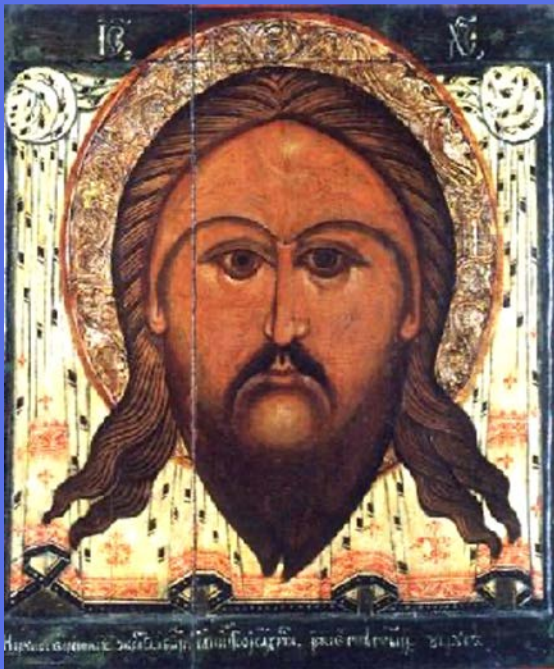
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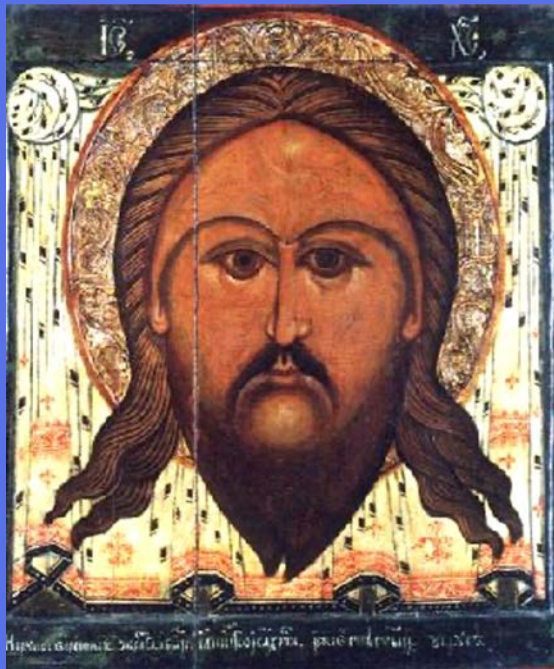


The Savior. Unknown author. 17th c. Karelia, Russia

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Today: In Buddhism Jesus is an Enlightened One, a bodhisattva, transcended but helping others.

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2 DOCETISM
Jesus Is Divine



4 MODALISM
1 Person, 3 Manifestations



Father Son Spirit

3 ADOPTIONISM
Man Made Lord/Christ



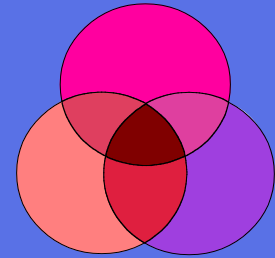
Lord



5 TRITHEISM
Father Son Spirit



**NICENE
CREED**



1 God, 3 Persons

100

200

325/381

Clement Ignatius Justin Irenaeus Tertullian Origen Alexander Athanasius

1 EBIONISM
Jesus Is Just a Man



**COUNCIL OF NICEA/
CONSTANTINOPLE**
325/381



Theos/God



Christos/Lord

6 ARIANISM
The Son Is a God

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4. God is only one person but manifest threefold as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Modalism, Sabellianism. The one God reveals himself in three modes, faces, or masks. There is no relationality in God.

"Trinitarian Christ," c.1500,
Declared heretical at Trent 1545

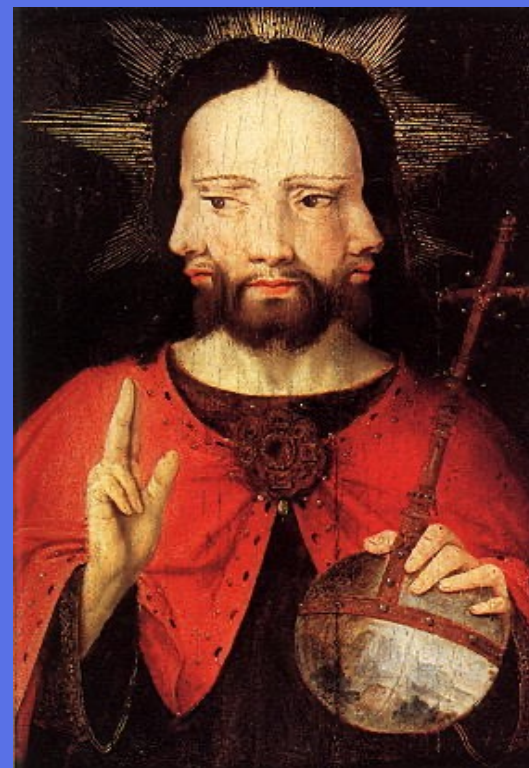


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Today: Oneness Pentecostalism or Jesus Only Pentecostalism (UPCI) declares that Jesus is Father in heaven, Jesus is God on earth, Jesus is the Spirit today. 1913-various groups; UPCI David Bernard, 5.1million; Oneness total 20million?

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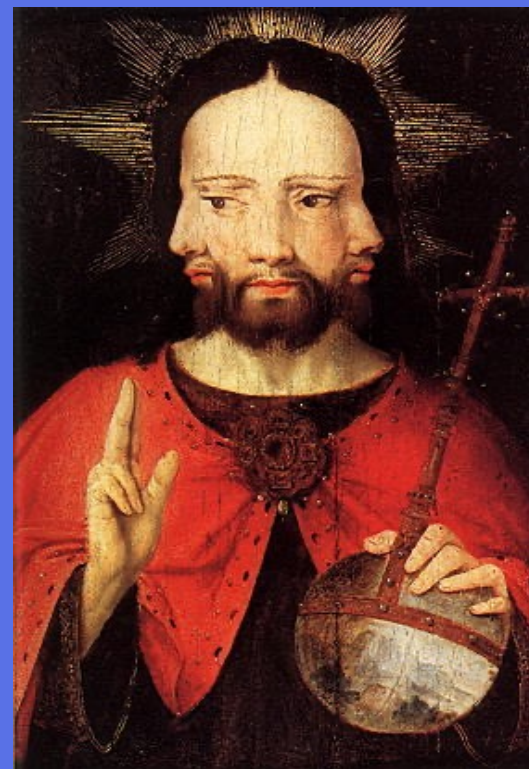
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Repeatedly in the NT (134 times) we see the three persons of the Trinity active in the Incarnation, baptism, multiple teachings of Jesus (Jn 14-17) and the apostles.

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B. Six Wrong Steps:

5. There are three distinct, separate Gods. Tritheism.

Today: **Mormonism (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)** teaches that God the Father (and a God-Mother) have themselves God Fathers and Mothers (ad infinitum in the past). All humans and angels are their offspring including God the Son and Satan—humans exist first as spirit children then are incarnated in bodies today. Through the LDS church humans may rise up to their deity.



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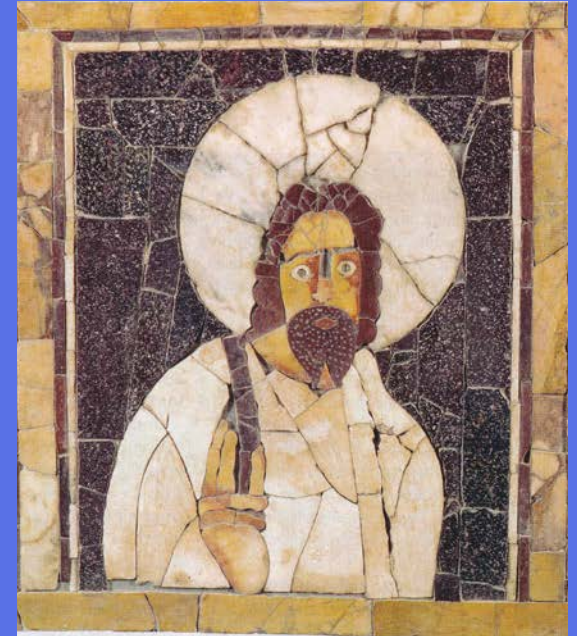
Joseph Smith (d. 1844),
17.2 million members

Deep Mormonism is not tritheistic,
Rather it is polytheistic.



B. Six Wrong Steps:

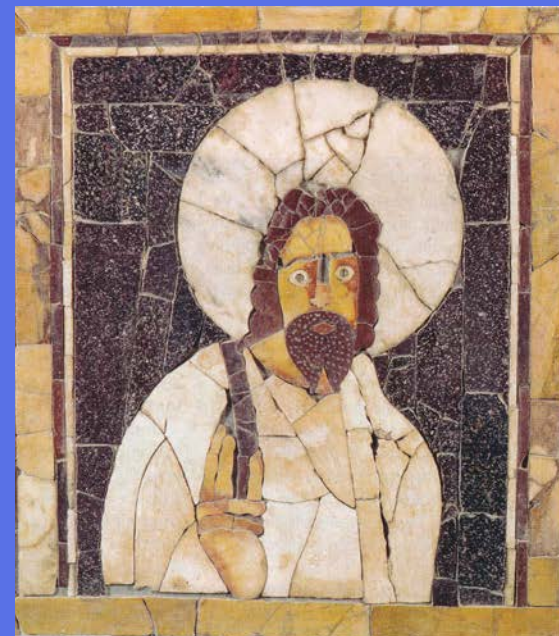
6. The Son is the first creation of God through whom all else is created. Thus the Son is like God, but not fully, eternally God; Jesus Christ may be adored but not worshipped. **Arianism**. This led to Nicaea.



4th-century stone inlay near Ostia, Italy, in Tony Burke, “‘Lost Gospels’—Lost No More,” *Biblical Archeology Review*, 9.14’2018

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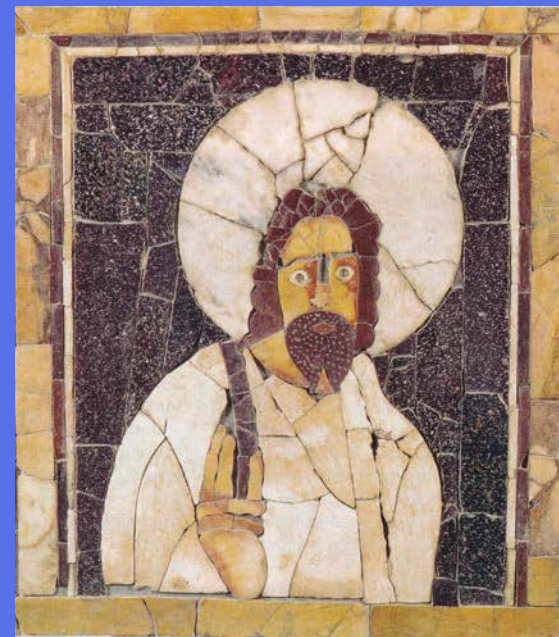


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It is curious that these last three recent movements (all since 1830)—Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Oneness Pentecostalism have spread to nearly every country of the world almost always among “Christian” people.

2 DOCETISM
Jesus Is Divine



4 MODALISM
1 Person, 3 Manifestations



Father Son Spirit

3 ADOPTIONISM
Man Made Lord/Christ



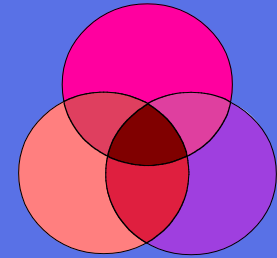
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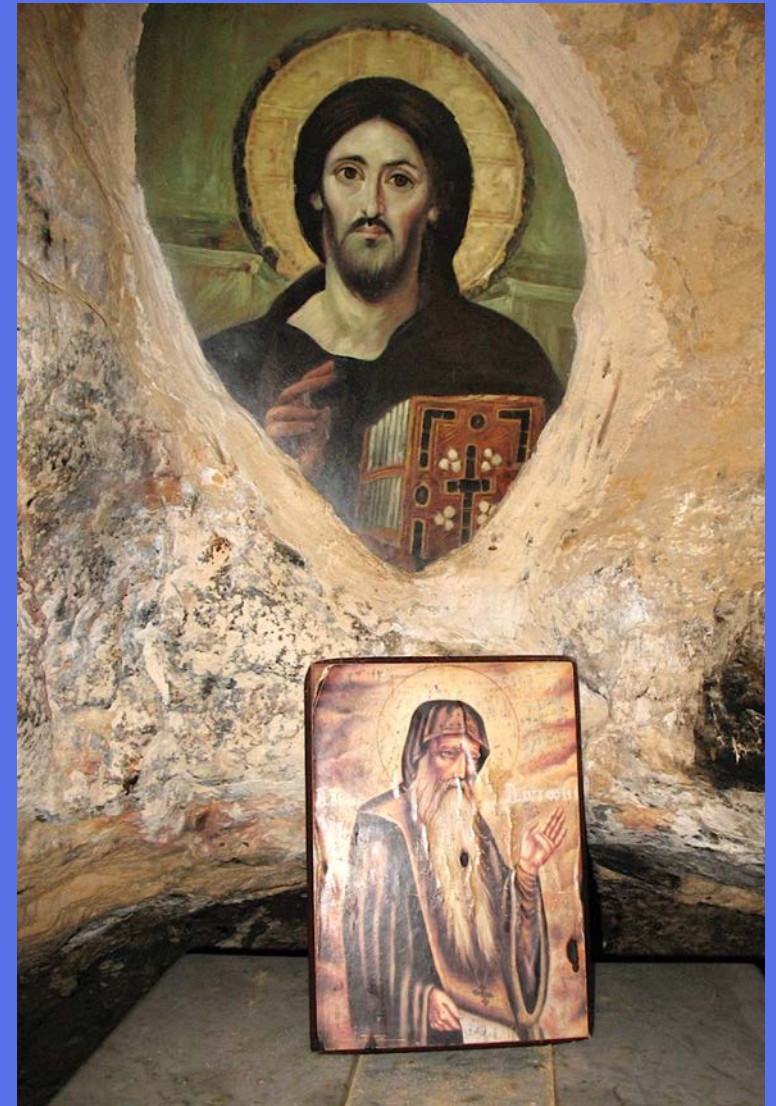
6 ARIANISM
The Son Is a God

“Literal” Interpretation of Bible

The Nicene fathers rejected spiritual-allegorical interpretations of Scripture and insisted on textual objectivity that approaches modern historical-grammatical hermeneutic.

The objective sense of Scripture divides truth from error, thus allowing the construction of biblical truth (“ortho-dox”).

Icon of Jesus Christ and depiction of St. Antony, impetus of worldwide monastic movement. Photo by author 2009 in cave of St. Antony near the Monastery of St. Antony in Egyptian desert.



The Nicene Creed (325/381)

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We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

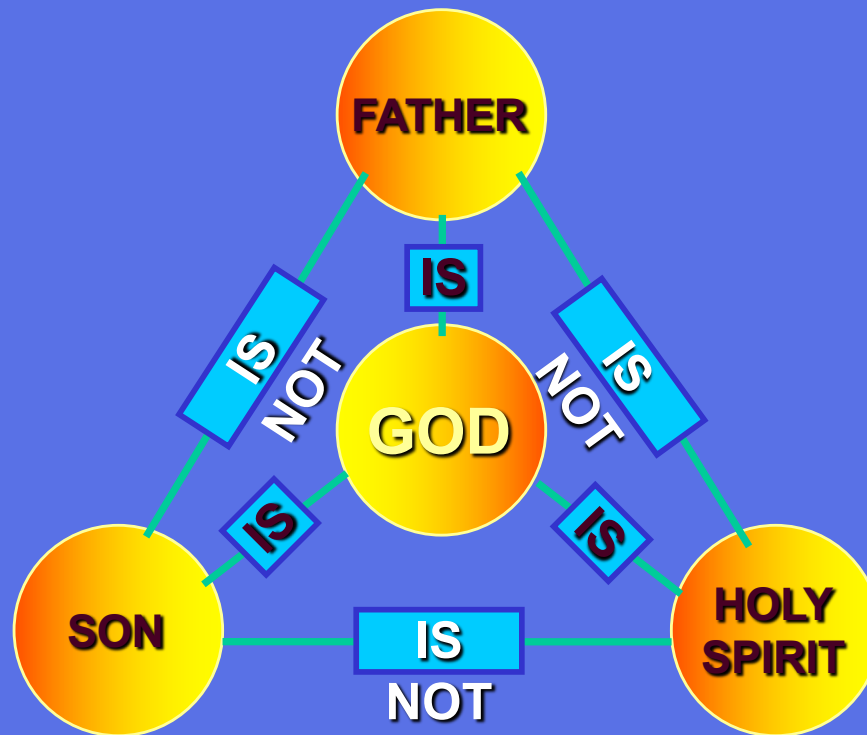
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

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We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

From the International Consultation on English Texts, the form adopted by the *Ancient Christian Doctrine* series, ed. Thomas Oden (IVP, 2009, 5 vols.



The Holy Trinity:

the one true God eternally exists as three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—one in nature, equal in glory, and distinct in relations.

THE HOLY TRINITY: REASON FOR OUR JOY



A. We Live in a Personal Universe.

1. Advances in Science: the edge of the universe 46.5 billion light years. Seems cold out there.

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A. We Live in a Personal Universe.

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2. Psalmist steps into natural world thick with presence of the LORD. Ps 149: "Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights above... Praise him, sun and moon; praise him all you shining stars...you great sea creatures and all ocean depths...wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds...Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his splendor is above the earth and the heavens."



A .We Live in a Personal Universe.

3. The Nicene Creed declares: “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God...Through him all things were made....We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.”

The natural world, nature itself, comes alive when we know and trust in the God of the Bible.



B. We Are Created in the Image of God.

1. Finite persons though we are, we are made in God's image, like God, for God. Ps 8:1,4 David. "LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name... What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" We are made like God and for God.

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2. We are persons because God is personal.

We think, because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit

We make real choices,

We have affections similar to the Father, Son, and Spirit

We desire relationships because God is relational.

Although fallen, we sense what is right and wrong

We are creative, we sense eternity

As each member of the Trinity indwells the other, so we
are made to be indwelled,

THE HOLY TRINITY: REASON FOR OUR JOY

C. Because God Is Trinity, Our Salvation Is Sure and Complete.

1. **Jesus paid it all.** “For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven...”



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3. **God himself makes a way.**
Luke 23: 35-43

What about you?



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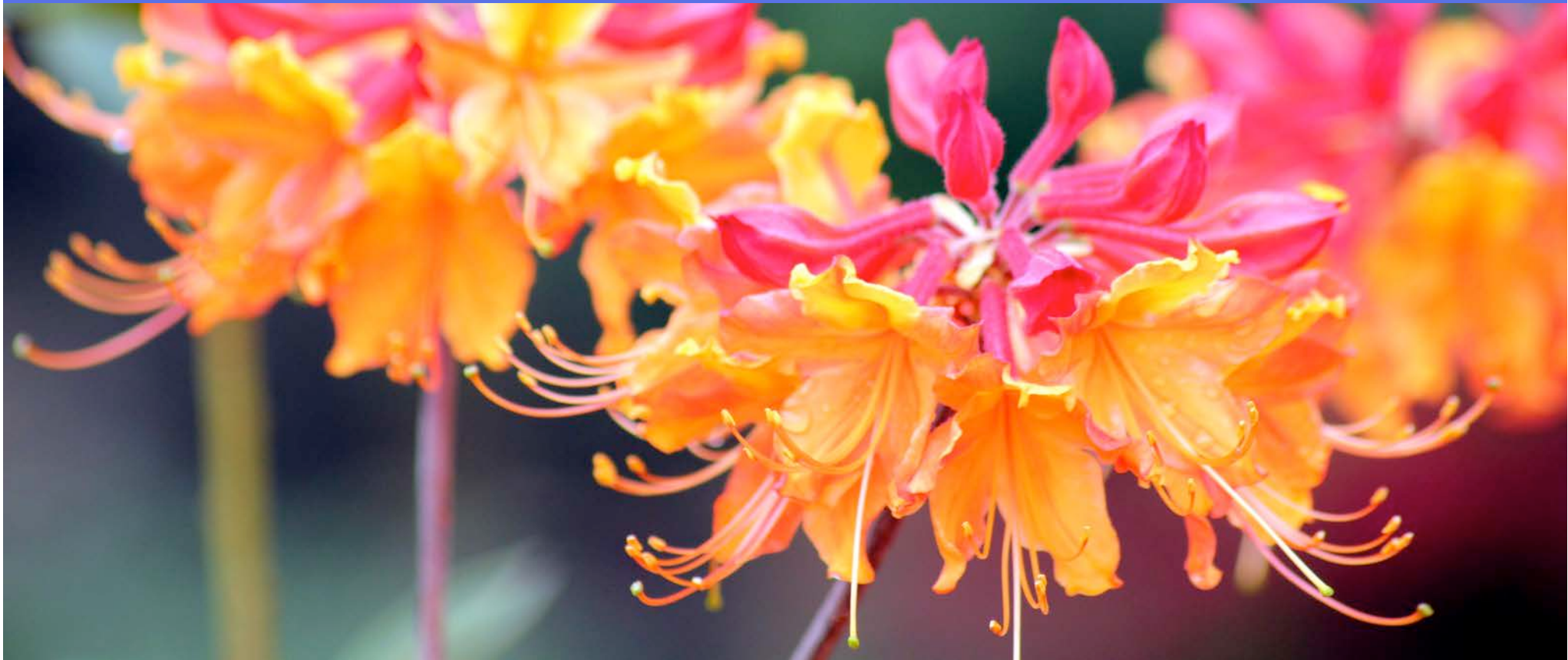
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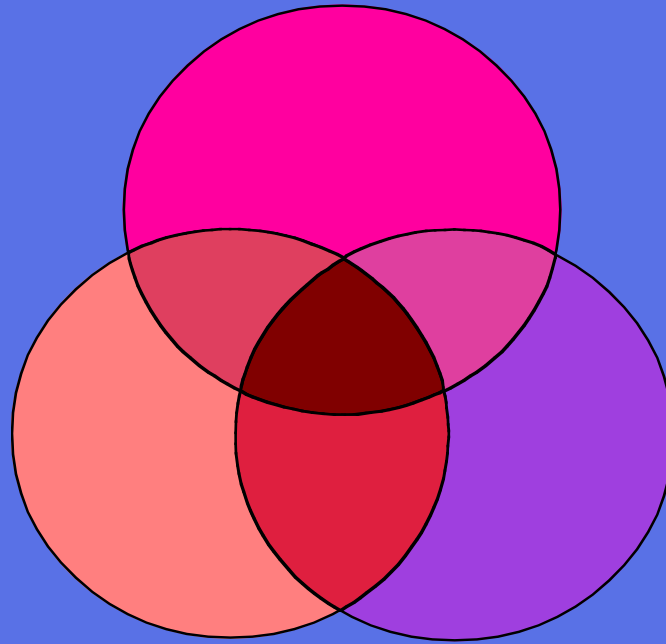
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“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, 9



We return to our basic definition:

The Holy Trinity: “the one true God eternally exists as three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one in nature, equal in glory, and distinct in relations.”