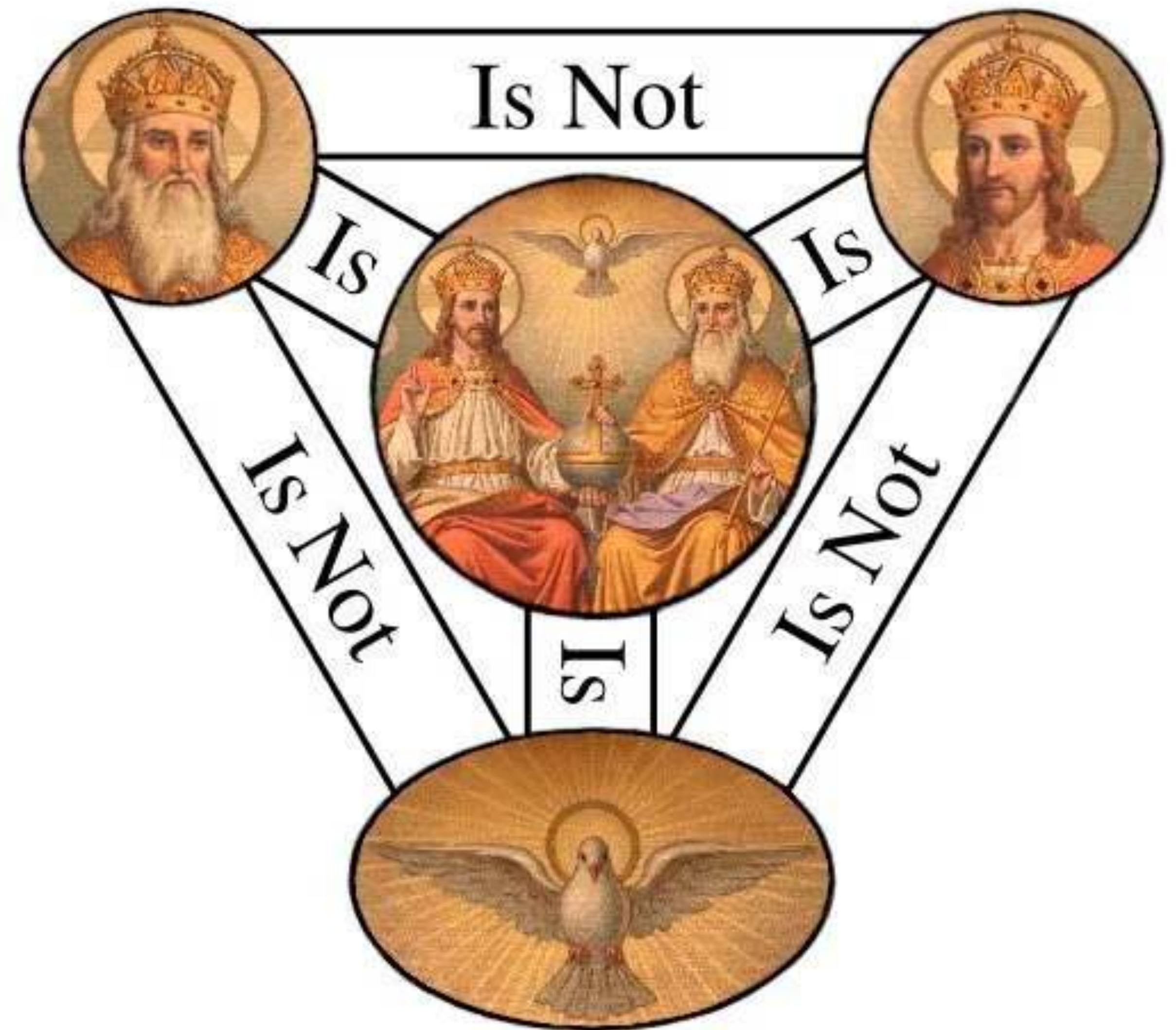


When Did the Trinity Start?

Victoria Christadelphians - September 27, 2026
<https://www.victoriabiblestudy.com/>

Agenda

- **Why is this topic so important?**
 - Defining the Trinity
 - Some key Bible references
- **When were the key milestones?**
 - Influences of Western philosophy and paganism
 - Politico-religious influences and maintenance
- **What is the Bible Truth?**



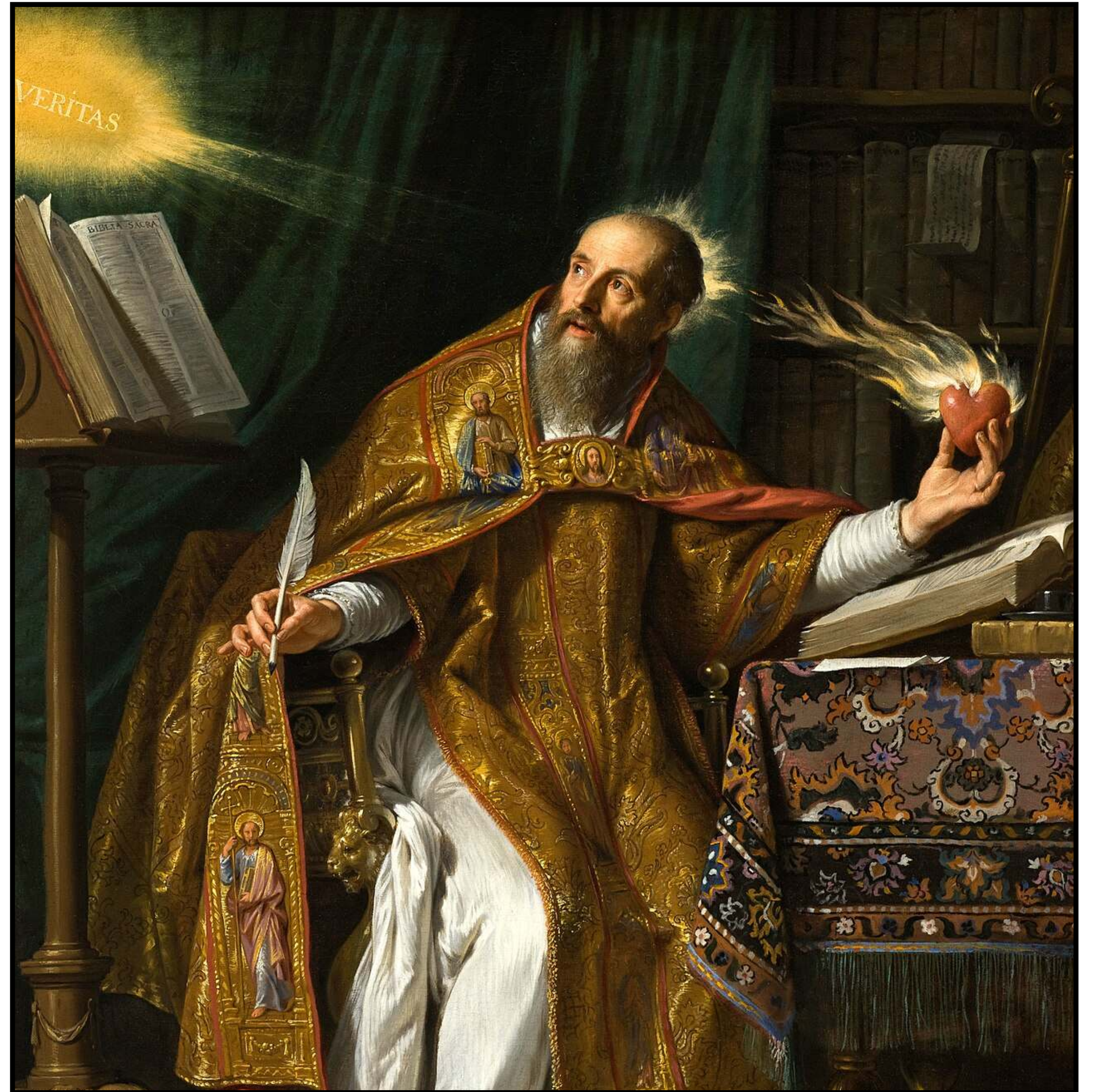
Source: <https://www.gods7000yearplan.com/trinity-is-church-doctrine>

Why Is This Important?

**“If you try to
understand the Trinity,
you will lose your mind;
if you deny it, you will
lose your soul.”**

**Maybe: Augustine of Hippo
(circa 354-430 AD)**

<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130101.htm>



“We cannot fully grasp the depth of mystery **that is the triune God, yet we should not be flippant with trinitarian doctrine either. It matters how we understand the roles of Father, Son, and Spirit in our redemption.”**

Coleman Ford

Source: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/trinitarianism-in-the-early-church/>

“The Vatican Council has explained the meaning to be attributed to the term **mystery in theology. It lays down that a mystery is a truth which we are not merely incapable of discovering apart from Divine Revelation, but which, even when revealed, remains “hidden by the veil of faith and enveloped, so to speak, by a kind of darkness” (Constitution, “De fide. cath.”, iv). In other words, our understanding of it remains only partial, even after we have accepted it as part of the Divine message.”**

The Catholic Encyclopedia
<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15047a.htm#V>

“It is evident [...] that the origin of the Trinitarian concept was not primarily developed by a single person, but was rather developed over centuries of theological reflection which present a clear picture of three uniquely individual yet inseparable persons.”

Mark Hansen

<https://www.mbu.edu/seminary/tracing-the-thread-of-trinitarian-thought-from-ignatius-to-origen/>

A fundamental question...

**“God is not a God of confusion but of peace”
(1 Corinthians 14:33)**

**“It is the glory of God to conceal things,
but the glory of kings is to search things out.”
(Proverbs 25:2)**

**“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book”
(Revelation 22:18-19)**

Define “the Trinity”

Defining the Trinity

Points to consider

- Not everyone agrees...
- Doctrinal domino effect
- Associated Catholic doctrines
 - Pre-existence of Christ
 - The Incarnation
- Affected concepts
 - Redemption
 - Forgiveness of Sins

Defining the Trinity

Simple Definition

God is **one** in substance, but **three** in person:
Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit.

Some Key Bible References

**“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”
(John 17:20-21)**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”
(John 1:1-3)

Establishing a Timeline

**“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”
(Acts 20:29-30)**

**“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”
(Galatians 1:6-7)**

“But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.”
(Revelation 2:14-16)

“For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone...”

(Galatians 1:11-16)

Triads: Platonism and Paganism

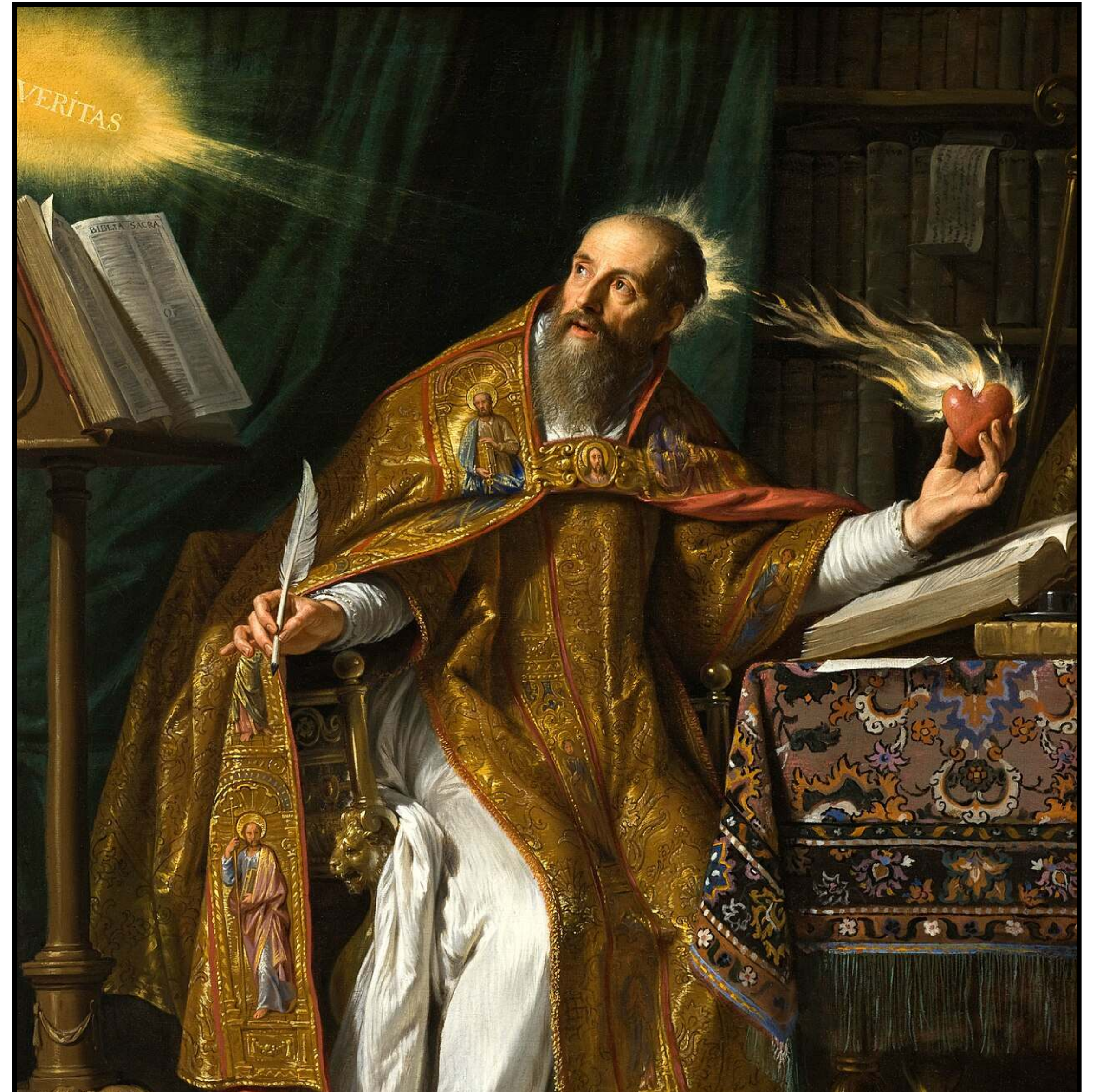
(Neo)Platonism

Plato - 428-347 BC

1. The One/Good
2. The Intellect
3. The Soul

One Essence - “ousia” / “homousious”

Three Instances - “hypostases”



“Ousia”

Strong’s Greek #3776. οὐσία **ousia**, oo-see’-ah; from the feminine of 5607; substance, i.e. property (possessions): — goods, substance.

“And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of **property** that is coming to me.’ And he divided his **property** between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.”

(Luke 15:12-13)

“Hypostasis”

Strong’s Greek #5287. ὑπόστασις **hupostasis**, hoop-os’-tas-is; from a compound of 5259 and 2476; a setting under (support), i.e. (figuratively) concretely, essence, or abstractly, assurance (objectively or subjectively): — confidence, confident, person, substance.

“He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact **imprint** of his **nature**, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,”

(Hebrews 1:3)

Strong’s Greek #5481. χαρακτήρ **charakter**, khar-ak-tare’; from the same as 5482; a graver (the tool or the person), i.e. (by implication) engraving (“character”), the figure stamped, i.e. an exact copy or (figuratively) representation): — express image.

Paganism

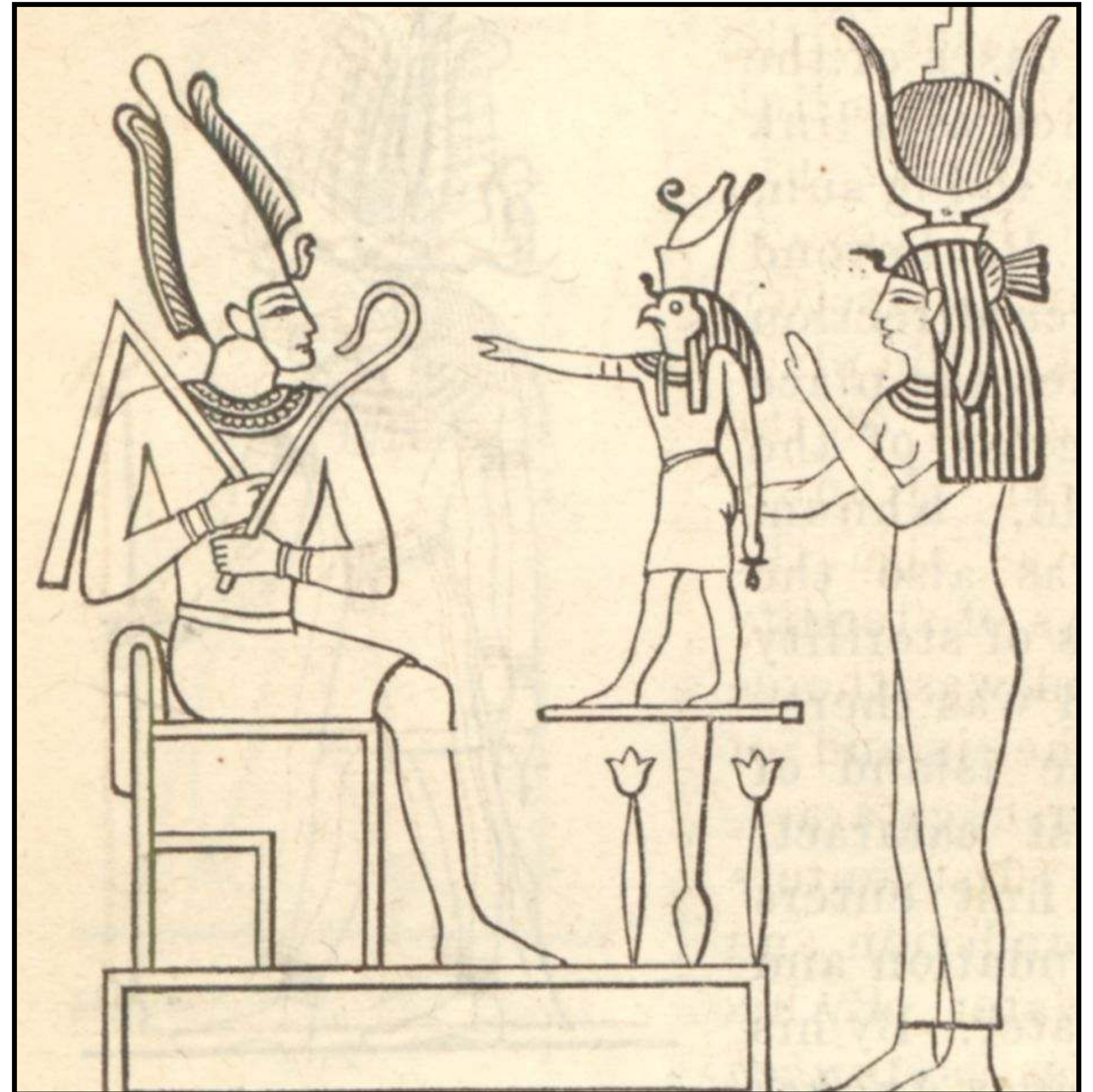
Ancient Egyptian Triad:

1. Osiris (god of the underworld)
2. Isis (his wife)
3. Horus (his son)

Idea:

“Son of a god” = “a god”

PHARAOH = GOD



Jewish Leaders Accuse Jesus...

... of making himself God

“The Jews answered [Jesus], “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

(John 10:33-36 ESV)

The Written Record

First error in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity:

- “Son of God” means or implies “is God”

Minimal surviving records in 100-200 AD from early Christian leaders

- Much of those preserved done to support Trinity theories

Catholic concept of “Apostolic Succession”

Apostles' Creed

Date and writer(s) unclear...

I believe in God the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son,
our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell; the third day
He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven, and sits at
the right hand of God the Father
almighty, from thence He shall come
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.
Amen.

Source: https://www.vaticannews.va/en/prayers/the-apostles_-creed.html

Early “Church fathers”

100-200's AD

Tertulian (155-220 AD) - “Against Praxeas”

“[...] All are of One, by unity (that is) of substance; while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded, which distributes the **Unity into a Trinity**, placing in their order the three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: three, however, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect; yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Source: <https://heidelblog.net/2024/12/tertullian-on-the-trinity/>

Early “Church fathers”

100-200's AD

Ignatius, Origen, Novatian etc.

- Most at least appeared to believe that Jesus was divine in some way
- Not a full Trinity doctrine as known today

Theodotus?

See: “**The History of Trinitarian Doctrines**” by Dr. Dale Tuggy in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy for more detail (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/trinity/trinity-history.html>)

Rise of “the Church”

“Ecclesia” driven underground

There has always been a strong and humble minority of believers that have held to the truth of the Bible throughout the ages.

Politicization of Christianity:

- 100-200's AD - Roman persecution of Christians
- 313 AD - **The Edict of Milan**; Constantine ended Christian persecution
- 380 AD - **The Edict of Thessalonica**; Theodosius 1 makes “Nicene Christianity” state religion

The Alexandrian/Arian Debate

“Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

(2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

Arius: Jesus is divine, but not co-eternal with the Father (i.e., separate nature; created)

Alexander: Jesus is co-eternal with the Father (i.e., one in nature; always existed)

Council of Nicaea

325 AD

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

Britannica Editors. "Nicene Creed". Encyclopedia Britannica, 2 Jul. 2026,
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nicene-Creed>. Accessed 18 September 2026.



33The Council of Nicaea, with Arius depicted as defeated by the council, written by
Michael Damaskinos, 1591. Source: C messier, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The Council of Constantinople

381 AD - Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed

*“And in the **Holy Ghost**, the Lord and Giver of life, **who proceedeth from the Father and the Son**, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.”*

The doctrine is largely enshrined, but...

The “**Filioque**” - cause of the Great Schism of 1054 AD

- Western and Eastern Church separate

Further councils and creeds...

Council of Ephesus (431 AD)

- Creeds re-affirmed, but...
- **Debate:** What to call Mary - Christ-bearer or God-bearer?

Council of Chalcedon (451AD)

- Creeds re-affirmed, but...
- **Debate:** How can Jesus be both fully God and fully human? 2 natures?

Athanasian Creed (date unclear)

- Further reading: <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/athanasian-creed>

After the Fall of the Roman Empire

Fall of the Empire (476 AD)

- The debates largely cease; doctrine “universally” accepted
- Deeper theorization about how the Trinity “works” continues

The Dark Ages (~1000 years)

- Catholic church clergy and theologians mediate and preserve the doctrine
- e.g., Augustine of Hippo (364-430 AD); Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD)

The Enlightenment and Protestant Reformation (1500's AD)

- e.g., Martin Luther (1483-1546 AD), William Tyndale (1494-1536 AD)

What Does the Bible Say?

**“[...] “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”
(Romans 10:8-10)**

“And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.””

(Matthew 12:49-50)

**“[...] God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”
(Acts 10:38)**

“For there is one God, and there is **one mediator between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**,”
(1 Timothy 2:5)**

“But we see him who for a little while was *made lower than the angels*, namely Jesus, *crowned with glory and honor* because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he, for whom and *by whom all things exist*, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. *For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source*. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,”
(Hebrews 2:9-11)

What do we believe about Jesus?

Jesus is:

1. Is the promised Messiah, the Son of God
2. Was fully human, had human nature, yet never sinned
3. Manifested his Father's character perfectly; was "one" with Him in purpose and character
4. Was anointed by God with power to fulfil his role as Messiah and represent God
5. Rose from the dead the 3rd day, was exalted to heaven and will come again
6. Is the only one who can mediate between God and man
7. Forgives those who repent, are baptized into his name and continually follow him

***The spiritual family of God - The New Creation!**

Jesus' return is imminent!

We would love to talk with you more about it

[**https://talks.victoriabiblestudy.com/category/publictalks/**](https://talks.victoriabiblestudy.com/category/publictalks/)