



GLOBAL IMPACT MINISTRIES

A Defense of the Apostolic
Christian Faith

The Original Nicene Creed Is Not Trinitarian



The historical evidence informs us that Oneness believers (Modalistic Monarchians) allied together with the Semi-Trinitarians to formulate the early 325 Nicene Creed in order to counter the Arian threat which denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. This explains why the Modalists and the Semi-Trinitarians were able to sign the early Nicene Creed while the Arians could not. If the Semi-Trinitarians of the early fourth century were true Trinitarians then they would not have formulated a Creed which supports Oneness Modalism. Therefore the Semi-Trinitarians who allied themselves with the Modalists against Arianism to formulate the 325 Nicene Creed could not have been true Trinitarians.

Athanasius, Alexander of Alexandria, and other Semi-Trinitarians of the early fourth-century were not true Trinitarians as the Trinitarian doctrine was not yet fully developed. Any casual reader will notice that the early Nicene Creed does not use the words, "Trinity," or "Three Persons," nor does it clearly spell out the Trinitarian doctrine like other Creeds which came later. Therefore the early fourth-century Nicene Creed was not a true Trinitarian Creed as it was a compromised Creed that strongly favored Oneness Modalistic Monarchianism ("Sabellianism").

Church historian Jaroslav Pelikan wrote that Marcellus of Ancyra "proved an embarrassment to Nicene Orthodoxy" because he and other "Sabellian" Monarchians were among "the signers in 325 (*The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, Vol. 1, Pg. 207*)." If the early Nicene Creed was a fully developed Trinitarian Creed then why were the Modalistic Monarchians among "the signers in 325?" Thus it is obvious that the original Nicene Creed of 325 was vague enough so that both the Semi-Trinitarians and the Oneness Modalists were able to sign the same Creed.

Under "Monarchianism", the New Advent Encyclopedia says, "In the fourth century the Arians and Semi-Arians professed to be much afraid of it (*Modalistic Monarchian theology*), and indeed the alliance of Pope Julius and Athanasius with Marcellus (*the chief speaker for the Modalists*) gave some colour to accusations against the Nicene formulas as opening the way to Sabellianism." - *Italicized comments in parenthesis added* -

How could the ancient Nicene formula be said to be "opening the way to Sabellianism" if the Nicene Creed of 325 was a true Trinitarian Creed? The Arians and Semi-Arians were afraid of Oneness Modalistic Monarchianism because there were many Modalistic bishops throughout the Empire who allied together with the Semi-Trinitarian bishops to overcome the Arians and Semi-Arians at Nicaea. Therefore the alliance of the Athanasian camp with the Marcellan camp helped stop Arianism from winning acceptance by the Roman Emperor Constantine at Nicaea.

Church historian B. B. Edwards wrote, "**Athanasius (a Semi-Trinitarian) and Marcellus (a Modalist), bishop of Ancyra, appear to have been the two principal speakers in behalf of the orthodox party, and to have been the agents on whom most of the doings of the Council depended**" (*THE BIBLICAL REPOSITORY AND QUARTERLY OBSERVER, By B. B. EDWARDS, VOLUME FIFTH—Nos. XVII, XVIII. ANDOVER: GOULD AND NEWMAN, PUBLISHERS AND PRINTERS. BOSTON: PERKINS, MARTIN AND Co. 1835. Under Remarks on Niceae, Page 291*).

Here we have the evidence to prove that both the Semi-Trinitarians and the Oneness Modalists worked together against Arianism to develop the original Nicene Creed of 325 AD. Since the early Christian writers acknowledged that Marcellus of Ancyra was a Modalist, we know that Oneness Modalism had a definite influence upon the original formulation of the early Nicene Creed. When we consider the fact Athanasius and Marcellus chose to use the word "homousian" [of the same substance] which was a term reported to be originally put forth by Sabellius, we can clearly see the Oneness or Sabellian influence upon the original wording used in the Nicene Creed of 325 AD.

In the "Select Treatises of St. Athanasius - In Controversy With the Arians," we have the historical evidence to prove that Athanasius actually used some words that were originally put forth by Sabellius to formulate the original Nicene Creed.

"It has been noted that **the Greek term "homousian" or "con-substantial", which Athanasius of Alexandria favored, was actually a term reported to be put forth by Sabellius...**" (*Select Treatises of St. Athanasius - In Controversy With the Arians - Freely Translated by John Henry Cardinal Newman - Longmans, Green, and Co., 1911, footnote, page 124*)

Sabellius was reported to have used some of the same exact wording that was later used in the Nicene Creed such as the words, "Light of Light" and "being of one substance ("con-substantial") with the Father."

Dr. Thomas Browning wrote, "Sabellius could say Jesus was 'Light of Lights' and even 'homousian'. Jesus was 'Light of Lights' in that He was LIKE A RAY OF THE SUN, He emanated from the Father. He was 'homousian' in that he was of the same substance as the Father." (*The History of the Doctrine of Justification, Chapter one "The Person of Christ" Post Tenebras Lux, Page 5 © 2010 Thomas R. Browning*)

THE ORIGINAL NICENE CREED HARMONIZES WITH ONENESS THEOLOGY

The original Nicene Creed can be affirmed by Oneness Pentecostals as the creed was vague and could be interpreted in favor of Oneness theology. The only group that could not have affirmed the early Nicene Creed was the Arians.

The Nicene Creed opens with the words,

"We believe in one God the Father All-sovereign, maker of all things."

Oneness Pentecostals affirm the opening words of the Nicene Creed because we believe that God the Father alone created "all things" "by the works" of His "hands" and that the Son as the Son did not create anything as the Son.

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father,"

Oneness Pentecostals can also agree because we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who was the Father's "only begotten Son" (lit. "only born Son") by being "made" (Heb. 2:17-"made like unto his brethren"), "reproduced", or "copied" (charakter-Heb.1:3 "the reproduction" of His Person") from the "substance" of the Father's own Being to form a human being when the Holy Spirit of the Father came down from heaven upon the virgin. Hence the Son is the one who was born from the Father's "substance of Being" (Heb. 1:3 "hypostasis") as "the image of the invisible" Father made flesh as a visible human Son via incarnation through the virgin.

Trinitarian Church historian B. B. Edwards remarked, "By reverting to the Nicene Creed, as exhibited above, the careful reader will perceive that the doctrine of the Trinity is not developed in such a manner as to satisfy the demands of the rule which Dr. Schleiermacher lays down as required by the pious feelings of Christians or the demands made by strict principles respecting the doctrine of the Trinity such as are now more generally held." (*THE BIBLICAL REPOSITORY AND QUARTERLY OBSERVER*, By B. B. EDWARDS" Under Remarks on the Nicene Creed, *The Biblical Repository and Classical Review*, American Biblical Repository, Page 292)

B. B. Edwards further noted: "It lies, moreover, on the very face of the Nicene Creed, that it acknowledges the Father only as the Monad of the Godhead: "We believe in One God the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God the only begotten of the Father, etc." Jesus Christ as here presented to us is not the one God, but the one Lord who was begotten of the substance of the one God or the Father, etc. The Father then, as presented in this Creed (Nicene), is not merely a distinct person, i.e. not merely one of the three persons, and on an equality with the other two; but he is the original, independent, self-existent monad." (*THE BIBLICAL REPOSITORY AND QUARTERLY OBSERVER*, By B. B. EDWARDS" Under Remarks on the Nicene Creed, *The Biblical Repository and Classical Review*, American Biblical Repository, Page 295)

According to the early Nicene Creed, the only true God is the Father who created the heavens and the earth, and that the Son of God was the "only begotten" out "of the substance of the one God or the Father." Hence, God the Father alone "is the original, independent, self-existent monad" rather than two other alleged coequal divine persons of a Trinity. Therefore the original Nicene Creed was not a definitive Trinitarian Creed at all as it actually supports Oneness Modalism's belief that the Son is the Father's substance of Being who later became a human being as the child born and Son given (Isaiah 9:6).

"God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God,"

Sabellius was reported to have used some of the exact wording in the Nicene Creed such as the words, "Light of Light" and "being of one substance with the Father."

Dr. Thomas Browning, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, stated that the modalistic monarchian theology of Sabellius was influential in the Nicene Creed itself.

"But the man most representative of modalistic monarchianism was a man named Sabellius (222 AD). Sabellius was much more sophisticated than Noetus ... Sabellius tried to solve the problem by using the illustration of the sun and its rays. The Father was the sun. Jesus is considered to be a dominate ray. He was projected for a while and then withdrawn back into the substance of the Father ... Sabellius could say Jesus was 'Light of Lights' and even 'homousian' Jesus was 'Light of Lights' in that He was LIKE A RAY OF THE SUN. He emanated from the Father. He was 'homousian' in that he was of the same substance as the Father." (*The History of the Doctrine of Justification, Chapter one "The Person of Christ" Post Tenebras Lux, Page 5 © 2010 Thomas R. Browning*)

The words "God of God" are very similar to the words "Yahweh ... from Yahweh" in Genesis 19:24. "Then the LORD [YHWH] rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD [YHWH] out of heaven (Genesis 19:24)..."

Just as inspired scripture says that "Yawe h (God) rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh (God) out of heaven", so God's Spirit can act on earth from God's Spirit from heaven. Hence, there is not much of a difference between "Yahweh" God "from Yahweh" God and "God of God" in the early Nicene Creed. With a correct understanding of God's omnipresence, Modalists could have agreed. The One true God the Father entered into a new existence by becoming a man. He was born as a human being so he can also be called "God of (from) God, Light of light, true God of true God." Oneness Modalists could have agreed with these words by affirming that the man Christ Jesus is also called God (but not as two coequal God Persons). For the One true God the Father who also became one true man is also called that selfsame God because the Son is the "radiance" and "glory" of the Father's Substance of Being reproduced as a human being (Heb. 1:3; Heb. 2:17; Matthew 1:20; Acts 2:36). As long as we are not talking about two coequal and co-eternal God Persons Oneness Pentecostals could agree!

"begotten not made, of one substance with the Father,"

Even Trinitarian scholars agree that the human nature, body, and spirit of the Son of God was made by his virgin conception and birth because God never had a human nature, a human body, or a human spirit before the incarnation. However, both Oneness and Trinitarian theologians agree that Christ's true divinity could never have been made. Hence, He who became the Son was "begotten" (lit. "born") but not made because He who became incarnate has always been the un-begotten God with no beginning in time. Therefore the words, "begotten (born) not made" could be interpreted in favor of both Oneness and Trinitarian theologies. The Son was "made" by being conceived and born of a woman but He who became that child born and son given is the uncreated God Himself with us as a man. Hence, the true identity of He who was begotten could never have been made. Therefore, the words, "begotten not made, of one substance with the Father" could have easily been interpreted in favor of Oneness Modalism as well as Trinitarianism.

"through whom all things were made, things in heaven and things on the earth;"

Oneness author David Bernard wrote, "God by his omniscience knew that man would sin, and he also knew that through the Son man could be saved and fulfill His original purpose. In his book *Is God a trinity*, John Miller states: 'Though He did not pick up His humanity till the fullness of time, yet He used it, and acted upon it, from all eternity.'" (*David Bernard, <https://www.scribd.com/document/115709710/Theology-The-Oneness-of-God>*)

1 Peter 1:20 states that the Son of God was, "Foreknown before the creation of the world, but was manifest in these last days" in order to save us. Hence, God the Father created all things through the Son in the sense of the Father using His foreknown Son and acting upon His foreknown Son to create all things "in him", "through him", and "for him (Colossians 1:16)." For the scriptures prove that all things were created through the impersonal word (logos) of God (Psalm 33:6 "By the word of Yahweh were the heavens made, and all the host of them BY THE BREATH OF HIS MOUTH" / John 1:2-3) which later became the man Christ Jesus. Since the Son already pre-existed his birth as the expressed "thought," wisdom," and "mind" of God (an aspect of God the Father Himself) which was impersonal before that word (logos) later became flesh as a human person (Romans 4:17), all of creation was predicated upon the Son's future beginning by his virgin begetting. Thus Oneness Pentecostals can affirm that "in him", "through" him", and "for him", "all things were made."

"who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and became man, suffered, and rose on the third day, ascended into the heavens, and is coming to judge living and dead."

Since Jesus Christ is the same Divine Person or Substance of Being of the only true God the Father's Spirit, Oneness Pentecostals have no problem understanding that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Divine Holy Spirit who came down from heaven to become the Christ child ("the Lord is the Spirit" – 2 Cor. 3:17). For since the true identity of Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit of the Father who became a man, Jesus is the same divine identity as the Spirit of God the Father who "came down from heaven" (John 6:38; Luke 1:35) and was "made flesh" (John 1:14) as a true man (a human son – Heb. 2:17).

"And in the Holy Spirit."

Notice that nothing is said of the Holy Spirit as a third God Person of a three person deity. Since Oneness Pentecostals believe in the Holy Spirit as the manifestation of the only true God the Father, we believe in the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of our Heavenly Father acting and coming down from heaven to manifest His presence and power to His creation.

Anathematizing Portion of Nicene Creed

"And those that say 'There was when he was not,' and, 'Before he was begotten he was not,'"

Oneness believers definitely affirm that the God who became incarnate as a child born and son given pre-existed his virgin conception and birth. Thus we can affirm the anathematization that it is false doctrine to say that "Before he was begotten he was not." However, if we are solely addressing the human Son of God and Son of Man (the human Son had a beginning) we would strongly disagree with the above anathematizing statement which says, "And those that say, 'There was when he was not.'" For if we are addressing the divinity of the One who became that child born and son given, then we can agree that the un-begotten God has always existed because there was never a time when the One true God "WAS NOT" before He also became a human Son within the virgin. Yet Oneness believers affirm that the human aspect of the Son's existence as a Son was not an eternal or timeless existence. Thus, Oneness Pentecostals can properly interpret and agree with the anathematization portion of the Nicene Creed as long as we are addressing the divinity of Jesus Christ which has always remained "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). For the human aspect of the Son's existence as a man had a beginning in time, but the divine aspect of his existence could never have had a beginning in time.

"and that, 'He came into being from what-is-not,'"

Oneness theologians affirm that the Son of God came into Being from the Father's "Substance of Being" (Heb. 1:3) reproduced as a true human being. Hence, the Son of God could not have "come into being from what is not." Jesus was born of the virgin ("begotten") from the Substance of Being of the Father's Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:20; Heb. 1:3) who came down from heaven. Therefore Jesus pre-existed his virgin conception as the eternal Spirit of God before His birth ("not made").

"or those that allege, that the son of God is 'Of another substance or essence'"

The ancient Modalists affirmed that the Son was conceived from "the Substance of Being" of God the Father Himself while the Semi-Arians and Semi-Trinitarians were affirming that the Son was "a different" or "a similar substance" from God the Father long before the Council of Nicaea convened in 325. Hence, Modalistic Monarchian theology has always affirmed that Jesus is not of another divine substance or essence distinct from the Father because His deity is of the same substance as the Father (Heb. 1:3) - God with us as a man.

"or 'created,' or 'changeable' or 'alterable,'"

Just as Trinitarian scholars admit that the new human existence of the Son was created by his virgin conception (his human flesh, human spirit, and human nature had to have been created), but He who became that human child born and son given remained the uncreated and unchangeable omnipresent Spirit of God who continued to fill the heavens and the earth while the Son simultaneously existed as a man on the earth. Thus the essence of the divine being of the only true God the Father remained unchangeable as the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God while His own holy arm was revealed as the man Christ Jesus (Isaiah 53:1; 59:16; 52:10). Since the true identity of the Son is the Mighty God and Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6), Oneness Pentecostals can agree that the God who became the Son was never created.

"these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes."

Ignatius of Antioch wrote in about A.D. 107, "Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be; as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church (lit. "the Universal Church")." Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans, chapter 8, J.R. Willis translation

The word "Catholic" simply means "Universal." Ignatius of Antioch first used the words "universal church" so we have no problem with the words "universal" or "catholic" within the context of the earliest Christian writings.

Like Trinitarians, Oneness Pentecostals reject all who disbelieve in the full deity of Jesus Christ because we believe that Jesus Christ is the only true God Himself who also became a man. Hence, the Modalistic Monarchian Bishops of the early fourth century would not have been persecuted or banished by the original Nicene Creed of 325 AD while the Arians would have been persecuted and banished by this Creed.

Oneness Pentecostals cannot agree with the revised Constantinopolitan Creed (381) because of the added words about worshipping the Holy Spirit as a distinct entity. Oneness believers can never agree with the revised Constantinopolitan Creed which added words to the original Nicene Creed.

"And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeded from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church;"

ONENESS PENTECOSTALS REJECT THE REVISED CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED of 381 A.D. because the scriptures do not support worshipping the Holy Spirit as a separate entity. We worship the only true God the Father in Spirit and in truth. When we worship Jesus, we are worshipping the full incarnation of that only true God the Father. The Holy Spirit is none other than the omnipresent Spirit of the only true God the Father, a manifestation of the true God Himself.

"we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

Most Protestants, Baptists, and Evangelicals cannot subscribe to the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 because they do not believe that baptism is "for the remission of sins." Thus the Creed that they profess to believe in actually anathematizes them with a curse. For the vast majority of Evangelicals do not know that all of the earliest Christians unanimously believed that water baptism was for the remission of sins and that it was necessary for salvation. Therefore Oneness Pentecostals have their roots in ancient historical Christianity while Evangelicals have their theological roots from the later Roman Catholic Trinitarian theology; but their belief that water baptism is not necessary for salvation came from the later Protestant reformation rather than from ancient historical Christianity both before and after the Council of Nicaea.

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