

in this country, but they have numbered amongst them men of intellect and power. And their faith is supposed to be the result of close reasoning.

The name they bear reveals to us something of their doctrine. They maintain that God exists in One Person only. They insist upon the Unity of the Godhead as opposed to the Trinity. The one God, however, is not with them banished to a remote corner of His Creation. He is the great All-Father who loves and compassionates His children. He is able and willing to help them.

Unitarianism is an attempt to escape from the mystery of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. But it is not the first attempt. So early as A.D. 200 Praxeas was perplexed by the same doctrine. He tried to get out of the difficulty that it presents, by merging the Three Persons of the Godhead into One Person. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were but different names for the same Divine Person, who acted in different ways—sometimes as Father, sometimes as Son, sometimes as Spirit. So that it was even taught by the followers of Praxeas that the Father became Man, was born, and suffered. And on account of this they were called by their opponents Patristians. Praxeas was followed about the middle of the third century by Sabellius, whose teaching was of a similar kind.

But the real ancestors of the Unitarians were the Arians, who tried to solve the difficulty in another way. Arianism made God the Father supreme at the expense of the two other Persons of the Holy Trinity. There was a period, they said, when the Son of God had no existence. He was created by the Father before all worlds indeed, but still created. He was specially enlightened by the Father, and in a lesser sense might be called God, for by His agency God made the world. In the fourth century Christendom was torn asunder by the dispute between the followers of Arius and the champions of the true Godhead of our Lord. A great council of the whole Church was held at Nicæa in the year 325.

Athanasius and the orthodox bishops on the one side, Arius and his followers on the other. There is a Latin proverb which says, 'Truth is great, and will finally prevail.' And so it came to pass that Arianism, casting as it did dishonour upon our Lord, was by the whole Christian world condemned, and the truth was vindicated.

The fruits of this council are gathered up for all time in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, which assert that Jesus Christ Himself is very God of very God, Begotten, not made; that He is equal to the Father as touching His Godhead; and that the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one; the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.

The decision of the Nicene Council was not given without much prayer and much searching of the Holy Scriptures. And we must believe that it was dictated by the Holy Spirit Who was expressly sent to guide the Church into all truth. There would be much weighing of our Lord's own words, such as: 'I and the Father are (essentially) One.' 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' Or again of the statement of the beloved Apostle that 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Then, too, the Baptismal formula would be carefully considered in which Christ bade His disciples baptise all the nations into the one Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Yet the Nicene Fathers recollected that the distinction between the Three Persons is as clearly revealed as their essential Unity. Thus our Lord says to His disciples on the evening before the crucifixion: 'I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth.' Here, we observe, the Son prays; the Father hears and gives; the Holy Ghost comes.

It might have been supposed that the putting forth of these Creeds, drawn as they are carefully from Scripture, and bearing upon them the sanction and approval of the whole Christian world, would have settled these questions once for all.