II. Taking a Hard Look at the Doctrine

    A. The cause of discussion in the early church:

        1. Polytheism, paganism, and spiritual ideals

        2. Monarchianism:

        In an attempt to make certain no one thought Christians were polytheists or tritheists, certain teachers propounded that God was one and that he manifested himself in different ways to reach our level. "Monarchianism" means God was the monarch..a single entity. Jesus was really God in a disguised form as was later the Holy Spirit. When Jesus spoke to the Father (as in John 17) he was really talking to himself so that we would later talk to Him thinking he was the Father. It is not quite that simple and yet that is just about the way it was. There were, of course, several different schools of monarchian thought. But all denied the essential individuality and deity of the man Christ Jesus. To admit it, they thought, would make them polytheists as noted above. Many Christians in trying to define the trinity fall into this error...and survive by the grace of God.

        3. After much discussion, debate, etc., the matter was settled in the Christian community at the council of Nicea in 325...although it took about fifty years to work things our more completely. The definition was spelled out in the Nicene Creed..a doctrinal statement recognized in Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox circles since. It says in a nutshell that Jesus was very God of very God, not made, eternally existent with the Father. Since Nicea anyone denying the essential deity of Jesus has been reckoned as outside the bounds of orthodoxy.

    B. The Biblical representation:

    But our study is not one in what the church defined or taught as good or inferior as it may have been. Our concern is with the literature from which the church analyzed the teaching: the Bible. In orthodox Christianity it is the only infallible rule of faith and practice and while much of the church has wandered from this today it is still the concept of evangelical Christianity and remains a spoken piece of most of the great creeds of the church.

        1. The earliest representations of the deity are pluralized.

            a. The Name of God.."Elohim" Genesis 1:1

            This does not "prove" a trinity concept but it shows the greatness of the person of God. In Hebrew it is usually regarded as a speech device known as a "majestic plural".. the idea being that the entity described is too large to be thought of in the singular! (If you cannot comprehend that, there is a club specially made for us.) This concept of plurality continues in Genesis 1:26, et al, although God also speaks of Himself in the singular in Genesis 1:29, etc. But what cannot be missed is the complex nature of the Divine Person.