

- d. Gregory of Nazianzus
Five Theological Orations
- e. Origen
De Principiis I.1.1

And there are lots of others...it is just a matter of time and space. But you can see the early church was picking its way out of the mass or philosophical error to express correctly the convictions it had gained from the Scripture about its God.

3. Summary

In the development of the doctrine of God we may note the following things from the teaching of the early church and have a sense of adequacy in them.

a. Respecting God

What was necessary was a common faith in the God of the Bible as Father, Creator, King. He was comprehended as being absolute, self-existent, unchangeable, eternal, etc. He is the author of the Law and the Gospel. He is personal and emotive and vitally concerned with our lot.

b. Respecting the Godhead

The polemicists saw the single essence existing in three persons (subsisting may be the better word.) Whether this was fully comprehended or not is uncertain. Tertullian coined the term "trinity" and, although he seems to have had a less accurate view of the Spirit than we would like, recognizes all three persons as worthy of worship. This is still a very difficult point to make in an understandable way and you can see how the Apostles' Creed, etc., works with it to get it precise and yet meaningful.

c. Respecting the attributes of Deity

Descriptions of the attributes and personality of God are slight. The apologists in particular were busy in showing what God was not (to keep our God distinct from the Gnostics). The later discussion of attributes communicable and non-communicable was not yet a vogue.

d. Respecting Christ

Christ was seen as the incarnate God...the Logos, with a distinct personality. Some of the formulations are not sharp and the Lord is equated (after the manner of rabbinic exegesis) with the personification of Proverbs 8 (wisdom), etc., and then seen as the "eternal reason" before the incarnation. But His Person as eternally existing is very clear. There is enough ambiguity on this to allow considerable confusion very soon thereafter and the position of many of the fathers is hard to approximate. There is no confusing Irenaeus, however, in the Third Fragment attached to his name: