

MEDITATION

Finding the right words can make the difference

It is amazing how much can be said in just a handful of words. This is true especially in matters of faith, and one of the most interesting topics where words are important is in the discussion of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is the belief that God is One but also known to us in three Persons, including the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.

Though this doctrinal notion is not presented in the Bible in its complete form, it is implied by the way the Bible talks about the three Persons of the Trinity. Yet, the fact is that early Christians often struggled to find the words to express this belief.

In the fourth century A.D., for example, a man named Arius, who lived in Alexandria, began to spread a viewpoint that suggested that Jesus was the Son of God, but couldn't actually be co-eternal with the Father and must thus be regarded as external

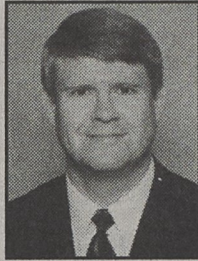
to the divine essence and only a creature. Simply put, then, Arius held that Jesus Christ was not truly God. The position that Arius embraced was known as "Arianism," and it was a position that many early Christians strongly opposed.

Another interesting figure in early Church history was a man named Apollinaris, who was the bishop of Laodicea in Syria. Apollinaris wrote against Arianism and zealously wished to maintain what he thought of as the "true error" of denying Christ's full humanity, so he declared that Christ had a human body but did not possess a human spirit. The result of this attempt

to oppose Arius, unfortunately, actually resulted in a denial of the full humanity of Jesus Christ.

In the following century, Nestorius, who was the patriarch of Constantinople, taught that Christ was both divine and human, but also that the divine nature was one Person, while the humanity was a second. Those who accepted Nestorius' view were called "Nestorians" and they taught that Jesus Christ did not embody a union of two natures, but was actually two persons.

Yet another leader who influenced this discussion was a man named Eutyches, who was a monk of Constantinople. Eutyches strongly opposed Nestorianism, but he also proposed another theory concerning the nature of Jesus. Eutyches' view was that the human nature of Christ is absorbed into the divine, but Eutychianism holds firmly to



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one nature, the divine in Christ, which made the humanity of Christ a mere accidental mixing of two separate natures.

None of these attempts to explain the nature of Jesus Christ met with full approval by the early Christians and so as to clarify their belief that Jesus was both divine and human early Christians used four important adverbs. They said that when "the Word was made flesh" the divine and the human natures were united "truly," to oppose the Arians; "perfectly," to oppose the Apollinarians; "undividedly," to oppose the Nestorians; and "unmixedly," to oppose the Eutychians. Sometimes, finding the right words can make all the difference.

Dr. Jeff Hensley is pastor of Kings Mountain Baptist Church.

BRIEFS

Good Hope Presbyterian Church, 105 N. Cansler St., is hosting a Hot Dog Sale from 12 p.m.-until Friday, September 5, 2008. Deliveries will be available for orders of five or more plates. To pre-order or for more information, call 704-739-1062 and leave a message.

Chestnut Ridge Baptist Church, 618 Chestnut Ridge Church Road, will host a special worship service, featuring "Gold City," the Southern Gospel music group, at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 5. A suggested donation at the door of \$5 and a love offering will be collected.

First Wesleyan Church of Kings Mountain, 505 N. Piedmont Ave., is hosting a fund-raiser for Gene Miller's needed kidney transplant. A hot dog lunch will be held 11-3 p.m., Sept. 6. Plates will be sold for \$5 each.

Second Baptist Church, 120 Linwood Road, is hosting "Biblical Recorder Day" with N.C. Baptist State newspaper Editor Dr. Norman Jameson as guest speaker, at 11 a.m. Sept. 7. A worship presentation will be held at 6 p.m. Sept. 7 led by The Master's House Christian Home for Men. Donations of toiletries, cleaning supplies, kitchen supplies, twin bed sheets, and money will be accepted.

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