

# FROM NICENISM TO NEO-NICENISM: AN INEVITABLE EVOLUTION?

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## Abstract

*This paper makes clear that one can no longer understand 'Neo-Niceneism' as overcoming or correcting the formula *mia ousia - mia hypostasis* with the formula *mia ousia - treis hypostaseis* propagated by the Cappadocian Fathers in the second half of the fourth century, since the Cappadocian formula belonged to a different exegetical and theological context and came from different discussions and reflections than those that had affected the Council of Nicaea. In fact, after Nicaea, there was a need to clarify the terms of the question, better demarcating the distinction of the Persons within the one divine nature, in order not to fall variously into the errors of Sabellius, Arius, Eunomius and Macedonius. In this sense, 'Neo-Niceneism' cannot be understood as a conceptual clarification to 'Niceneism', due only to the contribution of Homeusian theology. The Author thinks that in 381, the Synod Fathers, having taken for granted the natural only-begottenness and *perfecta aequalitas* of the Son from the Father, had to properly distinguish the divine Persons within the one nature, making use of more than half a century of debates and discussions. In this sense, the new theological temperament had given rise to a new 'Niceneism' that focused on Trinitarian theology rather than Christology, understanding that Christological reflection had its complete fulfillment only within a more systematic reflection on the Trinity of Persons.*

**Keywords:** Niceneism, Neo-Niceneism, Christology, *ousia*, *hypostasis*

## Introduction

The transition from 'Niceneism' to so-called 'Neo-Niceneism' is an historiographical issue that has a long history in modernity: Zahn already in 1867, in his study on Marcellus of Ancyra proposed the issue in substance but not yet in the terms used later, arguing that the difference between the *homousios* of Nicaea and that of Constantinople would consist in the transition from the numerical and natural unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to