

A. What kind of being is this? Early Fourth Century Theological Perspectives (Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 41f; Kelly, *Doctrine*, 280ff; Bauckham, *Jesus*; Williams, *Arius....*; Frend; Gonzalez, *History I*)

1. During the first three centuries, the church responded to what it considered to be heretical answers to the question of who Jesus is by appealing to apostolic authority. That appeal took the form of
 - an emphasis on apostolic succession (authority of bishops and elders acting as representatives of Christ and his apostles);
 - the determination of the final form of the New Testament canon to distinguish authentic apostolic doctrine from heretical propositions said to be based on apostolic teachings;
 - a systematic summary of the Christian faith based on apostolic teachings that would help the church distinguish between true and false doctrines. This summary is often referred to as the *rule of faith*, but, while there were various summaries approximating creeds like the Apostles' Creed, there was as yet no fixed and universally accepted summary. (Gonzalez, *History I*, 146-156; See Williams, *Arius*, 111 for Arius' rule of faith.)
2. But in the fourth century, political, ecclesiastical, and philosophical/theological developments will accelerate and have a lasting impact on the church's answer to the question, "What kind of being is this?"
 - a) Philosophical/theological developments:
 - 1) The emergence of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*: (see Appendix A for full treatment)
 - The Christian doctrine of creation arises, first of all, out of the biblical texts listed above. "God is the only Creator of all things (heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them), and God is the only sovereign Ruler of all things (all nature and history). It is not insignificant that the phrase 'all things' is itself commonly used in the texts in these connections... (Bauckham, *Jesus...*, 154)
 - The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* was elaborated in response to philosophical systems that argued for the eternal existence of matter (cf. Platonism), or denigrated the material world as an evil product of an inferior being (Gnosticism)
 - To Gnosticism the Church responded by linking the "Creator" to the "Father of Jesus" in order to stress the direct involvement of God in both creation and redemption. Matter was therefore not evil. (Zizioulas, *Lect.*, 91)
 - The gnostic view of creation isolated God from the world. When that view is reversed, "the world is turned into an eternal creation of God. If creation is an emanation of him it would mean that God creates because he cannot *not* create. The Church responded to Platonism with the expression '*creatio ex nihilo*' meaning that creation comes from no existing material or ideas.
 - It responded to middle Platonism and Neo-Platonism by stating that the world did not eternally exist as a thought in the mind (*nous*) of God, but that its existence was the result of the will of God. There is nothing necessary at all about the existence of the universe. (Cf. Zizioulas, *Lectures* 85-8; Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 131: Gregory of Nazianzus—Thoughts are expressions of God's will, not of God's nature.)
 - "The Church was determined to remove all sense of necessity from the doctrine of creation.... Creation is not an extension of God and it was not created either from existing matter or from ideas with an eternal existence in the mind of God. ... The fact that (the world) does exist is the result of God's good and free will" (Zizioulas, *Lect.* 91).
 - One consequence of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* was the Christian understanding of God as radically "Other."
 - There had long been various descending hierarchies of divinities that philosophers and theologians from Heraclites to Plotinus posited that were

useful in filling the gap between the Creator and the material world (cf. Allen, *Philosophy*, 72f; F. Young, *Presence*, 374ff; Wilken, *Remembering*, 67; Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 59; Williams, *Arius*, 109).

- Another 'chain of being' went heavenward, accounting for a vast and ever growing cult, first of rulers then including heroes and people who displayed special powers—cf. Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:11-13. Such was the traffic on the heavenward corridor that Euhemerus (fl. 300 BCE) suggested that all of the gods were simply humans who had been promoted to divine status. *Euhemerism* was so well known that Clement of Alexander (c. 150-c. 215) could reference it in speaking in favor of the deification of Christians (Russell, *Deification*, 17; cf. Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 78f.; F. Young, *Presence*, 375).
 - Middle Platonism questioned this popular divinization of mortals. Plutarch (c. CE 46 -120) rejected it, stating that “this is to ascribe divinity to the mortal features of human nature...” (Russell, *Deification*, 25).
 - ◆ Mythological anthropomorphisms: Greek philosophers had long debunked the gods of popular mythology: “Ethiopians make their gods black with turned-up noses, Thracians make them with red hair and blue eyes; mortals think that gods are born and have their own food, voice and shape...” (F. Young, *Presence*, 379).
 - Philo (20 BCE—50 CE) “declared with reference to Gaius’ self-deification that nothing could have been more offensive than, ‘when the created and corruptible nature of man was made to appear uncreated and incorruptible by a deification which our nation judges to be the more grievous impiety, since sooner could God change into a man than man into a god’” (Russell, *Deification*, 25).
- Apophatic (Negative) theology:
 - Plato had already said that “to find the maker and father of the universe is hard enough, and even if I succeeded, to declare him to everyone is impossible” (Zeyl, *Timaieus*, 28.c). (Cf. Plotinus (204—270: Neo-platonism, Allen, *Philosophy*, 75)
 - “(I)t was...a basic principle of Greek thought that we *can* come to know the essence of beings and that the mind can achieve this, by conceiving the idea and then being led to the essence itself” Zizioulas, *Lect.* 58).
 - ✚ “To know the being of this table, according to Plato, we look for the idea of ‘table’ within this particular table. No matter how much the truth of this table surpasses this actual table before me, our minds reach beyond this actuality to that truth. The more my mind is purified of all materiality, the more it is able to reach the reality, which is what the form is” (Ziz. *Lect.* 58).
 - “The Eastern Fathers are clear that the essence, the *what* of God, cannot be conceived or comprehended by the mind.” “Nobody knows the essence of God, apart from God himself” (Zizioulas, *Lect.* 58, 57).
- Philo was a devout Jew as well as a representative of Middle Platonism. God was unknowable in himself (in his *ousia*), according to Philo; we can

See Ayres, Nicaea, 195f; 282
 Pelikan, CCC, 40ff
 Meyendorff, 11f
 Rethinking, 107; *126

only know him as he relates to us (in his *dynameis*). Andrew Louth refers to Philo as “the Father of negative theology” (cf. Louth, *Origins*, 19).

- This “radical critique of anthropomorphism made a significant contribution to the development of the doctrine of a transcendent being with largely negative attributes” (e.g. Unoriginate, impassable, neither moved nor unmoved, etc.) (F Young, *Presence*, 379)
- “Everything that exists because it is called into existence by will, the Fathers referred to as ‘created.’ They called the one who always existed, no matter what, and who does not owe his existence to any other will, the ‘Uncreated.’ Everything that exists is either created or uncreated. There is no intermediate category” (Zizioulas, *Lect.* 91)
- The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* implies that the most fundamental ontological divide is between God and the created order, to which latter both soul and body belong. The soul has nothing in common with God; there is no kinship between it and the divine. Its kinship is with its body, in virtue of their common creation, rather than with God” (Louth, *Origins*, 77).
- Creation *ex nihilo*, together with the developing doctrine of apophaticism, “would mean the dissolution of the hierarchical model (of divinities and of created beings—H.S.), and the recognition of the absolute gulf between the ultimate divine nature and created orders of being, including angels” (F. Young, *Presence*, 386).
- According to Zizioulas, the revolutionary doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* introduced the dimensions of otherness and freedom into the discussion of being (ontology). “Otherness is necessary for freedom to exist: if there is no absolute, ontological otherness between God and the world, there is no ontological freedom allowing each of these two ‘beings’ to be *themselves* and thus to be at all” (Zizioulas, *Communion*, 19).
 - The question the Greek Fathers faced and sought to answer was: “How can God and the world be abysmally other ontologically and yet remain unseparated?” (Zizioulas, *Communion*, 19-20. Or stated differently, how can beings who are ontologically different enjoy full communion with each other?”

2) Reading and understanding Scripture

- (See Appendix B: “Do you understand what you are reading?” cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 31-40)
- Reviewing the early Christological debates, Jaroslav Pelikan (*Emergence*, 175f) finds four categories of Old Testament texts that were used to speak of Christ’s divinity:
 - “passages of adoption, which, by identifying a point in time at which he became divine, implied that the status of God was conferred on the man Jesus Christ at his baptism or at his resurrection;
 - Psalm 2:7 *You are my Son, today I have begotten you.* Early tradition linked Psalm 2:7 with the words from the cloud at Jesus’ baptism (Lk. 3:22)
 - Paul of Samosata seemed to have called Jesus ‘Christ’ only after his baptism. (See Orgien’s understanding of “Today” and *Emergence*, 190))
 - Such phrases as ‘God is born,’ ‘the suffering God,’ or ‘the dead God’ had...established themselves in the unreflecting usage of Christians.
 - passages of identity, which, by speaking of Yahweh as ‘the Lord,’ posited a simple identification of Christ with God;
 - Isaiah 63:9 (LXX) The salvation accomplished by Christ was the work of God: *‘Not an intercessor, nor an angel, but the Lord himself’.*
 - Psalm 96:10 by means of a ‘Christian midrash’ read, *‘The Lord reigns from the tree...’*

- The danger lay in thinking modalistically, not acknowledging any real distinctions between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (See Sabellian arguments, *Emergence*, 179, 190)
 - See later section on texts used by Athanasius in response to Arius.
 - passages of distinction, which, by speaking of one 'Lord' and of another 'Lord,' drew some difference between them;
 - Psalm 110:1 (The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand...) when conflated with Psalm 2:8, "could form part of the biblical proof for the thesis that 'the rule of truth teaches us to believe, after the Father, also in the Son of God, Christ Jesus, the Lord our God, but the Son of God'" (*Emergence*, 190).
 - and passages of derivation, which, by referring to the Father as 'the greater' or using such titles as angel, Spirit, Logos, and Son, suggested that he 'came from' God and was in some sense less than God." These texts will provide the basis for Arius and his supporters' arguments.
- 3) Language challenges that needed to be resolved (See below. Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 145f; Gonzalez, *History I*, 258; Zizioulas, *Lect.* 49f; Pelikan, *Emerg.* 219):
- Tertullian wrote (in Latin) that the Godhead is a **trinity** (1st to use that word in re to God).
 - He described the Godhead as "*Una substantia, tres personae.*"
 - **substantia** = unity of God; **personae** = plurality in God
 - Challenge in translating Tertullian's Latin expression into Greek (cf. Zizioulas, *Lect.* 49f)
 - For Eastern theologians at the time, the Greek words **hypostasis** and **ousia** were synonyms for what was fundamental, underlying, etc. (Cf. Nicene anathemas)
 - **Substantia** (*Lat.*)= either **hypostasis** or **ousia** (Gk) (See Heb. 1:3, Nicene anathemas)
 - **Persona** = **prosopon**? While in Latin **persona**=individual person, it's equivalent in Greek **prosopon**=aspect or façade or masks that actors wore for different roles. **Prosopon** might mean that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are roles played or fronts for God (cf. Sabellianism).
 - Origen and others after Tertullian began to use **hypostasis** for **prosopon**. To the Latin West, that sounded like God has three underlying, fundamental substances.
 - Sabellius, arguing that there is no distinction between the persons of the trinity, said that the three are one **hypostasis** (=ousia, substance) and one **prosopon** (person) with three names (cf. Heine, *Early*, 203)
 - Paul of Samosata tried to preserve the unity of God by saying that the Word was no more than God's unspoken reason; the Word was of the same essence (**homoousios**) with the Father.
 - Arius would gladly use the word "begotten" (**γενναω**) to describe the origin of the Son, but would use it in the sense of "made"/"created." "...(W)hile the Son, timelessly **begotten** by the Father, **created** and **established** before all ages, did not exist prior to his begetting..." (Statement of faith, in Williams, *Arius*, 271; cf. Kelly, *Early Ch. Creeds*, 237).
 - The Nicene Creed would differentiate the two: "begotten, not made" **γεννηθεντα ου ποιηθεντα**
 - In the early 360s, Athanasius and Hilary of Poitiers make efforts to reach an understanding of terms with Homoiousians (See page 48).

- The Cappadocians will further clarify and formulate acceptable definitions of several of these terms (Cf. Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 102ff; Zizioulas, *Lect.*, 49ff; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 185ff; Pelikan, *Emerge*. 220; Gonzalez, *History I*, 287).
- For the importance of terms of relation, see Wilken, *Remembering*, 87.

- 4) Four theological trajectories/tensions that reveal two trends: (Cf. Ayers, *Nicaea*, 40ff)
- In talking about the status of the Son, some theologians will prefer language that emphasizes the *sameness* of Father and Son. (Cf. passages of identity, Pelikan, *Emergence*, 177)
 - Alexander, Athanasius, and friends will
 - use phrases univocally of both: Father is God, Son is God; Father is light, Son is light, etc.;
 - will assert that the Son shares in almost all of the Father's characteristics: The Son is the Father's Wisdom, Power, and Word.
 - For them, the generation of the Son implies not just a 'mirroring' of the Father by the Son, but a real sharing in the nature of the Father. The *Logos* is intrinsically connected to that of which it is the *Logos*.
 - They will criticize the other camp of ignoring key scriptural texts (John 1:1, 1 Cor. 8 *et al.*) and scriptural terminologies (Word, Wisdom, Power). They also think it impious to consider the Son as in any way like other creatures.
 - Alexander argued that the Father is called Father because of the ever-present Son and that the Power and Wisdom of God must always have been with God.
 - Other theologians will prefer language that emphasizes the *diversity* between Father and Son. (See passages of adoption and distinction—Pelikan, *Emergence*, 175, 181)
 - Eusebius of Nicomedia, Eusebius of Caesarea, Arius will
 - make use of relational language, often hierarchical. The Son is an image of the Father, the 'first creature.'
 - For them, the status of the Son stems, not from sharing in the divine attributes, but from a decision of the divine will. (No materialist division of God but rather an emphasizes on the unique character of the Father)
 - They understand the *Logos* to be a subordinate and independent being.
 - Arius: "The one without beginning established the Son as the beginning of all creatures...He (the Son) possesses nothing proper to God...for he is not equal to God, nor yet is he of the same substance...there exists a Trinity in unequal glories, for their *hypostases* are not mixed with each other." (Cf. Ayers, *Early Ch. Lit*, 422)
 - "Arius was concerned that Jesus be truly human and that his divinity be stated, not in terms of substance, but rather in terms of the will—terms that were capable of imitation and repetition by believers." (Gonzalez, *History I*, 263)
 - "To Arius, it was important that the Son be such by adoption, so that we might follow him and be similarly adopted." (Gonzalez, *History I*, 263)
 - ◆ (The Monarchians suggest that the *Logos* had only a temporary status.)
 - Polemic strategies used against each other: (Ayers, *Nicaea*, 42-43).
 - Those who emphasize the difference between Father and Son attack those who emphasize sameness by arguing that the latter speak materially of God, implying a division of God's being in the Son's generation.

- Those who emphasize sameness between Father and Son criticize the other side for ignoring key scriptural terms, such as Word, Wisdom, and Power. They will criticize the other camp of dividing God (materially) through the Son's generation. They also see a fundamental impiety in speaking of the Son as a creature (Ayers, *Nicaea*, 43).
 - "The clear difference and diversity emphasized by one camp seems to the other to be the result of thinking about God as two (or three) distinct beings, separated like material entities" (Ayers, *Nicaea*, 43).
 - Theologians are still grappling with the problem of whether Father and Son are both 'true God', and with the question of whether it is possible to speak of degrees of divinity. (Ayers, *Nicaea*, 43).
- b) Ecclesiastical and political developments:
- We have already noted that in the second century an emphasis on apostolic succession—bishops and elders acting as representatives of Christ and his apostles and continuing their teaching—brought a sense of authority to those church leaders who were fighting heresy battles. Such episcopal authority was originally—and subsequently often—attached to the charisma of a gifted teacher. Bishops were often chosen by public acclaim.
 - But what happens when a bishop rules against a teacher who insists on being a faithful believer? Origen addressed what seems to have been a perennial problem:
 - "The truly spiritual person, 'free enough from worldly habits to search out all things and to be judged by no one', may sometimes occupy a lower clerical rank, while the selfish and stupid occupy the *cathedra doctoris*. ... The implication is clear enough: like the apostle, the inspired teacher is entitled to rely on his own (scripturally grounded) authority when confronted with an unspiritual cleric seeking to decide for him what he shall do or say" (Williams, *Arius*, 83).
 - This often resulted in two centers of authority in the church: An episcopal, bishop-led, institutional hierarchy ("Catholic"), and a more academic, charismatic, teacher-centered gathering. Origen is an example of the latter, being, for a time, the head of a catechetical school in Alexandria.
 - The episcopal hierarchy "represented a focus of unity in a common practice of worship, centering upon the presence of the symbolic token of continuity and self-identity, the apostolically-validated bishop,"
 - while the focus of unity in the academic gathering lay in the personality and the particular ideas of a teacher. (Williams, *Arius*, 86; cf. 233)
 - The coming dispute between Bishop Alexander (and his successor, Bishop Athanasius) and charismatic teacher Arius will fall along the divide between these two centers of authority in the church. (See Williams, *Arius*, 110 for exegetical debate.)
 - "Pre-Nicene Christianity had been obliged to live with a certain degree of organizational mess because of its chronic inability to sort out a single policy for resolving conflicts between institutional authority and the personal authority of gifted teachers.
 - Even between different institutional hierarchies, there were often disagreements. One local, provincial synod could excommunicate a teacher who would go to another local synod and be exonerated—see the many excommunications and exonerations of Arius!
 - But the episcopal, bishop-led hierarchy was not unified either!
 - Following the persecutions of Decius and Valerianus (250-20) and the "Great Persecution" of Diocletian and Galerius (303-304), a rigorous segment of the church

insisted that “to destroy the testaments and divine commands of Almighty God and our Lord Jesus Christ” by handing them over to be burned merited lasting damnation in unextinguishable fire” (Frend, *Rise*, 462).

- In 311 a new bishop, Caelian, was ordained in Carthage by one who had surrendered (*a traditor!*) copies of Scriptures during the persecution. Therefore, because “he who knowingly receives faith from the faithless receives not faith but guilt,” the ordination of Caelian was declared invalid by the more rigorous group and they named another bishop in his stead. Donatus succeeded him in 318.
- When Constantine made grants of money to the “Catholic” clergy and none to Donatus and his group, he appealed. A synod in Arles in 314 decided against that appeal and following a second rejection, Constantine proceeded to close their churches and banish their bishops. They were still a powerful force in the church at the time of Augustine (See Walker, *History*, 106; Frend, *Rise*, 654f).
- Then again there were the Circumcellions, a group of more extreme Donatists in North Africans who, because of social oppression, high debt, and poverty sought to overthrow the existing social order (Frend, *Rise* 572f).
- SEE WANDERING ASCETICS—Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 25;
- With the conversion of Constantine another authority appears, that of the empire, which now “intervenes to make possible a universal, ‘ecumenical’ solution, in accord with Constantine’s own goal of homogenizing his potentially chaotic empire” (Williams, *Arius*, 87).
 - “Before Constantine, the Church was simply not in a position to make universally binding and enforceable decisions. From Nicaea onwards the Church decided and communicated its decisions through the official network of the empire; it had become visible to *itself*, as well as to the world, in a new way” (Williams, *Arius*, 90).
 - “And to those concerned with enforcing agreed decisions, whether for the sake of the empire’s unity like Constantine or for the sake of theological integrity like Athanasius, the independent and actually or potentially recalcitrant ‘school’ group was inevitably redefined not merely as a sect, but as a body outside the framework of civilized society” (Williams, *Arius*, 90).
 - Now, post-Nicaea, “the wrong sort of Christian group was regarded pretty much as the Church itself had been regarded by the pagan empire, as something subversive of the sacred character of social life” (Williams, *Arius*, 90-91). Following the Council of Nicaea’s rejection of his assertions, Arius was not only excommunicated by the church, he was also exiled by the emperor. “This dual punishment, ecclesiastical and civil, was not only an ominous precedent: it sowed the seeds of endless bitterness and confusion in the years that followed, since, although the emperor could rescind his own legal decisions, he could not on his sole authority reverse ecclesiastical rulings” (Williams, *Arius*, 70-71).
 - The tension between an institutional unity passed on through tradition and the sacraments (a unity which might become rigid and detached from every-day life) and personal, charismatic teachers (who might teach deviant, heretical doctrines) will be resolved at Nicaea in favor of the former, but will always be present somewhere in the life of the church. Monasticism will carry on the teacher-centered, discipleship, ascetic life style movement with its own semi-autonomous authority. And, of course, the tension will erupt again in the 16th century

Reformation. Protestant churches may generally be seen as reflective of the personal, charismatic type of ecclesiastical authority.

3. Arius (c. 256-336) (For a history of the Arian controversy, see Williams, *Arius*, 67-81; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 11-186; Pelikan, *Emergence*, 193f; Gonzalez, *History I*, 261-271; Kelly, *Doctrine*, 223; et. al.).

a. Introduction:

- 1) "‘Arianism’ as a coherent system, founded by a single great figure and sustained by his disciples, is a fantasy—more exactly, a fantasy based on the polemic of Nicene writers, above all Athanasius" (Williams, *Arius*, 82, 233; cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 2, 13).
- 2) "Arians’ thought of themselves as Catholics; or more accurately, the very wide spectrum of non-Nicene believers thought of themselves as mainstream Christians, and regarded Athanasius and his allies as isolated extremists..." (Williams, *Arius*, 82).
 - In the background of the exegetical debate is the tension in Alexandria between the authority of the bishop and the authority of charismatic, catechetical teachers.
 - "In Alexandria (Arius) represented not only a conservative theology, but also a conservative understanding of his presbyteral role *vis-à-vis* the bishop, and a traditional Alexandrian confidence in the authority of the inspired contemplative and ascetic teacher" (Williams, *Arius*, 233; see above).
- 3) Arius’ point of departure was "the conviction of the absolute transcendence and perfection of the Godhead. God (and it was God the Father Whom he had in mind) was absolutely one: there could be no other God in the proper sense of the word beside Him" (Kelly, *Creeds*, 231-2). Note the emphasis in his profession of faith sent to Alexander of Nicomedia on the uniqueness and utter transcendence of God ("alone" --μονος)
 - "We acknowledge one God, Who is alone unbegotten (αγεννητον—ingenerate, self-existent), alone eternal, alone without beginning (αναρχον), alone true, alone possessing immortality, alone wise, alone good, alone ruler, alone judge of all..." (Quoted in Kelly, *Early Creeds*, 232; cf. Kelly, *Doctrine*, 226; Williams, *Arius*, 270; Pelikan, *Emergence*, 194).
 - "Even ‘one and only’ was not absolute enough; it had to be raised to a superlative, so that God was ‘without beginning and utterly one. God was ‘a monad (μονας).’ There had always been a monad, but a dyad had come into being with the generation of the Son and a triad with the production of the Spirit or wisdom. Therefore, ‘the triad is not eternal, but there was a monad first’" (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 194).
 - "No understanding of the Logos as divine could be permitted in any way to compromise this arithmetical oneness of God who ‘alone’ created his ‘only’ Son. Originally and fundamentally, then, ‘God was alone’" (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 194).
 - Arius interpreted Deuteronomy 6:4 (Yahweh (is) our God, Yahweh alone/one) to say that God is numerically one, not that Yahweh alone is to be worshipped. "Behold, God is said to be one and only and the first. How then can you say that the Son is God? For if he were God, (God) would not have said, ‘I alone’ or ‘God is one’" (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 195). (Compare this with the earlier note that, originally, the Shema did not reflect the arithmetical oneness of God.)
 - "This God was unengendered, uncreated, from everlasting to everlasting: Himself without source, He was the source and origin of whatever else existed (αγεννητος αρχη). The being, substance, essence (ουσια, το εχειν) of the unique God was absolutely incommunicable. For God to communicate His essence or substance to another being would imply that He was divisible (διαρετος) and subject to change (τρεπτος-mutable). Moreover, if another being were to share the divine nature in any valid sense, there would be a plurality of divine Beings, whereas God was by definition unique" (Kelly, *Creeds*, 232; cf. Kelly, *Doctrine*, 227).

- “Assuming, as Arius did, that the Church’s teaching of God’s unique and immaterial nature is non-negotiable (a necessary corollary of believing in the scriptural God at all) then...all that is said about the begetting of the Son must be interpreted in the light of this central belief.”
 - “(F)or *all* the writers of the early Church, freedom from time, matter, fate and chance expressed in the classical philosophical attribution of negative predicates to God (Immateriality, immutability, and so on) was self-evidently the only way to make sense of scriptural data—which themselves, in any case, witnessed *expressis verbis* to a God whom no one had seen at any time’, whose purposes did not change, immortal and unapproachable” (Williams, *Arius*, 111).
- 4) Arius on the relation between God the Father and Jesus, the Son or Word:
- Based on the conviction that “the created order could not bear the weight of the direct action of the increate and eternal God,” God brought into existence His Word who would be his instrument or agent in creation. (Kelly, *Creed*, 232; *Doctrine*, 127). As such
 - a) the Word is a creature (α κτισμα or ποιημα) whom the Father called into being out of nothing by his will;
 - b. as a creature, the Word had a beginning—‘before He was begotten or created or defined or established, He was not’ (Kelly, *Creed*, 233);
 - The word ‘beget’ (γενναω) applied to the generation of the Word must therefore bear the purely figurative sense of ‘make’ (ποιειν). To suggest that the Son is an emanation from (προβολη), or a consubstantial portion of (μερος ομοουσιον) the Father is to reduce the Godhead to physical categories” (Kelly, *Doctrine*, 228).
 - Arius later would agree that the Son was begotten from the Father, but only in the sense that all things could be said to be begotten from God.
 - c. being finite the Word could not have real knowledge of the Father (the finite cannot comprehend the infinite);
 - d. the Son was mutable, liable to change and to sin. The Son, by nature, was, in principle peccable (Kelly, *Doctrine*, 229). “It was by his own resolute act of will that He retained His moral perfection” (Kelly, *Creed*, 234).
 - “The Word, in Arius’ eyes, was not the authentic but the adoptive Son of the Father: ‘He is called Son or Power by grace.’ He had been promoted to that position because the Father had foreseen the meritorious and perfect life He would, by His own free acts of will, lead” (Kelly *Creed*, 234; cf. Pelikan, *Emergence*, 198).
 - The Word could be called ‘God,’ or ‘Son of God’ but those are, for Arius, at best courtesy titles. “Even if He is called God, He is not God truly, but by participation in grace...” (Kelly, *Doctrine*, 229; See Nicene Creed: “true God from true God”).
- 5) Resting on the conviction of God’s absolute oneness, transcendence and perfection, the Arian controversy moved to textual interpretation. Although it might be said that the controversy was “essentially about hermeneutics” (Williams, *Arius*, 108 and C. Blaising, *Creedal*, 376f) in that each side accused the other of selecting some texts while ignoring others, the selection on both sides flowed from philosophical/religious convictions.
- “Arius’ aim is to develop a biblically-based and rationally consistent catechesis” (Williams, *Arius*, 111), while Alexander will argue from other biblical texts to “both affirm the Son’s divinity and indicate the proper way to verbalize it” (C. Blaising, *Creedal Formation*, 378).
 - Given Arius’ firm conviction that only God (the Father) is unbegotten (αγεννητον) it is not surprising that “the passages on which the theological disagreements between

Arius and Alexander first focuses were: Psalm 45:7-8, Proverbs 8:22, Isaiah 1:2 and a number of unspecified New Testament texts” (Williams, *Arius*, 109; cf. Blaising, *Creedal*, 377-381; Pelikan, *Emergence*, 191-195). For these texts indicated that the Son, unlike the Father, was in reality created, brought forth, or begotten.

- The controversy apparently broke out over the exegesis of Proverbs 8:22-31 (Cf. Pelikan, *Emergence*, 193; Williams, *Arius*, 107).
- Prov. 8:22-25 (NRSV ²²*The LORD created me (LXX εκτισεν με) at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. ²³Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. ²⁴When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ²⁵Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth (LXX he begets me γεννα με, (H. Boersma, *Heavenly*, 142).*
 - With regard to the idea that Wisdom prefigured Christ in Proverbs 8, the “Christological reference was so universally shared that in the fourth century Arius and Athanasius—while in radically opposing camps with regard to the deity of Christ—both took for granted that the ‘wisdom’ of Proverbs 8 referred to Christ” (Boersma, *Heavenly*, 142-3, emphasis author’s).
 - Some early (orthodox) theologians saw Prov. 8 as a passage of distinction (cf. Pelikan, *Emergence*, 175), using it to argue that the Logos was to be distinguished from all other creatures. Later, Arius would see Prov. 8 as a passage of subordination (or of ‘derivation’). In this he followed Origen who, in arguing against Sabellius, insisted that the Logos was distinct from the Father, but then suggested that the Logos was also ‘the firstborn of all creation, a thing created, wisdom’ (Cf. Pelikan, *Emergence*, 191-2).
 - Since Prov. 8:23 states that wisdom was ‘set up before the beginning of the earth,’ Arius could assert that, “although the Logos was a creature, he was ‘not as one of the creatures,’ for they were created through him while he was created directly by God” (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 196).
 - While the Logos could be created directly by God “out of nothing,” earthly creatures “could not endure the untempered hand of the Father and be created by him.” They needed a “mediator to call them into existence” (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 196-7).
 - “The initial debate was not about the rightness or wrongness of hierarchical models of the Trinity, which were common to both sides” (Williams, *Arius*, 109).
- Isaiah 1:2: Lit. LXX: *Sons I begot and brought up...* (υιος εγεννησα). Eusebius of Nicomedia appealed to this verse “to argue for a ‘begotten’ sonship that is dissimilar to God by nature. Eusebius’ point...is to equate the status of being begotten with being created or made (the three verbs applied to Wisdom in Prov. 8) with the effect of classifying the Son along with ‘all things’” (C. Blaising, *Creedal*, 378).
- Psalm 45:7-8 *You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your kindred.* According to Arius,
 - the “therefore” implies a reward which in turn implies that “you” (taken to refer to the Son) had a choice and was, therefore, mutable—subject to change
 - and the “‘anointing above your kindred’ implies that the Son is a member of the class of things created” (Williams, *Arius*, 113).

- ◆ Thus Arius' reading of this psalm was closely connected with some fairly central themes in his theology—the createdness of the Son, and the fact that he does not by nature possess any of the divine attributes (eg. immutability—H. S.) The Son does not have any “godlike glory or stability by nature and so must be given them. ... As a creature, the Son is mutable, and as a rational creature he is mutable according to his choice...” Williams, *Arius*, 113).
 - Deuteronomy 32:18 *You have forsaken the God who begot you* (Θεον τον γεννησαντα)
 - Col. 1:15: *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation* (πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως).
 - John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God...
 - In his plea to Emperor Constantine in 327 (335?) for amnesty, Arius avoids references to his doctrinal disputes with Nicene theologians and states, “We have received this faith from the holy gospels, where the Lord says to his disciples, ‘go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Arius will be criticized for baptizing in the name of a someone he considers a created being.
- For Arius and his supporters, these (and other texts), when taken literally, were “inconsistent with what the *whole* of Scripture and tradition teaches about the nature of God (Williams, Arius, 112). They are, therefore, to be taken metaphorically (as Isaiah 1:2 is obviously metaphorical). “Thus when in Scripture we encounter the metaphor of sonship...we must be aware that the ‘core’ element of the metaphor cannot, in the nature of the case, be the semantic field that covers kinship...; it must be the narrower field of familial intimacy, a dependency expressed in trust or love—the field invoked for us when *we* call God ‘Father’” (Williams, Arius, 112)
- a. Arius' argumentation could perhaps be expressed in three syllogisms (Williams, *Arius*, 231-232):
 - 1) The Logos of God is the ground and condition, the rational or intelligible structure, of the world;
 - But* that structure has no existence independent of the world which it structures;
 - Therefore* the Logos does not exist prior to the divine decision to make the world.
 - 2) God the Father is absolute unity, God the Son (as the realm of intelligence and intelligibles) is multiplicity;
 - But* absolute unity cannot be conceptualized by any knowing subject without its being distorted into multiplicity (as something existing over against a subject);
 - Therefore* the Son can have no concept (no final grasp) of the Father's essence.
 - 3) The Logos truly exists as a subject distinct from the Father;
 - But* the defining qualities, the essential life, of one subject cannot as such be shared with another;
 - Therefore* the divine attributes traditionally and scripturally applied to the Son must be true of him in a (metaphorical—H.S.) sense quite different from that in which they are true of the Father.
- 4. Alexander and Nicaea's response to the Christological controversy:
 - a. Alexander of Alexandria: Letter to Alexander of Constantinople (324) (Ayres, *Nicaea*, 43; Blaising, *Creedal*, 378f)
 - In responding to the Arian (Eusebius of Nicomedia) teaching that the Son is ‘from nothing,’ Alexander joins 3 texts that both affirm the Son's divinity and indicate the proper way to verbalize that truth:
 - From John 1:18, Alexander concludes that the Father and Son exist inseparably.

- From John 1:3 he reasons that the Son cannot be classified with 'all things' since 'all things' came into existence through him.
 - John 1:1 indicates a hypostasis distinct from created things. They came to be, but he simply 'was' in the beginning. (Cf. Origen)
 - Responding to Arius' claim that there was when the Son was not (Arius, aware of the logical difficulty implicit in using the concept of 'time' while speaking of the Son's 'beginning,' avoids the use of that specific word) Alexander references Col. 1:15-17 and Heb. 1:2, to assert that 'all things' made through the Son, including as it does in these texts ages, things in heaven and on earth, unseen things as well as seen, and so on, must include any 'when' or 'interval' separating the Son's existence from the Father.
 - From these texts, Alexander summarizes his understanding of the Son's relationship with the Father: 'His sonship was not something created, made out of nothing. Rather he possesses by nature the Father's divinity. He is Son of the Father by nature, worshipped by all. His is a legitimate, distinctive, natural, and special sonship' (Blaising, *Creedal*, 379).
 - Turning to Rom. 8:32, Mt. 3:17, Ps. 2:7, and Ps. 110:1, he reinforces his point about the Son being distinguished from us and about his natural sonship with the Father.
 - Alexander complains that the 'Arians' take texts that deal with the economy of salvation to impugn the Son's eternal divinity. He presents another collection of texts:
 - The oneness the two share (Jn 10:30) is why the Father is seen in the Son (Jn 14:9).
 - It also explains the Psalmist's language of seeing light in light (Ps. 36:9) and is the basis for honoring the two equally (Jn 5:23).
 - Connected to these is the language and thought of Heb. 1:3: The Son takes from the Father's nature an impression of his likeness and is thus an exact image.
 - In response to the Arian claim that the Son is 'from nothing,' Alexander quotes 1 John 5:1: 'Everyone that loves the Father, also loves the Son that is begotten from Him' (ἐκ αὐτοῦ). This text relates the begotten one to the Father with the preposition ἐκ and therefore stands as the proper alternative to Isaiah 1:2 which was the starting point in Eusebius of Nicomedia's out-of-nothing argument (Blaising, *Creedal*, 380)
- b. Synod of Antioch, 325, (a regional council) drawing upon Alexander's letter, "promulgated a lengthy statement of 'the faith' in Christ as divine; it anathematized 'those who say or think or preach that the Son of God is a creature or has come into being or has been made and is not truly begotten, or that there was a then when he did not exist.' In its positive section the statement of faith described Christ as 'begotten not out of non-existence, but out of the Father, not as a thing made but as a begotten being in the strict sense, begotten in an ineffable, indescribable manner' as one who 'exists everlastingly and did not at one time not exist'" (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 200-1; see full creed of the Synod of Antioch in Williams, *Arius*, 275).
- c. Nicaea: 325
- 1) Introduction
 - "(T)he creed of Nicaea marked a new departure in confessing the faith—a verbally fixed declaratory creed, whose purpose was not liturgical but a defense of the faith against heresy" (Blaising, *Creedal*, 375). Anathemas were often attached to this type of declaratory creed and excommunications would follow for those who refused to sign it.
 - A small, Eastern Church council of 59 bishops, held in Antioch in the early weeks of 325, offers a declarative creed that anticipates the ecumenical Nicene Creed to be articulated later that same year (Cf. Kelly, *Early Creeds*, 208).
 - In the first three centuries, "declaratory creeds of the ordinary type (liturgical? -H. S.) had no place in the baptismal ritual... If in the fourth century and thereafter their role was...secondary, prior to the fourth century they had no role at all. An

affirmation of faith was, of course, indispensable, but it took the form of the candidate's response to the officiant's interrogations." (See Kelly, *Early Creeds*, 48; cf. 30-52, 95)

- "The faith confessed at Nicea, both in its own original formulation and in its interpretation by its defenders, was a cosmological confession and a soteriological confession simultaneously. Underlying it was the conviction that only he who had created the universe could save man, and that to do either or both of these he himself had to be divine and not a creature. ... In opposition, therefore, to the Arian equation of 'only-begotten' with 'firstborn of the creatures,' namely the first creature among creatures, the Nicene confession insisted that the creation of man and of the cosmos could not be understood apart from him as Creator, but that he had to be seen apart from his creatures. The creatures came 'from God' in the sense that their origin was not to be attributed to chance, but the Logos came 'from God' in the sense that he was 'of the *ousia* of the Father.'"

"The conflict with paganism had given prominence to the Christian insistence that the creatures had come into existence 'out of nothing.' The conflict with Arianism made that insistence even more crucial. For 'man is by nature mortal, since he is made out of what is not.' He was therefore constantly being drawn back down into the nonbeing out of which he had been called by the creating power of the divine Logos. Because God was 'he who is (ο ων)' by the standard exegesis of Ex. 3:14, his creatures could be delivered from annihilation only by participation in the image of the Creator. ... Man's fall into sin made him 'mortal and corruptible,' the victim of his own nature and its propensities. ... It was essential for Nicene orthodoxy to speak of sin in relation to the creation out of nothing, so that the Logos who had been the agent of creation might also be identified as the agent of salvation."

- "Only he who had called men out of nonbeing into being would be able to recall them after they had fallen back into the nothingness that threatened them" (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 203-205; cf. G. Florovsky...).

1) Events: (SEE....)

- Traditionally and then symbolically it was said that there were 318 attenders, but more recent scholarship has put the number at +/-250 bishops from the Eastern Greek churches and 6 from Western Latin churches. Some 17-22 of those bishops were sympathetic to Arius (Williams, *Arius*, 67).
- Majority didn't seem to understand the issues clearly.
- A small minority, led by Eusebius of Nicomedia, argued for the subordination of the Son.
- Another minority, led by Alexander, argued for the essential unity of the Father and the Son.
 - Eusebius made an early statement regarding the subordination of the Son which scandalized many.
 - Another group tried to produce a statement based on biblical texts, but Arians could offer their own interpretations of them all.
 - Finally Constantine (via Hosius of Cordoba?) suggested that the word *homoousios* be used.

2) The Nicene Creed of 325: (Kelly *Creeds*, 215-6)

We believe in one God, the Father almighty,
maker of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
begotten (γεννηθεντα) from the Father, only-begotten (μονογενη),

that is, from the substance of the Father,
 God from God,
 Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten (γεννηθεντα), not made; of one substance with the Father,
 through Whom all things came into being,
 things in heaven and things on earth,
 Who, because of us men and because of our salvation
 came down and became incarnate, becoming man,
 suffered and rose again on the third day,
 ascended to the heavens,
 will come to judge the living and the dead;

And in the Holy Spirit.

But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different *hypostasis* or *ousia*, or is subject to alteration or change—these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.

3) Anti-Arian clauses (Cf. Kelly *Creeds*, 234-242):

- **only begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father:** “What we have here is a deliberately formulated counter-blast to the principal tenet of Arianism, that the Son had been created out of nothing and had no community of being with the Father. Here the Son is said to be generated out of the Father’s very substance or being” (Kelly, *Creeds*, 235).
 - Many 4th c. theologians supposed the variant reading of John 1:18 (*the only begotten one, God*) to be the correct reading and therefore somewhat of a technical title. At least it stressed the uniqueness of the begetting of Christ. This doctrine asserted “that the Son of God bears no resemblance to the *genetos* creatures (that is, those that have a beginning), but that He is in every way assimilated to the Father alone who begat Him, and that He is not out of any other *hypostasis* and *ousia*, but out of the Father” (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 202).
 - (See the section that discusses whether the Son comes from the substance of the Father or from the will of the Father or from nothing at all, or is simply “of the same substance of the Father”—Constantinople 381.)
- **true God from true God:** To bring out God’s uniqueness, Arians focused on Jesus’ words in Jn. 17:3: This is life eternal, to know you, the only true God.... The Word might be ‘God’ but not ‘true God.’ Nicaea, states that “The Son was truly God in whatever sense the Father was God” (Kelly, *Creeds*, 236-7).
- **begotten, not made:** Arians had been willing to say that the Word was indeed begotten, but they understood ‘begotten’ to be equivalent to ‘made.’ The Word had been made/created/brought into existence as all things not-God were. Nicaea insisted that God’s “very nature was to beget. In answer to the objection that then the Father must, since it is natural for Father’s so to be, be prior to the Son, they had recourse to Origen’s well-known teaching of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father” (Kelly, *Creeds*, 237-8).
- **of one substance with the Father:** This phrase “completely traversed the Arian position by asserting the full deity of the Son. The Son, it implied, shared the very being or essence of the Father. He was therefore fully divine: whatever belonged to or characterized the Godhead belonged to and characterized him” (Kelly, *Creeds*, 238; cf.

exploration of the term *homoousios*/ὁμοουσιος on 242-254; Cf. Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 104).

- While there were various explanations of what ‘*because of us men and because of our salvation*’ meant, all “were taken to require that—in the words of Isaiah 63:9 (LXX)—...it be neither a messenger nor an angel, but God himself who saved mankind. And the formula that guaranteed this requirement was *homoousios*” (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 206).
- ***The anathemas*** then fully and explicitly condemn Arian positions and those who hold them