

1) Whence comes the Son?

- From the Father's substance?
 - Gnosticism asserted that souls, emanating from God, are divine and part of the divine substance. The divine substance is divisible and its emanating, necessary.
 - The Gnostic Valentinius used the term *homoousios* to describe the derivative nature of this emanation (Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 135).
 - In battling Gnosticism, Origen objected to the assertion that the divine substance is divisible and therefore is, in some sense, material.
 - Origen seems to have understood *homoousios* "to designate co-ordinate members of a single class, beings sharing the same properties" and so the gnostic derivative sense of *homoousios* and "expressions like 'out of the Father's substance' equally reflect the materialist implications of gnostic teaching in Origen's eyes" (Williams, *Arius*, 135; Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 24). Origen does not employ substance language when he writes about divine existence.
 - Athanasius employed substantialist language in order to emphasize that the Son was not a product of God's creative will like all other creatures, but that he shared the Father's very substance or being. (Kelly, *Creeds*, 235; Cf. Zizioulas, *Communion*, 121).
 - His substantialist language made its way into the Nicene Creed of 325: "*only begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father.*" (This will be later modified by Constantinople in 381—see below)
 - "When he therefore attached "the generation of the Son to God's substance and not to his will, Athanasius provoked the accusation of the Arians that he was implying that the generation of the Son was not free but necessary" (Zizioulas, *Communion*, 108, ft.18).
 - "Athanasius rejected this accusation but "without any demonstration of why logically the Arian argument was wrong. Athanasius insisted that the Father generated the Son 'willingly' and 'freely' but having made in his theology a clear-cut distinction between the creation of the world from God's will and the generation of the Son not from God's will but from God's substance, he had to say more in explanation..." (Zizioulas, *Communion*, 120-1).
 - Hilary of Poitiers (c. 300-367) "This unbegotten One, therefore, brought forth the Son from himself (*ex se Filium genuit*) before all time, not from any pre-existing matter...nor from nothing, because the Son is from Him. ... What is in the Father is in the Son also because the Son is from Him; the Son is in the Father because he is not a Son from anywhere else..." (*On the Trinity*, quoted in Ayres, *Nicaea*, 181).
 - Does Hilary say that the Son is from the *substance* of the Father? (H. S.)
 - "In an anti-Marcellan context (see below), Eusebians and Homoians argued that the Son had substantial existence and was not purely an *ενεργια*. The Son imaged the Father's *ousia* and *ενεργια* as a distinct subsistent. (Homoians, of course, would insist that the Son was subordinate to the Father) (Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 197).
 - Lewis Ayres argues that Augustine "presents the generation of the Son, in rather traditional Nicene manner, as the generation of one from the Father's substance or essence, a generation in which the Father shares all that he is with the Son, the one who is God from God" (Ayres, *Rethinking*, 12).
- From the Father's will?
 - "On a number of occasions Origen deploys the idea that the Son is generated 'as the will from the mind'. This language serves not only to present the generation as non-material, but also to emphasize the Son's generation as an intimate

expression of the Father's existence" (Ayers, *Nicaea*, 27; cf. Williams, *Arius*, 140-1).

- Arius argued that the being, substance, essence of the unique God was absolutely incommunicable. ... 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. ... The Word was 'the first-born of all creation' (Col. 1:15), meaning that, like all other creatures, He had been created by divine fiat out of nothing" (Kelly, *Creeds*, 232-3).
 - In his confession with Euzoius, asking for amnesty, Arius was willing to write, "We believe...in the Lord Jesus Christ, his only Son, who was begotten from him" (ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς), but in the sense that everything can be said to be 'from' or 'out of' the Father' (Williams, *Arius*, 278, 352).
- For Eusebius of Nicomedia (a supporter of Arius): "(There is) one, the unoriginated, and one produced by him truly and not from his substance, not participating at all in the unoriginated nature nor in his substance, but produced as altogether different in his nature and in his power.... There is, indeed, nothing of his *ousia*, yet everything that exists has been called into being by his will..." (Quoted in Ayers, *Nicaea*, 53).
 - For many, the theme of the Word's generation from the will of God "served both to secure the generation of the Word against materialist division of God, and to emphasize the unique character of the Father as true God" (Ayers, *Nicaea*, 53).
- In the first half of the 4th c. several writers turn "to the language of the will or *ενεργια* when the seek to explain the Son's generation without seeming to attribute passion and division to God. Thus Marcellus of Ancyra uses the language of *ενεργια* to explain how it is that the Son can come forth and work without God being extended materially.
 - For Eunomius, the Father's *ενεργια* or will is passionless and unique, and may be temporary: the Son is the product of this temporary activity. This helps to preserve the Father from division or passion (Ayers, *Nicaea*, 198; cf. 53).
 - Later pro-Nicenes will use *ενεργια* language but will insist that there is one divine *ενεργια* just as there is one divine nature. See the developing doctrine of the inseparable divine activity (DIO) implying one divine nature (Ayers, *Nicaea*, 198).
- From the Father's substance, no, from the Father as person.
 - As we have noted, substantialist language had made its way into the Nicene Creed of 325: "only begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father."
 - The Council of Constantinople (381) struck most of that phrase (leaving 'begotten of the Father') for "the debate that took place between the years 325 and 381 made it evident that the concept of 'substance' could make the begetting of the Son a matter of necessity. The accusations made by the Arians and Eunomians indicated that the begetting of the Son was involuntary and unfree, so the Church made this alteration to the Creed in order to rule out all sense of compulsion" (Zizioulas, *Lect.* 61).
 - "Gregory of Nazianzen contributed the solution by making a distinction between the 'will' and the 'willing one': the 'will' is common to all three persons of the Trinity. ... The 'willing one' is a person, and as such is primarily none else but the Father. ... Although, therefore, the Son, as Athanasius insisted, is not born out of the will of God, as is the case with creation, he nevertheless is not generated

unwillingly, and this because he is born 'of the Father' who, as a person and not substance, is the 'willing one' (Zizioulas, *Communion*, 121).

- "Of the same substance as the Father" (ὁμοουσιος).
 - According to Kelly, "the original Nicene teaching was, not that the Father and Son are numerically one in substance, but that They share the same divine nature" (Kelly, *Doctrine*, 254; cf. 267).
 - This phrase marks a full rejection of 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. Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 104).
- 2) The "strange, novel" term *homoousios* (cf. Kelly, *Creeds*, 242ff; Kelly *Doctrine*, 234ff; Williams, *Arius*, 69, 130ff; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 92ff; Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 102ff).
- "(I)t can scarcely be disputed that (the Nicene Creed) contained much more than a denial, point by point, of the principle Arian contentions. Not satisfied with merely demolishing the heretics' positions, it affirmed the full divinity of the Son in language which implied, if it did not explicitly assert, the doctrine of identity of substance between Him and the Father" (Kelly, *Creeds*, 242-3).
 - "The chief vehicle of this (affirmation) was the term *homoousios*...which was a strange, novel term, in the company of which no great body of churchmen felt entirely at home" (Kelly, *Creeds*, 243).
 - For Origen, "*hupostasis* and *ousia* were more or less synonymous and meant 'real individual subsistence, as opposed to existence as a mental construct only: in the background was the familiar philosophical distinction between what exists *kath' hupostasis* and what exists *kat' epinoian*, 'conceptually'" (Williams, *Arius*, 132)
 - Origen "deplores those heretics who confuse the 'concepts' (*ennoiai*) of Father and Son and make them out to be one in *hupostasis*, as if the distinction between Father and Son were only a matter of *epinoia* and of names, a purely mental distinction which we make in reflecting on the single *hupokeimenon* of God" (Williams, *Arius*, 132).
 - "That the Catholic Christian faith involves belief in three *hupostaseis* is stated firmly in the Commentary on John 11:10: and this concludes an argument that the Holy Spirit has its own 'proper *ousia*', being distinct from the Son as the Son is from the Father" (Williams, *Arius*, 132).
 - "In the light of all this, it is almost certainly right to conclude that Origen could not have spoken of the Son as *homoousios* with the Father" (Williams, *Arius*, 132, 135).
 - "Origen understood *homoousios* to designate co-ordinate members of a single class, beings sharing the same properties" (Williams, *Arius*, 134-5).
 - Origen argues against Valentinian gnostics who teach "that spirits destined for salvation are 'portions' of the divine substance: such spirits are of the same *kind* of thing as God because they come forth from him. ... Origen objects to the implication that the divine substance is divisible (and so material)... ('They do not see that what is *homoousios* is a subject of the same predicates—that is, a co-ordinate reality.') Thus the 'derivation' sense of *homoousios* and expressions like 'out of the Father's substance' equally reflect the materialist implications of gnostic teaching in Origen's eyes" (Williams, *Arius*, 135).
 - Kelly suggests that "the precise meaning attached to *ousia* varied with the philosophical context in which it occurred and the philosophical allegiance of the writer" (Kelly, *Creeds*, 243).

- The generic sense: Beings compared could be said to belong to the same class, their membership in it resulting from similarity of nature (cf. Neo-Platonist Porphyry, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea (Kelly, *Creeds*, 245). Example: John and Henry are human beings, i.e. they share human nature; they belong to the class of human beings, but are not numerically identical.
 - ✚ Twice Kelly asserts that “the original Nicene teaching was, not that the Father and Son are numerically one in substance, but that They share the same divine nature” (i.e. generic sense—H. S. Kelly, *Doctrine*, 254 and 267).
 - ✚ Basil of Caesarea: “The three persons of the Trinity all belong to the same general category of Godhead; all are therefore equally spiritual and uncreated, because all share in the same nature. ... In the Basilian scheme each person of the Trinity can be thought of as a union of the general divine nature and an individual characteristic, sometimes referred to as a *tropos hyparxeos* or way of existing. So the Father is as it were a compound of divinity + Fatherhood, and so on for the Son and Spirit” (Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 105; cf. 23, 36,)
- The individual sense: *Ousia* often equivalent to *hupostasis* as referring to “object,’ or ‘person’. St Basil could speak of the Trinity as three *ousiai* (cf. Marcellus of Ancyra; Kelly, *Creeds*, 244).
- The material or stuff sense: To Arius, talk of the Son being a consubstantial portion of the Father implied a division of the divine substance/matter.
- In the 260s, some Sabellian leaders complained to Dionysius the bishop of Rome that St. Dionysius of Alexander refused to say that the Son was *homoousios* with God. By *homoousios* with God, they meant, or course, that the Son was identical with the Father, that the Son and the Father were one—but in different modes.
 - Dionysius replied that he didn’t use the term *homoousios* because he didn’t find it to be a scriptural word, but he did believe what the term meant. What the term meant, he went on to say, was that the relation between the Father and the Son was like that of a parent to a child, a seed to a plant, a well to a stream, etc. They were entities of the same nature. He preferred the term *homogenes* (ὁμογενής). This is the generic usage mentioned above.
 - It appears that Dionysius of Rome rejected St. Dionysius’ position and approved the term *homoousios* to describe the relation between Father and Son. He probably meant that the Son shared the divine existence, not that the Son and the Father were one thing as the Sabellians asserted (cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 95).
 - As Kelly notes, the significance of this exchange is that *homoousios* was already becoming a technical term in some circles and that the Sabellians expected the Roman bishop to approve their interpretation of it (cf. Kelly, *Creeds*, 246-8). Eastern bishops will long hear Sabellian and Monarchian echoes in Western theological pronouncements.
- The synod of Antioch in 268 condemned Paul of Samosata’s understanding of *homoousios*. According to Hilary of Poitiers, “Basil of Ancyra and his associates understood Paul to have meant by *homoousios* that the Father and Son formed a single, undifferentiated being. ...The Son was in the Father as logos in man, and that Christ the Logos ...was something like the speech which issues from a man’s mouth. Naturally such a doctrine must have given a severe shock to the Origenist bishops who met in council to decide his fate. They could not but anathematize it

and declare that the Son was not *homoousios*...but a separate hypostasis” (Kelly, *Creeds*, 248).

- In the 4th century, *homoousios* was, then, a word with a variety of meanings. The followers of Meletius of Antioch who began the assault on Arius’ orthodoxy, insisted that the Logos was coeternal and *homoousios* with the Father. They argued that the Son was one and the same nature as the Father and shared his substance. They further argued against the Origenist teaching of the three hypostases which, to them, led to subordinationism (Kelly, *Creeds*, 249).
 - Every loyal adherent to the teaching of Origen, on the other hand, viewed with great suspicion any talk of the Son being identical to the Father.
 - Arius “roundly declared that the Son was ‘not equal to, nor for that matter *homoousios* with, the Father” (Kelly, *Creeds*, 249).
 - ✚ It is said that when Arius’ supporter, Eusebius of Nicomedia, snidely said at the beginning of the council of Nicaea’s deliberations: ‘If we describe Him as true Son of God and increate, we are beginning to say He is *homoousios* with the Father’ the council quickly turned against him and Arius (Kelly, *Creeds*, 249). Ambrose wrote that, “when (his statement) was read at the council, the bishops decided to include the word in the creed, seeing how strongly the Arians disliked it” (Williams, *Arius*, 69).
- The Emperor Constantine: (Kelly, *Creeds*, 250)

5. Defenders of Nicaea: (*Homoousians*)

- a. Athanasius: (Mateo-Seco, *Rethinking*, 74-76; cf. Kelly, *Doctrine* 243-247f; Pelikan, *Emergence*, 204f).
 - “In Athanasius’s approach philosophical and cosmological considerations (cf. Arius, Eusebius, et. al.-H. S.) played a very minor part, and his guiding thought was the conviction of redemption. (B)y his fellowship with Christ man has been made divine and has become the child of God. Hence the Word Himself must be intrinsically divine, since otherwise He could never have imparted the divine life to men. As he put the matter: the Word could never have divinized us if He were merely divine by participation and were not Himself the essential godhead, the Father’s ‘veritable image’” (Kelly, *Doctrine*, 243, see above)
 - Exegesis: For Athanasius, two things were necessary in ensure a correct interpretation of biblical texts (See P. Widdicombe, *Athanasius and Doctrine of Trinity* 460):
 - “The theologian must apply a properly constructed hermeneutical method,
 - interpretation must be in conformity with the whole shape (or ‘scope’) of the church’s tradition of faith (the ‘anchor of faith’)”
 - ✚ Arius’ interpretations were ‘private’ in that they undermined the Catholic Church’s actual faith and practice (e.g. baptism).
 - interpretation must be in conformity with the ‘scope’ within the Bible itself.
 - ✚ This internal scope is the double account of the Savior based on the distinction between the two spheres of theological discourse: The sphere of the Son’s eternal, preexistent life with the Father and the sphere of the Son’s incarnational life with the created order.
 - Didymus: “He created me” in Prov. 8:22 referred to Jesus’ birth (Pelikan, *Emergence*, 205).
 - The Arians fail to make this distinction and therefore they attribute ‘creaturely characteristics to the eternal word.’

- and he must undertake the interpretative task in moral purity” (Widdicombe, 460).
- “In his response to Arian questions, Athanasius gives the teaching of Scripture on the Father-Son relation great importance.... (He) does not argue using easy dialectics. But from his faith, and thus from his understanding of the revealed texts” (Mateo-Seco, *Rethinking*, 74).
 - Jn. 1:1 stands out...where not only is the co-eternity of the Father and Son accentuated, but it is also stressed that the Son is eternally *in* the Father.
 - This text is related to Rev. 1:4—*He who is, who was, and is to come*—in order to clarify the eternity of the Word joined to the Father.
 - The Word belongs to the Father so intimately that Athanasius takes the radical affirmations of our Lord, where He says that He is the *Truth* and the *Life* (Jn. 14:6), in their strongest sense, along with the sayings of Saint Paul who qualifies Christ as the *power* and *wisdom* of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24), *the resplendence of his glory and the figure of his substance* (Heb. 1:3).
 - Athanasius joins the citation of Jn. 1:1-3 to 1 Cor. 8:6: ‘There is but one God: the Father from whom everything proceeds, and the Son through whom all things are.’
 - Two texts are repeated in reference to the equality and union of the Father and the Son: ‘*Only the Father knows the Son, and only the Son knows the Father* (Mt. 11:27) and Jesus’ response to Philip during the Last Supper: ‘*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*’ (Jn. 14:9).
 - Jn. 14:28: *The Father is greater than I*, understanding it of the Word precisely because ‘the Father is the source from which the Son springs forth, the light of which the Son is the resplendence, that is, the Father is greater than the Son only in the sense that He is his ‘cause’ and source.’
 - Athanasius reserves a particular importance for the words of the theophany of the Transfiguration: The Father says: *This is my beloved Son* (Mt. 17:5). For this reason, Athanasius comments, the Son can ‘properly’ call God his Father. Athanasius often uses the adjective of ‘proper’ (ιδιος) to emphasize the difference between the Son and creatures, and thus to manifest the especially intimate relation that exists between the Father and the Son. Their unity is so tight that whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father (Jn. 5:23).
 - Athanasius repeatedly joins texts that show the unity between the Father and the Son: *I am in the Father and the Father is in me* (Jn. 14:10), *He who has seen me has seen the Father* (Jn. 14:9), and, *I and the Father are one* (Jn. 10:30) (Mateo-Seco, *Rethinking*, 74-76).

See the argument used against Arians that in their worship (liturgies and baptism) they should remove the Son if he were a creature as they asserted he was—Pelikan, *Emerg*, 199, 206; Widdicombe, 461)

- b. Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra (Cf. Kelly, *Doctrine*, 240f; Ayers, *Nicaea*, 62-69; Pelikan, *Emergence*, 207f.) A signer of the Nicene Creed, a fellow exile with Athanasius in Rome, 339, but an “over-zealous exponent of Nicene orthodoxy, he was expelled from his see (336) as being virtually a Sabellian” (Kelly, *Creeds*, 103).
 - “God is spirit, ‘an indivisible Monad’, ‘a single *prosopon*’. (On God being a “monad”, see Zizioulas, *Lect.* 48f)
 - “Before all ages the Logos was in God as His immanent reason, identical with Him as a man’s reason is within himself” (Kelly, *Doctrine*, 240; cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 62).
 - “Marcellus condemns the Origenist conception that the Logos is a distinct hypostasis or *ousia* as threatening to disrupt this unity and lead to polytheism.

- But if the Logos was thus immanent in God as ‘potency’, He was also externalized as God’s ‘active energy’ for creation and revelation.... This externalization of the Logos does not result in His becoming a second hypostasis; His coming forth or procession is described as an extension or expansion of the Monad, which at creation and the incarnation becomes, without undergoing any division, a dyad, and with the outpouring of the Spirit, a triad” (Kelly, *Doctrine* 240-1).
 - “Marcellus thought that the creed asserted identity of nature (*ousia*) in the deity, but also only one person (*hypostasis*) there.
 - Eventually, after the judgment, the process will be reversed; the Logos will be reabsorbed in the Monad, and the reign, or kingdom of Christ—not, we observe, of the Logos as such—will come to an end” (Kelly, *Doctrine*, 241).
 - Note: Synod of Constantinople will respond to this last assertion by stating: “*whose kingdom will never end*” to its creed.
 - The characteristic of (Marcellian theology) is the insistence that discussion of Word and Spirit must manifest the constancy and eternity of the divine unity. Terminologies which speak of generation and of subordinate degrees of existence of Word and Spirit are taken to be breaches of that unity” (Ayres, *Nicaea*, 69).
 - In the years after Nicaea we see how the theology of Marcellus and Eustathius which skirted Sabellian and Monarchian waters much more closely than Alexander’s was able to provoke a strong and sustained reaction from the Eusebians, and one that seems to have gained wide support throughout the east. It is important not to forget that for many eastern bishops the controversy over Marcellus is much more foundational than the prior conflict over Arius” (Ayres, *Nicaea*, 102).
- c. Eustathius, Bishop of Antioch from 325 (Ayres, *Nicaea*, 68-9). A participant and later defender of Nicaea (presiding over the debates?) he wrote about the initial Arian (Eusebius of Nicomedia?) proposal that supposedly shocked many other Nicene participants (See Kelly, *Creeeds*, 213; Williams, *Arius*, 69). His theology was close to that of Marcellus. He soon found himself in conflict with Eusebius of Caesarea and was deposed sometime between 326-331 (Ayres, *Nicaea*, 101).
- In 361 Meletius was consecrated bishop of Antioch. His inauguration sermon in front of Constantius seemed quite Homoian, although later he accepted Nicaea as the standard of the faith. He received support from many bishops throughout Asia Minor, including Basil of Caesarea. Others in the Antiochian church, led by Paulinus, remained faithful to Eustathius. During the 360s and 370s there were, then, two parties within the Antiochian church that professed loyalty to Nicaea. Athanasius did not help that situation when, in 362, he went to Antioch to speak with Meletius. When Meletius did show up—reason?—Athanasius acknowledged Paulinus as the rightful bishop of Antioch, aggravating the schism in the church (see Ayres, *Nicaea*, 176, 254 and Frend, *Rise*, 616, 632).
- d. Hilary of Poitiers, c. 300-367 (Ayres, *Nicaea*, 179-186. For Hilary’s clash with Constantius, see Frend, *Rise*, 542.
- *On the Synods*: Begun in 358-9 after Basil’s synod in Ancyra and before the council of Seleucia.
 - Returning from his exile in the East (360) Hilary argues for the orthodoxy of the Homoiousians he had gotten to know. Beginning with the 357 “Blasphemy of Sirmium,” he points out that most easterners had condemned its doctrines and that anti-Sabellian concerns were behind most texts that seemed suspicious to western readers.
 - *On the Trinity*:
 - In books 2 and 3, Hilary speaks of the Father being the one from whom all things come and as the source of the Son and of the Spirit. At the same time, he speaks of a

perfection existing in Father, Son and Spirit. “God is perfect in being a trinity of persons” (Ayres, *Nicaea*, 180).

- This perfection in the trinity—seeing the Word and Spirit as necessary to the Father being the Father—will be an idea increasingly found in other pro-Nicenes.
- Hilary emphasizes the fact that the “Son’s generation is incomprehensible because it occurs within and from the incomprehensible being of God” (Ayres, *Nicaea*, 181, 184).
- In book 7, Hilary incorporates ideas he learned while in exile among eastern theologians.
 - He increasingly pays attention to the relation between natures, powers, and operations.
 - ✚ Because the Son has the power to carry out the same acts as the Father, he must have the same nature.
 - ✚ Because the Son does the same work as the Father, he must be considered as equal in nature (John 5:17, 19, and 25) (Ayres, *Nicaea*, 183).
- e. Apollinaris of Laodicea (310-390 Cf. Kelly, *Doctrine*, 289ff; *Creeds*, 333ff; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 189; Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 110ff; Frend, *Rise* 634; Pelikan, *Emergence*, 239)
 - A dedicated Nicene, longstanding friend of Athanasius and correspondent of Basil of Caesarea, discussing *homoousion* terminology (See Ayres, *Nicaea*, 190, 205).
 - “Already at the Alexandrian Council of 362 there had been discussion of how Christ himself was to be acknowledged. If he was ‘very God,’ how could he be ‘true man’? Athanasius had side-stepped the issue...agreeing with the Antiochenes...who rejected the notion that the soul of Christ...could have entered Christ in the same way as a soul had entered the bodies of the prophets” (Frend, *Rise*, 634).
 - Apollinaris took up the issue, rejecting the existence of a human mind in Christ. “If one accepted its existence one had to accept also the possibility of Christ’s free will and ability to sin. The mind (*nous*) of Christ must be changeless, not prey to filthy thoughts, but existing as a divine mind, immutable and heavenly” (Frend, *Rise*, 634). If God is immutable and incorruptible, so, if Jesus is God, must he be immutable and incorruptible.
- f. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 340-397