

THE DOCTRINAL CONTEXT

Gregory of Nyssa's Theology of the Human Person

ARIUS

- It is improper to call the Son "God"
- The Son is a creature of God and the Father remains mysterious to him
- The Son was created out of nothing

THE COUNCIL OF NICEA

We believe in one God Father Almighty Maker of all things, seen and unseen:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, begotten as only-begotten of the Father, that is of the substance (*ousia*) of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten (*gennethenta*) not made (*ou poiethenta*), consubstantial (*homousious*) with the Father, through whom all things came into existence, both things in heaven and things on earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate and became man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into the heavens, is coming to judge the living and the dead:

And in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say, "there was a time when he did not exist", and "Before being begotten he did not exist", and that he came into being from non-existence, or who allege that the Son of God is of another *hypostasis* or *ousia*, or is alterable or changeable, these the Catholic and Apostolic Church condemns.

HOMOIANS

- After Nicea, most bishops were content with the condemnation of Arius but were uncomfortable with *homousios* as a technical theological term since it suggested a modalist reading that obscured the distinction between Father and Son
- The general preference was to stick to Scriptural language, to say that the Father, Son, and Spirit are all one God and truly three.
- It was seen to be enough to say that the Father, Son, and Spirit are like in divinity
 - The Son and Spirit are not creatures
 - The Son is an image of the essence of the Father

ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA

- Athanasius saw that any hesitation to attribute the full divinity of the Father to the Son did not do justice to the Christian understanding of salvation as sharing in the life of God
- Attacked anyone who wanted to say that the Son's *ousia* was less than the Father's *ousia* as "Arian"
- Came to defend Nicea as the only adequate account of the relationship between Father and Son

MODALISTS OR SEMI-MODALISTS

- Eustatius of Antioch
- Marcellus of Ancyra
 - The monad becomes triad for our salvation
 - When evil has been conquered, the Son will "deliver the Kingdom to the Father" and God will become a monad once again

THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Pneumatomachians
- Macedonians
- « Semi-Arians »

ANOMIANS

- Aetius
- Eunomius (335-366)
 - Language can speak of God's essence
 - God's most proper name is ingenerate
 - A pure concept of God is reached by stripping away all that comes from human experience and human invention. The name "ingenerate" is prior to any creaturely reflection. It has its source in God alone and is thus the applies to God as he is in himself.
 - The Son is thus of a different essence than the Father; the Spirit is a different essence than Father and Son

HOMOIOUSIANS

- Basil of Ancyra

BASIL OF CAESAREA

- Friend of Basil of Ancyra, at first wanted to say that Father and Son were like in essence (*homois kat'ousian* or *homoiousios*)
 - Nonetheless held that there is only one divine *ousia* shared by Father, Son, and Spirit in different order and rank. Thus the generated essence of the Son is not identical to the ingenerate essence of the Father.
- Came to see that like according to essence was insufficient.
- His point of departure became the unknowability of God in essence: we can only confess the equality of Father, Son, and Spirit
- All names of God are images based on our level of perception; we must "surpass that which is humble and base in the expression" (Adv. Eunom., 1.10)
- Our concepts are truly directed to God but do not reach God in himself.
- The confession of the identity of essence between Father, Son, and Spirit makes our faith true.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

- God is inaccessible to human reason
- Only revelation can bring the mind to God, but God is not known in revelation like objects in the world are known.
- To know God is to be transformed into being like God.
- We must confess the one *ousia* of God; the hypostases are distinguished by the distinction of their relations.

COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (381)

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.