Chapter 6

Heresy

One of the hallmarks of Christianity is its celebration of all aspects of human reality, the physical, the sensual, the emotional, and the intellectual. This leads to many great minds enhancing the understanding of the Faith. At the same time one of the things we have to struggle with in theology is when speculation crosses the line between illuminating the truth and straying into error. At that moment, when theology begins to usurp Faith (usually due to human meddling), people become confused between speculation and truth. The ability of the individual to rationally or emotionally come to grips with a mystery often dictates the level of ‘belief’ the individual can have. When this happens the ‘beliefs’ which one postulates are the only ‘logical’ truth they can reach, but they fail to realize that they have limited truth to personal belief. Still, it is one thing to believe something in error, and quite another to teach it as if it is the Faith.

Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy

How does one identify heresy? What is the measure of correct speculation about the truth? Before we tackle this slippery slope, let us start with a few definitions. The word *Orthodoxy* (Greek “*right-teaching*”) conjures up a sense of the straight and narrow. It speaks to holding on to Tradition and Scripture with a tight rein and within a set of boundaries and having a traceable authentic tradition. Another term we might use is *accepted belief*. *Heterodoxy* (Greek “*other-teaching*”) on the other hand is a less familiar and tougher term. For some it strictly means ‘unorthodox’ as in *anti-orthodox* or *heresy*; for most others it falls more into the realm of ‘disagreement’ or, more on a lower level, a difference of opinion but not something outside of the accepted norms of orthodoxy. Another word we might use is *diversity*.

The strength of orthodoxy is stability and stability counts for a lot. It has helped the Jews hold their message together for thousands of years and through hundreds of cleansings and hard times. It speaks to the fidelity of God who does not change and to the message which remains unchanged. Heterodoxy speaks to the human condition, one where mysteries, those things only revealed by God, are not fully penetrated and can be explored by each generation. Orthodoxy would say that the mystery is the mystery – let it go. Heterodoxy says that there may be something more we can understand of/from that mystery. So what is the balance? For its first thousand years the Church tolerated much diversity as long as it remained within the boundaries. Unfortunately, with much diversity comes much margin for error – and orthodoxy, as protection for the truth, begins to play a larger role.

The idea of heterodoxy as something positive typically goes with a tolerance about beliefs mainly on subjects which are not fully defined, or are possible understandings of loosely defined existing teachings. While not everyone would agree with this definition, heterodoxy describes beliefs that differ from strictly orthodox views but that fall short of *heresy*.

Where does this struggle arise? As time goes by and less and less effort was needed to convince the populous, the writings and argumentation turned from apologetics toward ideas and the discussion of whether or not the ideas had merit within the Christian ethos. The community is growing and experiencing growing pains. There comes a growing desire for consistency of teaching and of leadership structure. This gives rise to new understanding and new misunderstanding. Keep in mind, some disputes were in terms of orthodoxy to lunatic fringe kind of issues but others were the product of sincere and intellectually honest efforts to reach understanding often using the philosophical, social, or legal concepts of the day.

Smorgasbord

There are many ways to approach the many evolutionary lines of thinking which died out or were hunted to extinction. There is the strictly historical route where one just follows the thinkers in a line; then there is the thematic path, where the thinkers are lumped together by the basis of their thinking. Perhaps the best course for our needs is a combination, lumping them together by theme, but in a progressive manner.

One caveat to this quick parade is that many of these are related, that is, thinking in one area led to a broadening of that thinking to some of its logical ends, for example *Macedonianism* which was set forth by an Arian bishop, who was already denying the divinity of Christ.

***Salvation***

* **Gnosticism (**1st and 2nd Century**)**
  + Dualism of good and bad (a good god and an evil god) and ‘special’, hidden knowledge for salvation owned by an elite group. An example being *Valentinianism*, who lived in Rome between 136 and 165 and taught that the visible world had been created by the evil god of the Old Testament and that now only the invisible world was real. Christ came to deliver mankind from its bondage to matter and the evil physical world; unfortunately most would be unable to rise above matter and end up in eternal perdition (seen even today in groups like the Christian Scientists). Irenaeus (~125-~202) wrote against Valentinianism in particular in his work *Against the Heresies*.
* **Ebionism (**1st Century**)**
  + Jesus was an ordinary human who was just a really great guy and so was *adopted* by God because he was so zealous for the Law. They are often associated with the Judaizers of that Paul speaks of (c.f. *Galatians*). This can be seen in several modern groups, most definitely in places like *The Jesus Seminar*.
* **Albigenses (**13th Century**)**
  + Technically this one falls under a couple of categories but we will drop it here because it teaches reincarnation – and two gods, one good and other evil – a modern re-visiting of *Gnosticism*.

***God/Godhead’s Nature***

* **Marcionism (**2nd Century**)**
  + A fairly important dispute where they rejected the Old Testament and much of the New Testament, except for the Gospel of Luke and ten of the Letters of St. Paul. Only virgins, widows, and celibates were baptized; married people where unclean/unworthy and could not advance beyond the catechumenate which makes for somewhat limited growth.
* **Monarchianism (**2nd and 3rd Century**)** 
  + This has become a catch-all title for several of the ideas mentioned here, but basically it applies to the meaning of *monarch*: literally ‘one rule’ or ‘one beginning’ but mostly: unity. It was actually an attempt to refute early versions of *Tritheism* (6th- below ), but failed to keep the fullness of the Trinity stating that God is *one person*, that is there is no Father/Son/Spirit Trinity.
* **Sabellianism/Modalism** (3rd Century)
  + Similar to Monarchism, where God is one person but in three ‘modes’, that is He was Father, *then* Son, *then* Holy Spirit – like He was just wearing a mask each time He revealed Himself.
* **Manichaeism (**3rd Century**)**
  + A gnostic synthesis of many of the religious systems of the time, mainly Zoroastrian Dualism, Babylonian folklore, Buddhist ethics, and some small and superficial, additions of Christian elements. Augustine started out as an adherent but turned into one of its greatest opponents.
* **Patripassionism** (3rd century)
  + The Father, not Jesus, suffered on the cross.
* **Subordinationism** (4th Century)
  + Generic name for many errors; only God the Father is God, the Son is subordinate to the Father, that is, lesser than the Father in essence and or attributes.
* **Macedonianism** (4th Century)
  + Denies the divinity of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit does not to proceed from the Father but is a creation of the Son.
* **Tritheism** (6th century)
  + A sub-sect of 5th century *Monophysitism* (5th- below), where because Jesus is only divine, and as the name suggests the Trinity is really three separate gods.
* **Socinianism (**16th and 17th Century**)**
  + A kind of modern revival of *Ebionism* (1st - above) but included definite denial of the Trinity. Jesus is just a deified man.

***Christ’s Nature***

* **Adoptionism (**2nd Century**)**
  + God granted Jesus powers and then adopted him as a Son; Revived by Peter Abelard in the twelfth century.
* **Docetism (**2nd Century**)**
  + Jesus was only divine, and only seemed to be human.
* **Apollinarianism (**4th Century**)**
  + Jesus’ human rational soul and will was replaced by the divine Logos, meaning that he was not ‘free’ to accept death on the Cross among other things.
* **Arianism (**4th Century**)**
  + An extremely influential and damaging disagreement; Jesus was not God but a lesser, *created* being.
* **Anomeanism**. **(**4th Century**)**
  + A radical variant of Arianism, the Son was "unlike" (Greek: *animoios*) the Father.
* **Nestorianism (**5th Century**)**
  + Overemphasis on the human side of Jesus, who was considered to be two *distinct* persons; Jesus had to be human because we cannot even begin to conceive that God could be born, crucified, and died; further therefore, Mary could not be the Theotokos (*God-bearer*) but only the mother of a human being who was then conjoined to God.
* **Monophysitism (**5th Century**)**
  + Overemphasis on the divine side of Jesus; believed Jesus had only one nature/will and it was not the human one; rose up as a reaction against *Nestorianism*.
* **Monothelitism (**7th Century**)**
  + An attempt to accommodate *Monophysitism* where it was acknowledged that Jesus had two natures, divine and human but that these two natures had only ‘one will’.
* **Kenosis** (19th Century)
  + Greek for ‘emptying’; Based in a line from Philippians; Jesus gave up his divine attributes while on earth.

***Human Nature***

* **Priscillianism (**4th Century**)**
  + Combination of *Modalism* and *Gnosticism*; denied Christ's divinity *and* real humanity, holding that human souls were united to bodies in punishment for their sins.
* **Pelagianism (**5th Century**)**
  + Man is unaffected by the fall and can keep all of God's laws; in order to do good, grace already had to be present in the soul. Denies freewill and Original Sin.
* **Semi-Pelagianism** (5th Century)
  + An attempted compromise where humans and God cooperate to achieve man's salvation where the initial act belongs to humanity and everything after that is grace alone; this term is used in various ways through time.

***The Church***

* **Montanism (**2nd Century**)**
  + Kind of an early patent medicine man of Christianity he claimed to be the Paraclete and that he and two women had new (and superseding) Revelation; with an emphasis on ecstatic prophecy. Christians who fell from grace could not be redeemed, emphasized chastity, forbade remarriage; as talked about in the last chapter, influenced Tertullian though he eventually left the cult. Augustine (4th) successfully rejoined most of its followers with the Church.
* **Encratitism (**2nd Century**)**
  + Another early highly aesthetic temperance movement that forbade marriage and taught abstinence from meat; accepted the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospels, but rejected the Book of the Acts and cursed St. Paul and his Epistles.
* **Donatism (**4th Century**)**
  + Only the most worthy could serve; validity of sacraments depends on the character of the minister; condemned extensively by St. Augustine.
* **Iconoclasm (**7th and 8th Century**)**
  + A violent religious/political movement which, like Arianism, rocked all levels of the Church. Any images were considered sacrilege and had to be destroyed. Influenced by the rise of Islam and its prescriptions against graven images.

So what makes all of this so bad? At first glance it seems that the third through fifth centuries become hot beds of innovation and error, with the legitimization of Christianity by Constantine dead in the center. But that is not the final word – we see these ideas resurface and gain followers even today so let us take a look at a couple of them.

In The Know: *Gnosticism*

What that means is that, as Mark Twain said, there will never be a dearth “*of experts who knew the Deity's mind and were willing to reveal it.*” If you recall back, the previous chapter on philosophy versus theology highlighted Justin Martyr and Tertullian. In a passing remark I said that while they were both dealing with persecution they were also both dealing with internal struggles. The point being that during their timeframes, Justin was dealing with more social/religious heresy while Tertullian was dealing with more philosophical ones.

In terms of that, there arose a particularly insidious practice called Gnosticism, a broad umbrella name given to various and sundry systems which pop up fairly early on in the Christian story (within the first century) and continue in various forms. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, or as we might translate it, ‘knowing’. It finds its roots in several mystery cults and religious revivals already taking place in the first and second centuries in Roman society. Many of these groups, like the Cybele cults (a popular mother-goddess cult to which the founder of Montanism belonged) Basically it refers to the belief that there was secret knowledge that only the chosen few were privy to, meaning that salvation only comes through some special kind of knowledge, usually knowledge claimed by a special elite group. There is also an element of Zoroastrian belief in that the good and evil powers are in conflict. In general Gnosticism appears to be what can be thought of as a ‘unification’ type of religion, as Stoicism or Eclecticism was to philosophical systems, trying to create a cohesive system from a variety of systems, combining what they consider to be the best ideas of each. Elements of Platonism, Christianity, mystery cults – whatever provides a reasonable idea of meaning. As a general rule, at the core is the conviction that matter is evil and hostile to the human spirit and thereby drags it down and condemns it to Earth and only the initiated know this. It denied the Christian basic truths about the nature of Christ, the Church, and of salvation because they conflicted with this approach.

Gnosticism per se is long extinct, but Gnostic ideas persist and surface in some form in nearly every major heretical version of the Christian faith. This kind of socio-religious approach was not new. The rise of Isis cults and their like and the increased interest in Greek philosophers in Roman society show that the idea of secret knowledge and elite groups existed before Christianity. The Gnostic groups adapted the Gospels to their own views and for their own purposes, even composing pseudo-gospels (like the *Gospels of Thomas* and *Judas*) which embodied each group’s particular secret ideas and doctrines.

So while this one starts early and rumbles through for quite a while, even into today, mainly through ‘New Age’ groups and surprisingly enough is easily identifiable in Wicca (based in John Crowley’s 18th century works which, to this observer, seem very heavily influenced by a hodge-podge of Gnostic thinking and ideas). In his book *The Age of Constantine the Great* historian Jacob Burckhardt succinctly presents the Gnostics as “*speculative enthusiasts…who sought to make of Christianity a framework for Platonic and Oriental ideas.*” This sentiment goes to the heart of this chapter; Gnosticism embodies the idea that the truths of Christianity are insufficient in themselves and, like Plato’s ‘insufficient’ thought can be used as a framework for working with Christian ideas, Gnosticism wants to make Christianity the language for its beliefs not the other way around, at which point it ceases to be Christianity.

Arianism

After Gnosticism probably the single most contentious heresy in the history of Christianity, at least before the Western Schism of the 16th century, is Arianism. It arose amidst efforts to begin to solidify some of the teachings about one of the most central and important doctrinal areas: *Christology*. Who is Jesus? Who is the Christ? How is Jesus the Christ? By what power did he do miracles? By what power was he raised? If he is God, how is he God? And so on. Christology is so central because it goes to the heart of Christianity (so to speak). Salvation completely revolves around the question of Christ’s nature.

Arius (256-336), a priest from Alexandria, advanced a theology based in a philosophical argument[[1]](#footnote-1) that ultimately denied that there were three divine Persons in God. Arius determined that there was only one Person – the Father – meaning that the Son was *created*.[[2]](#footnote-2) He appealed to Scriptural passages such as *John* 14:28: “*the Father is greater than I*” and *Colossians* 1:15: “*the firstborn of all creation*.” In his thinking Christ was only a ‘son’ of God, not by nature, but only by *grace* and *adoption* (i.e. not The Son).

The doctrinal effect of this was stunning, stripping the Incarnation of all meaning, effectively overturning major tenets of the Faith. As his opponents saw it, if this were true and God did not become man, then the world has not been redeemed and the whole Faith itself crumbles because its foundation has been removed.[[3]](#footnote-3) For Arius and his followers, it provided a simpler answer to the problem of the Trinity, and who Christ was. There was no need for any great mystery when there was a perfectly simple and easy explanation, in fact one which was in opposition to another heresy: *Sabellianism* (see above). Because of the effect of this, the emperor Constantine called for the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 to settle the question which formally condemned Arianism and officially formulated the orthodox belief in the original version of the *Nicene Creed*.

Aside from the political and social chaos its broad acceptance caused, what makes this such a problem? First, Arius was just a priest and not a bishop: so the whole question of authority rises up: can a priest, an extension of a bishop, determine what a bishop should teach (and by extension, are theologians able to define doctrine)? Second the struggle for orthodoxy: for roughly 20 years the Church was actually Arian in its confession.[[4]](#footnote-4) Many of the aforementioned heresies had effect, but not really at the level of Arianism. In about 350 the emperor Constantius (337-361) backed the Arian notion of the relation of Jesus’ nature to God’s and the banished bishops were returned and the creed changed. The world “*awoke with a groan to find itself Arian*.” (Jerome, *Dialogus contra Luciferianos*) Politically and theologically the Church was thrown into chaos. This led to the exile and condemnation of formally respected doctors and fathers (some to their deaths) and the installation of sympathetic bishops. It is not until 379, with the help of emperor Theodosius, who literally outlawed the doctrine, that the orthodox bishops finally wrested control back and Arianism’s formal condemnation from the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea was upheld and further reinforced.

Lingering Doubt

So let us take a moment and think about the ramifications of un-orthodox thinking. The above mentioned *Semi-Arianism* was a modification that developed and flourished after the Council condemned Arianism in 325. It was started by those who wanted to end the bitter (and deadly) struggle by creating a compromise between the orthodox teaching of the divinity/con-substantiality of Christ's with the Father and those who followed Arian’s begotten-from-nothing non-consubstantiality. The idea was to substitute the term *homo-i-ousios* (“of *like* substance”) or *homoios* (“similar”) for *homo-ousios* (“of one substance”) within the Nicene Creed.[[5]](#footnote-5) This was probably Constantius’ position more so than ‘true’ Arianism, but did it help? Even after Theodosius’ condemnation in 379 the thinking lingers throughout the Empire, East and West, such that the West felt the need to add the filioque clause to the Nicene Creed in the 6th century. Many good men on both sides were censured or killed and the one Church was put into peril.

It makes sense then if you ponder the nature of Christianity that you would find this desire for compromise, which can apparently be just as dangerous as the thinking it is trying to overcome. Doctrine is not technically open to debate, and compromise is really not an ‘acceptable’ means of coming to doctrine. If doctrine is teachings about the Truth, then it is neither open to debate or to compromise. Theology, on the other hand, is a bit more flexible but in the end still must bow to and correspond with established doctrine and the Faith. We see here also the effects of partially or loosely defined doctrine in such cases. When the mystery is so deep, how do we talk about it? What are the effects of the limitations of human language to express the deepest of mysteries? One misspoken word and *whamo*, the disagreements start.

What makes one position more tenable than another? Theological, philosophical, and logical agreement must all come together, but there has to be something else as well. There must be a certain level of humility in the face of great mystery.

*Credo*

So how do you solve a problem like Maria?[[6]](#footnote-6) The pivotal Council of Nicaea (and the follow-ons of Constantinople and Nicaea) shows the importance of defined doctrinal statements to the stability of doctrine. The main outcome of Nicaea I was its Creed. Obviously the creedal statements are very important, but why? Let us answer that by backing away from doctrinal controversy and focusing on something much more basic.[[7]](#footnote-7) Initiation into any group requires a certain amount of knowledge about that group and that knowledge needs to be consistent (the Gnostics certainly understood this and made it part of their sales pitch). Baptism is the primary initiation used in mainstream and historical Christianity, but the early Church identified the endowment of the Spirit and participation in the deepest mysteries of the Faith as well. In the footsteps of the greatest of Jewish Traditions, knowledge of the Faith is important in order to participate fully – it is both head and heart. This means that simply being baptized is not enough, one must have familiarity (not necessarily perfect knowledge or understanding) of the mysteries which are embraced and entered into by that initiation. The catechumens were ‘handed’ the Faith through instruction over time and then, before Baptism, they ‘handed it back’ by acknowledging it through profession.

The solution then? Public declaration of the truths which one accedes to. A Creed then, is an extremely important facet of Christianity. It gives both the Faith foundation to Baptism and invites the participant to declare the economy to which one commits oneself in Baptism. Its very name holds both concepts. *Creed* is from the Latin word *credo* meaning “I believe”, the first two words of any Creed. Creeds should not be confused with the later idea of *Confessions* (not the Sacrament) used by many Protestant re-formers, which can be classified as more coercive statement of beliefs (many seem to have gone through as much fighting in their acceptance). Creeds on the other hand are properly used as expressions of *worship*; they are in this sense *prayers* and not merely a rote list of doctrinal propositions to which one is compelled to believe. They are summaries of Salvation, the biblical story of the Triune God, compiled from Scripture, which one affirms. If you want to be crass and put it into secular terms, the creed functions less as a “loyalty oath” and more as the “Pledge of Allegiance,” the things in which one believes and commits oneself to. In that sense, creeds are the measure of the Faith which one lives.

They also fulfill the important role of codifying the beliefs of the Church in lieu of an agreed upon, or even available, canon of Scripture, the situation which existed in the early Church. The development of the final canon (Latin for “list”, from the Greek, more toward “official list”) of the books of the Christian Scriptures (and the settling of which Hebrew Scriptures would make up the Old Testament) did not begin in earnest until the legitimization of Christianity by Constantine in 313 but its development really spans the first four centuries of Christianity, and was a long continuous process involving the collecting, sifting, and rejecting of the many writings associated with Christianity. We have discussed most of this earlier, but we must remember that the Bible as a book, or a collection of ordered books in one place, was not an all-at-once thing (i.e. did not appear out of thin air in King James’ English). Scriptures of all sorts did exist and were referenced before, up to, during, and after that time and many are so often touted today (cf. works like *The Hidden Books of the Bible*), but that they were not universal in acceptance or in distribution and as such were rejected from the canon.

Until such time as the official attempt at doing so, “*psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*” (*Ephesians* 5:19), homilies, and oral teachings as well as any circulated writings of the Apostles, Paul, the evangelists, and early Church leaders formed the reciprocal basis for the Truths. Those Truths are formally articulated in creeds and those creeds were as essential to the construction, articulation, and spread of the Faith then as Scripture is now, and in fact give basis to canonic Scripture. As such they warrant as much attention as does the canon of Scripture.[[8]](#footnote-8) As oral statements they also held much authority in a time when written books or scrolls were scarce. Many pre-date any written material (c.f. *Philippians* 2:6-11 which shows Paul’s use of an existing song which contains doctrinal statements).

This makes sense in the historical/doctrinal development of Christianity. The early foundation of the creeds start from the *kerygma* (“proclamations” or “teachings”) of the Apostles, something like Peter’s declaration in the Gospels “*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God*,” (*Matthew* 16:16), or his speech on Pentecost in Jerusalem, or Paul’s “*Jesus is Lord!*” (c.f. 1 *Corinthians* 12:3 or *Romans* 10:9) In fact the Creed labeled the “Apostle’s Creed” can be traced back to the Apostolic age, and though not written by the Apostles, reflects the 12 basic teaching of the Apostles. Creeds therefore cannot be discounted. It is a communal proclamation that corresponds to the “*Schema”* of the Old Testament (*“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!”*) in the synagogue liturgy. Creeds perform a complimentary but different function than Scripture but it is hard to have one without the other. Once again, Oral and Written Tradition are both necessary.

We can sense all of the elements discussed here in a pericope from Paul, “*Now I am reminding you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me*.” (*1 Corinthians* 15:1-9)

Say What?

Creeds are more than just confessions of faith, though the confession can be a part of the creed (i.e. “*I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins*”). The creed is an oral tradition with two basic modes: *declarative* and *interrogative*. The earliest form usually took place within

The ultimate strength of creeds goes to the problems which arise from *eisegetical* (reading *in to* text) interpretation versus *exegetical* (interpretation *from* text), which we will not really get into at this time. Suffice it to say that in the end theological disagreements and disputes are not the main threat to the stability of the Faith. The problem comes from not having decisive doctrinal determinations, that is, a good solid understanding and definitive statements of the Faith. Without such authentic expressions, theology, in its effort to bring about clarity, can bring about potentially community destroying positions. *"...we make our own the profession of the faith that we carry in our heart...We have the catholic faith in the creed, known to the faithful and committed to memory, contained in a form of expression as concise as has been rendered admissible by the circumstances;" (*Augustine of Hippo*)*

Putting It All Together

What we learn from all of this is that theology provides a fertile ground for speculative thought. Expansion though, and not “innovation” as Eusebius calls it (see quote below) is the basis for any theological exploration. One must “read from the text” and speculate about the meaning contained therein and not “read in to the text” thereby inserting meaning into the Faith.

The ancient idea of the Body of Christ speaks to the idea of *unity*. To believe is to belong. So the profession of that belief is a “symbol of Faith” which shows that one belongs. This flies in the face of Gnosticism which speaks not of open proclamation but of secret, hidden belief. Creeds, as open statements of belief would only be made by those who were together.

At the same time, we also see the results of trying to compromise or over-correcting for other errors. Each heresy is not necessarily the result of ‘wrong thinking’ but sometimes is the result of trying to fix wrong thinking. Of the many, the *filioque* ‘controversy’ is probably a good example. While this is not the time to go into the many intricacies of this disagreement between the western Catholic Church and the eastern Orthodox Church suffice it to say that sometime in the 6th century (589, at a church council in Toledo, Spain), the phrase “and the Son” was used to combat several forms of heresy including Arianism and variations on Arianism which had developed in the West and was finding footholds throughout the Western Empire. The East went back and forth on the need for the distinction and things went back and forth for about the next 6 centuries.

*“It is my purpose also to give the names and number and times of those who through love of innovation have run into the greatest errors, and, proclaiming themselves discoverers of knowledge falsely so-called have like fierce wolves unmercifully devastated the flock of Christ.”*

**Eusebius** (~260-341),*Church History*

1. Arius’ bishop Alexander was instructing them about the Trinity when Arius countered “*If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows, that he had his substance from nothing*” (Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*) – meaning that he was created. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Spawning the early flash mob chants of “*There was a time when he was not*” – but in Greek of course; “*we shall overcome*” it is not but it is what passed for a pretty radical statement in that day, certainly enough to get you punched, if not killed. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Think about it this way – if Christ is created then he is part of Creation, and unlike God, is not outside of Creation and therefore unable to transform it. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This is a broad generalization of history, and does not mean that the controversy did not still rage, any more than thinking that the Council of Nicaea was the final word at that time. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This subtly may seem senseless to our modern ears, especially in the Post-Reformation times of ‘no compromise’, but if we listen we still hear echoes of it in Luther’s “*con*-substantiation” being proffered against Aquinas’ “*trans*-substantiation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Think about it…or don’t. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Again, as with most discussions in this work, the following statements in no way capture the history or the subtly of the notion of creeds but is instead a high level collection of ideas about creeds within the context of our discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. As per our earlier Oral/Scriptural Tradition discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)