

THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON: THE BACKBONE OF THE NICENE CREED

ἓνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς
μονογενῆ, τοὔτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς, Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ...

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father
the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God...

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The 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea affords an opportunity for contemporary believers to reflect on Trinitarianism as among the foundations of our theological identity. While not inspired or infallible, the Nicene Creed faithfully represents biblical teaching on the Trinity and the person of Christ. Subordinate to and expository of Scripture, the Nicene Creed is a legitimate doctrinal norm for Christians. The backbone of the creed is the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son; it is the justification for how the Son can be consubstantial with the Father and, at the same time, distinct from the Father. This article undertakes a biblical and theological defense of eternal generation, namely, the eternal communication of the undivided divine essence from the Father to the Son. It shows that eternal generation is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith, and that it is derived from the sound exegesis of several texts from both Testaments, including Psalm 2, Proverbs 8, John 5, and others, including a lexical analysis of the Johannine monogenēs.

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Introduction: Praising God for the Nicene Creed

The year 2025 brings us to the 1700th anniversary of a truly momentous event in church history. It was in May of AD 325 that 318 pastors throughout the Roman Empire were summoned by the Emperor Constantine and met in the Bithynian city of Nicaea (now the town of Iznik, Turkey) to discuss the Christological claims of

Arius of Alexandria and Eusebius of Nicomedia.¹ Only twelve years earlier, in 313, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, which established religious freedom for Christians in the Roman Empire.² Christians had been persecuted in the Empire for nearly three centuries, but it only took twelve years of freedom for such sharp disagreement to develop as to present the need of an ecumenical council to settle the dispute.

And this disagreement centered on a doctrine no less foundational to Christianity than the person of Christ Himself. Who *was* this Jesus that had become the empire's object of worship? How could Christians confess that Jesus is *Lord* (Rom 10:9)—that He is “my Lord and my God,” as Thomas said (John 20:28)—while at the same time confessing faith in only one God (Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:4–6)? Further, if Jesus is God in precisely the same way that the Father is God, has God changed into a man? Jesus slept in the boat (Matt 8:24); but God neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps 121:4). Jesus didn't know the day or hour of His return (Mark 13:32); but God is omniscient (1 John 3:20). Jesus suffered and died (Luke 22:39–23:46); but God is immutable and impassible (Mal 3:6; Acts 14:15; Rom 11:34–36). Since these things are true, can it really be said that the Son is God in precisely the same way the Father is God?

Arius of Alexandria and Eusebius of Nicomedia were two pastors in the ancient world that began challenging the idea that the Father and the Son were equally God. They both would have affirmed that Jesus was God, but not in precisely the same way the Father was God. He was ὁμοιούσιος—of a *similar* substance to the Father—not ὁμοούσιος—the *same* substance, consubstantial with the Father.³ They accepted Scripture's title: He was the only-begotten Son of the Father (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:19). But Arius taught that when Scripture said the Son was “only-begotten” and “firstborn” (Col 1:15), that implied that the Son was created.⁴ If He was begotten, He must have had a beginning. If He was firstborn, then there must have been a time before He was born, and so a time when He did not exist.

Hence the famous Arian claim, “There was when the Son was not.”⁵ That is, there was a time, or a state of affairs, or a condition, in which the Father was, but the Son was not. The Son was not coexistent with the Father, according to Arius. There was an orthodox dictum, “God always, Son always.” Arius outright rejected that: “There was when the Son was not.” In fact, in a hymn Arius wrote, he said, “There is a Triad, *not in equal glories*.... As far as their glories, one infinitely more glorious than the other. Father in his essence is foreign to the Son, because he exists without beginning.”⁶ It becomes plain, then, that this dispute was not theological hair-splitting. It concerned whether the Son was to be worshiped as equal in glory with the Father and thus whether the Son was equal to the Father in His deity.

¹ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, Vol. 1, *The Age of the Early Church Fathers* (Ross-Shire, UK), 219–23.

² Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 1:167.

³ Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 369.

⁴ E. A. Cerny, “Firstborn of Every Creature (Col 1:15),” (Ph.D. Dissertation; St. Mary's University, 1938), 52–68; Larry R. Helyer, “Arius Revisited: The Firstborn over All Creation (Col 1:15),” *JETS* 31/1 (March 1988): 63n18.

⁵ Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 126.

⁶ Arius of Alexandria, “Thalia,” <https://www.fourthcentury.com/arius-thalia-intro/>.

As Arius' and Eusebius' teachings spread, Constantine desired unity in his newly-Christianized empire, and so he convened the Council of Nicaea, where bishops throughout the Empire could investigate the matter and settle it once and for all. The result was The Creed of Nicaea of 325, whose anniversary we celebrate this year. It reads:

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 of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; and he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

But those who say: "There was a time when he was not;" and "He was not before he was made;" and "He was made out of nothing," or "He is of another substance" or "essence," or "The Son of God is created," or "changeable," or "alterable"—they are condemned by the catholic [or universal] and apostolic Church.⁷

One immediately recognizes the Trinitarian structure of the Creed: "the Father Almighty," "the Lord Jesus Christ," and "the Holy Ghost" introduce the first three sentences. One also observes the disproportionate emphasis on the Son. There are three phrases on the Father, just one phrase on the Spirit, and the rest of the creed has reference to Christ. This makes sense given that the occasion for the council was a polemic on Christology. Further, one also notes the *anathema* at the end. The council concluded overwhelmingly against Arianism, basically listing many Arian catch-phrases and slogans and declaring them to be heretical. If anyone confesses any of these, they are considered eternally condemned by the apostolic church. If one says, "There was when He was not," or that He was ἐτέροουσιος (or "ἐξ ἐτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας φάσκοντας εἶναι")—of a different nature than the Father—rather than ὁμοούσιος, consubstantial with and of the same nature as the Father—then, by definition, that person is not a Christian.

Interestingly, despite the clarity of the condemnation, Arianism did not die out shortly after 325. While Arius himself was condemned by the Council, certain of his followers and diluted forms of his teaching persisted over the next half-century.⁸ This

⁷ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, 6th ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1877), 1:28–29. For a comparison of the English and Greek texts of the Creed of Nicaea, please see the appendix of this article.

⁸ Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 1:224.

resulted in the convention of a second ecumenical council, this time in the city of Constantinople, in the year 381. That council produced a slightly revised version of the Creed of Nicaea of 325—a document commonly called “The Nicene Creed,” but which technically is the Niceano-Constantinopolitan Creed.⁹

The result is what Chad VanDixhoorn calls “the most closely held and widely confessed statement about our triune God in the Christian church.”¹⁰ Historically speaking, to be a Christian is to confess not less than the truths stated in the Nicene Creed.

That is not to say that the Nicene Creed is inspired, or that it holds some sort of magisterial authority on par with Scripture. Scripture alone is breathed out by God, and so the Bible is the sole infallible authority for all matters of Christian doctrine. However, that is not to say that Scripture is the sole *authority* for the Christian. The Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is that Scripture is the sole *infallible* authority.¹¹ It stands opposed to the Romanist doctrine that says Scripture and tradition are equally ultimate infallible authorities (what historian Heiko Oberman calls “Tradition II”).¹² But *sola Scriptura* also stands opposed to the Anabaptist rejection of all other subordinate norms and authorities in the Christian life (what Oberman calls “Tradition 0”).¹³ Scripture alone is the norming norm which is not normed,¹⁴ but the Nicene Creed is *a* norm for the Christian faith. To be sure, it is a subordinate norm that itself must be normed by Scripture; but precisely because the Nicene Creed is biblical—because it is a faithful summary of biblical teaching on the Trinity and the person of Christ—it is a subordinate authority for Christians. It is neither inspired nor infallible, but it *is* free from error—something 1,700 years of Christian reflection and biblical examination have demonstrated to be true.¹⁵

⁹ For the English and Greek text of the Niceano-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, see the appendix of this article.

¹⁰ Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Creeeds, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader’s Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 15.

¹¹ See Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, *Revelation and God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 399–400.

¹² See the discussion in Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2001), 151–57. Oberman cast the Reformed doctrine of *sola Scriptura* as “Tradition I,” which recognized that extrabiblical tradition was not an equally ultimate authority alongside Scripture (Tradition II), but neither was it altogether non-authoritative and negligible (Tradition 0). There are legitimate extrabiblical norms for the Christian life (like the Nicene Creed), but those extrabiblical norms are subordinate to Scripture and must themselves be normed by Scripture.

¹³ Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, 151–57.

¹⁴ The Latin phrase *norma normans non normata* (“the norming norm not normed”) is often attributed to Luther, Calvin, and the Reformers, and is expositive of their view of *sola Scriptura*. For example, see A. N. Williams, “Tradition,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 363.

¹⁵ Some question whether Reformed Evangelicals can confess the entirety of the Nicene Creed due to its affirmation of “one baptism for the remission of sins” (ἐν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν). Such would seem to be a confession of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. However, the Creed is intentionally alluding to Acts 2:38: καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν . . . εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν (“and be baptized . . . for the forgiveness of your sins”). Those raising this objection are not likely to suspect the Apostle Peter of teaching baptismal regeneration in Acts 2:38. In this way they acknowledge that there is a way to interpret such language as not teaching baptismal regeneration. We ought to extend the same courtesy to the Nicene Creed. From another angle, we agree that we must confess the truth of Acts 2:38.

Such virtually universal consensus—while, again, conferring no status of inspiration or infallibility—does mean that the Nicene Creed is therefore owed a greater reverence than just another sermon from one's pastor or commentary by a most esteemed scholar. The Nicene Creed is a legitimate, subordinate norm for Christian doctrine, such that to transgress the boundaries it sets is to reject the Bible's teaching on the Trinity and the person of Christ. Because of this, the Nicene Creed is a reason for praise to God and is a worthy object of the church's study.

Eternal Generation: The Backbone of the Nicene Creed

There are a few differences between the Creed of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed. The latter significantly elaborates on the church's confession of the deity of the Holy Spirit and His equality with the Father and the Son; the Holy Spirit is to be worshiped as God alongside the other two persons of the Trinity. Such a claim was increasingly disputed in discussions between the First and Second Ecumenical Councils.¹⁶ Most significant for the topic of this article, the Nicene Creed of AD 381 adds the phrase “before all worlds,” or “ages” in its section on Christ. We believe “in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father *before all ages*.” This makes explicit something the orthodox universally taught from the beginning: the Son's generation from the Father was an *eternal* generation; the only-begotten Son is the eternally-begotten Son.

This is one key concept which vexed Arius. It was agreed that the Son was begotten; the notion of an unbegotten son is a contradiction in terms. But Arius believed that being begotten implied a beginning—being created. Significantly, the Nicene Council refuted Arianism on this not by trying to downplay the doctrine of the generation of the Son. (They did not pursue a line of argumentation that claimed, for example, that *μονογενής* does not mean “only begotten” but only “unique.”) Instead, the Council pressed *into* the biblical reality that the Son was begotten, while also insisting that His generation was an *eternal* generation: the Son was “begotten of the Father before all worlds,” and was “begotten, not created.” The doctrine of eternal generation is so misunderstood today that many evangelicals think that that it has subordinationist leanings—that it was some sort of concession to Arianism. In reality, the Nicene Council leveraged the doctrine of eternal generation precisely in order to refute Arianism and to remove all vestiges of subordinationism from orthodox Christology.

Further still, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son forms the backbone of the Nicene Creed. It is striking how many times the word “begotten” appears in the Creed: “...the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.” It is true that the central conclusion of the Nicene Creed was that the Son was *ὁμοούσιος* (i.e., consubstantial, of the same substance) with the Father.

Since the Creed intentionally alludes to Acts 2:38, it is legitimate to interpret the Creed to mean what Peter means in Acts 2:38. For more on this, see a helpful response from R. Scott Clark, “Does the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed Require Baptismal Regeneration?,” <https://heidelblog.net/2017/03/does-the-nicene-constantinopolitan-creed-require-baptismal-regeneration/> (accessed May 2025).

¹⁶ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 435.

But the justification for *how* the Son could be consubstantial with the Father and, at the same time, not *be* the Father in just some other manifestation (as the Sabellians taught), lies with the doctrine of eternal generation. Eternal generation was the Nicene Council's killshot against Arianism, and the linchpin for Trinitarian monotheism. Because so much of the substance of the Creed consists in the eternal generation of the Son, this article is devoted to providing a biblical defense of this foundational Christian doctrine.

Essential to the Christian Faith

The doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is as essential to biblical Christianity as it is unfamiliar to contemporary Christians. The great 18th-century commentator, John Gill, summarizing theological history, wrote, "All the sound and orthodox writers have unanimously declared for the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ in all ages, and that those only of an unsound mind and judgment, and corrupt in other things as well as this, and many of them men of impure lives and vile principles, have declared against it."¹⁷ Elsewhere Gill says,

[Eternal generation] is the distinguishing criterion of the Christian religion.... Without this the doctrine of the Trinity can never be supported; of this the adversaries of it are so sensible, as the Socinians, that they have always set themselves against it with all their might and main; well knowing, that if they can demolish this, it is all over with the doctrine of the Trinity; for without this, the distinction of Persons in the Trinity can never be maintained; and, indeed, without this, there is none at all; take away this, and all distinction ceases.¹⁸

Why did one of the most respected Bible commentators of church history regard eternal generation to be so important? The answer is: because it is the Nicene Creed's (following Scripture) explanation for how three things remain true at the same time: (1) there is one God, (2) the Son has the identical divine essence as the Father, and (3) the Son remains personally distinct from the Father.¹⁹ Eternal generation is precisely how the persons of the Father and the Son can both be fully God while also being distinct from one another. Both the Father and the Son fully subsist in the identical divine essence; they are both truly and fully God. But though the Father is God and the Son is God, the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. Everything that the Father is, the Son is; but the Father is not *who* the Son is. They are the same *What*, but distinct *Whos*.

¹⁷ John Gill, *Dissertation Concerning Eternal Sonship*, in *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts: In Two Volumes* (London: George Keith, 1773), 2:564.

¹⁸ John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, <https://ccel.org/ccel/gill/doctrinal/doctrinal.ii.xxviii.html> (accessed May 2025).

¹⁹ As Keith Johnson puts it, "eternal generation is a central feature of pro-Nicene theology (both Latin and Greek)." Keith Johnson, "Trinitarian Agency and the Eternal Submission of the Son: An Augustinian Perspective," *Themelios* 36, no. 1 (2011): 11; cf. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 236.

Relations of Origin Derived from the Personal Names

And so, if the Father is God, and the Son is God, but there is only one God, why is the Father not the Son? The importance of the answer to that question is impossible to overestimate. You may *say* that the Father, Son, and Spirit must be meaningfully distinguished from one another without dividing the divine essence. But if you cannot *account* for why the Father is not the Son—if you cannot give a coherent justification for that distinction without losing genuine consubstantiality—then your conception of God is functionally sub-Trinitarian. Much is at stake here.

On what basis, then, can the Son be distinguished from the Father? Well, on the basis that Scripture calls the Father “Father,” and calls the Son “Son,” and “only begotten.” John Owen reminds us that “a divine person is nothing but the divine essence, upon the account of an especial property, subsisting in an especial manner.”²⁰ The Father’s manner of subsistence is paternity (Lat. *pater*, “father”); He eternally begets the Son. That is simply what it means to be Father. The Son’s manner of subsistence is filiation (Lat. *filius*, “son”); He is eternally begotten by the Father. That is simply what it means to be Son. The Spirit’s manner of subsistence is spiration (Lat. *spiritus*, “spirit”); He eternally proceeds from (or is breathed forth by) both the Father and the Son. That is simply what it means to be Spirit. The fourth-century Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nazianzus, put it this way:

The very facts of not being begotten, of being begotten, and of proceeding, give them whatever names are applied to them—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, respectively. The aim is to safeguard the distinctness of the three hypostases within the single nature and quality of the Godhead. The Son is not Father [i.e., not *who* the Father is]; there is one Father, yet he is *whatever* the Father is. The Spirit is not Son [merely] because he is from God; there is one Only-begotten. Yet *whatever* the Son is, he is. The three are a single whole in their Godhead and the single whole is three in persons.²¹

Similarly, the 19th-century Presbyterian theologian, W. G. T. Shedd, articulates this point in a uniquely helpful way:

Some trinitarians have attempted to hold the doctrine of the Trinity while denying eternal generation, spiration, and procession.... But this is inconsistent. These trinal names Father, Son, and Spirit, given to God in Scripture, force upon the theologian the ideas of paternity, filiation, spiration, and procession.... He cannot say with Scripture that the first person is the Father and then deny or doubt that he ‘fathers.’ He cannot say that the second person is the Son and then deny or doubt that he is ‘begotten.’ He cannot say that the third person is the Spirit and then deny or doubt that he ‘proceeds’ by ‘spiration’ (Spirit because spirated) from the Father and Son. Whoever accepts the nouns Father, Son, and

²⁰ John Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (London: Banner of Truth, 1965–1968), 2:407.

²¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, Popular Patristics (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 31.9, emphases added.

Spirit as conveying absolute truth must accept also the corresponding adjectives and predicates—beget and begotten, spirate and proceed—as conveying absolute truth.²²

Thus, Scripture calls the Father “Father” because He fathers the Son, and it calls the Son “Son” because He is “sonned” or “sired” by the Father. (“Fathered” is a more accurate English equivalent, but it loses the lexical parallel with sonship.) In other words, the Father begets, and the Son is begotten. The truths of the eternal relations of origin are rooted directly in the names Scripture explicitly applies to the divine persons. Cyril of Alexandria, for example, regards this as self-evident: “If the Father did not beget at all, why is he called Father? And if the Son was not begotten from the Father, how is he really the Son? The names themselves demand such an interpretation.”²³ Augustine agrees, stating, “When we say begotten we mean the same as when we say ‘son.’ Being son is a consequence of being begotten, and being begotten is implied by being son.”²⁴ In sum, without the eternal generation of the Son by the Father, we have neither the Father nor the Son. Without eternal generation, we lose the Trinity.

Consubstantiality and Fromness

But what does it mean for the Son to be begotten from the Father? Well, Scripture calls the Father “Father” and the Son “Son” because a son has the *same nature* as his father (e.g., Gen 5:3), but the son has that nature *from* his father (e.g., Luke 3:38). We call sameness of nature by the name “consubstantiality,” that is, being of the same substance. “Fromness” describes the notion of proceeding from another. Perhaps it is a bit foreign when put in those terms, but we understand this in principle. My son is human like I am human; we are the same sort of being, and so we are consubstantial. But my son has his human nature from me as his father. Sonship denotes consubstantiality and fromness. Gregory of Nazianzus said the same: “Just as with us these names indicate kindred and affinity, so here too they designate sameness of stock.... He is called ‘Son’ because he is ... *identical in substance* with the Father, [and also] stems *from* him.”²⁵

²² W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed., ed. Alan Gomes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 245.

²³ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John, Volume 1*, Ancient Christian Texts, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, trans. David R. Maxwell (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 10 (1.2.26).

²⁴ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 1.15.16.

²⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ*, 29.16; 30.20 (emphasis added). John MacArthur writes, “There is another, more vital, significance to the idea of ‘begetting’ than merely the origin of one’s offspring. In the design of God, each creature begets offspring ‘after his kind’ (Gen. 1:11–12; 21–25). The offspring bear the exact likeness of the parent. The fact that a son is generated by the father guarantees that the son shares the same essence as the father. I believe this is the sense Scripture aims to convey when it speaks of the begetting of Christ by the Father. Christ is not a created being (John 1:1–3). He had no beginning but is as timeless as God Himself. Therefore, the ‘begetting’ mentioned in Psalm 2 and its cross-references has ... everything to do with the fact that He is of the same essence as the Father. Expressions like ‘eternal generation,’ ‘only begotten Son,’ and others pertaining to the filiation of Christ must all be understood in this sense: Scripture employs them to underscore the absolute oneness of essence between Father and Son.” John MacArthur, “Reexamining the Eternal Sonship of Christ,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 6, no. 1 (2001): 21–23.

Thus, by calling the Father the Father of the Son, and the Son the begotten of the Father, Scripture means to teach, first, that the Son has the identical divine nature as the Father. He is ὁμοούσιος: “*God of very God*,” as the Creed says. Second, Scripture means to teach that the Son has that identical divine nature *from* the Father. He is “*God of very God*.” In other words, when the Creed says that the Son is “*God of God*” and “*Light of Light*,” that is not meant as a superlative—like “*holy of holies*” meant “*the holiest place*.”²⁶ It means that the Son is *from* the Father: God from God, Light from Light.

An Eternal Communication of Essence

This is all to say, then, that the Father eternally communicates the undivided divine essence to the Son. Francis Turretin, one of the most able defenders of Reformed Orthodoxy in history, captures this well. He writes, “As all generation indicates a communication of essence on the part of the begetter to the begotten (by which the begotten becomes like the begetter and partakes of the same nature with him), so this wonderful generation is rightly expressed as a communication of essence from the Father (by which the Son possesses indivisibly the same essence with him and is made perfectly like him).”²⁷ Or, as John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue put it, “‘Eternal generation’ describes the eternal, necessary, and self-differentiating act of God the Father by which he generates the personal subsistence of the Son and thereby communicates to the Son the entire divine essence.”²⁸

It is readily acknowledged that the language of generation—of the communication of the divine essence—quickly raises concerns. If the Father eternally communicates the divine essence to the Son, does that mean the Father has brought the Son into existence? The answer to that question is, “Absolutely not.” This is why the Creed says that the Son is “begotten, [but] not made.” “Father” is not merely a role the first person of the Trinity plays; the first person of the Trinity *is* Father from all eternity. And therefore, the Father cannot exist before or without His Son. This is what it means to confess all three persons of the Trinity as coexistent and coeternal. A communication of essence from the Father to the Son, therefore, cannot mean that the Father preexisted the Son or brought the Son into existence.

Further, while perhaps unfamiliar, the concept of a communication of essence is standard historic Trinitarianism. Until the late seventeenth-century, the Christian tradition was virtually uniform in speaking of eternal generation this way. In addition to Turretin and MacArthur and Mayhue above, consider these excerpts from both patristic and Reformed teachers:

- Gregory of Nazianzus: “But because the Son is ‘Son’ in a more elevated sense..., and since we have no other term to express his consubstantial

²⁶ Kevin DeYoung, *The Nicene Creed: What You Need to Know about the Most Important Creed Ever Written* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2025), 39.

²⁷ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., ed. James T. Dennis, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1997), 1:292–93.

²⁸ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 207.

derivation from God, it does not follow that we ought to ... transfer wholesale to the divine sphere the earthly names of human family ties.”²⁹

- Hilary of Poitiers: “God the Son confesses God as His Father, because He was born of Him; but also, because He was born, He inherits the whole nature of God.”³⁰
- Augustine: “He did not mean that the Father gave life to the Son already existing without life, but that he begot him timelessly in such a way that the life which the Father gave the Son by begetting him is co-eternal with the life of the Father who gave it.”³¹
- John Owen: “...the Father is the original and fountain of the whole Trinity as to subsistence, ... the Son, ... [has] the divine nature communicated unto him by eternal generation, ... And thus he becomes ‘the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,’ namely, by the receiving his glorious nature from him, the whole and all of it.”³²
- Petrus van Mastricht: “The Reformed state that for the eternal generation of the Son of God is required communication of essence with the image or likeness of the one communicating it.”³³

Thus, though some who are unfamiliar with the language (and intended meaning) of an eternal communication of essence fear it could lead to some form of subordinationism, this brief survey demonstrates that the most *anti*-subordinationist, *anti*-Arian defenders of orthodoxy found no inconsistency in using this conceptual framework.

Divine vs. Creaturely Begetting

But how can the Son “receive” the divine essence if He always had it? How can we speak of the generation of an eternal, uncreated Word? The answer is: we must speak of *eternal* generation. MacArthur and Mayhue acknowledge,

At first glance, *eternal generation* seems oxymoronic. In normal human discourse, the words *generate* and *beget* speak of bringing someone or

²⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ*, 31.7. “Consubstantial derivation” speaks of the derivation or communication of the identical divine nature.

³⁰ Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, 11.12, *NPNF*², 9:207. There is an inheritance, or a reception, of the divine nature by the Son from the Father.

³¹ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 15.47.

³² John Owen, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, in *Works*, 19:99.

³³ Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology, Volume 2: Faith in the Triune God*, ed., Joel R. Beeke, trans. Todd M. Rester (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2021), 556. Elsewhere, van Mastricht states, “...the Son, because he subsists from the Father and has his essence communicated to him from the Father, is the second” (van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 2:539).

something into existence. In the human realm, begetting occurs only once, at a definite point in time. To pair the idea with the adjective *eternal* is to change it in the most radical way. And it is absolutely vital to understand and affirm the difference between the begetting of a human child and the eternal generation of the Son of God.³⁴

In other words, God the Father does not generate God the Son in a manner that is one-to-one identical with human generation. Human generation has a beginning; it happens at a single point in time; it requires that a father exist before his son exists; and it also requires a mother. In human generation, there is either a division of nature—where a father passes down something of his essence to his son—or a multiplication of nature—where generation results in another being, separate from father and mother.

But none of those things is true of the eternal generation of God the Son. This is an incomprehensible, eternal communication of the divine essence, internal to life of the Triune God. It has no beginning; there is no single point in time when it takes place. The Father did not exist before the Son; there was never a time that the Father was not the Father, and so there was never a time that the Son was not the Son. He is from the Father, but not after the Father. There is no multiplication or division of nature, no priority or posteriority, no passion or change. Turretin says, “While whatever of perfection occurs in finite generation is attributed to it (as that the begetter begets a thing similar to himself by communication of essence), whatever denotes any imperfection must be carefully removed from it.”³⁵ He goes on to speak of eternal generation being (1) without time, so the Son is not after the Father; (2) without place, so that the Son is not begotten external to the Father, but internal to Him; and (3) without passion or change, so that nothing about the Father or the Son indicates divine mutability.³⁶

So, if generation entails consubstantiality and fromness, then *eternal* generation entails *eternal* consubstantiality and *eternal* fromness. Precisely because this communication of the full, undivided divine essence is eternal, the Son cannot be “less than” the Father in any way. So far from eternal generation entailing the creation, subjection, or subordination of the Son, eternal generation is the orthodox refutation of each of these ideas, the safeguard of the Son’s genuine equality with and distinction from the Father.

Generation Language in Scripture

It is often objected that if the language of generation has to be so heavily qualified and differentiated from its use in the human realm, it is not a good candidate to describe this great mystery of the relations of the persons of the Trinity. The answer to this, however, is that the language of generation is the language Scripture uses to describe this mystery. Several biblical passages bear this out.

³⁴ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 206.

³⁵ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:302.

³⁶ Turretin, 1:302.

Psalm 2:7

Psalm 2 is something of a *locus classicus* in this discussion. It is a text that is cited throughout the centuries as a defense of Trinitarianism, and it figured very prominently in the pro-Nicene case for the eternal generation of the Son. The context is that the nations rage against Yahweh and His Anointed, but Yahweh laughs and declares He has installed His King upon Zion.

Then, in verse 7, the installed King, who we learn is Yahweh's Son, speaks of His generation from the Father. He says the Father said to Him, "You are My Son, today I have begotten [גִּבְרָתִי; LXX: γεννάω] You." The term means to generate, to beget, or to bring forth as in childbearing. Undoubtedly, there is a sense in which this passage has reference to David, Yahweh's king. But there can be no question that someone greater than David is in view here. Verses 11 and 12 speak of a universal kingdom, where the King's wrath is kindled unto the destruction of nations, but where all who worship Him and take refuge in Him will be blessed. Such a figure sounds suspiciously divine.

More than that, the New Testament unmistakably cites Psalm 2:7 several times as referring to the Messiah. Acts 4:25–28 quotes Psalm 2:1–2 and says, "Your holy servant Jesus" was the referent of "His Anointed" in Psalm 2:2. Acts 13:33 says that God fulfilled the promise of Psalm 2:7 "in that He raised up Jesus." Hebrews 1:4 says that Christ is superior to the angels, and then Hebrews 1:5 cites Psalm 2:7 as proof: "For to which of the angels did [God] ever say, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'?" If this generation is the ground of the Son's superiority to the angels, then it cannot be something that can be predicated of a mere creature, even if that creature is David. Thus, the Holy Spirit reveals that the begotten Son of Psalm 2:7 is unmistakably the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 5:5).

Some object that Psalm 2:7 has reference, not to the eternal generation of the Son, but to the resurrection of Christ, because when the text is quoted in Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:5, it speaks clearly of Jesus' resurrection. But that objection fails, because it makes Jesus' divine sonship consist in His resurrection, an impossibility. The Son was Son well before His resurrection. The Father testifies at Jesus' baptism as well as the Transfiguration: "This is My beloved Son" (Matt 3:17; 17:5). The Word who was with God in the beginning (John 1:1) is the only begotten from the Father (John 1:14). That is to say, the Son was God the Son from eternity. It could not be otherwise without the Father ceasing to be God the Father from eternity.

Why, then, the focus on the resurrection in these New Testament passages that quote Psalm 2:7? Acts 13 and Hebrews 1 cite a text expounding eternal generation as proof for the resurrection, because the resurrection declares or manifests Christ to be the Son of God that He was from eternity. This is Paul's point in Romans 1:4, where he says Jesus "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." Christ was *declared* to be Son in the resurrection; He was not *begotten* as Son in the resurrection. The resurrection decisively proved that He was the divine Son of God from all eternity. As Turretin said, "Because, therefore, the resurrection was an irrefragable proof of his divinity and eternal filiation, the Holy

Spirit, with the psalmist, could join both together and refer as much to the eternal generation as to its manifestation . . . made in the resurrection.”³⁷

The “today” of Psalm 2:7, then, is not a literal indicator of one day above another, but rather a poetic way of expressing the eternal “today” of deity—that with God there is no succession of moments, no yesterday or tomorrow; but that all things are an eternal present with Him.³⁸

Proverbs 8:22–30

Another classic text that figured very prominently in the pro-Nicene tradition was Proverbs 8:22–30. Though there is much contemporary disagreement over whether “Wisdom” of Proverbs 8 should be identified with the person of Christ (whom 1 Corinthians 1:24 calls “the wisdom of God”),³⁹ there was virtually no such disagreement in the early church. Even the Arians believed this text referred to the Son.⁴⁰ While it would take an entire journal article to make a case one way or another, I am sympathetic to the reasons the pro-Nicenes saw support for eternal generation here.

Wisdom says, “Yahweh possessed (קָנָה) me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. From everlasting (מִעוֹלָם) I was established (אָסַד; cf. Ps 2:6), from the beginning (LXX: ἐν ἀρχῆ; cf. John 1:1), from the earliest times of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth (הוֹרִי); when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills I was brought forth (הוֹרִי; LXX: γεννάω; cf. Ps 2:7); while He had not yet made the earth and the *fields*, nor the first dust of the world” (Prov 8:22–26).

The verb קָנָה (translated “possessed” in verse 22) indeed can mean “to possess,” but it can also mean “to get” or “receive,” in the sense of receiving a child from the

³⁷ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:294. He goes on, “And Paul properly says that the oracle was fulfilled when its truth was exhibited, since by the resurrection the Father has most fully declared that he is really (*ontos*) and peculiarly (*idios*) his own Son” (Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:294). Steven Duby puts it this way: “The Father’s eternal begetting of the Son accounts for the Son’s unique fitness for his incarnate work, and that eternal begetting is what the Father ultimately expresses and underscores in his economic declaration of the Son’s supremacy over all creatures.” Steven J. Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), 61.

³⁸ Turretin says, “And so with regard to the word ‘today’ (*hodie*), which is added not to point out a certain time in which that generation began; but that we may understand that all things are present with God, and that that generation is not successive, but permanent in eternity. . . . As, therefore, with God there is no yesterday or tomorrow, but always today, so this filiation being eternal can properly be designated by the today of eternity.” *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:295.

When John MacArthur retracted his denial of eternal sonship, he commented on this point: “It is now my conviction that the begetting spoken of in Psalm 2 and Hebrews 1 is not an event that takes place in time. Even though at first glance Scripture seems to employ terminology with temporal overtones (*this day* have I begotten thee’), the context of Psalm 2:7 seems clearly to be a reference to the eternal decree of God. It is reasonable to conclude that the begetting spoken of there is also something that pertains to eternity rather than a point in time. The temporal language should therefore be understood as figurative, not literal.” John MacArthur, “Reexamining the Eternal Sonship of Christ,” 21–23.

³⁹ E.g., Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*, trans. M. G. Easton, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 1:183. See also Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 108.

⁴⁰ See the discussion in Athanasius, *Four Discourses against the Arians*, in *NPNF*², 2:306ff.

Lord in birth. In fact, this word appears in Genesis 4:1, when Eve conceives and gives birth to Cain, and says, “I have gotten (קָנִיתִי) a manchild with the help of Yahweh.” The pro-Nicenes observed this and concluded that Scripture says Yahweh “got” Wisdom the way Eve had “gotten” Cain: as a son. And, of course, to speak of “the beginning of Yahweh’s way,” “from everlasting” (מֵעוֹלָם), is to speak of eternity. Several lines of evidence, then, suggest that an eternal begetting is in view here.

Further, the term מָסַךְ, which speaks of the “establishment,” of the Son-King in verse 23, also appears in Psalm 2:6, where Yahweh says, “I have installed (מָסַךְ) My King upon Zion.” Thus, Yahweh established Wisdom in the same way He installed His King, who is His eternally begotten Son. He has done this “from the beginning,” which the Septuagint translates as “ἐν ἀρχῆν”—the same two words with which the Apostle John begins His Gospel, where “the Word” of God’s Wisdom “was (i.e., was existing) in the beginning (i.e., from eternity) with God.”

Still further, in Proverbs 8:24–25, we learn that Wisdom was “brought forth” (הוֹלִיד). In Isaiah 45:10, this term occurs in parallelism with יָלַד (“begetting”; cf. Ps 2:7) and is itself translated as “giving birth”: “Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting (יָלַד)?’ Or to a woman, ‘To what are you giving birth (הוֹלִיד)?’” Thus, Yahweh brought forth wisdom in the same way a woman brings forth a child that a father begets. There is much exegetical warrant to see the eternal generation of the Son in this text.

Besides this, if wisdom here refers only to the divine attribute of wisdom, what is the relationship between God and His wisdom? Because God is a simple being, all of God’s attributes are essential to Him and identical to His essence.⁴¹ What would it mean for Him to “bring forth” one of His own attributes, if not generating the divine essence, which is an impossibility? Apart from the generation of a personal subsistence—that is, the eternal communication of the divine essence constituting a divine person—it would seem there is no way to conceive of this relationship except God bringing His wisdom (and thus His essence) into being. This would either undermine divine simplicity or make God the creator of Himself,⁴² neither of which is possible.

Micah 5:2

In Micah 5:2, we read, “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth (יֵצֵא) for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth (מִוֹצְאֵי) are from long ago, from the days of eternity (עוֹלָם).”

⁴¹ For an excellent defense of divine simplicity, see James E. Dolezal, *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017).

⁴² As Emerson notes, “If the Wisdom referenced in Proverbs 8 is not Christ but one of God’s attributes, does this mean that wisdom as an attribute did not exist in God from eternity? This introduces complexity into the nature of God and diminishes his wisdom.” Matthew Y. Emerson, “The Role of Proverbs 8: Eternal Generation and Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern,” in *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, eds. Fred Sanders and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2017), 60.

Matthew 2:4–6 identifies Jesus as the referent of this ruler.⁴³ The language of “fromness” inherent in the term $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\upsilon$ —often used in contexts of childbirth (e.g., Gen 25:25–26), even translated as “gives birth” in Exodus 21:22—signals that the concept of generation is in view. And to predicate such goings forth as having their origin “from the days of eternity” is to furnish the necessary ingredients for the doctrine of eternal generation.

The Johannine $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\varsigma$

Coming to the New Testament, the Apostle John arguably draws upon the preceding Old Testament background as He introduces his readers to the eternal divine Word, distinct from the Father and yet God Himself. In John 1:14, he writes, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the *only begotten* from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

That Jesus is “the only begotten from the Father,” or that He is “the only begotten God,” verse 18, or that He is the “only begotten Son” (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), is not a reference to His incarnation. Many mistakenly believe “only begotten” refers to the fact that Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary. But John tells us he beheld the glory of the incarnate Son, and that glory was “as of the only begotten from the Father.” Put simply, the glory of the only begotten is a divine glory. It is the fulfillment of the shekinah glory of God, tabernacling with His people in the wilderness, now dwelling among men (John 1:14; cf. Exod 40:34–38). It is the glory that Peter and John beheld in the transfiguration (Matt 17:2; 2 Pet 1:16–18), in which Christ’s divine nature is expressed through visible means. The glory John speaks of in 1:14 is not a glory that Jesus has by virtue of His incarnation but by virtue of His being the eternal Word—the radiance of the divine glory and the exact representation of the Father (Heb 1:3)—the eternal Son of the Father. Therefore, as it is not a human glory, it is not a human begetting that is in view here. When John speaks of Jesus as “the only begotten from the Father,” he is referring to a divine begetting.

The term that translates to “only begotten” in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and 1 John 4:9 is $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\varsigma$: from the terms $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\varsigma$, “only,” and $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\acute{\alpha}\omega$, “to beget.” This is also much disputed. Some argue that $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\varsigma$ is better translated as “unique” or “one of a kind,” because they believe $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\varsigma$ comes from $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\varsigma$, “only,” and $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$, “kind.” However, that lexical argument seems to rest almost exclusively on the research of a single article by Dale Moody in 1953 (and Westcott before him).⁴⁴ Trinitarian scholar Kevin Giles claims, “Virtually every evangelical who questions this doctrine appeals to this article.”⁴⁵

However, the view that $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\varsigma$ comes from $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\varsigma$ and $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ has recently been ably challenged. In several publications, most notably his chapter in the 2017

⁴³ Turretin notes, “The things predicated prove it because he is called ruler in Israel by way of eminence. . . ; to him is ascribed the calling of the nations, a pastoral kingdom, the strength of Jehovah, the extension of glory and peace unto all the ends of the earth (Mic. 5:4, 5).” *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:297.

⁴⁴ Dale Moody, “The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 72 (1953): 213–19.

⁴⁵ Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 64.

volume *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, Lee Irons demonstrates that μονογενής comes from μόνος and γεννάω.⁴⁶ He shows that the majority of Greek words with the -γενής ending refer to being “born of,” or “produced by,” and only little more than ten percent (12 out of 145 lexemes) are unambiguous in speaking of “a kind,” or “of the same genus.”⁴⁷

For example, in 2 Timothy 1:15, Paul speaks of “Phygelus and Hermogenes,” who turned away from him in Asia. It is self-evident that Ἑρμογένης does not mean “unique Hermes,” or “a kind of Hermes”; it means “born of Hermes.” A νεογένης was a “newborn,” not a new kind, and so on. It is not that μονογενής always and only means “only-begotten” and never means “one of a kind”; there are times where “uniqueness” seems to be intended. But context is king in every interpretive endeavor, and when the parent-child relationship or childbirth is in the context, the concept of “begottenness” is inherent in the term. Well, every time μονογενής appears in the New Testament, there is mention of a father, or a son, or a daughter. In other words, the context requires that we understand this biological sense of μονογενής as μόνος and γεννάω.⁴⁸

The one exception is Hebrews 11:17, where Isaac is said to be τὸν μονογενῆ, even though Abraham had begotten other children. Irons explains that this is a “nonliteral extension” of the term in which an heir functions *as if* he is the only begotten son: “If a father or mother has only one child, then the loss of that child would be especially tragic since it would mean losing one’s heir. This, then, is why Isaac can be called ‘only begotten’ (*monogenēs*) even though he is not literally the sole offspring of Abraham.”⁴⁹ He gives the example that Agamemnon is called μονογενῆς τέκνον πατρὶ even though his brother Menelaus was also a son of their father Atreus: “this phrase . . . metaphorically describes him as one on whom depends the whole safety of the house and/or the city.”⁵⁰ Thus, Isaac can be described as μονογενῆς because he is the only heir, who receives the inheritance as if he were the only begotten child.

Besides this, it is reasonable to think that native speakers of ancient Greek understand the language better than twentieth-century non-native linguists. If so, it is significant that the authors of the Nicene Creed follow a confession of Christ as “τὸν μονογενῆ” with the clarification, “γεννηθέντα [from γεννάω] οὐ ποιηθέντα” (“begotten, not made”). This shows, first, that they understood the -γενής ending in μονογενῆς to derive from γεννάω. It is also significant that they felt the need to explain how the Son could be begotten but not made, something that presents no problem if μονογενῆς meant “unique” or “one of a kind.” In other words, “unique but not made” is an unnecessary contrast. Further, the Vulgate and earlier Latin translations going all the way back to Tertullian rendered μονογενῆς as “*unigenitus*” (“only begotten”) rather than “*unicus*” (“unique”). And in the Latin translation of the

⁴⁶ Charles Lee Irons, “A Lexical Defense of the Johannine ‘Only Begotten,’” in *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, 98–116.

⁴⁷ Irons, “Lexical Defense,” 104.

⁴⁸ Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021), 187–88, 198.

⁴⁹ Irons, “Lexical Defense,” 108.

⁵⁰ Irons, 109.

Nicene Creed, “begotten not made” is translated “*gentium, non factum.*” *Genitum* corresponds with *unigenitus* and shows that begetting is in view.

All this is to say that the Johannine occurrences of *μονογενής* should be translated as “only begotten,” rather than “one and only.” This means—though of course it is not uncontested (what important doctrine throughout church history *is* uncontested?)—Psalm 2, Proverbs 8, Micah 5, and the Gospel and First Epistle of John show us that eternal generation is explicitly scriptural language.

John 5

However, Scripture does not merely use the *words* for “generation.” It also teaches the *concepts* of consubstantiality and fromness, even when not using the words. The passage where this is the clearest is John chapter 5. There, the Jews are angry with Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath. In verse 17, Jesus responds by saying, in effect, “I work on the Sabbath because My Father works on the Sabbath.” This enrages them all the more, because they understood what He was saying: He “was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (5:18).

Observe, then, that (1) “calling God His own Father” is to say that He is God’s own Son, and that (2) identifying Himself as God’s Son in this way, is “making Himself *equal* with God.” This is not to be missed. Sonship, according to John 5:18, implies equality with God. And to be equal with God is to *be* God, to subsist in the divine nature. That is to say, it is to be consubstantial with God. Sonship implies consubstantiality.

Then He says, “The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for *whatever* the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner” (5:19). The significance of this statement is virtually impossible to overstate. Here, Jesus grounds His equality with the Father from verse 18 in the fact that He and the Father work inseparably. In other words, the Son is God just as the Father is God because the Father’s acts *are* His acts. “Whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does.” He is saying, “I and the Father act from the same principle of action.” And the principle of any action is the nature by which that action is performed.⁵¹ So, for Jesus to say, “I and the Father act from the same principle of action,” is for Him to say, “I and the Father share the same nature. We are *ὁμοούσιος*, i.e., consubstantial.”

But to say, “The Son can do nothing *of Himself*” (5:19a), is to say that, while His acts are identical to the Father’s acts (since they act by virtue of the identical nature), nevertheless, He does not act *ἑαυτοῦ*, “from Himself.” To say that the Son does not act from Himself but does only what He sees the Father doing is the equivalent of saying that the Son acts from the Father. Well, if the identity between the Son’s

⁵¹ Richard Muller writes of the phrase *agere sequitur esse*: “operation follows existence (or essence); sometimes also, more expansively, *modus operandi sequitur modum essendi*; an axiom of traditional metaphysics and physics, indicating the basic truth that a thing must exist in order to engage in its proper operations or activities and also, by extension, indicating that the being of a thing determines how it operates or acts. The essence . . . of a thing is the foundation, or *principium*. . . , of its operations. The point is true both ontologically and logically.” Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 19–20.

acts and the Father's acts shows that the Son has the identical *nature* as the Father, then the Son's acting *from* the Father implies that He has His nature (i.e., His principle of action) *from* the Father. Here is both consubstantiality and fromness, once again, in the context of sonship.

Jesus goes on to speak of raising the dead (5:21), judging all people (5:22), and receiving worship just as the Father does (5:23). These remarkable claims all reinforce that the Son does whatever the Father does, and that such inseparable operation is proof of His divinity.

Then, as He speaks about the final resurrection, Jesus makes this astounding statement in verse 26: "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself." For the Father to have "life in Himself" means that He has the attribute of self-existence, or aseity. This was already established in John 1:4, where John says of the eternal Word, "In Him was life." In the Word, life was existing eternally, which testifies to the Word's deity.⁵² Steven Duby observes that the life spoken of in John 5:26

is a life by which the Son can raise the dead by his mere speech. It is thus a divine life, not a life or power that pertains merely to Jesus' human nature or economic office, and not a life reducible to the eternal life that all believers receive (cf. 1:4; 11:25–26). Indeed, in his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus has already ruled out the idea that humanity in its weakness ('flesh') might have the life by which one could grant spiritual life to others (3:5–6).⁵³

So, the Father has this attribute of self-existence, and Jesus says that He too has this identical attribute of self-existence. But the Son has it in a different manner than the Father has it. The Father has life-in-Himself that has been given to Him by no one. The Son has this same life-in-Himself that was *given* to Him by the Father.

Given that God is a simple being, not made up of parts (e.g., Exod 3:14), therefore, each divine attribute is identical to the divine essence (John 4:24; 1 John 1:5; 4:8). That means that the Father's "giving" to the Son the attribute of aseity is nothing less than the Father's communication of the entire divine essence to the Son. Jesus is speaking of eternal generation in this passage. He does the same works as the Father because He is consubstantial with Him, and He works not from Himself but from the Father because He has the divine nature from the Father. That is, the Father eternally gave to the Son to have the simple, undivided divine essence in Himself. Duby's conclusion is correct: "The Son receives from the Father the fullness of the divine life, a life that pertains to what God is as God. The Son's reception of

⁵² Carson says, "Like God he has life-in-himself. God is self-existent; he is always the 'living God.' Mere human beings are derived creatures ... but to the Son, and to the Son alone, God has imparted life-in-himself. This cannot mean that the Son gained this prerogative only after the incarnation. The prologue has already asserted of the pre-incarnate Word, 'In Him was life' (1:4). The impartation of life-in-himself to the Son must be an act belonging to eternity.... Many systematicians have tied this teaching to what they call 'the eternal generation of the Son.' This is unobjectionable." D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 256–57.

⁵³ Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism*, 55.

this life assumes, then, an eternal going forth or procession on the Son's part, ... fittingly called "generation" or "filiation."⁵⁴

The Son has all that the Father has: the whole divine essence. He is thus fully and truly God. But the Son has the identical divine nature in a manner distinct from the way the Father has it.⁵⁵ Though He is as equally God as the Father, He is not the same person as the Father. The distinction is not in their nature—the one somehow more or less God than the other. The distinction is in the manner of subsistence *in* that nature. The Father has the divine nature from Himself; He is begotten of no one. That is just what it means to be God the Father. The Son has the divine nature from the Father, because He is eternally begotten of the Father. That is just what it means to be God the Son.

The Aseity of the Son

But how can one have life-in-Himself that was "given to Him"? Self-existence is either "in Himself" or "from another," right? Well, apparently not, because Jesus thinks it no contradiction to speak of life-in-Himself that was given to Him by the Father. The aseity of the Son is not at odds with the eternal communication of the divine essence from the Father to the Son, or else Jesus misspoke in John 5:26. To be God is to be *a se* (*autotheos*). Thus, though some believe otherwise, eternal generation is not a denial of the aseity of the Son.

Failing to recognize this, some grant that the Father eternally generates the personal subsistence of the Son, but they deny that the Father eternally communicates to the Son the divine essence. In my judgment, this is an absurd statement; it is to say that the Son is eternally generated but not eternally generated. What it means to eternally generate the personal subsistence of the Son is for the Father to eternally communicate the divine essence to Him. If we empty eternal generation of an eternal communication of essence, we have emptied eternal generation of its meaning. Indeed, what would it mean, exactly, to generate the personal subsistence of the Son if not to communicate to Him the divine essence?⁵⁶

In my view, those making this objection see a contradiction where Jesus does not. The argument is, "The Son cannot be *a se* if He has His aseity *from* the Father." But it seems to me one would have to make the same charge against Jesus in John 5:26: "The Son can't have life *in Himself* if He has that life *from* someone else." Thus, insofar as the Son is God, He fully subsists in the divine essence and thus possesses (along with the Father and the Spirit) essential aseity. He is *autotheos* with respect to His deity. However, as van Maastricht observes, "The Reformed distinguish between essential and personal aseity: indeed they affirm essential aseity, in which the deity communicated to the Son and the Holy Spirit is *a se*, from itself; however, they deny personal aseity, insofar as the deity which the Son and the Holy

⁵⁴ Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism*, 55.

⁵⁵ Augustine says, "The Father remains life, the Son also remains life; the Father, life in himself, not from the Son; the Son, life in himself, but from the Father. [The Son was] begotten by the Father to be life in himself, but the Father [is] life in himself, unbegotten." *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 19.13.

⁵⁶ This is not to confess the eternal generation of the divine essence. The essence is not generated; only the subsistence of the Son is generated. But the generation of the subsistence of the Son just is the communication of the essence.

Spirit possess, they do not possess from themselves but from the Father.”⁵⁷ Owen explains further, “The Father is of none, is *autautos*. The Son is begotten of the Father, having the glory of the only-begotten Son of God, and so is *autotheos* in respect of his nature, essence, and being, not in respect of his personality [i.e., personhood, subsistence], which he hath of the Father. The Spirit is of the Father and the Son.”⁵⁸ Understanding this, we may (must) confess both the aseity of the Son and the eternal communication of the divine essence from the Father to the Son.

Radiance, Image, Word

Scripture communicates this same truth of consubstantiality and fromness also by the use of different figures. The first we will consider is “radiance.” The author of Hebrews begins his epistle by saying that in these last days God has (1) spoken to us in His (2) Son, through whom also He (3) made the world. In this context of sonship, speaking, and creation, he says, “And He [the Son] is the radiance of [the Father’s] glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb 1:3). “Exact representation” translates *χαρακτήρ*, which refers to the imprint of a seal or a stamp. When one dips a stamp in ink and presses it on a page, that stamp produces the exact representation of its design on the paper. Hebrews says the Son is the perfect imprint of the Father’s nature, a figure that communicates consubstantiality with remarkable clarity.

But the passage also says the Son is the radiance (*ἀπαύγασμα*) of the Father’s glory, which speaks to fromness. Both the Father and the Son shine in glory, but the Son’s shining somehow proceeds from the Father’s shining. The term *ἀπαύγασμα* is itself prefixed with the preposition *ἀπὸ* (“from”), and so it has overtones of procession. Scott Swain describes it this way: “Just as light naturally radiates its brightness, so too God naturally radiates his Son.”⁵⁹ In other words, the concepts of Sonship and “exact-representation-and-radiance” present in Hebrews 1 both denote consubstantiality and fromness. These truths are the foundation for the Nicene Creed’s confession of faith in Christ as “begotten [sonship] of the Father before all worlds, God [exact representation] of God, Light of Light [radiance], very God of very God.”

Paul points to the same truths of consubstantiality and fromness in Colossians 1. Also in a context in which He speaks of Christ as Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos (1:16–17), he calls Christ “the *image* [*εἰκὼν*] of the invisible God” (1:15). Genesis 5

⁵⁷ Petrus van Maastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 2:561–62. John Webster summarizes it similarly, “In the terminology of post-Reformation divinity, the Son is still *autotheos*. He is this, not in respect of his person (which he has from the Father), but in respect of the common aseity which he has as a sharer in the one divine essence. The Father is a se in his person (as the principium of the triune life); the Son a se only in his divine essence. ‘The Son is God from himself although not the Son from himself.’” John Webster, *God without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology: Volume 1: God and the Works of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2018), 37.

⁵⁸ John Owen, *The Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated*, in *The Works of John Owen*, 12:392. Van Maastricht makes the same observation: “Accordingly, although the Son and the Holy Spirit are *autotheos*, God from himself, even so they are not *autoprosopa*, persons from themselves.... Nor does it lead to Sabellianism, for, although the essential deity is made common, even so personal aseity remains proper to the Father.” *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 2:561–62.

⁵⁹ Scott R. Swain, “The Radiance of the Father’s Glory: Eternal Generation, the Divine Names, and Biblical Interpretation,” in *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, 41.

gives insight to the interplay between sonship/begottenness and image-bearing. According to Genesis 5:3, a son is begotten in his father's image: "Adam ... *begat* (ἔτεκε; LXX: γεννάω) a son in his own likeness, according to his *image* [LXX: εἰκόν]." What does this mean? Well, Seth was of the same substance or nature as his father; he was human like Adam was human, and thus consubstantial. But Seth was not the same person as his father; he proceeded *from* him. The same is true with Christ, the divine Son. The Son is not the Father, but He is the perfect reproduction of Him: His image, begotten in the likeness of His Father, just as Genesis 5 says of Seth. Just as the image reflected back to you in a mirror is not modified or altered in any way, so also all that the Father is, the Son is (consubstantiality). But just as an image is distinct from and derivative of the archetype it represents, the Son is what He is by virtue of what He receives from the Father (fromness)—i.e., the eternal communication of the divine essence.

In fact, the Apostle John begins his Gospel similar to the letter to the Hebrews. Hebrews says in these last days God has spoken (that is, spoken His Word) to us in His Son (Heb 1:3), and John says there was an eternal Word (John 1:1) who is the only begotten Son (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). Hebrews says through this Son God made the world (Heb 1:2), and John says without Him was not anything made that has been made (John 1:3). Thus, in this similar conceptual context, it is not unreasonable to conclude that when John calls Jesus "the Word," he intends to communicate these same truths of consubstantiality and fromness.

As to consubstantiality, it is worth observing that, according to Scripture, God's Word is as God Himself. In the first place, we recognize this to be true of men. You can identify a man with his word. The way you treat my words is the way you treat me. If you ignore the words I speak to you, you are ignoring me. If you heed my words, you are listening to me. Inasmuch as my word is conceived in my mind before it is uttered from my lips, my words are as my thoughts—the products of my own mind. And my mind is a faculty of my soul; my mind is *me*, in that sense. Thus, a man's word is as the man himself.

But Scripture also testifies to the truth that God's Word is as God Himself. This is why 1 Samuel 3:21 says, "Yahweh appeared ... at Shiloh ... *by the word* of Yahweh." Yahweh appears by His Word. In other words, if Yahweh's Word is there, Yahweh Himself is there. God's Word is as God Himself. Further, God's Word is as His own name—i.e., His own character, or nature. Psalm 138:2 says of God, "You have magnified Your *word* above all Your *name*." In Revelation 3:8, Jesus says to the church of Philadelphia, "You have a little power, and have kept My *word*, and have not denied My *name*." To keep Jesus' Word is to not deny His name, because these are synonymous concepts. God's Word is as God Himself. Thus, for John to call the Son "the Word" of God is to identify the Son *as* God, fully consubstantial with the Father.

"Word" also communicates fromness, or procession. A man's word proceeds forth from him, whether in thought or in actual utterance. Isaiah 55:11 says this about God's Word, when God speaks of "My Word which *goes forth* from My mouth." God's Word is as God Himself (consubstantiality), and God's Word is *from* God (fromness). Here again are the essential markers of the doctrine of eternal generation. The great Bible commentator Matthew Henry puts it this way: "There is the word *conceived*, that is, *thought*, which is the first and only immediate *product* and

conception of the soul..., and it is *one* with the soul. And thus the second person in the Trinity is fitly called *the Word*; for he is the *first-begotten of the Father*, that eternal essential Wisdom which the [Father] possessed, as the soul does its thought.”⁶⁰ John Gill agrees, writing that the Son is “called [Word] from his nature, being begotten of the Father; for as the word, whether silent or expressed, is the birth of the mind, the image of it, equal to it, and distinct from it; so Christ is the only begotten of the Father, the express image of his person, in all things equal to him, and a distinct person from him.”⁶¹

Therefore, from before there was a beginning, the Father eternally communicated the fullness of the whole divine essence to the Son, in this incomprehensible, inexpressible act, internal to the life of the Triune God Himself, which we call the mystery of eternal generation. Eternal generation is what it means for the second person of the Trinity to be the image of God, the perfect representation of the Father. Eternal generation is what it means for Him to be the radiance of the Father’s glory, eternally shining forth from the Father. Eternal generation is what it means for Him to be the Word, eternally uttered by the Father. Eternal generation is what it means for the second person of the Trinity to be the Son, eternally begotten of the Father.

Conclusion

How can we summarize? The key question that all Trinitarians must answer is: How can (a) the Son be God just as the Father is, (b) there be only one God, and (c) the Son not be the Father? How can we account for the fact that the Son is equal to the Father and yet a distinct person from the Father? What makes the Son the Son? The answer that Scripture gives, and the answer that the most ancient ecumenical council gives, is eternal generation: consubstantiality and fromness; the eternal communication of the divine essence from the Father to the Son. This is what makes the Son the Son. This is how the architects of the formal doctrine of the Trinity defended that doctrine against its earliest enemies. Without it, there is no consistent Trinitarianism.

And then, as a word of application, having considered these truths, lay hold of the weight and gravity of what the Apostle John says in John 1:14 that it was the *eternal Son* who became flesh: “and we beheld *His* glory, glory as of the *only begotten* of the Father.” This glory that the Apostles beheld in this Word become flesh was not a pillar of cloud or pillar of fire, nor the shekinah glory that went out from the temple of Solomon over the Mount of Olives. No, “Something greater than the temple is here” (Matt 12:6). The only begotten Son is here. The eternal radiance of the Father’s glory is here. The very image of the invisible God is here. The One to whom the Father has given to have life-in-Himself is here. John says, “We beheld the glory of the eternally generated Son.” Because that is so, we can sing, at

⁶⁰ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume 5: Matthew to John*, electronic version, John 1, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/john/1.html> (accessed May 2025).

⁶¹ John Gill, *Exposition of the Whole Bible*, electronic version, John 1, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/john/1.htm> (accessed May 2025).

Christmastime, and every day of the year, “God of God, / Light of Light eternal, / Lo, He abhors not the virgin’s womb! / Very God, begotten, not created! / O come, let us adore Him.”

It was this One, “who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man. *He* suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven.” If man is to be reconciled to God, we need a mediator—one who can “lay his hand upon” both God and man (Job 9:33). The only way He could be fit to make us *adopted* sons of God by His work of mediation, is if He was the *eternal* Son of God by His very nature. The only way in which the Son “gives life to whom He wishes” (John 5:21) is if the Father, who has life in Himself, “gave to the Son also to have life in Himself” (John 5:26) from eternity. As one man put it, “If he is not eternally generated, what hope do we have that we will be regenerated? Unless he is born from the Father from all eternity, we have little confidence we will be born again and enter the kingdom of the Son.”⁶²

⁶² Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 210.

The Creed of Nicaea – 325

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 of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;

by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth;

who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;

He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven;

and he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

But those who say: “There was a time when he was not;” and “He was not before he was made;” and “He was made out of nothing,” or “He is of another substance” or “essence,” or “The Son of God is created,” or “changeable,” or “alterable”—they are condemned by the catholic and apostolic Church.

The Creed of Nicaea – 325

Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἓνα Θεὸν Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, πάντων ὀρατῶν τε καὶ ἀοράτων ποιητὴν·

καὶ εἰς ἓνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς μονογενῆ, τούτεστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς, Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ, Φῶς ἐκ Φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί,

δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο, τὰ τε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς·

τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα καὶ σαρκωθέντα καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα,

παθόντα, καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς,

καὶ ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς.

Καὶ εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα.

Τοὺς δὲ λέγοντας, ὅτι ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, καὶ πρὶν γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν, καὶ ὅτι ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐγένετο, ἢ ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας φάσκοντας εἶναι, ἢ κτιστόν, ἢ τρεπτόν, ἢ ἀλλοιωτόν τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τούτους ἀναθεματίζει ἡ καθολικὴ καὶ ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

**The Nicene Creed
(Constantinople I) – 381**

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;

by whom all things were made;

who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;

was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;

and he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father *[and the Son]*, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**The Nicene Creed
(Constantinople I) – 381**

Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεὸν Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς, ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀοράτων.

Καὶ εἰς ἕνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί·

δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο·

τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα,

σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, καὶ παθόντα καὶ ταφέντα, καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς γραφάς, καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καὶ καθεζόμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Πατρὸς,

καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς· οὗ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος.

Καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ Κύριον, τὸ ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς *[filioque]* ἐκπορευόμενον, τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον, τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν.

Εἰς μίαν, ἁγίαν, καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν· ὁμολογοῦμεν ἓν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν· προσδοκοῦμεν ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν, καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. Ἀμήν.

The Creed of Nicaea – 325

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 of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;

by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth;

who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;

He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven;

and he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

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was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;

and he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

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