

CHURCH HISTORY: THE THIRD AGE (312-591)

THE COUNCIL OF NICEA



**IN THE BEGINNING WAS
THE WORD, AND THE
WORD WAS WITH GOD,
AND THE WORD WAS
GOD.**

John 1:1

THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS PRE-STATE SOLUTIONS

- ▶ Initially, all theological controversies were settled by solid arguments and a holy life
 - ▶ Jews & Gentile Converts
 - ▶ Gnosticism
 - ▶ Restoration of the lapsed
- ▶ They were all bitter and significant controversies
- ▶ Civil authorities paid no attention to them, so Christians never appealed to them

Cyprian and Justina



THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS POLITICAL SOLUTIONS

- ▶ After Constantine, the state begins to get involved
 - ▶ The empire was interested in unity
 - ▶ The state will begin to force theological agreement
- ▶ After a while, the participants didn't try to convince their opponents, they tried to convince the emperors
 - ▶ Political intrigue eclipses theological debate

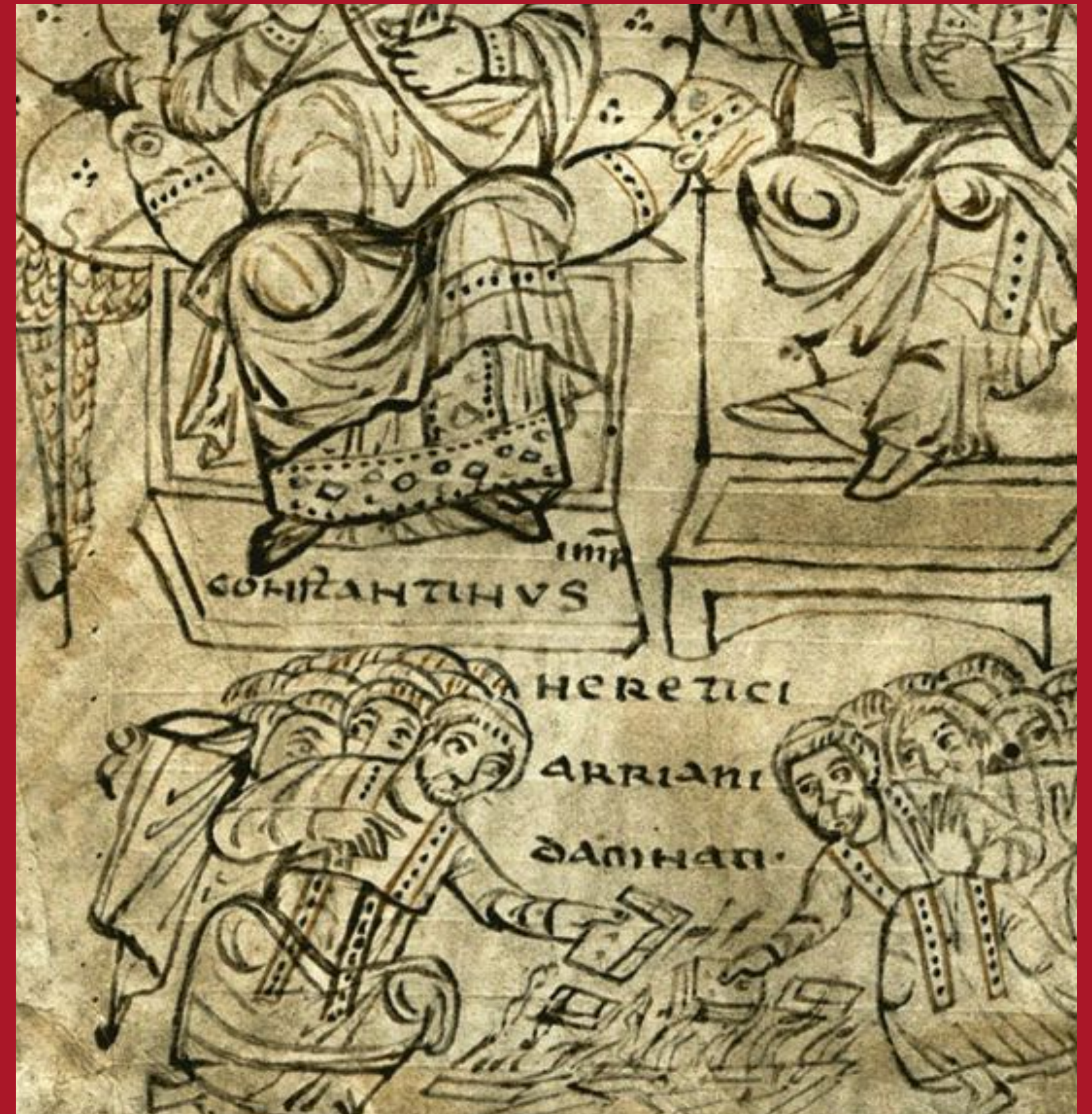
Constantine I



POLITICS & TRUTH LIGHT IN THE MIDST OF CONFUSION

- ▶ The Arian controversy was a local conflict between a bishop and a priest
 - ▶ Constantine felt the need to intervene
 - ▶ Political maneuvering was on both sides
- ▶ It is hopeful and surprising that the church still rejected error for truth
 - ▶ Politics are always present, but the church pursued truth despite politics

The burning of Arius' books by Constantine



EARLY CHRISTIAN BELIEFS THE NATURE OF CHRIST

- ▶ Early Christians were monotheists, they believed in ONE God (Like the Jews)
 - ▶ They also held that Jesus was God (unlike the Jews)
- ▶ They held that belief without real understanding on how to express it in words

Shema Yisrael



“THE DEITY OF CHRIST IS PROFESSED IN THE OLDEST SURVIVING CHRISTIAN SERMON, IN THE OLDEST SURVIVING REPORT OF THE DEATH OF A CHRISTIAN MARTYR, IN THE OLDEST PAGAN REPORT OF A CHURCH SERVICE, AND IN THE OLDEST SURVIVING LITURGICAL PRAYER.”

Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*

PRE-NICENE TRINITARIAN LANGUAGE WORSHIP OF THE TRINITY

- ▶ Long before 325 AD, Christians worshipped the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
 - ▶ They approached this more as witnesses to the faith, than interpreters of it
 - ▶ They accepted, preached, and lived it

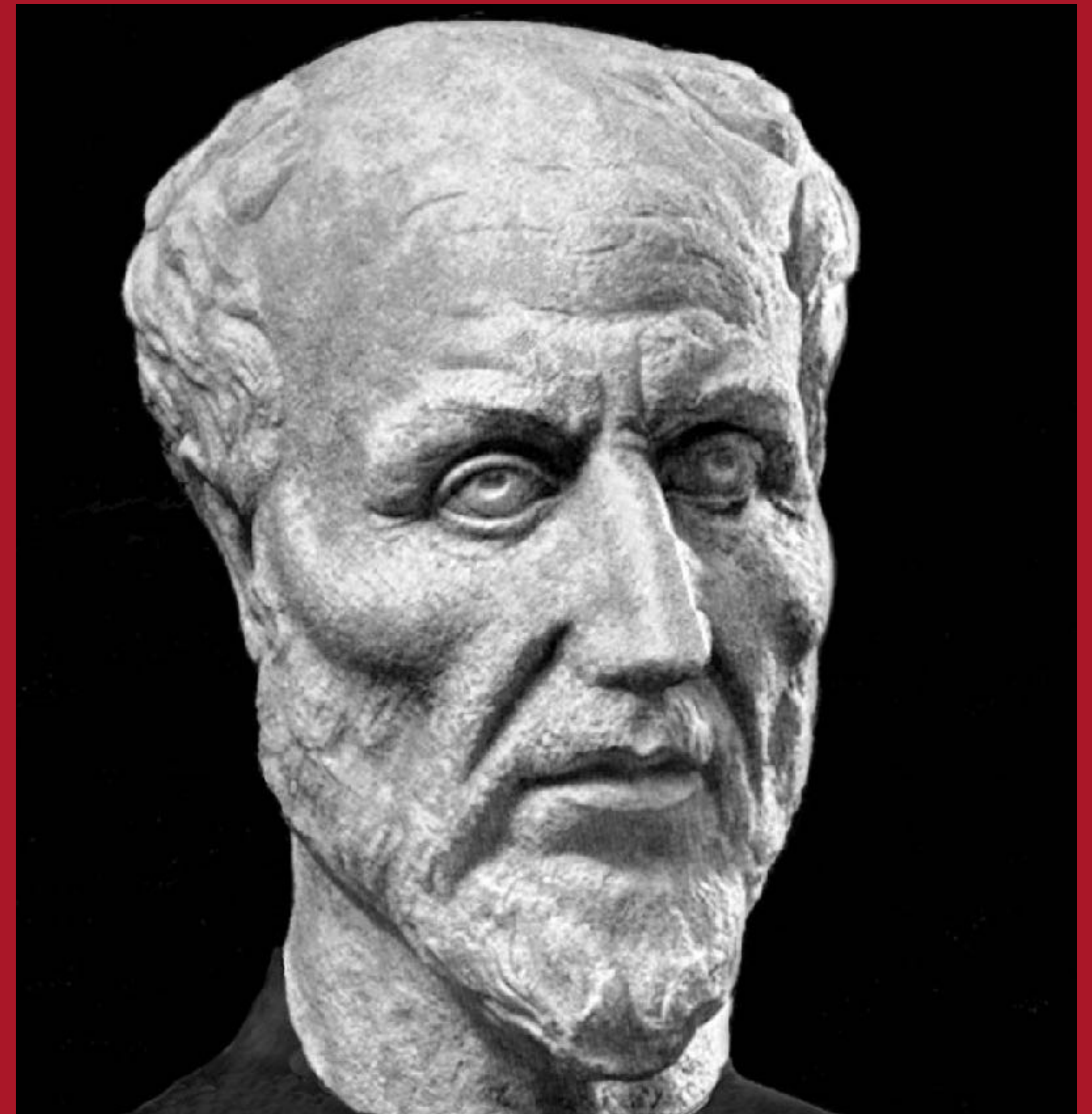
Clement of Rome, author of the oldest surviving Sermon



EXPLAINING THE INVISIBLE GOD THE ANSWER TO THE PAGANS

- ▶ The Arian controversy is rooted in clarifying and codifying early Christian teaching
 - ▶ Early Christians, in answer to Pagan society, expressed their 'invisible true God' as the same god that the Pagan philosopher's espoused
 - ▶ Plato, Plotinus, and others believed there was a supreme being
 - ▶ Some also declared the pagan 'gods' were human creations

Plotinus



THE PERFECTION OF GOD

GREEK PHILOSOPHICAL CONFUSION

- ▶ Some Christians spoke of God (not like the prophets and other writers) but like the philosophers
- ▶ What is perfection according to Greek philosophy? i.e., what is God?
 - ▶ immutable, impassible, fixed
- ▶ The Old Testament gives a picture of a God who expresses emotion, who relents of planned destructions, who hears the pleas of his people and changes his stated goal
 - ▶ Not immutable, impassible, or fixed like the Greek version

Abraham pleading for Sodom



LOGOS THEOLOGY

JUSTIN MARTYR, CLEMENT, ORIGEN

- ▶ Early Christian fathers explained the difference between God's perfection (Greek view) and God's emotional expressions (Old Testament view) by the Logos theology
 - ▶ The LOGOS, word, or 'reason of God' is the personal, direct communication of God to man
- ▶ The LOGOS theology was the beginning point or source of the Arian controversy

Justin Martyr



PRESERVING THE DIVERSITY OF THE GODHEAD SUBORDINATIONISM

- ▶ Subordinationism shows God the Father, subordinate to Him is Christ, under Christ is the Holy Spirit
 - ▶ God the Father is at the top, then Christ, then the Spirit
- ▶ There are three definite 'persons'
- ▶ This view denies the equality and unity of the Trinity

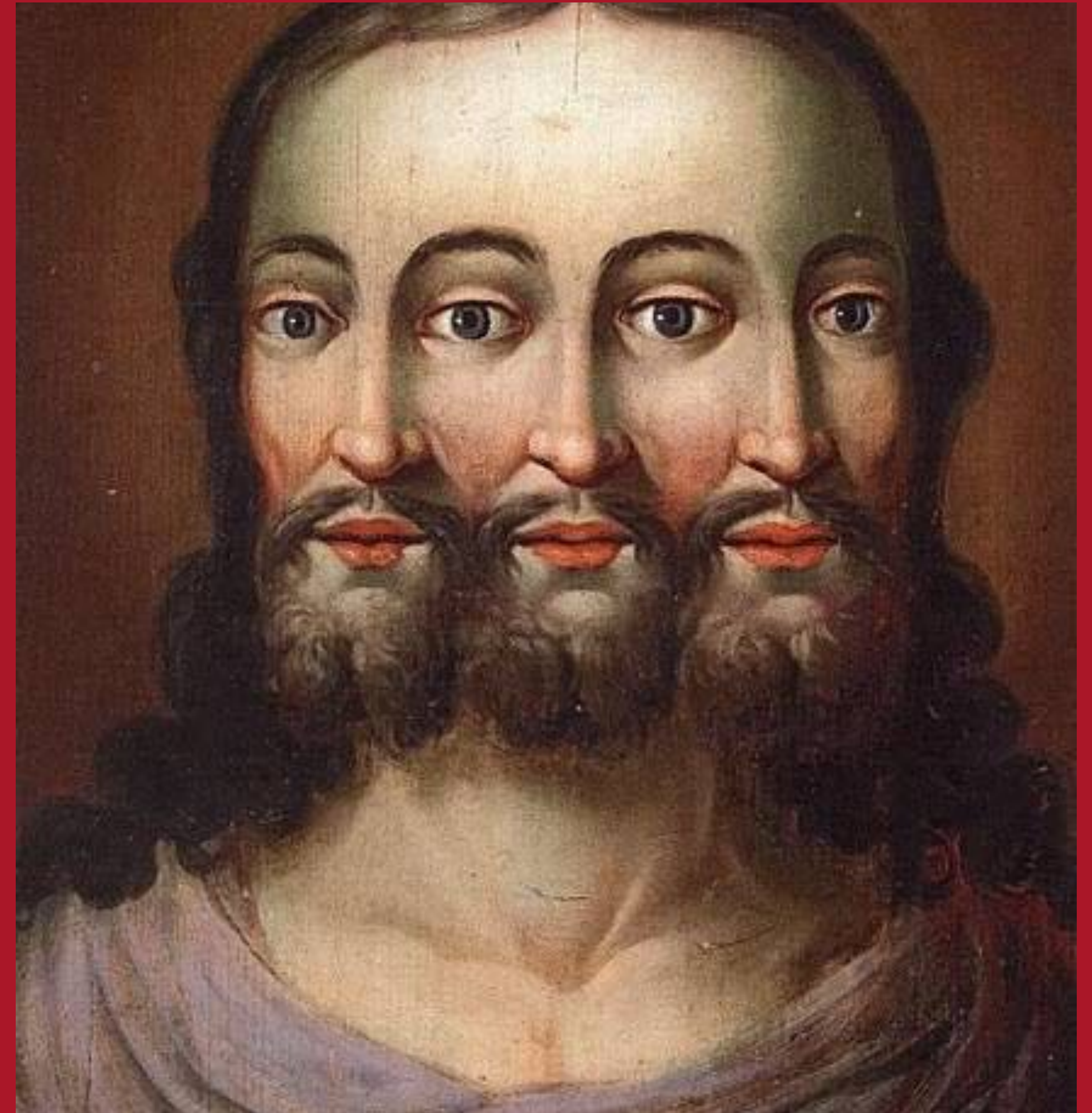
Trinitarian Image



PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD MONARCHIANISM (MODALISM)

- ▶ There is one God (not three levels of God)
 - ▶ One God appears in different modes of being
 - ▶ He appears as Father and we call him Father
 - ▶ In like manner, the Son and the Holy Spirit
- ▶ Monarchianism preserves the 'oneness' of God, though loses all real personhood of the Father, Son, and Spirit

Trinitarian Image



THE DEITY OF CHRIST

TERTULLIAN'S FORMULA

- ▶ Tertullian created words that helped us to clarify the nature of God
 - ▶ He probably invented the word 'Trinitas'
 - ▶ He also came up with the words 'substantia' and 'personae'
- ▶ 'God is one substance existing in three persons'- Trinity
- ▶ The questions were over the exact meaning of substance and persons
 - ▶ Both could be misinterpreted or twisted

Tertullian of Carthage



'ALWAYS GOD, ALWAYS THE SON.'

Alexander of Alexandria

ALEXANDER OF ALEXANDRIA

WHO IS CHRIST?

- ▶ Alexander was the Bishop at Alexandria
 - ▶ Alexandria, Egypt (the great city of learning)
 - ▶ Home to much intellectual curiosity
 - ▶ Gnostics, Origen's theology
- ▶ He taught that the LOGOS or the Word of God, was co-eternal with God
- ▶ 'At the same time the Father, at the same time the Son.'

Alexander of Alexandria



**'IF GOD AND CHRIST WERE EQUAL, THEN
CHRIST SHOULD BE CALLED GOD'S BROTHER,
NOT GOD'S SON.'**

Arius of Alexandria

ARIUS OF ALEXANDRIA (PRESBYTER) WHO IS CHRIST?

- ▶ Arius argued that the Word of God was not co-eternal
 - ▶ If the Word was not co-eternal, the Word was not divine
 - ▶ Jesus was not fully God
- ▶ Arius would claim that Jesus (or the Word) was the first created thing

Arian Baptistry in Ravenna



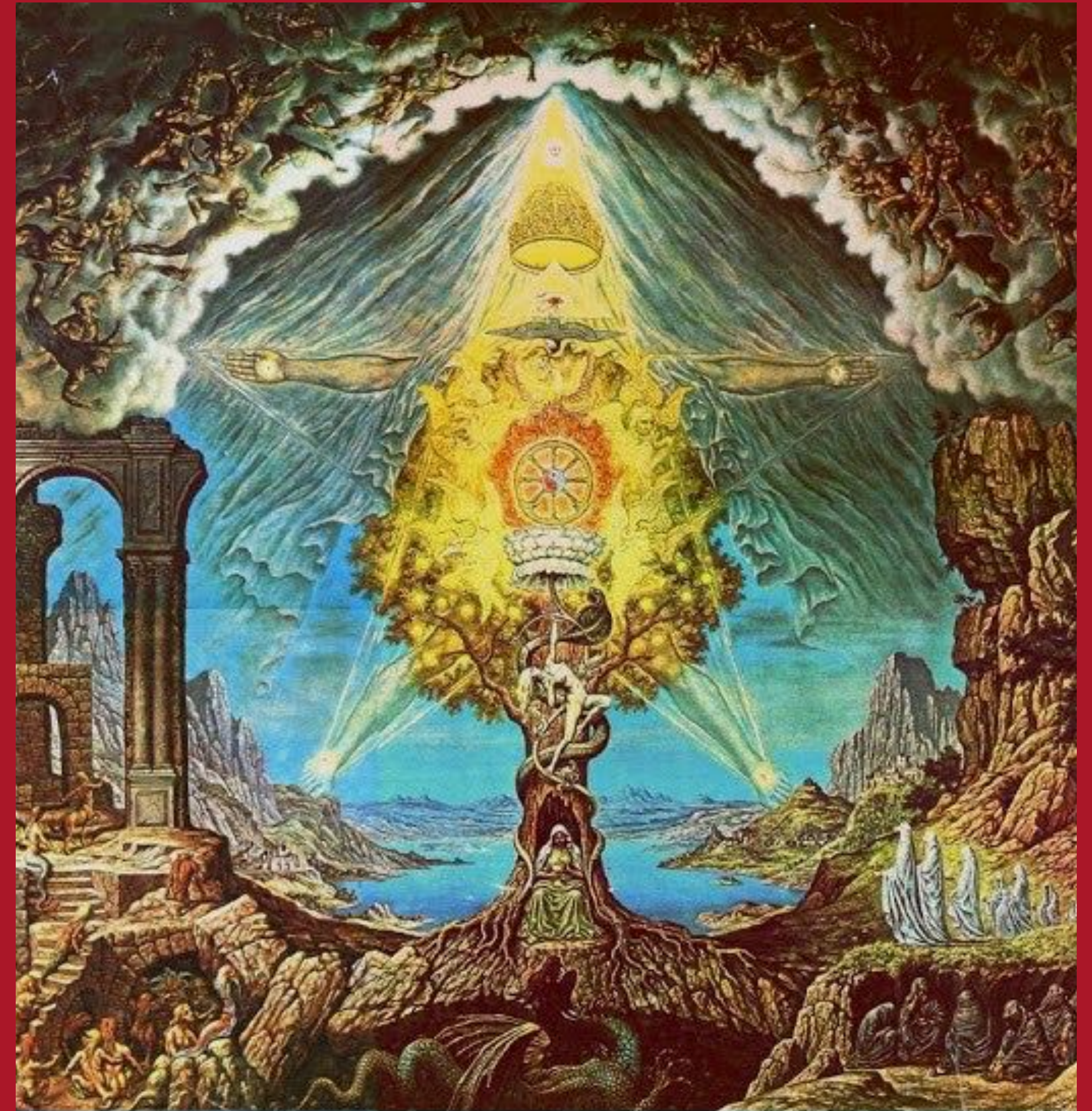
**'THERE WAS A TIME WHEN HE
WAS NOT.'**

Arius of Alexandria

ALEXANDRIAN ACCEPTANCE GNOSTIC INFLUENCE

- ▶ Gnostic beliefs included multiple Demi-gods or demiurges
 - ▶ Half gods that were separating God and man
 - ▶ Gnostics believed a demiurge created the evil material world full of suffering
- ▶ The Gnostic influence made Arius' position seem more reasonable

Gnostic Imagery



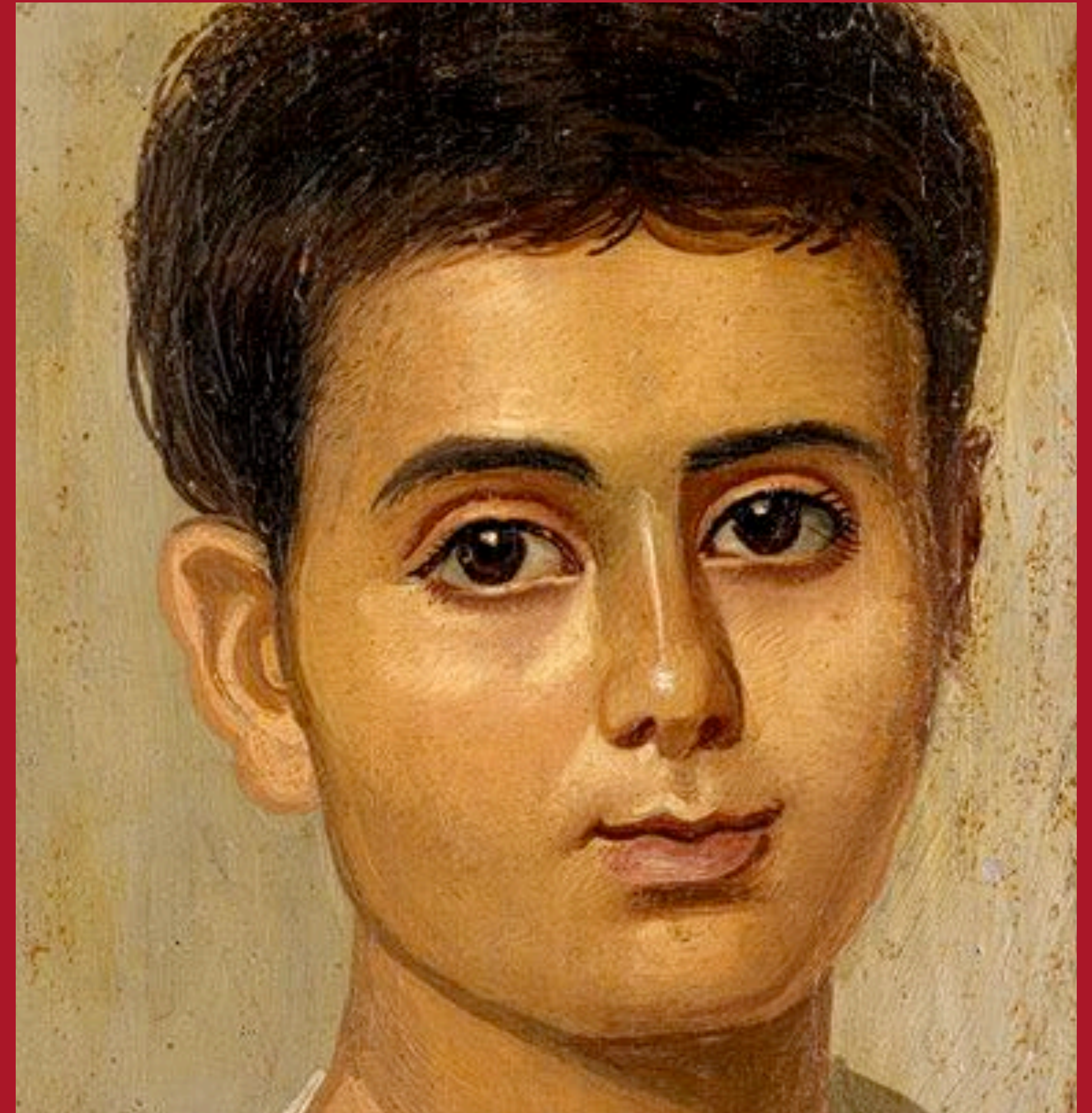
**“AN INCARNATION OF WHAT IS NOT
GOD IN WHAT IS NOT MAN.”**

J.W.C. Wand, on the Arian Christ

THEOLOGICAL DEBATES POLITICAL FERVOR

- ▶ This became a heated debate in the city of Alexandria
- ▶ The whole city became involved in the debate, picking sides with fervor
- ▶ Arius put his views in verse and set them to popular tunes that were sung around town, in bars, etc.
 - ▶ The songs were eventually followed by fights with clubs and fists

Egyptian tomb portrait, 2nd-4th century?



THE SHACK

WHERE TRAGEDY CONFRONTS ETERNITY



WM. PAUL YOUNG

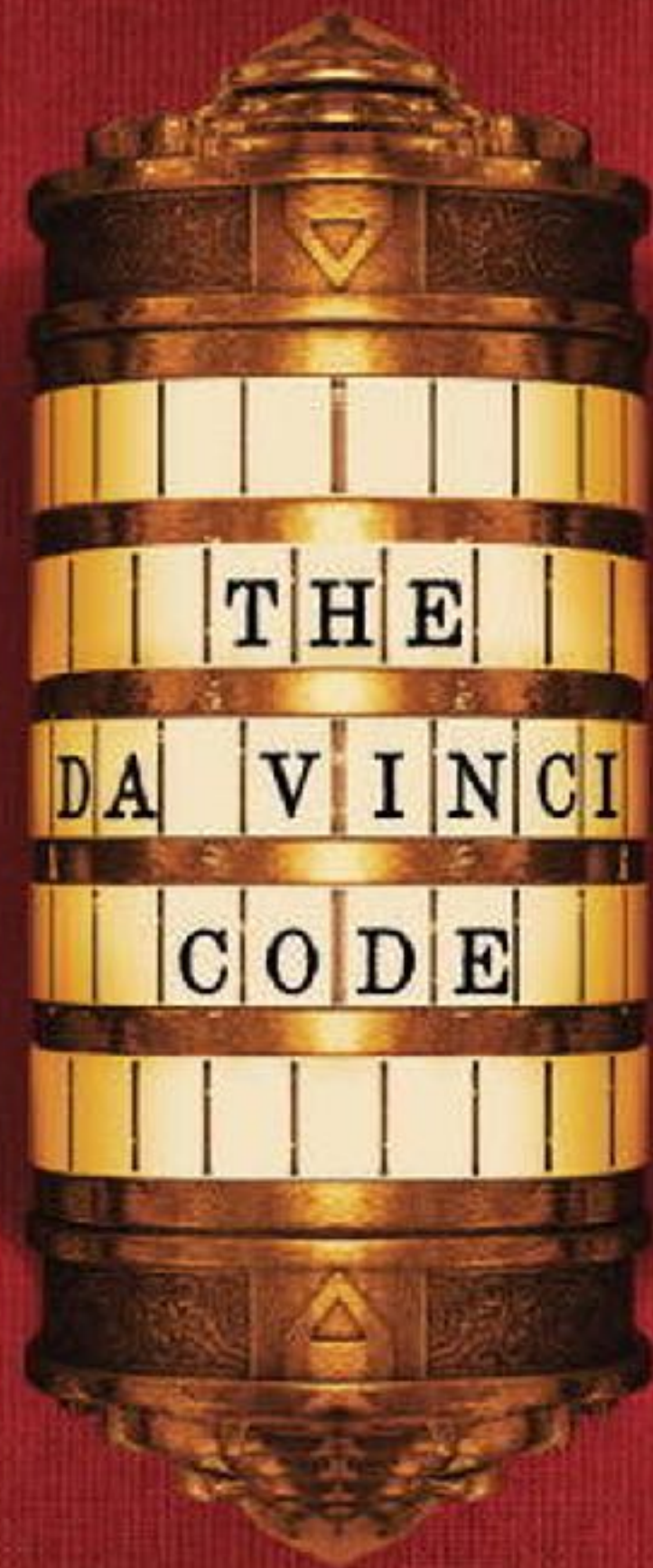
“This book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* did for his. It’s that good!”

**ARIUS OF ALEXANDRIA,
I’M THE TALK OF ALL THE
TOWN, FRIEND OF
SAINTS, ELECT OF
HEAVEN, FILLED WITH
LEARNING AND RENOWN;**

Arius of Alexandria

THE #1 WORLDWIDE BESTSELLER ADAPTED FOR YOUNG ADULTS

DAN BROWN



THE GREATEST CONSPIRACY OF THE PAST
2,000 YEARS IS ABOUT TO UNRAVEL

READ BY PAUL MICHAEL

AN UNABRIDGED PRODUCTION

**IF YOU WANT THE LOGOS-
DOCTRINE, I CAN SERVE
IT STEAMING HOT: GOD
BEGAT HIM, AND BEFORE
HE WAS BEGOTTEN HE
WAS NOT."**

Arius of Alexandria



**EVERYONE ENTERED INTO
IT. MEN WHO MET TO
TRANSACT BUSINESS
NEGLECTED THEIR
BARGAINING TO TALK
THEOLOGY.**

**Gregory of Nyssa,
describing the Arian debate**



**IF ONE SAID TO THE BAKER,
'HOW MUCH IS THAT LOAF
OF BREAD?' THE BAKER
WOULD ANSWER, 'THE SON
IS SUBORDINATE TO THE
FATHER.'"**

**Gregory of Nyssa,
describing the Arian debate**



**IF ONE SENT A SERVANT
ON AN ERRAND, HE
WOULD REPLY, 'THE
SON AROSE OUT OF
NOTHING.'**

**Gregory of Nyssa,
describing the Arian debate**

LOGICAL OUTCOME ALEXANDER & ARIUS' THEOLOGY

- ▶ Arius argued that Alexander denied Christian monotheism
 - ▶ Two divine beings means two gods
- ▶ Alexander argued that Arius denied the divinity of the Word (the divinity of Jesus)
 - ▶ The church that had always worshipped Jesus Christ and if Arius were right, then they must stop worshipping Jesus
 - ▶ or they must worship a creature (a created being)

Jesus the Eternal word of God



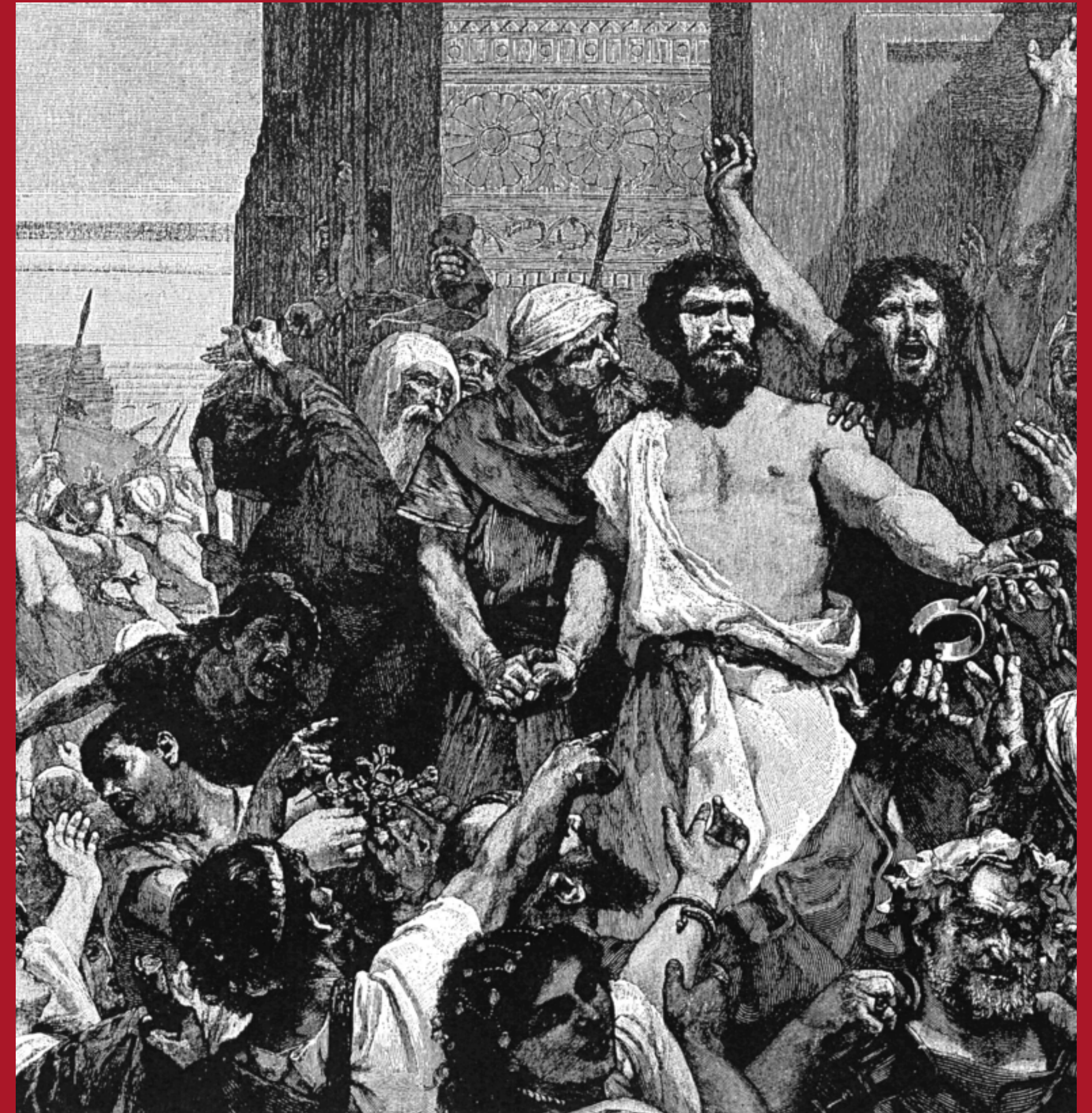
BECAUSE THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD FOR A LIE AND WORSHIPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR, WHO IS BLESSED FOREVER! AMEN.

Romans 1:25

ALEXANDER'S AUTHORITY ARIUS IS OUSTED

- ▶ Alexander claimed his authority and responsibility as a bishop
 - ▶ He removed Arius from all posts in Alexandria
- ▶ Arius appealed to the people of Alexandria and to other bishops throughout the east
- ▶ There began to be popular demonstrations on the street
- ▶ The bishops to whom Arius appealed wrote letters about how Arius was right and Alexander was wrong

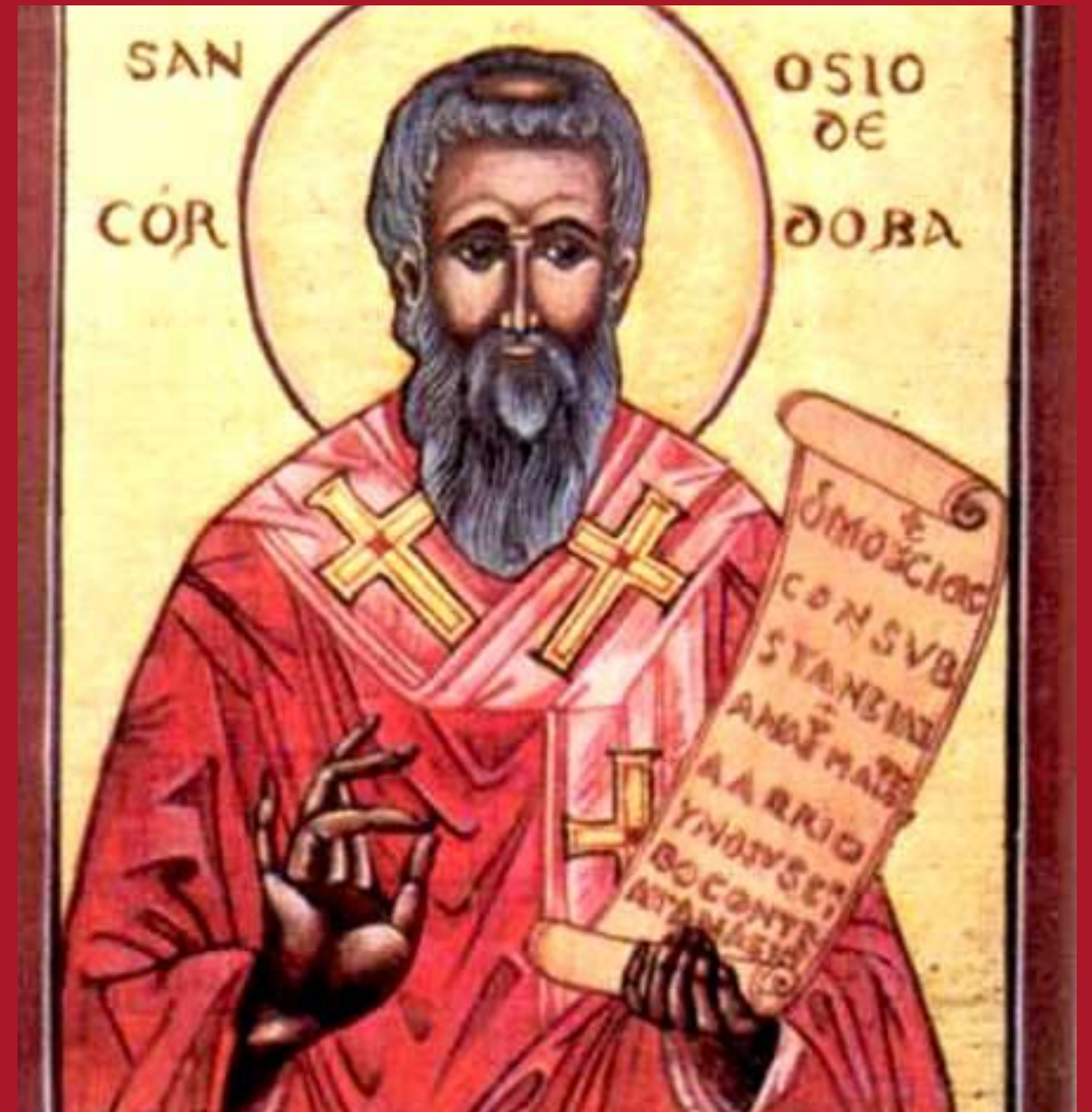
'Give us Barabbas'



THE THREAT OF DIVISION CONSTANTINE'S ROLE

- ▶ This local conflict grew to involve much of the Eastern church
- ▶ Constantine decided to get involved
 - ▶ He sent Bishop *Hosius of Cordova* to try to reconcile the two parties
- ▶ Hosius replied that there would be no reconciliation
- ▶ Constantine called a great assembly or council to resolve the controversies

Hosius of Cordova



(REVIEW IN ORANGE)

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NICENE CREED

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**WHO FOR US MEN AND FOR OUR SALVATION,
CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND WAS MADE
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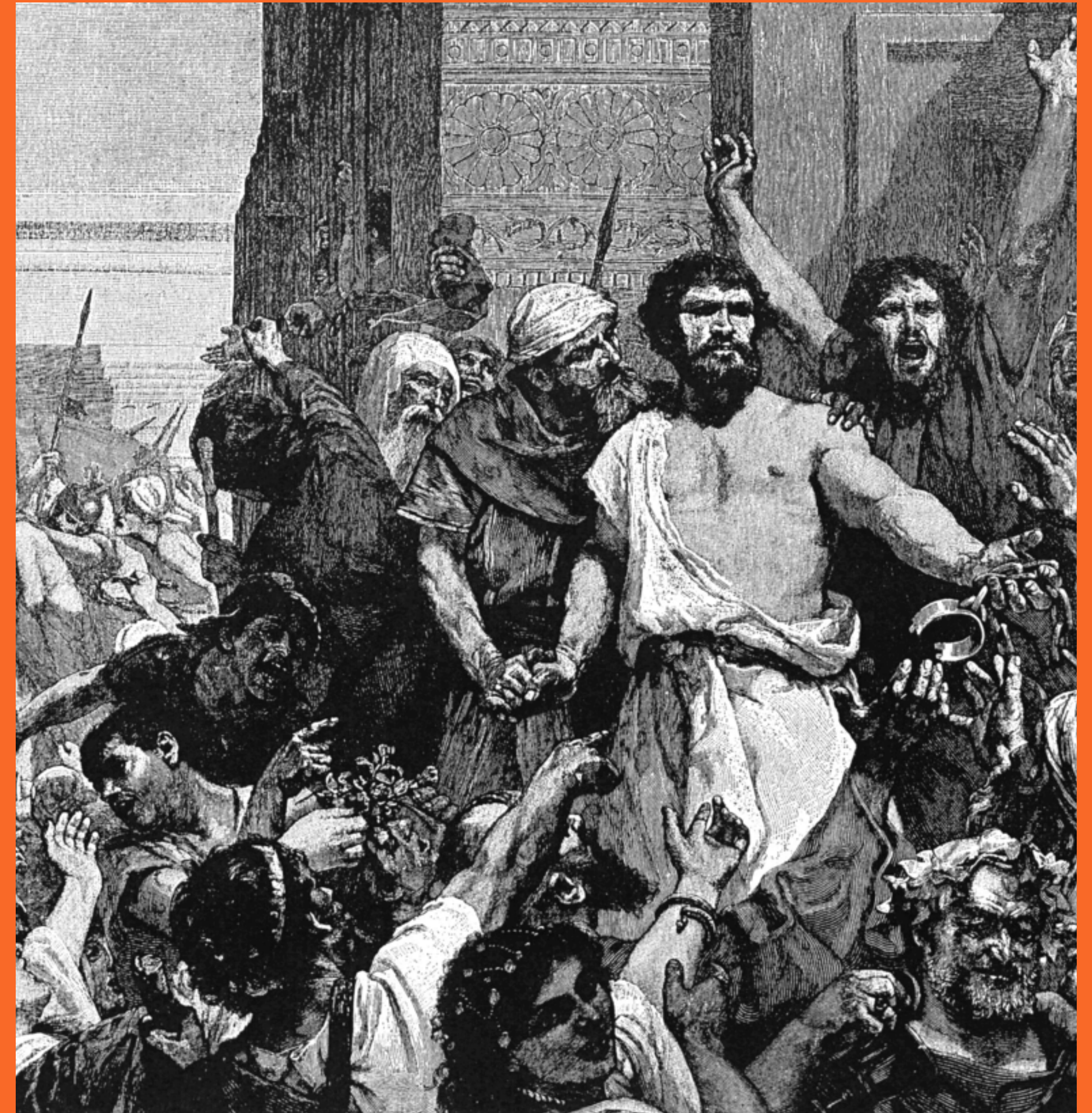
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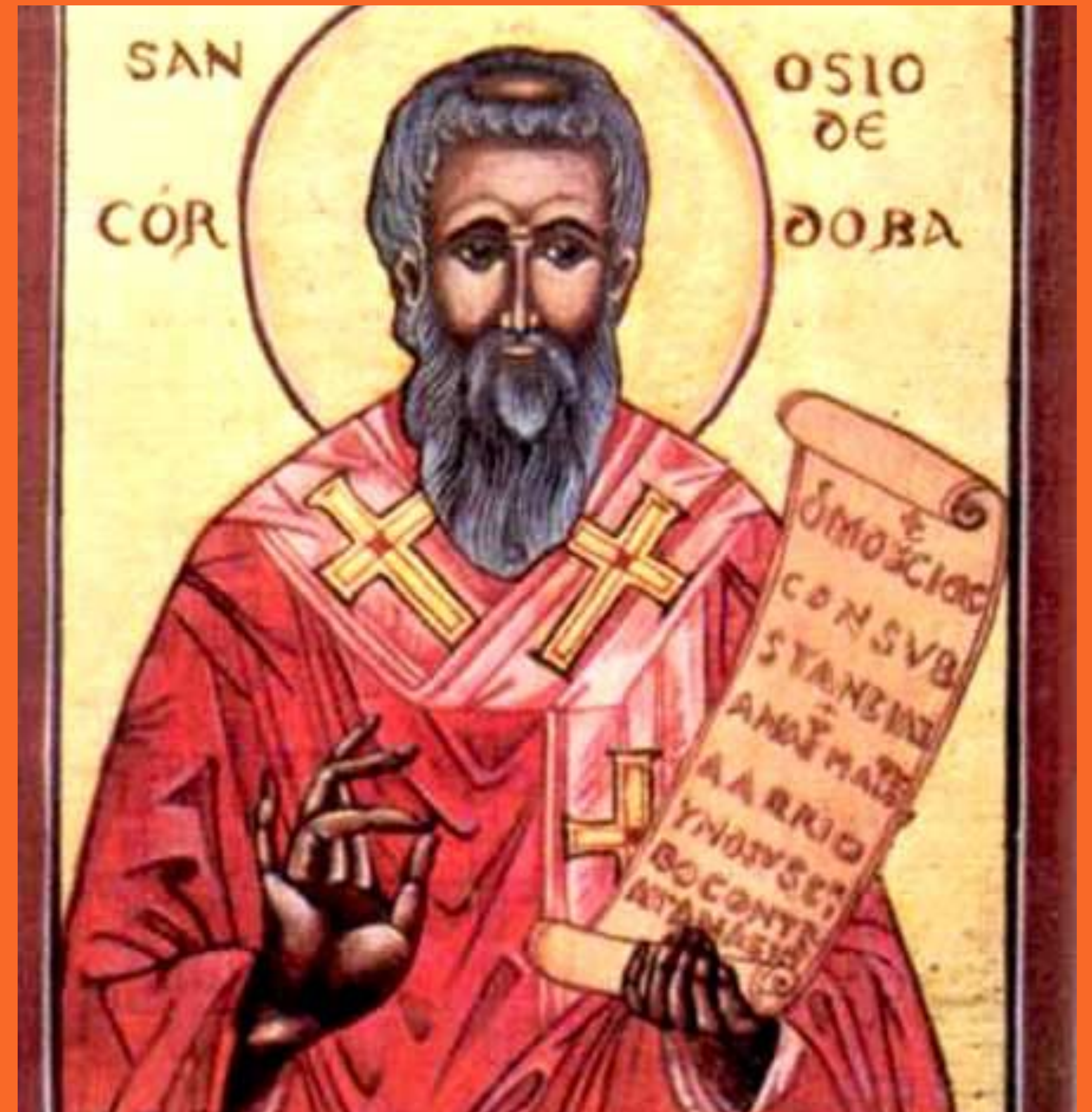
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THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL SIZE AND DIVERSITY

- ▶ Constantine's council was an "ecumenical council" attended by 318 "church fathers"
 - ▶ (around 300, but probably not 318)
 - ▶ A reference to Genesis 14:14 and Abraham's 318 servants
- ▶ included a majority of eastern church leaders (the center of the controversy)
- ▶ included a few western representatives
- ▶ The Emperor covered all travel expenses

Abraham's Army of 318 servants





EXPANSION OF CHRISTIANITY

□ Bishoprics □ Archb. of the Greek Church
 □ Archbishoprics □ Patriarchates

English Miles
 0 50 100 200 300 400



**THERE WERE GATHERED
THE MOST DISTINGUISHED
MINISTERS OF GOD, FROM
THE MANY CHURCHES IN
EUROPE, LIBYA (I.E.,
AFRICA) AND ASIA...**

**Eusebius of Ceasarea
on the Council of Nicea**



...CONSTANTINE IS THE FIRST RULER OF ALL TIME TO HAVE GATHERED SUCH A GARLAND IN THE BOND OF PEACE, AND TO HAVE PRESENTED IT TO HIS SAVIOR AS AN OFFERING OF GRATITUDE FOR THE VICTORIES HE HAD WON OVER ALL HIS ENEMIES.

**Eusebius of Ceasarea
on the Council of Nicea**

THE GOAL OF THE COUNCIL REGULATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ▶ The bishops decided on many legislative matters after the end of the persecutions
 - ▶ Readmission of the lapsed
 - ▶ Election and ordination of presbyters and bishops
 - ▶ Precedence of episcopal sees
- ▶ Settle the Arian Controversy

Alexander of Alexandria



“...THEY WERE MEN OF ACTION, NOT OF SPECULATION; COURAGEOUS PRIESTS AND PASTORS WHO THOUGHT OF THEIR WORK AS LIKE THAT OF SOLDIERS IN OPEN BATTLE, AND WHO WERE READY TO DIE AS ONE DIES FOR HIS COUNTRY.”

B.B. Warfield quoting Paul Sabatier

THE VARIOUS PARTIES THE CONVINCED ARIANS

- ▶ A small number of convinced Arians
 - ▶ Led by Eusebius of Nicomedia
 - ▶ Arius was not a bishop and could not sit in the council
 - ▶ The theology was so obviously correct that it only needed a clear explanation to reveal its logic
 - ▶ They believed the assembly would rebuke Alexander and vindicate Arius

Arius and Nicholas



THE VARIOUS PARTIES ANTI-ARIANS

- ▶ A small group of bishops who were convinced that Arianism threatened the core of Christian Faith
 - ▶ Led by Alexander of Alexandria
 - ▶ A young deacon, Athanasius, was present but could not sit on the council
 - ▶ Athanasius later becomes the 'champion of Nicene Orthodoxy'

Athanasius of Alexandria



THE VARIOUS PARTIES REMAINING PARTIES

- ▶ Latin-Speaking western church fathers had little interest in the debate (considered it an Eastern discussion over Origen)
- ▶ 3-4 held that the Father and Son were the same and that means the Father suffered the passion
 - ▶ 'Patripassianism' These were later condemned as well
- ▶ The majority of these bishops did not belong to any groups
 - ▶ They disliked controversy and hoped to achieve compromise

Rublev's Trinity Icon



EUSEBIUS OF NICOMEDIA DEFENDING ARIANISM

- ▶ Eusebius attempted to give a clear view of Arianism
 - ▶ He was convinced that a clear statement was all that was needed to convince the assembly
- ▶ When the bishops heard his explanation, their reaction was quite different than what he expected
- ▶ The assertion that the Word or Son was only a creature (no matter how high) provoked anger
- ▶ Eusebius was shouted down, his speech was snatched from his hands, torn to shreds, and trampled underfoot

Council of Nicea



“YOU LIE!” “BLASPHEMY!” “HERESY!”

Nicene Church Fathers after hearing Eusebius of Nicomedia

SHIFTING MOODS REJECTION OF ARIANISM

- ▶ At this point, the majority was no longer seeking negotiation or compromise
- ▶ They needed the clearest possible rejection of Arianism
 - ▶ Initially attempted to use several passages of Scripture to refute Arianism
 - ▶ Unfortunately, it is difficult to find biblical texts that would explicitly exclude and reject Arianism (without potential for confusion)

Nicholas striking Arius



YOU HEARD ME SAY TO YOU, 'I AM GOING AWAY, AND I WILL COME TO YOU.' IF YOU LOVED ME, YOU WOULD HAVE REJOICED, BECAUSE I AM GOING TO THE FATHER, FOR THE FATHER IS GREATER THAN I.

John 14:28 , quoted by Arian

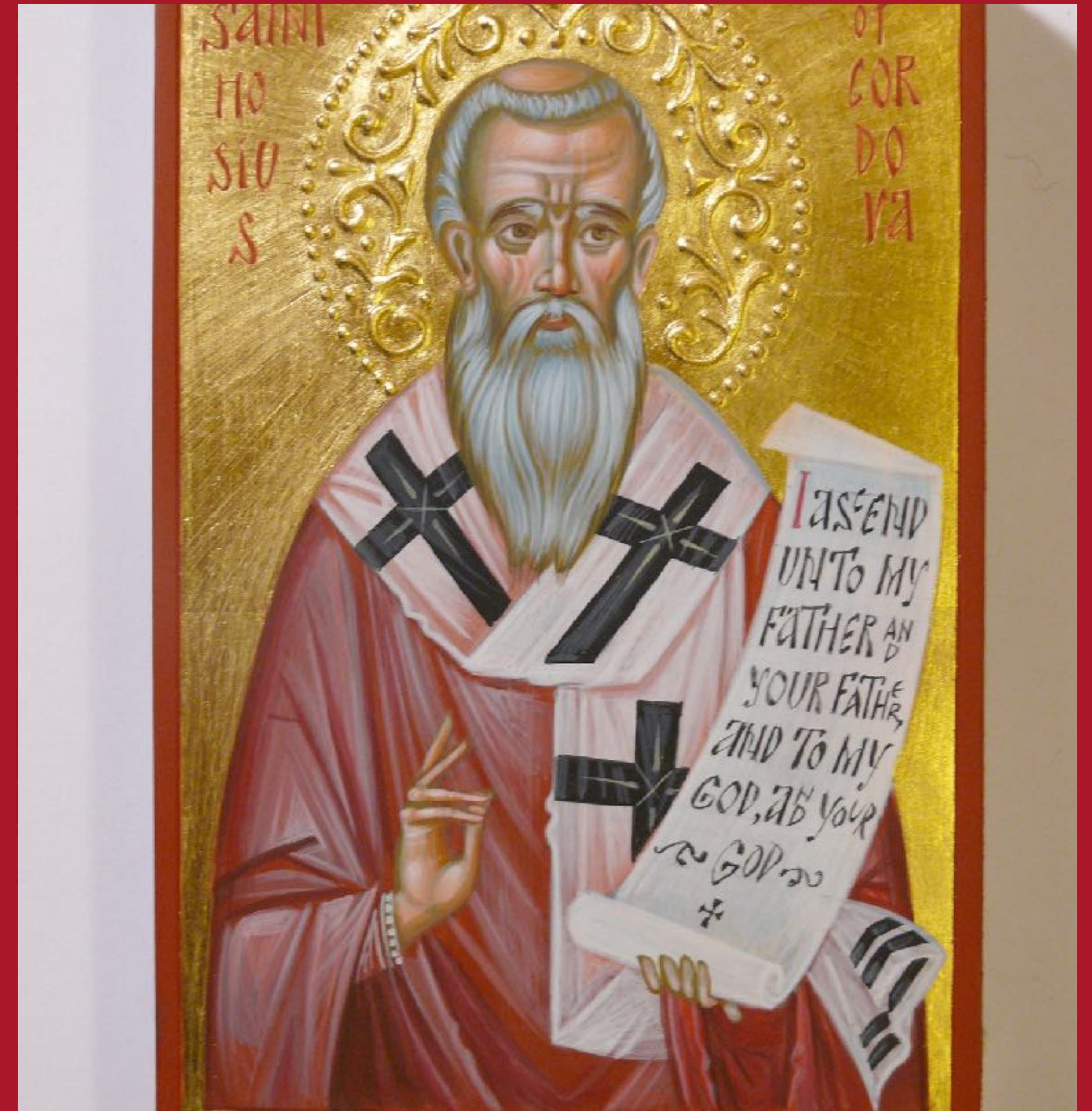
JESUS SAID TO THEM, “TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM.”

John 8:58, Jesus referencing his divinity

LANGUAGE OF THE CREED DEFINING ORTHODOXY

- ▶ *Eusebius of Ceasarea* (not Nicomedia) read the creed of his own church
 - ▶ The creed would be used to firmly and clearly outline both their positive and negative beliefs
 - ▶ What was true and what was false
- ▶ *Hosius of Cordova* suggested adding the term "homousios" or 'same substance' to the creed
- ▶ The assembly settled on the creed that rejected Arianism

Hosius of Cordova



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BEGOTTEN, NOT MADE HOMOIOUS WITH THE FATHER

- ▶ The word *homousios* means that Christ is of one substance with the Father
 - ▶ One essence with the father (in his being)
- ▶ This is a non-scriptural word
- ▶ It was used to control people's understanding of Scriptural language
- ▶ *Homousios*, though not found in the Bible, teaches what's in the Bible

Trinity Icon



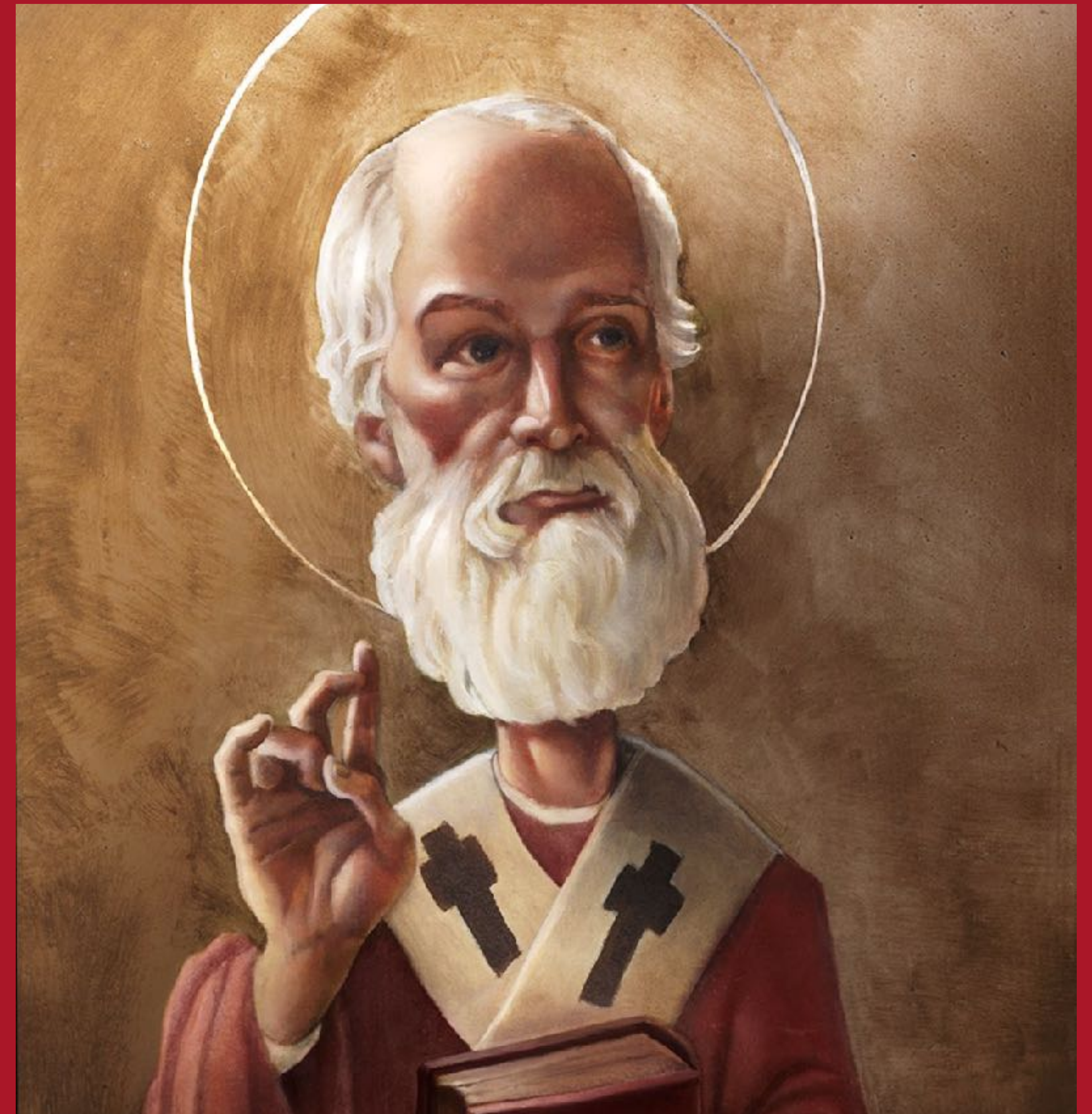
14 AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US, AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

John 1:14 (NKJV)

BEGOTTEN, NOT MADE ONE SUBSTANCE WITH THE FATHER

- ▶ Arians could not accept Christ as *homoousios* with the Father
- ▶ Arians believed that God was begotten, but this means that he came into existence at some point
 - ▶ They argued for begotten meaning a beginning
- ▶ Orthodoxy says the begetting of God is a mystery

Athanasius of Alexandria





THE BEGETTING OF GOD MUST BE HONORED BY SILENCE. IT IS A GREAT THING FOR YOU TO LEARN HE WAS BEGOTTEN. BUT THE MANNER OF HIS GENERATION WE WILL NOT ADMIT THAT EVEN ANGELS CAN CONCEIVE, MUCH LESS YOU.

Gregory of Nazianzuz

GOD OF GOD, LIGHT OF LIGHT THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

- ▶ The Nicene Creed is the most universally accepted Christian Creed
- ▶ The language used is explicit in its proclamation that Jesus is divine as the Father is divine
 - ▶ It is designed to exclude misinterpretations (specifically Arianism)
- ▶ It does not fully explain or define the trinity of Orthodoxy

Nicene Icon



THE COUNCIL ENDS THE EMPEROR APPROVES AND ACTS

- ▶ Those bishops who did not sign the creed were deposed and declared heretical
- ▶ Constantine deposed *and banished* the bishops from the city that did not sign the creed
 - ▶ Most bishops signed (though many duplicitously)
 - ▶ The punishment by the state had larger consequences later on

Statue of Constantine



THE END OF THE ARIANISM? ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA (296–373)

- ▶ The Nicene Creed did not end the Arian Controversy
- ▶ Eusebius of Nicomedia was recalled and became an Advisor of Constantine
 - ▶ He was the bishop that baptized Constantine
 - ▶ An Arian Baptism
- ▶ When the sons of Constantine came to power, Arianism came with them

Baptism of Constantine



**...THE WHOLE WORLD GROANED IN
AMAZEMENT AT FINDING ITSELF ARIAN.**

Jerome (347–420)

**“ATHANASIOUS STOOD FOR PRINCIPLE
AT ANY PRICE, CONSTANTINE FOR
CONCORD AT ANY PRICE.”**

F.F. Bruce