

Church History



Church History

- *Introduction to Church History*
- *The Ancient Church* AD 1st-3rd centuries
- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4th-5th centuries
- *The Early Middle Ages* AD 6th-10th centuries
- *The Age of Crusades* AD 11th-13th centuries
- *The Renaissance* AD 14th-15th centuries
- *Conquest and Reformation* AD 16th century
- *The Age of Enlightenment* AD 17th-18th centuries
- *The Age of Revolution* AD 19th century
- *The Modern Age* AD 20th century
- *The Postmodern Age* AD 21st century



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- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4th-5th centuries
 - *Constantine: The Thirteenth Apostle*
 - *The First Ecumenical Council*



The Rise of Christendom

- Constantine desired to see one, unified Church—and so he *institutionalized* it
325
Constantine convened Council of Nicaea
 - Though he had convened a smaller council in Arles in 314, the Council of Nicaea is considered the first, true, ecumenical Council, since he invited all 1,800 bishops in the world to take part (of whom, 318 actually showed up)
 - In fact, our word, “ecumenical,” comes from the Greek phrase, “οἰκουμένη γῆ” (“oikouménē gē”), which means, “the whole inhabited world”



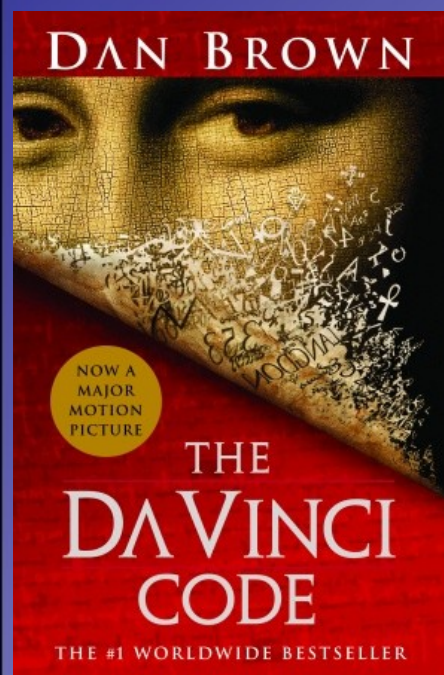
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 - Though he had convened a smaller council in Arles in 314, the Council of Nicaea is considered the first, true, ecumenical Council, since he invited all 1,800 bishops in the world to take part
 - Nicaea was chosen not only because it was centrally located within the Church but also because it was near Byzantium, which Constantine was in the process of converting into his own, *personal* capital city of Constantinople



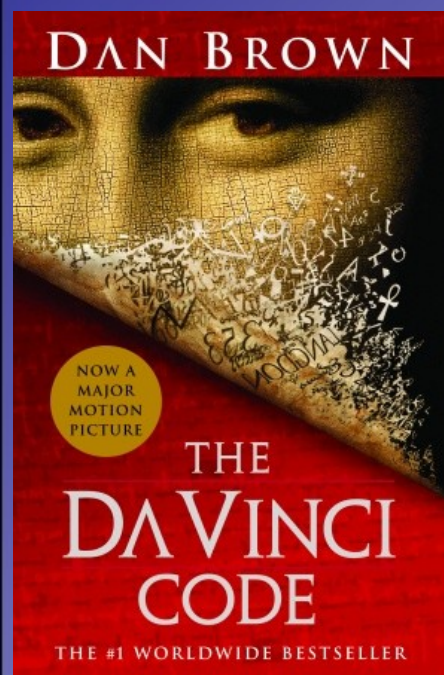
The Rise of Christendom

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Dan Brown (author of *The DaVinci Code*) wrote that at the Council of Nicaea in 325,
 - Constantine shifted the Sabbath from a Jewish Saturday to a Christian Sunday
 - But, as we've seen already, his actions (taken four years earlier) had nothing to do with the Sabbath or Christianity
 - Besides, both Ignatius and Justin Martyr (writing 200 years before Nicaea) had cited Sunday as the Church's new holy day



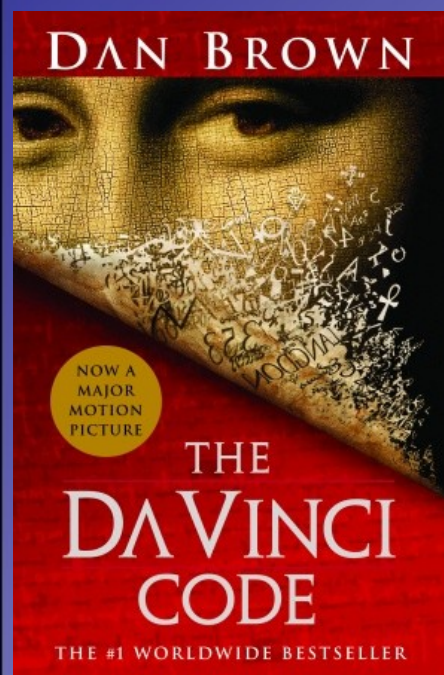
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 - Constantine shifted the Sabbath from a Jewish Saturday to a Christian Sunday
 - Constantine “deified” Jesus Christ
 - “Until *that* moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal... not the Son of God... Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea... A relatively close vote at that...” (from *The DaVinci Code*)
 - This is in reference to a group called the Arians who questioned the otherwise generally accepted doctrine of the full divinity of Christ
 - In a vote, they were defeated 316-2
 - Ironically, Constantine tended to side with the Arians



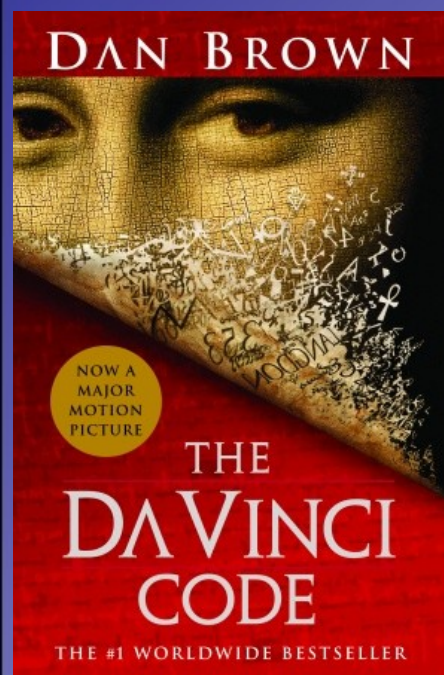
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 - Constantine oversaw the creation of a canon that reflected his own theology
 - “More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John among them... The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great... The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.” (from *The DaVinci Code*)



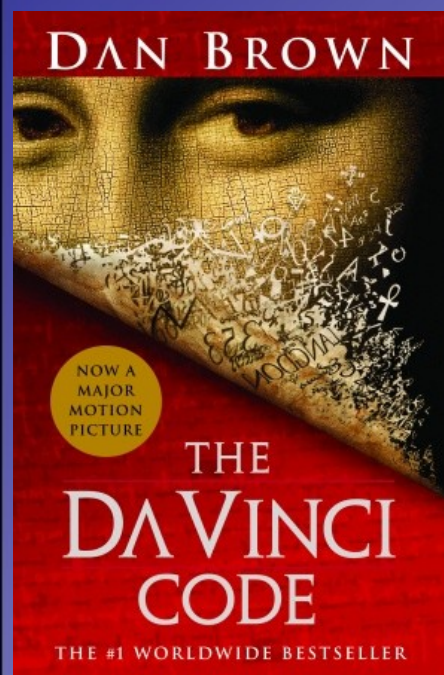
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 - But the four Biblical gospels are the earliest ones that we have
 - The gnostic gospels that Brown favors in his book were written centuries later



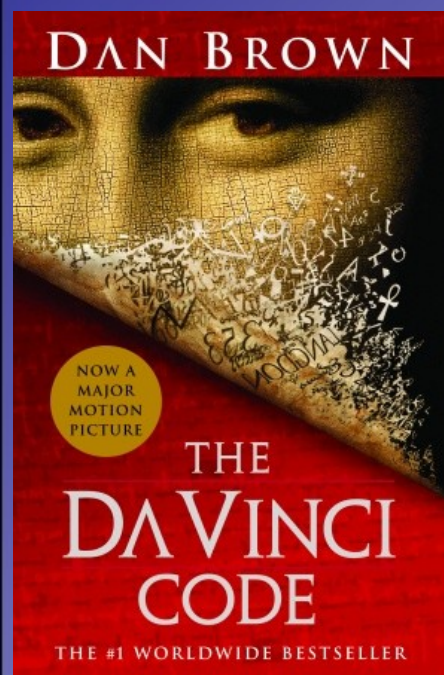
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 - Constantine oversaw the creation of a canon that reflected his own theology
 - But the four Biblical gospels are the earliest ones that we have
 - Christian leaders had supported only those four for centuries—
 - “It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For as there are four quarters of the world in which we live, and four universal winds, and as the Church is dispersed over all the earth, and the gospel is the pillar and base of the Church and the breath of life, so it is natural that it should have four pillars... the four Gospels.” (Irenaeus, writing 150 years before the Council of Nicaea)



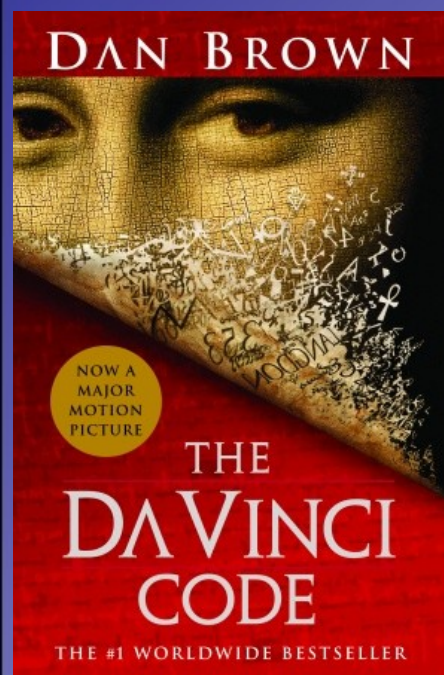
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 - Constantine oversaw the creation of a canon that reflected his own theology
 - But the four Biblical gospels *are* the earliest ones that we have
 - Christian leaders had supported only those four for centuries—
 - “We have approved solely what the church has recognized, which is that only the four Gospels should be accepted.” (*Origen, writing 100 years before the Council of Nicaea*)



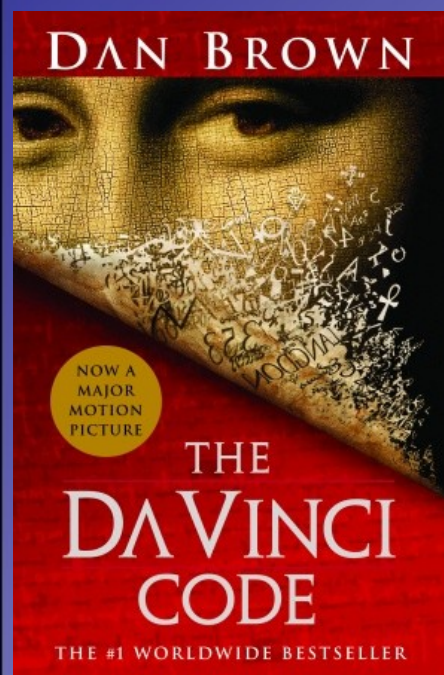
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 - Constantine oversaw the creation of a canon that reflected his own theology
 - But the four Biblical gospels are the earliest ones that we have
 - Christian leaders had supported only those four for centuries—
 - And—most crucially importantly—the Council of Nicaea *never addressed* the question of the canon



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 - Strangely, most people—including many *Christians*—took the book’s description of church history as totally valid
 - Why do you think that is?



The Rise of Christendom

- Constantine desired to see one, unified Church—and so he *institutionalized* it
325 Constantine convened Council of Nicaea
 - The Council of Nicaea
 - which was attended by pretty much *everyone* who was *anyone* at the time
 - Church historian Eusebius
 - Bishop Spyridon of Cyprus
(who continued to work as a shepherd, even *after* being named bishop)



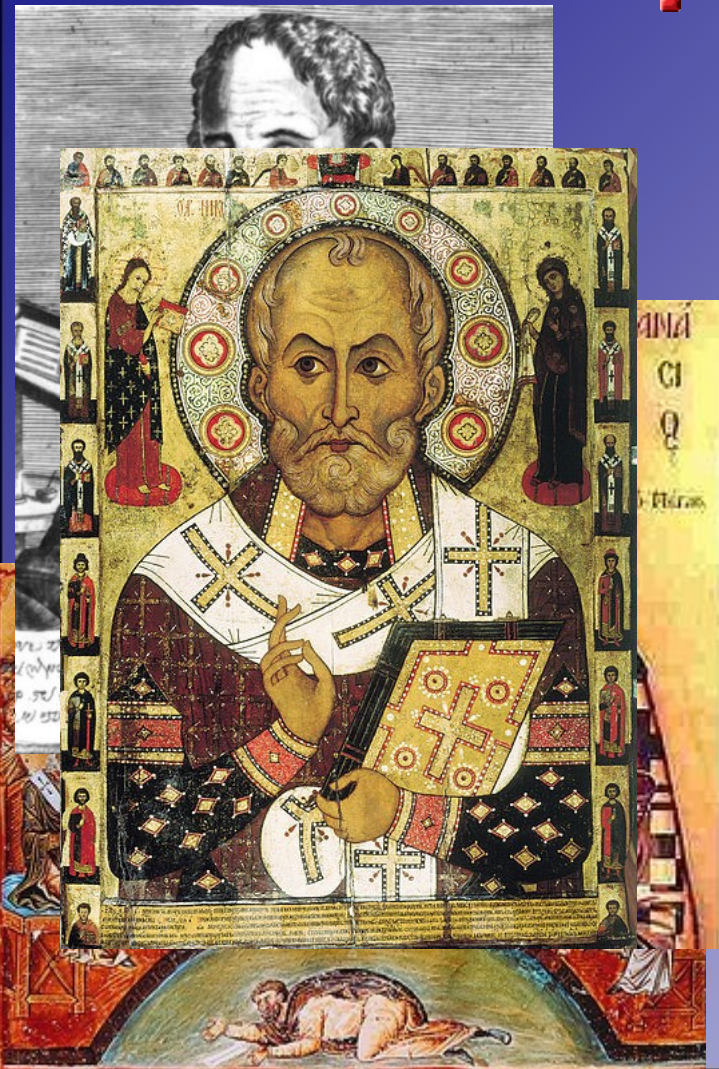
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 - Theologian and bishop Athanasius (who even had his *own creed* named after him—though it was written centuries after his death)



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 - And even Santa Claus
(Saint Nicholas of Myra, whose veneration and name became corrupted by centuries of syncretism)



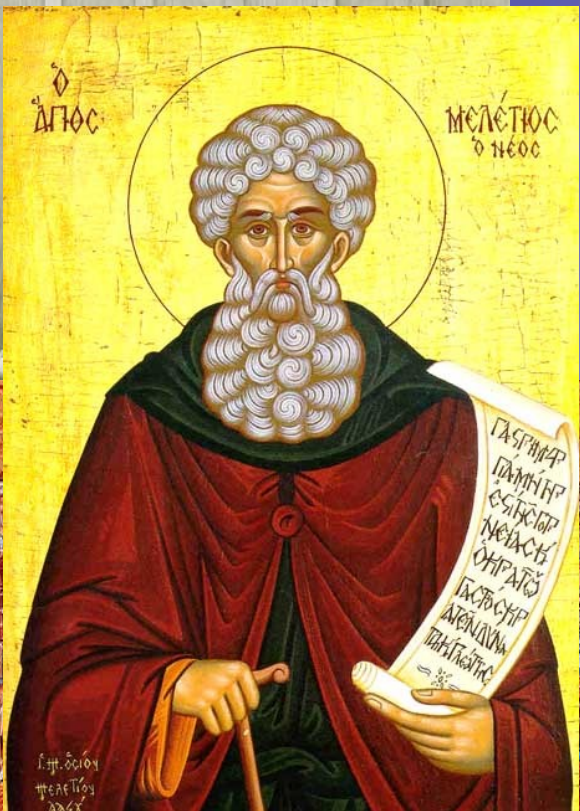
The Rise of Christendom

- Constantine desired to see one, unified Church—and so he *institutionalized* it
325 Constantine convened Council of Nicaea
 - The Council of Nicaea was convened to address five core issues—*none* of which had anything to do with the canon



The Rise of Christendom

- Constantine desired to see one, unified Church—and so he *institutionalized* it
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 - The Council of Nicaea was convened to address five core issues—
 - 5) What to do with those whose faith had lapsed under Licinius' reign
 - 4) What to do about Bishop Meletius (who, like his fellow African bishop, Donatus, argued that the *lapsi* shouldn't be welcomed back into fellowship)
 - One of the hardest hardliners was Bishop Acesius of Byzantium, who argued that those whose faith had lapsed or who had sinned after being baptised should be permanently removed from communion within the Church
 - In response, Constantine jeered, "Place a ladder, Acesius, and climb alone into heaven..."



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 - 4) What to do about Bishop Meletius
 - 3) What to do about all of those Christians who had been baptized by people whom the Church had declared to be heretics
 - Do you *accept* their baptism?
 - Do you *re*-baptize them?
 - Are they just toast?



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 - 3) What to do about all of those Christians who had been baptized by people whom the Church had declared to be heretics
 - 2) That whole pesky Easter question
 - Constantine wrote: "At the council we also considered the issue of our holiest day, Easter, and it was determined by common consent that everyone, everywhere should celebrate it on one and the same day. For what can be more appropriate, or what more solemn, than that this feast from which we have received the hope of immortality, should be kept by all without variation, using the same order and a clear arrangement? ..."



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- 2) That whole pesky Easter question
"It seemed very unworthy for us to keep this most sacred feast following the custom of the Jews, who have soiled their hands in a most terrible outrage, and have polluted their souls, and are now deservedly blind. Since we have cast aside their way of calculating the date, we can ensure that future generations can celebrate this observance at the more accurate time which we have kept from the first day of the passion until the present time...."



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 - 2) That whole pesky Easter question
 - 1) **The Arian Controversy**
 - Arius of Alexandria taught that Jesus was *divine-ish*, but still just a *created* being
 - “We say that the Son has a beginning, but that God is *without* beginning.”
 - Thus, Nicaea focused on *Christology*



The Rise of Christendom

- Funky little teaching moment—*Christology*.
(special thanks to Michael Uhler for the inspiration for these notes)

Man Marcionism ~~God~~

- YAHWEH was a *naughty* god from the Jewish “Old” Testament, and Jesus was a *good* god from the Christian “New” Testament
 - Therefore, Jesus *couldn't* have been a human being, since that would have made Him part of YAHWEH's sinfully fleshly Creation—but He wasn't really “God” in the same sense that YAHWEH had been, since they were effectively two *different* gods
 - Jesus only *seemed* human while here on Earth, when He was actually a Spirit (spawning the movement known as “*Docetism*”—from the word, “*δοκέω*” or “*dokeō*”—“to seem”)



The Rise of Christendom

- Funky little teaching moment—*Christology*.

Man Marcionism ~~God~~

Man Arianism God

- Jesus wasn't *divine*—or at least not as divine as the *Father* was
 - The Father was the all-powerful θεός (“*Theos*” or “*God*”), and Jesus was the perfect human κυριός (“*Kyrios*” or “*Lord*”) who came *from* the Father during human history to teach us how to be *holy* humans



The Rise of Christendom

- Funky little teaching moment—*Christology*.

Man Marcionism ~~God~~

Man Arianism God

Man Apollinarism God

- Jesus had a human *body* and *soul* (i.e.; emotions), but a Divine *mind*
 - Theodore accused Apollinaris of being a Sabellian
 - Sabellius had taught modalism—that God revealed Himself to humanity in three stages or “modes” (the Father in Creation, the Son in Redemption, and the Spirit in Sanctification and Regeneration)



The Rise of Christendom

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Man Marcionism ~~God~~

Man Arianism God

Man Apollinarism God

- Jesus had a human *body* and *soul* (i.e.; emotions), but a Divine *mind*
 - Theodoret accused Apollinaris of being a Sabellian
 - Theodoret and others encouraged the use of the title Θεοτόκος (*Theotokos* or “God-birther”) to refer to Mary, focusing on Christ's completely Divine nature, even while being completely human (and thus he supported Nestorius)



The Rise of Christendom

- Funky little teaching moment—*Christology*.

Man Marcionism ~~God~~

Man Arianism God

Man Apollinarism God

Man Nestorianism God

- It shouldn't be broken up between being a fleshly human or a spiritual God—Jesus had two *distinct, separate natures*
 - But, ironically, he *repudiated* the use of the title Θεοτόκος to refer to Mary, since she really only gave birth to Christ's *human* nature, not His *Divine* one



The Rise of Christendom

- Funky little teaching moment—*Christology*.

Man	Marcionism	God
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Man	Arianism	God
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Man	Apollinarism	God
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Man	Nestorianism	God
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Man	Eutychianism	God
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- Yes, Christ had both a human nature *and* a Divine one, but they actually then formed a third, *new* nature—what Tertullian called a *tertium quid*



The Rise of Christendom

- Funky little teaching moment—*Christology*.

Man Marcionism ~~God~~

Man Arianism God

Man Apollinarism God

Man Nestorianism God

Man Eutychianism God

Man Modern Orthodoxy God

- Jesus was fully God and fully man



The Rise of Christendom

- Constantine desired to see one, unified Church—and so he *institutionalized* it
 - 325 Constantine convened Council of Nicaea
 - Much of the discussion at Nicaea came down to *one letter*—the letter “i”
 - Athanasius (and 315 other guys) argued that Jesus was divine—that He was of the same substance and nature as God the Father
 - The word they used was *ὁμοούσιος* (“*homooúsios*”)—“same essence”
 - The Arians argued that Jesus was *divine-ish*—that He was only of a *similar* substance and nature as God
 - The word *they* used was *ὁμοιοúsios* (“*homoioúsios*”)—“*similar* essence”
 - The Arians were voted down 316-2, and Arius was deposed and exiled
 - But his views would still attract followers for centuries to come
 - In 327, Constantine remitted his sentence and exiled Athanasius



The Rise of Christendom

- The Council adopted a creed to codify what they'd decided—the “Nicene Creed”
 - 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*—being of one substance 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;
 - From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.
 - And in the Holy Spirit.
 - 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 holy catholic and apostolic Church

