

The first ecumenical council at Nicaea was called when Constantine's entreaties to Alexander and Arius failed to stem argument over the nature of Christ and his relationship to the Father. Arius could protect monotheism by agreeing that Jesus was divine but insisting that the Father was, as Jesus had himself insisted, greater than he. Eusebius had Constantine suggesting that the difference is of little moment (Comby, *How to Read the Church Fathers*, 90.) and certainly Arius is very much in the tradition of Origen, with Jesus the Logos created by God. (Armstrong, *History of God*, 127-8.) His ideas work as a way that the Christian participates in the divine by entering into the life of perfect obedience lived by Jesus. This is a thought that seems to have great potential today as a bridge between faiths.

In the less optimistic view of fallen man, of Alexander and Athanasius however, nothing less than the creator God could save his creation and Jesus' full participation in the Godhead is essential from that perspective. The appearance of less than simple monotheism, for all the Trinitarian exposition to follow, makes Egypt easy meat for Islam in the centuries to come.

Nicaea cemented this view in its insistence that Jesus was of the substance of the Father and to be sure the point wasn't missed the original version anathematizes a whole range of constructions of Arian propositions.

Constantinople made it clear that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father, still the position of the orthodox, and was comfortable enough to remove the anathemas.