Nicaea Through the Centuries (Annotated)

Faith, Doctrine, and Imperial Power

Documentary History and Annotated Anthology

Selected and annotated by

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This volume concerns the First Council of Nicaea in 325 and its reception through the nineteenth century. Historical works and translations are identified separately in the source notes and source register.

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Preface

The Council of Nicaea became a permanent reference point in Christian argument because its decision could be invoked for different purposes. Athanasius appealed to it against rival accounts of the Son. Later councils received it while explaining questions its short confession had left open. Medieval theologians asked how an inherited creed could be defended, interpreted, or enlarged. Reformers retained its central confession while disputing the authority of councils. Critics used its history to ask whether an alliance between theological definition and political power had altered Christianity itself.

This book follows those arguments through substantial historical readings. Its subject is the First Council of Nicaea in 325 and the reception of that council through the nineteenth century. It brings the surviving documents of the controversy into conversation with later Eastern and Western Christians, defenders of creedal authority, advocates of toleration, and critics of established Christianity. These authors did not all answer the same question. Their differences become clearer when each is allowed enough space to establish an argument.

The documents support several conclusions that guide the commentary. Nicaea addressed a real disagreement about the Son's relation to the Father. Its language imposed meaningful restrictions on Christian confession. The emperor's involvement affected the setting, enforcement, and public interpretation of the decision. The council did not end either theological development or ecclesiastical conflict. Its later authority depended on repeated acts of reception, explanation, teaching, and worship. Moral failures in the churches that received the creed deserve examination in their own right; they cannot be made to disappear by reciting the confession correctly.

These historical conclusions leave room for disagreement about divine guidance. A historian can investigate who spoke, what a document excludes, or how an emperor intervened. The same investigation does not establish whether the Holy Spirit guided the outcome. Nor does evidence of political involvement, by itself, settle the theological question. The readings permit a more precise discussion than either an immaculate account of conciliar authority or a theory in which every theological argument conceals a political motive.

The book gives its largest opening section to the dispute and the surviving settlement. The following sections trace the difficult fourth-century aftermath, the Eastern transmission of conciliar belief, the Latin West's account of tradition and development, Reformation judgments about councils, and later historical and ethical criticism. The medieval centuries receive their own sources and arguments. Their place in the history cannot be supplied by a brief transition from the church fathers to the Reformation.

Older English translations are historical artifacts as well as vehicles for older works. Their phrasing sometimes sounds remote, and their vocabulary may carry assumptions that require explanation. The annotations identify important problems beside the relevant readings. Where a new rendering has been made, it is identified as a new rendering, with its underlying text. No recent translation has been treated as unprotected merely because its ancient author lived many centuries ago.

The purpose of the volume is to make the history available for judgment. A defender of Nicaea should encounter the strongest objections with their contexts intact. A critic should encounter the actual theological reasoning and the documents that resist an overly simple account of corruption. Neither reader is asked to mistake the selection for every surviving text. The scope is substantial but finite: the history of Nicaea includes many languages, institutions, local controversies, and forms of worship beyond the boundaries of this volume.

Reading the Documents

Each chapter distinguishes the historical reading from the present commentary. A source note identifies the work, the historical edition or translation, and the range selected. The reading follows in indented type. The surrounding prose belongs to this edition. Headings supplied to organize a reading do not become statements by the historical author.

Some documents are reproduced in full; longer works are selected. Selection matters especially when an author quotes an opponent. Athanasius's statement of an Arian argument is evidence for what Athanasius says his opponents believed. A surviving letter by Arius supplies a different kind of evidence. Neither can automatically replace the other. An emperor's letter, a theological treatise, a conciliar definition, and a later historian's narrative also have different purposes and different relationships to the event described.

The first distinction to keep in view is between the confession of 325 and the fuller creed associated with Constantinople in 381. The latter became the familiar liturgical Nicene Creed in many churches. Its fuller treatment of the Holy Spirit, church, baptism, and resurrection belongs to the history after the first council. The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 concerned images and their veneration. It appears here as a later act of reception of earlier councils, not as another name for the gathering of 325.

The second distinction concerns vocabulary. Substance and essence in these translations generally concern divine being, not physical material. Person does not always carry its modern psychological meaning. Ousia and hypostasis were not employed with an identical, settled distinction by every fourth-century writer. A formula must be read with its author's explanation, its date, and the propositions it was designed to exclude.

The third distinction concerns authority. A writer may defend the truth of the creed without defending every action of the bishops who subscribed it. A writer may defend councils in general while allowing that particular councils have erred. Reformation confessions can retain Nicaea while rejecting an unrestricted claim for later ecclesiastical assemblies. The chapter introductions identify these positions instead of placing every author in a single camp for or against councils.

Biblical references in the commentary identify passages without reproducing a modern copyrighted translation. The historical readings retain the biblical wording used by their historical translators. Words such as Catholic, orthodox, heretic, and Arian often express the standpoint of the speaker. Their presence in a document is not an editorial verdict on every person to whom the speaker applies them.

The source register records the editions used. Its dates refer to the English edition or underlying text as specified; they should not be confused with the date of the ancient or medieval work. The chronology provides a route through the principal events, while the glossary explains recurring terms. Neither substitutes for the qualifications in the individual chapters.

Introduction

1 Nicaea as Event and Inheritance

The question before the bishops

Nicaea is often remembered through a single Greek word, homoousios. The word mattered because the dispute concerned the boundary between God and what God makes. Arius could give the Son extraordinary titles, place him before the ages, and describe the world's creation through him while still denying that the Son shares the Father's unoriginated being. His opponents believed this account placed the Son within the order of things brought into existence. A dispute expressed through scriptural quotations therefore became a dispute about what those quotations allowed Christians to say.

The creed of 325 answered by describing the Son as begotten from the Father's substance, true God from true God, begotten rather than made, and of one substance with the Father. Its concluding anathemas rejected the claim that the Son once did not exist or came from nonbeing. These clauses have to be read together. Isolating a single word from the connected confession can make the creed seem more accommodating than its complete argument permits.

Arius's own letters are therefore essential. They show why a historical opponent should not be reduced to a modern approximation such as someone who thought Jesus was merely an ordinary man. The surviving letters attribute an exceptional, preexistent status to the Son. The disagreement concerns whether that status includes full divine identity in the sense asserted by the creed. Understanding the opponent's actual position also clarifies why Athanasius thought the council's exclusions necessary.

The documents do not give us a complete transcript of the assembly. No surviving record allows a reader to reconstruct every speech, vote, or private negotiation. Eusebius of Caesarea supplies an important participant's account and an explanatory letter, but his writing also serves his theological and political purposes. Athanasius's later defenses give indispensable access to the argument for Nicaea, while reflecting the conflicts in which the council's meaning continued to be contested. Later church historians preserve documents and narratives whose dates and aims must be kept visible.

The traditional number of 318 fathers became a powerful symbol of the council's authority. It should not be confused with a modern attendance list independently verified for every name. Eusebius describes more than 250 bishops. Variations in reported numbers do not make the council imaginary; they show the difference

between an event's surviving evidence and the symbolic form in which it was later remembered.

Constantine's investment in agreement

Constantine's involvement was neither an incidental decoration nor a sufficient explanation of the theology. The emperor had an interest in the peace of the churches and the stability of his rule. His early letter to Alexander and Arius treated their disagreement as a quarrel that should be settled for the sake of concord. The participants who believed salvation and worship were at stake could not simply accept his estimate of the dispute's importance.

At the council the emperor's presence, hospitality, and ceremonial language helped present agreement as an achievement of Christian imperial government. Eusebius's account invites admiration for this spectacle. The reading deserves attention precisely because it is so favorable. It shows how an influential Christian writer could understand imperial sponsorship as a providential benefit. That interpretation was part of the council's reception from an early date.

Imperial backing also carried coercive possibilities. Banishment, the suppression of books, and administrative intervention changed the conditions under which theological disputes were conducted. A confession backed by an emperor could have consequences that a theological argument alone could not produce. Yet imperial policy was not consistently favorable to every person later honored as a Nicene defender. Athanasius's conflicts and exiles prevent a simple narrative in which Constantine permanently established one party and the subsequent history merely enforced the original victory.

The settlement reached beyond a creed

The twenty canons widen the picture of what the council sought to govern. They address clerical ordination and movement, the recognition of episcopal jurisdictions, reconciliation after persecution, lending at interest, the treatment of people approaching death, and common practices of prayer. The council's authority was exercised through disciplinary rules as well as through a statement about the Son.

Canon 3, for example, restricts the presence of a subintroducta in a cleric's household, allowing specified relatives and women beyond suspicion. The term belongs to practices of spiritual companionship and shared domestic life that could provoke concern about sexual conduct or appearances. It is not a transparent synonym for a wife. Its presence requires an explanation of the practice rather than a modern assumption about a universal law of clerical celibacy.

Canon 12 deals with Christians who returned to military service after abandoning it in circumstances connected with persecution and religious compromise. Its disciplinary setting matters. It cannot simply be quoted as a comprehensive ruling on every form

of military service. Canon 13, concerning communion for the dying, and Canon 17, concerning clerical usury, likewise show concrete pastoral and moral concerns. They make it difficult to sustain a later critic's total claim that creedal Christianity had no interest in duties of conduct.

The Easter controversy adds another dimension. The council sought a common observance, and Constantine's subsequent circular employed hostile language about Jews. That rhetoric belongs to the record and calls for a clear moral judgment. It should be attributed to the document that contains it. It is not part of the creed of 325, and the surviving twenty canons do not contain a complete astronomical rule for calculating Easter in the familiar later form.

Nor do these documents support the popular claim that Nicaea selected the complete biblical canon. Later remarks about particular books require examination on their own terms. They do not supply the missing record of a Nicene vote establishing the entire list of biblical books. The absence of such a record is especially significant when a confident modern story treats that supposed vote as a principal act of the council.

Reception required further decisions

The council's decision survived through a history of explanation. The words later used to summarize orthodox Trinitarian belief were not all fixed in a uniform technical sense in 325. The Tome to the Antiochenes of 362 illustrates a practical response: the parties explained what they meant by one or three hypostases, and apparently opposed expressions could be assessed by the errors their speakers intended to exclude.

The fuller confession associated with Constantinople in 381 and its reception at Chalcedon in 451 belong to this same history. They show both continuity and further specification. Later Christians could regard the original faith as unchanged while allowing additional statements to explain it. Critics would ask how an authorized explanation could be distinguished from an alteration. The question became particularly acute when a later council prohibited the production of another faith or creed.

Eastern and Western Christians inherited different linguistic settings as well as overlapping convictions. A Latin term did not necessarily reproduce every use of a Greek term. The Filioque controversy concerned the Holy Spirit's procession and the authority to alter a received creedal text; it cannot be projected backward as the subject debated at Nicaea in 325. Nevertheless, it belongs to the reception of Nicene authority because both sides appealed to the inheritance of the ecumenical councils.

John of Damascus, medieval Latin theologians, and later confessional documents offer more than a series of endorsements. They explain what an inherited formula means within developed accounts of God, salvation, the church, and the transmission of

teaching. Their distance from 325 matters. They are evidence for how later Christians understood and used Nicaea, rather than eyewitness accounts of what every participant in the first council intended.

Councils and their judges

The Latin West's reflections on tradition complicate the idea that an appeal to antiquity always forbids development. Vincent of Lérins defended continuity while distinguishing growth from alteration. Medieval questions about the making of creeds and the clarification of articles of faith continued the problem within different accounts of ecclesiastical authority. Anselm and Aquinas did not merely repeat the council's adjectives; they developed forms of reasoning through which the received confession could be explained.

The Reformers again changed the setting. The Augsburg Confession affirmed the decree of Nicaea concerning the divine essence and three persons. Calvin defended the usefulness of terms that might not occur in Scripture when those terms served to express scriptural teaching against evasion. At the same time, Protestant writers rejected claims that a council's institutional standing by itself guaranteed the truth of every decision. Their position requires a distinction between accepting Nicaea's doctrine and accepting an unlimited theory of conciliar authority.

Writers on toleration brought a related question into focus: what may an ecclesiastical body or civil ruler do to someone who refuses a confession? This is not identical to asking whether the confession is true. A writer could hold a theological opinion strongly while denying the state's competence to enforce assent. The readings from the early modern period therefore place arguments about doctrine beside arguments about the rights and powers of institutions.

Newton's historical interest in Christian doctrine belongs to this setting, but his objections need to be stated with care. His proposal that Nicene wording could accommodate a merely human Christ deified after death is sharper than a general dislike of metaphysical vocabulary. It must be tested against the complete creed, including creation through the Son and the same subject's descent and incarnation. A critic's prestige in another field does not settle the interpretation of a fourth-century document.

Historical and ethical criticism

Gibbon examined theological controversy within a history of imperial institutions, public passions, and conflict. His perspective brought political consequences into view, but his wit and narrative control can also make an interpretation feel conclusive before every theological premise has been examined. Priestley, Newman, and later historians supply other accounts of how doctrine developed. Their disagreements

concern both the evidence and the standard by which development becomes fidelity or corruption.

Philaret provides a later Eastern Christian account of a received confession. His catechetical setting is important. The work teaches readers how to understand the faith within an existing church, rather than attempting a neutral reconstruction of the council. Its account of the first two ecumenical councils and the procession of the Spirit shows how Nicaea belongs to a larger ecclesiastical inheritance.

Tolstoy's criticism turns attention toward the relation between profession and conduct. A church may repeat claims about Christ while tolerating war, coercion, or other practices that a critic regards as incompatible with his teaching. That challenge has force where actual conduct is at issue. It becomes historically weaker when it is enlarged into a total claim that the churches or their confessions contain no moral demands. The documentary record permits the criticism to be divided into propositions that can be assessed separately.

The question that runs through this history is consequently more specific than whether councils are good or bad. It concerns what Nicaea asserted, why later Christians received it, how they explained its terms, what institutions did in its name, and how far their lives corresponded to their confession. The chapters that follow give those questions their historical settings and let the arguments develop at greater length.

Part I Origins and the Council of 325

2 Alexandria Before the Council

The controversy that led to Nicaea began inside a Christian church. Alexander was bishop of Alexandria; Arius was one of the city's presbyters. Both claimed to teach the apostolic faith, both reasoned from Scripture, and both understood the Son to have existed before the human life of Jesus. Their disagreement concerned the kind of existence that belonged to the Son and his relation to the Father. It was not a choice between acknowledging Jesus and ignoring him. It was a conflict over what Christians were saying when they called him the Son of God.

The letters in this chapter let the opposing parties state that conflict in their own language. Alexander's long letter explains why he considered Arius's teaching incompatible with the church's confession. Arius's much shorter appeal to Eusebius of Nicomedia explains why he considered himself an unjustly persecuted defender of truth. His profession to Alexander claims continuity with the instruction he had received from Alexander himself. Eusebius of Nicomedia supplies a further argument for the distinction between the unbegotten Father and the generated Son. These documents establish a dispute before the council supplied its celebrated formula.

The transmission of the letters is part of their history. Theodoret, writing in the fifth century, preserved Alexander's letter and the correspondence of Arius and Eusebius. Athanasius preserved the profession to Alexander in his account of the councils of Ariminum and Seleucia, written decades after Nicaea. The hostile descriptions surrounding the letters belong to those transmitters. They have been omitted from the readings so that the quoted letter is not confused with its later historian's denunciation. This does not make the documents independent of their transmission; it identifies the boundary between document and narrative.

Alexander's addressee is also named Alexander. Theodoret's heading identifies him with the bishop of Constantinople, the city earlier called Byzantium; the identification has been disputed. The argument below does not depend on settling that question. The sender is Alexander of Alexandria. This Alexander should not be confused with Athanasius, his successor, or with the Alexander associated with Arius's later attempt to receive communion at Constantinople.

Alexander argues from the inseparability of divine Fatherhood and Sonship. A Father eternally possesses his Word and Wisdom; otherwise God would at some point have existed without what belongs to God's own life. To say that the Son once was not therefore changes the account of God, not merely the biography of a subordinate agent. Alexander supports this claim by assembling scriptural passages about the Word, the image, the Father's bosom, and the Son's generation. His method is

cumulative. A reader should follow how one passage limits the interpretation of another rather than expect a single verse to contain the complete later definition.

His rhetoric is equally conspicuous. He attributes avarice, ambition, dishonesty, and other moral failings to his opponents. Those charges reveal the temperature of the conflict, but the letter itself does not supply independent proof of each accusation. Its treatment of women and its comparisons with Jews also expose the social prejudices through which the author frames religious danger. Recording that rhetoric is necessary to understanding the source. The theological case must still be evaluated by its actual claims about the Father and Son; the insults neither establish nor refute them.

Alexander explains the disagreement

Alexander of Alexandria, letter to Alexander, preserved in Theodoret, Ecclesiastical History I.3; English translation by Blomfield Jackson, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 3 (1892). The complete letter as printed in that chapter is reproduced; Theodoret's subsequent narrative paragraph and the nineteenth-century footnotes are omitted. The address in the historical chapter heading is discussed above.

“To his most revered and likeminded brother Alexander, Alexander sendeth greeting in the Lord.

“Impelled by avarice and ambition, evil-minded persons have ever plotted against the wellbeing of the most important dioceses. Under various pretexts, they attack the religion of the Church; and, being maddened by the devil, who works in them, they start aside from all piety according to their own pleasure, and trample under foot the fear of the judgment of God. Suffering as I do from them myself, I deem it necessary to inform your piety, that you may be on your guard against them, lest they or any of their party should presume to enter your diocese (for these cheats are skilful in deception), or should circulate false and specious letters, calculated to delude one who has devoted himself to the simple and undefiled faith.

“Arius and Achillas have lately formed a conspiracy, and, emulating the ambition of Colluthus, have gone far beyond him. He indeed sought to find a pretext for his own pernicious line of action in the charges he brought against them. But they, beholding his making a trade of Christ for lucre, refused to remain any longer in subjection to the Church; but built for themselves caves, like robbers, and now constantly assemble in them, and day and night ply slanders there against Christ and against us. They revile every godly apostolical doctrine, and in Jewish fashion have organized a gang to fight against Christ, denying His divinity, and declaring Him to be on a level with other men. They pick out every passage which refers to the dispensation of salvation, and to His humiliation for our sake; they endeavour to collect from them their own impious assertion, while they evade all those which declare His eternal divinity, and the unceasing glory which He possesses with the Father. They maintain the ungodly doctrine entertained by the Greeks and the Jews concerning Jesus Christ; and thus, by every means in their power, hunt for their applause. Everything which outsiders ridicule in us they officiously practise. They

daily excite persecutions and seditions against us. On the one hand they bring accusations against us before the courts, suborning as witnesses certain unprincipled women whom they have seduced into error. On the other they dishonour Christianity by permitting their young women to ramble about the streets. Nay, they have had the audacity to rend the seamless garment of Christ, which the soldiers dared not divide.

“When these actions, in keeping with their course of life, and the impious enterprise which had been long concealed, became tardily known to us, we unanimously ejected them from the Church which worships the divinity of Christ. They then ran hither and thither to form cabals against us, even addressing themselves to our fellow-ministers who were of one mind with us, under the pretence of seeking peace and unity with them, but in truth endeavouring by means of fair words, to sweep some among them away into their own disease. They ask them to write a wordy letter, and then read the contents to those whom they have deceived, in order that they may not retract, but be confirmed in their impiety, by finding that bishops agree with and support their views. They make no acknowledgment of the evil doctrines and practices for which they have been expelled by us, but they either impart them without comment, or carry on the deception by fallacies and forgeries. Thus concealing their destructive doctrine by persuasive and meanly truckling language, they catch the unwary, and lose no opportunity of calumniating our religion. Hence it arises that several have been led to sign their letter, and to receive them into communion, a proceeding on the part of our fellow-ministers which I consider highly reprehensible; for they thus not only disobey the apostolical rule, but even help to inflame their diabolical action against Christ. It is on this account, beloved brethren, that without delay I have stirred myself up to inform you of the unbelief of certain persons who say that “There was a time when the Son of God was not;” and “He who previously had no existence subsequently came into existence; and when at some time He came into existence He became such as every other man is.” God, they say, created all things out of that which was non-existent, and they include in the number of creatures, both rational and irrational, even the Son of God. Consistently with this doctrine they, as a necessary consequence, affirm that He is by nature liable to change, and capable both of virtue and of vice, and thus, by their hypothesis of his having been created out of that which was non-existent, they overthrow the testimony of the Divine Scriptures, which declare the immutability of the Word and the Divinity of the Wisdom of the Word, which Word and Wisdom is Christ. ‘We are also able,’ say these accursed wretches, ‘to become like Him, the sons of God; for it is written, - I have nourished and brought up children.’ When the continuation of this text is brought before them, which is, ‘and they have rebelled against Me,’ and it is objected that these words are inconsistent with the Saviour’s nature, which is immutable, they throw aside all reverence, and affirm that God foreknew and foresaw that His Son would not rebel against Him, and that He therefore chose Him in preference to all others. They likewise assert that He was not chosen because He had by nature any thing superior to the other sons of God; for no man, say they, is son of God by nature, nor has any peculiar relation to Him. He was chosen, they allege, because, though mutable by nature, His

painstaking character suffered no deterioration. As though, forsooth, even if a Paul and a Peter made like endeavours, their sonship would in no respects differ from His.

“To establish this insane doctrine they insult the Scriptures, and bring forward what is said in the Psalms of Christ, ‘Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.’ Now that the Son of God was not created out of the non-existent, and that there never was a time in which He was not, is expressly taught by John the Evangelist, who speaks of Him as ‘the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father.’ This divine teacher desired to show that the Father and the Son are inseparable; and, therefore, he said, ‘that the Son is in the bosom of the Father.’ Moreover, the same John affirms that the Word of God is not classed among things created out of the non-existent, for, he says that ‘all things were made by Him,’ and he also declares His individual personality in the following words: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.…All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made.’ If, then, all things were made by Him, how is it that He who thus bestowed existence on all, could at any period have had no existence himself? The Word, the creating power, can in no way be defined as of the same nature as the things created, if indeed He was in the beginning, and all things were made by Him, and were called by Him out of the non-existent into being. ‘That which is ’ must be of an opposite nature to, and essentially different from, things created out of the non-existent. This shows, likewise, that there is no separation between the Father and the Son, and that the idea of separation cannot even be conceived by the mind; while the fact that the world was created out of the non-existent involves a later and fresh genesis of its essential nature, all things having been endowed with such an origin of existence by the Father through the Son. John, the most pious apostle, perceiving that the word ‘was’ applied to the Word of God was far beyond and above the intelligence of created beings, did not presume to speak of His generation or creation, nor yet dared to name the Maker and the creature in equivalent syllables. Not that the Son of God is unbegotten, for the Father alone is unbegotten; but that the ineffable personality of the only-begotten God is beyond the keenest conception of the evangelists and perhaps even of angels. Therefore, I do not think men ought to be considered pious who presume to investigate this subject, in disobedience to the injunction, ‘Seek not what is too difficult for thee, neither enquire into what is too high for thee.’ For if the knowledge of many other things incomparably inferior is beyond the capacity of the human mind, and cannot therefore be attained, as has been said by Paul, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,’ and as God also said to Abraham, that the stars could not be numbered by him; and it is likewise said, ‘Who shall number the grains of sand by the sea-shore, or the drops of rain?’ how then can any one but a madman presume to enquire into the nature of the Word of God? It is said by the Spirit of prophecy, ‘Who shall declare His generation?’ And, therefore, our Saviour in His kindness to those men who were the pillars of the whole world, desiring to relieve them of the burden of striving after

this knowledge, told them that it was beyond their natural comprehension, and that the Father alone could discern this most divine mystery; ‘No man,’ said He, ‘knoweth the Son but the Father, and no man knoweth the Father save the Son.’ It was, I think, concerning this same subject that the Father said, ‘My secret is for Me and for Mine.’

“But the insane folly of imagining that the Son of God came into being out of that which had no being, and that His sending forth took place in time, is plain from the words ‘which had no being,’ although the foolish are incapable of perceiving the folly of their own utterances. For the phrase ‘He was not’ must either have reference to time, or to some interval in the ages. If then it be true that all things were made by Him, it is evident that every age, time, all intervals of time, and that ‘when’ in which ‘was not’ has its place, were made by Him. And is it not absurd to say that there was a time when He who created all time, and ages, and seasons, with which the ‘was not’ is confused, was not? For it would be the height of ignorance, and contrary indeed to all reason, to affirm that the cause of any created thing can be posterior to that caused by it. The interval during which they say the Son was still unbegotten of the Father was, according to their opinion, prior to the wisdom of God, by whom all things were created. They thus contradict the Scripture which declares Him to be ‘the firstborn of every creature.’ In consonance with this doctrine, Paul with his usual mighty voice cries concerning Him; ‘whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds ’ ‘For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things ’ Since the hypothesis implied in the phrase ‘out of the non-existent’ is manifestly impious, it follows that the Father is always Father. And He is Father from the continual presence of the Son, on account of whom He is called Father. And the Son being ever present with Him, the Father is ever perfect, wanting in no good thing, for He did not beget His only Son in time, or in any interval of time, nor out of that which had no previous existence.

“Is it not then impious to say that there was a time when the wisdom of God was not? Who saith, ‘I was by Him as one brought up with Him: I was daily His delight?’ Or that once the power of God was not, or His Word, or anything else by which the Son is known, or the Father designated, defective? To assert that the brightness of the Father’s glory ‘once did not exist,’ destroys also the original light of which it is the brightness; and if there ever was a time in which the image of God was not, it is plain that He Whose image He is, is not always: nay, by the non-existence of the express image of God’s Person, He also is taken away of whom this is ever the express image. Hence it may be seen, that the Sonship of our Saviour has not even anything in common with the sonship of men. For just as it has been shown that the nature of His existence cannot be expressed by language, and infinitely surpasses in excellence all things to which He has given being, so His Sonship, naturally partaking in His paternal Divinity, is unspeakably different from the sonship of those who, by His appointment, have been adopted as sons. He is by nature immutable,

perfect, and all-sufficient, whereas men are liable to change, and need His help. What further advance can be made by the wisdom of God? What can the Very Truth, or God the Word, add to itself? How can the Life or the True Light in any way be bettered? And is it not still more contrary to nature to suppose that wisdom can be susceptible of folly? that the power of God can be united with weakness? that reason itself can be dimmed by unreasonableness, or that darkness can be mixed with the true light? Does not the Apostle say, 'What communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?' and Solomon, that 'the way of a serpent upon a rock ' was 'too wonderful' for the human mind to comprehend, which 'rock,' according to St. Paul, is Christ. Men and angels, however, who are His creatures, have received His blessing, enabling them to exercise themselves in virtue and in obedience to His commands, that thus they may avoid sin. And it is on this account that our Lord being by nature the Son of the Father, is worshipped by all; and they who have put off the spirit of bondage, and by brave deeds and advance in virtue have received the spirit of adoption through the kindness of Him Who is the Son of God by nature, by adoption also become sons.

"His true, peculiar, natural, and special Sonship was declared by Paul, who, speaking of God, says, that 'He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us,' who are not by nature His sons. It was to distinguish Him from those who are not 'His own,' that he called Him 'His own son.' It is also written in the Gospel, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;' and in the Psalms the Saviour says, 'The Lord said unto Me, Thou art My Son.' By proclaiming natural sonship He shows that there are no other natural sons besides Himself.

"And do not these words, I begot thee 'from the womb before the morning,' plainly show the natural sonship of the paternal birth of One whose lot it is, not from diligence of conduct, or exercise in moral progress, but by individuality of nature? Hence it ensues that the filiation of the only-begotten Son of the Father is incapable of fall; while the adoption of reasonable beings who are not His sons by nature, but merely on account of fitness of character, and by the bounty of God, may fall away, as it is written in the word, 'The sons of God saw the daughters of men, and took them as wives,' and so forth. And God, speaking by Isaiah, said, 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.'

"I have many things to say, beloved, but because I fear that I shall cause weariness by further admonishing teachers who are of one mind with myself, I pass them by. You, having been taught of God, are not ignorant that the teaching at variance with the religion of the Church which has just arisen, is the same as that propagated by Ebion and Artemas, and rivals that of Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, who was excommunicated by a council of all the bishops. Lucianus, his successor, withdrew himself from communion with these bishops during a period of many years.

"And now amongst us there have sprung up, 'out of the non-existent' men who have greedily sucked down the dregs of this impiety, offsets of the same stock: I mean Arius and Achillas, and all their gang of rogues. Three bishops of Syria, appointed no one knows how, by consenting to them, fire them to more fatal heat. I refer their

sentence to your decision. Retaining in their memory all that they can collect concerning the suffering, humiliation, emptying of Himself, and so-called poverty, and everything of which the Saviour for our sake accepted the acquired name, they bring forward those passages to disprove His eternal existence and divinity, while they forget all those which declare His glory and nobility and abiding with the Father; as for instance, 'I and My father are one.' In these words the Lord does not proclaim Himself to be the Father, neither does He represent two natures as one; but that the essence of the Son of the Father preserves accurately the likeness of the Father, His nature taking off the impress of likeness to Him in all things, being the exact image of the Father and the express stamp of the prototype. When, therefore, Philip, desirous of seeing the Father, said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father,' the Lord with abundant plainness said to him, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,' as though the Father were beheld in the spotless and living mirror of His image. The same idea is conveyed in the Psalms, where the saints say, 'In Thy light we shall see light.' It is on this account that 'he who honoureth the Son, honoureth the Father.' And rightly, for every impious word which men dare to utter against the Son is spoken also against the Father.

"After this no one can wonder at the false calumnies which I am about to detail, my beloved brethren, propagated by them against me, and against our most religious people. They not only set their battle in array against the divinity of Christ, but ungratefully insult us. They think it beneath them to be compared with any of those of old time, nor do they endure to be put on a par with the teachers we have been conversant with from childhood. They will not admit that any of our fellow-ministers anywhere possess even mediocrity of intelligence. They say that they themselves alone are the wise and the poor, and discoverers of doctrines, and to them alone have been revealed those truths which, say they, have never entered the mind of any other individuals under the sun. O what wicked arrogance! O what excessive folly! What false boasting, joined with madness and Satanic pride, has hardened their impious hearts! They are not ashamed to oppose the godly clearness of the ancient scriptures, nor yet does the unanimous piety of all our fellow-ministers concerning Christ blunt their audacity. Even devils will not suffer impiety like this; for even they refrain from speaking blasphemy against the Son of God.

"These then are the questions I have to raise, according to the ability I possess, with those who from their rude resources throw dust on the Christ, and try to slander our reverence for Him. These inventors of silly tales assert that we, who reject their impious and unscriptural blasphemy concerning the creation of Christ from the non-existent, teach that there are two unbegotten Beings. For these ill-instructed men contend that one of these alternatives must hold; either He must be believed to have come out of the non-existent, or there are two unbegotten Beings. In their ignorance and want of practice in theology they do not realize how vast must be the distance between the Father who is uncreate, and the creatures, whether rational or irrational, which He created out of the non-existent; and that the only-begotten nature of Him Who is the Word of God, by Whom the Father created the universe out of the non-existent, standing, as it were, in the middle between the two, was

begotten of the self-existent Father, as the Lord Himself testified when He said, ‘Every one that loveth the Father, loveth also the Son that is begotten of Him.’

“We believe, as is taught by the apostolical Church, in an only unbegotten Father, Who of His being hath no cause, immutable and invariable, and Who subsists always in one state of being, admitting neither of progression nor of diminution; Who gave the law, and the prophets, and the gospel; of patriarchs and apostles, and of all saints, Lord: and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten not out of that which is not, but of the Father, Who is; yet not after the manner of material bodies, by severance or emanation, as Sabellius and Valentinus taught; but in an inexpressible and inexplicable manner, according to the saying which we quoted above, ‘Who shall declare His generation?’ since no mortal intellect can comprehend the nature of His Person, as the Father Himself cannot be comprehended, because the nature of reasonable beings is unable to grasp the manner in which He was begotten of the Father.

“But those who are led by the Spirit of truth have no need to learn these things of me, for the words long since spoken by the Saviour yet sound in our ears, ‘No one knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and no one knoweth who the Son is but the Father.’ We have learnt that the Son is immutable and unchangeable, all-sufficient and perfect, like the Father, lacking only His “unbegotten.” He is the exact and precisely similar image of His Father. For it is clear that the image fully contains everything by which the greater likeness exists, as the Lord taught us when He said, ‘My Father is greater than I.’ And in accordance with this we believe that the Son always existed of the Father; for he is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Father’s Person.” But let no one be led by the word ‘always’ to imagine that the Son is unbegotten, as is thought by some who have their intellects blinded: for to say that He was, that He has always been, and that before all ages, is not to say that He is unbegotten.

“The mind of man could not possibly invent a term expressive of what is meant by being unbegotten. I believe that you are of this opinion; and, indeed, I feel confident in your orthodox view that none of these terms in any way signify the unbegotten. For all the terms appear to signify merely the extension of time, and are not adequate to express the divinity and, as it were, the primæval being of the only-begotten Son. They were used by the holy men who earnestly endeavoured to clear up the mystery, and who asked pardon from those who heard them, with a reasonable excuse for their failure, by saying ‘as far as our comprehension has reached.’ But if those who allege that what was ‘known in part’ has been ‘done away ’ for them, expect from human lips anything beyond human powers, it is plain that the terms ‘was,’ and ‘ever,’ and ‘before all ages,’ fall far short of this expectation. But whatever they may mean, it is not the same as ‘the unbegotten.’ Therefore His own individual dignity must be reserved to the Father as the Unbegotten One, no one being called the cause of His existence: to the Son likewise must be given the honour which befits Him, there being to Him a generation from the Father which has no beginning; we must render Him worship, as we have already said, only piously and religiously ascribing to Him the ‘was’ and the ‘ever,’ and the ‘before all

ages;' not however rejecting His divinity, but ascribing to Him a perfect likeness in all things to His Father, while at the same time we ascribe to the Father alone His own proper glory of 'the unbegotten,' even as the Saviour Himself says, 'My Father is greater than I.'

"And in addition to this pious belief respecting the Father and the Son, we confess as the Sacred Scriptures teach us, one Holy Ghost, who moved the saints of the Old Testament, and the divine teachers of that which is called the New. We believe in one only Catholic Church, the apostolical, which cannot be destroyed even though all the world were to take counsel to fight against it, and which gains the victory over all the impious attacks of the heterodox; for we are emboldened by the words of its Master, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' After this, we receive the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, of which Jesus Christ our Lord became the first-fruits; Who bore a Body, in truth, not in semblance, derived from Mary the mother of God; in the fulness of time sojourning among the race, for the remission of sins: who was crucified and died, yet for all this suffered no diminution of His Godhead. He rose from the dead, was taken into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

"In this epistle I have only mentioned these things in part, deeming it, as I have said, wearisome to dwell minutely on each article, since they are well known to your pious diligence. These things we teach, these things we preach; these are the dogmas of the apostolic Church, for which we are ready to die, caring little for those who would force us to forswear them; for we will never relinquish our hope in them, though they should try to compel us by tortures.

"Arius and Achillas, together with their fellow foes, have been expelled from the Church, because they have become aliens from our pious doctrine: according to the blessed Paul, who said, 'If any of you preach any other gospel than that which you have received, let him be accursed, even though he should pretend to be an angel from heaven, and 'But if any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing,' and so forth. Since, then, they have been condemned by the brotherhood, let none of you receive them, nor attend to what they say or write. They are deceivers, and propagate lies, and they never adhere to the truth. They go about to different cities with no other intent than to deliver letters under the pretext of friendship and in the name of peace, and by hypocrisy and flattery to obtain other letters in return, in order to deceive a few 'silly women who are laden with sins.' I beseech you, beloved brethren, to avoid those who have thus dared to act against Christ, who have publicly held up the Christian religion to ridicule, and have eagerly sought to make a display before judicial tribunals, who have endeavoured to excite a persecution against us at a period of the most entire peace, and who have enervated the unspeakable mystery of the generation of Christ. Unite unanimously in opposition to them, as some of our fellow-ministers have already done, who, being filled with indignation, wrote to me against them, and signed our formulary.

> “I have sent you these letters by my son Apion, the deacon; being those of (the ministers in) all Egypt and the Thebaid, also of those of Libya, and the Pentapolis, of Syria, Lycia, Pamphylia, Asia, Cappadocia, and in the other adjoining countries. Whose example you likewise, I trust, will follow. Many kindly attempts have been made by me to gain back those who have been led astray, but no remedy has proved more efficacious in restoring the laity who have been deceived by them and leading them to repentance, than the manifestation of the union of our fellow-ministers. Salute one another, with the brotherhood that is with you. I pray that you may be strong in the Lord, my beloved, and that I may receive the fruit of your love to Christ.
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> “The following are the name of those who have been anathematized as heretics: among the presbyters, Arius; among the deacons, Achillas, Euzoius, Aïthales, Lucius, Sarmates, Julius, Menas, another Arius, and Helladius.”

Alexander's argument distinguishes natural sonship from the sonship granted to creatures. Christians can become children of God by adoption or grace. That participation does not make them the source of the life in which they participate. For Alexander the Son belongs to a different category: he is the Father's own offspring, the one through whom others receive divine gifts. This is the doctrinal work being done by his language of true, natural, and peculiar Sonship. Peculiar here means belonging specifically to the Son; it is not an accusation of strangeness.

His refusal to explain the manner of generation is significant. He believes the relation is real but rejects the inference that divine generation must involve bodily division. Arius and his allies feared that deriving the Son from the Father's being would divide or diminish God. Alexander answers that the physical picture has been wrongly imported into an incorporeal relation. He therefore combines a positive claim about origin with a prohibition on understanding that origin materially. The later Nicene controversy would repeatedly return to this distinction.

Arius's appeal to Eusebius presents a different account of what must be protected. The Father alone is without beginning and without an originating cause. Arius considers it essential that the Son should not be unbegotten alongside the Father. He can call the Son perfect God and affirm that the Son was established before ages without accepting that the Son has always existed in the same sense as the Father. His language does not describe an ordinary human teacher promoted after death. It describes a preexistent heavenly Son whose existence depends on the Father's decision.

The Eusebius addressed by Arius is the bishop of Nicomedia. Eusebius of Caesarea, whom the letter names among sympathetic bishops, is another man. Likewise Athanasius of Anazarbus, named in Arius's list, is not Athanasius of Alexandria. These distinctions matter because a reader can otherwise place the council's later defender among Arius's allies or assign one Eusebius's actions to the other. The title Pope in Jackson's translation designates Alexander of Alexandria; it is not a reference to the bishop of Rome.

Arius appeals to Eusebius of Nicomedia

Arius, letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, preserved in Theodoret, Ecclesiastical History I.4; Jackson translation (1892). The letter is complete. Theodoret's explanatory and polemical paragraphs following it are omitted.

“To his very dear lord, the man of God, the faithful and orthodox Eusebius, Arius, unjustly persecuted by Alexander the Pope, on account of that all-conquering truth of which you also are a champion, sendeth greeting in the Lord.

“Ammonius, my father, being about to depart for Nicomedia, I considered myself bound to salute you by him, and withal to inform that natural affection which you bear towards the brethren for the sake of God and His Christ, that the bishop greatly wastes and persecutes us, and leaves no stone unturned against us. He has driven us out of the city as atheists, because we do not concur in what he publicly preaches, namely, God always, the Son always; as the Father so the Son; the Son co-exists unbegotten with God; He is everlasting; neither by thought nor by any interval does God precede the Son; always God, always Son; he is begotten of the unbegotten; the Son is of God Himself. Eusebius, your brother bishop of Cæsarea, Theodotus, Paulinus, Athanasius, Gregorius, Aetius, and all the bishops of the East, have been condemned because they say that God had an existence prior to that of His Son; except Philogonius, Hellanicus, and Macarius, who are unlearned men, and who have embraced heretical opinions. Some of them say that the Son is an eructation, others that He is a production, others that He is also unbegotten. These are impieties to which we cannot listen, even though the heretics threaten us with a thousand deaths. But we say and believe, and have taught, and do teach, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; and that He does not derive His subsistence from any matter; but that by His own will and counsel He has subsisted before time, and before ages, as perfect God, only begotten and unchangeable, and that before He was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established, He was not. For He was not unbegotten. We are persecuted, because we say that the Son has a beginning, but that God is without beginning. This is the cause of our persecution, and likewise, because we say that He is of the non-existent. And this we say, because He is neither part of God, nor of any essential being. For this are we persecuted; the rest you know. I bid thee farewell in the Lord, remembering our afflictions, my fellow-Lucianist, and true Eusebius.”

The phrase by His own will and counsel in this historical translation needs care. The issue is the Son's origin through the Father's will; Arius is not claiming that a nonexistent Son first decided to create himself. The letter's decisive propositions are explicit: the Son has a beginning, the Father is without beginning, and the Son has his existence from what previously did not exist. Arius treats these as consistent with a Son who precedes the created ages and is uniquely exalted above the rest of creation.

The next profession, addressed to Alexander, is fuller and more deliberate. It rejects several explanations that Arius's party considered unacceptable: the Son as a portion of the Father, an emanation, or a bodily division. It also rejects the thought that the Father and Son are the same subject under different descriptions. Arius is not simply

throwing away the vocabulary of divine Sonship. He is arranging that vocabulary around the Father's unique lack of origin, so that even the Son's glorious existence remains a gift from the Father.

This is why the profession could sound traditional while still provoking a fundamental objection. Its first phrases honor the one God in terms Alexander could recognize. Its account of the Son then makes beginningless existence exclusive to the Father. Alexander's objection is that this arrangement deprives the Father of his own eternal Word. Arius's objection is that Alexander's arrangement appears to make two without a beginning. The council would have to address the underlying distinction rather than count the honorific titles each party was willing to use.

Arius and his colleagues profess their faith to Alexander

Arius and associated presbyters and deacons, profession to Alexander of Alexandria, preserved in Athanasius, On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia 16. John Henry Newman translation as revised in Archibald Robertson's edition, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 4 (1892). The salutation and complete profession in section 16 are reproduced; Athanasius's introductory and concluding denunciations are omitted.

To Our Blessed Pope and Bishop, Alexander, the Presbyters and Deacons send health in the Lord.

Our faith from our forefathers, which also we have learned from thee, Blessed Pope, is this: - We acknowledge One God, alone Ingenerate, alone Everlasting, alone Unbegun, alone True, alone having Immortality, alone Wise, alone Good, alone Sovereign; Judge, Governor, and Providence of all, unalterable and unchangeable, just and good, God of Law and Prophets and New Testament; who begat an Only-begotten Son before eternal times, through whom He has made both the ages and the universe; and begat Him, not in semblance, but in truth; and that He made Him subsist at His own will, unalterable and unchangeable; perfect creature of God, but not as one of the creatures; offspring, but not as one of things begotten; nor as Valentinus pronounced that the offspring of the Father was an issue; nor as Manichæus taught that the offspring was a portion of the Father, one in essence; or as Sabellius, dividing the Monad, speaks of a Son-and-Father; nor as Hieracas, of one torch from another, or as a lamp divided into two; nor that He who was before, was afterwards generated or new-created into a Son, as thou too thyself, Blessed Pope, in the midst of the Church and in session hast often condemned; but, as we say, at the will of God, created before times and before ages, and gaining life and being from the Father, who gave subsistence to His glories together with Him. For the Father did not, in giving to Him the inheritance of all things, deprive Himself of what He has ingenerately in Himself; for He is the Fountain of all things. Thus there are Three Subsistences. And God, being the cause of all things, is Unbegun and altogether Sole, but the Son being begotten apart from time by the Father, and being created and founded before ages, was not before His generation, but being begotten apart from time before all things, alone was made to subsist by the Father. For He is not eternal or co-eternal or co-unoriginate with the Father, nor has He His

being together with the Father, as some speak of relations, introducing two ingenerate beginnings, but God is before all things as being Monad and Beginning of all. Wherefore also He is before the Son; as we have learned also from thy preaching in the midst of the Church. So far then as from God He has being, and glories, and life, and all things are delivered unto Him, in such sense is God His origin. For He is above Him, as being His God and before Him. But if the terms ‘from Him,’ and ‘from the womb,’ and ‘I came forth from the Father, and I am come ’ (Rom. xi. 36; Ps. cx. 3; John xvi. 28), be understood by some to mean as if a part of Him, one in essence or as an issue, then the Father is according to them compounded and divisible and alterable and material, and, as far as their belief goes, has the circumstances of a body, Who is the Incorporeal God.

Eusebius of Nicomedia argues from generation

Eusebius of Nicomedia, letter to Paulinus of Tyre, preserved in Theodoret, Ecclesiastical History I.5; Jackson translation (1892). The complete letter is reproduced; the historian's following denunciation is omitted.

“To my lord Paulinus, Eusebius sendeth greeting in the Lord.

“The zeal of my lord Eusebius in the cause of the truth, and likewise your silence concerning it, have not failed to reach our ears. Accordingly, if, on the one hand, we rejoiced on account of the zeal of my lord Eusebius; on the other we are grieved at you, because even the silence of such a man appears like a defeat of our cause. Hence, as it behoves not a wise man to be of a different opinion from others, and to be silent concerning the truth, stir up, I exhort you, within yourself the spirit of wisdom to write, and at length begin what may be profitable to yourself and to others, specially if you consent to write in accordance with Scripture, and tread in the tracks of its words and will.

“We have never heard that there are two unbegotten beings, nor that one has been divided into two, nor have we learned or believed that it has ever undergone any change of a corporeal nature; but we affirm that the unbegotten is one and one also that which exists in truth by Him, yet was not made out of His substance, and does not at all participate in the nature or substance of the unbegotten, entirely distinct in nature and in power, and made after perfect likeness both of character and power to the maker. We believe that the mode of His beginning not only cannot be expressed by words but even in thought, and is incomprehensible not only to man, but also to all beings superior to man. These opinions we advance not as having derived them from our own imagination, but as having deduced them from Scripture, whence we learn that the Son was created, established, and begotten in the same substance and in the same immutable and inexpressible nature as the Maker; and so the Lord says, ‘God created me in the beginning of His way; I was set up from everlasting; before the hills was I brought forth.’

“If He had been from Him or of Him, as a portion of Him, or by an emanation of His substance, it could not be said that He was created or established; and of this you, my lord, are certainly not ignorant. For that which is of the unbegotten could not be

> said to have been created or founded, either by Him or by another, since it is unbegotten from the beginning. But if the fact of His being called the begotten gives any ground for the belief that, having come into being of the Father’s substance, He also has from the Father likeness of nature, we reply that it is not of Him alone that the Scriptures have spoken as begotten, but that they also thus speak of those who are entirely dissimilar to Him by nature. For of men it is said, ‘I have begotten and brought up sons, and they have rebelled against me;’ and in another place, ‘Thou hast forsaken God who begat thee;’ and again it is said, ‘Who begat the drops of dew?’ This expression does not imply that the dew partakes of the nature of God, but simply that all things were formed according to His will. There is, indeed, nothing which is of His substance, yet every thing which exists has been called into being by His will. He is God; and all things were made in His likeness, and in the future likeness of His Word, being created of His free will. All things were made by His means by God. All things are of God.
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> “When you have received my letter, and have revised it according to the knowledge and grace given you by God, I beg you will write as soon as possible to my lord Alexander. I feel confident that if you would write to him, you would succeed in bringing him over to your opinion. Salute all the brethren in the Lord. May you, my lord, be preserved by the grace of God, and be led to pray for us.”

Eusebius's use of Proverbs requires special attention. The Greek scriptural tradition's language about Wisdom being created could be read as a statement about the Son. He joins it to passages about begetting and concludes that these do not require a derivation from the Father's substance. His opponent would have to explain why created language applied to Wisdom does not place the Son among created beings. Later pro-Nicene interpretation would distinguish what is said of the eternal Word from what is said of the Word's embodied saving mission. That later solution should not be silently substituted for the argument as it stood here.

The letters show a dispute over shared scriptural language before Nicaea. Alexander and Arius disagreed over the connected meaning of that language, especially whether the Son's generation admitted a beginning. The council's choice of a term outside Scripture sought to exclude particular readings of those common texts.

3 The Emperor Attempts to Restore Peace

Constantine first addressed the Alexandrian disagreement as a quarrel that reasonable leaders should be able to contain. His letter to Alexander and Arius, preserved in Eusebius's Life of Constantine, belongs to the period before Nicaea. It does not yet announce the council's definition or threaten punishment for rejecting that definition. It urges both men to recover common worship and treats their disagreement as disproportionate to the injury it is causing. The contrast with the post-council measures is one of the most instructive developments in the documentary record.

The emperor speaks as a fellow servant of God while also explaining the consequences of dissension for his own rule. He wants religious unity and civil concord to reinforce each other. These concerns cannot be cleanly separated into a sincere private faith and a merely cynical public policy on the evidence of this letter. He presents imperial success, the service of God, and the healing of ecclesiastical division as parts of one undertaking. That is his account of his motives; readers can judge the relationship between those aims without pretending to have direct access to everything he privately believed.

The letter makes a strong claim about the limits of appropriate debate. Constantine thinks that the original question should not have been asked publicly and that Arius should not have answered it as he did. Matters too difficult for ordinary understanding should not be exposed to a general audience. He offers philosophical schools as an analogy: differences of opinion do not necessarily destroy the common identity of a school. Alexander and Arius should therefore agree in their common faith while tolerating the disputed inquiry. This is a proposal for unity through restraint in speculation.

That proposal could not settle the question for Alexander, because Alexander considered the disputed account of the Son an alteration of the faith itself. What Constantine describes as an unnecessary inquiry was, for the bishop, an issue already affecting preaching, worship, and the church's confession. The conflict concerned the boundary between a permissible opinion and a teaching that changed the identity of Christian belief. The emperor's instruction therefore did not merely ask the parties to become less angry. It asked them to accept his assessment of how much their disagreement mattered.

Eusebius divides the imperial letter across chapters 64 through 72 of Book II. Those chapter headings interrupt one connected document. The text is printed in that order below, followed by his brief admission that the quarrel continued. The heading sequence belongs to the historical edition and is not a set of separate imperial letters. The text is transmitted in Greek; the 1890 English translation presents the letter through that transmitted form.

The messenger in Socrates's account

Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History I.7, opening narrative paragraph; English translation revised by A. C. Zenos (1890). Socrates's following partial version of the imperial letter is omitted here because the fuller text from Eusebius follows.

When the emperor was made acquainted with these disorders, he was very deeply grieved; and regarding the matter as a personal misfortune, immediately exerted himself to extinguish the conflagration which had been kindled, and sent a letter to Alexander and Arius by a trustworthy person named Hosius, who was bishop of Cordova, in Spain. The emperor greatly loved this man and held him in the highest estimation. It will not be out of place to introduce here a portion of this letter, the whole of which is given in the life of Constantine by Eusebius.

Constantine writes to Alexander and Arius

Constantine, letter to Alexander and Arius, preserved in Eusebius, Life of Constantine II.64-72; Ernest Cushing Richardson translation, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 1 (1890). The letter is reproduced continuously across the original chapter divisions. The nineteenth-century footnotes are omitted. Eusebius's report in II.73 follows separately.

Chapter LXIV. - Constantine’s Letter to Alexander the Bishop, and Arius the Presbyter.

“Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Alexander and Arius.

“I call that God to witness, as well I may, who is the helper of my endeavors, and the Preserver of all men, that I had a twofold reason for undertaking that duty which I have now performed.

Chapter LXV. - His Continual Anxiety for Peace.

“My design then was, first, to bring the diverse judgments formed by all nations respecting the Deity to a condition, as it were, of settled uniformity; and, secondly, to restore to health the system of the world, then suffering under the malignant power of a grievous distemper. Keeping these objects in view, I sought to accomplish the one by the secret eye of thought, while the other I tried to rectify by the power of military authority. For I was aware that, if I should succeed in establishing, according to my hopes, a common harmony of sentiment among all the servants of God, the general course of affairs would also experience a change correspondent to the pious desires of them all.

Chapter LXVI. - That he also adjusted the Controversies which had arisen in Africa.

“Finding, then, that the whole of Africa was pervaded by an intolerable spirit of mad folly, through the influence of those who with heedless frivolity had presumed to rend the religion of the people into diverse sects; I was anxious to check this disorder, and could discover no other remedy equal to the occasion, except in sending some of yourselves to aid in restoring mutual harmony among the disputants, after I had removed that common enemy of mankind who had interposed his lawless sentence for the prohibition of your holy synods.

Chapter LXVII. - That Religion began in the East.

“For since the power of Divine light, and the law of sacred worship, which, proceeding in the first instance, through the favor of God, from the bosom, as it were, of the East, have illumined the world, by their sacred radiance, I naturally believed that you would be the first to promote the salvation of other nations, and resolved with all energy of thought and diligence of enquiry to seek your aid. As soon, therefore, as I had secured my decisive victory and unquestionable triumph over my enemies, my first enquiry was concerning that object which I felt to be of paramount interest and importance.

Chapter LXVIII. - Being grieved by the Dissension, he counsels Peace.

“But, O glorious Providence of God! how deep a wound did not my ears only, but my very heart receive in the report that divisions existed among yourselves more grievous still than those which continued in that country! so that you, through whose aid I had hoped to procure a remedy for the errors of others, are in a state which needs healing even more than theirs. And yet, having made a careful enquiry into the origin and foundation of these differences, I find the cause to be of a truly insignificant character, and quite unworthy of such fierce contention. Feeling myself, therefore, compelled to address you in this letter, and to appeal at the same time to your unanimity and sagacity, I call on Divine Providence to assist me in the task, while I interrupt your dissension in the character of a minister of peace. And with reason: for if I might expect, with the help of a higher Power, to be able without difficulty, by a judicious appeal to the pious feelings of those who heard me, to recall them to a better spirit, even though the occasion of the disagreement were a greater one, how can I refrain from promising myself a far easier and more speedy adjustment of this difference, when the cause which hinders general harmony of sentiment is intrinsically trifling and of little moment?

Chapter LXIX. - Origin of the Controversy between Alexander and Arius, and that these Questions ought not to have been discussed.

I understand, then, that the origin of the present controversy is this. When you, Alexander, demanded of the presbyters what opinion they severally maintained respecting a certain passage in the Divine law, or rather, I should say, that you asked them something connected with an unprofitable question, then you, Arius, inconsiderately insisted on what ought never to have been conceived at all, or if conceived, should have been buried in profound silence. Hence it was that a dissension arose between you, fellowship was withdrawn, and the holy people, rent into diverse parties, no longer preserved the unity of the one body. Now, therefore, do ye both exhibit an equal degree of forbearance, and receive the advice which your fellow-servant righteously gives. What then is this advice? It was wrong in the first instance to propose such questions as these, or to reply to them when propounded. For those points of discussion which are enjoined by the authority of no law, but rather suggested by the contentious spirit which is fostered by misused leisure, even though they may be intended merely as an intellectual exercise, ought certainly to be confined to the region of our own thoughts, and not hastily produced in the popular assemblies, nor unadvisedly intrusted to the general ear. For how very few are there able either accurately to comprehend, or adequately to explain subjects so sublime and abstruse in their nature? Or, granting that one were fully competent for this, how many people will he convince? Or, who, again, in dealing with questions of such subtle nicety as these, can secure himself against a dangerous declension from the truth? It is incumbent therefore on us in these cases to be sparing of our words, lest, in case we ourselves are unable, through the feebleness of our natural faculties, to give a clear explanation of the subject before us, or, on the other hand, in case the slowness of our hearers’ understandings disables them from arriving at an accurate apprehension of what we say, from one or other of these causes the people be reduced to the alternative either of blasphemy or schism.

Chapter LXX. - An Exhortation to Unanimity.

“Let therefore both the unguarded question and the inconsiderate answer receive your mutual forgiveness. For the cause of your difference has not been any of the leading doctrines or precepts of the Divine law, nor has any new heresy respecting the worship of God arisen among you. You are in truth of one and the same judgment: you may therefore well join in communion and fellowship.

Chapter LXXI. - There should be no Contention in Matters which are in themselves of Little Moment.

“For as long as you continue to contend about these small and very insignificant questions, it is not fitting that so large a portion of God’s people should be under the direction of your judgment, since you are thus divided between yourselves. I believe it indeed to be not merely unbecoming, but positively evil, that such should be the case. But I will refresh your minds by a little illustration, as follows. You know that philosophers, though they all adhere to one system, are yet frequently at issue on certain points, and differ, perhaps, in their degree of knowledge: yet they are recalled to harmony of sentiment by the uniting power of their common doctrines. If this be true, is it not far more reasonable that you, who are the ministers of the Supreme God, should be of one mind respecting the profession of the same religion? But let us still more thoughtfully and with closer attention examine what I have said, and see whether it be right that, on the ground of some trifling and foolish verbal difference between ourselves, brethren should assume towards each other the attitude of enemies, and the august meeting of the Synod be rent by profane disunion, because of you who wrangle together on points so trivial and altogether unessential? This is vulgar, and rather characteristic of childish ignorance, than consistent with the wisdom of priests and men of sense. Let us withdraw ourselves with a good will from these temptations of the devil. Our great God and common Saviour of all has granted the same light to us all. Permit me, who am his servant, to bring my task to a successful issue, under the direction of his Providence, that I may be enabled, through my exhortations, and diligence, and earnest admonition, to recall his people to communion and fellowship. For since you have, as I said, but one faith, and one sentiment respecting our religion, and since the Divine commandment in all its parts enjoins on us all the duty of maintaining a spirit of concord, let not the circumstance which has led to a slight difference between you, since it does not affect the validity of the whole, cause any division or schism among you. And this I say without in any way desiring to force you to entire unity of judgment in regard to this truly idle question, whatever its real nature may be. For the dignity of your synod may be preserved, and the communion of your whole body maintained unbroken, however wide a difference may exist among you as to unimportant matters. For we are not all of us like-minded on every subject, nor is there such a thing as one disposition and judgment common to all alike. As far, then, as regards the Divine Providence, let there be one faith, and one understanding among you, one united judgment in reference to God. But as to your subtle disputations on questions of little or no significance, though you may be unable to harmonize in sentiment, such differences should be consigned to the secret custody of your own minds and thoughts. And now, let the preciousness of common affection, let faith in the truth, let the honor due to God and to the observance of his law continue immovably among you. Resume, then, your mutual feelings of friendship, love, and regard: restore to the people their wonted embracings; and do ye yourselves, having purified your souls, as it were, once more acknowledge one another. For it often

> happens that when a reconciliation is effected by the removal of the causes of enmity, friendship becomes even sweeter than it was before.

Chapter LXXII. - The Excess of his Pious Concern caused him to shed Tears; and his Intended Journey to the East was postponed because of These Things.

> “Restore me then my quiet days, and untroubled nights, that the joy of undimmed light, the delight of a tranquil life, may henceforth be my portion. Else must I needs mourn, with constant tears, nor shall I be able to pass the residue of my days in peace. For while the people of God, whose fellow-servant I am, are thus divided amongst themselves by an unreasonable and pernicious spirit of contention, how is it possible that I shall be able to maintain tranquillity of mind? And I will give you a proof how great my sorrow has been on this behalf. Not long since I had visited Nicomedia, and intended forthwith to proceed from that city to the East. It was while I was hastening towards you, and had already accomplished the greater part of the distance, that the news of this matter reversed my plan, that I might not be compelled to see with my own eyes that which I felt myself scarcely able even to hear. Open then for me henceforward by your unity of judgment that road to the regions of the East which your dissensions have closed against me, and permit me speedily to see yourselves and all other peoples rejoicing together, and render due acknowledgment to God in the language of praise and thanksgiving for the restoration of general concord and liberty to all.”

Eusebius reports the failure of the appeal

> In this manner the pious emperor endeavored by means of the foregoing letter to promote the peace of the Church of God. And the excellent man to whom it was intrusted performed his part not merely by communicating the letter itself, but also by seconding the views of him who sent it; for he was, as I have said, in all respects a person of pious character. The evil, however, was greater than could be remedied by a single letter, insomuch that the acrimony of the contending parties continually increased, and the effects of the mischief extended to all the Eastern provinces. These things jealousy and some evil spirit who looked with an envious eye on the prosperity of the Church, wrought.

Constantine's appeal contains an argument for moderation, but its tolerance is conditional. It presupposes that Alexander and Arius can be said to share the same essential faith. If their disputed claims actually define incompatible accounts of the God they worship, the proposed settlement assumes what it needs to establish. His comparison with philosophical schools may support patience in discussion, yet it does not explain which disagreements a religious community can absorb while remaining the same community. That unanswered question helps explain why the letter failed without proving that patience itself was impossible.

The emperor also shifts the scale of attention. Alexander's letter had depicted a network of teachers and bishops corrupting the church. Arius had depicted a persecuted party seeking protection from sympathetic bishops. Constantine now depicts the empire's religious peace as a responsibility shared by both disputants. Each source selects a different injured subject: true teaching, the accused teachers, or the common peace. A historical account becomes more concrete when it asks what each author is asking a recipient to protect.

Hosius of Corduba appears in the narrative tradition as the intermediary who carried the imperial attempt at reconciliation. A bishop could therefore act within imperial diplomacy while remaining an ecclesiastical participant in the dispute. Such cooperation complicates the picture of a secular emperor confronting an entirely separate religious institution. The fourth-century church included bishops with access to the court, bishops with local constituencies, and bishops whose authority depended on provincial arrangements. Their interests could overlap without becoming identical.

Eusebius's admission that the letter did not bring peace is particularly useful because his larger work celebrates Constantine's achievement. The failure is not evidence that the emperor cared nothing for doctrine. It establishes that an imperial wish for agreement was insufficient to produce it. The subsequent council would create a different procedure: assembled bishops would formulate and subscribe a common statement, and imperial authority would support the result. The move from private admonition to a general assembly changed the means by which peace was to be achieved.

The documents do not provide every meeting or draft between the unsuccessful appeal and the summons for Nicaea. They establish a change in public policy: Constantine moved from admonishing the two disputants to supporting a common judgment by assembled bishops.

4 The Assembled Bishops and the Creed of 325

Eusebius of Caesarea gives two different kinds of evidence for Nicaea. His Life of Constantine describes the assembly as part of a providential imperial achievement. His letter to the people of his diocese explains why he accepted the council's formula. The first text is celebratory narrative written after Constantine's death; the second is a participant's explanation directed to a community for which he was responsible. Their difference in audience helps explain the difference in detail. The Life makes the emperor's entrance memorable. The letter makes the disputed words discussable.

The narrative's estimate of attendance should not be silently replaced with the traditional number 318. Eusebius says that the number of bishops exceeded 250, apart from the attendants accompanying them. The later prominence of 318 belongs to the reception of the council. Neither figure supplies a complete, independently verified roll of everyone present. The secure conclusion is that the council gathered an unusually extensive body of bishops, predominantly from the eastern provinces, with some western representation. Its claim to a common settlement depended on that breadth of assembly.

Eusebius's list of regions has a rhetorical purpose as well as geographical content. He compares the meeting with the gathering of nations in Acts. The assembly appears as a visible sign that dispersed peoples could possess one faith under one ruler. The bishops' differences in age, learning, and manner contribute to this portrait. Their diversity makes the final agreement appear an achievement of concord. The narrative thus teaches a reader how to admire the assembly before giving any detailed account of the definition.

Constantine enters as a ruler whose magnificence is moderated by reverence. He waits to sit until the bishops indicate that he should do so, and he addresses them through the idiom of service and peace. Eusebius's description is not a neutral seating chart: it places imperial greatness within an image of religious humility. Nevertheless it also makes the material setting unmistakable. The bishops meet in a palace, the emperor participates, and the settlement becomes an object of imperial concern. Reverence and political power occupy the same room.

The passage below ends at the reported unanimity on faith and Easter. No full verbatim minutes survive by which to reconstruct every speech or every change to a draft. Eusebius gives the emperor's address but not a comparable sequence of the bishops' theological arguments. Claims about exactly who introduced each decisive phrase should therefore be distinguished from the wording the council actually adopted. The creed and the participants' explanations provide firmer evidence than an imagined dramatic debate.

Eusebius of Caesarea, Life of Constantine III.6-14; Richardson translation (1890). The chapters are reproduced in sequence, with the historical chapter headings and without the edition's footnotes. The narrative is Eusebius's account; the address in III.12 is presented by him as Constantine's speech.

Chapter VI. - How he ordered a Council to be held at Nicæa.

Then as if to bring a divine array against this enemy, he convoked a general council, and invited the speedy attendance of bishops from all quarters, in letters expressive of the honorable estimation in which he held them. Nor was this merely the issuing of a bare command but the emperor’s good will contributed much to its being carried into effect: for he allowed some the use of the public means of conveyance, while he afforded to others an ample supply of horses for their transport. The place, too, selected for the synod, the city Nicæa in Bithynia (named from “Victory”), was appropriate to the occasion. As soon then as the imperial injunction was generally made known, all with the utmost willingness hastened thither, as though they would outstrip one another in a race; for they were impelled by the anticipation of a happy result to the conference, by the hope of enjoying present peace, and the desire of beholding something new and strange in the person of so admirable an emperor. Now when they were all assembled, it appeared evident that the proceeding was the work of God, inasmuch as men who had been most widely separated, not merely in sentiment but also personally, and by difference of country, place, and nation, were here brought together, and comprised within the walls of a single city, forming as it were a vast garland of priests, composed of a variety of the choicest flowers.

Chapter VII. - Of the General Council, at which Bishops from all Nations were Present.

In effect, the most distinguished of God’s ministers from all the churches which abounded in Europe, Lybia, and Asia were here assembled. And a single house of prayer, as though divinely enlarged, sufficed to contain at once Syrians and Cilicians, Phœnicians and Arabians, delegates from Palestine, and others from Egypt; Thebans and Libyans, with those who came from the region of Mesopotamia. A Persian bishop too was present at this conference, nor was even a Scythian found wanting to the number. Pontus, Galatia, and Pamphylia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Phrygia, furnished their most distinguished prelates; while those who dwelt in the remotest districts of Thrace and Macedonia, of Achaia and Epirus, were notwithstanding in attendance. Even from Spain itself, one whose fame was widely spread took his seat as an individual in the great assembly. The prelate of the imperial city was prevented from attending by extreme old age; but his presbyters were present, and supplied his place. Constantine is the first prince of any age who bound together such a garland as this with the bond of peace, and presented it to his Saviour as a thank-offering for the victories he had obtained over every foe, thus exhibiting in our own times a similitude of the apostolic company.

Chapter VIII. - That the Assembly was composed, as in the Acts of the Apostles, of Individuals from Various Nations.

For it is said that in the Apostles' age, there were gathered "devout men from every nation under heaven"; among whom were Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene; and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians. But that assembly was less, in that not all who composed it were ministers of God; but in the present company, the number of bishops exceeded two hundred and fifty, while that of the presbyters and deacons in their train, and the crowd of acolytes and other attendants was altogether beyond computation.

Chapter IX. - Of the Virtue and Age of the Two Hundred and Fifty Bishops.

Of these ministers of God, some were distinguished by wisdom and eloquence, others by the gravity of their lives, and by patient fortitude of character, while others again united in themselves all these graces. There were among them men whose years demanded veneration: others were younger, and in the prime of mental vigor; and some had but recently entered on the course of their ministry. For the maintenance of all ample provision was daily furnished by the emperor's command.

Chapter X. - Council in the Palace. Constantine, entering, took his Seat in the Assembly.

Now when the appointed day arrived on which the council met for the final solution of the questions in dispute, each member was present for this in the central building of the palace, which appeared to exceed the rest in magnitude. On each side of the interior of this were many seats disposed in order, which were occupied by those who had been invited to attend, according to their rank. As soon, then, as the whole assembly had seated themselves with becoming orderliness, a general silence prevailed, in expectation of the emperor's arrival. And first of all, three of his immediate family entered in succession, then others also preceded his approach, not of the soldiers or guards who usually accompanied him, but only friends in the faith. And now, all rising at the signal which indicated the emperor's entrance, at last he himself proceeded through the midst of the assembly, like some heavenly messenger of God, clothed in raiment which glittered as it were with rays of light, reflecting the glowing radiance of a purple robe, and adorned with the brilliant splendor of gold and precious stones. Such was the external appearance of his person; and with regard to his mind, it was evident that he was distinguished by piety and godly fear. This was indicated by his downcast eyes, the blush on his countenance, and his gait. For the rest of his personal excellencies, he surpassed all present in height of stature and beauty of form, as well as in majestic dignity of mien, and invincible strength and vigor. All these graces, united to a suavity of manner, and a serenity

becoming his imperial station, declared the excellence of his mental qualities to be above all praise. As soon as he had advanced to the upper end of the seats, at first he remained standing, and when a low chair of wrought gold had been set for him, he waited until the bishops had beckoned to him, and then sat down, and after him the whole assembly did the same.

Chapter XI. - Silence of the Council, after Some Words by the Bishop Eusebius.

The bishop who occupied the chief place in the right division of the assembly then rose, and, addressing the emperor, delivered a concise speech, in a strain of thanksgiving to Almighty God on his behalf. When he had resumed his seat, silence ensued, and all regarded the emperor with fixed attention; on which he looked serenely round on the assembly with a cheerful aspect, and, having collected his thoughts, in a calm and gentle tone gave utterance to the following words.

Chapter XII. - Constantine’s Address to the Council concerning Peace.

“It was once my chief desire, dearest friends, to enjoy the spectacle of your united presence; and now that this desire is fulfilled, I feel myself bound to render thanks to God the universal King, because, in addition to all his other benefits, he has granted me a blessing higher than all the rest, in permitting me to see you not only all assembled together, but all united in a common harmony of sentiment. I pray therefore that no malignant adversary may henceforth interfere to mar our happy state; I pray that, now the impious hostility of the tyrants has been forever removed by the power of God our Saviour, that spirit who delights in evil may devise no other means for exposing the divine law to blasphemous calumny; for, in my judgment, intestine strife within the Church of God, is far more evil and dangerous than any kind of war or conflict; and these our differences appear to me more grievous than any outward trouble. Accordingly, when, by the will and with the co-operation of God, I had been victorious over my enemies, I thought that nothing more remained but to render thanks to him, and sympathize in the joy of those whom he had restored to freedom through my instrumentality; as soon as I heard that intelligence which I had least expected to receive, I mean the news of your dissension, I judged it to be of no secondary importance, but with the earnest desire that a remedy for this evil also might be found through my means, I immediately sent to require your presence. And now I rejoice in beholding your assembly; but I feel that my desires will be most completely fulfilled when I can see you all united in one judgment, and that common spirit of peace and concord prevailing amongst you all, which it becomes you, as consecrated to the service of God, to commend to others. Delay not, then, dear friends: delay not, ye ministers of God, and faithful servants of him who is our common Lord and Saviour: begin from this moment to discard the causes of that disunion which has existed among you, and remove the perplexities of controversy by embracing the principles of peace. For by such conduct you will at the same time

be acting in a manner most pleasing to the supreme God, and you will confer an exceeding favor on me who am your fellow-servant.”

Chapter XIII. - How he led the Dissentient Bishops to Harmony of Sentiment.

As soon as the emperor had spoken these words in the Latin tongue, which another interpreted, he gave permission to those who presided in the council to deliver their opinions. On this some began to accuse their neighbors, who defended themselves, and recriminated in their turn. In this manner numberless assertions were put forth by each party, and a violent controversy arose at the very commencement. Notwithstanding this, the emperor gave patient audience to all alike, and received every proposition with steadfast attention, and by occasionally assisting the argument of each party in turn, he gradually disposed even the most vehement disputants to a reconciliation. At the same time, by the affability of his address to all, and his use of the Greek language, with which he was not altogether unacquainted, he appeared in a truly attractive and amiable light, persuading some, convincing others by his reasonings, praising those who spoke well, and urging all to unity of sentiment, until at last he succeeded in bringing them to one mind and judgment respecting every disputed question.

Chapter XIV. - Unanimous Declaration of the Council concerning Faith, and the Celebration of Easter.

The result was that they were not only united as concerning the faith, but that the time for the celebration of the salutary feast of Easter was agreed on by all. Those points also which were sanctioned by the resolution of the whole body were committed to writing, and received the signature of each several member. Then the emperor, believing that he had thus obtained a second victory over the adversary of the Church, proceeded to solemnize a triumphal festival in honor of God.

The creed gives a more precise account of the settlement than the narrative's language of unanimity. Its central assertions are that the Son is begotten from the Father, from the Father's substance, truly God, and begotten rather than made. The same Son is the agent through whom all things were made and the one who came down for human salvation. Its closing anathemas reject the very propositions that Arius's correspondence had advanced: a time or condition in which the Son was not, existence from what did not exist, and an origin that places him outside the Father's divine being.

Substance in this translation is not chemical matter. The term concerns what the Son is, and the definition explicitly distinguishes his origin from the making of creatures. Nor does begotten instruct the reader to imagine a sexual or bodily process. Alexander had already rejected bodily division, and Eusebius's explanation below does the same. The text asks readers to distinguish divine generation from creaturely

manufacture while refusing a material account of the relation. That combination of assertion and prohibition is part of the formula's intended meaning.

The brief reference to the Holy Spirit is a conspicuous limit of this particular document. The fuller confession now commonly recited as the Nicene Creed contains a more developed affirmation of the Spirit, as well as clauses about the church, baptism, and resurrection. It is associated with Constantinople in 381 and received in the later conciliar tradition. The short confession below belongs to 325. Printing it separately prevents the later received creed from being treated as the complete text the first assembly adopted.

The confession and anathemas

Council of Nicaea, creed and anathemas of 325, in Henry R. Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 14 (1900), printed page 3. The complete historical translation is reproduced. Greek expressions and bracketed phrases in that edition are retained.

> 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, the only-begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten (γεννηθέντα), not made, being of one substance (ὁμοούσιον, consubstantialem) with the Father. By whom all things were made, both which be in heaven and in earth. Who for us men and for our salvation came down [from heaven] and was incarnate and was made man. He suffered and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven. And he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost. And whosoever shall say that there was a time when the Son of God was not (ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν), or that before he was begotten he was not, or that he was made of things that were not, or that he is of a different substance or essence [from the Father] or that he is a creature, or subject to change or conversion - all that so say, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them.

The word hypostasis in the anathemas requires particular care. The 325 text condemns saying that the Son comes from another hypostasis or ousia. Later orthodox teaching could distinguish the one ousia from three hypostases. The same Greek terms did not yet possess that later, consistently differentiated function in every speaker's vocabulary. A reader who imports the later dictionary mechanically may make the first council condemn a formula that later pro-Nicene Christians accepted. The history of clarification belongs to the decades after the council.

Eusebius's explanatory letter shows assent being negotiated through interpretation. He begins with a confession that he says expresses his inherited and baptismal faith, then reproduces the council's statement and explains the additions. He asks whether from the Father's substance implies a portion or severance and receives a denial. He accepts begotten, not made because it excludes the Son from the works created

through him. He accepts one in essence on the understanding that it does not describe bodies being cut into parts.

This is evidence for a meaningful doctrinal boundary and for continuing interpretive work. Eusebius did not sign a string of sounds to which no content could be attached. His letter states the content he considered acceptable and insists that he inquired into it. At the same time, his need to reassure his own people shows that assent to a common formula did not eliminate the need to explain how it related to previous teaching. A signature could mark agreement on certain exclusions while leaving further questions about preferred terminology unresolved.

Eusebius explains his assent to his diocese

Eusebius of Caesarea, Letter to the People of His Diocese concerning Nicaea, preserved with Athanasius's works; Newman translation revised in Robertson's edition, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 4 (1892), sections 1-11. The complete fuller form of the letter, including both confessions quoted in it, is reproduced; sections 9-10 are absent from Socrates's version, as discussed below. The nineteenth-century introductory headings, footnotes, and running page numbers are omitted. The internal heading identifying the council's formula is retained.

1. What was transacted concerning ecclesiastical faith at the Great Council assembled at Nicæa, you have probably learned, Beloved, from other sources, rumour being wont to precede the accurate account of what is doing. But lest in such reports the circumstances of the case have been misrepresented, we have been obliged to transmit to you, first, the formula of faith presented by ourselves, and next, the second, which [the Fathers] put forth with some additions to our words. Our own paper, then, which was read in the presence of our most pious Emperor, and declared to be good and unexceptionable, ran thus: -

2. “As we have received from the Bishops who preceded us, and in our first catechisings, and when we received the Holy Laver, and as we have learned from the divine Scriptures, and as we believed and taught in the presbytery, and in the Episcopate itself, so believing also at the time present, we report to you our faith, and it is this:” -

3. “We believe in One God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, God from God, Light from Light, Life from Life, Son Only-begotten, first-born of every creature, before all the ages, begotten from the Father, by Whom also all things were made; Who for our salvation was made flesh, and lived among men, and suffered, and rose again the third day, and ascended to the Father, and will come again in glory to judge the quick and dead. And we believe also in One Holy Ghost:”

“believing each of these to be and to exist, the Father truly Father, and the Son truly Son, and the Holy Ghost truly Holy Ghost, as also our Lord, sending forth His disciples for the preaching, said, “Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Concerning Whom we

confidently affirm that so we hold, and so we think, and so we have held aforetime, and we maintain this faith unto the death, anathematizing every godless heresy. That this we have ever thought from our heart and soul, from the time we recollect ourselves, and now think and say in truth, before God Almighty and our Lord Jesus Christ do we witness, being able by proofs to shew and to convince you, that, even in times past, such has been our belief and preaching."

4. On this faith being publicly put forth by us, no room for contradiction appeared; but our most pious Emperor, before any one else, testified that it comprised most orthodox state ments. He confessed moreover that such were his own sentiments, and he advised all present to agree to it, and to subscribe its articles and to assent to them, with the insertion of the single word, One-in-essence, which moreover he interpreted as not in the sense of the affections of bodies, nor as if the Son subsisted from the Father in the way of division, or any severance; for that the immaterial, and intellectual, and incorporeal nature could not be the subject of any corporeal affection, but that it became us to conceive of such things in a divine and ineffable manner. And such were the theological remarks of our most wise and most religious Emperor; but they, with a view to the addition of One in essence, drew up the following formula: -

The Faith dictated in the Council.

"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, Only-begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, Very God from Very God, begotten not made, One in essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things in earth; Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, was made man, suffered, and rose again the third day, ascended into heaven, and cometh to judge quick and dead."

"And in the Holy Ghost."

"And those who say, 'Once He was not,' and 'Before His generation He was not,' and 'He came to be from nothing,' or those who pretend that the Son of God is 'Of other subsistence or essence,' or 'created' or 'alterable,' or 'mutable,' the Catholic Church anathematizes."

5. On their dictating this formula, we did not let it pass without inquiry in what sense they introduced "of the essence of the Father," and "one in essence with the Father." Accordingly questions and explanations took place, and the meaning of the words underwent the scrutiny of reason. And they professed, that the phrase "of the essence" was indicative of the Son's being indeed from the Father, yet without being as if a part of Him. And with this understanding we thought good to assent to the sense of such religious doctrine, teaching, as it did, that the Son was from the Father, not however a part of His essence. On this account we assented to the sense

ourselves, without declining even the term “One in essence,” peace being the object which we set before us, and stedfastness in the orthodox view.

6. In the same way we also admitted “begotten, not made;” since the Council alleged that “made” was an appellative common to the other creatures which came to be through the Son, to whom the Son had no likeness. Wherefore, say they, He was not a work resembling the things which through Him came to be, but was of an essence which is too high for the level of any work; and which the Divine oracles teach to have been generated from the Father, the mode of generation being inscrutable and incalculable to every originated nature.

7. And so too on examination there are grounds for saying that the Son is “one in essence” with the Father; not in the way of bodies, nor like mortal beings, for He is not such by division of essence, or by severance, no, nor by any affection, or alteration, or changing of the Father’s essence and power (since from all such the unoriginate nature of the Father is alien), but because “one in essence with the Father” suggests that the Son of God bears no resemblance to the originated creatures, but that to His Father alone Who begat Him is He in every way assimilated, and that He is not of any other subsistence and essence, but from the Father. To which term also, thus interpreted, it appeared well to assent; since we were aware that even among the ancients, some learned and illustrious Bishops and writers have used the term “one in essence,” in their theological teaching concerning the Father and Son.

8. So much then be said concerning the faith which was published; to which all of us assented, not without inquiry, but according to the specified senses, mentioned before the most religious Emperor himself, and justified by the forementioned considerations. And as to the anathematism published by them at the end of the Faith, it did not pain us, because it forbade to use words not in Scripture, from which almost all the confusion and disorder of the Church have come. Since then no divinely inspired Scripture has used the phrases, “out of nothing,” and “once He was not,” and the rest which follow, there appeared no ground for using or teaching them; to which also we assented as a good decision, since it had not been our custom hitherto to use these terms.

9. Moreover to anathematize “Before His generation He was not,” did not seem preposterous, in that it is confessed by all, that the Son of God was before the generation according to the flesh.

10. Nay, our most religious Emperor did at the time prove, in a speech, that He was in being even according to His divine generation which is before all ages, since even before He was generated in energy, He was in virtue with the Father ingenerately, the Father being always Father, as King always, and Saviour always, being all things in virtue, and being always in the same respects and in the same way.

11. This we have been forced to transmit to you, Beloved, as making clear to you the deliberation of our inquiry and assent, and how reasonably we resisted even to the last minute as long as we were offended at statements which differed from our own,

> but received without contention what no longer pained us, as soon as, on a candid examination of the sense of the words, they appeared to us to coincide with what we ourselves have professed in the faith which we have already published.

The letter is reproduced in the fuller form printed in the historical edition. Its sections 9 and 10 are absent from Socrates's version, and their authenticity has been questioned. They should therefore not be used as an independently secure transcript of Constantine's theological reasoning. The account in section 4, which also attributes an interpretation of the disputed term to the emperor, stands outside those two disputed paragraphs. The difference between versions is a reminder that even an early participant's letter reaches us through a later textual history.

Eusebius attributes an important interpretive role to the emperor, including an explanation that one in essence does not imply bodily division. That attribution should be read as the participant's report, not expanded into a claim that Constantine composed the creed by himself. The letter names discussion and examination and distinguishes the statement Eusebius presented from the formula produced at the council. Imperial involvement is explicit; sole imperial authorship is not established by this evidence.

His acceptance of the anathemas is also revealing. He objects to unscriptural expressions used by the condemned party and is willing to exclude them. This argument differs from a blanket principle that only exact biblical wording may ever be used in Christian confession. The letter assesses the sense carried by an expression and the consequences of allowing it. The conflict over nonbiblical language was therefore not solved simply by identifying which side possessed a word absent from the Bible. The disputants also had to explain why their interpretive vocabulary preserved, rather than changed, what Scripture taught.

The anathemas and Eusebius's explanatory letter establish the definition's restrictive purpose: it excluded an account that made the Son one of the things brought into existence through divine choice. What remains uncertain is how completely every subscriber shared its implications.

5 The Twenty Canons and the Life of the Churches

The council's twenty canons bring its institutional world into focus. They concern the selection of clergy, the authority of bishops, the return of separated Christians, the restoration of those who failed under persecution, financial conduct, and common worship. The council that confessed the Son also regulated households, loans, appointments, and the posture of prayer. Its surviving legislation therefore resists the idea that Nicaea was interested only in metaphysical language.

These canons are printed in full and in their received sequence. Brief explanations follow each one. The annotations identify the problem a canon addresses and the extent of the rule it actually states. Later collections, commentaries, and theories of church government greatly enlarged the significance of these texts. That later authority should not be confused with the claim that every developed institution already existed in its eventual form in 325.

Several rules look backward to the effects of persecution. A lapsed Christian had failed in circumstances where fidelity might threaten security, livelihood, freedom, or life. The council distinguishes different forms of failure and prescribes stages of restoration. That vocabulary assumes a church with recognized classes of penitents and a visible passage toward full participation in worship. The rules could impose long exclusions; they also give bishops a responsibility to consider the seriousness of repentance and the urgency of death. Discipline and restoration are joined in the same legislation.

The word catholic in these documents refers to the church understood as universal or whole. It should not automatically be read as the name of the later Roman Catholic communion in distinction from every other present-day church. The bishops are regulating the communion to which they believe Christians should belong, and some canons explicitly concern the reception of other groups. The institutional claim is real even where a modern denominational label would mislead.

The canons are given in Percival's historical English translation. Terms such as subintroducta, Cathari, hearers, and prostrators require explanation because substituting an approximate modern word could conceal the particular institution being regulated. The annotations supply that explanation without altering the source wording. The larger nineteenth-century commentaries, ancient epitomes, and later canonical parallels printed around the canons in Percival's volume are not part of the council's own text and are not reproduced as if they were.

Council of Nicaea, Canons 1-20, complete, in Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils (1900). The canon texts are reproduced without Percival's surrounding notes, ancient epitomes, and excursuses. Bracketed explanations already present in the historical translation are retained. Each annotation following a canon is new editorial commentary.

Canon 1

> If any one in sickness has been subjected by physicians to a surgical operation, or if he has been castrated by barbarians, let him remain among the clergy; but, if any one in sound health has castrated himself, it behoves that such an one, if [already] enrolled among the clergy, should cease [from his ministry], and that from henceforth no such person should be promoted. But, as it is evident that this is said of those who wilfully do the thing and presume to castrate themselves, so if any have been made eunuchs by barbarians, or by their masters, and should otherwise be found worthy, such men the Canon admits to the clergy.

Canon 1 distinguishes a bodily condition imposed by illness or violence from deliberate self-castration. The council does not exclude every physically mutilated person from ministry. Its concern is an intentional act and the moral interpretation attached to it. The exceptions are part of the rule, not an embarrassment to be silently omitted. The canon also limits how zeal for ascetic discipline may be expressed through injury to the body.

Canon 2

> Forasmuch as, either from necessity, or through the urgency of individuals, many things have been done contrary to the Ecclesiastical canon, so that men just converted from heathenism to the faith, and who have been instructed but a little while, are straightway brought to the spiritual laver, and as soon as they have been baptized, are advanced to the episcopate or the presbyterate, it has seemed right to us that for the time to come no such thing shall be done. For to the catechumen himself there is need of time and of a longer trial after baptism. For the apostolical saying is clear, “Not a novice; lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into condemnation and the snare of the devil.” But if, as time goes on, any sensual sin should be found out about the person, and he should be convicted by two or three witnesses, let him cease from the clerical office. And whoso shall transgress these [enactments] will imperil his own clerical position, as a person who presumes to disobey the great Synod.

Canon 2 resists rapid promotion from conversion and baptism into authority. A teacher should first have experience within the community and be tested. The citation of the pastoral warning against a novice grounds the rule in Scripture, while the stated need to correct existing practice shows that scriptural warrant did not automatically produce uniform administration. The council also addresses how later misconduct should affect the office already received.

Canon 3

> The great Synod has stringently forbidden any bishop, presbyter, deacon, or any one of the clergy whatever, to have a subintroducta dwelling with him, except only a mother, or sister, or aunt, or such persons only as are beyond all suspicion.

Subintroducta designates a woman brought into a cleric's household, including arrangements presented as spiritual companionship without marriage or close kinship. The canon allows specified relatives and women beyond suspicion. It is not a complete marriage law for all clergy, and it cannot by itself prove that every later discipline of clerical celibacy was already universal. Its immediate concern is the perceived danger and public suspicion surrounding particular domestic arrangements.

Canon 4

> It is by all means proper that a bishop should be appointed by all the bishops in the province; but should this be difficult, either on account of urgent necessity or because of distance, three at least should meet together, and the suffrages of the absent [bishops] also being given and communicated in writing, then the ordination should take place. But in every province the ratification of what is done should be left to the Metropolitan.

The election of a bishop is a provincial matter requiring participation or consent from fellow bishops and confirmation by the metropolitan. Metropolitan here identifies the bishop associated with the province's principal city. The provision for three bishops addresses distance and practical necessity. It combines collective participation with a recognized presiding authority; it does not describe an unrestricted right of a single local congregation or an entirely centralized appointment system.

Canon 5

> Concerning those, whether of the clergy or of the laity, who have been excommunicated in the several provinces, let the provision of the canon be observed by the bishops which provides that persons cast out by some be not readmitted by others. Nevertheless, inquiry should be made whether they have been excommunicated through captiousness, or contentiousness, or any such like ungracious disposition in the bishop. And, that this matter may have due investigation, it is decreed that in every province synods shall be held twice a year, in order that when all the bishops of the province are assembled together, such questions may by them be thoroughly examined, that so those who have confessedly offended against their bishop, may be seen by all to be for just cause excommunicated, until it shall seem fit to a general meeting of the bishops to pronounce a milder sentence upon them. And let these synods be held, the one before Lent, (that the pure Gift may be offered to God after all bitterness has been put away), and let the second be held about autumn.

The canon recognizes existing excommunications while allowing a provincial examination of whether a bishop's action arose from personal hostility or some other improper cause. Twice-yearly synods supply a means of review. The right to exclude is therefore accompanied by a procedure for checking its exercise. The calendar reference places one meeting before Lent so that disputes need not obstruct the community's approach to its central season of reconciliation.

Canon 6

> Let the ancient customs in Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis prevail, that the Bishop of Alexandria have jurisdiction in all these, since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also. Likewise in Antioch and the other provinces, let the Churches retain their privileges. And this is to be universally understood, that if any one be made bishop without the consent of the Metropolitan, the great Synod has declared that such a man ought not to be a bishop. If, however, two or three bishops shall from natural love of contradiction, oppose the common suffrage of the rest, it being reasonable and in accordance with the ecclesiastical law, then let the choice of the majority prevail.

The appeal to ancient custom protects existing jurisdictions, especially Alexandria's relation to Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, with Rome and Antioch invoked as parallels. This is important evidence for regional authority. It is not a complete constitutional statement resolving all later disputes over papal primacy or patriarchal power. The final sentences again connect episcopal appointments with provincial consent and resist a minority's unreasonable obstruction of a common decision.

Canon 7

> Since custom and ancient tradition have prevailed that the Bishop of Ælia [i.e., Jerusalem] should be honoured, let him, saving its due dignity to the Metropolis, have the next place of honour.

Aelia is the Roman name used for Jerusalem. The bishop receives a customary place of honor while the metropolitan's dignity is preserved. The distinction between honor and jurisdiction matters. The canon does not yet give Jerusalem every right it later possessed as a patriarchal see. It recognizes the city's religious importance within a provincial arrangement that still protects another bishop's established position.

Canon 8

> Concerning those who call themselves Cathari, if they come over to the Catholic and Apostolic Church, the great and holy Synod decrees that they who are ordained shall continue as they are in the clergy. But it is before all things necessary that they should profess in writing that they will observe and follow the dogmas of the Catholic and Apostolic Church; in particular that they will communicate with

> persons who have been twice married, and with those who having lapsed in persecution have had a period [of penance] laid upon them, and a time [of restoration] fixed so that in all things they will follow the dogmas of the Catholic Church. Wheresoever, then, whether in villages or in cities, all of the ordained are found to be of these only, let them remain in the clergy, and in the same rank in which they are found. But if they come over where there is a bishop or presbyter of the Catholic Church, it is manifest that the Bishop of the Church must have the bishop’s dignity; and he who was named bishop by those who are called Cathari shall have the rank of presbyter, unless it shall seem fit to the Bishop to admit him to partake in the honour of the title. Or, if this should not be satisfactory, then shall the bishop provide for him a place as Chorepiscopus, or presbyter, in order that he may be evidently seen to be of the clergy, and that there may not be two bishops in the city.

The Cathari here are associated with the Novatianist tradition, whose strict discipline especially affected the reception of Christians who had lapsed and those who married again. The council permits reception under stated commitments to the church's communion and discipline. Its rule that there should not be two bishops in one city addresses an institutional consequence of reunion: admitting separated clergy requires decisions about rank and office, not only a change in vocabulary.

Canon 9

> If any presbyters have been advanced without examination, or if upon examination they have made confession of crime, and men acting in violation of the canon have laid hands upon them, notwithstanding their confession, such the canon does not admit; for the Catholic Church requires that [only] which is blameless.

Examination before ordination is meant to establish fitness for office. Where a serious disqualifying offense was confessed but disregarded by those ordaining, the irregularity does not become acceptable merely because the ceremony occurred. The canon limits the power of an act of ordination to erase what the church regards as an impediment. It also places responsibility on those who failed to examine or knowingly ignored the result.

Canon 10

> If any who have lapsed have been ordained through the ignorance, or even with the previous knowledge of the ordainers, this shall not prejudice the canon of the Church; for when they are discovered they shall be deposed.

This canon concerns people who had lapsed and were nevertheless ordained. It says that ignorance, or even prior knowledge, by the ordainers does not cancel the rule when the lapse becomes known. It is a severe provision directed at eligibility for ministry, not a general statement that a lapsed layperson can never be reconciled. The following canons explicitly provide routes toward restored communion.

Canon 11

> Concerning those who have fallen without compulsion, without the spoiling of their property, without danger or the like, as happened during the tyranny of Licinius, the Synod declares that, though they have deserved no clemency, they shall be dealt with mercifully. As many as were communicants, if they heartily repent, shall pass three years among the hearers; for seven years they shall be prostrators; and for two years they shall communicate with the people in prayers, but without oblation.

The council prescribes a lengthy penitential course for those who abandoned fidelity without the pressures it lists. The stages distinguish hearing, prostration, and participation in prayer without the offering. These are communal statuses, not merely private feelings. The reference to Licinius places the law in the recent experience of persecution and imperial conflict, even as the bishops meet with the support of Licinius's victorious rival.

Canon 12

> As many as were called by grace, and displayed the first zeal, having cast aside their military girdles, but afterwards returned, like dogs, to their own vomit, (so that some spent money and by means of gifts regained their military stations); let these, after they have passed the space of three years as hearers, be for ten years prostrators. But in all these cases it is necessary to examine well into their purpose and what their repentance appears to be like. For as many as give evidence of their conversions by deeds, and not pretence, with fear, and tears, and perseverance, and good works, when they have fulfilled their appointed time as hearers, may properly communicate in prayers; and after that the bishop may determine yet more favourably concerning them. But those who take [the matter] with indifference, and who think the form of [not] entering the Church is sufficient for their conversion, must fulfil the whole time.

The military girdle marks service that some Christians had renounced and then sought to regain, even through payments or favors. The canon's sharp comparison with a dog returning to its vomit condemns that reversal. Its precise historical scope has been disputed; it should not be made into an unqualified decree about every Christian soldier in every circumstance. Its latter half is especially significant because demonstrated repentance can justify shortening the prescribed course.

Canon 13

> Concerning the departing, the ancient canonical law is still to be maintained, to wit, that, if any man be at the point of death, he must not be deprived of the last and most indispensable Viaticum. But, if any one should be restored to health again who has received the communion when his life was despaired of, let him remain among those who communicate in prayers only. But in general, and in the case of any dying

> person whatsoever asking to receive the Eucharist, let the Bishop, after examination made, give it him.

Viaticum means provision for a journey, here the indispensable final communion of a dying Christian. The canon directs that such a person must not be deprived of it. If the person survives, the appropriate penitential status resumes. Pastoral judgment and investigation remain necessary, but the imminence of death changes how exclusion is administered. A council concerned with boundaries also makes a direct provision against their merciless application.

Canon 14

> Concerning catechumens who have lapsed, the holy and great Synod has decreed that, after they have passed three years only as hearers, they shall pray with the catechumens.

Catechumens were preparing for baptism and had not yet entered the same sacramental status as the baptized faithful. Their restoration is consequently regulated differently. Three years as hearers precedes a return to prayer with the catechumens. The distinction shows why a single undifferentiated label such as church member can obscure the stages through which a fourth-century Christian community organized belonging.

Canon 15

> On account of the great disturbance and discords that occur, it is decreed that the custom prevailing in certain places contrary to the Canon, must wholly be done away; so that neither bishop, presbyter, nor deacon shall pass from city to city. And if any one, after this decree of the holy and great Synod, shall attempt any such thing, or continue in any such course, his proceedings shall be utterly void, and he shall be restored to the Church for which he was ordained bishop or presbyter.

Bishops, presbyters, and deacons are not to transfer themselves from city to city. The stated reason is disturbance and discord, not a theological theory that geography can never change. The canon also invalidates arrangements made in violation of the rule. Later careers and controversies make this prohibition particularly important: the existence of a rule is evidence of an effort to restrain a practice, not proof that the practice immediately disappeared.

Canon 16

> Neither presbyters, nor deacons, nor any others enrolled among the clergy, who, not having the fear of God before their eyes, nor regarding the ecclesiastical Canon, shall recklessly remove from their own church, ought by any means to be received by another church; but every constraint should be applied to restore them to their own parishes; and, if they will not go, they must be excommunicated. And if anyone

> shall dare surreptitiously to carry off and in his own Church ordain a man belonging to another, without the consent of his own proper bishop, from whom although he was enrolled in the clergy list he has seceded, let the ordination be void.

This companion rule addresses clergy who abandon their own churches and other bishops who receive or ordain them without the responsible bishop's consent. It protects existing ecclesiastical relationships and limits competition over personnel. The language of insolence and disorder should not conceal the administrative problem. A mobile cleric could become an instrument of rivalry between bishops or of a faction seeking a different ecclesiastical home.

Canon 17

> Forasmuch as many enrolled among the Clergy, following covetousness and lust of gain, have forgotten the divine Scripture, which says, “He hath not given his money upon usury,” and in lending money ask the hundredth of the sum [as monthly interest], the holy and great Synod thinks it just that if after this decree any one be found to receive usury, whether he accomplish it by secret transaction or otherwise, as by demanding the whole and one half, or by using any other contrivance whatever for filthy lucre’s sake, he shall be deposed from the clergy and his name stricken from the list.

The canon condemns clergy who lend for gain, take interest, or devise substitutes for interest. It is concrete evidence that the council understood the pursuit of profit as a possible contradiction of ministry and Scripture. Its immediate legal subject is the clergy. A broader Christian economic ethic would require other sources, but the canon itself is enough to refute a claim that Nicaea issued no moral demand beyond assent to a creed.

Canon 18

> It has come to the knowledge of the holy and great Synod that, in some districts and cities, the deacons administer the Eucharist to the presbyters, whereas neither canon nor custom permits that they who have no right to offer should give the Body of Christ to them that do offer. And this also has been made known, that certain deacons now touch the Eucharist even before the bishops. Let all such practices be utterly done away, and let the deacons remain within their own bounds, knowing that they are the ministers of the bishop and the inferiors of the presbyters. Let them receive the Eucharist according to their order, after the presbyters, and let either the bishop or the presbyter administer to them. Furthermore, let not the deacons sit among the presbyters, for that is contrary to canon and order. And if, after this decree, any one shall refuse to obey, let him be deposed from the diaconate.

The rule regulates Eucharistic order and rank among bishops, presbyters, and deacons. It rejects a deacon's giving communion to a presbyter in the circumstances

described and requires deacons to receive after presbyters. The passage assumes an already differentiated ministry while also reporting practices that depart from the preferred order. The rule gives evidence both for the hierarchy the council affirmed and for local variation that it sought to correct.

Canon 19

> Concerning the Paulianists who have flown for refuge to the Catholic Church, it has been decreed that they must by all means be rebaptized; and if any of them who in past time have been numbered among their clergy should be found blameless and without reproach, let them be rebaptized and ordained by the Bishop of the Catholic Church; but if the examination should discover them to be unfit, they ought to be deposed. Likewise in the case of their deaconesses, and generally in the case of those who have been enrolled among their clergy, let the same form be observed. And we mean by deaconesses such as have assumed the habit, but who, since they have no imposition of hands, are to be numbered only among the laity.

The Paulianists were associated with Paul of Samosata. The council requires their baptism on reception and provides for examining those who had served among them as clergy. The reference to deaconesses concerns women described here as having received no laying on of hands and therefore counted among the laity. It cannot settle every question about women's ministries across all ancient churches, because its statement is tied to the group and situation being received.

Canon 20

> Forasmuch as there are certain persons who kneel on the Lord’s Day and in the days of Pentecost, therefore, to the intent that all things may be uniformly observed everywhere (in every parish), it seems good to the holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing.

The rule requires standing rather than kneeling for prayer on Sundays and during the Pentecost season. Its immediate purpose is common observance. Pentecost here can designate the fifty-day festal period following Easter, not only one modern calendar day. This final canon is a reminder that the council regulated visible bodily worship as well as doctrine and office. Uniformity meant coordinated practices that ordinary congregations would actually see.

Taken together, the canons show an effort to order a church whose communities were connected but not administratively identical. They appeal to older custom, correct hurried appointments, regulate the reception of separated groups, and make provision for those whose failures had been exposed by persecution. They assume authority and seek to constrain abuses within it. Neither an image of perfectly uniform practice nor an image of wholly independent congregations adequately describes what the rules are doing.

The creed defines the confession of the Son; the canons regulate appointments, money, reconciliation, and worship within the confessing community. Later critics of ecclesiastical greed or harshness could appeal to obligations already present in this legislation, including restraints on clerical profit and provision for dying penitents.

6 The Synodal Settlement and the Common Easter

The council's letter to Alexandria presents its decisions as news to be received with joy. It reports three connected settlements: the condemnation of Arius, the treatment of Meletius and those associated with him, and agreement about Easter. This is the council speaking to a church particularly affected by its work. It gives an account of what was decided and how the Alexandrian community should respond. It does not read like a philosophical treatise or like a modern neutral summary of opposing positions.

The letter's handling of Meletius deserves the same close reading as its handling of Arius. Meletius had led a separate ecclesiastical organization in Egypt. The council permits him to retain a title but restricts his power to ordain, while laying down terms for receiving those he had ordained. It also addresses rank, nomination, and succession. Reconciliation therefore requires arrangements through which competing offices can be brought into one hierarchy. The issue is not settled by declaring that everyone now has the same abstract belief.

The council's praise of Alexander also belongs to this institutional settlement. It asks the recipients to honor their bishop and recognizes his labor. Such language helps restore a local authority challenged in the controversy. The letter is evidence of how the assembly intended its decision to function in Egypt: the Alexandrian church was to recognize its bishop's standing and receive the settlement transmitted in his company. The emperor is named as the ruler who brought the bishops together and in whose presence the disputed teaching was examined.

The Easter announcement is brief. It says that Christians who had followed the custom associated with the Jews would henceforth observe the feast in agreement with Rome, the Alexandrian church, and the rest. It does not set out the complete astronomical algorithm often attributed to Nicaea in popular accounts. In particular, the twenty canons printed in the previous chapter do not contain a rule stating the familiar modern formula about the Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox. A history of Easter calculation must trace later tables, practices, and explanations as well as this announced agreement.

Constantine's accompanying circular is much more expansive, and much more hostile toward Jews. It turns separation from Jewish practice into a religious and moral reason for Christian unanimity. The collective accusations in that circular are the emperor's rhetoric, transmitted by Eusebius; they should not be assigned to the wording of the creed. They also should not be softened into a purely technical disagreement over calendars. An administrative aim is being promoted through a claim about the religious and moral character of another people.

The council writes to Alexandria

Council of Nicaea, synodal letter to the Church of Alexandria and associated communities, complete, in Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils (1900). The historical translation is reproduced without the source catalogue and later editorial discussion printed around it.

To the Church of Alexandria, by the grace of God, holy and great; and to our well-beloved brethren, the orthodox clergy and laity throughout Egypt, and Pentapolis, and Lybia, and every nation under heaven, the holy and great synod, the bishops assembled at Nicea, wish health in the Lord.

Forasmuch as the great and holy Synod, which was assembled at [Nicaea] through the grace of Christ and our most religious Sovereign Constantine, who brought us together from our several provinces and cities, has considered matters which concern the faith of the Church, it seemed to us to be necessary that certain things should be communicated from us to you in writing, so that you might have the means of knowing what has been mooted and investigated, and also what has been decreed and confirmed.

First of all, then, in the presence of our most religious Sovereign Constantine, investigation was made of matters concerning the impiety and transgression of Arius and his adherents; and it was unanimously decreed that he and his impious opinion should be anathematized, together with the blasphemous words and speculations in which he indulged, blaspheming the Son of God, and saying that he is from things that are not, and that before he was begotten he was not, and that there was a time when he was not, and that the Son of God is by his free will capable of vice and virtue; saying also that he is a creature. All these things the holy Synod has anathematized, not even enduring to hear his impious doctrine and madness and blasphemous words. And of the charges against him and of the results they had, ye have either already heard or will hear the particulars, lest we should seem to be oppressing a man who has in fact received a fitting recompense for his own sin. So far indeed has his impiety prevailed, that he has even destroyed Theonas of Marmorica and Secundes of Ptolemais; for they also have received the same sentence as the rest.

But when the grace of God had delivered Egypt from that heresy and blasphemy, and from the persons who have dared to make disturbance and division among a people heretofore at peace, there remained the matter of the insolence of Meletius and those who have been ordained by him; and concerning this part of our work we now, beloved brethren, proceed to inform you of the decrees of the Synod. The Synod, then, being disposed to deal gently with Meletius (for in strict justice he deserved no leniency), decreed that he should remain in his own city, but have no authority either to ordain, or to administer affairs, or to make appointments; and that he should not appear in the country or in any other city for this purpose, but should enjoy the bare title of his rank; but that those who have been placed by him, after they have been confirmed by a more sacred laying on of hands, shall on these conditions be admitted to communion: that they shall both have their rank and the

> right to officiate, but that they shall be altogether the inferiors of all those who are enrolled in any church or parish, and have been appointed by our most honourable colleague Alexander. So that these men are to have no authority to make appointments of persons who may be pleasing to them, nor to suggest names, nor to do anything whatever, without the consent of the bishops of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, who are serving under our most holy colleague Alexander; while those who, by the grace of God and through your prayers, have been found in no schism, but on the contrary are without spot in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, are to have authority to make appointments and nominations of worthy persons among the clergy, and in short to do all things according to the law and ordinance of the Church. But, if it happen that any of the clergy who are now in the Church should die, then those who have been lately received are to succeed to the office of the deceased; always provided that they shall appear to be worthy, and that the people elect them, and that the bishop of Alexandria shall concur in the election and ratify it. This concession has been made to all the rest; but, on account of his disorderly conduct from the first, and the rashness and precipitation of his character, the same decree was not made concerning Meletius himself, but that, inasmuch as he is a man capable of committing again the same disorders, no authority nor privilege should be conceded to him.
>
> These are the particulars, which are of special interest to Egypt and to the most holy Church of Alexandria; but if in the presence of our most honoured lord, our colleague and brother Alexander, anything else has been enacted by canon or other decree, he will himself convey it to you in greater detail, he having been both a guide and fellow-worker in what has been done.
>
> We further proclaim to you the good news of the agreement concerning the holy Easter, that this particular also has through your prayers been rightly settled; so that all our brethren in the East who formerly followed the custom of the Jews are henceforth to celebrate the said most sacred feast of Easter at the same time with the Romans and yourselves and all those who have observed Easter from the beginning.
>
> Wherefore, rejoicing in these wholesome results, and in our common peace and harmony, and in the cutting off of every heresy, receive ye with the greater honour and with increased love, our colleague your Bishop Alexander, who has gladdened us by his presence, and who at so great an age has undergone so great fatigue that peace might be established among you and all of us. Pray ye also for us all, that the things which have been deemed advisable may stand fast; for they have been done, as we believe, to the well-pleasing of Almighty God and of his only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

The reference to Arius's blasphemous expressions reinforces the creed's purpose. The council identifies propositions it means to exclude, rather than pretending that the opposing parties merely need a more charitable tone. The letter's proclamation that Egypt has been delivered from the disturbance expresses the assembly's hoped-for

result. It is not proof that the actual controversy had already ended. Subsequent appeals, reversals, and renewed disputes would show how far a declared settlement could be from a durable social peace.

The Meletian arrangements reveal a different mode of boundary management. Some people can be received while their authority is reclassified and placed under another bishop's consent. That is neither unrestricted acceptance of the prior organization nor a demand that every former participant disappear. It is a negotiated absorption with conditions. The contrast with Arius's condemnation shows that the council did not apply one simple procedure to every form of separation.

Eusebius places Constantine's banquet immediately after his report of doctrinal and calendrical agreement. The juxtaposition gives political form to the celebration. Men whose experience included persecution now dine under imperial protection. That reversal could reasonably be experienced as extraordinary relief. It also created obligations and opportunities: the ruler could honor bishops, provide transport, distribute gifts, and make their collective decision part of the empire's public order. The following chapters let that setting remain visible instead of reducing the event to a single theological sentence.

Eusebius, Life of Constantine III.15-21; Richardson translation (1890), complete and in sequence. Chapters 17-20 contain Constantine's circular on Easter and the council; chapter 21 returns to Eusebius's narrative of the emperor's parting counsel. Editorial footnotes are omitted.

Chapter XV. - How Constantine entertained the Bishops on the Occasion of His Vicennalia.

About this time he completed the twentieth year of his reign. On this occasion public festivals were celebrated by the people of the provinces generally, but the emperor himself invited and feasted with those ministers of God whom he had reconciled, and thus offered as it were through them a suitable sacrifice to God. Not one of the bishops was wanting at the imperial banquet, the circumstances of which were splendid beyond description. Detachments of the body-guard and other troops surrounded the entrance of the palace with drawn swords, and through the midst of these the men of God proceeded without fear into the innermost of the imperial apartments, in which some were the emperor’s own companions at table, while others reclined on couches arranged on either side. One might have thought that a picture of Christ’s kingdom was thus shadowed forth, and a dream rather than reality.

Chapter XVI. - Presents to the Bishops, and Letters to the People generally.

After the celebration of this brilliant festival, the emperor courteously received all his guests, and generously added to the favors he had already bestowed by personally presenting gifts to each individual according to his rank. He also gave information of the proceedings of the synod to those who had not been present, by a letter in his own hand-writing. And this letter also I will inscribe as it were on some monument by inserting it in this my narrative of his life. It was as follows:

Chapter XVII. - Constantine’s Letter to the Churches respecting the Council at Nicæa.

“Constantinus Augustus, to the Churches.

“Having had full proof, in the general prosperity of the empire, how great the favor of God has been towards us, I have judged that it ought to be the first object of my endeavors, that unity of faith, sincerity of love, and community of feeling in regard to the worship of Almighty God, might be preserved among the highly favored multitude who compose the Catholic Church. And, inasmuch as this object could not be effectually and certainly secured, unless all, or at least the greater number of the bishops were to meet together, and a discussion of all particulars relating to our most holy religion to take place; for this reason as numerous an assembly as possible has been convened, at which I myself was present, as one among yourselves (and far be it from me to deny that which is my greatest joy, that I am your fellow-servant), and every question received due and full examination, until that judgment which God, who sees all things, could approve, and which tended to unity and concord, was brought to light, so that no room was left for further discussion or controversy in relation to the faith.

Chapter XVIII. - He speaks of their Unanimity respecting the Feast of Easter, and against the Practice of the Jews.

“At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present, that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day. For what can be more becoming or honorable to us than that this feast from which we date our hopes of immortality, should be observed unfailingly by all alike, according to one ascertained order and arrangement? And first of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul. For we have it in our power, if we abandon their custom, to prolong the due observance of this ordinance to future ages, by a truer order, which we have preserved from the very day of the passion until the present time. Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way. A course at

once legitimate and honorable lies open to our most holy religion. Beloved brethren, let us with one consent adopt this course, and withdraw ourselves from all participation in their baseness. For their boast is absurd indeed, that it is not in our power without instruction from them to observe these things. For how should they be capable of forming a sound judgment, who, since their parricidal guilt in slaying their Lord, have been subject to the direction, not of reason, but of ungoverned passion, and are swayed by every impulse of the mad spirit that is in them? Hence it is that on this point as well as others they have no perception of the truth, so that, being altogether ignorant of the true adjustment of this question, they sometimes celebrate Easter twice in the same year. Why then should we follow those who are confessedly in grievous error? Surely we shall never consent to keep this feast a second time in the same year. But supposing these reasons were not of sufficient weight, still it would be incumbent on your Sagacities to strive and pray continually that the purity of your souls may not seem in anything to be sullied by fellowship with the customs of these most wicked men. We must consider, too, that a discordant judgment in a case of such importance, and respecting such religious festival, is wrong. For our Saviour has left us one feast in commemoration of the day of our deliverance, I mean the day of his most holy passion; and he has willed that his Catholic Church should be one, the members of which, however scattered in many and diverse places, are yet cherished by one pervading spirit, that is, by the will of God. And let your Holinesses' sagacity reflect how grievous and scandalous it is that on the self-same days some should be engaged in fasting, others in festive enjoyment; and again, that after the days of Easter some should be present at banquets and amusements, while others are fulfilling the appointed fasts. It is, then, plainly the will of Divine Providence (as I suppose you all clearly see), that this usage should receive fitting correction, and be reduced to one uniform rule.

Chapter XIX. - Exhortation to follow the Example of the Greater Part of the World.

"Since, therefore, it was needful that this matter should be rectified, so that we might have nothing in common with that nation of parricides who slew their Lord: and since that arrangement is consistent with propriety which is observed by all the churches of the western, southern, and northern parts of the world, and by some of the eastern also: for these reasons all are unanimous on this present occasion in thinking it worthy of adoption. And I myself have undertaken that this decision should meet with the approval of your Sagacities, in the hope that your Wisdoms will gladly admit that practice which is observed at once in the city of Rome, and in Africa; throughout Italy, and in Egypt, in Spain, the Gauls, Britain, Libya, and the whole of Greece; in the dioceses of Asia and Pontus, and in Cilicia, with entire unity of judgment. And you will consider not only that the number of churches is far greater in the regions I have enumerated than in any other, but also that it is most fitting that all should unite in desiring that which sound reason appears to demand, and in avoiding all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews. In fine, that I

may express my meaning in as few words as possible, it has been determined by the common judgment of all, that the most holy feast of Easter should be kept on one and the same day. For on the one hand a discrepancy of opinion on so sacred a question is unbecoming, and on the other it is surely best to act on a decision which is free from strange folly and error.

Chapter XX. - Exhortation to obey the Decrees of the Council.

“Receive, then, with all willingness this truly Divine injunction, and regard it as in truth the gift of God. For whatever is determined in the holy assemblies of the bishops is to be regarded as indicative of the Divine will. As soon, therefore, as you have communicated these proceedings to all our beloved brethren, you are bound from that time forward to adopt for yourselves, and to enjoin on others the arrangement above mentioned, and the due observance of this most sacred day; that whenever I come into the presence of your love, which I have long desired, I may have it in my power to celebrate the holy feast with you on the same day, and may rejoice with you on all accounts, when I behold the cruel power of Satan removed by Divine aid through the agency of our endeavors, while your faith, and peace, and concord everywhere flourish. God preserve you, beloved brethren!”

The emperor transmitted a faithful copy of this letter to every province, wherein they who read it might discern as in a mirror the pure sincerity of his thoughts, and of his piety toward God.

Chapter XXI. - Recommendation to the Bishops, on their Departure, to Preserve Harmony.

And now, when the council was on the point of being finally dissolved, he summoned all the bishops to meet him on an appointed day, and on their arrival addressed them in a farewell speech, in which he recommended them to be diligent in the maintenance of peace, to avoid contentious disputations, amongst themselves and not to be jealous, if any one of their number should appear pre-eminent for wisdom and eloquence, but to esteem the excellence of one a blessing common to all. On the other hand he reminded them that the more gifted should forbear to exalt themselves to the prejudice of their humbler brethren, since it is God’s prerogative to judge of real superiority. Rather should they considerately condescend to the weaker, remembering that absolute perfection in any case is a rare quality indeed. Each then, should be willing to accord indulgence to the other for slight offenses, to regard charitably and pass over mere human weaknesses; holding mutual harmony in the highest honor, that no occasion of mockery might be given by their dissensions to those who are ever ready to blaspheme the word of God: whom indeed we should do all in our power to save, and this cannot be unless our conduct seems to them attractive. But you are well aware of the fact that testimony is by no means productive of blessing to all, since some who hear are glad to secure the supply of their mere bodily necessities, while others court the patronage of their

> superiors; some fix their affection on those who treat them with hospitable kindness, others again, being honored with presents, love their benefactors in return; but few are they who really desire the word of testimony, and rare indeed is it to find a friend of truth. Hence the necessity of endeavoring to meet the case of all, and, physician-like, to administer to each that which may tend to the health of the soul, to the end that the saving doctrine may be fully honored by all. Of this kind was the former part of his exhortation; and in conclusion he enjoined them to offer diligent supplications to God on his behalf. Having thus taken leave of them, he gave them all permission to return to their respective countries; and this they did with joy, and thenceforward that unity of judgment at which they had arrived in the emperor’s presence continued to prevail, and those who had long been divided were bound together as members of the same body.

The circular promotes common Christian observance through collective accusations against Jews. A shared date required no such accusations. Its administrative objective is defensible; the contempt used to promote it deserves criticism on the evidence of the text itself.

The emperor's discussion of celebrating twice in one year belongs to a calendrical dispute. Different reckonings of the year and of the relation between Passover and the equinox could generate outcomes Christians found unacceptable. His language treats the Jewish reckoning as a sign of disorder and spiritual deficiency. A reader should separate the technical problem from that evaluation of the people using the calendar. The document records the emperor's polemical presentation of Jewish practice, not an adequate independent description of every Jewish community's computation.

The final counsel to the bishops is almost the opposite in tone. Constantine warns against envy, urges gentleness toward weaker believers, and notes that different people respond to different forms of assistance. The emperor who wants one public settlement also recognizes uneven human capacities and material needs. Eusebius uses this counsel to complete his picture of the ruler as a wise religious mediator. Placing it beside the circular's hostility permits a more specific judgment than calling the whole account simply tolerant or intolerant. Its generosity has a defined community and its exclusions have a defined target.

The assembly intended common Easter observance. Constantine promoted it through a combination of practical agreement, majority practice, divine sanction, and separation from Jews. The circular's administrative and polemical elements both belong to the settlement's immediate reception.

7 Imperial Support and the Unfinished Settlement

The documents following Nicaea show the emperor supporting the settlement through letters, buildings, books, gifts, and threatened punishment. These are different instruments of power. A letter commending a council asserts authority; money and transport make institutions possible; a criminal penalty coerces conduct. Treating all of them as one indistinct imperial influence loses the practical ways in which the relationship between church and ruler changed.

Eusebius first describes the departure of the bishops and the continuing difficulty in Egypt. His admission that contention remained does not fit a simple picture of one meeting permanently pacifying the church. Constantine's own letter to the Alexandrians then claims a divine status for the judgment of the assembled bishops. The emperor's earlier proposal had treated the disputed inquiry as a matter on which agreement need not require a common answer. The post-council letter speaks of the decision as something to be received because God has acted through the assembly.

Socrates, writing in the fifth century, preserves this letter together with several other imperial documents in Book I, chapter 9 of his Ecclesiastical History. His arrangement should not be mistaken for a dated archive in which every successive item followed the previous one immediately. The decree ordering the destruction of Arius's books is particularly important. Its date is disputed; it is often assigned to 333, although an earlier date has also been argued. It is printed in that chapter near the council's documents, but it is not one of the twenty canons, not a sentence contained in the creed, and not evidence of an execution performed during the council.

The decree itself is unambiguous about its threat. A person who concealed a writing of Arius and failed to surrender it for burning was to suffer death on conviction. The document establishes an announced policy of coercion. It does not by itself establish how frequently the penalty was enforced, whom it actually killed, or how many books were destroyed. Those questions require additional evidence. Maintaining the distinction does not diminish the moral seriousness of the threat; it prevents an assertion of power from becoming an invented list of events.

The later letters concerning churches and copies of Scripture show an additional side of the same imperial patronage. Christian expansion created practical needs for places of assembly and for books used in worship and instruction. Constantine offered resources and administrative assistance. The letter ordering fifty copies of the Scriptures is especially useful because it is often recruited into stories about the creation of the Bible. It asks for copies appropriate to church use. It does not record the bishops at Nicaea voting a list of biblical books into existence.

Eusebius, Life of Constantine III.22-24; Richardson translation (1890), complete. These chapters conclude the selected continuous account of the council and its immediate presentation in the Life. The subsequent documents below are preserved by Socrates and are separately identified.

Chapter XXII. - How he dismissed Some, and wrote Letters to Others; also his Presents.

Full of joy therefore at this success, the emperor presented as it were pleasant fruits in the way of letters to those who had not been present at the council. He commanded also that ample gifts of money should be bestowed on all the people, both in the country and the cities, being pleased thus to honor the festive occasion of the twentieth anniversary of his reign.

Chapter XXIII. - How he wrote to the Egyptians, exhorting them to Peace.

And now, when all else were at peace, among the Egyptians alone an implacable contention still raged, so as once more to disturb the emperor’s tranquillity, though not to excite his anger. For indeed he treated the contending parties with all respect, as fathers, nay rather, as prophets of God; and again he summoned them to his presence, and again patiently acted as mediator between them, and honored them with gifts, and communicated also the result of his arbitration by letter. He confirmed and sanctioned the decrees of the council, and called on them to strive earnestly for concord, and not to distract and rend the Church, but to keep before them the thought of God’s judgment. And these injunctions the emperor sent by a letter written with his own hand.

Chapter XXIV. - How he wrote Frequent Letters of a Religious Character to the Bishops and People.

But besides these, his writings are very numerous on kindred subjects, and he was the author of a multitude of letters, some to the bishops, in which he laid injunctions on them tending to the advantage of the churches of God; and sometimes the thrice blessed one addressed the people of the churches generally, calling them his own brethren and fellow-servants. But perhaps we may hereafter find leisure to collect these despatches in a separate form, in order that the integrity of our present history may not be impaired by their insertion.

Constantine commends the decision to Alexandria

Constantine, letter to the Catholic Church of the Alexandrians, preserved in Socrates, Ecclesiastical History I.9; English translation revised by A. C. Zenos, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 2 (1890). The complete letter is reproduced; Socrates's following explanation is omitted.

Constantine Augustus, to the Catholic church of the Alexandrians. Beloved brethren, hail! We have received from Divine Providence the inestimable blessing of being relieved from all error, and united in the acknowledgment of one and the same faith. The devil will no longer have any power against us, since all that which he had malignantly devised for our destruction has been entirely overthrown from the foundations. The splendor of truth has dissipated at the command of God those dissensions, schisms, tumults, and so to speak, deadly poisons of discord. Wherefore we all worship one true God, and believe that he is. But in order that this might be done, by divine admonition I assembled at the city of Nicæa most of the bishops; with whom I myself also, who am but one of you, and who rejoice exceedingly in being your fellow-servant, undertook the investigation of the truth. Accordingly, all points which seemed in consequence of ambiguity to furnish any pretext for dissension, have been discussed and accurately examined. And may the Divine Majesty pardon the fearful enormity of the blasphemies which some were shamelessly uttering concerning the mighty Saviour, our life and hope; declaring and confessing that they believe things contrary to the divinely inspired Scriptures. While more than three hundred bishops remarkable for their moderation and intellectual keenness, were unanimous in their confirmation of one and the same faith, which according to the truth and legitimate construction of the law of God can only be the faith; Arius alone beguiled by the subtlety of the devil, was discovered to be the sole disseminator of this mischief, first among you, and afterwards with unhallowed purposes among others also. Let us therefore embrace that doctrine which the Almighty has presented to us: let us return to our beloved brethren from whom an irreverent servant of the devil has separated us: let us go with all speed to the common body and our own natural members. For this is becoming your penetration, faith and sanctity; that since the error has been proved to be due to him who is an enemy to the truth, ye should return to the divine favor. For that which has commended itself to the judgment of three hundred bishops cannot be other than the doctrine of God; seeing that the Holy Spirit dwelling in the minds of so many dignified persons has effectually enlightened them respecting the Divine will. Wherefore let no one vacillate or linger, but let all with alacrity return to the undoubted path of duty; that when I shall arrive among you, which will be as soon as possible, I may with you return due thanks to God, the inspector of all things, for having revealed the pure faith, and restored to you that love for which ye have prayed. May God protect you, beloved brethren.

Constantine's letter is early evidence for belief that God guided the assembled bishops. Its claim to divine sanction supported obedience to the settlement. The documentary finding concerns an emperor's public defense of the council, rather than a later invention of that defense.

Constantine also says that he participated as one among the assembled company and that the questions were examined rather than decided rashly. These statements belong to his defense of the result. They should be compared with the participant Eusebius's account of inquiry into the disputed terms. Together they give evidence of a deliberative process, but they still do not supply complete minutes or prove the absence of political pressure. The most precise reading identifies both the process claimed and the authority invoked to secure its reception.

The order to burn the writings of Arius

Constantine, decree addressed to bishops and people concerning Arius and his writings, preserved in Socrates, Ecclesiastical History I.9; English translation revised by Zenos (1890). The complete decree is reproduced. Its placement in Socrates's chapter does not establish that it was issued during the council; it is often assigned to 333 in modern chronologies.

> Victor Constantine Maximus Augustus, to the bishops and people. - Since Arius has imitated wicked and impious persons, it is just that he should undergo the like ignominy. Wherefore as Porphyry, that enemy of piety, for having composed licentious treatises against religion, found a suitable recompense, and such as thenceforth branded him with infamy, overwhelming him with deserved reproach, his impious writings also having been destroyed; so now it seems fit both that Arius and such as hold his sentiments should be denominated Porphyrians, that they may take their appellation from those whose conduct they have imitated. And in addition to this, if any treatise composed by Arius should be discovered, let it be consigned to the flames, in order that not only his depraved doctrine may be suppressed, but also that no memorial of him may be by any means left. This therefore I decree, that if any one shall be detected in concealing a book compiled by Arius, and shall not instantly bring it forward and burn it, the penalty for this offense shall be death; for immediately after conviction the criminal shall suffer capital punishment. May God preserve you!

Calling Arius and his supporters Porphyrians linked them with a celebrated pagan critic of Christianity. It was a strategy of public naming as well as punishment: the condemned teachers were to be understood through the identity of an enemy of the faith. The decree sought to destroy both writings and remembrance. That ambition helps explain why the survival of Arius's letters through hostile quotation matters. A history written only from the emperor's desired result would have no opposing voice left to read.

The command to kill a person for concealing a book adds a criminal penalty to religious condemnation. The creed supplies no argument for that penalty. Constantine's decree therefore marks a specific extension of the settlement into the coercive jurisdiction that later critics of persecution would challenge.

Church buildings and imperial assistance

Constantine, letter to Eusebius concerning church buildings, preserved in Socrates, Ecclesiastical History I.9; English translation revised by Zenos (1890). The imperial address and complete letter are reproduced; the historian's transition to the next document is omitted.

Victor Constantine Maximus Augustus, to Eusebius.

Since an impious purpose and tyranny have even to the present time persecuted the servants of God our Saviour, I have been credibly informed and am fully persuaded, most beloved brother, that all our sacred edifices have either by neglect gone to decay, or from dread of impending danger have not been adorned with becoming dignity. But now that liberty has been restored, and that persecuting dragon Licinius has by the providence of the Most High God, and our instrumentality, been removed from the administration of public affairs, I imagine that the divine power has been made manifest to all, and at the same time that those who either through fear or unbelief fell into any sins, having acknowledged the living God, will come to the true and right course of life. Wherefore enjoin the churches over which you yourself preside, as well as the other bishops presiding in various places, together with the presbyters and deacons whom you know, to be diligent about the sacred edifices, either by repairing those which remain standing, or enlarging them, or by erecting new ones wherever it may be requisite. And do you yourself ask, and the rest through you, the necessary supplies both from the governors of the provinces, and the officers of the prætorian prefecture: for directions have been given to them to execute with all diligence the orders of your holiness. May God preserve you, beloved brother.

Fifty copies of the Scriptures

Constantine, letter to Eusebius of Caesarea concerning copies of Scripture, preserved in Socrates, Ecclesiastical History I.9; English translation revised by Zenos (1890). The imperial address and complete letter are reproduced. The same undertaking is discussed in Eusebius, Life of Constantine IV.36-37.

Victor Constantine Maximus Augustus, to Eusebius of Cæsarea.

In the city which derives its name from us, a very great multitude of persons, through the assisting providence of our Saviour God, have united themselves to the most holy Church, so that it has received much increase there. It is therefore requisite that more churches should be furnished in that place: wherefore do you most cordially enter into the purpose which I have conceived. I have thought fit to intimate this to your prudence, that you should order to be transcribed on well-prepared parchment, by competent writers accurately acquainted with their art, fifty copies of the Sacred Scriptures, both legibly described, and of a portable size, the provision and use of which you know to be needful for the instruction of the Church. Letters have also been despatched from our clemency, to the financial agent of the diocese that he be careful to provide all things necessary for the preparation of them. That these copies may be got ready as quickly as possible, let it be a task for your diligence: and you are authorized, on the warrant of this our

letter, to use two of the public carriages for their conveyance; for thus the copies which are most satisfactorily transcribed, may be easily conveyed for our inspection, one of the deacons of your church fulfilling this commission; who when he has reached us shall experience our bounty. May God preserve you, beloved brother.

The church at the place of the resurrection

Constantine, letter to Macarius of Jerusalem, preserved in Socrates, Ecclesiastical History I.9; English translation revised by Zenos (1890). The complete letter is reproduced. Socrates's concluding narrative paragraph is omitted.

Victor Constantine Maximus Augustus, to Macarius of Jerusalem. - Such is the grace of our Saviour, that no supply of words seems to be adequate to the expression of its present manifestation. For that the monument of his most holy passion, long since hidden under the earth, should have lain concealed for a period of so many years, until, through the destruction of the common enemy of all, it should shine forth to his own servants after their having regained their freedom, exceeds all admiration. For if all those who throughout the whole habitable earth are accounted wise, should be convened in one and the same place, desiring to say something worthy of the event, they would fall infinitely short of the least part of it; for the apprehension of this wonder as far transcends every nature capable of human reasoning, as heavenly things are mightier than human. Hence therefore this is always my especial aim, that as the credibility of the truth daily demonstrates itself by fresh miracles, so the souls of us all should become more diligent respecting the holy law, with modesty and unanimous eagerness. But I desire that you should be fully aware of what I conceive is pretty generally known, that it is now my chief care, that we should adorn with magnificent structures that hallowed spot, which by God’s appointment I have disencumbered of a most disgraceful addition of an idol, as of some grievous burden; which was consecrated indeed from the beginning in the purpose of God, but has been more manifestly sanctified since he has brought to light the evidence of the Saviour’s passion. Wherefore it is becoming your prudence to make such arrangements, and provision of everything necessary, that not only a church should be built in itself superior to any elsewhere, but that the rest of its parts also may be such that all the most splendid edifices in every city may be excelled by this. With regard to the workmanship and chaste execution of the walls, know that we have entrusted the care of these things to our friend Dracilian, deputy to the most illustrious prefects of the prætorium, and to the governor of the province: for my piety has ordered that artificers and workmen, and whatever other things they may be informed from your sagacity to be necessary for the structure, shall through their care be immediately sent. Respecting the columns or the marbles, whatever you may judge to be more precious and useful, do you yourself after having inspected the plan take care to write to us; that when we shall understand from your letter how many things and of what kind there may be need of, these may be conveyed to you from all quarters: for it is but just that the most wonderful place in the world, should be adorned in accordance with its dignity. But I wish to know from you, whether you consider that the vault of the basilica should be

> fretted, or constructed on some other plan: for if it is to be fretted, it can also be decorated with gold. It remains that your holiness should inform the officers before mentioned as soon as possible, how many workmen and artificers, and what money for expenses you will want. Be careful at the same time to report to me speedily, not only concerning the marbles and columns, but also concerning the fretted vault, if indeed you should decide this to be the more beautiful. May God preserve you, beloved brother.

The letters about buildings are evidence of a transformation in the material conditions of Christian public life. Officials are to assist bishops, resources are to be made available, and a monumental church is to express the significance of a sacred place. Such patronage could enable worship and make the ruler appear as a benefactor of the faith. It could also tie ecclesiastical activity to decisions about expenditure, architecture, local prestige, and imperial favor. Those consequences cannot be read out of the creed alone.

The request for fifty scriptural codices assumes that books suitable for church use can be commissioned from an experienced bishop. The letter is not a catalogue. It gives no list from Genesis to Revelation and no record of a Nicene decree determining that list. Consequently it cannot support the popular claim that Constantine and the bishops at Nicaea simply selected the Bible's contents in 325. The history of the canon involves multiple communities, lists, uses, and disputes that require their own evidence. Commissioning copies and defining a canon are different documented acts.

The conclusion of this first part is therefore concrete. Nicaea produced a confession intended to exclude Arius's account of the Son, twenty rules for church life, and an announced settlement of Egyptian ecclesiastical disputes and Easter observance. The emperor helped convene the assembly, participated in its public presentation, defended its decision, and furnished resources to the church. His government could also attach coercive measures to religious condemnation. None of these findings requires the claim that he invented Christian belief or that the bishops merely repeated words he dictated.

The settlement remained unfinished in an equally definite sense. Its terms required explanation, its local reception required negotiation, and the emperor's support did not remove the struggles among bishops and communities. The subsequent history would include efforts to restore condemned figures, to displace others, and to propose new formulas. The next generations made Nicaea authoritative through continuing argument about its meaning and its relation to Scripture. To end the story at the council's banquet would stop precisely where the long history of reception begins.

Part II The Fourth Century Settlement and Its Reception

8 Athanasius Explains the Nicene Definition

Nicaea did not supply Athanasius with a substitute for argument. It gave him a formula whose necessity he then had to defend. In On the Decrees of the Council of Nicaea, usually known by its Latin title De Decretis, he explains why the bishops resorted to expressions not found as such in the biblical text. The objection was serious: if Scripture was sufficient to disclose the relation between Father and Son, why make the unscriptural word homoousios a test of faith? Athanasius answers by claiming that his opponents had learned to agree to biblical phrases while retaining interpretations the council intended to exclude.

His defense therefore turns on the relation between words and the propositions they express. Almost everyone could call the Son an image, a power, or a being from God. Those expressions also had applications to creatures. To say that the Son was from the Father's essence restricted the possible sense of from God; to say that he was coessential with the Father restricted the possible sense of image. The council's additional vocabulary was intended to make certain evasions more difficult. Whether it succeeded is a question the later fourth century would continue to test.

This is a retrospective defense written many years after the council, by the most energetic advocate of its cause. Athanasius had attended Nicaea as a deacon accompanying Alexander of Alexandria; he subsequently became bishop of Alexandria. His account of the opponents' reactions is evidence from a participant in the dispute, but it is also an advocate's account of how the dispute ought to be understood. When he describes adversaries exchanging glances or inventing excuses, he is interpreting conduct as well as reporting it. There are no surviving full verbatim minutes against which every scene can be checked.

The selection begins with his description of the controversy and then moves to the central defense of the council's expressions. It ends with the distinction between acknowledging the ordinary limitations of language and using those limitations to dissolve a doctrinal boundary. Reading a sustained argument makes clear why Athanasius regarded the classification of the Son as a creature as a change in the Christian understanding of God, rather than a minor alteration in vocabulary.

The controversy and the need for a definition

Athanasius, De Decretis, sections 1-5, in Select Works and Letters, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 4, edited by Archibald Robertson, 1892. Historical English translation by John Henry Newman, revised for this edition. Sections are reproduced consecutively within each stated range; the intervening sections are omitted. The original editorial headings and footnotes are omitted. Biblical phrases remain in the historical translator's wording. The following polemical descriptions express Athanasius's judgments, including his objectionable comparisons with Jews.

1. Thou hast done well, in signifying to me the discussion thou hast had with the advocates of Arianism, among whom were certain of the friends of Eusebius, as well as very many of the brethren who hold the doctrine of the Church. I hailed thy vigilance for the love of Christ, which excellently exposed the irreligion of their heresy; while I marvelled at the effrontery which led the Arians, after all the past detection of unsoundness and futility in their arguments, nay, after the general conviction of their extreme perverseness, still to complain like the Jews, “Why did the Fathers at Nicæa use terms not in Scripture, ‘Of the essence’ and ‘One in essence?’” Thou then, as a man of learning, in spite of their subterfuges, didst convict them of talking to no purpose; and they in devising them were but acting suitably to their own evil disposition. For they are as variable and fickle in their sentiments, as chameleons in their colours; and when exposed they look confused, and when questioned they hesitate, and then they lose shame, and betake themselves to evasions. And then, when detected in these, they do not rest till they invent fresh matters which are not, and, according to the Scripture, ‘imagine a vain thing’; and all that they may be constant to their irreligion.

Now such endeavours are nothing else than an obvious token of their defect of reason, and a copying, as I have said, of Jewish malignity. For the Jews too, when convicted by the Truth, and unable to confront it, used evasions, such as, ‘What sign doest Thou, that we may see and believe Thee? What dost Thou work? though so many signs were given, that they said themselves, ‘What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.’ In truth, dead men were raised, lame walked, blind saw afresh, lepers were cleansed, and the water became wine, and five loaves satisfied five thousand, and all wondered and worshipped the Lord, confessing that in Him were fulfilled the prophecies, and that He was God the Son of God; all but the Pharisees, who, though the signs shone brighter than the sun, yet complained still, as ignorant men, ‘Why dost Thou, being a man, make Thyself God?’ Insensate, and verily blind in understanding! they ought contrariwise to have said, “Why hast Thou, being God, become man?” for His works proved Him God, that they might both worship the goodness of the Father, and admire the Son’s Economy for our sakes. However, this they did not say; no, nor liked to witness what He was doing; or they witnessed indeed, for this they could not help, but they changed their ground of complaint again, “Why healest Thou the paralytic, why makest Thou the born-blind to see, on the sabbath day?” But this too was an excuse, and mere murmuring; for on other days as well did the Lord heal ‘all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease,’ but they complained still according to their wont, and by calling Him Beelzebub,

preferred the suspicion of Atheism, to a recantation of their own wickedness. And though in such sundry times and divers manners the Saviour shewed His Godhead and preached the Father to all men, nevertheless, as kicking against the pricks, they contradicted in the language of folly, and this they did, according to the divine proverb, that by finding occasions, they might separate themselves from the truth.

2. As then the Jews of that day, for acting thus wickedly and denying the Lord, were with justice deprived of their laws and of the promise made to their fathers, so the Arians, Judaizing now, are, in my judgment, in circumstances like those of Caiaphas and the contemporary Pharisees. For, perceiving that their heresy is utterly unreasonable, they invent excuses, “Why was this defined, and not that?” Yet wonder not if now they practise thus; for in no long time they will turn to outrage, and next will threaten ‘the band and the captain.’ Forsooth in these their heterodoxy has its support, as we see; for denying the Word of God, reason have they none at all, as is equitable. Aware then of this, I would have made no reply to their interrogations: but, since thy friendliness has asked to know the transactions of the Council, I have without any delay related at once what then took place, shewing in few words, how destitute Arianism is of a religious spirit, and how their one business is to frame evasions.

And do thou, beloved, consider whether it be not so. If, the devil having sowed their hearts with this perverseness, they feel confidence in their bad inventions, let them defend themselves against the proofs of heresy which have been advanced, and then will be the time to find fault, if they can, with the definition framed against them. For no one, on being convicted of murder or adultery, is at liberty after the trial to arraign the sentence of the judge, why he spoke in this way and not in that. For this does not exculpate the convict, but rather increases his crime on the score of petulance and audacity. In like manner, let these either prove that their sentiments are religious (for they were then accused and convicted, and their complaints are subsequent, and it is just that those who are under a charge should confine themselves to their own defence), or if they have an unclean conscience, and are aware of their own irreligion, let them not complain of what they do not understand, or they will bring on themselves a double imputation, of irreligion and of ignorance. Rather let them investigate the matter in a docile spirit, and learning what hitherto they have not known, cleanse their irreligious ears with the spring of truth and the doctrines of religion.

3. Now it happened to Eusebius and his fellows in the Nicene Council as follows: - while they stood out in their irreligion, and attempted their fight against God, the terms they used were replete with irreligion; but the assembled Bishops who were three hundred more or less, mildly and charitably required of them to explain and defend themselves on religious grounds. Scarcely, however, did they begin to speak, when they were condemned, and one differed from another; then perceiving the straits in which their heresy lay, they remained dumb, and by their silence confessed the disgrace which came upon their heterodoxy. On this the Bishops, having negatived the terms they had invented, published against them the sound and

ecclesiastical faith; and, as all subscribed it, Eusebius and his fellows subscribed it also in those very words, of which they are now complaining, I mean, “of the essence” and “one in essence,” and that “the Son of God is neither creature or work, nor in the number of things originated, but that the Word is an offspring from the substance of the Father.” And what is strange indeed, Eusebius of Cæsarea in Palestine, who had denied the day before, but afterwards subscribed, sent to his Church a letter, saying that this was the Church’s faith, and the tradition of the Fathers; and made a public profession that they were before in error, and were rashly contending against the truth. For though he was ashamed at that time to adopt these phrases, and excused himself to the Church in his own way, yet he certainly means to imply all this in his Epistle, by his not denying the “one in essence,” and “of the essence.” And in this way he got into a difficulty; for while he was excusing himself, he went on to attack the Arians, as stating that “the Son was not before His generation,” and as thereby rejecting His existence before His birth in the flesh. And this Acacius is aware of also, though he too through fear may pretend otherwise because of the times and deny the fact. Accordingly I have subjoined at the end the letter of Eusebius, that thou mayest know from it the disrespect towards their own doctors shewn by Christ’s enemies, and singularly by Acacius himself.

4. Are they not then committing a crime, in their very thought to gainsay so great and ecumenical a Council? are they not in transgression, when they dare to confront that good definition against Arianism, acknowledged, as it is, by those who had in the first instance taught them irreligion? And supposing, even after subscription, Eusebius and his fellows did change again, and return like dogs to their own vomit of irreligion, do not the present gain-sayers deserve still greater detestation, because they thus sacrifice their souls’ liberty to others; and are willing to take these persons as masters of their heresy, who are, as James has said, double-minded men, and unstable in all their ways, not having one opinion, but changing to and fro, and now recommending certain statements, but soon dishonouring them, and in turn recommending what just now they were blaming? But this, as the Shepherd has said, is “the child of the devil,” and the note of hucksters rather than of doctors. For, what our Fathers have delivered, this is truly doctrine; and this is truly the token of doctors, to confess the same thing with each other, and to vary neither from themselves nor from their fathers; whereas they who have not this character are to be called not true doctors but evil. Thus the Greeks, as not witnessing to the same doctrines, but quarrelling one with another, have no truth of teaching; but the holy and veritable heralds of the truth agree together, and do not differ. For though they lived in different times, yet they one and all tend the same way, being prophets of the one God, and preaching the same Word harmoniously.

5. And thus what Moses taught, that Abraham observed; and what Abraham observed, that Noah and Enoch acknowledged, discriminating pure from impure, and becoming acceptable to God. For Abel too in this way witnessed, knowing what he had learned from Adam, who himself had learned from that Lord, who said, when

He came at the end of the ages for the abolishment of sin, “I give no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye have heard from the beginning.” Wherefore also the blessed Apostle Paul, who had learned it from Him, when describing ecclesiastical functions, forbade that deacons, not to say bishops, should be double-tongued; and in his rebuke of the Galatians, he made a broad declaration, “If anyone preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be anathema, as I have said, so say I again. If even we, or an Angel from heaven should preach unto you any other Gospel than that ye have received, let him be anathema.” Since then the Apostle thus speaks, let these men either anathematise Eusebius and his fellows, at least as changing round and professing what is contrary to their subscriptions; or, if they acknowledge that their subscriptions were good, let them not utter complaints against so great a Council. But if they do neither the one nor the other, they are themselves too plainly the sport of every wind and surge, and are influenced by opinions, not their own, but of others, and being such, are as little worthy of deference now as before, in what they allege. Rather let them cease to carp at what they understand not; lest so be that not knowing to discriminate, they simply call evil good and good evil, and think that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter. Doubtless, they desire that doctrines which have been judged wrong and have been reprobated should gain the ascendancy, and they make violent efforts to prejudice what was rightly defined. Nor should there be any reason on our part for any further explanation, or answer to their excuses, neither on theirs for further resistance, but for an acquiescence in what the leaders of their heresy subscribed; for though the subsequent change of Eusebius and his fellows was suspicious and immoral, their subscription, when they had the opportunity of at least some little defence of themselves, is a certain proof of the irreligion of their doctrine. For they would not have subscribed previously had they not condemned the heresy, nor would they have condemned it, had they not been encompassed with difficulty and shame; so that to change back again is a proof of their contentious zeal for irreligion. These men also ought therefore, as I have said, to keep quiet; but since from an extraordinary want of modesty, they hope perhaps to be able to advocate this diabolical irreligion better than the others, therefore, though in my former letter written to thee, I have already argued at length against them, notwithstanding, come let us now also examine them, in each of their separate statements, as their predecessors; for now not less than then their heresy shall be shewn to have no soundness in it, but to be from evil spirits.

Why the council added words

De Decretis, sections 19-24. Sections 6-18 are omitted. This connected passage gives Athanasius's principal explanation of the terms of the essence and coessential.

19. The Council wishing to do away with the irreligious phrases of the Arians, and to use instead the acknowledged words of the Scriptures, that the Son is not from nothing but ‘from God,’ and is ‘Word’ and ‘Wisdom,’ and not creature or work, but a proper offspring from the Father, Eusebius and his fellows, led by their inveterate heterodoxy, understood the phrase ‘from God’ as belonging to us, as if in respect to it the Word of God differed nothing from us, and that because it is written, ‘There is one God, from whom, all things;’ and again, ‘Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new, and all things are from God.’ But the Fathers, perceiving their craft and the cunning of their irreligion, were forced to express more distinctly the sense of the words ‘from God.’ Accordingly, they wrote ‘from the essence of God,’ in order that ‘from God’ might not be considered common and equal in the Son and in things originate, but that all others might be acknowledged as creatures, and the Word alone as from the Father. For though all things be said to be from God, yet this is not in the sense in which the Son is from Him; for as to the creatures, ‘of God’ is said of them on this account, in that they exist not at random or spontaneously, nor come to be by chance, according to those philosophers who refer them to the combination of atoms, and to elements of similar structure, - nor as certain heretics speak of a distinct Framer, - nor as others again say that the constitution of all things is from certain Angels; - but in that (whereas God is), it was by Him that all things were brought into being, not being before, through His Word; but as to the Word, since He is not a creature, He alone is both called and is ‘from the Father;’ and it is significant of this sense to say that the Son is ‘from the essence of the Father,’ for to nothing originate does this attach. In truth, when Paul says that ‘all things are from God,’ he immediately adds, ‘and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things,’ in order to shew all men, that the Son is other than all these things which came to be from God (for the things which came to be from God, came to be through His Son); and that he had used his foregoing words with reference to the world as framed by God, and not as if all things were from the Father as the Son is. For neither are other things as the Son, nor is the Word one among others, for He is Lord and Framer of all; and on this account did the Holy Council declare expressly that He was of the essence of the Father, that we might believe the Word to be other than the nature of things originate, being alone truly from God; and that no subterfuge should be left open to the irreligious. This then was the reason why the Council wrote ‘of the essence.’

20. Again, when the Bishops said that the Word must be described as the True Power and Image of the Father, in all things exact and like the Father, and as unalterable, and as always, and as in Him without division (for never was the Word not, but He was always, existing everlastingly with the Father, as the radiance of light), Eusebius and his fellows endured indeed, as not daring to contradict, being put to shame by the arguments which were urged against them; but withal they

were caught whispering to each other and winking with their eyes, that ‘like,’ and ‘always,’ and ‘power,’ and ‘in Him,’ were, as before, common to us and the Son, and that it was no difficulty to agree to these. As to ‘like,’ they said that it is written of us, ‘Man is the image and glory of God:’ ‘always,’ that it was written, ‘For we which live are alway:’ ‘in Him,’ ‘In Him we live and move and have our being:’ ‘unalterable,’ that it is written, ‘Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ:’ as to ‘power,’ that the caterpillar and the locust are called ‘power’ and ‘great power,’ and that it is often said of the people, for instance, ‘All the power of the Lord came out of the land of Egypt:’ and there are others also, heavenly ones, for Scripture says, ‘The Lord of powers is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.’ Indeed Asterius, by title the sophist, had said the like in writing, having learned it from them, and before him Arius having learned it also, as has been said. But the Bishops discerning in this too their dissimulation, and whereas it is written, ‘Deceit is in the heart of the irreligious that imagine evil,’ were again compelled on their part to collect the sense of the Scriptures, and to re-say and re-write what they had said before, more distinctly still, namely, that the Son is ‘one in essence’ with the Father: by way of signifying, that the Son was from the Father, and not merely like, but the same in likeness, and of shewing that the Son’s likeness and unalterableness was different from such copy of the same as is ascribed to us, which we acquire from virtue on the ground of observance of the commandments. For bodies which are like each other may be separated and become at distances from each other, as are human sons relatively to their parents (as it is written concerning Adam and Seth, who was begotten of him that he was like him after his own pattern); but since the generation of the Son from the Father is not according to the nature of men, and not only like, but also inseparable from the essence of the Father, and He and the Father are one, as He has said Himself, and the Word is ever in the Father and the Father in the Word, as the radiance stands towards the light (for this the phrase itself indicates), therefore the Council, as understanding this, suitably wrote ‘one in essence,’ that they might both defeat the perverseness of the heretics, and shew that the Word was other than originated things. For, after thus writing, they at once added, ‘But they who say that the Son of God is from nothing, or created, or alterable, or a work, or from other essence, these the Holy Catholic Church anathematizes.’ And by saying this, they shewed clearly that ‘of the essence,’ and ‘one in essence,’ are destructive of those catchwords of irreligion, such as ‘created,’ and ‘work,’ and ‘originated,’ and ‘alterable,’ and ‘He was not before His generation.’ And he who holds these, contradicts the Council; but he who does not hold with Arius, must needs hold and intend the decisions of the Council, suitably regarding them to signify the relation of the radiance to the light, and from thence gaining the illustration of the truth.

21. Therefore if they, as the others, make an excuse that the terms are strange, let them consider the sense in which the Council so wrote, and anathematize what the Council anathematized; and then if they can, let them find fault with the expressions. But I well know that, if they hold the sense of the Council, they will fully accept the terms in which it is conveyed; whereas if it be the sense which they wish

to complain of, all must see that it is idle in them to discuss the wording, when they are but seeking handles for irreligion. This then was the reason of these expressions; but if they still complain that such are not scriptural, that very complaint is a reason why they should be cast out, as talking idly and disordered in mind. And let them blame themselves in this matter, for they set the example, beginning their war against God with words not in Scripture. However, if a person is interested in the question, let him know, that, even if the expressions are not in so many words in the Scriptures, yet, as was said before, they contain the sense of the Scriptures, and expressing it, they convey it to those who have their hearing unimpaired for religious doctrine. Now this circumstance it is for thee to consider, and for those ill-instructed men to give ear to. It has been shewn above, and must be believed as true, that the Word is from the Father, and the only Offspring proper to Him and natural. For whence may one conceive the Son to be, who is the Wisdom and the Word, in whom all things came to be, but from God Himself? However, the Scriptures also teach us this, since the Father says by David, ‘My heart uttered a good Word,’ and, ‘From the womb before the morning star I begat Thee;’ and the Son signifies to the Jews about Himself, ‘If God were your Father, ye would love Me; for I proceeded forth from the Father.’ And again; ‘Not that anyone has seen the Father, save He which is from God, He hath seen the Father.’ And moreover, ‘I and My Father are one,’ and, ‘I in the Father and the Father in Me,’ is equivalent to saying, ‘I am from the Father, and inseparable from Him.’ And John in saying, ‘The Only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him,’ spoke of what He had learned from the Saviour. Besides, what else does ‘in the bosom’ intimate, but the Son’s genuine generation from the Father?

22. If then any man conceives God to be compound, as accident is in essence, or to have any external envelopement, and to be encompassed, or as if there is aught about Him which completes the essence, so that when we say ‘God,’ or name ‘Father,’ we do not signify the invisible and incomprehensible essence, but something about it, then let them complain of the Council’s stating that the Son was from the essence of God; but let them reflect, that in thus considering they utter two blasphemies; for they make God corporeal, and they falsely say that the Lord is not Son of the very Father, but of what is about Him. But if God be simple, as He is, it follows that in saying ‘God’ and naming ‘Father,’ we name nothing as if about Him, but signify his essence itself. For though to comprehend what the essence of God is be impossible, yet if we only understand that God is, and if Scripture indicates Him by means of these titles, we, with the intention of indicating Him and none else, call Him God and Father and Lord. When then He says, ‘I am that I am,’ and ‘I am the Lord God,’ or when Scripture says, ‘God,’ we understand nothing else by it but the intimation of His incomprehensible essence Itself, and that He Is, who is spoken of. Therefore let no one be startled on hearing that the Son of God is from the Essence of the Father; but rather let him accept the explanation of the Fathers, who in more explicit but equivalent language have for ‘from God’ written ‘of the essence.’ For they considered it the same thing to say that the Word was ‘of God’ and ‘of the essence of God,’ since the word ‘God,’ as I have already said, signifies nothing but

the essence of Him Who Is. If then the Word is not in such sense from God, as a son, genuine and natural, from a father, but only as creatures because they are framed, and as ‘all things are from God,’ then neither is He from the essence of the Father, nor is the Son again Son according to essence, but in consequence of virtue, as we who are called sons by grace. But if He only is from God, as a genuine Son, as He is, then the Son may reasonably be called from the essence of God.

23. Again, the illustration of the Light and the Radiance has this meaning. For the Saints have not said that the Word was related to God as fire kindled from the heat of the sun, which is commonly put out again, for this is an external work and a creature of its author, but they all preach of Him as Radiance, thereby to signify His being from the essence, proper and indivisible, and His oneness with the Father. This also will secure His true unchangableness and immutability; for how can these be His, unless He be proper Offspring of the Father’s essence? for this too must be taken to confirm His identity with His own Father. Our explanation then having so religious an aspect, Christ’s enemies should not be startled at the ‘One in essence,’ either, since this term also has a sound sense and good reasons. Indeed, if we say that the Word is from the essence of God (for after what has been said this must be a phrase admitted by them), what does this mean but the truth and eternity of the essence from which He is begotten? for it is not different in kind, lest it be combined with the essence of God as something foreign and unlike it. Nor is He like only outwardly, lest He seem in some respect or wholly to be other in essence, as brass shines like gold and silver like tin. For these are foreign and of other nature, are separated off from each other in nature and virtues, nor is brass proper to gold, nor is the pigeon born from the dove; but though they are considered like, yet they differ in essence. If then it be thus with the Son, let Him be a creature as we are, and not One in essence; but if the Son is Word, Wisdom, Image of the Father, Radiance, He must in all reason be One in essence. For unless it be proved that He is not from God, but an instrument different in nature and different in essence, surely the Council was sound in its doctrine and correct in its decree.

24. Further, let every corporeal reference be banished on this subject; and transcending every imagination of sense, let us, with pure understanding and with mind alone, apprehend the genuine relation of son to father, and the Word’s proper relation towards God, and the unvarying likeness of the radiance towards the light: for as the words ‘Offspring’ and ‘Son’ bear, and are meant to bear, no human sense, but one suitable to God, in like manner when we hear the phrase ‘one in essence,’ let us not fall upon human senses, and imagine partitions and divisions of the Godhead, but as having our thoughts directed to things immaterial, let us preserve undivided the oneness of nature and the identity of light; for this is proper to a son as regards a father, and in this is shewn that God is truly Father of the Word. Here again, the illustration of light and its radiance is in point. Who will presume to say that the radiance is unlike and foreign to the sun? rather who, thus considering the radiance relatively to the sun, and the identity of the light, would not say with confidence, ‘Truly the light and the radiance are one, and the one is manifested in

the other, and the radiance is in the sun, so that whoso sees this, sees that also?' but such a oneness and natural property, what should it be named by those who believe and see aright, but Offspring one in essence? and God's Offspring what should we fittingly and suitably consider, but Word, and Wisdom, and Power? which it were a sin to say was foreign to the Father, or a crime even to imagine as other than with Him everlastingly. For by this Offspring the Father made all things, and extended His Providence unto all things; by Him He exercises His love to man, and thus He and the Father are one, as has been said; unless indeed these perverse men make a fresh attempt, and say that the essence of the Word is not the same as the Light which is in Him from the Father, as if the Light in the Son were one with the Father, but He Himself foreign in essence as being a creature. Yet this is simply the belief of Caiaphas and the Samosatene, which the Church cast out, but these now are disguising; and by this they fell from the truth, and were declared to be heretics. For if He partakes in fulness the light from the Father, why is He not rather that which others partake, that there be no medium introduced between Him and the Father? Otherwise, it is no longer clear that all things were generated by the Son, but by Him, of whom He too partakes. And if this is the Word, the Wisdom of the Father, in whom the Father is revealed and known, and frames the world, and without whom the Father doth nothing, evidently He it is who is from the Father: for all things originated partake of Him, as partaking of the Holy Ghost. And being such, He cannot be from nothing, nor a creature at all, but rather a proper Offspring from the Father, as the radiance from light.

How a word is to be judged

De Decretis, sections 30-32. Sections 25-29 are omitted; the letter of Eusebius which follows the work in some editions is not repeated here.

30. In like manner, when the Prophets spoke of God as All-ruling, they did not so name Him, as if the Word were included in that All; (for they knew that the Son was other than things originated, and Sovereign over them Himself, according to His likeness to the Father); but because He is Ruler over all things which through the Son He has made, and has given the authority of all things to the Son, and having given it, is Himself once more the Lord of all things through the Word. Again, when they called God, Lord of the powers, they said not this as if the Word was one of those powers, but because while He is Father of the Son, He is Lord of the powers which through the Son have come to be. For again, the Word too, as being in the Father, is Lord of them all, and Sovereign over all; for all things, whatsoever the Father hath, are the Son's. This then being the force of such titles, in like manner let a man call God unoriginated, if it so please him; not however as if the Word were of originated things, but because, as I said before, God not only is not originated, but through His proper Word is He the maker of things which are so. For though the Father be called such, still the Word is the Father's Image, and one in essence with Him; and being His Image, He must be distinct from things originated, and from everything; for whose Image He is, His property and likeness He hath: so that he

who calls the Father unoriginated and almighty, perceives in the Unoriginated and the Almighty, His Word and His Wisdom, which is the Son. But these wondrous men, and prompt for irreligion, hit upon the term Unoriginated, not as caring for God's honour, but from malevolence towards the Saviour; for if they had regard to honour and reverent language, it rather had been right and good to acknowledge and to call God Father, than to give Him this name; for in calling God unoriginated, they are, as I said before, calling Him from things which came to be, and as a Maker only, that so they may imply the Word to be a work after their own pleasure; but he who calls God Father, in Him withal signifies His Son also, and cannot fail to know that, whereas there is a Son, through this Son all things that came to be were created.

31. Therefore it will be much more accurate to denote God from the Son and to call Him Father, than to name Him and call Him Unoriginated from His works only; for the latter term refers to the works that have come to be at the will of God through the Word, but the name of Father points out the proper offspring from His essence. And whereas the Word surpasses things originated, by so much and more also doth calling God Father surpass the calling Him Unoriginated; for the latter is non-scriptural and suspicious, as it has various senses; but the former is simple and scriptural, and more accurate, and alone implies the Son. And 'Unoriginated' is a word of the Greeks who know not the Son: but 'Father' has been acknowledged and vouchsafed by our Lord; for He knowing Himself whose Son He was, said, 'I in the Father and the Father in Me;' and, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;' and, 'I and the Father are one;' but nowhere is He found to call the Father Unoriginated. Moreover, when He teaches us to pray, He says not, 'When ye pray, say, O God Unoriginated,' but rather, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven.' And it was His Will, that the Summary of our faith should have the same bearing. For He has bid us be baptized, not in the name of Unoriginate and Originate, not into the name of Uncreate and Creature, but into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for with such an initiation we too are made sons verily, and using the name of the Father, we acknowledge from that name the Word in the Father. But if He wills that we should call His own Father our Father, we must not on that account measure ourselves with the Son according to nature, for it is because of the Son that the Father is so called by us; for since the Word bore our body and came to be in us, therefore by reason of the Word in us, is God called our Father. For the Spirit of the Word in us names through us His own Father as ours, which is the Apostle's meaning when he says, 'God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.'

32. But perhaps being refuted as touching the term Unoriginate also, they will say according to their evil nature, 'It behoved, as regards our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ also, to state from the Scriptures what is there written of Him, and not to introduce non-scriptural expressions.' Yes, it behoved, say I too; for the tokens of truth are more exact as drawn from Scripture, than from other sources; but the ill disposition and the versatile and crafty irreligion of Eusebius and his fellows, compelled the Bishops, as I said before, to publish more distinctly the terms which

> overthrew their irreligion; and what the Council did write has already been shewn to have an orthodox sense, while the Arians have been shewn to be corrupt in their phrases, and evil in their dispositions. The term Unoriginate, having its own sense, and admitting of a religious use, they nevertheless, according to their own idea, and as they will, use for the dishonour of the Saviour, all for the sake of contentiously maintaining, like giants, their fight with God. But as they did not escape condemnation when they adduced these former phrases, so when they misconceive of the Unoriginated which in itself admits of being used well and religiously, they were detected, being disgraced before all, and their heresy everywhere proscribed. This then, as I could, have I related, by way of explaining what was formerly done in the Council; but I know that the contentious among Christ’s foes will not be disposed to change even after hearing this, but will ever search about for other pretences, and for others again after those. For as the Prophet speaks, ‘If the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots’, then will they be willing to think religiously, who have been instructed in irreligion. Thou however, beloved, on receiving this, read it by thyself; and if thou approvest of it, read it also to the brethren who happen to be present, that they too on hearing it, may welcome the Council’s zeal for the truth, and the exactness of its sense; and may condemn that of Christ’s foes, the Arians, and the futile pretences, which for the sake of their irreligious heresy they have been at the pains to frame among themselves; because to God and the Father is due the glory, honour, and worship with His co-existent Son and Word, together with the All-holy and Life-giving Spirit, now and unto endless ages of ages. Amen.

The strength and limits of the defense

The most persuasive part of Athanasius's historical explanation is his account of why agreement on a biblical sentence might fail to establish agreement on its meaning. The fact that both parties could say that the Son was from God did not settle whether he was from God in the way every creature is from its creator. His distinction is explicit and consequential. A modern account that reduces the controversy to the substitution of Greek philosophy for a wholly unambiguous biblical faith fails to reckon with this problem of interpretation.

Athanasius's inference from the Son's role in creation to his place on the divine side of the creator-creature distinction is the chapter's substantive answer to an account of Nicaea as imperial manufacture. Summoning bishops and enforcing their decision did not supply that inference. His account must be assessed as an argument as well as a defense of an institution.

Athanasius is less reliable when the force of an argument depends on identifying every opponent with the same evasive intention. Someone could object to homoousios because he suspected that it erased the difference between Father and Son, rather than because he wished to conceal Arius's doctrine. Hilary's discussion in a later chapter makes this distinction particularly plain. The work's polemical habit of

treating opposition as deliberate bad faith should therefore be separated from its analysis of the propositions at issue.

The repeated comparison with Jewish unbelief is another failure of judgment. Athanasius uses a Christian anti-Jewish stereotype to stigmatize Christian adversaries. That rhetoric adds nothing necessary to his argument about generation or essence. Its presence matters because an influential defense of the creed also transmitted a model of religious hostility. Recognizing the strength of an argument does not require inheriting the prejudices with which its author surrounded it.

Finally, this work shows that a council's authority and a council's interpretation are inseparable historical questions. Athanasius does not merely say that the bishops voted and the matter is closed. He spends pages explaining what their language excludes, how their phrases relate to Scripture, and why their terminology does not introduce a material division in God. The surviving defense is itself evidence that the meaning of Nicaea required explanation after 325. The creed became authoritative through a continuing labor of interpretation as well as through acts of reception.

9 Councils and Emperors Reverse Their Judgments

The years after Constantine's death in 337 destroy any picture of Nicaea as a settlement enforced continuously by a single imperial will. Athanasius returned from one exile and entered others. Councils judged bishops whom other councils restored. Eastern and Western courts did not always support the same ecclesiastical parties. The council of 325 remained a point of appeal, but its defenders often had to resist the emperor who governed their churches.

Socrates of Constantinople, writing his Ecclesiastical History in the fifth century, tells this story as a succession of disputed judgments and political interventions. He favors the Nicene cause, yet his narrative includes a fact uncomfortable for a simple division between persecuting opponents and powerless defenders: Athanasius's restoration was helped by the threat of war from the Western emperor Constans against his brother Constantius. Socrates represents the threat as decisive. His judgment about the brothers' motives belongs to his narrative; it should not be treated as independent access to their private thoughts.

The council of Sardica, conventionally dated to 343, attempted to address the division. Eastern and Western groups separated rather than reaching a common judgment. The subsequent appeal to imperial power did not follow a successful reunion. It followed the failure of an assembly to make its decision acceptable to both sides. This distinction is essential to understanding why additional councils could deepen a dispute even when everyone claimed to desire the church's peace.

The following readings preserve Socrates's account of Sardica, his description of Constans's intervention, and the documents he presents in connection with Athanasius's recall. A later extract records the renewed vulnerability of the Nicene bishops after Constans's death. The sequence shows how quickly protection could change when the political balance changed. Socrates's chronological arrangement contains difficulties, so the dates of events should not be calculated simply from the order of every incident in his narrative.

A council divides

Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, book II, chapter 20, in the historical translation revised by A. C. Zenos, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 2, 1890. Original editorial footnotes are omitted. The chapter is reproduced in full after its heading. Socrates's numerical and partisan descriptions are retained as his testimony.

The Western prelates on account of their being of another language, and not understanding this exposition, would not admit of it; saying that the Nicene Creed was sufficient, and that they would not waste time on anything beyond it. But when the emperor had again written to insist on the restoration to Paul and Athanasius of their respective sees, but without effect in consequence of the continual agitation of the people - these two bishops demanded that another Synod should be convened, so that their case, as well as other questions in relation to the faith might be settled by an ecumenical council, for they made it obvious that their deposition arose from no other cause than that the faith might be the more easily perverted. Another general council was therefore summoned to meet at Sardica, - a city of Illyricum, - by the joint authority of the two emperors; the one requesting by letter that it might be so, and the other, of the East, readily acquiescing in it. It was the eleventh year after the death of the father of the two Augusti, during the consulship of Rufinus and Eusebius, that the Synod of Sardica met. According to the statement of Athanasius about 300 bishops from the western parts of the empire were present; but Sabinus says there came only seventy from the eastern parts, among whom was Ischyras of Mareotes, who had been ordained bishop of that country by those who deposed Athanasius. Of the rest, some pretended infirmity of body; others complained of the shortness of the notice given, casting the blame of it on Julius, bishop of Rome, although a year and a half had elapsed from the time of its having been summoned: in which interval Athanasius remained at Rome awaiting the assembling of the Synod. When at last they were convened at Sardica, the Eastern prelates refused either to meet or to enter into any conference with those of the West, unless they first excluded Athanasius and Paul from the convention. But as Protogenes, bishop of Sardica, and Hosius, bishop of Cordova, a city in Spain, would by no means permit them to be absent, the Eastern bishops immediately withdrew, and returning to Philippopolis in Thrace, held a separate council, wherein they openly anathematized the term homoousios; and having introduced the Anomoian opinion into their epistles, they sent them in all directions. On the other hand those who remained at Sardica, condemning in the first place their departure, afterwards divested the accusers of Athanasius of their dignity; then confirming the Nicene Creed, and rejecting the term anomoion, they more distinctly recognized the doctrine of consubstantiality, which they also inserted in epistles addressed to all the churches. Both parties believed they had acted rightly: those of the East, because the Western bishops had countenanced those whom they had deposed; and these again, in consequence not only of the retirement of those who had deposed them before the matter had been examined into, but also because they themselves were the defenders of the Nicene faith, which the other party had dared to adulterate. They therefore restored to Paul and Athanasius their sees, and also Marcellus of Ancyra

in Lesser Galatia, who had been deposed long before, as we have stated in the former book. At that time indeed he exerted himself to the utmost to procure the revocation of the sentence pronounced against him, declaring that his being suspected of entertaining the error of Paul of Samosata arose from a misunderstanding of some expressions in his book. It must, however, be noticed that Eusebius Pamphilus wrote three entire books against Marcellus, in which he quotes that author’s own words to prove that he asserts with Sabellius the Libyan, and Paul of Samosata, that the Lord [Jesus] was a mere man.

An emperor threatens his brother

Socrates, Ecclesiastical History II.22-23, complete chapters after their headings. Chapter 21, a separate defense of Eusebius of Caesarea, is omitted. The letters are reproduced as documents embedded in Socrates's history; they are not surviving transcripts of a modern archival original.

Those convened at Sardica, as well as those who had formed a separate council at Philippopolis in Thrace, having severally performed what they deemed requisite, returned to their respective cities. From that time, therefore, the Western church was severed from the Eastern; and the boundary of communion between them was the mountain called Soucis, which divides the Illyrians from the Thracians. As far as this mountain there was indiscriminate communion, although there was a difference of faith; but beyond it they did not commune with one another. Such was the perturbed condition of the churches at that period. Soon after these transactions, the emperor of the Western parts informed his brother Constantius of what had taken place at Sardica, and begged him to restore Paul and Athanasius to their sees. But as Constantius delayed to carry this matter into effect, the emperor of the West again wrote to him, giving him the choice either of re-establishing Paul and Athanasius in their former dignity, and restoring their churches to them; or, on his failing to do this, of regarding him as his enemy, and immediately expecting war. The letter which he addressed to his brother was as follows:

‘Athanasius and Paul are here with me; and I am quite satisfied after investigation, that they are persecuted for the sake of piety. If, therefore, you will pledge yourself to reinstate them in their sees, and to punish those who have so unjustly injured them, I will send them to you; but should you refuse to do this, be assured, that I will myself come thither, and restore them to their own sees, in spite of your opposition.’

On receiving this communication the emperor of the East fell into perplexity; and immediately sending for the greater part of the Eastern bishops, he acquainted them with the choice his brother had submitted to him, and asked what ought to be done. They replied, it was better to concede the churches to Athanasius, than to undertake a civil war. Accordingly the emperor, urged by necessity, summoned Athanasius and his friends to his presence. Meanwhile the emperor of the West sent Paul to Constantinople, with two bishops and other honorable attendance, having fortified him with his own letters, together with those of the Synod. But while Athanasius was

still apprehensive, and hesitated to go to him, - for he dreaded the treachery of his calumniators, - the emperor of the East not once only, but even a second and a third time, invited him to come to him; this is evident from his letters, which, translated from the Latin tongue, are as follows:

Epistle of Constantius to Athanasius.

Constantius Victor Augustus to Athanasius the bishop.

Our compassionate clemency cannot permit you to be any longer tossed and disquieted as it were by the boisterous waves of the sea. Our unwearied piety has not been unmindful of you driven from your native home, despoiled of your property, and wandering in pathless solitudes. And although I have too long deferred acquainting you by letter with the purpose of my mind, expecting your coming to us of your own accord to seek a remedy for your troubles; yet since fear perhaps has hindered the execution of your wishes, we therefore have sent to your reverence letters full of indulgence, in order that you may fearlessly hasten to appear in our presence, whereby after experiencing our benevolence, you may attain your desire, and be re-established in your proper position. For this reason I have requested my Lord and brother Constans Victor Augustus to grant you permission to come, to the end that by the consent of us both you may be restored to your country, having this assurance of our favor.

Another Epistle to Athanasius.

Constantius Victor Augustus to the bishop Athanasius.

Although we have abundantly intimated in a former letter that you might confidently come to our court, as we are extremely anxious to reinstate you in your proper place, yet we have again addressed this letter to your reverence. We therefore urge you, without any distrust or apprehension, to take a public vehicle and hasten to us, in order that you may be able to obtain what you desire.

Another Epistle to Athanasius.

Constantius Victor Augustus to the bishop Athanasius.

While we were residing at Edessa, where your presbyters were present, it pleased us to send one of them to you, for the purpose of hastening your arrival at our court, in order that after having been introduced to our presence, you might forthwith proceed to Alexandria. But inasmuch as a considerable time has elapsed since you received our letter, and yet have not come, we now therefore hasten to remind you to speedily present yourself before us, that so you may be able to return to your country, and obtain your desire. For the more ample assurance of our intention, we have despatched to you Achetas the deacon, from whom you will learn both our mind in regard to you, and that you will be able to secure what you wish; viz., our readiness to facilitate the objects you have in view.

When Athanasius had received these letters at Aquileia, - for there he abode after his departure from Sardica, - he immediately hastened to Rome; and having shown

these communications to Julius the bishop, he caused the greatest joy in the Roman Church. For it seemed as if the emperor of the East also had recognized their faith, since he had recalled Athanasius. Julius then wrote to the clergy and laity of Alexandria on behalf of Athanasius as follows:

Epistle of Julius, Bishop of Rome, to those at Alexandria.

Julius, the bishop, to the presbyters, deacons, and people inhabiting Alexandria, brethren beloved, salutations in the Lord.

I also rejoice with you, beloved brethren, because you at length see before your eyes the fruit of your faith. For that this is really so, any one may perceive in reference to my brother and fellow-prelate Athanasius, whom God has restored to you, both on account of his purity of life, and in answer to your prayers. From this it is evident that your supplications to God have unceasingly been offered pure and abounding with love; for mindful of the divine promises and of the charity connected with them, which ye learned from the instruction of my brother, ye knew assuredly, and according to the sound faith which is in you clearly foresaw that your bishop would not be separated from you for ever, whom ye had in your devout hearts as though he were ever present. Wherefore it is unnecessary for me to use many words in addressing you, for your faith has already anticipated whatever I could have said; and the common prayer of you all has been fulfilled according to the grace of Christ. I therefore rejoice with you, and repeat that ye have preserved your souls invincible in the faith. And with my brother Athanasius I rejoice equally; because, while suffering many afflictions, he has never been unmindful of your love and desire; for although he seemed to be withdrawn from you in person for a season, yet was he always present with you in spirit. Moreover, I am convinced, beloved, that every trial which he has endured has not been inglorious; since both your faith and his has thus been tested and made manifest to all. But had not so many troubles happened to him, who would have believed, either that you had so great esteem and love for this eminent prelate, or that he was endowed with such distinguished virtues, on account of which also he will by no means be defrauded of his hope in the heavens? He has accordingly obtained a testimony of confession in every way glorious both in the present age and in that which is to come. For having suffered so many and diversified trials both by land and by sea, he has trampled on every machination of the Arian heresy; and though often exposed to danger in consequence of envy, he despised death, being protected by Almighty God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, ever trusting that he should not only escape the plots [of his adversaries], but also be restored for your consolation, and bring back to you at the same time greater trophies from your own conscience. By which means he has been made known even to the ends of the whole earth as glorious, his worth having been approved by the purity of his life, the firmness of his purpose, and his steadfastness in the heavenly doctrine, all being attested by your unchanging esteem and love. He therefore returns to you, more illustrious now than when he departed from you. For if the fire tries the precious metals (I speak of gold and silver) for purification, what can be said of so excellent a man proportionate to his worth, who after having overcome the

fire of so many calamities and dangers, is now restored to you, being declared innocent not only by us, but also by the whole Synod? Receive therefore with godly honor and joy, beloved brethren, your bishop Athanasius, together with those who have been his companions in tribulation. And rejoice in having attained the object of your prayers, you who have supplied with meat and drink, by your supporting letters, your pastor hungering and thirsting, so to speak, for your spiritual welfare. And in fact ye were a comfort to him while he was sojourning in a strange land; and ye cherished him in your most faithful affections when he was plotted against and persecuted. As for me, it makes me happy even to picture to myself in imagination the delight of each one of you at his return, the pious greetings of the populace, the glorious festivity of those assembled to meet him, and indeed what the entire aspect of that day will be when my brother shall be brought back to you again; when past troubles will be at an end, and his prized and longed-for return will unite all hearts in the warmest expression of joy. This feeling will in a very high degree extend to us, who regard it as a token of divine favor that we should have been privileged to become acquainted with so eminent a person. It becomes us therefore to close this epistle with prayer. May God Almighty and his Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ afford you this grace continually, thus rewarding the admirable faith which ye have manifested in reference to your bishop by an illustrious testimony: that the things most excellent which ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man; even the things which God has prepared for them that love him,’ may await you and yours in the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom be glory to God Almighty for ever and ever, Amen. I pray that ye may be strengthened, beloved brethren.

Athanasius, relying on these letters, arrived at the East. The Emperor Constantius did not at that time receive him with hostility of feeling; nevertheless at the instigation of the Arians he endeavored to circumvent him, and addressed him in these words: ‘You have been reinstated in your see in accordance with the decree of the Synod, and with our consent. But inasmuch as some of the people of Alexandria refuse to hold communion with you, permit them to have one church in the city.’ To this demand Athanasius promptly replied: ‘You have the power, my sovereign, both to order, and to carry into effect, whatever you may please. I also, therefore, would beg you to grant me a favor.’ The emperor having readily promised to acquiesce, Athanasius immediately added, that he desired the same thing might be conceded to him, which the emperor had sought from him, viz.: that in every city one church should be assigned to those who might refuse to hold communion with the Arians. The Arians perceiving the purpose of Athanasius to be inimical to their interests, said that this affair might be postponed to another time: but they suffered the emperor to act as he pleased. He therefore restored to Athanasius, Paul, and Marcellus their respective sees; as also to Asclepas, bishop of Gaza, and Lucius of Adrianople. For these, too, had been received by the Council of Sardica: Asclepas, because he showed records from which it appeared that Eusebius Pamphilus, in conjunction with several others, after having investigated his case, had restored him to his former rank; and Lucius, because his accusers had fled. Hereupon the

emperor’s edicts were despatched to their respective cities, enjoining the inhabitants to receive them readily. At Ancyra indeed, when Basil was ejected, and Marcellus was introduced in his stead, there was a considerable tumult made, which afforded his enemies an occasion of calumniating him: but the people of Gaza willingly received Asclepas. Macedonius at Constantinople, for a short time gave place to Paul, convening assemblies by himself separately, in a separate church in that city. Moreover the emperor wrote on behalf of Athanasius to the bishops, clergy, and laity, in regard to receiving him cheerfully: and at the same time he ordered by other letters, that whatever had been enacted against him in the judicial courts should be abrogated. The communications respecting both these matters were as follows:

The Epistle of Constantius in Behalf of Athanasius.

Victor Constantius Maximus Augustus, to the bishops and presbyters of the Catholic Church.

The most reverend bishop Athanasius has not been forsaken by the grace of God. But although he was for a short time subjected to trial according to men, yet has he obtained from an omniscient Providence the exoneration which was due to him; having been restored by the will of God, and our decision, both to his country and to the church over which by divine permission he presided. It was therefore suitable that what is in accordance with this should be duly attended to by our clemency: so that all things which have been heretofore determined against those who held communion with him should now be rescinded; that all suspicion against him should henceforward cease; and that the immunity which those clergymen who are with him formerly enjoyed, should be, as it is meet, confirmed to them. Moreover, we thought it just to add this to our grace toward him, that the whole ecclesiastical body should understand that protection is extended to all who have adhered to him, whether bishops or other clergymen: and union with him shall be a sufficient evidence of each person’s right intention. Wherefore we have ordered, according to the similitude of the previous providence, that as many as have the wisdom to enroll themselves with the sounder judgment and party and to choose his communion, shall enjoy that indulgence which we have now granted in accordance with the will of God.

Another Epistle sent to the Alexandrians.

Victor Constantius Maximus Augustus, to the people of the Catholic Church at Alexandria.

Setting before us as an aim your good order in all respects, and knowing that you have long since been bereft of episcopal oversight, we thought it just to send back to you again Athanasius your bishop, a man known to all by the rectitude and sanctity of his life and manners. Having received him with your usual and becoming courtesy, and constituted him the assistant of your prayers to God, exert yourselves to maintain at all times, according to the ecclesiastical canon, harmony and peace, which will be alike honorable to yourselves, and grateful to us. For it is

unreasonable that any dissension or faction should be excited among you, hostile to the prosperity of our times; and we trust that such a misfortune will be wholly removed from you. We exhort you, therefore, to assiduously persevere in your accustomed devotions, by his assistance, as we before said: so that when this resolution of yours shall become generally known, entering into the prayers of all, even the pagans, who are still enslaved in the ignorance of idolatrous worship, may hasten to seek the knowledge of our sacred religion, most beloved Alexandrians. Again, therefore, we exhort you to give heed to these things: heartily welcome your bishop, as one appointed you by the will of God and our decree; and esteem him worthy of being embraced with all the affections of your souls. For this becomes you, and is consistent with our clemency. But in order to check all tendency to seditions and tumult in persons of a factious disposition, orders have been issued to our judges to give up to the severity of the laws all whom they may discover to be seditious. Having regard, therefore, to our determination and God’s, as well as to the anxiety we feel to secure harmony among you, and remembering also the punishment that will be inflicted on the disorderly, make it your especial care to act agreeably to the sanctions of our sacred religion, with all reverence honoring your bishop; that so in conjunction with him you may present your supplications to the God and Father of the universe, both for yourselves, and for the orderly government of the whole human race.

An Epistle respecting the Rescinding of the Enactments against Athanasius.

Victor Constantius Augustus to Nestorius, and in the same terms to the governors of Augustamnica, Thebaïs, and Libya.

If it be found that at any time previously any enactment has been passed prejudicial and derogatory to those who hold communion with Athanasius the bishop, our pleasure is that it should now be wholly abrogated; and that his clergy should again enjoy the same immunity which was granted to them formerly. We enjoin strict obedience to this command, to the intent that since the bishop Athanasius has been restored to his church, all who hold communion with him may possess the same privileges as they had before, and such as other ecclesiastics now enjoy: that so their affairs being happily arranged, they also may share in the general prosperity.

The balance of power changes

Socrates, Ecclesiastical History II.26, complete after its heading. Chapters 24-25 are omitted. The text resumes after the death of the Western emperor Constans in 350.

The conflux of these disastrous events occurred during a short space of time; for they happened in the fourth year after the council at Sardica, during the consulate of Sergius and Nigrinian. When these circumstances were published, the entire sovereignty of the empire seemed to devolve on Constantius alone, who, being accordingly proclaimed in the East sole Autocrat, made the most vigorous preparations against the usurpers. Hereupon the adversaries of Athanasius, thinking a favorable crisis had arisen, again framed the most calumnious charges against

him, before his arrival at Alexandria; assuring the Emperor Constantius that he was subverting all Egypt and Libya. And his having undertaken to ordain out of the limits of his own diocese, tended not a little to accredit the accusations against him. Meanwhile in this conjuncture, Athanasius entered Alexandria; and having convened a council of the bishops in Egypt, they confirmed by their unanimous vote, what had been determined in the Synod at Sardica, and that assembled at Jerusalem by Maximus. But the emperor, who had been long since imbued with Arian doctrine, reversed all the indulgent proceedings he had so recently resolved on. And first of all he ordered that Paul, bishop of Constantinople, should be sent into exile; whom those who conducted strangled, at Cucusus in Cappadocia. Marcellus was also ejected, and Basil again made ruler of the church at Ancyra. Lucius of Adrianople, being loaded with chains, died in prison. The reports which were made concerning Athanasius so wrought on the emperor’s mind, that in an ungovernable fury he commanded him to be put to death wherever he might be found: he moreover included Theodulus and Olympius, who presided over churches in Thrace, in the same proscription. Athanasius, however, was not ignorant of the intentions of the emperor; but learning of them he once more had recourse to flight, and so escaped the emperor’s menaces. The Arians denounced this retreat as criminal, particularly Narcissus, bishop of Neronias in Cilicia, George of Laodicæa, and Leontius who then had the oversight of the church at Antioch. This last person, when a presbyter, had been divested of his rank, because in order to remove all suspicion of illicit intercourse with a woman named Eustolium, with whom he spent a considerable portion of his time, he had castrated himself and thenceforward lived more unreservedly with her, on the ground that there could be no longer any ground for evil surmises. Afterwards however, at the earnest desire of the Emperor Constantius, he was created bishop of the church at Antioch, after Stephen, the successor of Placitus. So much respecting this.

What imperial support could accomplish

The letters of recall demonstrate a practical form of imperial intervention. Constantius offers safe travel, requests Athanasius's return, and directs officials to facilitate his restoration. Whatever judgment one makes about the emperor's sincerity, these are not merely expressions of private theological opinion. An imperial decision could change whether a bishop could enter a city, occupy churches, and exercise his office. Disputes over communion were also disputes about buildings, jurisdiction, security, and public recognition.

Socrates's narrative also exposes the instability of a policy founded on the emperor's favor. A promise of protection did not create an arrangement independent of the ruler who made it. After Constans died, Athanasius lost a powerful external supporter. The return of pressure against him was not evidence that the theological argument had suddenly changed. It showed that the institutions through which bishops acted were entangled with the changing distribution of coercive power.

The Western threat is particularly important. It prevents the history from being organized into the moral convenience of one side always imposing and the other side always suffering. In Socrates's account, an emperor favorable to Athanasius was prepared to bring armed force into the dispute. That does not make every bishop responsible for every action of a sympathetic ruler. It does establish that the political resources of the Nicene cause were real, and that restoring an exiled bishop could involve pressure as well as principle.

Socrates presents competing episcopal judgments without making them equal in his own estimation. He thinks some accusations were false and some councils had acted wrongly. His narrative does not require the conclusion that councils were incapable of judging truth. It does require a distinction between a council's claim to act for the church and the actual extent of its reception. An assembly could pronounce a judgment while large bodies of bishops rejected its procedure, its premises, or its jurisdiction.

Eusebius's ceremonial unity at Nicaea appears here as a beginning disputed by subsequent rulers and bishops. Socrates's account records divided councils, competing courts, and protection contingent on the survival of a patron. These documents rule out a history of immediate, continuously enforced consensus after 325.

10 Hilary Tests the Meaning of Rival Formulas

Hilary of Poitiers wrote On the Councils, or The Faith of the Easterns, while separated by exile from his fellow bishops in Gaul. In 359 he tried to explain why some Eastern bishops who resisted radical subordination of the Son nevertheless distrusted the Nicene term homoousios. His undertaking was not to abandon Nicaea. It was to distinguish disagreement over the word from disagreement over the faith the word was intended to protect.

The distinction between homoousios, of one essence, and homoiousios, of like essence, has often been reduced to a joke about a single letter. Hilary demonstrates why that joke is historically inadequate. Like could mean an imperfect resemblance between beings of different ranks. It could also be used to affirm an exact likeness grounded in a genuinely shared nature. Conversely, one essence could preserve the Son's full divinity, but it could also be misunderstood as making Father and Son the same personal subject, dividing a material stuff, or placing both under an essence that existed before them.

Hilary therefore asks what an expression means in its argumentative setting. He gives neither term a license to mean whatever its user wishes. He excludes understandings which deny the Son's true origin from the Father or dissolve their distinction. His effort at reconciliation operates within definite doctrinal boundaries. It offers an alternative to identifying every hesitation about the Nicene word with Arius's claim that the Son had a beginning from nonbeing.

The selection follows his explanation of how both formulas can be used badly and how they might be understood compatibly. A second passage, after an explicitly marked omission, returns to his defense of the Nicene term and closes with an appeal to bishops whose disagreement he hopes to overcome. Hilary's references to events and documents assume the crowded succession of councils in the 350s. Their essential background is that bishops were being asked to subscribe formulas under shifting ecclesiastical and imperial pressures.

One essence and like essence

Hilary of Poitiers, De Synodis or On the Councils, sections 63-77, translated by L. Pullan, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 9, 1899. Original editorial footnotes are omitted; the section numbers and historical translator's Greek terms remain. The preceding survey of Eastern formulas is omitted. The Basil addressed later in this work is Basil of Ancyra, not Basil of Caesarea.

63. You must not be surprised, dear brethren, that so many creeds have recently been written. The frenzy of heretics makes it necessary. The danger of the Eastern Churches is so great that it is rare to find either priest or layman that belongs to this faith, of the orthodoxy of which you may judge. Certain individuals have acted so wrongly as to support the side of evil, and the strength of the wicked has been increased by the exile of some of the bishops, the cause of which you are acquainted with. I am not speaking about distant events or writing down incidents of which I know nothing: I have heard and seen the faults which we now have to combat. They are not laymen but bishops who are guilty. Except the bishop Eleusius and his few comrades, the greater part of the ten provinces of Asia, in which I am now staying, really know not God. Would that they knew nothing about Him, for their ignorance would meet with a readier pardon than their detraction. These faithful bishops do not keep silence in their pain. They seek for the unity of that faith of which others have long since robbed them. The necessity of a united exposition of that faith was first felt when Hosius forgot his former deeds and words, and a fresh yet festering heresy broke out at Sirmium. Of Hosius I say nothing, I leave his conduct in the background lest man’s judgment should forget what once he was. But everywhere there are scandals, schisms and treacheries. Hence some of those who had formerly written one creed were compelled to sign another. I make no complaint against these long-suffering Eastern bishops, it was enough that they gave at least a compulsory assent to the faith after they had once been willing to blaspheme. I think it a subject of congratulation that a single penitent should be found among such obstinate, blaspheming and heretical bishops. But, brethren, you enjoy happiness and glory in the Lord, who meanwhile retain and conscientiously confess the whole apostolic faith, and have hitherto been ignorant of written creeds. You have not needed the letter, for you abounded in the spirit. You required not the office of a hand to write what you believed in your hearts and professed unto salvation. It was unnecessary for you to read as bishops what you held when new-born converts. But necessity has introduced the custom of expounding creeds and signing expositions. Where the conscience is in danger we must use the letter. Nor is it wrong to write what it is wholesome to confess.

64. Kept always from guile by the gift of the Holy Spirit, we confess and write of our own will that there are not two Gods but one God; nor do we therefore deny that the Son of God is also God; for He is God of God. We deny that there are two incapable of birth, because God is one through the prerogative of being incapable of birth; nor does it follow that the Unbegotten is not God, for His source is the Unborn substance. There is not one subsistent Person, but a similar substance in both Persons. There is not one name of God applied to dissimilar natures, but a wholly

similar essence belonging to one name and nature. One is not superior to the other on account of the kind of His substance, but one is subject to the other because born of the other. The Father is greater because He is Father, the Son is not the less because He is Son. The difference is one of the meaning of a name and not of a nature. We confess that the Father is not affected by time, but do not deny that the Son is equally eternal. We assert that the Father is in the Son because the Son has nothing in Himself unlike the Father: we confess that the Son is in the Father because the existence of the Son is not from any other source. We recognize that their nature is mutual and similar because equal: we do not think them to be one Person because they are one: we declare that they are through the similarity of an identical nature one, in such a way that they nevertheless are not one Person.

Translation clarification, section 64. The historical English reads Unbegotten in the clause denying that the Son is not God. Hilary's Latin has Unigenitus, Only-begotten: neque per id non et Unigenitus Deus est. The intended subject is the Son, not the unbegotten Father. The clause means: Nor does it follow that the Only-begotten is not God. His origin is then referred to the Father's unbegotten substance. The Latin was checked in Patrologia Latina 10, column 499, as transcribed at https://la.wikisource.org/wiki/Liber_de_synodis_seu_fide_orientalium . This explanatory rendering is new; the identified historical translation above is retained unchanged.

65. I have expounded, beloved brethren, my belief in our common faith so far as our wonted human speech permitted and the Lord, whom I have ever besought, as He is my witness, has given me power. If I have said too little, nay, if I have said almost nothing, I ask you to remember that it is not belief but words that are lacking. Perhaps I shall thereby prove that my human nature, though not my will, is weak: and I pardon my human nature if it cannot speak as it would of God, for it is enough for its salvation to have believed the things of God.

66. Since your faith and mine, so far as I am conscious, is in no danger before God, and I have shewn you, as you wished, the creeds that have been set forth by the Eastern bishops (though I repeat that they were few in number, for, considering how numerous the Eastern Churches are, that faith is held by few), I have also declared my own convictions about divine things, according to the doctrine of the apostles. It remains for you to investigate without suspicion the points that mislead the unguarded temper of our simple minds, for there is now no opportunity left of hearing. And although I shall no longer fear that sentence will not be passed upon me in accordance with the whole exposition of the creed, I ask you to allow me to express a wish that I may not have the sentence passed until the exposition is actually completed.

67. Many of us, beloved brethren, declare the substance of the Father and the Son to be one in such a spirit that I consider the statement to be quite as much wrong as right. The expression contains both a conscientious conviction and the opportunity for delusion. If we assert the one substance, understanding it to mean the likeness of natural qualities and such a likeness as includes not only the species but the genus, we assert it in a truly religious spirit, provided we believe that the one substance signifies such a similitude of qualities that the unity is not the unity of a monad but of equals. By equality I mean exact similarity so that the likeness may be called an

equality, provided that the equality imply unity because it implies an equal pair, and that the unity which implies an equal pair be not wrested to mean a single Person. Therefore the one substance will be asserted piously if it does not abolish the subsistent personality or divide the one substance into two, for their substance by the true character of the Son's birth and by their natural likeness is so free from difference that it is called one.

68. But if we attribute one substance to the Father and the Son to teach that there is a solitary personal existence although denoted by two titles: then though we confess the Son with our lips we do not keep Him in our hearts, since in confessing one substance we then really say that the Father and the Son constitute one undifferentiated Person. Nay, there immediately arises an opportunity for the erroneous belief that the Father is divided, and that He cut off a portion of Himself to be His Son. That is what the heretics mean when they say the substance is one: and the terminology of our good confession so gratifies them that it aids heresy when the word ὁμοούσιος is left by itself, undefined and ambiguous. There is also a third error. When the Father and the Son are said to be of one substance this is thought to imply a prior substance, which the two equal Persons both possess. Consequently the word implies three things, one original substance and two Persons, who are as it were fellow-heirs of this one substance. For as two fellow-heirs are two, and the heritage of which they are fellow-heirs is anterior to them, so the two equal Persons might appear to be sharers in one anterior substance. The assertion of the one substance of the Father and the Son signifies either that there is one Person who has two titles, or one divided substance that has made two imperfect substances, or that there is a third prior substance which has been usurped and assumed by two and which is called one because it was one before it was severed into two. Where then is there room for the Son's birth? Where is the Father or the Son, if these names are explained not by the birth of the divine nature but a severing or sharing of one anterior substance?

69. Therefore amid the numerous dangers which threaten the faith, brevity of words must be employed sparingly, lest what is piously meant be thought to be impiously expressed, and a word be judged guilty of occasioning heresy when it has been used in conscientious and unsuspecting innocence. A Catholic about to state that the substance of the Father and the Son is one, must not begin at that point: nor hold this word all important as though true faith did not exist where the word was not used. He will be safe in asserting the one substance if he has first said that the Father is unbegotten, that the Son is born, that He draws His personal subsistence from the Father, that He is like the Father in might, honour and nature, that He is subject to the Father as to the Author of His being, that He did not commit robbery by making Himself equal with God, in whose form He remained, that He was obedient unto death. He did not spring from nothing, but was born. He is not incapable of birth but equally eternal. He is not the Father, but the Son begotten of Him. He is not any portion of God, but is whole God. He is not Himself the source but the image; the image of God born of God to be God. He is not a creature but is God. Not another God in the kind of His substance, but the one God in virtue of the

essence of His exactly similar substance. God is not one in Person but in nature, for the Born and the Begetter have nothing different or unlike. After saying all this, he does not err in declaring one substance of the Father and the Son. Nay, if he now denies the one substance he sins.

70. Therefore let no one think that our words were meant to deny the one substance. We are giving the very reason why it should not be denied. Let no one think that the word ought to be used by itself and unexplained. Otherwise the word ὁμοούσιος is not used in a religious spirit. I will not endure to hear that Christ was born of Mary unless I also hear, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. I will not hear Christ was hungry, unless I hear that after His fast of forty days He said, Man doth not live by bread alone. I will not hear He thirsted unless I also hear Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. I will not hear Christ suffered unless I hear, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. I will not hear He died unless I hear He rose again. Let us bring forward no isolated point of the divine mysteries to rouse the suspicions of our hearers and give an occasion to the blasphemers. We must first preach the birth and subordination of the Son and the likeness of His nature, and then we may preach in godly fashion that the Father and the Son are of one substance. I do not personally understand why we ought to preach before everything else, as the most valuable and important of doctrines and in itself sufficient, a truth which cannot be piously preached before other truths, although it is impious to deny it after them.

71. Beloved brethren, we must not deny that there is one substance of the Father and the Son, but we must not declare it without giving our reasons. The one substance must be derived from the true character of the begotten nature, not from any division, any confusion of Persons, any sharing of an anterior substance. It may be right to assert the one substance, it may be right to keep silence about it. You believe in the birth and you believe in the likeness. Why should the word cause mutual suspicions, when we view the fact in the same way? Let us believe and say that there is one substance, but in virtue of the true character of the nature and not to imply a blasphemous unity of Persons. Let the oneness be due to the fact that there are similar Persons and not a solitary Person.

72. But perhaps the word similarity may not seem fully appropriate. If so, I ask how I can express the equality of one Person with the other except by such a word? Or is to be like not the same thing as to be equal? If I say the divine nature is one I am suspected of meaning that it is undifferentiated: if I say the Persons are similar, I mean that I compare what is exactly like. I ask what position equal holds between like and one? I enquire whether it means similarity rather than singularity. Equality does not exist between things unlike, nor does similarity exist in one. What is the difference between those that are similar and those that are equal? Can one equal be distinguished from the other? So those who are equal are not unlike. If then those who are unlike are not equals, what can those who are like be but equals?

73. Therefore, beloved brethren, in declaring that the Son is like in all things to the Father, we declare nothing else than that He is equal. Likeness means perfect

equality, and this fact we may gather from the Holy Scriptures, And Adam lived two hundred and thirty years, and begat a son according to his own image and according to his own likeness; and called his name Seth. I ask what was the nature of his likeness and image which Adam begot in Seth? Remove bodily infirmities, remove the first stage of conception, remove birth-pangs, and every kind of human need. I ask whether this likeness which exists in Seth differs in nature from the author of his being, or whether there was in each an essence of a different kind, so that Seth had not at his birth the natural essence of Adam? Nay, he had a likeness to Adam, even though we deny it, for his nature was not different. This likeness of nature in Seth was not due to a nature of a different kind, since Seth was begotten from only one father, so we see that a likeness of nature renders things equal because this likeness betokens an exactly similar essence. Therefore every son by virtue of his natural birth is the equal of his father, in that he has a natural likeness to him. And with regard to the nature of the Father and the Son the blessed John teaches the very likeness which Moses says existed between Seth and Adam, a likeness which is this equality of nature. He says, Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His father, making Himself equal with God. Why do we allow minds that are dulled with the weight of sin to interfere with the doctrines and sayings of such holy men, and impiously match our rash though sluggish senses against their impregnable assertions? According to Moses, Seth is the likeness of Adam, according to John, the Son is equal to the Father, yet we seek to find a third impossible something between the Father and the Son. He is like the Father, He is the Son of the Father, He is born of Him: this fact alone justifies the assertion that they are one.

74. I am aware, dear brethren, that there are some who confess the likeness, but deny the equality. Let them speak as they will, and insert the poison of their blasphemy into ignorant ears. If they say that there is a difference between likeness and equality, I ask whence equality can be obtained? If the Son is like the Father in essence, might, glory and eternity, I ask why they decline to say He is equal? In the above creed an anathema was pronounced on any man who should say that the Father was Father of an essence unlike Himself. Therefore if He gave to Him whom He begat without effect upon Himself a nature which was neither another nor a different nature, He cannot have given Him any other than His own. Likeness then is the sharing of what is one’s own, the sharing of one’s own is equality, and equality admits of no difference. Those things which do not differ at all are one. So the Father and the Son are one, not by unity of Person but by equality of nature.

75. Although general conviction and divine authority sanction no difference between likeness and equality, since both Moses and John would lead us to believe the Son is like the Father and also His equal, yet let us consider whether the Lord, when the Jews were angry with Him for calling God His Father and thus making Himself equal with God, did Himself teach that He was equal with God. He says, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do. He shewed that the Father originates by saying Can do nothing of Himself, He calls attention to His own obedience by adding, but what He seeth the Father do. There is no difference of

might, He says He can do nothing that He does not see because it is His nature and not His sight that gives Him power. But His obedience consists in His being able only when He sees. And so by the fact that He has power when He sees, He shews that He does not gain power by seeing but claims power on the authority of seeing. The natural might does not differ in Father and Son, the Son's equality of power with the Father not being due to any increase or advance of the Son's nature but to the Father's example. In short that honour which the Son's subjection retained for the Father belongs equally to the Son on the strength of His nature. He has Himself added, What things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. Surely then the likeness implies equality. Certainly it does, even though we deny it: for these also doeth the Son likewise. Are not things done likewise the same? Or do not the same things admit equality? Is there any other difference between likeness and equality, when things that are done likewise are understood to be made the same? Unless perchance any one will deny that the same things are equal, or deny that similar things are equal, for things that are done in like manner are not only declared to be equal but to be the same things.

76. Therefore, brethren, likeness of nature can be attacked by no cavil, and the Son cannot be said to lack the true qualities of the Father's nature because He is like Him. No real likeness exists where there is no equality of nature, and equality of nature cannot exist unless it imply unity, not unity of person but of kind. It is right to believe, religious to feel, and wholesome to confess, that we do not deny that the substance of the Father and the Son is one because it is similar, and that it is similar because they are one.

77. Beloved, after explaining in a faithful and godly manner the meaning of the phrases one substance, in Greek ὁμοούσιον, and similar substance or ὁμοιούσιον, and shewing very completely the faults which may arise from a deceitful brevity or dangerous simplicity of language, it only remains for me to address myself to the holy bishops of the East. We have no longer any mutual suspicions about our faith, and those which before now have been due to mere misunderstanding are being cleared away. They will pardon me if I proceed to speak somewhat freely with them on the basis of our common faith.

Why the Nicene word need not be condemned

On the Councils, sections 85-92. Sections 78-84 are omitted, including Hilary's reproduction of the Nicene Creed. Section 85 continues the defense of that creed and of its term homoousios.

85. But perhaps on the opposite side it will be said that it ought to meet with disapproval, because an erroneous interpretation is generally put upon it. If such is our fear, we ought to erase the words of the Apostle, There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, because Photinus uses this to support his heresy, and refuse to read it because he interprets it mischievously. And the fire or the sponge should annihilate the Epistle to the Philippians, lest Marcion should read again in it, And was found in fashion as a man, and say Christ's body was only a phantasm and not a body. Away with the Gospel of John, lest Sabellius learn from it,

I and the Father are one. Nor must those who now affirm the Son to be a creature find it written, The Father is greater than I. Nor must those who wish to declare that the Son is unlike the Father read: But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. We must dispense, too, with the books of Moses, lest the darkness be thought coeval with God who dwells in the unborn light, since in Genesis the day began to be after the night; lest the years of Methuselah extend later than the date of the deluge, and consequently more than eight souls were saved; lest God hearing the cry of Sodom when the measure of its sins was full should come down as though ignorant of the cry to see if the measure of its sins was full according to the cry, and be found to be ignorant of what He knew; lest any one of those who buried Moses should have known his sepulchre when he was buried; lest these passages, as the heretics think, should prove that the contradictions of the law make it its own enemy. So as they do not understand them, we ought not to read them. And though I should not have said it myself unless forced by the argument, we must, if it seems fit, abolish all the divine and holy Gospels with their message of our salvation, lest their statements be found inconsistent; lest we should read that the Lord who was to send the Holy Spirit was Himself born of the Holy Spirit; lest He who was to threaten death by the sword to those who should take the sword, should before His passion command that a sword should be brought; lest He who was about to descend into hell should say that He would be in paradise with the thief; lest finally the Apostles should be found at fault, in that when commanded to baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, they baptized in the name of Jesus only. I speak to you, brethren, to you, who are no longer nourished with milk, but with meat, and are strong. Shall we, because the wise men of the world have not understood these things, and they are foolish unto them, be wise as the world is wise and believe these things foolish? Because they are hidden from the godless, shall we refuse to shine with the truth of a doctrine which we understand? We prejudice the cause of divine doctrines when we think that they ought not to exist, because some do not regard them as holy. If so, we must not glory in the cross of Christ, because it is a stumbling-block to the world; and we must not preach death in connection with the living God, lest the godless argue that God is dead.

86. Some misunderstand ὁμοούσιον; does that prevent me from understanding it? The Samosatene was wrong in using the word ὁμοούσιον; does that make the Arians right in denying it? Eighty bishops once rejected it; but three hundred and eighteen recently accepted it. And for my own part I think the number sacred, for with such a number Abraham overcame the wicked kings, and was blessed by Him who is a type of the eternal priesthood. The former disapproved of it to oppose a heretic: the latter surely approved of it to oppose a heretic. The authority of the fathers is weighty, is the sanctity of their successors trivial? If their opinions were contradictory, we ought to decide which is the better: but if both their approval and disapproval established the same fact, why do we carp at such good decisions?

87. But perhaps you will reply, ‘Some of those who were then present at Nicæa have now decreed that we ought to keep silence about the word ὁμοούσιον.’ Against my

will I must answer: Do not the very same men rule that we must keep silence about the word ὁμοιούσιον? I beseech you that there may be found no one of them but Hosius, that old man who loves a peaceful grave too well, who shall be found to think that we ought to keep silence about both. Amid the fury of the heretics into what straits shall we fall at last, if while we do not accept both, we keep neither? For there seems to be no impiety in saying that since neither is found in Scripture, we ought to confess neither or both.

88. Holy brethren, I understand by ὁμοούσιον God of God, not of an essence that is unlike, not divided but born, and that the Son has a birth which is unique, of the substance of the unborn God, that He is begotten yet co-eternal and wholly like the Father. I believed this before I knew the word ὁμοούσιον but it greatly helped my belief. Why do you condemn my faith when I express it by ὁμοούσιον while you cannot disapprove it when expressed by ὁμοιούσιον? For you condemn my faith, or rather your own, when you condemn its verbal equivalent. Do others misunderstand it? Let us join in condemning the misunderstanding, but not deprive our faith of its security. Do you think we must subscribe to the Samosatene Council to prevent any one from using ὁμοούσιον in the sense of Paul of Samosata? Then let us also subscribe to the Council of Nicæa, so that the Arians may not impugn the word. Have we to fear that ὁμοιούσιον does not imply the same belief as ὁμοούσιον? Let us decree that there is no difference between being of one or of a similar substance. The word ὁμοούσιον can be understood in a wrong sense. Let us prove that it can be understood in a very good sense. We hold one and the same sacred truth. I beseech you that we should agree that this truth, which is one and the same, should be regarded as sacred. Forgive me, brethren, as I have so often asked you to do. You are not Arians: why should you be thought to be Arians by denying the ὁμοούσιον?

89. But you say: ‘The ambiguity of the word ὁμοούσιον troubles and offends me.’ I pray you hear me again and be not offended. I am troubled by the inadequacy of the word ὁμοιούσιον. Many deceptions come from similarity. I distrust vessels plated with gold, for I may be deceived by the metal underneath: and yet that which is seen resembles gold. I distrust anything that looks like milk, lest that which is offered to me be milk but not sheep’s milk: for cow’s milk certainly looks like it. Sheep’s milk cannot be really like sheep’s milk unless drawn from a sheep. True likeness belongs to a true natural connection. But when the true natural connection exists, the ὁμοούσιον is implied. It is a likeness according to essence when one piece of metal is like another and not plated, if milk which is of the same colour as other milk is not different in taste. Nothing can be like gold but gold, or like milk that did not belong to that species. I have often been deceived by the colour of wine: and yet by tasting the liquor have recognized that it was of another kind. I have seen meat look like other meat, but afterwards the flavour has revealed the difference to me. Yes, I fear those resemblances which are not due to a unity of nature.

90. I am afraid, brethren, of the brood of heresies which are successively produced in the East: and I have already read what I tell you I fear. There was nothing whatever suspicious in the document which some of you, with the assent of certain Orientals, took on your embassy to Sirmium to be there subscribed. But some

misunderstanding has arisen in reference to certain statements at the beginning which I believe you, my holy brethren, Basil, Eustathius, and Eleusius, omitted to mention lest they should give offence. If it was right to draw them up, it was wrong to bury them in silence. But if they are now unmentioned because they were wrong we must beware lest they should be repeated at some future time. Out of consideration for you I have hitherto said nothing about this: yet you know as well as I do that this creed was not identical with the creed of Ancyra. I am not talking gossip: I possess a copy of the creed, and I did not get it from laymen, it was given me by bishops.

91. I pray you, brethren, remove all suspicion and leave no occasion for it. To approve of ὁμοιούσιον, we need not disapprove of ὁμοούσιον. Let us think of the many holy prelates now at rest: what judgment will the Lord pronounce upon us if we now say anathema to them? What will be our case if we push the matter so far as to deny that they were bishops and so deny that we are ourselves bishops? We were ordained by them and are their successors. Let us renounce our episcopate, if we took its office from men under anathema. Brethren, forgive my anguish: it is an impious act that you are attempting. I cannot endure to hear the man anathematized who says ὁμοούσιον and says it in the right sense. No fault can be found with a word which does no harm to the meaning of religion. I do not know the word ὁμοιούσιον, or understand it, unless it confesses a similarity of essence. I call the God of heaven and earth to witness, that when I had heard neither word, my belief was always such that I should have interpreted ὁμοιούσιον by ὁμοούσιον. That is, I believed that nothing could be similar according to nature unless it was of the same nature. Though long ago regenerate in baptism, and for some time a bishop, I never heard of the Nicene creed until I was going into exile, but the Gospels and Epistles suggested to me the meaning of ὁμοούσιον and ὁμοιούσιον. Our desire is sacred. Let us not condemn the fathers, let us not encourage heretics, lest while we drive one heresy away, we nurture another. After the Council of Nicæa our fathers interpreted the due meaning of ὁμοούσιον with scrupulous care; the books are extant, the facts are fresh in men’s minds: if anything has to be added to the interpretation, let us consult together. Between us we can thoroughly establish the faith, so that what has been well settled need not be disturbed, and what has been misunderstood may be removed.

92. Beloved brethren, I have passed beyond the bounds of courtesy, and forgetting my modesty I have been compelled by my affection for you to write thus of many abstruse matters which until this our age were unattempted and left in silence. I have spoken what I myself believed, conscious that I owed it as my soldier’s service to the Church to send to you in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel by these letters the voice of the office which I hold in Christ. It is yours to discuss, to provide and to act, that the inviolable fidelity in which you stand you may still keep with conscientious hearts, and that you may continue to hold what you hold now. Remember my exile in your holy prayers. I do not know, now that I have thus expounded the faith, whether it would be as sweet to return unto you again in the

> Lord Jesus Christ as it would be full of peace to die. That our God and Lord may keep you pure and undefiled unto the day of His appearing is my desire, dearest brethren.

A distinction inside the Nicene cause

Hilary's argument is strongest where he makes the proposed alternatives explicit. A unity which eliminates the Son as a real distinct subject cannot express what he means by the Nicene faith. Neither can a likeness which leaves the Son short of the Father's divine nature. Once those two exclusions are accepted, he sees room for speakers who use different terms to acknowledge agreement about the thing those terms signify. His examples of gold plating, different kinds of milk, and deceptive appearances make clear why an unspecified likeness is not enough.

This is not a proof that homoousios and homoiousios were interchangeable in every fourth-century document. Hilary himself distrusts a resemblance that merely conceals a difference in nature. His case is conditional: if like means a complete likeness of nature, and if one does not mean a single personal subject, the gap between the formulas can be narrowed. A history that says the entire dispute was only verbal goes beyond his evidence. A history that says no verbal misunderstanding mattered falls short of it.

His statement in section 91 that he had not heard the Nicene Creed until he was going into exile is especially revealing. It does not mean that he had never believed in the Son's divinity; he explicitly says the Gospels and Epistles had supplied the substance of his belief. It does mean that the council's text was not equally familiar to all bishops everywhere in the years after 325. Later ubiquity should not be projected backward into an instant universal familiarity. A decree's authority, its circulation, and its role in a particular church were related but distinguishable historical facts.

Hilary also argues from the continuity of episcopal ordination. To anathematize a formula in the sense intended by the bishops who ordained their successors would create consequences for the successors' own claim to office. That argument does not decide the theological meaning of a word. It shows that the dispute involved inherited institutional relationships as well as abstract propositions. To condemn predecessors was to raise a question about the legitimacy of the church's present ministers.

The work provides a useful correction to Athanasius's more comprehensive habit of assigning evasive intentions to opponents. Both authors defend the Son's full divinity. Hilary nevertheless finds bishops on the other side of a disputed vocabulary with whom he hopes to establish agreement. Their difference in strategy belongs within the history of the eventual Nicene settlement. That settlement was strengthened by the ability to distinguish an opponent who denied its substance from a potential ally who distrusted its phrasing.

11 Basil and Gregory Clarify the Faith and Rebuke Its Defenders

By the 370s, the question was no longer only whether the Son could be described as a creature. Bishops also disputed how the divine unity could be confessed while affirming the real distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The word hypostasis was especially difficult. At Nicaea in 325 it appeared in an anathema alongside ousia, in a way which did not yet express the later standard distinction between one ousia and three hypostases. Basil of Caesarea helped establish that distinction in an increasingly precise vocabulary.

Basil's letter to Count Terentius is theology written in the middle of an ecclesiastical dispute. The division at Antioch placed supporters of Meletius and Paulinus against one another even though both parties claimed the Nicene inheritance. Western support for Paulinus did not persuade Basil that Meletius's community should be ignored. His discussion of substance and hypostasis thus has immediate consequences for whom an influential official ought to recognize and support.

The second witness is Gregory of Nazianzus. His farewell oration frames his departure from Constantinople in 381 before the assembled bishops. It combines a confident statement of Trinitarian belief with a bitter indictment of rivalry, ambition, and demands for retaliation. Gregory's criticism has special force because he is speaking from within the pro-Nicene cause. He does not regard the failures of bishops as a reason to surrender the divinity of the Son or the Spirit.

Basil's distinction and Gregory's farewell belong to the later fourth century. They show a generation developing Nicaea's inheritance while the Antiochene division and the contest over Constantinople exposed disagreement among its defenders.

Basil on one essence and three hypostases

Basil of Caesarea, Letter 214 to Count Terentius, complete, translated by Blomfield Jackson, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 8, 1895. Original editorial footnotes are omitted. The Greek terms ousia and hypostasis are retained as in the historical English edition. The party of Paulinus here is the Antiochene community, not the followers of Paul of Samosata.

1. When I heard that your excellency had again been compelled to take part in public affairs, I was straightway distressed (for the truth must be told) at the thought of how contrary to your mind it must be that you after once giving up the anxieties of official life, and allowing yourself leisure for the care of your soul, should again be forced back into your old career. But then I bethought me that peradventure the Lord has ordained that your lordship should again appear in public from this wish to grant the boon of one alleviation for the countless pains which now

beset the Church in our part of the world. I am, moreover, cheered by the thought that I am about to meet your excellency once again before I depart this life.

2. But a further rumour has reached me that you are in Antioch, and are transacting the business in hand with the chief authorities. And, besides this, I have heard that the brethren who are of the party of Paulinus are entering on some discussion with your excellency on the subject of union with us; and by “us” I mean those who are supporters of the blessed man of God, Meletius. I hear, moreover, that the Paulinians are carrying about a letter of the Westerns, assigning to them the episcopate of the Church in Antioch, but speaking under a false impression of Meletius, the admirable bishop of the true Church of God. I am not astonished at this. They are totally ignorant of what is going on here; the others, though they might be supposed to know, give an account to them in which party is put before truth; and it is only what one might expect that they should either be ignorant of the truth, or should even endeavour to conceal the reasons which led the blessed Bishop Athanasius to write to Paulinus. But your excellency has on the spot those who are able to tell you accurately what passed between the bishops in the reign of Jovian, and from them I beseech you to get information. I accuse no one; I pray that I may have love to all, and “especially unto them who are of the household of faith;” and therefore I congratulate those who have received the letter from Rome. And, although it is a grand testimony in their favour, I only hope it is true and confirmed by facts. But I shall never be able to persuade myself on these grounds to ignore Meletius, or to forget the Church which is under him, or to treat as small, and of little importance to the true religion, the questions which originated the division. I shall never consent to give in, merely because somebody is very much elated at receiving a letter from men. Even if it had come down from heaven itself, but he does not agree with the sound doctrine of the faith, I cannot look upon him as in communion with the saints.

3. Consider well, my excellent friend, that the falsifiers of the truth, who have introduced the Arian schism as an innovation on the sound faith of the Fathers, advance no other reason for refusing to accept the pious opinion of the Fathers than the meaning of the homoousion which they hold in their wickedness, and to the slander of the whole faith, alleging our contention to be that the Son is consubstantial in hypostasis. If we give them any opportunity by our being carried away by men who propound these sentiments and their like, rather from simplicity than from malevolence, there is nothing to prevent our giving them an unanswerable ground of argument against ourselves and confirming the heresy of those whose one end is in all their utterances about the Church, not so much to establish their own position as to calumniate mine. What more serious calumny could there be? What better calculated to disturb the faith of the majority than that some of us could be shewn to assert that there is one hypostasis of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? We distinctly lay down that there is a difference of Persons; but this statement was anticipated by Sabellius, who affirms that God is one by hypostasis, but is described by Scripture in different Persons, according to the requirements of

each individual case; sometimes under the name of Father, when there is occasion for this Person; sometimes under the name of Son when there is a descent to human interests or any of the operations of the œconomy; and sometimes under the Person of Spirit when the occasion demands such phraseology. If, then, any among us are shewn to assert that Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one in substance, while we maintain the three perfect Persons, how shall we escape giving clear and incontrovertible proof of the truth of what is being asserted about us?

4. The non-identity of hypostasis and ousia is, I take it, suggested even by our western brethren, where, from a suspicion of the inadequacy of their own language, they have given the word ousia in the Greek, to the end that any possible difference of meaning might be preserved in the clear and unconfounded distinction of terms. If you ask me to state shortly my own view, I shall state that ousia has the same relation to hypostasis as the common has to the particular. Every one of us both shares in existence by the common term of essence (ousia) and by his own properties is such an one and such an one. In the same manner, in the matter in question, the term ousia is common, like goodness, or Godhead, or any similar attribute; while hypostasis is contemplated in the special property of Fatherhood, Sonship, or the power to sanctify. If then they describe the Persons as being without hypostasis, the statement is per se absurd; but if they concede that the Persons exist in real hypostasis, as they acknowledge, let them so reckon them that the principle of the homoousion may be preserved in the unity of the Godhead, and that the doctrine preached may be the recognition of true religion, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the perfect and complete hypostasis of each of the Persons named. Nevertheless, there is one point which I should like to have pressed on your excellency, that you and all who like you care for the truth, and honour the combatant in the cause of true religion, ought to wait for the lead to be taken in bringing about this union and peace by the foremost authorities in the Church, whom I count as pillars and foundations of the truth and of the Church, and reverence all the more because they have been sent away for punishment, and have been exiled far from home. Keep yourself, I implore you, clear of prejudice, that in you, whom God has given me as a staff and support in all things, I may be able to find rest.

Gregory confesses the Trinity

Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 42, sections 14-17, translated by Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 7, 1894. Sections 1-13 and the original editorial introduction and footnotes are omitted.

14. But you are perhaps longing for me to give an exposition of the faith, in so far as I am able. For I shall myself be sanctified by the effort of memory, and the people also will be benefited, by its special delight in such discussions, and you will fully acknowledge it - unless we are the objects of groundless envy, as the rivals, in the manifestation of the truth, of those whom we do not excel. For as, of deep waters, some in the depths are utterly hidden, some foam against any obstruction, and

hesitate a while before breaking (as they promise to our ears), some do actually break; so also, of those who are professors of the Divine philosophy - setting aside the utterly misguided - some keep their piety entirely secret and hidden within themselves, some are not far from the birth pangs, avoiding impiety, yet not speaking out their piety, either from cautious reserve in their teaching, or under pressure of fear, being themselves sound, as they say, in mind, but not making sound their people, as if they had been entrusted with the government of their own souls, but not of those of others; while there are some who make public their treasure, unable to restrain themselves from giving birth to their piety, and not considering that to be salvation which saves themselves alone, without bestowing upon others the overflow of their blessings. Among these would I range myself, and all who by my side have nobly dared to confess the truth.

15. One concise proclamation of our teaching, an inscription intelligible to all, is this people, which so sincerely worships the Trinity, that it would sooner sever anyone from this life, than sever one of the three from the Godhead: of one mind, of equal zeal, and united to one another, to us and to the Trinity by unity of doctrine. Briefly to run over its details: That which is without beginning, and is the beginning, and is with the beginning, is one God. For the nature of that which is without beginning does not consist in being without beginning or being unbegotten, for the nature of anything lies, not in what it is not but in what it is. It is the assertion of what is, not the denial of what is not. And the Beginning is not, because it is a beginning, separated from that which has no beginning. For its beginning is not its nature, any more than the being without beginning is the nature of the other. For these are the accompaniments of the nature, not the nature itself. That again which is with that which has no beginning, and with the beginning, is not anything else than what they are. Now, the name of that which has no beginning is the Father, and of the Beginning the Son, and of that which is with the Beginning, the Holy Ghost, and the three have one Nature - God. And the union is the Father from Whom and to Whom the order of Persons runs its course, not so as to be confounded, but so as to be possessed, without distinction of time, of will, or of power. For these things in our case produce a plurality of individuals, since each of them is separate both from every other quality, and from every other individual possession of the same quality. But to Those who have a simple nature, and whose essence is the same, the term One belongs in its highest sense.

Translation clarification. The historical English sentence about severing anyone from this life reverses the voice of the first Greek verb. Gregory writes διαζευχθῆναι, to be separated, before the active διαζεῦξαι, to separate. A closer rendering is: A believer would sooner be separated from this life than separate one of the Three from the Godhead. The sentence praises willingness to die for the confession; it does not praise killing another person. Greek checked against Oration 42.15 as published on the Church of Cyprus website, https://churchofcyprus.org.cy/40159 . This explanatory rendering is new; the identified historical translation above is retained unchanged.

16. Let us then bid farewell to all contentious shiftings and balancings of the truth on either side, neither, like the Sabellians, assailing the Trinity in the interest of the Unity, and so destroying the distinction by a wicked confusion; nor, like the Arians, assailing the Unity in the interest of the Trinity, and by an impious distinction overthrowing the Oneness. For our object is not to exchange one evil for another, but to ensure our attainment of that which is good. These are the playthings of the Wicked One, who is ever swaying our fortunes towards the evil. But we, walking along the royal road which lies between the two extremes, which is the seat of the virtues, as the authorities say, believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, of one Substance and glory; in Whom also baptism has its perfection, both nominally and really (thou knowest who hast been initiated!); being a denial of atheism and a confession of Godhead; and thus we are regenerated, acknowledging the Unity in the Essence and in the undivided worship, and the Trinity in the Hypostases or Persons (which term some prefer.) And let not those who are contentious on these points utter their scandalous taunts, as if our faith depended on terms and not on realities. For what do you mean who assert the three Hypostases? Do you imply three Essences by the term? I am assured that you would loudly shout against those who do so. For you teach that the Essence of the Three is One and the same. What do you mean, who assert the Three Persons? Do you imagine a single compound sort of being, with three faces, or of an entirely human form? Perish the thought! You too will loudly reply that he who thinks thus, will never see the face of God, whatever it may be. What is the meaning of the Hypostases of the one party, of the Persons of the other, to ask this further question? That They are three, Who are distinguished not by natures, but by properties. Excellent. How could men agree and harmonize better than you do, even if there be a difference between the syllables you use? You see what a reconciler I am, bringing you back from the letter to the sense, as we do with the Old and New Testaments.

17. But, to resume: let us speak of the Unbegotten, the Begotten, and the Proceeding, if anyone likes to create names: for we shall have no fear of bodily conceptions attaching to Those who are not embodied, as the calumniators of the Godhead think. For the creature must be called God’s, and this is for us a great thing, but God never. Otherwise I shall admit that God is a creature, if I become God, in the strict sense of the term. For this is the truth. If God, He is not a creature; for the creature ranks with us who are not Gods. And if a creature, he is not God, for he had a beginning in time. And there was a time when he who had a beginning was not. And that of which non-existence was its prior condition, has not being in the

strict sense of the term. And how can that, which strictly has not being, be God? Not one single one, then, of the Three is a creature, nor, what is worse, came into being for my sake; for in that case he would be not only a creature, but inferior in honour to us. For, if I am for the glory of God, and he is for my sake, as the tongs for the waggon, the saw for the door, I am his superior in causality. For in whatever degree God is superior to creatures, in the same degree is he, who came into being for my sake, inferior to me who exist for God’s sake.

Gregory judges the conduct of bishops

Oration 42, sections 21-25. Sections 18-20 are omitted. Gregory now turns from the doctrinal exposition to faction, retaliation, episcopal display, and his request to leave office.

21. What more need be said? But how can I bear this holy war? For there has been said to be a holy, as well as a Persian, war. How shall I unite and join together the hostile occupants of sees, and hostile pastors, and the people broken up along with, and opposed to them, as if by some chasms caused by earthquakes between neighbouring and adjoining places; or as, in pestilential diseases, befalls servants and members of the family, when the sickness readily attacks in succession one after another; and besides the very quarters of the globe are affected by the spirit of faction, so that East and West are arrayed on opposite sides, and bid fair to be severed in opinion no less than in position. How long are parties to be mine and yours, the old and the new, the more rational and the more spiritual, the more noble and the more ignoble, the more and the less numerous? I am ashamed of my old age, when, after being saved by Christ, I am called by the name of others.

22. I cannot bear your horse races and theatres, and this rage for rivalry in expense and party spirit. We unharness, and harness ourselves on the other side, we neigh against each other, we almost beat the air, as they do, and fling the dust towards heaven, like those which are excited; and under other masks satisfy our own rivalry, and become evil arbiters of emulation, and senseless judges of affairs. To-day sharing the same thrones and opinions, if our leaders thus carry us along; to-morrow hostile alike in position and opinion, if the wind blows in the contrary direction. Amid the variations of friendship and hatred, our names also vary: and what is most terrible, we are not ashamed to set forth contrary doctrines to the same audience; nor are we constant to the same objects, being rendered different at different times by our contentiousness. They are like the ebb and flow of some narrow strait. For as when the children are at play in the midst of the market place, it would be most disgraceful and unbecoming for us to leave our household business, and join them; for children’s toys are not becoming for old age: so, when others are contending, even if I am better informed than the majority, I could not allow myself to be one of them, rather than, as I now do, enjoy the freedom of obscurity. For, besides all this, my feeling is that I do not, on most points, agree with the majority, and cannot bear to walk in the same way. Rash and stupid though it may be, such is my feeling. That which is pleasant to others causes pain to me, and I am pleased with what is painful to others. So that I should not be surprised if I were even imprisoned as a

disagreeable man, and thought by most men to be out of my senses, as is said to have been the case with one of the Greek philosophers, whose moderation exposed him to the charge of madness, because he laughed at everything, since he saw that the objects of the eager pursuit of the majority were ridiculous; or even be thought full of new wine as were in later days the disciples of Christ, because they spoke with tongues, since men knew not that it was the power of the Spirit, and not a distraction of mind.

23. Now, consider the charges laid against us. You have been ruler of the church, it is said, for so long, and favoured by the course of time, and the influence of the sovereign, a most important matter. What change have we been able to notice? How many men have in days gone by used us outrageously? What sufferings have we failed to undergo? Ill-usage? Threats? Banishment? Plunder? Confiscation? The burning of priests at sea? The desecration of temples by the blood of the saints, till, instead of temples, they became charnel-houses? The public slaughter of aged Bishops, to speak more accurately, of Patriarchs? The denial of access to every place in the case of the godly alone? In fact any kind of suffering which could be mentioned? And for which of these have we requited the wrongdoers? For the wheel of fortune gave us the power of rightly treating those who so treated us, and our persecutors ought to have received a lesson. Apart from all other things, speaking only of our experiences, not to mention your own, have we not been persecuted, maltreated, driven from churches, houses, and, most terrible of all, even from the deserts? Have we not had to endure an enraged people, insolent governors, the disregard of Emperors and their decrees? What was the result? We became stronger, and our persecutors took to flight. That was actually the case. The power to requite them seemed to me a sufficient vengeance on those who had wronged us. These men thought otherwise; for they are exceedingly exact and just in requiting: and accordingly they demand what the state of things permits. What governor, they say, has been fined? What populace chastised? What ringleaders of the populace? What fear of ourselves have we been able to inspire for the future?

24. Perhaps we may be reproached, as we have been before, with the exquisite character of our table, the splendour of our apparel, the officers who precede us, our haughtiness to those who meet us. I was not aware that we ought to rival the consuls, the governors, the most illustrious generals, who have no opportunity of lavishing their incomes; or that our belly ought to hunger for the enjoyment of the goods of the poor, and to expend their necessaries on superfluities, and belch forth over the altars. I did not know that we ought to ride on splendid horses, and drive in magnificent carriages, and be preceded by a procession and surrounded by applause, and have everyone make way for us, as if we were wild beasts, and open out a passage so that our approach might be seen afar. If these sufferings have been endured, they have now passed away: Forgive me this wrong. Elect another who will please the majority: and give me my desert, my country life, and my God, Whom alone I may have to please, and shall please by my simple life. It is a painful thing to be deprived of speeches and conferences, and public gatherings, and applause like

that which now lends wings to my thoughts, and relatives, and friends and honours, and the beauty and grandeur of the city, and its brilliancy which dazzles those who look at the surface without investigating the inner nature of things; but yet not so painful as being clamoured against and besmirched amid public disturbances and agitations, which trim their sails to the popular breeze. For they seek not for priests, but for orators, not for stewards of souls, but for treasurers of money, not for pure offerers of the sacrifice, but for powerful patrons. I will say a word in their defence: we have thus trained them, by becoming all things to all men, whether to save or destroy all, I know not.

25. What say you? Are you persuaded, have you been overcome by my words? Or must I use stronger terms in order to persuade you? Yea by the Trinity Itself, Whom you and I alike worship, by our common hope, and for the sake of the unity of this people, grant me this favour; dismiss me with your prayers; let this be the proclamation of my contest; give me my certificate of retirement, as sovereigns do to their soldiers; and, if you will, with a favourable testimony, that I may enjoy the honour of it; if not, just as you please; this will make no difference to me, until God sees what my case really is. What successor then shall we elect? God will provide Himself a shepherd for the office, as He once provided a lamb for a burnt-offering. I only make this further request, - let him be one who is the object of envy, not the object of pity; not one who yields everything to all, but one who can on some points offer resistance for the sake of what is best: for though the one is most pleasant, the other is most profitable. So do you prepare for me your addresses of dismissal: I will now bid you farewell.

Definition and reconciliation

Basil's analogy between the common and the particular gives the reader a practical way to follow his vocabulary. The one ousia answers the question of divine being; the distinct hypostases identify Father, Son, and Spirit in their particular relations. The analogy is not a claim that God consists of three separate instances of a species in precisely the way that three human beings share humanity. Basil uses it to mark a distinction in language while insisting on the unity of the Godhead. Treating the comparison as an exhaustive model would undermine the unity he is trying to preserve.

The English word substance can obscure this point because translators use it for more than one Greek term. Near the end of section 3, the phrase one in substance represents to hypokeimenon, the underlying subject; the historical edition identifies the Greek phrase in a footnote. It should not be read as Basil's rejection of one divine ousia. Section 4 makes his distinction explicit: ousia and hypostasis are not identical in his usage. His objection is to collapsing the distinctions of Father, Son, and Spirit. A reader should follow these stated distinctions rather than suppose that every occurrence of substance throughout fourth-century translations carries a single settled sense.

Basil's refusal to defer simply to a letter from the West is equally concrete. He does not deny that the letter matters. He denies that its arrival removes the need to examine local facts and doctrine. His striking assertion that even a letter from heaven could not excuse unsound teaching subordinates an apparent credential to the content of the faith. That is a powerful statement about the limits of institutional evidence from a bishop whose own ecclesiastical convictions were emphatic.

Gregory's doctrinal exposition is also an attempt to prevent words from replacing realities. He asks speakers of three hypostases whether they mean three essences and speakers of three persons whether they mean a single being with three faces. Both answers should be no. The clarifying questions expose the intended agreement more effectively than an isolated count of the terms would. He remains confident that a real doctrinal boundary exists even while he urges reconciliation over language.

The corrected sense of section 15 joins Gregory's account of confession to willingness to suffer for it. The old English wording can suggest that his people would rather kill someone than deny the Trinity. The Greek instead speaks of a believer being separated from this life. That is a claim about enduring death, not inflicting it. His later defense against demands for retaliation should therefore be read on its own terms. He represents possession of the power to requite former persecutors as sufficient vengeance, and refuses to measure the success of his office by fines, punishments, or the fear he inspired. This is a specific rejection of political revenge; the passage should not be enlarged into a complete theory of every permissible use of public force.

The most convincing part of his indictment is specific. He attacks bishops who change doctrines with their alliances, congregations that demand powerful patrons, and the diversion of resources from the poor to episcopal luxury. He admits that church leaders helped train their people to expect such things. These charges cannot be dismissed as the complaints of a critic who never understood the creed. They come from a major expositor of the doctrine. They establish that criticism of church conduct was already part of the Nicene tradition, and that doctrinal agreement did not settle the question of how its representatives ought to live.

12 From Alexandria in 362 to Constantinople in 381

Athanasius's Tome to the Antiochenes, issued after the Alexandrian synod of 362, offers a remarkable example of reconciliation through an inquiry into meaning. Men who spoke of three hypostases were asked whether they meant three separate divine essences or three gods. Men who spoke of one hypostasis were asked whether they denied the real distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit. Once both groups rejected those interpretations, the document accepted their agreement and urged them to stop making disputed phrases a cause of separation.

The result was not an unrestricted permission to hold contradictory doctrines. The participants explicitly rejected Arius and Sabellius, rejected a created Holy Spirit, and affirmed the Son's complete humanity. The synod sought agreement by determining what speakers affirmed and denied, rather than by treating a term as self-interpreting. This procedure stands alongside the claim that the faith of Nicaea was sufficient. A sufficient creed still had to be read and applied to questions which its brief wording had not separately developed.

The document also reveals the limits of a successful theological clarification. It called for union at Antioch, where competing episcopal claims continued to divide Christians. Its account of agreement in Alexandria is not proof that every intended recipient immediately accepted the proposed ecclesiastical arrangement. The difference between a negotiated doctrinal understanding and a completed local reunion is visible when the Tome is read beside Basil's later letter.

The chapter then turns to the fuller creed associated with Constantinople in 381, the council's letter to Theodosius, and its first three canons. These documents join doctrinal reception to governance. They also make clear why the creed familiar from later Christian worship must not simply be substituted for the shorter text of 325.

The Alexandrian settlement of 362

Athanasius and the bishops at Alexandria, Tome or Synodal Letter to the People of Antioch, sections 1-9, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 4, 1892, edited and translated under Archibald Robertson. The salutation and substantive text of sections 1-9 are reproduced; appended signatures and subscriptions in sections 10-11 and the original editorial headings and footnotes are omitted. Eusebius in this document is Eusebius of Vercelli, not either Eusebius of the earlier Arian controversy.

To our beloved and much-desired fellow-ministers Eusebius, Lucifer, Asterius, Kymatius, and Anatolius, Athanasius and the bishops present in Alexandria from Italy and Arabia, Egypt and Libya; Eusebius, Asterius, Gaius, Agathus, Ammonius, Agathodæmon, Dracontius, Adelphius, Hermæon, Marcus, Theodorus, Andreas,

Paphnutius, another Marcus, Zoilus, Menas, George, Lucius, Macarius and the rest, all greeting in Christ.

We are persuaded that being ministers of God and good stewards ye are sufficient to order the affairs of the Church in every respect. But since it has come to us, that many who were formerly separated from us by jealousy now wish for peace, while many also having severed their connection with the Arian madmen are desiring our communion, we think it well to write to your courtesy what ourselves and the beloved Eusebius and Asterius have drawn up: yourselves being our beloved and truly most-desired fellow-ministers. We rejoice at the said tidings, and pray that even if any be left still far from us, and if any appear to be in agreement with the Arians, he may promptly leave their madness, so that for the future all men everywhere may say, 'One Lord, one faith.' For as the psalmist says, what is so good or pleasant as for brethren to dwell in unity. But our dwelling is the Church, and our mind ought to be the same. For thus we believe that the Lord also will dwell with us, who says, 'I will dwell with them and walk in them' and 'Here will I dwell for I have a delight therein.' But by 'here' what is meant but there where one faith and religion is preached?

We then of Egypt truly wished to go to you along with our beloved Eusebius and Asterius, for many reasons, but chiefly that we might embrace your affection and together enjoy the said peace and concord. But since, as we declared in our other letters, and as ye may learn from our fellow-ministers, the needs of the church detain us, with much regret we begged the same fellow-ministers of ours, Eusebius and Asterius, to go to you in our stead. And we thank their piety in that although they might have gone at once to their dioceses, they preferred to go to you at all costs, on account of the pressing need of the Church. They therefore having consented, we consoled ourselves with the consideration that you and they being there, we all were present with you in mind.

As many then as desire peace with us, and specially those who assemble in the Old [Church] and those again who are seceding from the Arians, do ye call to yourselves, and receive them as parents their sons, and welcome them as tutors and guardians; and unite them to our beloved Paulinus and his people, without requiring more from them than to anathematise the Arian heresy and confess the faith confessed by the holy fathers at Nicæa, and to anathematise also those who say that the Holy Spirit is a Creature and separate from the Essence of Christ. For this is in truth a complete renunciation of the abominable heresy of the Arians, to refuse to divide the Holy Trinity, or to say that any part of it is a creature. For those who, while pretending to cite the faith confessed at Nicæa, venture to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, do nothing more than in words deny the Arian heresy while they retain it in thought. But let the impiety of Sabellius and of Paul of Samosata also be anathematised by all, and the madness of Valentinian and Basilides, and the folly of the Manichæans. For if this be done, all evil suspicion will be removed on all hands, and the faith of the Catholic Church alone be exhibited in purity.

But that we, and they who have ever remained in communion with us, hold this faith, we think no one of yourselves nor any one else is ignorant. But since we rejoice with all those who desire re-union, but especially with those that assemble in the Old [church], and as we glorify the Lord exceedingly, as for all things so especially for the good purpose of these men, we exhort you that concord be established with them on these terms, and, as we said above, without further conditions, without namely any further demand upon yourselves on the part of those who assemble in the Old [church], or Paulinus and his fellows propounding anything else, or aught beyond the Nicene definition.

And prohibit even the reading or publication of the paper, much talked of by some, as having been drawn up concerning the Faith at the synod of Sardica. For the synod made no definition of the kind. For whereas some demanded, on the ground that the Nicene synod was defective, the drafting of a creed, and in their haste even attempted it, the holy synod assembled in Sardica was indignant, and decreed that no statement of faith should be drafted, but that they should be content with the Faith confessed by the fathers at Nicæa, inasmuch as it lacked nothing but was full of piety, and that it was undesirable for a second creed to be promulged, lest that drafted at Nicæa should be deemed imperfect, and a pretext be given to those who were often wishing to draft and define a creed. So that if a man propound the above or any other paper, stop them, and persuade them rather to keep the peace. For in such men we perceive no motive save only contentiousness. For as to those whom some were blaming for speaking of three Subsistences, on the ground that the phrase is unscriptural and therefore suspicious, we thought it right indeed to require nothing beyond the confession of Nicæa, but on account of the contention we made enquiry of them, whether they meant, like the Arian madmen, subsistences foreign and strange, and alien in essence from one another, and that each Subsistence was divided apart by itself, as is the case with creatures in general and in particular with those begotten of men, or like different substances, such as gold, silver, or brass; - or whether, like other heretics, they meant three Beginnings and three Gods, by speaking of three Subsistences.

They assured us in reply that they neither meant this nor had ever held it. But upon our asking them ‘what then do you mean by it, or why do you use such expressions?’ they replied, Because they believed in a Holy Trinity, not a trinity in name only, but existing and subsisting in truth, ‘both a Father truly existing and subsisting, and a Son truly substantial and subsisting, and a Holy Spirit subsisting and really existing do we acknowledge,’ and that neither had they said there were three Gods or three beginnings, nor would they at all tolerate such as said or held so, but that they acknowledged a Holy Trinity but One Godhead, and one Beginning, and that the Son is coessential with the Father, as the fathers said; while the Holy Spirit is not a creature, nor external, but proper to and inseparable from the Essence of the Father and the Son.

Having accepted then these men’s interpretation and defence of their language, we made enquiry of those blamed by them for speaking of One Subsistence, whether

they use the expression in the sense of Sabellius, to the negation of the Son and the Holy Spirit, or as though the Son were non-substantial, or the Holy Spirit impersonal. But they in their turn assured us that they neither meant this nor had ever held it, but ‘we use the word Subsistence thinking it the same thing to say Subsistence or Essence;’ ‘But we hold that there is One, because the Son is of the Essence of the Father, and because of the identity of nature. For we believe that there is one Godhead, and that it has one nature, and not that there is one nature of the Father, from which that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit are distinct.’ Well, thereupon they who had been blamed for saying there were three Subsistences agreed with the others, while those who had spoken of One Essence, also confessed the doctrine of the former as interpreted by them. And by both sides Arius was anathematised as an adversary of Christ, and Sabellius, and Paul of Samosata, as impious men, and Valentinus and Basilides as aliens from the truth, and Manichæus as an inventor of mischief. And all, by God’s grace, and after the above explanations, agree together that the faith confessed by the fathers at Nicæa is better than the said phrases, and that for the future they would prefer to be content to use its language.

But since also certain seemed to be contending together concerning the fleshly Economy of the Saviour, we enquired of both parties. And what the one confessed, the others also agreed to, that the Word did not, as it came to the prophets, so dwell in a holy man at the consummation of the ages, but that the Word Himself was made flesh, and being in the Form of God, took the form of a servant, and from Mary after the flesh became man for us, and that thus in Him the human race is perfectly and wholly delivered from sin and quickened from the dead, and given access to the kingdom of the heavens. For they confessed also that the Saviour had not a body without a soul, nor without sense or intelligence; for it was not possible, when the Lord had become man for us, that His body should be without intelligence: nor was the salvation effected in the Word Himself a salvation of body only, but of soul also. And being Son of God in truth, He became also Son of Man, and being God’s Only-begotten Son, He became also at the same time ‘firstborn among many brethren.’ Wherefore neither was there one Son of God before Abraham, another after Abraham: nor was there one that raised up Lazarus, another that asked concerning him; but the same it was that said as man, ‘Where does Lazarus lie;’ and as God raised him up: the same that as man and in the body spat, but divinely as Son of God opened the eyes of the man blind from his birth; and while, as Peter says, in the flesh He suffered, as God opened the tomb and raised the dead. For which reasons, thus understanding all that is said in the Gospel, they assured us that they held the same truth about the Word’s Incarnation and becoming Man.

These things then being thus confessed, we exhort you not hastily to condemn those who so confess, and so explain the phrases they use, nor to reject them, but rather to accept them as they desire peace and defend themselves, while you check and rebuke, as of suspicious views, those who refuse so to confess and to explain their language. But while you refuse toleration to the latter, counsel the others also who

explain and hold aright, not to enquire further into each other’s opinions, nor to fight about words to no useful purpose, nor to go on contending with the above phrases, but to agree in the mind of piety. For they who are not thus minded, but only stir up strife with such petty phrases, and seek something beyond what was drawn up at Nicæa, do nothing except ‘give their neighbour turbid confusion to drink,’ like men who grudge peace and love dissensions. But do ye, as good men and faithful servants and stewards of the Lord, stop and check what gives offence and is strange, and value above all things peace of that kind, faith being sound. Perhaps God will have pity on us, and unite what is divided, and, there being once more one flock, we shall all have one leader, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

These things, albeit there was no need to require anything beyond the synod of Nicæa, nor to tolerate the language of contention, yet for the sake of peace, and to prevent the rejection of men who wish to believe aright, we enquired into. And what they confessed, we put briefly into writing, we namely who are left in Alexandria, in common with our fellow-ministers, Asterius and Eusebius. For most of us had gone away to our dioceses. But do you on your part read this in public where you are wont to assemble, and be pleased to invite all to you thither. For it is right that the letter should be there first read, and that there those who desire and strive for peace should be re-united. And then, when they are re-united, in the spot where all the laity think best, in the presence of your courtesy, the public assemblies should be held, and the Lord be glorified by all together. The brethren who are with me greet you. I pray that you may be well, and remember us to the Lord; both I, Athanasius, and likewise the other bishops assembled, sign, and those sent by Lucifer, bishop of the island of Sardinia, two deacons, Herennius and Agapetus; and from Paulinus, Maximus and Calemerus, deacons also. And there were present certain monks of Apolinarius the bishop, sent from him for the purpose.

The fuller confession associated with 381

The creed attributed to the 150 fathers at Constantinople, in Henry R. Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 14, 1900. Only the creed is reproduced, not Percival's introduction, alternate creeds, or notes. The editorial note indicators I and II have been removed. Its explicit attribution to the council of 381 is preserved in the proceedings of Chalcedon in 451; the detailed history of its formulation is a separate question from that received attribution.

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 his 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 the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth

at the Right Hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead. Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver-of-Life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. And [we believe] in one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, [and] we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The council asks the emperor to confirm its acts

Letter of the council at Constantinople to Emperor Theodosius, complete, in Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, 1900. Original source heading and reference are omitted.

To the most religious Emperor Theodosius, the Holy Synod of Bishops assembled in Constantinople out of different Provinces.

We begin our letter to your Piety with thanks to God, who has established the empire of your Piety for the common peace of the Churches and for the support of the true Faith. And, after rendering due thanks unto God, as in duty bound we lay before your Piety the things which have been done in the Holy Synod. When, then, we had assembled in Constantinople, according to the letter of your Piety, we first of all renewed our unity of heart each with the other, and then we pronounced some concise definitions, ratifying the Faith of the Nicene Fathers, and anathematizing the heresies which have sprung up, contrary thereto. Besides these things, we also framed certain Canons for the better ordering of the Churches, all which we have subjoined to this our letter. Wherefore we beseech your Piety that the decree of the Synod may be ratified, to the end that, as you have honoured the Church by your letter of citation, so you should set your seal to the conclusion of what has been decreed. May the Lord establish your empire in peace and righteousness, and prolong it from generation to generation; and may he add unto your earthly power the fruition of the heavenly kingdom also. May God by the prayers (εὐχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων) of the Saints, show favour to the world, that you may be strong and eminent in all good things as an Emperor most truly pious and beloved of God.

The first three canons

Constantinople, canons 1-3, in Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, 1900. Only the canons are reproduced. The ancient epitomes and the later commentators whom Percival prints after them are omitted. These canons address the Nicene faith, territorial administration, and Constantinople's rank.

Canon 1

The Faith of the Three Hundred and Eighteen Fathers assembled at Nice in Bithynia shall not be set aside, but shall remain firm. And every heresy shall be anathematized, particularly that of the Eunomians or [Anomæans, the Arians or] Eudoxians, and that of the Semi-Arians or Pneumatomachi, and that of the Sabellians, and that of the Marcellians, and that of the Photinians, and that of the Apollinarians.

Canon 2

The bishops are not to go beyond their dioceses to churches lying outside of their bounds, nor bring confusion on the churches; but let the Bishop of Alexandria, according to the canons, alone administer the affairs of Egypt; and let the bishops of the East manage the East alone, the privileges of the Church in Antioch, which are mentioned in the canons of Nice, being preserved; and let the bishops of the Asian Diocese administer the Asian affairs only; and the Pontic bishops only Pontic matters; and the Thracian bishops only Thracian affairs. And let not bishops go beyond their dioceses for ordination or any other ecclesiastical ministrations, unless they be invited. And the aforesaid canon concerning dioceses being observed, it is evident that the synod of every province will administer the affairs of that particular province as was decreed at Nice. But the Churches of God in heathen nations must be governed according to the custom which has prevailed from the times of the Fathers.

Canon 3

The Bishop of Constantinople, however, shall have the prerogative of honour after the Bishop of Rome; because Constantinople is New Rome.

Continuity that required further work

The Tome's treatment of hypostasis is the strongest evidence against projecting one fixed later dictionary into every earlier Nicene text. It expressly records that some Christians used hypostasis as an equivalent of essence, while others used it for the real distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit. Both could be accepted after their explanations. If the document had judged the syllables alone, the outcome would have been different. Its method depends on the possibility that the same word can carry

different senses and that different words can sometimes protect the same doctrinal commitment.

This finding does not make the council of 325 meaningless. The Tome treats its faith as the common boundary and rejects the position that part of the Trinity belongs to creation. What changes is the level of explanation. A brief statement intended to exclude particular claims is applied to a wider set of controversies, with fresh questions asked to determine what agreement now requires. The development is both intellectual and institutional: bishops decide whom they can receive into communion on the basis of the answers.

The text's claim that nothing more than Nicaea should be required needs to be read beside its own additional instructions concerning the Spirit and the humanity of Christ. The authors regarded those requirements as the implications of the existing faith, not a rival creed. Historically, however, a reader can see an expansion of explicit explanation. Calling the faith sufficient did not mean that every later controversy could be resolved without further propositions, distinctions, or judgments.

The fuller creed carries this process into the form most readers recognize. The Spirit receives an extended confession as Lord and giver of life, proceeding from the Father and worshiped and glorified with Father and Son. The church, baptism, resurrection, and life to come are also stated in a fuller form. The Western addition and the Son does not appear in this text. That later question should not be inserted into the words attributed here to the council of 381.

The canons show another kind of continuity and change. Canon 1 declares that the faith of Nicaea must remain firm, while condemning a range of positions which the council's readers now need to distinguish. Canon 2 regulates the geographical reach of bishops. Canon 3 gives Constantinople the place of honor after Rome because it is New Rome. The last reason is expressly political and geographical. A city's position in the imperial order had become a stated argument for its position in ecclesiastical honor.

Finally, the letter to Theodosius asks the emperor to give effect to the bishops' decisions. The bishops describe their work in sacred terms, but they also seek a ruler's confirmation. This is a documentary answer to an idealized picture of a council operating in isolation from earthly institutions. The documents present divine guidance, episcopal deliberation, and imperial administration as compatible elements of one public act. A historical assessment must examine all three rather than allowing any one to erase the others.

13 Chalcedon Receives and Interprets Nicaea

Chalcedon in 451 did more than repeat a creed inherited from a remote past. Its proceedings show bishops and imperial officials deciding how the earlier confessions should govern a new controversy about the incarnation. The fathers of Nicaea were invoked as an authority which must not be displaced. Yet the council eventually issued a further definition to explain how the same Christ could be confessed as fully divine and fully human.

This is one of the clearest surviving examples of the difference between prohibiting a different faith and forbidding every additional explanation. Some bishops initially resisted producing a new written exposition. They appealed to the sufficiency of what had already been defined. The proceedings then moved toward a statement which its makers understood as an explanation of that faith, accompanied by another prohibition against introducing a different one. The history is not intelligible if every addition of wording is assumed either to be a betrayal or to be a meaningless repetition.

The acts also provide explicit evidence for the received attribution of the fuller creed to the 150 fathers at Constantinople. The creed of the 318 at Nicaea is read, then the creed of the 150 is read, and the bishops acclaim both. These are two identified earlier assemblies in the proceedings of a third. The ceremonial association of their authority should not lead a modern reader to merge their texts into a single document produced in 325.

The selection includes the opening exchange of the second session and the council's definition. It does not reproduce the whole dossier of Cyril's and Leo's letters or the many disciplinary and jurisdictional acts. Those documents have their own histories. Here the question is how Nicaea was being used as a criterion of continuity more than a century after its meeting.

The bishops debate a further exposition

Council of Chalcedon, extracts from Session II, as translated and edited by Henry R. Percival in The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 14, 1900. The passage runs from the opening speech of the judges through the acclamation of the creed of the 150 fathers. Percival's abbreviated references to the two creeds are retained; their complete texts appear earlier in this volume. His edition itself presents extracts, not a complete translation of all the acts.

When all were seated before the rails of the most holy altar, the most superb and glorious judges and the great (ὑπερφυὴς) senate said; At a former meeting the question was examined of the condemnation of the most reverend bishop Flavian of blessed memory and Eusebius, and it was patent to you all with what justice and accuracy the examination was conducted: and it was proved that they had been

cruelly and improperly condemned. What course we should pursue in this matter became clear after your deliberations. Now however the question to be enquired into, studied, and decided, is how the true faith is to be established, which is the chief end for which this Council has been assembled. As we know that ye are to render to God a strict account not only for your own souls in particular, but as well for the souls of all of us who desire rightly to be taught all things that pertain to religion, and that all ambiguity be taken away, by the agreement and consent of all the holy fathers, and by their united exposition and doctrine; hasten therefore without any fear of pleasing or displeasing, to set forth (ἐκθέσθαι) the pure faith, so that they who do not seem to believe with all the rest, may be brought to unity through the acknowledging of the truth. For we wish you to know that the most divine and pious lord of the whole world and ourselves hold the orthodox faith set forth by the 318 and by the 150 holy fathers, and what also has been taught by the rest of the most holy and glorious fathers, and in accordance with this is our belief.

The most reverend bishops cried; Any other setting forth (ἔκθεσιν ἄλλην) no one makes, neither will we attempt it, neither will we dare to set forth [anything new] (ἐκθεσθαι). For the fathers taught, and in their writings are preserved, what things were set forth by them, and further than this we can say nothing.

Cecropius, the most reverend bishop of Sebastopol said: The matters concerning Eutyches have been examined, and the most holy archbishop of Rome has given a form (τύπον) which we follow and to his letter we all [i.e. those in his neighbourhood] have subscribed.

The most reverend bishops cried: These are the opinions of all of us. The expositions (ἐκτεθέντα) already made are quite sufficient: it is not lawful to make any other.

The most glorious judges and great senate said, If it pleases your reverence, let the most holy patriarch of each province, choosing one or two of his own province and going into the midst, and together considering the faith, make known to all what is agreed upon. So that if, as we desire, all be of one mind, all ambiguity may be removed: But if some entertain contrary opinions (which we do not believe to be the case) we may know what their opinions are.

The most reverend bishops cried out, we make no new exposition in writing. This is the law, [i.e. of the Third Synod] which teaches that what has been set forth is sufficient. The law wills that no other exposition should be made. Let the sayings of the Fathers remain fast.

Florentius, the most reverend bishop of Sardis, said, since it is not possible for those who follow the teaching of the holy Synod of Nice, which was confirmed rightly and piously at Ephesus, to draw up suddenly a declaration of faith in accordance with the faith of the holy fathers Cyril and Celestine, and of the letter of the most holy Leo, we therefore pray your magnificence to give us time, so that we may be able to arrive at the truth of the matter with a fitting document, although so far as we are concerned, who have subscribed the letter of the most holy Leo, nothing further is needed.

Cecropius, the most reverend bishop of Sebastopol, said, The faith has been well defined by the 318 holy fathers and confirmed by the holy fathers Athanasius, Cyril, Celestine, Hilary, Basil, Gregory, and now once again by the most holy Leo: and we pray that those things which were decreed by the 318 holy fathers, and by the most holy Leo be read.

The most glorious judges and great Senate said: Let there be read the expositions (ἐκτεθέντα) of the 318 fathers gathered together at Nice.

Eunomius, the most reverend bishop of Nicomedia read from a book [the Exposition of faith of the 318 fathers.]

The Exposition of faith of the Council held at Nice.

“In the consulate of Paul and Julian” etc.

“We believe in one God,” etc.

“But those who say,” etc.

The most reverend bishops cried out; This is the orthodox faith; this we all believe: into this we were baptized; into this we baptize: Blessed Cyril so taught: this is the true faith: this is the holy faith: this is the everlasting faith: into this we were baptized: into this we baptize: we all so believe: so believes Leo, the Pope (ὁ πάπας): Cyril thus believed: Pope Leo so interpreted it.

The most glorious judges and great senate said, Let there be read what was set forth by the 150 holy fathers.

Aëtius, the reverend deacon of Constantinople read from a book [the creed of the 150 fathers.]

The holy faith which the 150 fathers set forth as consonant to the holy and great Synod of Nice.

“We believe in one God,” etc.

All the most reverend bishops cried out: This is the faith of all of us: we all so believe.

The definition receives the earlier councils

The Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon, in Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, 1900. The definition and the following acclamation are reproduced; Percival's later historical notes are omitted. In the final prohibition, the deficient English phrase to as wish is supplied as to [such] as wish. Brackets elsewhere belong to the historical translation.

The holy, great, and ecumenical synod, assembled by the grace of God and the command of our most religious and Christian Emperors, Marcian and Valentinian, Augusti, at Chalcedon, the metropolis of the Bithynian Province, in the martyry of the holy and victorious martyr Euphemia, has decreed as follows:

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when strengthening the knowledge of the Faith in his disciples, to the end that no one might disagree with his neighbour concerning the doctrines of religion, and that the proclamation of the truth might be set forth equally to all men, said, “My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” But, since the evil one does not desist from sowing tares among the seeds of godliness, but ever invents some new device against the truth; therefore the Lord, providing, as he ever does, for the human race, has raised up this pious, faithful, and zealous Sovereign, and has called together unto him from all parts the chief rulers of the priesthood; so that, the grace of Christ our common Lord inspiring us, we may cast off every plague of falsehood from the sheep of Christ, and feed them with the tender leaves of truth. And this have we done with one unanimous consent, driving away erroneous doctrines and renewing the unerring faith of the Fathers, publishing to all men the Creed of the Three Hundred and Eighteen, and to their number adding, as their peers, the Fathers who have received the same summary of religion. Such are the One Hundred and Fifty holy Fathers who afterwards assembled in the great Constantinople and ratified the same faith. Moreover, observing the order and every form relating to the faith, which was observed by the holy synod formerly held in Ephesus, of which Celestine of Rome and Cyril of Alexandria, of holy memory, were the leaders, we do declare that the exposition of the right and blameless faith made by the Three Hundred and Eighteen holy and blessed Fathers, assembled at Nice in the reign of Constantine of pious memory, shall be pre-eminent: and that those things shall be of force also, which were decreed by the One Hundred and Fifty holy Fathers at Constantinople, for the uprooting of the heresies which had then sprung up, and for the confirmation of the same Catholic and Apostolic Faith of ours.

The Creed of the three hundred and eighteen Fathers at Nice.

We believe in one God, etc.

Item, the Creed of the one hundred and fifty holy Fathers who were assembled at Constantinople.

We believe in one God, etc.

This wise and salutary formula of divine grace sufficed for the perfect knowledge and confirmation of religion; for it teaches the perfect [doctrine] concerning Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and sets forth the Incarnation of the Lord to them that faithfully receive it. But, forasmuch as persons undertaking to make void the preaching of the truth have through their individual heresies given rise to empty babblings; some of them daring to corrupt the mystery of the Lord’s incarnation for us and refusing [to use] the name Mother of God (Θεοτόκος) in reference to the Virgin, while others, bringing in a confusion and mixture, and idly conceiving that the nature of the flesh and of the Godhead is all one, maintaining that the divine Nature of the Only Begotten is, by mixture, capable of suffering; therefore this present holy, great, and ecumenical synod, desiring to exclude every device against the Truth, and teaching that which is unchanged from the beginning, has at the very

outset decreed that the faith of the Three Hundred and Eighteen Fathers shall be preserved inviolate. And on account of them that contend against the Holy Ghost, it confirms the doctrine afterwards delivered concerning the substance of the Spirit by the One Hundred and Fifty holy Fathers who assembled in the imperial City; which doctrine they declared unto all men, not as though they were introducing anything that had been lacking in their predecessors, but in order to explain through written documents their faith concerning the Holy Ghost against those who were seeking to destroy his sovereignty. And, on account of those who have taken in hand to corrupt the mystery of the dispensation [i.e. the Incarnation] and who shamelessly pretend that he who was born of the holy Virgin Mary was a mere man, it receives the synodical letters of the Blessed Cyril, Pastor of the Church of Alexandria, addressed to Nestorius and the Easterns, judging them suitable, for the refutation of the frenzied folly of Nestorius, and for the instruction of those who long with holy ardour for a knowledge of the saving symbol. And, for the confirmation of the orthodox doctrines, it has rightly added to these the letter of the President of the great and old Rome, the most blessed and holy Archbishop Leo, which was addressed to Archbishop Flavian of blessed memory, for the removal of the false doctrines of Eutyches, judging them to be agreeable to the confession of the great Peter, and as it were a common pillar against misbelievers. For it opposes those who would rend the mystery of the dispensation into a Duad of Sons; it repels from the sacred assembly those who dare to say that the Godhead of the Only Begotten is capable of suffering; it resists those who imagine a mixture or confusion of the two natures of Christ; it drives away those who fancy his form of a servant is of an heavenly or some substance other than that which was taken of us, and it anathematizes those who foolishly talk of two natures of our Lord before the union, conceiving that after the union there was only one.

Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to his manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us.

> These things, therefore, having been expressed by us with the greatest accuracy and attention, the holy Ecumenical Synod defines that no one shall be suffered to bring forward a different faith (ἑτέραν πίστιν), nor to write, nor to put together, nor to excogitate, nor to teach it to others. But such as dare either to put together another faith, or to bring forward or to teach or to deliver a different Creed (ἕτερον σύμβολον) to [such] as wish to be converted to the knowledge of the truth, from the Gentiles, or Jews or any heresy whatever, if they be Bishops or clerics let them be deposed, the Bishops from the Episcopate, and the clerics from the clergy; but if they be monks or laics: let them be anathematized.
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> After the reading of the definition, all the most religious Bishops cried out: This is the faith of the fathers: let the metropolitans forthwith subscribe it: let them forthwith, in the presence of the judges, subscribe it: let that which has been well defined have no delay: this is the faith of the Apostles: by this we all stand: thus we all believe.

What the reception establishes

The definition does not treat Nicaea as an optional historical opinion. It renews the authority of the 318 fathers and places the 150 fathers of Constantinople beside them as confessors of the same faith. It then receives the letters of Cyril and Leo as appropriate explanations of the incarnation. The result is a documentary sequence of authorized interpretation. The authority of the earlier council is asserted through the reception of later texts which explain what the church now means by fidelity to it.

The extension of consubstantial language is especially revealing. Nicaea had confessed the Son as consubstantial with the Father. Chalcedon confesses the same Christ as consubstantial with the Father according to his Godhead and consubstantial with us according to his humanity. The second affirmation does not follow from merely reciting the first. It addresses a distinct question: whether the incarnate Christ genuinely shares human nature. The council uses an inherited term to clarify a further theological problem.

The four adverbs in the definition protect two boundaries at once. Unconfusedly and immutably reject a merging which destroys the integrity of the divine and human natures. Indivisibly and inseparably reject a division into two Christs or two personal subjects. The sentence insists on one and the same Son while preserving the distinction of natures. A reader who hears only an accumulation of metaphysical words misses the exclusions those words perform. A reader who imagines that the formula explains every difficulty also asks it to do more than its authors accomplished.

The acts reveal the institutional process behind the appearance of unanimity. Bishops protest that no other exposition is lawful. Officials ask how the faith should be stated and press for a procedure. Texts are read from books; earlier authorities are named; the assembly acclaims what it receives. The final definition speaks with a collective

voice, but the proceedings preserve deliberation before that voice was settled. The claim of guidance does not remove the evidence of discussion, pressure, and drafting.

Chalcedon's own prohibitions also require careful interpretation. It bars the composition or teaching of a different faith while issuing a definition whose wording is more extensive than the creed of 325. The council's intended distinction is between explaining the received faith and replacing it with an incompatible one. That claim can be evaluated historically and theologically, but it cannot be represented accurately as a ban on any future sentence that the Nicene bishops had not themselves written.

By 451, Nicaea had become a foundational authority through which later councils justified their own work. Chalcedon's reading of two earlier creeds, reception of Cyril and Leo, and adoption of a further definition establish how that authority operated: inherited formulas governed deliberation, yet required new interpretation.

Part III The Greek East Receives and Defends Nicaea

14 Ephesus and the Question of Another Creed

The council of 325 supplied later Christians with an authoritative confession, but it did not supply a complete answer to every question about the incarnation. Its declaration that the Son became human left interpreters to explain who acted, suffered, and was born when the divine Word entered human life. At Ephesus in 431, the Nicene confession became the standard by which letters about these questions were judged. The council's received documents show bishops claiming fidelity to an existing rule while deciding the meaning of that rule in a new dispute.

Cyril of Alexandria's second letter to Nestorius offers a particularly clear example. It does not begin by proposing a substitute creed. Cyril recites the council's account of the eternal Son and then argues that the person born of Mary is that same Son. He rejects the picture of an ordinary human being into whom the Word subsequently descended. The union, he insists, belongs to the conception itself. His argument turns the sequence of the creed into a rule about the identity of its subject: the one who exists before the ages is the one who becomes human.

This is the setting of the title Theotokos, translated here as Mother of God. Cyril is not saying that Mary originates the divine nature, creates God, or exists before the Father. The title identifies the person to whom she gave birth. The divine Word is eternal; his birth in the flesh has a beginning. The distinction permits Cyril to attribute the birth and suffering to the Word without claiming that the divine nature, considered in itself, began to exist or became vulnerable to nails. Whether that account is persuasive requires following these distinctions rather than replacing them with a simpler claim that God and humanity have been mixed.

The surviving conciliar presentation is Cyril's successful case. Nestorius and his defenders would dispute the way their teaching was represented. The Church of the East's later Christological tradition likewise cannot responsibly be reduced to the accusation that it simply worships two sons. The documents printed here establish the interpretation accepted at Ephesus and the language used to exclude its opponents; they do not make the victorious party an impartial reporter of every adversary's intention.

Cyril explains the confession of the Fathers

Cyril of Alexandria, second letter to Nestorius, received in the first session at Ephesus in 431. Historical English translation in Henry R. Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 14 (1900), section headed The Epistle of Cyril to Nestorius. The complete letter is given; the edition's title, bibliographic parenthesis, and footnotes are omitted. The allegations in the opening paragraphs are Cyril's allegations.

To the most religious and beloved of God, fellow minister Nestorius, Cyril sends greeting in the Lord.

I hear that some are rashly talking of the estimation in which I hold your holiness, and that this is frequently the case especially at the times that meetings are held of those in authority. And perchance they think in so doing to say something agreeable to you, but they speak senselessly, for they have suffered no injustice at my hands, but have been exposed by me only to their profit; this man as an oppressor of the blind and needy, and that as one who wounded his mother with a sword. Another because he stole, in collusion with his waiting maid, another’s money, and had always laboured under the imputation of such like crimes as no one would wish even one of his bitterest enemies to be laden with. I take little reckoning of the words of such people, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor would I stretch the measure of my narrow brain above the Fathers, for no matter what path of life one pursues it is hardly possible to escape the smirching of the wicked, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness, and who at the last must give an account to the Judge of all.

But I return to the point which especially I had in mind. And now I urge you, as a brother in the Lord, to propose the word of teaching and the doctrine of the faith with all accuracy to the people, and to consider that the giving of scandal to one even of the least of those who believe in Christ, exposes a body to the unbearable indignation of God. And of how great diligence and skill there is need when the multitude of those grieved is so great, so that we may administer the healing word of truth to them that seek it. But this we shall accomplish most excellently if we shall turn over the words of the holy Fathers, and are zealous to obey their commands, proving ourselves, whether we be in the faith according to that which is written, and conform our thoughts to their upright and irreprehensible teaching.

The holy and great Synod therefore says, that the only begotten Son, born according to nature of God the Father, very God of very God, Light of Light, by whom the Father made all things, came down, and was incarnate, and was made man, suffered, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven. These words and these decrees we ought to follow, considering what is meant by the Word of God being incarnate and made man. For we do not say that the nature of the Word was changed and became flesh, or that it was converted into a whole man consisting of soul and body; but rather that the Word having personally united to himself flesh animated by a rational soul, did in an ineffable and inconceivable manner become man, and was called the Son of Man, not merely as willing or being pleased to be so

called, neither on account of taking to himself a person, but because the two natures being brought together in a true union, there is of both one Christ and one Son; for the difference of the natures is not taken away by the union, but rather the divinity and the humanity make perfect for us the one Lord Jesus Christ by their ineffable and inexpressible union. So then he who had an existence before all ages and was born of the Father, is said to have been born according to the flesh of a woman, not as though his divine nature received its beginning of existence in the holy Virgin, for it needed not any second generation after that of the Father (for it would be absurd and foolish to say that he who existed before all ages, coeternal with the Father, needed any second beginning of existence), but since, for us and for our salvation, he personally united to himself an human body, and came forth of a woman, he is in this way said to be born after the flesh; for he was not first born a common man of the holy Virgin, and then the Word came down and entered into him, but the union being made in the womb itself, he is said to endure a birth after the flesh, ascribing to himself the birth of his own flesh. On this account we say that he suffered and rose again; not as if God the Word suffered in his own nature stripes, or the piercing of the nails, or any other wounds, for the Divine nature is incapable of suffering, inasmuch as it is incorporeal, but since that which had become his own body suffered in this way, he is also said to suffer for us; for he who is in himself incapable of suffering was in a suffering body. In the same manner also we conceive respecting his dying; for the Word of God is by nature immortal and incorruptible, and life and life-giving; since, however, his own body did, as Paul says, by the grace of God taste death for every man, he himself is said to have suffered death for us, not as if he had any experience of death in his own nature (for it would be madness to say or think this), but because, as I have just said, his flesh tasted death. In like manner his flesh being raised again, it is spoken of as his resurrection, not as if he had fallen into corruption (God forbid), but because his own body was raised again. We, therefore, confess one Christ and Lord, not as worshipping. a man with the Word (lest this expression “with the Word” should suggest to the mind the idea of division), but worshipping him as one and the same, forasmuch as the body of the Word, with which he sits with the Father, is not separated from the Word himself, not as if two sons were sitting with him, but one by the union with the flesh. If, however, we reject the personal union as impossible or unbecoming, we fall into the error of speaking of two sons, for it will be necessary to distinguish, and to say, that he who was properly man was honoured with the appellation of Son, and that he who is properly the Word of God, has by nature both the name and the reality of Sonship. We must not, therefore, divide the one Lord Jesus Christ into two Sons. Neither will it at all avail to a sound faith to hold, as some do, an union of persons; for the Scripture has not said that the Word united to himself the person of man, but that he was made flesh. This expression, however, “the Word was made flesh,” can mean nothing else but that he partook of flesh and blood like to us; he made our body his own, and came forth man from a woman, not casting off his existence as God, or his generation of God the Father, but even in taking to himself flesh remaining what he was. This the declaration of the correct faith proclaims

> everywhere. This was the sentiment of the holy Fathers; therefore they ventured to call the holy Virgin, the Mother of God, not as if the nature of the Word or his divinity had its beginning from the holy Virgin, but because of her was born that holy body with a rational soul, to which the Word being personally united is said to be born according to the flesh. These things, therefore, I now write unto you for the love of Christ, beseeching you as a brother, and testifying to you before Christ and the elect angels, that you would both think and teach these things with us, that the peace of the Churches may be preserved and the bond of concord and love continue unbroken amongst the Priests of God.

The council tests an interpretation

Cyril's argument protects two assertions at once. The Word remains what he eternally is, and the Word truly undergoes a human birth and death. The distinction between nature and person is doing work. A nature answers what something is; the personal subject answers who is born, acts, and suffers. Cyril's expressions are not yet identical to every later technical formula, but his letter makes the question of the subject explicit. The creed's subject cannot be exchanged halfway through its account of salvation.

His language also shows how misleading an isolated quotation can become. He says that the Word suffered, then denies suffering to the divine nature. If either statement is detached from the other, his position becomes either a denial of divine impassibility or a denial of real suffering. Taken together, the assertions form an attempt to say that the one divine Son really lived and died as human. The tension is part of his account, not a scribal accident that an editor should smooth away.

The acts immediately following the letter ask whether Cyril agrees with Nicaea. They then apply the same test to Nestorius. This is reception in a concrete form: an older document is read aloud, a more recent explanation is compared with it, and an assembly records its judgment. Whatever one concludes about the judgment's truth, the bishops were doing more than mechanically copying a sentence composed a century earlier.

The first session compares the letters with Nicaea

Ephesus, first session, continued extracts from the acts, in Percival (1900), section following Cyril's second letter. This continuous selection begins with Cyril's request for judgment and ends with the collective condemnation after Nestorius's letter was read. The nineteenth-century edition itself abbreviates the individual episcopal interventions and does not reproduce Nestorius's letter here; its bracketed notices are retained as editorial notices within the historical translation.

And after the letter was read, Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria, said: This holy and great Synod has heard what I wrote to the most religious Nestorius, defending the right faith. I think that I have in no respect departed from the true statement of the faith, that is from the creed set forth by the holy and great synod formerly assembled at Nice. Wherefore I desire your holiness [i.e. the Council] to say whether rightly and blamelessly and in accordance with that holy synod I have written these things or no.

[A number of bishops then gave their opinion, all favourable to Cyril; after these individual opinions the Acts continue (col. 491):]

And all the rest of the bishops in the order of their rank deposed to the same things, and so believed, according as the Fathers had set forth, and as the Epistle of the most holy Archbishop Cyril to Nestorius the bishop declared.

Palladius, the bishop of Amasea, said, The next thing to be done is to read the letter of the most reverend Nestorius, of which the most religious presbyter Peter made mention; so that we may understand whether or no it agrees with the exposition of the Nicene fathers.…

And after this letter was read, Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria, said, What seems good to this holy and great synod with regard to the letter just read? Does it also seem to be consonant to the faith set forth by the holy Synod assembled in the city of Nice?

[The bishops, then as before, individually express their opinion, and at last the Acts continue (col. 502):]

All the bishops cried out together: Whoever does not anathematize Nestorius let him be anathema. Such an one the right faith anathematizes; such an one the holy Synod anathematizes. Whoever communicates with Nestorius let him be anathema! We anathematize all the apostles of Nestorius: we all anathematize Nestorius as a heretic: let all such as communicate with Nestorius be anathema, etc., etc.

What the prohibition of another faith prohibits

Canon 7 is a decisive text in later disputes about changing a creed. Its immediate setting is the presentation of a rival exposition brought to the council by the presbyter Charisius. The council prohibits offering a different faith in competition with the Nicene faith, and imposes ecclesiastical penalties on those who do so. The Greek

adjective heteran can mean another or different. The phrase is stronger than a general encouragement to remember the past, but the scope of its prohibition still requires interpretation.

A literal ban on every explanatory sentence would make Cyril's own letter difficult to explain. The council had just accepted a substantial interpretation of Nicaea, using expressions absent from the creed. Later councils would again affirm Nicaea and issue further definitions. Defenders of those councils distinguished a clarification that preserved the faith from a replacement that contradicted it. Critics could accept the prohibition while disputing whether a particular addition counted as clarification. The argument therefore moved from the existence of a rule to the identity of the authority entitled to apply it.

Ephesus Canon 7

Ephesus, Canon 7, complete canonical text, Percival (1900). The following Ancient Epitome and later commentators' notes are omitted. The prohibition is tied in the text itself to rival creeds and to the exposition submitted by Charisius.

> When these things had been read, the holy Synod decreed that it is unlawful for any man to bring forward, or to write, or to compose a different (ἑτέραν) Faith as a rival to that established by the holy Fathers assembled with the Holy Ghost in Nicæa.
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> But those who shall dare to compose a different faith, or to introduce or offer it to persons desiring to turn to the acknowledgment of the truth, whether from Heathenism or from Judaism, or from any heresy whatsoever, shall be deposed, if they be bishops or clergymen; bishops from the episcopate and clergymen from the clergy; and if they be laymen, they shall be anathematized.
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> And in like manner, if any, whether bishops, clergymen, or laymen, should be discovered to hold or teach the doctrines contained in the Exposition introduced by the Presbyter Charisius concerning the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten Son of God, or the abominable and profane doctrines of Nestorius, which are subjoined, they shall be subjected to the sentence of this holy and ecumenical Synod. So that, if it be a bishop, he shall be removed from his bishopric and degraded; if it be a clergyman, he shall likewise be stricken from the clergy; and if it be a layman, he shall be anathematized, as has been afore said.

The next canon addresses a different inheritance from the first council: church jurisdiction. Cyprus resists the claim that its bishops must be ordained through Antioch. The council invokes the canons and inherited practice to protect the island's ecclesiastical independence. Its concern is not the divine essence but the growth of one bishop's power over another province. The same conciliar tradition thus carries a confession and rules limiting administrative encroachment.

Ephesus Canon 8

Ephesus, Canon 8, complete canonical text, Percival (1900). The editorial heading, subsequent epitome, and commentators' notes are omitted.

Translation clarification. The historical English below obscures the condition on which Cyprus's claim rests. The Greek says kai malista ei mede ethos archaion parekolouthesen: especially if no ancient custom had prevailed authorizing the bishop of Antioch to perform ordinations in Cyprus, as the Cypriot petitioners maintained. The absence of that custom supports Cyprus's right to ordain its own bishops. This is not a finding that Antiochene ordinations themselves constituted the ancient custom. Compare William Bright, The Canons of the First Four General Councils, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), Greek text, pages XXVII-XXVIII. The inherited English is retained here so that its wording remains inspectable.

> Our brother bishop Rheginus, the beloved of God, and his fellow beloved of God bishops, Zeno and Evagrius, of the Province of Cyprus, have reported to us an innovation which has been introduced contrary to the ecclesiastical constitutions and the Canons of the Holy Apostles, and which touches the liberties of all. Wherefore, since injuries affecting all require the more attention, as they cause the greater damage, and particularly when they are transgressions of an ancient custom; and since those excellent men, who have petitioned the Synod, have told us in writing and by word of mouth that the Bishop of Antioch has in this way held ordinations in Cyprus; therefore the Rulers of the holy churches in Cyprus shall enjoy, without dispute or injury, according to the Canons of the blessed Fathers and ancient custom, the right of performing for themselves the ordination of their excellent Bishops. The same rule shall be observed in the other dioceses and provinces everywhere, so that none of the God beloved Bishops shall assume control of any province which has not heretofore, from the very beginning, been under his own hand or that of his predecessors. But if any one has violently taken and subjected [a Province], he shall give it up; lest the Canons of the Fathers be transgressed; or the vanities of worldly honour be brought in under pretext of sacred office; or we lose, without knowing it, little by little, the liberty which Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Deliverer of all men, hath given us by his own Blood.
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> Wherefore, this holy and ecumenical Synod has decreed that in every province the rights which heretofore, from the beginning, have belonged to it, shall be preserved to it, according to the old prevailing custom, unchanged and uninjured: every Metropolitan having permission to take, for his own security, a copy of these acts. And if any one shall bring forward a rule contrary to what is here determined, this holy and ecumenical Synod unanimously decrees that it shall be of no effect.

The canon's final warning identifies administrative encroachment as a danger within church government. Its protection of provincial rights gives concrete content to the appeal to inherited canons: one bishop's expansion must yield to an established local liberty.

Ephesus establishes two historical conclusions. Nicaea was already an authoritative standard in the fifth century, and applying that standard required fresh acts of interpretation. The canon against another faith did not stop interpretive development. It gave later Christians an additional language in which to dispute whether a proposed development was legitimate. This distinction will recur when the Greek and Latin churches disagree about the procession of the Holy Spirit and the alteration of their common creed.

15 Constantinople Reinterprets the Inheritance in 553 and 681

The councils of the sixth and seventh centuries did not replace the controversy about the Son with unrelated business. They asked what the divine Son's incarnation entailed. If the one who becomes human is fully divine, how can his humanity remain complete? If his acts are those of one personal subject, does that subject possess a human will? The answers would depend on distinctions that the short confession of 325 had not fully articulated.

The Second Council of Constantinople in 553 addressed the dispute known as the Three Chapters: Theodore of Mopsuestia, certain writings of Theodoret against Cyril, and a letter attributed to Ibas of Edessa. Justinian sought an interpretation of Chalcedon that would make its confession of two natures compatible with Cyril's insistence on the one incarnate subject. This effort took place amid continuing imperial involvement in church affairs. It also encountered disagreement over the authority to condemn particular writers and over whether a condemnation weakened Chalcedon's earlier decisions.

The capitula printed below show the result in compressed form. Their first proposition explicitly confesses one divine essence in three subsistences. They then move to two births of the Word, the identity of the wonder-working Son with the suffering Christ, and the proper meaning of union. A list of condemned figures places Arius beside later opponents. Nicaea has become the first member of a growing chain of authoritative judgments.

The text is demanding because the same ordinary word can carry several technical senses. Union could mean agreement of purpose, possession of a common honor, or the unity of a single personal subject. The council excludes the first two as sufficient descriptions of the incarnation. It does not deny that God and humanity differ; it denies that their union in Christ produces two independent personal subjects standing alongside one another. Its force depends on that distinction.

The fourteen capitula of 553

Second Council of Constantinople, fourteen capitula, in Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils (1900), The Capitula of the Council. All fourteen propositions are reproduced. The footnotes and the intervening nineteenth-century note debating Origen's name in proposition XI are omitted. The separate collection of fifteen anathemas against Origen is not reproduced here and should not be confused with these fourteen capitula.

I.

If anyone shall not confess that the nature or essence of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is one, as also the force and the power; [if anyone does not confess] a consubstantial Trinity, one Godhead to be worshipped in three subsistences or Persons: let him be anathema. For there is but one God even the Father of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things, and one Holy Spirit in whom are all things.

II.

If anyone shall not confess that the Word of God has two nativities, the one from all eternity of the Father, without time and without body; the other in these last days, coming down from heaven and being made flesh of the holy and glorious Mary, Mother of God and always a virgin, and born of her: let him be anathema.

III.

If anyone shall say that the wonder-working Word of God is one [Person] and the Christ that suffered another; or shall say that God the Word was with the woman-born Christ, or was in him as one person in another, but that he was not one and the same our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, incarnate and made man, and that his miracles and the sufferings which of his own will he endured in the flesh were not of the same [Person]: let him be anathema.

IV.

If anyone shall say that the union of the Word of God to man was only according to grace or energy, or dignity, or equality of honour, or authority, or relation, or effect, or power, or according to good pleasure in this sense that God the Word was pleased with a man, that is to say, that he loved him for his own sake, as says the senseless Theodorus, or [if anyone pretends that this union exists only] so far as likeness of name is concerned, as the Nestorians understand, who call also the Word of God Jesus and Christ, and even accord to the man the names of Christ and of Son, speaking thus clearly of two persons, and only designating disingenuously one Person and one Christ when the reference is to his honour, or his dignity, or his worship; if anyone shall not acknowledge as the Holy Fathers teach, that the union of God the Word is made with the flesh animated by a reasonable and living soul, and that such union is made synthetically and hypostatically, and that therefore there is only one Person, to wit: our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the Holy Trinity: let him be anathema. As a matter of fact the word “union” (τῆς ἑνώςεως) has many meanings, and the partisans of Apollinaris and Eutyches have affirmed that these natures are confounded inter se, and have asserted a union produced by the mixture

of both. On the other hand the followers of Theodorus and of Nestorius rejoicing in the division of the natures, have taught only a relative union. Meanwhile the Holy Church of God, condemning equally the impiety of both sorts of heresies, recognises the union of God the Word with the flesh synthetically, that is to say, hypostatically. For in the mystery of Christ the synthetical union not only preserves unconfusedly the natures which are united, but also allows no separation.

V.

If anyone understands the expression “one only Person of our Lord Jesus Christ” in this sense, that it is the union of many hypostases, and if he attempts thus to introduce into the mystery of Christ two hypostases, or two Persons, and, after having introduced two persons, speaks of one Person only out of dignity, honour or worship, as both Theodorus and Nestorius insanely have written; if anyone shall calumniate the holy Council of Chalcedon, pretending that it made use of this expression [one hypostasis] in this impious sense, and if he will not recognize rather that the Word of God is united with the flesh hypostatically, and that therefore there is but one hypostasis or one only Person, and that the holy Council of Chalcedon has professed in this sense the one Person of our Lord Jesus Christ: let him be anathema. For since one of the Holy Trinity has been made man, viz.: God the Word, the Holy Trinity has not been increased by the addition of another person or hypostasis.

VI.

If anyone shall not call in a true acceptation, but only in a false acceptation, the holy, glorious, and ever-virgin Mary, the Mother of God, or shall call her so only in a relative sense, believing that she bare only a simple man and that God the word was not incarnate of her, but that the incarnation of God the Word resulted only from the fact that he united himself to that man who was born [of her]; if he shall calumniate the Holy Synod of Chalcedon as though it had asserted the Virgin to be Mother of God according to the impious sense of Theodore; or if anyone shall call her the mother of a man (ἀνθρωποτόκον) or the Mother of Christ (Χριστοτόκον), as if Christ were not God, and shall not confess that she is exactly and truly the Mother of God, because that God the Word who before all ages was begotten of the Father was in these last days made flesh and born of her, and if anyone shall not confess that in this sense the holy Synod of Chalcedon acknowledged her to be the Mother of God: let him be anathema.

VII.

If anyone using the expression, “in two natures,” does not confess that our one Lord Jesus Christ has been revealed in the divinity and in the humanity, so as to designate by that expression a difference of the natures of which an ineffable union is unconfusedly made, [a union] in which neither the nature of the Word was changed into that of the flesh, nor that of the flesh into that of the Word, for each remained that it was by nature, the union being hypostatic; but shall take the expression with regard to the mystery of Christ in a sense so as to divide the parties, or recognising the two natures in the only Lord Jesus, God the Word made man, does not content

himself with taking in a theoretical manner the difference of the natures which compose him, which difference is not destroyed by the union between them, for one is composed of the two and the two are in one, but shall make use of the number [two] to divide the natures or to make of them Persons properly so called: let him be anathema.

VIII.

If anyone uses the expression “of two natures,” confessing that a union was made of the Godhead and of the humanity, or the expression “the one nature made flesh of God the Word,” and shall not so understand those expressions as the holy Fathers have taught, to wit: that of the divine and human nature there was made an hypostatic union, whereof is one Christ; but from these expressions shall try to introduce one nature or substance [made by a mixture] of the Godhead and manhood of Christ; let him be anathema. For in teaching that the only-begotten Word was united hypostatically [to humanity] we do not mean to say that there was made a mutual confusion of natures, but rather each [nature] remaining what it was, we understand that the Word was united to the flesh. Wherefore there is one Christ, both God and man, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood. Therefore they are equally condemned and anathematized by the Church of God, who divide or part the mystery of the divine dispensation of Christ, or who introduce confusion into that mystery.

IX.

If anyone shall take the expression, Christ ought to be worshipped in his two natures, in the sense that he wishes to introduce thus two adorations, the one in special relation to God the Word and the other as pertaining to the man; or if anyone to get rid of the flesh, [that is of the humanity of Christ,] or to mix together the divinity and the humanity, shall speak monstrously of one only nature or essence (φύσιν ἤγουν οὐσίαν) of the united (natures), and so worship Christ, and does not venerate, by one adoration, God the Word made man, together with his flesh, as the Holy Church has taught from the beginning: let him be anathema.

X.

If anyone does not confess that our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified in the flesh is true God and the Lord of Glory and one of the Holy Trinity: let him be anathema.

XI.

If anyone does not anathematize Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches and Origen, as well as their impious writings, as also all other heretics already condemned and anathematized by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and by the aforesaid four Holy Synods and [if anyone does not equally anathematize] all those who have held and hold or who in their impiety persist in holding to the end the same opinion as those heretics just mentioned: let him be anathema.

XII.

If anyone defends the impious Theodore of Mopsuestia, who has said that the Word of God is one person, but that another person is Christ, vexed by the sufferings of the soul and the desires of the flesh, and separated little by little above that which is inferior, and become better by the progress in good works and irreproachable in his manner of life, as a mere man was baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and obtained by this baptism the grace of the Holy Spirit, and became worthy of Sonship, and to be worshipped out of regard to the Person of God the Word (just as one worships the image of an emperor) and that he is become, after the resurrection, unchangeable in his thoughts and altogether without sin. And, again, this same impious Theodore has also said that the union of God the Word with Christ is like to that which, according to the doctrine of the Apostle, exists between a man and his wife, “They twain shall be in one flesh.” The same [Theodore] has dared, among numerous other blasphemies, to say that when after the resurrection the Lord breathed upon his disciples, saying, “Receive the Holy Ghost,” he did not really give them the Holy Spirit, but that he breathed upon them only as a sign. He likewise has said that the profession of faith made by Thomas when he had, after the resurrection, touched the hands and the side of the Lord, viz.: “My Lord and my God,” was not said in reference to Christ, but that Thomas, filled with wonder at the miracle of the resurrection, thus thanked God who had raised up Christ. And moreover (which is still more scandalous) this same Theodore in his Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles compares Christ to Plato, Manichæus, Epicurus and Marcion, and says that as each of these men having discovered his own doctrine, had given his name to his disciples, who were called Platonists, Manicheans, Epicureans and Marcionites, just so Christ, having discovered his doctrine, had given the name Christians to his disciples. If, then, anyone shall defend this most impious Theodore and his impious writings, in which he vomits the blasphemies mentioned above, and countless others besides against our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and if anyone does not anathematize him or his impious writings, as well as all those who protect or defend him, or who assert that his exegesis is orthodox, or who write in favour of him and of his impious works, or those who share the same opinions, or those who have shared them and still continue unto the end in this heresy: let him be anathema.

XIII.

If anyone shall defend the impious writings of Theodoret, directed against the true faith and against the first holy Synod of Ephesus and against St. Cyril and his XII. Anathemas, and [defends] that which he has written in defence of the impious Theodore and Nestorius, and of others having the same opinions as the aforesaid Theodore and Nestorius, if anyone admits them or their impiety, or shall give the name of impious to the doctors of the Church who profess the hypostatic union of God the Word; and if anyone does not anathematize these impious writings and those who have held or who hold these sentiments, and all those who have written contrary to the true faith or against St. Cyril and his XII. Chapters, and who die in their impiety: let him be anathema.

XIV.

If anyone shall defend that letter which Ibas is said to have written to Maris the Persian, in which he denies that the Word of God incarnate of Mary, the Holy Mother of God and ever-virgin, was made man, but says that a mere man was born of her, whom he styles a Temple, as though the Word of God was one Person and the man another person; in which letter also he reprehends St. Cyril as a heretic, when he teaches the right faith of Christians, and charges him with writing things like to the wicked Apollinaris. In addition to this he vituperates the First Holy Council of Ephesus, affirming that it deposed Nestorius without discrimination and without examination. The aforesaid impious epistle styles the XII. Chapters of Cyril of blessed memory, impious and contrary to the right faith and defends Theodore and Nestorius and their impious teachings and writings. If anyone therefore shall defend the aforementioned epistle and shall not anathematize it and those who defend it and say that it is right or that a part of it is right, or if anyone shall defend those who have written or shall write in its favour, or in defence of the impieties which are contained in it, as well as those who shall presume to defend it or the impieties which it contains in the name of the Holy Fathers or of the Holy Synod of Chalcedon, and shall remain in these offences unto the end: let him be anathema.

Explaining two natures without two sons

Propositions VII and VIII illustrate the council's interpretive method. They receive the phrase in two natures while rejecting a separation of the natures into two personal centers. They also receive Cyril's expression one incarnate nature of God the Word when understood as the union of Godhead and humanity in one hypostasis. This flexibility was not unlimited. The council excluded interpretations that dissolved either the humanity or the divinity. But it did not treat every verbal difference as a sufficient reason for exclusion.

The tenth proposition is unusually brief. The one crucified in the flesh is true God and one of the Trinity. The words in the flesh matter: the council identifies the sufferer without making the divine nature as such subject to bodily injury. This is the same problem Cyril confronted in his letter. It also explains why the later debate cannot be reduced to a preference for more elaborate terminology. A different description of the subject could change the account of what Christians believed God had done for them.

The final three propositions turn from abstract definition to the disputed historical record. They describe what Theodore, Theodoret, and the letter attributed to Ibas allegedly taught. Those descriptions belong to a council condemning them. They should be read as formal charges and judgments, rather than substituted for an independent account of everything those writers wrote. The council's own wording acknowledges uncertainty of attribution in the case of Ibas's letter.

This assembly did not bring all Christians of the East into agreement. Churches that had rejected Chalcedon did not uniformly receive the imperial settlement, and later Chalcedonian churches themselves differed over particular authorities and texts. A

history of Nicene reception must therefore distinguish acceptance of Nicaea from acceptance of every subsequent council. Common allegiance to the first council could coexist with a deep division over later interpretations of the incarnation.

The question of Christ's human willing

The Third Council of Constantinople, meeting in 680-681, addressed the teaching that Christ had one will and one operation. Its received definition affirms two natural wills and two natural operations. The word natural distinguishes this claim from the allegation that there are two rival persons in Christ. The council locates a complete human capacity to will in the humanity assumed by the one Son.

The immediate moral question is whether obedience can be real if the human will has vanished. The definition answers that Christ's human will is neither abolished nor in opposition to the divine will. It follows freely and is subject to the divine will. The text's analogy is the deification of the flesh: participation in divine life does not destroy the flesh's nature, and neither does it eliminate the reality of human willing.

The definition again says that the received creed is sufficient, yet proceeds to explain what further error requires it to say. That combination is central to the history of reception. Sufficiency meant that the existing confession contained the true faith; it did not always mean that the church must cease producing definitions. Whether a later formula faithfully explicated that confession remained a matter for argument.

The definition of 681

Third Council of Constantinople, definition of faith read in the eighteenth session, in Percival (1900). The complete definition is given in the form printed there. The edition abbreviates the recitation of the two creeds as We believe, etc.; those brief notices are retained. They refer to the creeds of 325 and 381, reproduced earlier in this volume. The translation's bracketed clarifications are retained; footnotes are omitted.

> The holy, great, and Ecumenical Synod which has been assembled by the grace of God, and the religious decree of the most religious and faithful and mighty Sovereign Constantine, in this God-protected and royal city of Constantinople, New Rome, in the Hall of the imperial Palace, called Trullus, has decreed as follows.
>
> The only-begotten Son, and Word of God the Father, who was made man in all things like unto us without sin, Christ our true God, has declared expressly in the words of the Gospel, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” And again, “My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” Our most gentle Sovereign, the champion of orthodoxy, and opponent of evil doctrine, being reverentially led by this divinely uttered doctrine of peace, and having convened this our holy and Ecumenical assembly, has united the judgment of the whole Church. Wherefore this our holy and Ecumenical Synod having driven away the impious error which had prevailed for a certain time until now, and following closely the straight path of the holy and approved Fathers, has piously given its full assent to the five holy and Ecumenical Synods (that is to say, to

that of the 318 holy Fathers who assembled in Nice against the raging Arius; and the next in Constantinople of the 150 God-inspired men against Macedonius the adversary of the Spirit, and the impious Apollinaris; and also the first in Ephesus of 200 venerable men convened against Nestorius the Judaizer; and that in Chalcedon of 630 God-inspired Fathers against Eutyches and Dioscorus hated of God; and in addition to these, to the last, that is the Fifth holy Synod assembled in this place, against Theodore of Mopsuestia, Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius, and the writings of Theodoret against the Twelve Chapters of the celebrated Cyril, and the Epistle which was said to be written by Ibas to Maris the Persian), renewing in all things the ancient decrees of religion, and chasing away the impious doctrines of irreligion. And this our holy and Ecumenical Synod inspired of God has set its seal to the Creed which was put forth by the 318 Fathers, and again religiously confirmed by the 150, which also the other holy synods cordially received and ratified for the taking away of every soul-destroying heresy.

The Nicene Creed of the 318 holy Fathers.

We believe, etc.

The Creed of the 150 holy Fathers assembled at Constantinople. We believe, etc.

The holy and Ecumenical Synod further says, this pious and orthodox Creed of the Divine grace would be sufficient for the full knowledge and confirmation of the orthodox faith. But as the author of evil, who, in the beginning, availed himself of the aid of the serpent, and by it brought the poison of death upon the human race, has not desisted, but in like manner now, having found suitable instruments for working out his will (we mean Theodorus, who was Bishop of Pharan, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter, who were Archbishops of this royal city, and moreover, Honorius who was Pope of the elder Rome, Cyrus Bishop of Alexandria, Macarius who was lately bishop of Antioch, and Stephen his disciple), has actively employed them in raising up for the whole Church the stumbling-blocks of one will and one operation in the two natures of Christ our true God, one of the Holy Trinity; thus disseminating, in novel terms, amongst the orthodox people, an heresy similar to the mad and wicked doctrine of the impious Apollinaris, Severus, and Themistius, and endeavouring craftily to destroy the perfection of the incarnation of the same our Lord Jesus Christ, our God, by blasphemously representing his flesh endowed with a rational soul as devoid of will or operation. Christ, therefore, our God, has raised up our faithful Sovereign, a new David, having found him a man after his own heart, who as it is written, “has not suffered his eyes to sleep nor his eyelids to slumber,” until he has found a perfect declaration of orthodoxy by this our God-collected and holy Synod; for, according to the sentence spoken of God, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” the present holy and Ecumenical Synod faithfully receiving and saluting with uplifted hands as well the suggestion which by the most holy and blessed Agatho, Pope of ancient Rome, was sent to our most pious and faithful Emperor Constantine, which rejected by name those who taught or preached one will and one operation in the dispensation of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ who is our very God, has likewise adopted

that other synodal suggestion which was sent by the Council holden under the same most holy Pope, composed of 125 Bishops, beloved of God, to his God-instructed tranquillity, as consonant to the holy Council of Chalcedon and to the Tome of the most holy and blessed Leo, Pope of the same old Rome, which was directed to St. Flavian, which also this Council called the Pillar of the right faith; and also agrees with the Synodal Epistles which were written by Blessed Cyril against the impious Nestorius and addressed to the Oriental Bishops. Following the five holy Ecumenical Councils and the holy and approved Fathers, with one voice defining that our Lord Jesus Christ must be confessed to be very God and very man, one of the holy and consubstantial and life-giving Trinity, perfect in Deity and perfect in humanity, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and human body subsisting; consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before all ages according to his Godhead, but in these last days for us men and for our salvation made man of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, strictly and properly the Mother of God according to the flesh; one and the same Christ our Lord the only-begotten Son of two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, inseparably indivisibly to be recognized, the peculiarities of neither nature being lost by the union but rather the proprieties of each nature being preserved, concurring in one Person and in one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons but one and the same only-begotten Son of God, the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, according as the Prophets of old have taught us and as our Lord Jesus Christ himself hath instructed us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers hath delivered to us; defining all this we likewise declare that in him are two natural wills and two natural operations indivisibly, inconvertibly, inseparably, inconfusedly, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers. And these two natural wills are not contrary the one to the other (God forbid!) as the impious heretics assert, but his human will follows and that not as resisting and reluctant, but rather as subject to his divine and omnipotent will. For it was right that the flesh should be moved but subject to the divine will, according to the most wise Athanasius. For as his flesh is called and is the flesh of God the Word, so also the natural will of his flesh is called and is the proper will of God the Word, as he himself says: “I came down from heaven, not that I might do mine own will but the will of the Father which sent me!” where he calls his own will the will of his flesh, inasmuch as his flesh was also his own. For as his most holy and immaculate animated flesh was not destroyed because it was deified but continued in its own state and nature (ὅρῳ τε καὶ λόγῳ), so also his human will, although deified, was not suppressed, but was rather preserved according to the saying of Gregory Theologus: “His will [i.e., the Saviour’s] is not contrary to God but altogether deified.”

We glorify two natural operations indivisibly, immutably, inconfusedly, inseparably in the same our Lord Jesus Christ our true God, that is to say a divine operation and a human operation, according to the divine preacher Leo, who most distinctly asserts as follows: “For each form (μορφὴ) does in communion with the other what pertains properly to it, the Word, namely, doing that which pertains to the Word, and the flesh that which pertains to the flesh.”

> For we will not admit one natural operation in God and in the creature, as we will not exalt into the divine essence what is created, nor will we bring down the glory of the divine nature to the place suited to the creature.
>
> We recognize the miracles and the sufferings as of one and the same [Person], but of one or of the other nature of which he is and in which he exists, as Cyril admirably says. Preserving therefore the inconfusedness and indivisibility, we make briefly this whole confession, believing our Lord Jesus Christ to be one of the Trinity and after the incarnation our true God, we say that his two natures shone forth in his one subsistence in which he both performed the miracles and endured the sufferings through the whole of his economic conversation (δἰ ὅλης αὐτοῦ τῆς οἰκονομκῆς ἀναστροφῆς), and that not in appearance only but in very deed, and this by reason of the difference of nature which must be recognized in the same Person, for although joined together yet each nature wills and does the things proper to it and that indivisibly and inconfusedly. Wherefore we confess two wills and two operations, concurring most fitly in him for the salvation of the human race.
>
> These things, therefore, with all diligence and care having been formulated by us, we define that it be permitted to no one to bring forward, or to write, or to compose, or to think, or to teach a different faith. Whosoever shall presume to compose a different faith, or to propose, or teach, or hand to those wishing to be converted to the knowledge of the truth, from the Gentiles or Jews, or from any heresy, any different Creed; or to introduce a new voice or invention of speech to subvert these things which now have been determined by us, all these, if they be Bishops or clerics let them be deposed, the Bishops from the Episcopate, the clerics from the clergy; but if they be monks or laymen: let them be anathematized.

The condemnation of Honorius, a former pope of Rome, is an especially important feature of the definition. It places him among the named advocates or supporters of the rejected teaching. The historical fact of his condemnation belongs to the document. The significance later theologians assigned to it for theories of papal authority is a further question. One need not decide every later controversy about infallibility to acknowledge that this council did not exempt the holder of the Roman see from a retrospective doctrinal judgment.

The same text makes large claims for the first five councils and adds a sixth to the sequence. It is simultaneously conservative and productive: conservative in its explicit allegiance to the earlier confession, productive in its formulation of a rule about two wills. The historical development is visible on the page. A reader who sees only an unchanged deposit misses the new precision; a reader who sees only invention misses the careful effort to justify that precision through the inherited account of the same incarnate Son.

16 John of Damascus Organizes the Received Faith

By the eighth century, an author could present the doctrinal inheritance of the earlier councils as an ordered body of teaching. John of Damascus's Exposition of the Orthodox Faith is such a work. Its opening book moves from the limits of knowledge about God to the confession of the Trinity and the explanation of its vocabulary. Instead of reporting the meetings of 325, John teaches readers how to speak within the tradition that those meetings helped define.

His opening claim is a restraint on theological speculation. God is incomprehensible in essence, and revelation gives knowledge according to human capacity. Yet John does not infer that nothing can be said. He distinguishes what is known from how adequately it can be expressed. This distinction permits a dense theological vocabulary to coexist with an acknowledgment that the reality described exceeds the vocabulary.

The sequence printed here begins with the first two chapters and then moves to chapters 6-8 and 10. Chapters 3-5, on God's existence, incomprehensibility, and unity, are omitted; the omission is a selection of subject, not evidence that John leaps from ignorance to a Trinity without intermediate reasoning. The chosen chapters show his account of the Word and Spirit, his extensive summary of Trinitarian doctrine, and his rule for distinguishing common divine attributes from personal properties.

The historical translation uses subsistence for hypostasis. Here it generally means the Father, Son, or Spirit as a distinct personal reality, not an independent specimen of the divine species. Essence names the one divine being. A reader who substitutes three beings for three subsistences will misunderstand John's argument before reaching its central claims.

The limits of knowledge

John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, book I, chapter 1. Translation by S. D. F. Salmond in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 9 (1899). Complete chapter; source headings and footnotes omitted. The English text is taken from the historical CCEL transcription, rather than a modernized adaptation.

> No one hath seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. The Deity, therefore, is ineffable and incomprehensible. For no one knoweth the Father, save the Son, nor the Son, save the Father. And the Holy Spirit, too, so knows the things of God as the spirit of the man knows the things that are in him. Moreover, after the first and blessed nature no one, not of men only, but even of supramundane powers, and the Cherubim, I say, and Seraphim themselves, has ever known God, save he to whom He revealed Himself.

God, however, did not leave us in absolute ignorance. For the knowledge of God’s existence has been implanted by Him in all by nature. This creation, too, and its maintenance, and its government, proclaim the majesty of the Divine nature. Moreover, by the Law and the Prophets in former times and afterwards by His Only-begotten Son, our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, He disclosed to us the knowledge of Himself as that was possible for us. All things, therefore, that have been delivered to us by Law and Prophets and Apostles and Evangelists we receive, and know, and honour, seeking for nothing beyond these. For God, being good, is the cause of all good, subject neither to envy nor to any passion. For envy is far removed from the Divine nature, which is both passionless and only good. As knowing all things, therefore, and providing for what is profitable for each, He revealed that which it was to our profit to know; but what we were unable to bear He kept secret. With these things let us be satisfied, and let us abide by them, not removing everlasting boundaries, nor overpassing the divine tradition.

What can be known and said

John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, book I, chapter 2. Translation by S. D. F. Salmond in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 9 (1899). Complete chapter; source headings and footnotes omitted. The English text is taken from the historical CCEL transcription, rather than a modernized adaptation.

It is necessary, therefore, that one who wishes to speak or to hear of God should understand clearly that alike in the doctrine of Deity and in that of the Incarnation, neither are all things unutterable nor all utterable; neither all unknowable nor all knowable. But the knowable belongs to one order, and the utterable to another; just as it is one thing to speak and another thing to know. Many of the things relating to God, therefore, that are dimly understood cannot be put into fitting terms, but on things above us we cannot do else than express ourselves according to our limited capacity; as, for instance, when we speak of God we use the terms sleep, and wrath, and regardlessness, hands, too, and feet, and such like expressions.

We, therefore, both know and confess that God is without beginning, without end, eternal and everlasting, uncreate, unchangeable, invariable, simple, uncompound, incorporeal, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribed, infinite, incognisable, indefinable, incomprehensible, good, just, maker of all things created, almighty, all-ruling, all-surveying, of all overseer, sovereign, judge; and that God is One, that is to say, one essence; and that He is known, and has His being in three subsistences, in Father, I say, and Son and Holy Spirit; and that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in all respects, except in that of not being begotten, that of being begotten, and that of procession; and that the Only-begotten Son and Word of God and God, in His bowels of mercy, for our salvation, by the good pleasure of God and the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, being conceived without seed, was born uncorruptedly of the Holy Virgin and Mother of God, Mary, by the Holy Spirit, and became of her perfect Man; and that the Same is at once perfect God and perfect Man, of two natures, Godhead and Manhood, and in two natures

possessing intelligence, will and energy, and freedom, and, in a word, perfect according to the measure and proportion proper to each, at once to the divinity, I say, and to the humanity, yet to one composite person; and that He suffered hunger and thirst and weariness, and was crucified, and for three days submitted to the experience of death and burial, and ascended to heaven, from which also He came to us, and shall come again. And the Holy Scripture is witness to this and the whole choir of the Saints.

But neither do we know, nor can we tell, what the essence of God is, or how it is in all, or how the Only-begotten Son and God, having emptied Himself, became Man of virgin blood, made by another law contrary to nature, or how He walked with dry feet upon the waters. It is not within our capacity, therefore, to say anything about God or even to think of Him, beyond the things which have been divinely revealed to us, whether by word or by manifestation, by the divine oracles at once of the Old Testament and of the New.

The Word and Son

John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, book I, chapter 6. Translation by S. D. F. Salmond in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 9 (1899). Complete chapter; source headings and footnotes omitted. The English text is taken from the historical CCEL transcription, rather than a modernized adaptation.

So then this one and only God is not Wordless. And possessing the Word, He will have it not as without a subsistence, nor as having had a beginning, nor as destined to cease to be. For there never was a time when God was not Word: but He ever possesses His own Word, begotten of Himself, not, as our word is, without a subsistence and dissolving into air, but having a subsistence in Him and life and perfection, not proceeding out of Himself but ever existing within Himself. For where could it be, if it were to go outside Him? For inasmuch as our nature is perishable and easily dissolved, our word is also without subsistence. But since God is everlasting and perfect, He will have His Word subsistent in Him, and everlasting and living, and possessed of all the attributes of the Begetter. For just as our word, proceeding as it does out of the mind, is neither wholly identical with the mind nor utterly diverse from it (for so far as it proceeds out of the mind it is different from it, while so far as it reveals the mind, it is no longer absolutely diverse from the mind, but being one in nature with the mind, it is yet to the subject diverse from it), so in the same manner also the Word of God in its independent subsistence is differentiated from Him from Whom it derives its subsistence: but inasmuch as it displays in itself the same attributes as are seen in God, it is of the same nature as God. For just as absolute perfection is contemplated in the Father, so also is it contemplated in the Word that is begotten of Him.

The Holy Spirit

John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, book I, chapter 7. Translation by S. D. F. Salmond in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 9 (1899). Complete chapter; source headings and footnotes omitted. The English text is taken from the historical CCEL transcription, rather than a modernized adaptation.

Moreover the Word must also possess Spirit. For in fact even our word is not destitute of spirit; but in our case the spirit is something different from our essence. For there is an attraction and movement of the air which is drawn in and poured forth that the body may be sustained. And it is this which in the moment of utterance becomes the articulate word, revealing in itself the force of the word. But in the case of the divine nature, which is simple and uncompound, we must confess in all piety that there exists a Spirit of God, for the Word is not more imperfect than our own word. Now we cannot, in piety, consider the Spirit to be something foreign that gains admission into God from without, as is the case with compound natures like us. Nay, just as, when we heard of the Word of God, we considered it to be not without subsistence, nor the product of learning, nor the mere utterance of voice, nor as passing into the air and perishing, but as being essentially subsisting, endowed with free volition, and energy, and omnipotence: so also, when we have learnt about the Spirit of God, we contemplate it as the companion of the Word and the revealer of His energy, and not as mere breath without subsistence. For to conceive of the Spirit that dwells in God as after the likeness of our own spirit, would be to drag down the greatness of the divine nature to the lowest depths of degradation. But we must contemplate it as an essential power, existing in its own proper and peculiar subsistence, proceeding from the Father and resting in the Word, and shewing forth the Word, neither capable of disjunction from God in Whom it exists, and the Word Whose companion it is, nor poured forth to vanish into nothingness, but being in subsistence in the likeness of the Word, endowed with life, free volition, independent movement, energy, ever willing that which is good, and having power to keep pace with the will in all its decrees, having no beginning and no end. For never was the Father at any time lacking in the Word, nor the Word in the Spirit.

Thus because of the unity in nature, the error of the Greeks in holding that God is many, is utterly destroyed: and again by our acceptance of the Word and the Spirit, the dogma of the Jews is overthrown: and there remains of each party only what is profitable. On the one hand of the Jewish idea we have the unity of God’s nature, and on the other, of the Greek, we have the distinction in subsistences and that only.

But should the Jew refuse to accept the Word and the Spirit, let the divine Scripture confute him and curb his tongue. For concerning the Word, the divine David says, For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven. And again, He sent His Word and healed them. But the word that is uttered is not sent, nor is it for ever settled. And concerning the Spirit, the same David says, Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created. And again, By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. Job, too, says, The Spirit of God hath made me,

and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. Now the Spirit which is sent and makes and stablishes and conserves, is not mere breath that dissolves, any more than the mouth of God is a bodily member. For the conception of both must be such as harmonizes with the Divine nature.

The Holy Trinity

John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, book I, chapter 8. Translation by S. D. F. Salmond in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 9 (1899). Complete chapter; source headings and footnotes omitted. The English text is taken from the historical CCEL transcription, rather than a modernized adaptation.

We believe, then, in One God, one beginning, having no beginning, uncreate, unbegotten, imperishable and immortal, everlasting, infinite, uncircumscribed, boundless, of infinite power, simple, uncompound, incorporeal, without flux, passionless, unchangeable, unalterable, unseen, the fountain of goodness and justice, the light of the mind, inaccessible; a power known by no measure, measurable only by His own will alone (for all things that He wills He can), creator of all created things, seen or unseen, of all the maintainer and preserver, for all the provider, master and lord and king over all, with an endless and immortal kingdom: having no contrary, filling all, by nothing encompassed, but rather Himself the encompasser and maintainer and original possessor of the universe, occupying all essences intact and extending beyond all things, and being separate from all essence as being super-essential and above all things and absolute God, absolute goodness, and absolute fulness: determining all sovereignties and ranks, being placed above all sovereignty and rank, above essence and life and word and thought: being Himself very light and goodness and life and essence, inasmuch as He does not derive His being from another, that is to say, of those things that exist: but being Himself the fountain of being to all that is, of life to the living, of reason to those that have reason; to all the cause of all good: perceiving all things even before they have become: one essence, one divinity, one power, one will, one energy, one beginning, one authority, one dominion, one sovereignty, made known in three perfect subsistences and adored with one adoration, believed in and ministered to by all rational creation, united without confusion and divided without separation (which indeed transcends thought). (We believe) in Father and Son and Holy Spirit whereinto also we have been baptized. For so our Lord commanded the Apostles to baptize, saying, Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(We believe) in one Father, the beginning, and cause of all: begotten of no one: without cause or generation, alone subsisting: creator of all: but Father of one only by nature, His Only-begotten Son and our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and Producer of the most Holy Spirit. And in one Son of God, the Only-begotten, our Lord, Jesus Christ: begotten of the Father, before all the ages: Light of Light, true God of true God: begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, through Whom all things are made: and when we say He was before all the ages we shew that His birth is without time or beginning: for the Son of God was not brought into being out

of nothing, He that is the effulgence of the glory, the impress of the Father's subsistence, the living wisdom and power, the Word possessing interior subsistence, the essential and perfect and living image of the unseen God. But always He was with the Father and in Him, everlastingly and without beginning begotten of Him. For there never was a time when the Father was and the Son was not, but always the Father and always the Son, Who was begotten of Him, existed together. For He could not have received the name Father apart from the Son: for if He were without the Son, He could not be the Father: and if He thereafter had the Son, thereafter He became the Father, not having been the Father prior to this, and He was changed from that which was not the Father and became the Father. This is the worst form of blasphemy. For we may not speak of God as destitute of natural generative power: and generative power means, the power of producing from one's self, that is to say, from one's own proper essence, that which is like in nature to one's self.

In treating, then, of the generation of the Son, it is an act of impiety to say that time comes into play and that the existence of the Son is of later origin than the Father. For we hold that it is from Him, that is, from the Father's nature, that the Son is generated. And unless we grant that the Son co-existed from the beginning with the Father, by Whom He was begotten, we introduce change into the Father's subsistence, because, not being the Father, He subsequently became the Father. For the creation, even though it originated later, is nevertheless not derived from the essence of God, but is brought into existence out of nothing by His will and power, and change does not touch God's nature. For generation means that the begetter produces out of his essence offspring similar in essence. But creation and making mean that the creator and maker produces from that which is external, and not out of his own essence, a creation of an absolutely dissimilar nature.

Wherefore in God, Who alone is passionless and unalterable, and immutable, and ever so continueth, both begetting and creating are passionless. For being by nature passionless and not liable to flux, since He is simple and uncompound, He is not subject to passion or flux either in begetting or in creating, nor has He need of any co-operation. But generation in Him is without beginning and everlasting, being the work of nature and producing out of His own essence, that the Begetter may not undergo change, and that He may not be God first and God last, nor receive any accession: while creation in the case of God, being the work of will, is not co-eternal with God. For it is not natural that that which is brought into existence out of nothing should be co-eternal with what is without beginning and everlasting. There is this difference in fact between man's making and God's. Man can bring nothing into existence out of nothing, but all that he makes requires pre-existing matter for its basis, and he does not create it by will only, but thinks out first what it is to be and pictures it in his mind, and only then fashions it with his hands, undergoing labour and trouble, and often missing the mark and failing to produce to his satisfaction that after which he strives. But God, through the exercise of will alone, has brought all things into existence out of nothing. Now there is the same difference between God and man in begetting and generating. For in God, Who is

without time and beginning, passionless, not liable to flux, incorporeal, alone and without end, generation is without time and beginning, passionless and not liable to flux, nor dependent on the union of two: nor has His own incomprehensible generation beginning or end. And it is without beginning because He is immutable: without flux because He is passionless and incorporeal: independent of the union of two again because He is incorporeal but also because He is the one and only God, and stands in need of no co-operation: and without end or cessation because He is without beginning, or time, or end, and ever continues the same. For that which has no beginning has no end: but that which through grace is endless is assuredly not without beginning, as, witness, the angels.

Accordingly the everlasting God generates His own Word which is perfect, without beginning and without end, that God, Whose nature and existence are above time, may not engender in time. But with man clearly it is otherwise, for generation is with him a matter of sex, and destruction and flux and increase and body clothe him round about, and he possesses a nature which is male or female. For the male requires the assistance of the female. But may He Who surpasses all, and transcends all thought and comprehension, be gracious to us.

The holy catholic and apostolic Church, then, teaches the existence at once of a Father: and of His Only-begotten Son, born of Him without time and flux and passion, in a manner incomprehensible and perceived by the God of the universe alone: just as we recognise the existence at once of fire and the light which proceeds from it: for there is not first fire and thereafter light, but they exist together. And just as light is ever the product of fire, and ever is in it and at no time is separate from it, so in like manner also the Son is begotten of the Father and is never in any way separate from Him, but ever is in Him. But whereas the light which is produced from fire without separation, and abideth ever in it, has no proper subsistence of its own distinct from that of fire (for it is a natural quality of fire), the Only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father without separation and difference and ever abiding in Him, has a proper subsistence of its own distinct from that of the Father.

The terms, ‘Word’ and ‘effulgence,’ then, are used because He is begotten of the Father without the union of two, or passion, or time, or flux, or separation: and the terms ‘Son’ and ‘impress of the Father’s subsistence,’ because He is perfect and has subsistence and is in all respects similar to the Father, save that the Father is not begotten: and the term ‘Only-begotten’ because He alone was begotten alone of the Father alone. For no other generation is like to the generation of the Son of God, since no other is Son of God. For though the Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father, yet this is not generative in character but processional. This is a different mode of existence, alike incomprehensible and unknown, just as is the generation of the Son. Wherefore all the qualities the Father has are the Son’s, save that the Father is unbegotten, and this exception involves no difference in essence nor dignity, but only a different mode of coming into existence. We have an analogy in Adam, who was not begotten (for God Himself moulded him), and Seth, who was begotten (for he is Adam’s son), and Eve, who proceeded out of Adam’s rib (for she was not

begotten). These do not differ from each other in nature, for they are human beings: but they differ in the mode of coming into existence.

For one must recognise that the word ἀγένητον with only one ‘ν’ signifies “uncreate” or “not having been made,” while ἀγέννητον written with double ‘ν’ means “unbegotten.” According to the first significance essence differs from essence: for one essence is uncreate, or ἀγένητον with one ‘ν,’ and another is create or γενητή. But in the second significance there is no difference between essence and essence. For the first subsistence of all kinds of living creatures is ἀγέννητος but not ἀγένητος. For they were created by the Creator, being brought into being by His Word, but they were not begotten, for there was no pre-existing form like themselves from which they might have been born.

So then in the first sense of the word the three absolutely divine subsistences of the Holy Godhead agree: for they exist as one in essence and uncreate. But with the second signification it is quite otherwise. For the Father alone is ingenerate, no other subsistence having given Him being. And the Son alone is generate, for He was begotten of the Father’s essence without beginning and without time. And only the Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father’s essence, not having been generated but simply proceeding. For this is the doctrine of Holy Scripture. But the nature of the generation and the procession is quite beyond comprehension.

And this also it behoves us to know, that the names Fatherhood, Sonship and Procession, were not applied to the Holy Godhead by us: on the contrary, they were communicated to us by the Godhead, as the divine apostle says, Wherefore I bow the knee to the Father, from Whom is every family in heaven and on earth. But if we say that the Father is the origin of the Son and greater than the Son, we do not suggest any precedence in time or superiority in nature of the Father over the Son (for through His agency He made the ages), or superiority in any other respect save causation. And we mean by this, that the Son is begotten of the Father and not the Father of the Son, and that the Father naturally is the cause of the Son: just as we say in the same way not that fire proceedeth from light, but rather light from fire. So then, whenever we hear it said that the Father is the origin of the Son and greater than the Son, let us understand it to mean in respect of causation. And just as we do not say that fire is of one essence and light of another, so we cannot say that the Father is of one essence and the Son of another: but both are of one and the same essence. And just as we say that fire has brightness through the light proceeding from it, and do not consider the light of the fire as an instrument ministering to the fire, but rather as its natural force: so we say that the Father creates all that He creates through His Only-begotten Son, not as though the Son were a mere instrument serving the Father’s ends, but as His natural and subsistential force. And just as we say both that the fire shines and again that the light of the fire shines, So all things whatsoever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. But whereas light possesses no proper subsistence of its own, distinct from that of the fire, the Son is a perfect subsistence, inseparable from the Father’s subsistence, as we have shewn above. For it is quite impossible to find in creation an image that will

illustrate in itself exactly in all details the nature of the Holy Trinity. For how could that which is create and compound, subject to flux and change, circumscribed, formed and corruptible, clearly shew forth the super-essential divine essence, unaffected as it is in any of these ways? Now it is evident that all creation is liable to most of these affections, and all from its very nature is subject to corruption.

Likewise we believe also in one Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life: Who proceedeth from the Father and resteth in the Son: the object of equal adoration and glorification with the Father and Son, since He is co-essential and co-eternal: the Spirit of God, direct, authoritative, the fountain of wisdom, and life, and holiness: God existing and addressed along with Father and Son: uncreate, full, creative, all-ruling, all-effecting, all-powerful, of infinite power, Lord of all creation and not under any lord: deifying, not deified: filling, not filled: shared in, not sharing in: sanctifying, not sanctified: the intercessor, receiving the supplications of all: in all things like to the Father and Son: proceeding from the Father and communicated through the Son, and participated in by all creation, through Himself creating, and investing with essence and sanctifying, and maintaining the universe: having subsistence, existing in its own proper and peculiar subsistence, inseparable and indivisible from Father and Son, and possessing all the qualities that the Father and Son possess, save that of not being begotten or born. For the Father is without cause and unborn: for He is derived from nothing, but derives from Himself His being, nor does He derive a single quality from another. Rather He is Himself the beginning and cause of the existence of all things in a definite and natural manner. But the Son is derived from the Father after the manner of generation, and the Holy Spirit likewise is derived from the Father, yet not after the manner of generation, but after that of procession. And we have learned that there is a difference between generation and procession, but the nature of that difference we in no wise understand. Further, the generation of the Son from the Father and the procession of the Holy Spirit are simultaneous.

All then that the Son and the Spirit have is from the Father, even their very being: and unless the Father is, neither the Son nor the Spirit is. And unless the Father possesses a certain attribute, neither the Son nor the Spirit possesses it: and through the Father, that is, because of the Father’s existence, the Son and the Spirit exist, and through the Father, that is, because of the Father having the qualities, the Son and the Spirit have all their qualities, those of being unbegotten, and of birth and of procession being excepted. For in these hypostatic or personal properties alone do the three holy subsistences differ from each other, being indivisibly divided not by essence but by the distinguishing mark of their proper and peculiar subsistence.

Further we say that each of the three has a perfect subsistence, that we may understand not one compound perfect nature made up of three imperfect elements, but one simple essence, surpassing and preceding perfection, existing in three perfect subsistences. For all that is composed of imperfect elements must necessarily be compound. But from perfect subsistences no compound can arise.

Wherefore we do not speak of the form as from subsistences, but as in subsistences. But we speak of those things as imperfect which do not preserve the form of that which is completed out of them. For stone and wood and iron are each perfect in its own nature, but with reference to the building that is completed out of them each is imperfect: for none of them is in itself a house.

The subsistences then we say are perfect, that we may not conceive of the divine nature as compound. For compoundness is the beginning of separation. And again we speak of the three subsistences as being in each other, that we may not introduce a crowd and multitude of Gods. Owing to the three subsistences, there is no compoundness or confusion: while, owing to their having the same essence and dwelling in one another, and being the same in will, and energy, and power, and authority, and movement, so to speak, we recognise the indivisibility and the unity of God. For verily there is one God, and His word and Spirit.

Marg. ms. Concerning the distinction of the three subsistences: and concerning the thing itself and our reason and thought in relation to it.

One ought, moreover, to recognise that it is one thing to look at a matter as it is, and another thing to look at it in the light of reason and thought. In the case of all created things, the distinction of the subsistences is observed in actual fact. For in actual fact Peter is seen to be separate from Paul. But the community and connection and unity are apprehended by reason and thought. For it is by the mind that we perceive that Peter and Paul are of the same nature and have one common nature. For both are living creatures, rational and mortal: and both are flesh, endowed with the spirit of reason and understanding. It is, then, by reason that this community of nature is observed. For here indeed the subsistences do not exist one within the other. But each privately and individually, that is to say, in itself, stands quite separate, having very many points that divide it from the other. For they are both separated in space and differ in time, and are divided in thought, and power, and shape, or form, and habit, and temperament and dignity, and pursuits, and all differentiating properties, but above all, in the fact that they do not dwell in one another but are separated. Hence it comes that we can speak of two, three, or many men.

And this may be perceived throughout the whole of creation, but in the case of the holy and superessential and incomprehensible Trinity, far removed from everything, it is quite the reverse. For there the community and unity are observed in fact, through the co-eternity of the subsistences, and through their having the same essence and energy and will and concord of mind, and then being identical in authority and power and goodness - I do not say similar but identical - and then movement by one impulse. For there is one essence, one goodness, one power, one will, one energy, one authority, one and the same, I repeat, not three resembling each other. But the three subsistences have one and the same movement. For each one of them is related as closely to the other as to itself: that is to say that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one in all respects, save those of not being begotten, of birth and of procession. But it is by thought that the difference is

perceived. For we recognise one God: but only in the attributes of Fatherhood, Sonship, and Procession, both in respect of cause and effect and perfection of subsistence, that is, manner of existence, do we perceive difference. For with reference to the uncircumscribed Deity we cannot speak of separation in space, as we can in our own case. For the subsistences dwell in one another, in no wise confused but cleaving together, according to the word of the Lord, I am in the father, and the father in Me: nor can one admit difference in will or judgment or energy or power or anything else whatsoever which may produce actual and absolute separation in our case. Wherefore we do not speak of three Gods, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but rather of one God, the holy Trinity, the Son and Spirit being referred to one cause, and not compounded or coalesced according to the synæresis of Sabellius. For, as we said, they are made one not so as to commingle, but so as to cleave to each other, and they have their being in each other without any coalescence or commingling. Nor do the Son and the Spirit stand apart, nor are they sundered in essence according to the diæresis of Arias. For the Deity is undivided amongst things divided, to put it concisely: and it is just like three suns cleaving to each other without separation and giving out light mingled and conjoined into one. When, then, we turn our eyes to the Divinity, and the first cause and the sovereignty and the oneness and sameness, so to speak, of the movement and will of the Divinity, and the identity in essence and power and energy and lordship, what is seen by us is unity. But when we look to those things in which the Divinity is, or, to put it more accurately, which are the Divinity, and those things which are in it through the first cause without time or distinction in glory or separation, that is to say, the subsistences of the Son and the Spirit, it seems to us a Trinity that we adore. The Father is one Father, and without beginning, that is, without cause: for He is not derived from anything. The Son is one Son, but not without beginning, that is, not without cause: for He is derived from the Father. But if you eliminate the idea of a beginning from time, He is also without beginning: for the creator of times cannot be subject to time. The Holy Spirit is one Spirit, going forth from the Father, not in the manner of Sonship but of procession; so that neither has the Father lost His property of being unbegotten because He hath begotten, nor has the Son lost His property of being begotten because He was begotten of that which was unbegotten (for how could that be so?), nor does the Spirit change either into the Father or into the Son because He hath proceeded and is God. For a property is quite constant. For how could a property persist if it were variable, moveable, and could change into something else? For if the Father is the Son, He is not strictly the Father: for there is strictly one Father. And if the Son is the Father, He is not strictly the Son: for there is strictly one Son and one Holy Spirit.

Further, it should be understood that we do not speak of the Father as derived from any one, but we speak of Him as the Father of the Son. And we do not speak of the Son as Cause or Father, but we speak of Him both as from the Father, and as the Son of the Father. And we speak likewise of the Holy Spirit as from the Father, and call Him the Spirit of the Father. And we do not speak of the Spirit as from the Son:

but yet we call Him the Spirit of the Son. For if any one hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His, saith the divine apostle. And we confess that He is manifested and imparted to us through the Son. For He breathed upon His Disciples, says he, and said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. It is just the same as in the case of the sun from which come both the ray and the radiance (for the sun itself is the source of both the ray and the radiance), and it is through the ray that the radiance is imparted to us, and it is the radiance itself by which we are lightened and in which we participate. Further we do not speak of the Son of the Spirit, or of the Son as derived from the Spirit.

Common attributes and personal distinctions

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Therefore all these names must be understood as common to deity as a whole, and as containing the notions of sameness and simplicity and indivisibility and union: while the names Father, Son and Spirit, and causeless and caused, and unbegotten and begotten, and procession contain the idea of separation: for these terms do not explain His essence, but the mutual relationship and manner of existence.

When, then, we have perceived these things and are conducted from these to the divine essence, we do not apprehend the essence itself but only the attributes of the essence: just as we have not apprehended the essence of the soul even when we have learnt that it is incorporeal and without magnitude and form: nor again, the essence of the body when we know that it is white or black, but only the attributes of the essence. Further, the true doctrine teacheth that the Deity is simple and has one simple energy, good and energising in all things, just as the sun’s ray, which warms all things and energises in each in harmony with its natural aptitude and receptive power, having obtained this form of energy from God, its Maker.

But quite distinct is all that pertains to the divine and benignant incarnation of the divine Word. For in that neither the Father nor the Spirit have any part at all, unless so far as regards approval and the working of inexplicable miracles which the God-Word, having become man like us, worked, as unchangeable God and son of God.

What the later vocabulary accomplishes

John's long eighth chapter may seem remote from the short confession of 325. Its governing concern is nevertheless recognizable. The Son is begotten rather than made, eternally derived from the Father without a temporal beginning, and possessed of the same divine essence. John repeatedly contrasts divine generation with the bodily processes through which human parents produce children. The argument

denies that the metaphor of Father and Son entails sexual reproduction, division of material, or an older deity followed by a younger one.

The chapter also gives an answer to the accusation of three gods. Three human persons possess a common kind of nature, but each can act separately and occupy a different place. John refuses to apply that model unchanged to the Trinity. The divine persons have one will, power, and operation, and exist in one another without separation. These assertions can be disputed, but they are essential to the position. Merely counting the personal names and announcing a count of three independent deities does not address it.

His use of examples is similarly controlled. Fire and light illustrate inseparability and derivation, but an ordinary flame does not possess a rational personal light alongside itself. The analogy is useful only within stated limits. John's own qualifications should stop the reader from treating a physical model as the doctrine itself. He repeatedly says that divine generation and procession do not belong to the same order as creaturely production.

The treatment of unbegotten is particularly significant. A negative predicate about the Father's lack of origin must not be turned into an essence that the Son lacks. John distinguishes being uncreated, which belongs to the three, from being unbegotten, which identifies the Father. This distinction addresses a problem inherited from fourth-century disputes: if every term proper to one person defines the divine nature, the other persons will either be excluded from divinity or absorbed into the first.

John is equally definite about the Spirit. He calls the Spirit the Spirit of the Son, and says that the Spirit is manifested and imparted through the Son, while denying that the Spirit is from the Son. In the later Latin controversy, those expressions would demand close attention. The question was not whether the Son had any relation to the Spirit. It was whether through the Son named manifestation, communication, or an eternal relation that also authorized saying from the Son.

The text's several uses of cause require care. The Father is cause of the Son and Spirit in the account of their personal origin; God is cause of creation in a different relation. John does not classify the Son and Spirit as creatures merely because he describes their origin from the Father. He expressly denies that result by calling them uncreated and consubstantial. The English word cause can conceal this distinction when removed from the surrounding argument.

A boundary with a problematic inheritance

Chapter 7 presents Christian doctrine as preserving what John calls the good in Jewish and Greek thought while rejecting opposing errors. Its language about the Jew is part of a polemical classification, not a reliable description of every Jewish understanding of God. It treats refusal of John's Christian inference as a position to be overcome. The anthology reproduces that rhetoric because it belongs to the historical

source; the argument should be examined without turning its generalized religious opponent into a portrait of living Jewish people.

The same passage shows that John's project involves persuasion as well as preservation. He offers arguments about God's Word and Spirit rather than relying only on a list of councils. Their strength depends on whether a reader accepts the move from ordinary speech and breath to subsisting divine Word and Spirit. John supplies qualifications intended to prevent a crude physical analogy. Whether those qualifications make the inference convincing is a better question than whether a breath literally exists inside the divine body, a body he has already denied.

This reading reveals a major change in the form of Nicene reception. In 325, a contested term helped an assembly draw a boundary in an ongoing conflict. In John, the received terminology becomes the material of a systematic exposition, organized for readers who need to learn how its distinctions fit together. The continuity is real, but so is the accumulation of explanation between the original confession and the later textbook.

17 The Second Nicaea Claims the First Nicaea

The council held at Nicaea in 787 is a different assembly from the council of 325. Its principal controversy concerned images and their veneration. Its documents nevertheless make an explicit claim to preserve the first council's faith. The sequence of councils had become a way of expressing continuity: to confess the true incarnation was to receive earlier definitions, and to receive them properly was, in the judgment of 787, to recognize the legitimacy of representing the incarnate Christ.

The opposing council of 754 had also appealed to the earlier councils and claimed the authority of the Holy Spirit. The documents of 787 quote and refute its position. This creates an editorial hazard: an extract from the acts of 787 can contain words that 787 rejects. In Percival's collection, the text headed Epitome of the Definition of the Iconoclastic Conciliabulum belongs to the opponents of images in 754. The reading below is instead the decree adopted by the second council of Nicaea.

That distinction matters because the two sides use some of the same doctrinal premises. Both reject the separation of Christ into two sons and the confusion of divinity with humanity. The opponents of images argue that depicting Christ must either divide his natures or attempt to depict an uncircumscribable divinity. The defenders answer that the visible human life of the one divine person can be represented without a picture claiming to contain or measure the divine nature.

The dispute is therefore a later argument over the consequences of the incarnation. The bishops of 325 had not produced a canon commanding the veneration of icons. The bishops of 787 claim that their judgment follows from the received faith and the church's traditions. That is a claim about continuity through interpretation, rather than a claim that every word of the later decree had already been spoken in the first council's hall.

The decree of the second council of Nicaea

Second Council of Nicaea, decree and concluding acclamations, in Henry R. Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils (1900), The Decree of the Holy, Great, Ecumenical Synod, the Second of Nice. Complete as printed, including the historical edition's abbreviated notice of the creed and its bracketed transition to the acclamations. Footnotes omitted. This is the decree of 787, not the iconoclast definition of 754 quoted elsewhere in the collection.

The holy, great, and Ecumenical Synod which by the grace of God and the will of the pious and Christ-loving Emperors, Constantine and Irene, his mother, was gathered together for the second time at Nice, the illustrious metropolis of Bithynia, in the holy church of God which is named Sophia, having followed the tradition of the Catholic Church, hath defined as follows:

Christ our Lord, who hath bestowed upon us the light of the knowledge of himself, and hath redeemed us from the darkness of idolatrous madness, having espoused to

himself the Holy Catholic Church without spot or defect, promised that he would so preserve her: and gave his word to this effect to his holy disciples when he said: “Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” which promise he made, not only to them, but to us also who should believe in his name through their word. But some, not considering of this gift, and having become fickle through the temptation of the wily enemy, have fallen from the right faith; for, withdrawing from the traditions of the Catholic Church, they have erred from the truth and as the proverb saith: “The husbandmen have gone astray in their own husbandry and have gathered in their hands nothingness,” because certain priests, priests in name only, not in fact, had dared to speak against the God-approved ornament of the sacred monuments, of whom God cries aloud through the prophet, “Many pastors have corrupted my vineyard, they have polluted my portion.”

And, forsooth, following profane men, led astray by their carnal sense, they have calumniated the Church of Christ our God, which he hath espoused to himself, and have failed to distinguish between holy and profane, styling the images of our Lord and of his Saints by the same name as the statues of diabolical idols. Seeing which things, our Lord God (not willing to behold his people corrupted by such manner of plague) hath of his good pleasure called us together, the chief of his priests, from every quarter, moved with a divine zeal and brought hither by the will of our princes, Constantine and Irene, to the end that the traditions of the Catholic Church may receive stability by our common decree. Therefore, with all diligence, making a thorough examination and analysis, and following the trend of the truth, we diminish nought, we add nought, but we preserve unchanged all things which pertain to the Catholic Church, and following the Six Ecumenical Synods, especially that which met in this illustrious metropolis of Nice, as also that which was afterwards gathered together in the God-protected Royal City.

We believe…life of the world to come. Amen.

We detest and anathematize Arius and all the sharers of his absurd opinion; also Macedonius and those who following him are well styled “Foes of the Spirit” (Pneumatomachi). We confess that our Lady, St. Mary, is properly and truly the Mother of God, because she was the Mother after the flesh of One Person of the Holy Trinity, to wit, Christ our God, as the Council of Ephesus has already defined when it cast out of the Church the impious Nestorius with his colleagues, because he taught that there were two Persons [in Christ]. With the Fathers of this synod we confess that he who was incarnate of the immaculate Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary has two natures, recognizing him as perfect God and perfect man, as also the Council of Chalcedon hath promulgated, expelling from the divine Atrium [αὐλῆς] as blasphemers, Eutyches and Dioscorus; and placing in the same category Severus, Peter and a number of others, blaspheming in divers fashions. Moreover, with these we anathematize the fables of Origen, Evagrius, and Didymus, in accordance with the decision of the Fifth Council held at Constantinople. We affirm that in Christ there be two wills and two operations according to the reality of each nature, as also the Sixth Synod, held at Constantinople, taught, casting out Sergius, Honorius,

Cyrus, Pyrrhus, Macarius, and those who agree with them, and all those who are unwilling to be reverent.

To make our confession short, we keep unchanged all the ecclesiastical traditions handed down to us, whether in writing or verbally, one of which is the making of pictorial representations, agreeable to the history of the preaching of the Gospel, a tradition useful in many respects, but especially in this, that so the incarnation of the Word of God is shown forth as real and not merely phantastic, for these have mutual indications and without doubt have also mutual significations.

We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit indwells her), define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic as of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and on the vestments and on hangings and in pictures both in houses and by the wayside, to wit, the figure of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honourable Angels, of all Saints and of all pious people. For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them; and to these should be given due salutation and honourable reverence (ἀσπασμὸν καὶ τιμητικὴν προσκύνησιν), not indeed that true worship of faith (λατρείαν) which pertains alone to the divine nature; but to these, as to the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross and to the Book of the Gospels and to the other holy objects, incense and lights may be offered according to ancient pious custom. For the honour which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject represented. For thus the teaching of our holy Fathers, that is the tradition of the Catholic Church, which from one end of the earth to the other hath received the Gospel, is strengthened. Thus we follow Paul, who spake in Christ, and the whole divine Apostolic company and the holy Fathers, holding fast the traditions which we have received. So we sing prophetically the triumphal hymns of the Church, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Rejoice and be glad with all thy heart. The Lord hath taken away from thee the oppression of thy adversaries; thou art redeemed from the hand of thine enemies. The Lord is a King in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more, and peace be unto thee forever.”

Those, therefore who dare to think or teach otherwise, or as wicked heretics to spurn the traditions of the Church and to invent some novelty, or else to reject some of those things which the Church hath received (e.g., the Book of the Gospels, or the image of the cross, or the pictorial icons, or the holy reliques of a martyr), or evilly and sharply to devise anything subversive of the lawful traditions of the Catholic Church or to turn to common uses the sacred vessels or the venerable monasteries, if they be Bishops or Clerics, we command that they be deposed; if religious or laics, that they be cut off from communion.

[After all had signed, the acclamations began (col. 576).]

The holy Synod cried out: So we all believe, we all are so minded, we all give our consent and have signed. This is the faith of the Apostles, this is the faith of the orthodox, this is the faith which hath made firm the whole world. Believing in one God, to be celebrated in Trinity, we salute the honourable images! Those who do not so hold, let them be anathema. Those who do not thus think, let them be driven far away from the Church. For we follow the most ancient legislation of the Catholic Church. We keep the laws of the Fathers. We anathematize those who add anything to or take anything away from the Catholic Church. We anathematize the introduced novelty of the revilers of Christians. We salute the venerable images. We place under anathema those who do not do this. Anathema to them who presume to apply to the venerable images the things said in Holy Scripture about idols. Anathema to those who do not salute the holy and venerable images. Anathema to those who call the sacred images idols. Anathema to those who say that Christians resort to the sacred images as to gods. Anathema to those who say that any other delivered us from idols except Christ our God. Anathema to those who dare to say that at any time the Catholic Church received idols.

Many years to the Emperors, etc., etc.

Honor and worship in the decree

The distinction between honorable reverence and the worship proper to the divine nature is the decree's central defense against idolatry. It states that honor given to an image passes to its prototype. The material object is not declared to be another god. A critic may question whether ordinary practice reliably maintains this distinction, or whether the distinction sufficiently answers scriptural objections. The text nevertheless requires the distinction to be understood before its position is assessed.

The statement that nothing is added and nothing diminished should be read beside the positive commands that follow it. The assembly regulates the placement and honoring of images, lists theological opponents, and declares penalties. It understands these acts as preservation. Historical description can acknowledge that self-understanding while also recognizing the new formal authority attached to this particular judgment.

The first three canons broaden the picture. They receive earlier canonical rules, require a bishop to know the Scriptures and church law, and reject appointments imposed by secular rulers. The council was convened under imperial patronage, yet it states a limit on what princes may do in the church. This is an example of cooperation with political authority accompanied by a rule against a particular political intrusion.

Canon 1 on receiving the canons

Second Council of Nicaea, Canon 1, complete canonical text, Percival (1900). The later epitome and commentators' notes are omitted.

The pattern for those who have received the sacerdotal dignity is found in the testimonies and instructions laid down in the canonical constitutions, which we receiving with a glad mind, sing unto the Lord God in the words of the God-inspired David, saying: “I have had as great delight in the way of thy testimonies as in all manner of riches.” “Thou hast commanded righteousness as thy testimonies for ever.” “Grant me understanding and I shall live.” Now if the word of prophesy bids us keep the testimonies of God forever and to live by them, it is evident that they must abide unshaken and without change. Therefore Moses, the prophet of God, speaketh after this manner: “To them nothing is to be added, and from them nothing is to be taken away.” And the divine Apostle glorying in them cries out, “which things the angels desire to look into,” and, “if an angel preach to you anything besides that which ye have received, let him be anathema.” Seeing these things are so, being thus well-testified unto us, we rejoice over them as he that hath found great spoil, and press to our bosom with gladness the divine canons, holding fast all the precepts of the same, complete and without change, whether they have been set forth by the holy trumpets of the Spirit, the renowned Apostles, or by the Six Ecumenical Councils, or by Councils locally assembled for promulgating the decrees of the said Ecumenical Councils, or by our holy Fathers. For all these, being illumined by the same Spirit, defined such things as were expedient. Accordingly those whom they placed under anathema, we likewise anathematize; those whom they deposed, we also depose; those whom they excommunicated, we also excommunicate; and those whom they delivered over to punishment, we subject to the same penalty. And now “let your conversation be without covetousness,” crieth out Paul the divine Apostle, who was caught up into the third heaven and heard unspeakable words.

Canon 2 on a bishop learning the Scriptures

Second Council of Nicaea, Canon 2, complete canonical text, Percival (1900). The later epitome and commentators' notes are omitted.

When we recite the psalter, we promise God: “I will meditate upon thy statutes, and will not forget thy words.” It is a salutary thing for all Christians to observe this, but it is especially incumbent upon those who have received the sacerdotal dignity. Therefore we decree, that every one who is raised to the rank of the episcopate shall know the psalter by heart, so that from it he may admonish and instruct all the clergy who are subject to him. And diligent examination shall be made by the metropolitan whether he be zealously inclined to read diligently, and not merely now and then, the sacred canons, the holy Gospel, and the book of the divine Apostle, and all other divine Scripture; and whether he lives according to God’s commandments, and also teaches the same to his people. For the special treasure

(οὐσία) of our high priesthood is the oracles which have been divinely delivered to us, that is the true science of the Divine Scriptures, as says Dionysius the Great. And if his mind be not set, and even glad, so to do and teach, let him not be ordained. For says God by the prophet, “Thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me.”

Canon 3 on secular appointments

Second Council of Nicaea, Canon 3, complete canonical text, Percival (1900). The later epitome and commentators' notes are omitted.

Let every election of a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, made by princes stand null, according to the canon which says: If any bishop making use of the secular powers shall by their means obtain jurisdiction over any church, he shall be deposed, and also excommunicated, together with all who remain in communion with him. For he who is raised to the episcopate must be chosen by bishops, as was decreed by the holy fathers of Nice in the canon which says: It is most fitting that a bishop be ordained by all the bishops in the province; but if this is difficult to arrange, either on account of urgent necessity, or because of the length of the journey, three bishops at least having met together and given their votes, those also who are absent having signified their assent by letters, the ordination shall take place. The confirmation of what is thus done, shall in each province be given by the metropolitan thereof.

The letter to Constantine VI and Irene gives a further view of the council's public voice. The bishops credit the rulers' initiative and describe themselves as restoring a neglected inheritance. Imperial praise is part of the letter's genre and political setting. It is evidence of how the assembly presented its work to its patrons, rather than an independent demonstration that every action of those patrons met the standards of the faith.

The synod writes to Constantine and Irene

Second Council of Nicaea, letter of the synod to the emperor and empress, in Percival (1900). Complete letter; source heading, bibliographic parenthesis, and footnotes omitted. The praise, condemnations, and claims of antiquity belong to the synod's address.

To our most religious and most serene princes, Constantine and Irene his mother. Tarasius, the unworthy bishop of your God-protected royal city, new Rome, and all the holy Council which met at the good pleasure of God and upon the command of your Christ-loving majesty in the renowned metropolis of Nice, the second council to assemble in this city.

Christ our God (who is the head of the Church) was glorified, most noble princes, when your heart, which he holds in his hands, gave forth that good word bidding us to assemble in his name, in order that we might strengthen our hold on the sure, immovable, and God-given truth contained in the Church’s dogmas. As your heads

were crowned with gold and most brilliant stones, so likewise were your minds adorned with the precepts of the Gospel and the teachings of the Fathers. And being the disciples and companions, as it were, of those whose sounds went forth into all the earth, ye became the leaders in the way of piety of all who bore the name of Christ, setting forth clearly the word of truth, and giving a brilliant example of orthodoxy and piety; so that ye were to the faithful as so many burning lamps. The Church which was ready to fall, ye upheld with your hands, strengthening it with sound doctrine, and bringing into the unity of a right judgment those who were at variance. We may therefore well say with boldness that it was through you that the good pleasure of God brought about the triumph of godliness, and filled our mouth with joy and our tongue with gladness. And these things our lips utter with a formal decree. For what is more glorious than to maintain the Church's interests; and what else is more calculated to provoke our gladness?

Certain men rose up, having the form of godliness, inasmuch as they were clothed with the dignity of the priesthood, but denying the power thereof; and thus deserving for themselves the charge of being but priests of Babylon. Of such the word of prophecy had before declared that "lawlessness went forth from the priests of Babylon." Nay more, they banded themselves together in a sanhedrim, like to that which Caiaphas held, and became the propagators of ungodly doctrines. And having a mouth full of cursing and bitterness, they thought to win the mastery by means of abusive words. With a slanderous tongue and a pen of a like character, and objecting to the very terms used by God himself, they devised marvellous tales, and then proceeded to stigmatise as idolaters the royal priesthood and the holy nation, even those who had put on Christ, and by his grace had been kept safe from the folly of idols. And having a mind set upon evil, they took in hand unlawful deeds, thinking to suppress altogether the depicting of the venerable images. Accordingly, as many icons as were set in mosaic work they dug out, and those which were in painted waxwork, they scraped away; thus turning the comely beauty of the sacred temples into complete disorder. Among doings of this sort, it is to be specially noted that the pictures set up on tablets in memory of Christ our God and of his Saints, they gave over to the flames. Finally, in a word, having desecrated our churches, they reduced them to utter confusion. Then some bishops became the leaders of this heresy and where before was peace, they fomented strife among the people; and instead of wheat sowed tares in the Church's fields. They mingled wine with water, and gave the foul draught to those about them. Although but Arabian wolves, they hid themselves under sheeps' clothing, and by specious reasoning against the truth sought to commend their lie. But all the while "they hatched asps' eggs and wove a spider's web," as says the prophet; and "he that would eat of their eggs, having crushed one, found it to be addled, with a basilisk within it," and giving forth a deadly stench.

In such a state of affairs, with a lie busy destroying the truth, ye, most gracious and most noble princes, did not idly allow so grave a plague, and such soul-destroying error long to continue in your day. But moved by the divine Spirit which abideth in

you, ye set yourselves with all your strength utterly to exterminate it, and thus preserve the stability of the Church's government, and likewise concord among your subjects; so that your whole empire might be established in peace agreeably with the name [Irene] you bear. Ye rightly reasoned, that it was not to be patiently endured, that while in other matters we could be of one mind and live in concord, yet in what ought to be the chief concern of our life, the peace of the Churches, there was amongst us strife and division. And that too, when Christ being our head, we ought to be members one of another, and one body, by our mutual agreement and faith. Accordingly, ye commanded our holy and numerously-attended council to assemble in the metropolis of Nice, in order that after having rid the Church of division, we might restore to unity the separated members, and might be careful to rend and utterly destroy the coarse cloak of false doctrine, which they had woven of thorn fibre, and unfold again the fair robe of orthodoxy.

And now having carefully traced the traditions of the Apostles and Fathers, we are bold to speak. Having but one mind by the inbreathing of the most Holy Spirit, and being all knit together in one, and understanding the harmonious tradition of the Catholic Church, we are in perfect harmony with the symphonies set forth by the six, holy and ecumenical councils; and accordingly we have anathematised the madness of Arius, the frenzy of Macedonius, the senseless understanding of Appolinarius, the man-worship of Nestorius, the irreverent mingling of the natures devised by Eutyches and Dioscorus, and the many-headed hydra which is their companion. We have also anathematised the idle tales of Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius; and the doctrine of one will held by Sergius, Honorius, Cyrus, and Pyrrhus, or rather, we have anathematised their own evil will. Finally, taught by the Spirit, from whom we have drawn pure water, we have with one accord and one soul, altogether wiped out with the sponge of the divine dogmas the newly devised heresy, well-worthy to be classed with those just mentioned, which springing up after them, uttered such empty nonsense about the sacred icons. And the contrivers of this vain, but revolutionary babbling we have cast forth far from the Church's precincts.

And as the hands and feet are moved in accordance with the directions of the mind, so likewise, we, having received the grace and strength of the Spirit, and having also the assistance and co-operation of your royal authority, have with one voice declared as piety and proclaimed as truth: that the sacred icons of our Lord Jesus Christ are to be had and retained, inasmuch as he was very man; also those which set forth what is historically narrated in the Gospels; and those which represent our undefiled Lady, the holy Mother of God; and likewise those of the Holy Angels (for they have manifested themselves in human form to those who were counted worthy of the vision of them), or of any of the Saints. [We have also decreed] that the brave deeds of the Saints be pourtrayed on tablets and on the walls, and upon the sacred vessels and vestments, as hath been the custom of the holy Catholic Church of God from ancient times; which custom was regarded as having the force of law in the teaching both of those holy leaders who lived in the first ages of the Church, and also of their successors our reverend Fathers. [We have likewise decreed] that these images are

to be reverenced (προσκυνεῖν), that is, salutations are to be offered to them. The reason for using the word is, that it has a two-fold signification. For κυνεῖν in the old Greek tongue signifies both “to salute” and “to kiss.” And the preposition προς gives to it the additional idea of strong desire towards the subject; as for example, we have φέρω and προσφέρω, κυρῶ and προσκυρῶ, and so also we have κυνέω and προσκυνέω. Which last word implies salutation and strong love; for that which one loves he also reverences (προσκυνεῖ) and what he reverences that he greatly loves, as the everyday custom, which we observe towards those we love, bears witness, and in which both ideas are practically illustrated when two friends meet together. The word is not only made use of by us, but we also find it set down in the Divine Scriptures by the ancients. For it is written in the histories of the Kings, “And David rose up and fell upon his face and did reverence to (προσεκυνήσε) Jonathan three times and kissed him” (1 Kings xx. 41). And what is it that the Lord in the Gospel says concerning the Pharisees? “They love the uppermost rooms at feasts and greetings (ἀσπασμοὺς) in the markets.” It is evident that by “greetings” here, he means reverence (προσκύνησιν) for the Pharisees being very high-minded and thinking themselves to be righteous were eager to be reverenced by all, but not [merely] to be kissed. For to receive salutations of this latter sort savoured too much of lowly humility, and this was not to the Pharisees’ liking. We have also the example of Paul the divine Apostle, as Luke in the Acts of the Apostles relates: “When we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly, and the day following Paul went in with us unto James, and all the presbyters were present. And when he had saluted (ἀσπασάμενος) them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry” (Acts xxi. 17, 18, 19). By the salutation here mentioned, the Apostle evidently intended to render that reverence of honour (τιμητικὴν προσκύνησιν) which we shew to one another, and of which he speaks when he says concerning Jacob, that “he reverenced (προσεκύνησεν) the top of his staff” (Heb. xi. 21). With these examples agrees what Gregory surnamed Theologus says: “Honour Bethlehem, and reverence (προσκυνήσον) the manger.”

Now who of those rightly and sincerely understanding the Divine Scriptures, has ever supposed that these examples which we have cited speak of the worship in spirit (τῆς ἐν πνεύματι λατρείας)? [Certainly no one has ever thought so] except perhaps some persons utterly bereft of sense and ignorant of all knowledge of the Scriptures and of the teaching of the Fathers. Surely Jacob did not adore (ἐλάτρευσεν) the top of his staff; and surely Gregory Theologus does not bid us to adore (λατρεύειν) the manger? By no means.

Again, when offering salutations to the life-giving Cross, we together sing: “We reverence (προσκυνῶμεν), thy cross, O Lord, and we also reverence (προσκυνῶμεν) the spear which opened the life-giving side of thy goodness.” This is clearly but a salutation, and is so called, and its character is evinced by our touching the things mentioned with our lips. We grant that the word προσκύνησις is frequently found in the Divine Scriptures and in the writings of our learned and holy Fathers for the worship in spirit (ἐπὶ της ἐν πνεύματι λατρείας), since, being a word of many

significations, it may be used to express that kind of reverence which is service. As there is also the veneration of honour, love and fear. In this sense it is, that we venerate your glorious and most noble majesty. So also there is another veneration which comes of fear alone, thus Jacob venerated Esau. Then there is the veneration of gratitude, as Abraham reverenced the sons of Heth, for the field which he received from them for a burying place for Sarah his wife. And finally, those looking to obtain some gift, venerate those who are above them, as Jacob venerated Pharaoh. Therefore because this term has these many significations, the Divine Scriptures teaching us, “Thou shalt venerate the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,” says simply that veneration is to be given to God, but does not add the word “only;” for veneration being a word of wide meaning is an ambiguous term; but it goes on to say “thou shalt serve (λατρεύσεις) him only,” for to God alone do we render latria.

The things which we have decreed, being thus well supported, it is confessedly and beyond all question acceptable and well-pleasing before God, that the images of our Lord Jesus Christ as man, and those of the undefiled Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, and of the honourable Angels and of all Saints, should be venerated and saluted. And if anyone does not so believe, but undertakes to debate the matter further and is evil affected with regard to the veneration due the sacred images, such an one our holy ecumenical council (fortified by the inward working of the Spirit of God, and by the traditions of the Fathers and of the Church) anathematises. Now anathema is nothing less than complete separation from God. For if any are quarrelsome and will not obediently accept what has now been decreed, they but kick against the pricks, and injure their own souls in their fighting against Christ. And in taking pleasure at the insults which are offered to the Church, they clearly shew themselves to be of those who madly make war upon piety, and are therefore to be regarded as in the same category with the heretics of old times, and their companions and brethren in ungodliness.

We have sent our brethren and fellow priests, God-beloved Bishops, together with certain of the Hegumenoi and clergy, that they may give a full report of our proceedings to your godly-hearing ears. In proof and confirmation of what we have decreed, and also for the assurance of your most religious majesty, we have submitted proofs from the Fathers, a few of the many we have gathered together in illustration of the brightly shining truth.

And now may the Saviour of us all, who reigns with you (συμβασιλεύων ὑμῖν) and who was pleased to vouchsafe his peace to the Churches through you, preserve your kingdom for many years, and also your council, princes, and faithful army, and the whole estate of the empire; and may he also give you victory over all your enemies. For he it is, who says: “As I live, saith the Lord, they that glorify me, I will glorify.” He it is also who hath girded you with strength, and will smite all your enemies, and make your people to rejoice.

And do thou, O city, the new Sion, rejoice and be glad; thou that art the wonder of the whole world. For although David hath not reigned in thee, nevertheless thy

> pious princes here preside over thy affairs as David would have done. The Lord is in the midst of thee; may his name be blessed forever and ever. Amen.

The letter's appeal to books, testimony, and ancestral practice illustrates how the memory of Nicaea became part of a much larger archive. The first council's authority was reinforced by placing it in a sequence of assemblies, saints, and received interpretations. That sequence could also become a reason to condemn a more recent council. For the bishops of 787, loyalty to the council of 325 did not require loyalty to the assembly of 754.

This episode makes it impossible to infer a council's authority from the fact that its members claimed divine guidance. Both sides could make that claim. Within the tradition, the judgment depended on agreement with the received faith and eventual ecclesiastical reception. Outside that framework, the historian can establish who assembled, what they said, how they argued, and how their decisions were contested. The historical record preserves a struggle over recognized authority, not an automatic rule that any imperial synod speaking confidently for the Spirit must be received.

18 Photius and the Procession of the Spirit

The first Nicene creed says little about the Holy Spirit. The fuller confession associated with Constantinople in 381 states that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. Later disputes concerned both the meaning of that procession and the authority to add and the Son, Filioque in Latin, to the creed. The argument involved an inherited common text, different theological vocabularies, and a conflict over who could authorize a change in the confession.

The ninth-century controversy associated with Photius brought these questions into especially sharp focus. In the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit transmitted under his name, the Son's words in John 15:26 become a decisive rule. If the Son himself says that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, Photius asks, what warrants treating the Son as another source of procession? His appeal is at once scriptural and conciliar: the councils receive what he understands the Lord to have taught.

The following new translation gives sections 2-7 of the Greek text printed in Patrologia Graeca 102. It is a connected opening argument, not a collection of later slogans. The printed text and apparatus preserve differences among manuscripts, including variation in the work's transmission and attribution. The traditional title Photius's Mystagogy identifies the printed work used here; it does not settle every question about its textual history. The English below was translated for this volume from the displayed Greek, with the facing nineteenth-century Latin used as a check.

Several terms require orientation. Cause refers here to the personal origin of Son and Spirit, not to their creation. Procession names the Spirit's distinctive origin; generation names the Son's. Bringing forth translates the related Greek language of production without implying a temporal manufacture. Photius's argument assumes the Son and Spirit are fully divine and equal. Its purpose is to protect the Father's particular relation as source while preserving that equality.

The opening case against procession from the Son

Photius, Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit, sections 2-7, Greek text in J.-P. Migne, Patrologia Graeca, volume 102, columns 280-288, incorporating Joseph Hergenröther's edition. New English translation prepared for this volume from the public-domain Greek; no modern English translation is reproduced. Section 1, a prefatory address, and all later sections are omitted. The paragraph break within section 2 separates its two movements; the numbering follows the printed Latin section numbers, alongside the Greek text. The printed apparatus and variants are not translated. The bracketed words you say in section 7 identify the opposing assertion to which Photius is replying.

2. First, then, against them stands a sharp and inescapable arrow: before all else, the Lord's voice, which strikes down and annihilates every beast and every fox. What voice is this? The one which says that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. The Son initiates us into the mystery that the Spirit proceeds from the Father; and do you seek another initiator, through whom you will be initiated - or rather, brought to ruin - in impiety, and invent the tale that the Spirit comes forth from the Son? If you have not shrunk from undertaking to make the teachings of the common Savior, Creator, and Lawgiver yield to your own folly, what else could anyone seek to find by which to refute your impious zeal decisively? If you transgress the Master's laws, which of the pious will not abhor your opinion? What else could raise you from your fall? What ingenuity of treatment could heal the wound throughout your body - not a wound inflicted by the Savior's word, but one deepened by a self-chosen disease, since you have stubbornly striven, through disobedience, to turn the remedy of the Master's teaching into an unspeakable poison?

2 continued. Or rather, the man who sought to go over to their side has run beneath the sword that defends us and is directed against our enemies. Therefore, though you already lie prostrate under the Spirit's two-edged sword, we too, displaying our affection and readiness for the common Master, will not through neglect allow you to escape the wounds inflicted by the arguments of our sacred strategy, which arm us and set us in battle array.

3. Further, if the Son comes forth from one cause, the Father, and the Spirit also, the Spirit by procession and the Son by generation, but the Son in turn brings forth the Spirit, as this blasphemy asserts, how does a consistent account not compel the assertion that the Spirit also brings forth the Son? For since both have come forth equally from the cause, if one supplies to the other the service of a cause in the other's coming forth, the other must not withhold that reciprocal service, if the unalterable order of their equal rank is to be preserved.

4. Again, if the Son is brought forth from the Father in an ineffable generation, but the Spirit is referred to a double cause and subsists by a double bringing forth, how will the Spirit not be composite? How will the equally honored Spirit not be blasphemously declared inferior to the Son? How will the simplicity of the Trinity stand firm, when you dare to utter language of this impiety?

5. Which of our sacred and renowned Fathers said that the Spirit proceeds from the Son? What council, established and celebrated for its universal confession, supported this? Or rather, what assembly of priests and bishops, guided by the Spirit, did not condemn in advance this conception contrary to the Spirit? For, instructed by the Lord's own teaching, they proclaimed clearly and magnificently that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. Those who did not think in this way they subjected to anathema as despisers of the catholic and apostolic Church. Looking forward from ancient times with prophetic eyes upon the impiety then first appearing, they condemned it in writing, in words, and in resolutions together with the many forms of apostasy that had preceded it. The second of the ecumenical and holy councils defined that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father; the third received it, the fourth confirmed it, the fifth gave its agreement, the sixth joined in its assent, and the seventh splendidly sealed it. Through each of these it is clear and manifest that the pious confession was made that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, and not from the Son. What herd, teaching impiety, has changed you and drawn you to place upon your neck the unlawful opinions of those who legislate against the Master?

6. Their presumption, which fights against God, is refuted from another direction also. Everything common belongs to an undifferentiated, indivisible, simple, and unitary communion. If, then, such things belong to the Spirit and the Father, they belong also to the Son; likewise, whatever is contemplated and predicated in the Spirit and the Son is confessed to belong also to the Father. Nor is anything belonging to the Son and the Father taken away from the Spirit: kingship, goodness, supersubstantial being, power beyond conception, eternity, incorporeality, and a thousand other and innumerable attributes by which the most divine doctrine of the divinity has been handed down to the pious from the beginning. If these things are thus understood, none of the Christians will venture to fight against them. But if, as the heretical argument arrogantly insists, bringing forth the Spirit is common to the Father and the Son, the Spirit too would be divided in its own procession - what manifold impiety! - with one part bringing forth and another being brought forth, one part cause and another caused, and a great swarm of other acts of war against God.

7. But the Spirit proceeds from the Son, [you say]. What does it receive in addition that it did not have when proceeding from the Father? For if there is something to receive and to identify as what it has received, how is it not imperfect without the addition - or indeed even after receiving it? But if it has received nothing - for here too the other consequences follow, including its being double and composite, separated from the simple and uncompounded nature - what is the point of a procession that is unable to bring anything further?

Where the argument is strongest

The strongest historical point is that the received Greek creed did not contain the Latin addition. Photius appeals to an identifiable text and a sequence of councils that received it. One does not need to accept every deduction in the Mystagogy to recognize the difference between quoting that text and expanding it. The dispute over authority to change a common confession survives even if a theologian believes the proposed addition expresses a true doctrine.

His strongest theological concern is also intelligible: a second source must not divide the Spirit into two components or make the Spirit's divinity depend on completing something the Father supplies imperfectly. Sections 4 and 7 turn this concern into questions. What does procession from the Son add? If it supplies what was lacking, the first procession seems deficient; if it supplies nothing, what does the extra formula explain? These are objections directed to the coherence of an account, not merely an objection to a disliked Latin word.

There is nevertheless a substantial question about whether the argument describes the strongest Latin position. A Latin defender can deny that Father and Son are two independent or competing causes. The claim that the Spirit proceeds from them as one principle aims precisely to avoid the division Photius attacks. A satisfactory comparison must therefore ask whether that answer is coherent and whether its principle corresponds to the Greek sense of cause. It cannot simply repeat that two named persons necessarily mean two separate sources.

Section 3 contains a further step that needs examination. Photius argues that if the Son contributes to the Spirit's origin, equal rank would require the Spirit to contribute to the Son's origin. Equality of nature alone does not obviously require every personal relation to be reversible. Photius himself receives the nonreversible relations of Father, Son, and Spirit. His objection has force within a particular understanding of what can be common to two divine persons without belonging to the third, but it is not an uncontroversial rule that equal persons must stand in identical relations.

Section 6 presses that same issue through common divine attributes. It contends that what belongs commonly to Father and Son must also belong to the Spirit; otherwise the Spirit would lack something divine. If spiration is made a common divine attribute, the Spirit seems required to participate in causing its own origin. Latin theology answers by distinguishing an essential attribute from a relation or notional act. The disagreement thus reaches the architecture of the two accounts. It cannot be resolved simply by translating every occurrence of procession and cause as if the vocabularies mapped perfectly.

The councils as a chain of authorization

In section 5, the second ecumenical council is the council associated with the fuller creed of 381. The first council of Nicaea did not itself state the clause about procession from the Father in that expanded form. Photius knows that he is invoking a sequence of authorities: the second defines, and the third through seventh receive and confirm. The sequence gives his argument a historical structure, even though his conclusion about what every council thereby excludes remains an interpretation.

The omitted first section is a prefatory address; the later work develops many additional arguments, scriptural readings, and discussions of earlier authorities. These opening sections do not exhaust its reasoning. They do establish why an Eastern critic could regard the Latin addition as a challenge to Nicene fidelity while fully affirming the divinity of Son and Spirit. Criticism of an addition to the creed was not necessarily criticism of Nicaea. In this case it was advanced in the name of preserving Nicaea's received inheritance.

19 Mark of Ephesus Refuses the Council of Union

By the fifteenth century, the appeal to Nicaea could support sharply opposed judgments about a later council. The assembly of Ferrara-Florence in 1438-1439 sought union between the Greek and Latin churches. Its supporters argued that their accounts of the Spirit's procession could be reconciled and that a common confession could express the agreement. Mark Eugenikos, metropolitan of Ephesus, refused the settlement. His subsequent letter to George Scholarius shows how a defender of councils could denounce a particular council as a betrayal of their inheritance.

The letter belongs to the period after the Florentine settlement of 1439. It addresses a learned fellow Greek, not a Latin opponent. Mark accuses Scholarius of retreating from a firm defense of inherited faith toward a middle position. The form is personal exhortation and rebuke. Mark speaks as if he knows why his correspondent hesitates, attributing weakness to threats, honors, fine clothes, and worldly standing. These accusations reveal his polemical interpretation of Scholarius's conduct; they are not proof that those motives exhaust the man's reasoning.

Scholarius later became the patriarch Gennadius II under Ottoman rule. That later role should not be silently moved backward into this exchange. In the letter Mark calls him George and urges him toward the anti-unionist position. The source thus preserves a disagreement within the Greek learned world before later commemorations made the two men appear as a uniformly aligned pair.

The reference to the present council concerns Florence, not the first council at Nicaea. Mark's borrowed language about a council of Caiaphas comes from Gregory of Nazianzus's Oration 21, section 22, describing the fourth-century synodal sequence associated with Seleucia and Constantinople. Mark deliberately transfers that language to his own controversy. He is not claiming that Gregory witnessed Florence or condemned it by name.

The Florentine settlement: one principle and one spiration

Council of Florence, Laetentur caeli, 6 July 1439, session VI, doctrinal passage on the Spirit's procession, from Quod Spiritus sanctus to symbolo fuisse appositam. New English rendering for this volume from the Latin, as reproduced by the Holy See; the source identifies Bullarium Romanum, Turin edition, volume V (1860), pages 39-41, among its printed witnesses. The opening declaration, historical preamble, and subsequent decisions on other subjects are omitted. Spiration names the breathing forth of the Spirit in the Latin theological vocabulary; it does not mean a physical breath. No modern English translation is reproduced.

The Holy Spirit is eternally from the Father and the Son, and has his essence and his subsistent being from the Father together with the Son, and proceeds eternally from both as from one principle and by one spiration. We declare that when the holy teachers and fathers say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, their meaning is that the Son also, like the Father, is, according to the Greeks, cause, and according to the Latins, principle of the Holy Spirit's subsistence.

And since the Father, in begetting his only-begotten Son, gave him everything that belongs to the Father except being Father, the Son eternally has from the Father this very thing: that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son. From the Father he is also eternally begotten. We further define that the explanation in the words 'and the Son' was lawfully and reasonably added to the creed for the sake of declaring the truth and because of the necessity then pressing.

The letter to George Scholarius

Mark of Ephesus, letter to George Scholarius, after the Council of Florence. New English translation for this volume from the Greek text, compared with Louis Petit's Greek and Latin edition, Documents relatifs au Concile de Florence II, Patrologia Orientalis 17, part 2 (1923), document XVI, printed pages 460-464; also printed in Patrologia Graeca 160, columns 1092-1096. The complete letter is reproduced; the modern Greek transcription's paragraph breaks are followed. No modern English translation has been copied. Mark's quotation of Gregory is translated as Mark quotes it, rather than replaced by a different English edition of Gregory.

To Scholarius, from the bishop of Ephesus. Most illustrious, most wise, most learned, and to me most beloved brother and spiritual son, master George: I pray God that you may be healthy in soul and body, and prosper in all things. By his mercy I too am in moderately good bodily health.

As great as was the pleasure you gave us when you took the side of right belief and of the pious conviction of our fathers, and defended the truth condemned by unjust judges, so great, on the contrary, was the sorrow and despondency that filled us when we heard that you had changed again, were thinking and speaking the opposite, and were joining those bad stewards in their compromises and accommodations.

Are these fine things, worthy of a philosopher's soul? I was already thinking of weaving praises for you, and had in mind the great Gregory, who bears the name

Theologian, praising a certain philosopher Heron who resisted the error of the Arians: 'because,' he says, 'his noble body was torn with thongs, and he was sent into exile.' But you, without experiencing any painful trial, apparently frightened by threats alone, or persuaded by promises of gifts and honors, have so easily betrayed the truth again.

Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, that I may weep for the daughter of Zion? I mean the philosopher's soul, blown about and carried away like chaff from a summer threshing floor. But perhaps you will say that the change has not been to the opposite side: we are looking for some middle position and accommodation.

Never, my friend, have the affairs of the church been set right through a middle position. There is no middle between truth and falsehood. Just as one who has gone outside the light must be in darkness, so we may truly say that one who has turned even a little aside from truth is henceforth subject to falsehood. One can indeed speak of an intermediate condition between light and darkness, called dawn or twilight. But no one could conceive a middle between truth and falsehood, however much he labored.

Hear how Gregory, great in theology, praises the council of the middle position: 'Whether it should be called the tower of Chalane, which rightly divided the tongues - would that it had divided these also, for their agreement was for evil - or the council of Caiaphas, by which Christ is condemned, or some other such name: that council overturned and confused everything. It destroyed the pious and ancient doctrine which gives equal honor to the Trinity by setting up a palisade and shaking down the consubstantial with engines of war; it opened a door to impiety through the ambiguity of what was written. For they became wise in doing evil, but did not know how to do good.'

Do these words not apply to our present council also? Very much so, I would say, except that, though it wished to make much use of ambiguity and double dealing, it could not, because those who paid its wages prevented it. For that reason it openly burst out with the blasphemy that pleased them; or rather, in the prophet's words, they hatched asps' eggs and weave a spider's web. The definition composed and named by them is indeed a spider's web.

Let them not deceive us by retreating again to an intermediate position and double dealing. They remain a council of Caiaphas as long as the union they have made overshadows the church.

How long, unhappy man, will you occupy the nobility and generous spirit of your soul with empty things? How long the dreams? Let the truth at last become your serious concern. Flee Egypt without turning back; flee Sodom and Gomorrah; save yourself on the mountain, lest you be swept away with them. But do a little empty reputation, falsely named wealth, and your elegant, bright little cloaks hold you back, together with the other things that make up worldly prosperity? Alas for the philosopher's unphilosophical understanding!

Consider those before you who enjoyed similar distinctions. Tomorrow you too will go down to Hades, leaving everything above ground behind. You will be required to give a most exact account of your life, just as the falsely named council will be required to answer for the blood of the souls being lost: those scandalized concerning the mystery of faith; those who received into their souls the intolerable and unforgivable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, daring to refer the Spirit's existence to two principles; those subjected to unlawful and ridiculous Latin customs; those who drew down upon their own heads the curses and anathemas against innovation in the faith.

But will the union they have made preserve and advance our people? Certainly! Do you not see the enemies of the cross fleeing, one of us pursuing a thousand, and two putting ten thousand to flight? In fact, we see the exact opposite. Unless the Lord builds our dominion, its builders have labored in vain; unless the Lord guards our city, those guarding it with the pope's gold have watched in vain.

Come, then: turn your whole self to the Lord. Leave the dead to bury their own dead; leave Caesar's things to Caesar. Give God the soul which he created and adorned. Consider how greatly you stand in his debt, and render what you owe. Yes, I beg you, dearest and wisest friend: let me rejoice over you; let me give glory to God, who may preserve you above every grievous encounter. The humble metropolitan of Ephesus and of all Asia, Mark.

The argument about a middle position

Mark's charge that the union gives the Spirit two principles should now be compared with the decree's express wording, one principle and one spiration. The literal charge does not accurately repeat what Florence defines. His objection must instead be that assigning a role in the Spirit's origin to both Father and Son entails two causes despite the decree's denial. That is a substantive criticism, but it requires an argument about the account's coherence.

Florence also locates the Son's contribution in what he eternally receives from the Father, reserving being Father to the Father alone. This answers the crude picture of two independent divine sources. The remaining disagreement is whether this received capacity to spirate preserves the Father's distinctive causality or communicates to the Son a property that must belong to the Father alone. The preceding Photius selection supplies arguments for the latter position; the decree states the alternative readers must test against them.

Mark's image of light and darkness gives force to a refusal to compromise a known truth. It does not by itself decide whether different expressions contradict one another. The document makes a further, distinct claim that Filioque was a lawful addition to the creed. Even if its doctrinal explanation were accepted, the authority to alter a common confession would still require examination.

Imperial survival and religious fidelity

Mark also attacks the expectation that union will secure the polity. His sarcastic question about enemies fleeing invokes biblical promises of victory, followed immediately by the observation that events show the opposite. It is not a neutral military assessment, and his mention of the pope's gold belongs to his polemical argument. It does establish his refusal to make promised political advantage the sufficient ground for doctrinal agreement.

This is a different alignment of creed and power from the celebration of Constantine in the earliest readings. Here an Orthodox bishop opposes an imperial project of ecclesiastical union because he believes it compromises the faith. The same Nicene inheritance that once accompanied an emperor's unifying assembly can become a standard by which a later imperial settlement is rejected. Political sponsorship could assist a council, but did not guarantee its reception by everyone who affirmed the older councils.

Mark's threatened judgment concerns teachers whom he holds responsible for endangering souls through a false account of the Spirit. This explains the urgency of his rebuke. His accusations of corrupt motives supply no independent answer to the decree's doctrinal claims.

What this medieval witness establishes

The letter shows a later Eastern Christian reasoning from Nicaea's authority, Gregory's example, and a received Trinitarian account toward opposition to a new assembly. His criticism does not belong to a simple modern story in which believers trust councils and skeptics reject them. He trusts councils he regards as faithful and rejects a council he regards as a departure. The difficult question becomes how the church recognizes the difference.

The inherited confession also supplies Mark with a limit on negotiation: the faith does not belong to delegates to amend for a useful settlement. More than eleven centuries of reception had involved arguments about Nicaea's implications, including appeals to its authority against the powers calling a later council together.

Part IV The Latin West from Augustine to Aquinas

20 Augustine on the Son and the Authority of Councils

Augustine inherited a church in which the Nicene confession had already acquired a history. Born in 354, he was not present at the council of 325. His mature treatment of the Trinity belongs to the early fifth century, when the equality of Father and Son could be expounded through a sustained reading of Scripture rather than defended only through a narrative of the original controversy. His starting point is a received confession, but the confession does not relieve him of the obligation to explain it. The selected chapters ask why the Son may be called fully divine and why biblical statements of inferiority do not, in his judgment, contradict that claim.

The decisive argument appears in his reading of the opening of John's Gospel. Everything that was made was made through the Word. If the Word himself were a made thing, Augustine reasons, the statement would contain an unexplained exception at precisely the point where it claims universality. He therefore divides being into God and creation and places the Word on the divine side. The conclusion does more than attach an honorific title to Christ. It excludes an intermediate class in which the Son could be more exalted than every other creature while remaining a creature himself. Readers have already encountered this boundary in Athanasius; Augustine shows its continuing force in Latin theology.

The argument depends on more than the isolated word God. A biblical writer can use divine language in several senses, and a controversialist can select verses favoring either exaltation or subordination. Augustine's claim concerns the connected account of creation, incarnation, and divine identity. The same Word through whom things were made becomes human. Consequently, language about the Son's obedience, suffering, or inferiority must be interpreted alongside language about his eternal equality. Augustine distinguishes the form of God from the form of a servant, using the language of Philippians. This distinction supplies his rule for reading passages that otherwise appear contradictory.

That rule has a theological cost as well as an explanatory advantage. It asks the reader to distinguish what is predicated of Christ according to his divinity from what is predicated according to the humanity he assumed. Anyone who rejects that distinction will find some of Augustine's solutions unpersuasive. Yet the distinction also prevents a simpler distortion: turning every statement about the earthly Jesus into a statement about the limits of the eternal divine nature. The interpretation must be tested against the whole sequence of his reasoning, including his insistence that the incarnation does not convert God into a changeable creature.

A second reading places this doctrinal confidence beside Augustine's account of ecclesiastical authority. In On Baptism he argues against Donatist appeals to Cyprian, a revered third-century bishop who supported baptizing people received from heretical communities. The immediate dispute concerns baptism and communion, not the Nicene definition of the Son. Augustine distinguishes the canonical Scriptures, individual episcopal writings, regional councils, and plenary councils. His acknowledgment that earlier plenary councils may be corrected by later ones is unusually direct. It gives us an important piece of his account of authority, but it should not be detached from the controversy and converted into a declaration that every council's creed is provisional in the same way.

The combination is instructive. Augustine believes that the church confesses a truth about God that demands fidelity. He also believes that bishops can err, that revered predecessors must be interpreted critically, and that councils differ in scope and authority. His Catholicism contains an account of correction within communion. The modern reader need not agree with every level of his hierarchy to recognize that it is more complicated than a choice between unanswerable institutions and isolated private judgment.

Augustine, On the Trinity, Book I, Chapters 4-7, paragraphs 7-14. Translation by Arthur West Haddan, revised and annotated by W. G. T. Shedd, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, first series, volume 3, 1887. The four chapters are reproduced in sequence. The historical edition's editorial chapter summaries, marginal references, and footnotes are omitted; Augustine's paragraph numbers are retained.

On the Trinity I 4

7. All those Catholic expounders of the divine Scriptures, both Old and New, whom I have been able to read, who have written before me concerning the Trinity, Who is God, have purposed to teach, according to the Scriptures, this doctrine, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit intimate a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality; and therefore that they are not three Gods, but one God: although the Father hath begotten the Son, and so He who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father, and so He who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, Himself also co-equal with the Father and the Son, and pertaining to the unity of the Trinity. Yet not that this Trinity was born of the Virgin Mary, and crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven, but only the Son. Nor, again, that this Trinity descended in the form of a dove upon Jesus when He was baptized; nor that, on the day of Pentecost, after the ascension of the Lord, when “there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind,” the same Trinity “sat upon each of them with cloven tongues like as of fire,” but only the Holy Spirit. Nor yet that this Trinity said from heaven, “Thou art my Son,” whether when He was baptized by John, or when the three disciples were with Him in the mount, or when the voice sounded, saying, “I

have both glorified it, and will glorify it again;” but that it was a word of the Father only, spoken to the Son; although the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as they are indivisible, so work indivisibly. This is also my faith, since it is the Catholic faith.

On the Trinity I 5

8. Some persons, however, find a difficulty in this faith; when they hear that the Father is God, and the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God, and yet that this Trinity is not three Gods, but one God; and they ask how they are to understand this: especially when it is said that the Trinity works indivisibly in everything that God works, and yet that a certain voice of the Father spoke, which is not the voice of the Son; and that none except the Son was born in the flesh, and suffered, and rose again, and ascended into heaven; and that none except the Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove. They wish to understand how the Trinity uttered that voice which was only of the Father; and how the same Trinity created that flesh in which the Son only was born of the Virgin; and how the very same Trinity itself wrought that form of a dove, in which the Holy Spirit only appeared. Yet, otherwise, the Trinity does not work indivisibly, but the Father does some things, the Son other things, and the Holy Spirit yet others: or else, if they do some things together, some severally, then the Trinity is not indivisible. It is a difficulty, too, to them, in what manner the Holy Spirit is in the Trinity, whom neither the Father nor the Son, nor both, have begotten, although He is the Spirit both of the Father and of the Son. Since, then, men weary us with asking such questions, let us unfold to them, as we are able, whatever wisdom God’s gift has bestowed upon our weakness on this subject; neither “let us go on our way with consuming envy.” Should we say that we are not accustomed to think about such things, it would not be true; yet if we acknowledge that such subjects commonly dwell in our thoughts, carried away as we are by the love of investigating the truth, then they require of us, by the law of charity, to make known to them what we have herein been able to find out. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect” (for, if the Apostle Paul, how much more must I, who lie far beneath his feet, count myself not to have apprehended!); but, according to my measure, “if I forget those things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, and press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling,” I am requested to disclose so much of the road as I have already passed, and the point to which I have reached, whence the course yet remains to bring me to the end. And those make the request, whom a generous charity compels me to serve. Needs must too, and God will grant that, in supplying them with matter to read, I shall profit myself also; and that, in seeking to reply to their inquiries, I shall myself likewise find that for which I was inquiring. Accordingly I have undertaken the task, by the bidding and help of the Lord my God, not so much of discoursing with authority respecting things I know already, as of learning those things by piously discoursing of them.

On the Trinity I 6

9. They who have said that our Lord Jesus Christ is not God, or not very God, or not with the Father the One and only God, or not truly immortal because changeable, are proved wrong by the most plain and unanimous voice of divine testimonies; as, for instance, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” For it is plain that we are to take the Word of God to be the only Son of God, of whom it is afterwards said, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” on account of that birth of His incarnation, which was wrought in time of the Virgin. But herein is declared, not only that He is God, but also that He is of the same substance with the Father; because, after saying, “And the Word was God,” it is said also, “The same was in the beginning with God: all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made.” Not simply “all things;” but only all things that were made, that is; the whole creature. From which it appears clearly, that He Himself was not made, by whom all things were made. And if He was not made, then He is not a creature; but if He is not a creature, then He is of the same substance with the Father. For all substance that is not God is creature; and all that is not creature is God. And if the Son is not of the same substance with the Father, then He is a substance that was made: and if He is a substance that was made, then all things were not made by Him; but “all things were made by Him,” therefore He is of one and the same substance with the Father. And so He is not only God, but also very God. And the same John most expressly affirms this in his epistle: “For we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know the true God, and that we may be in His true Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

10. Hence also it follows by consequence, that the Apostle Paul did not say, “Who alone has immortality,” of the Father merely; but of the One and only God, which is the Trinity itself. For that which is itself eternal life is not mortal according to any changeableness; and hence the Son of God, because “He is Eternal Life,” is also Himself understood with the Father, where it is said, “Who only hath immortality.” For we, too, are made partakers of this eternal life, and become, in our own measure, immortal. But the eternal life itself, of which we are made partakers, is one thing; we ourselves, who, by partaking of it, shall live eternally, are another. For if He had said, “Whom in His own time the Father will show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality;” not even so would it be necessarily understood that the Son is excluded. For neither has the Son separated the Father from Himself, because He Himself, speaking elsewhere with the voice of wisdom (for He Himself is the Wisdom of God), says, “I alone compassed the circuit of heaven.” And therefore so much the more is it not necessary that the words, “Who hath immortality,” should be understood of the Father alone, omitting the Son; when they are said thus: “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: whom in His own time He will show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light

which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.” In which words neither is the Father specially named, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit; but the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; that is, the One and only and true God, the Trinity itself.

11. But perhaps what follows may interfere with this meaning; because it is said, “Whom no man hath seen, nor can see:” although this may also be taken as belonging to Christ according to His divinity, which the Jews did not see, who yet saw and crucified Him in the flesh; whereas His divinity can in no wise be seen by human sight, but is seen with that sight with which they who see are no longer men, but beyond men. Rightly, therefore, is God Himself, the Trinity, understood to be the “blessed and only Potentate,” who “shows the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in His own time.” For the words, “Who only hath immortality,” are said in the same way as it is said, “Who only doeth wondrous things.” And I should be glad to know of whom they take these words to be said. If only of the Father, how then is that true which the Son Himself says, “For what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise?” Is there any, among wonderful works, more wonderful than to raise up and quicken the dead? Yet the same Son saith, “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will.” How, then, does the Father alone “do wondrous things,” when these words allow us to understand neither the Father only, nor the Son only, but assuredly the one only true God, that is, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

12. Also, when the same apostle says, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him,” who can doubt that he speaks of all things which are created; as does John, when he says, “All things were made by Him”? I ask, therefore, of whom he speaks in another place: “For of Him, and through Him, and in Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” For if of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so as to assign each clause severally to each person: of Him, that is to say, of the Father; through Him, that is to say, through the Son; in Him, that is to say, in the Holy Spirit, - it is manifest that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one God, inasmuch as the words continue in the singular number, “To whom be glory for ever.” For at the beginning of the passage he does not say, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge” of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Spirit, but “of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” “How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and in Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” But if they will have this to be understood only of the Father, then in what way are all things by the Father, as is said here; and all things by the Son, as where it is said to the Corinthians, “And one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things,” and as in the Gospel of John, “All things were made by Him?” For if some things were made by the

Father, and some by the Son, then all things were not made by the Father, nor all things by the Son; but if all things were made by the Father, and all things by the Son, then the same things were made by the Father and by the Son. The Son, therefore, is equal with the Father, and the working of the Father and the Son is indivisible. Because if the Father made even the Son, whom certainly the Son Himself did not make, then all things were not made by the Son; but all things were made by the Son: therefore He Himself was not made, that with the Father He might make all things that were made. And the apostle has not refrained from using the very word itself, but has said most expressly, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;” using here the name of God specially of the Father; as elsewhere, “But the head of Christ is God.”

13. Similar evidence has been collected also concerning the Holy Spirit, of which those who have discussed the subject before ourselves have most fully availed themselves, that He too is God, and not a creature. But if not a creature, then not only God (for men likewise are called gods), but also very God; and therefore absolutely equal with the Father and the Son, and in the unity of the Trinity consubstantial and co-eternal. But that the Holy Spirit is not a creature is made quite plain by that passage above all others, where we are commanded not to serve the creature, but the Creator; not in the sense in which we are commanded to “serve” one another by love, which is in Greek δουλεύειν, but in that in which God alone is served, which is in Greek λατρεύειν. From whence they are called idolaters who tender that service to images which is due to God. For it is this service concerning which it is said, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” For this is found also more distinctly in the Greek Scriptures, which have λατρεύσεις. Now if we are forbidden to serve the creature with such a service, seeing that it is written, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (and hence, too, the apostle repudiates those who worship and serve the creature more than the Creator), then assuredly the Holy Spirit is not a creature, to whom such a service is paid by all the saints; as says the apostle, “For we are the circumcision, which serve the Spirit of God,” which is in the Greek λατρεύοντες. For even most Latin copies also have it thus, “We who serve the Spirit of God;” but all Greek ones, or almost all, have it so. Although in some Latin copies we find, not “We worship the Spirit of God,” but, “We worship God in the Spirit.” But let those who err in this case, and refuse to give up to the more weighty authority, tell us whether they find this text also varied in the mss.: “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?” Yet what can be more senseless or more profane, than that any one should dare to say that the members of Christ are the temple of one who, in their opinion, is a creature inferior to Christ? For the apostle says in another place, “Your bodies are members of Christ.” But if the members of Christ are also the temple of the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit is not a creature; because we must needs owe to Him, of whom our body is the temple, that service wherewith God only is to be served, which in Greek is called λατρεία. And accordingly the apostle says, “Therefore glorify God in your body.”

On the Trinity I 7

14. In these and like testimonies of the divine Scriptures, by free use of which, as I have said, our predecessors exploded such sophistries or errors of the heretics, the unity and equality of the Trinity are intimated to our faith. But because, on account of the incarnation of the Word of God for the working out of our salvation, that the man Christ Jesus might be the Mediator between God and men, many things are so said in the sacred books as to signify, or even most expressly declare, the Father to be greater than the Son; men have erred through a want of careful examination or consideration of the whole tenor of the Scriptures, and have endeavored to transfer those things which are said of Jesus Christ according to the flesh, to that substance of His which was eternal before the incarnation, and is eternal. They say, for instance, that the Son is less than the Father, because it is written that the Lord Himself said, “My Father is greater than I.” But the truth shows that after the same sense the Son is less also than Himself; for how was He not made less also than Himself, who “emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant?” For He did not so take the form of a servant as that He should lose the form of God, in which He was equal to the Father. If, then, the form of a servant was so taken that the form of God was not lost, since both in the form of a servant and in the form of God He Himself is the same only-begotten Son of God the Father, in the form of God equal to the Father, in the form of a servant the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; is there any one who cannot perceive that He Himself in the form of God is also greater than Himself, but yet likewise in the form of a servant less than Himself? And not, therefore, without cause the Scripture says both the one and the other, both that the Son is equal to the Father, and that the Father is greater than the Son. For there is no confusion when the former is understood as on account of the form of God, and the latter as on account of the form of a servant. And, in truth, this rule for clearing the question through all the sacred Scriptures is set forth in one chapter of an epistle of the Apostle Paul, where this distinction is commended to us plainly enough. For he says, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and was found in fashion as a man.” The Son of God, then, is equal to God the Father in nature, but less in “fashion.” For in the form of a servant which He took He is less than the Father; but in the form of God, in which also He was before He took the form of a servant, He is equal to the Father. In the form of God He is the Word, “by whom all things are made;” but in the form of a servant He was “made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” In like manner, in the form of God He made man; in the form of a servant He was made man. For if the Father alone had made man without the Son, it would not have been written, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Therefore, because the form of God took the form of a servant, both is God and both is man; but both God, on account of God who takes; and both man, on account of man who is taken. For neither by that taking is the one of them turned and changed into the other: the Divinity is not changed into the creature, so as to cease to be Divinity; nor the creature into Divinity, so as to cease to be creature.

Augustine, On Baptism against the Donatists, Book II, Chapters 2-4, paragraphs 3-5. Translation by J. R. King, revised and annotated by Chester D. Hartranft, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, first series, volume 4, 1887. These three consecutive chapters are a separate selection from a different work. Original footnotes and chapter labels are omitted; the paragraph numbers remain. The quoted address of Cyprian belongs to Augustine's argument and is retained.

On Baptism II 2

3. "When, on the calends of September, very many bishops from the provinces of Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania, with their presbyters and deacons, had met together at Carthage, a great part of the laity also being present; and when the letter addressed by Jubaianus to Cyprian, as also the answer of Cyprian to Jubaianus, on the subject of baptizing heretics, had been read, Cyprian said: ‘Ye have heard, most beloved colleagues, what Jubaianus, our fellow-bishop, has written to me, consulting my moderate ability concerning the unlawful and profane baptism of heretics, and what answer I gave him, - giving a judgment which we have once and again and often given, that heretics coming to the Church ought to be baptized, and sanctified with the baptism of the Church. Another letter of Jubaianus has likewise been read to you, in which, agreeably to his sincere and religious devotion, in answer to our epistle, he not only expressed his assent, but returned thanks also, acknowledging that he had received instruction. It remains that we severally declare our opinion on this subject, judging no one, nor depriving any one of the right of communion if he differ from us. For no one of us sets himself up as a bishop of bishops, or, by tyrannical terror, forces his colleagues to a necessity of obeying, inasmuch as every bishop, in the free use of his liberty and power, has the right of forming his own judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he can himself judge another. But we must all await the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone has the power both of setting us in the government of His Church, and of judging of our acts therein.’"

On Baptism II 3

4. Now let the proud and swelling necks of the heretics raise themselves, if they dare, against the holy humility of this address. Ye mad Donatists, whom we desire earnestly to return to the peace and unity of the holy Church, that ye may receive health therein, what have ye to say in answer to this? You are wont, indeed, to bring up against us the letters of Cyprian, his opinion, his Council; why do ye claim the authority of Cyprian for your schism, and reject his example when it makes for the peace of the Church? But who can fail to be aware that the sacred canon of Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, is confined within its own limits, and that it stands so absolutely in a superior position to all later letters of the bishops, that about it we can hold no manner of doubt or disputation whether what is confessedly contained in it is right and true; but that all the letters of bishops which have been written, or are being written, since the closing of the canon, are liable to

be refuted if there be anything contained in them which strays from the truth, either by the discourse of some one who happens to be wiser in the matter than themselves, or by the weightier authority and more learned experience of other bishops, by the authority of Councils; and further, that the Councils themselves, which are held in the several districts and provinces, must yield, beyond all possibility of doubt, to the authority of plenary Councils which are formed for the whole Christian world; and that even of the plenary Councils, the earlier are often corrected by those which follow them, when, by some actual experiment, things are brought to light which were before concealed, and that is known which previously lay hid, and this without any whirlwind of sacrilegious pride, without any puffing of the neck through arrogance, without any strife of envious hatred, simply with holy humility, catholic peace, and Christian charity?

On Baptism II 4

5. Wherefore the holy Cyprian, whose dignity is only increased by his humility, who so loved the pattern set by Peter as to use the words, "Giving us thereby a pattern of concord and patience, that we should not pertinaciously love our own opinions, but should rather account as our own any true and rightful suggestions of our brethren and colleagues, for the common health and weal," - he, I say, abundantly shows that he was most willing to correct his own opinion, if any one should prove to him that it is as certain that the baptism of Christ can be given by those who have strayed from the fold, as that it could not be lost when they strayed; on which subject we have already said much. Nor should we ourselves venture to assert anything of the kind, were we not supported by the unanimous authority of the whole Church, to which he himself would unquestionably have yielded, if at that time the truth of this question had been placed beyond dispute by the investigation and decree of a plenary Council. For if he quotes Peter as an example for his allowing himself quietly and peacefully to be corrected by one junior colleague, how much more readily would he himself, with the Council of his province, have yielded to the authority of the whole world, when the truth had been thus brought to light? For, indeed, so holy and peaceful a soul would have been most ready to assent to the arguments of any single person who could prove to him the truth; and perhaps he even did so, though we have no knowledge of the fact. For it was neither possible that all the proceedings which took place between the bishops at that time should have been committed to writing, nor are we acquainted with all that was so committed. For how could a matter which was involved in such mists of disputation even have been brought to the full illumination and authoritative decision of a plenary Council, had it not first been known to be discussed for some considerable time in the various districts of the world, with many discussions and comparisons of the views of the bishop on every side? But this is one effect of the soundness of peace, that when any doubtful points are long under investigation, and when, on account of the difficulty of arriving at the truth, they produce difference of opinion in the course of brotherly disputation, till men at last arrive at the unalloyed truth; yet the bond of unity

> remains, lest in the part that is cut away there should be found the incurable wound of deadly error.

Augustine's reading makes the word consubstantial carry an exact consequence. The Father and the Son do not possess two instances of a divisible divine material. Their equality belongs to the one divine being. The Holy Spirit is included in the same argument, so that divine action is inseparable even where Scripture names a particular person. This is why the baptism of Jesus presents him with a problem worth explaining: a heavenly voice, an embodied Son, and the appearance of a dove must not become three independent divine beings acting beside one another.

His account also helps locate a frequent misunderstanding of Nicene theology. Distinction between Father and Son does not disappear when equality is affirmed. Augustine expressly denies that the Father is the Son. Nor does the unity grow larger when the three are considered together. The doctrine attempts to preserve personal distinction without distributing divinity among three unequal holders. Later medieval discussions will refine the grammar of that attempt, but their central difficulty is already visible here.

The reading from On Baptism makes a different judgment possible. Augustine's language does not support the proposition that being a bishop guarantees accuracy, or that the first conciliar statement on any disputed subject exhausts all subsequent inquiry. It supports an ordered process in which stronger evidence and broader ecclesiastical judgment can correct a narrower or earlier decision. At the same time, his description assumes that this process serves the peace of the Catholic Church. He does not present correction as a warrant for unlimited separation. The tension between authoritative confession and continuing correction belongs to his own text; it has not been imposed on him by a modern critic.

21 Vincent of Lerins on Continuity and Development

Vincent of Lérins wrote his Commonitory around 434, close enough to the fourth-century controversies to treat their outcome as a practical warning. His famous appeal to what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all is often quoted as though it were a numerical test that any reader could apply without further interpretation. The chapters that follow show a more demanding procedure. Vincent expects occasions when a region, a majority, or a prominent teacher appears to depart from the inherited faith. The task then is to identify the older and more comprehensive witness that ought to govern the dispute.

The Nicene controversy is central to his explanation. He recalls a time when imperial favor and widespread episcopal compliance appeared to support Arian teaching. His answer is not to count the bishops currently in office and declare their prevailing opinion correct. He praises those who adhered to the earlier faith against pressure. Antiquity supplies a critical standard against a contemporary consensus. For this reason Vincent cannot be used straightforwardly to prove that whatever most church leaders presently affirm must express the catholic faith. His own example depends on the possibility that a visible majority has been misled.

The rule nevertheless presents difficulties that his confident rhetoric does not dissolve. A controversy arises partly because the parties disagree about which earlier witnesses are decisive and how their statements fit together. The word everywhere cannot mean that every individual Christian has always held the same explicit formula. Vincent's narrative itself contains divisions, regional errors, and prominent dissenters. His practical appeal is to the substantial agreement of authoritative teachers within the communion he recognizes, especially when a general council has brought that agreement into a judgment. The rule directs inquiry; it does not replace the historical work needed to carry it out.

Vincent also makes room for doctrinal progress. His comparison with the growth of a human body is exact in its purpose. An adult has developed capacities and proportions that were not explicit in infancy, yet remains the same person. Similarly, Christian teaching may become clearer and more articulate through time while retaining its identity. He distinguishes this growth from an alteration that replaces the subject with something else. A church can therefore defend a later technical expression as the clarification of an earlier confession. This is one of the principal ways in which Nicaea's defenders have explained a word that does not itself occur in the biblical text.

The distinction between development and alteration is a criterion, not a guarantee of agreement. A defender of a new formulation must show that it preserves what was previously confessed; a critic must show where it changes that content. Merely calling

something a development settles neither question. Vincent's analogy identifies what must be argued about. It does not establish that every subsequent dogmatic definition passes his test. In particular, nothing in this fifth-century reading permits us to assume that he had already assessed the later Latin addition to the creed or medieval claims about the authority of the papacy.

The selections bring together his general rule, his account of the Arian crisis, his explanation of the deposit of faith, his account of growth, and his procedure for consulting the fathers. They give enough of his argument to reveal both its power and its interpretive burden. The resulting picture is neither a church without historical change nor a church free to redefine its confession at will. It is a community that claims continuity and therefore owes an account of the changes through which that continuity is expressed.

Vincent of Lérins, Commonitory, Chapters II-V, XXIII, and XXVIII, translated by C. A. Heurtley, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 11, 1894. Each listed chapter is reproduced in full, with its original numbered sections and paragraph divisions. Chapters VI-XXII and XXIV-XXVII are omitted between the marked selections. Original editorial chapter summaries and footnotes are omitted.

Commonitory 2

[4.] I have often then inquired earnestly and attentively of very many men eminent for sanctity and learning, how and by what sure and so to speak universal rule I may be able to distinguish the truth of Catholic faith from the falsehood of heretical pravity; and I have always, and in almost every instance, received an answer to this effect: That whether I or any one else should wish to detect the frauds and avoid the snares of heretics as they rise, and to continue sound and complete in the Catholic faith, we must, the Lord helping, fortify our own belief in two ways; first, by the authority of the Divine Law, and then, by the Tradition of the Catholic Church.

[5.] But here some one perhaps will ask, Since the canon of Scripture is complete, and sufficient of itself for everything, and more than sufficient, what need is there to join with it the authority of the Church’s interpretation? For this reason, - because, owing to the depth of Holy Scripture, all do not accept it in one and the same sense, but one understands its words in one way, another in another; so that it seems to be capable of as many interpretations as there are interpreters. For Novatian expounds it one way, Sabellius another, Donatus another, Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, another, Photinus, Apollinaris, Priscillian, another, Iovinian, Pelagius, Celestius, another, lastly, Nestorius another. Therefore, it is very necessary, on account of so great intricacies of such various error, that the rule for the right understanding of the prophets and apostles should be framed in accordance with the standard of Ecclesiastical and Catholic interpretation.

[6.] Moreover, in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense “Catholic,” which, as the name itself and the reason of the thing declare, comprehends all universally. This rule we shall observe if we follow

universality, antiquity, consent. We shall follow universality if we confess that one faith to be true, which the whole Church throughout the world confesses; antiquity, if we in no wise depart from those interpretations which it is manifest were notoriously held by our holy ancestors and fathers; consent, in like manner, if in antiquity itself we adhere to the consentient definitions and determinations of all, or at the least of almost all priests and doctors.

Commonitory 3

[7.] What then will a Catholic Christian do, if a small portion of the Church have cut itself off from the communion of the universal faith? What, surely, but prefer the soundness of the whole body to the unsoundness of a pestilent and corrupt member? What, if some novel contagion seek to infect not merely an insignificant portion of the Church, but the whole? Then it will be his care to cleave to antiquity, which at this day cannot possibly be seduced by any fraud of novelty.

[8.] But what, if in antiquity itself there be found error on the part of two or three men, or at any rate of a city or even of a province? Then it will be his care by all means, to prefer the decrees, if such there be, of an ancient General Council to the rashness and ignorance of a few. But what, if some error should spring up on which no such decree is found to bear? Then he must collate and consult and interrogate the opinions of the ancients, of those, namely, who, though living in divers times and places, yet continuing in the communion and faith of the one Catholic Church, stand forth acknowledged and approved authorities: and whatsoever he shall ascertain to have been held, written, taught, not by one or two of these only, but by all, equally, with one consent, openly, frequently, persistently, that he must understand that he himself also is to believe without any doubt or hesitation.

Commonitory 4

[9.] But that we may make what we say more intelligible, we must illustrate it by individual examples, and enlarge upon it somewhat more fully, lest by aiming at too great brevity important matters be hurried over and lost sight of.

In the time of Donatus, from whom his followers were called Donatists, when great numbers in Africa were rushing headlong into their own mad error, and unmindful of their name, their religion, their profession, were preferring the sacrilegious temerity of one man before the Church of Christ, then they alone throughout Africa were safe within the sacred precincts of the Catholic faith, who, detesting the profane schism, continued in communion with the universal Church, leaving to posterity an illustrious example, how, and how well in future the soundness of the whole body should be preferred before the madness of one, or at most of a few.

[10.] So also when the Arian poison had infected not an insignificant portion of the Church but almost the whole world, so that a sort of blindness had fallen upon almost all the bishops of the Latin tongue, circumvented partly by force, partly by fraud, and was preventing them from seeing what was most expedient to be done in

the midst of so much confusion, then whoever was a true lover and worshipper of Christ, preferring the ancient belief to the novel misbelief, escaped the pestilent infection.

[11.] By the peril of which time was abundantly shown how great a calamity the introduction of a novel doctrine causes. For then truly not only interests of small account, but others of the very gravest importance, were subverted. For not only affinities, relationships, friendships, families, but moreover, cities, peoples, provinces, nations, at last the whole Roman Empire, were shaken to their foundation and ruined. For when this same profane Arian novelty, like a Bellona or a Fury, had first taken captive the Emperor, and had then subjected all the principal persons of the palace to new laws, from that time it never ceased to involve everything in confusion, disturbing all things, public and private, sacred and profane, paying no regard to what was good and true, but, as though holding a position of authority, smiting whomsoever it pleased. Then wives were violated, widows ravished, virgins profaned, monasteries demolished, clergymen ejected, the inferior clergy scourged, priests driven into exile, jails, prisons, mines, filled with saints, of whom the greater part, forbidden to enter into cities, thrust forth from their homes to wander in deserts and caves, among rocks and the haunts of wild beasts, exposed to nakedness, hunger, thirst, were worn out and consumed. Of all of which was there any other cause than that, while human superstitions are being brought in to supplant heavenly doctrine, while well established antiquity is being subverted by wicked novelty, while the institutions of former ages are being set at naught, while the decrees of our fathers are being rescinded, while the determinations of our ancestors are being torn in pieces, the lust of profane and novel curiosity refuses to restrict itself within the most chaste limits of hallowed and uncorrupt antiquity?

Commonitory 5

[12.] But it may be, we invent these charges out of hatred to novelty and zeal for antiquity. Whoever is disposed to listen to such an insinuation, let him at least believe the blessed Ambrose, who, deploring the acerbity of the time, says, in the second book of his work addressed to the Emperor Gratian: “Enough now, O God Almighty! have we expiated with our own ruin, with our own blood, the slaughter of Confessors, the banishment of priests, and the wickedness of such extreme impiety. It is clear, beyond question, that they who have violated the faith cannot remain in safety.”

And again in the third book of the same work, “Let us observe the precepts of our predecessors, and not transgress with rude rashness the landmarks which we have inherited from them. That sealed Book of Prophecy no Elders, no Powers, no Angels, no Archangels, dared to open. To Christ alone was reserved the prerogative of explaining it. Who of us may dare to unseal the Sacerdotal Book sealed by Confessors, and consecrated already by the martyrdom of numbers, which they who had been compelled by force to unseal afterwards resealed, condemning the fraud which had been practised upon them; while they who had not ventured to tamper

with it proved themselves Confessors and martyrs? How can we deny the faith of those whose victory we proclaim?”

[13.] We proclaim it truly, O venerable Ambrose, we proclaim it, and applaud and admire. For who is there so demented, who, though not able to overtake, does not at least earnestly desire to follow those whom no force could deter from defending the faith of their ancestors, no threats, no blandishments, not life, not death, not the palace, not the Imperial Guards, not the Emperor, not the empire itself, not men, not demons? - whom, I say, as a recompense for their steadfastness in adhering to religious antiquity, the Lord counted worthy of so great a reward, that by their instrumentality He restored churches which had been destroyed, quickened with new life peoples who were spiritually dead, replaced on the heads of priests the crowns which had been torn from them, washed out those abominable, I will not say letters, but blotches (non literas, sed lituras) of novel impiety, with a fountain of believing tears, which God opened in the hearts of the bishops? - lastly, when almost the whole world was overwhelmed by a ruthless tempest of unlooked for heresy, recalled it from novel misbelief to the ancient faith, from the madness of novelty to the soundness of antiquity, from the blindness of novelty to pristine light?

[14.] But in this divine virtue, as we may call it, exhibited by these Confessors, we must note especially that the defence which they then undertook in appealing to the Ancient Church, was the defence, not of a part, but of the whole body. For it was not right that men of such eminence should uphold with so huge an effort the vague and conflicting notions of one or two men, or should exert themselves in the defence of some ill-advised combination of some petty province; but adhering to the decrees and definitions of the universal priesthood of Holy Church, the heirs of Apostolic and Catholic truth, they chose rather to deliver up themselves than to betray the faith of universality and antiquity. For which cause they were deemed worthy of so great glory as not only to be accounted Confessors, but rightly, and deservedly to be accounted foremost among Confessors.

Commonitory 23

[54.] But some one will say, perhaps, Shall there, then, be no progress in Christ’s Church? Certainly; all possible progress. For what being is there, so envious of men, so full of hatred to God, who would seek to forbid it? Yet on condition that it be real progress, not alteration of the faith. For progress requires that the subject be enlarged in itself, alteration, that it be transformed into something else. The intelligence, then, the knowledge, the wisdom, as well of individuals as of all, as well of one man as of the whole Church, ought, in the course of ages and centuries, to increase and make much and vigorous progress; but yet only in its own kind; that is to say, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning.

[55.] The growth of religion in the soul must be analogous to the growth of the body, which, though in process of years it is developed and attains its full size, yet remains still the same. There is a wide difference between the flower of youth and the maturity of age; yet they who were once young are still the same now that they have

become old, insomuch that though the stature and outward form of the individual are changed, yet his nature is one and the same, his person is one and the same. An infant's limbs are small, a young man's large, yet the infant and the young man are the same. Men when full grown have the same number of joints that they had when children; and if there be any to which maturer age has given birth these were already present in embryo, so that nothing new is produced in them when old which was not already latent in them when children. This, then, is undoubtedly the true and legitimate rule of progress, this the established and most beautiful order of growth, that mature age ever develops in the man those parts and forms which the wisdom of the Creator had already framed beforehand in the infant. Whereas, if the human form were changed into some shape belonging to another kind, or at any rate, if the number of its limbs were increased or diminished, the result would be that the whole body would become either a wreck or a monster, or, at the least, would be impaired and enfeebled.

[56.] In like manner, it behoves Christian doctrine to follow the same laws of progress, so as to be consolidated by years, enlarged by time, refined by age, and yet, withal, to continue uncorrupt and unadulterate, complete and perfect in all the measurement of its parts, and, so to speak, in all its proper members and senses, admitting no change, no waste of its distinctive property, no variation in its limits.

[57.] For example: Our forefathers in the old time sowed wheat in the Church's field. It would be most unmeet and iniquitous if we, their descendants, instead of the genuine truth of corn, should reap the counterfeit error of tares. This rather should be the result, - there should be no discrepancy between the first and the last. From doctrine which was sown as wheat, we should reap, in the increase, doctrine of the same kind - wheat also; so that when in process of time any of the original seed is developed, and now flourishes under cultivation, no change may ensue in the character of the plant. There may supervene shape, form, variation in outward appearance, but the nature of each kind must remain the same. God forbid that those rose-beds of Catholic interpretation should be converted into thorns and thistles. God forbid that in that spiritual paradise from plants of cinnamon and balsam, darnel and wolfsbane should of a sudden shoot forth.

Therefore, whatever has been sown by the fidelity of the Fathers in this husbandry of God's Church, the same ought to be cultivated and taken care of by the industry of their children, the same ought to flourish and ripen, the same ought to advance and go forward to perfection. For it is right that those ancient doctrines of heavenly philosophy should, as time goes on, be cared for, smoothed, polished; but not that they should be changed, not that they should be maimed, not that they should be mutilated. They may receive proof, illustration, definiteness; but they must retain withal their completeness, their integrity, their characteristic properties.

[58.] For if once this license of impious fraud be admitted, I dread to say in how great danger religion will be of being utterly destroyed and annihilated. For if any one part of Catholic truth be given up, another, and another, and another will thenceforward be given up as a matter of course, and the several individual portions

having been rejected, what will follow in the end but the rejection of the whole? On the other hand, if what is new begins to be mingled with what is old, foreign with domestic, profane with sacred, the custom will of necessity creep on universally, till at last the Church will have nothing left untampered with, nothing unadulterated, nothing sound, nothing pure; but where formerly there was a sanctuary of chaste and undefiled truth, thenceforward there will be a brothel of impious and base errors. May God’s mercy avert this wickedness from the minds of his servants; be it rather the frenzy of the ungodly.

[59.] But the Church of Christ, the careful and watchful guardian of the doctrines deposited in her charge, never changes anything in them, never diminishes, never adds, does not cut off what is necessary, does not add what is superfluous, does not lose her own, does not appropriate what is another’s, but while dealing faithfully and judiciously with ancient doctrine, keeps this one object carefully in view, - if there be anything which antiquity has left shapeless and rudimentary, to fashion and polish it, if anything already reduced to shape and developed, to consolidate and strengthen it, if any already ratified and defined, to keep and guard it. Finally, what other object have Councils ever aimed at in their decrees, than to provide that what was before believed in simplicity should in future be believed intelligently, that what was before preached coldly should in future be preached earnestly, that what was before practised negligently should thenceforward be practised with double solicitude? This, I say, is what the Catholic Church, roused by the novelties of heretics, has accomplished by the decrees of her Councils, - this, and nothing else, - she has thenceforward consigned to posterity in writing what she had received from those of olden times only by tradition, comprising a great amount of matter in a few words, and often, for the better understanding, designating an old article of the faith by the characteristic of a new name.

Commonitory 28

[71.] And here I perceive that, as a necessary sequel to the foregoing, I ought to show by examples in what way, by collating the consentient opinions of the ancient masters, the profane novelties of heretics may be detected and condemned. Yet in the investigation of this ancient consent of the holy Fathers we are to bestow our pains not on every minor question of the Divine Law, but only, at all events especially, where the Rule of Faith is concerned. Nor is this way of dealing with heresy to be resorted to always, or in every instance, but only in the case of those heresies which are new and recent, and that on their first arising, before they have had time to deprave the Rules of the Ancient Faith, and before they endeavour, while the poison spreads and diffuses itself, to corrupt the writings of the ancients. But heresies already widely diffused and of old standing are by no means to be thus dealt with, seeing that through lapse of time they have long had opportunity of corrupting the truth. And therefore, as to the more ancient schisms or heresies, we ought either to confute them, if need be, by the sole authority of the Scriptures, or at any rate, to shun them as having been already of old convicted and condemned by universal councils of the Catholic Priesthood.

[72.] Therefore, as soon as the corruption of each mischievous error begins to break forth, and to defend itself by filching certain passages of Scripture, and expounding them fraudulently and deceitfully, forthwith, the opinions of the ancients in the interpretation of the Canon are to be collected, whereby the novelty, and consequently the profaneness, whatever it may be, that arises, may both without any doubt be exposed, and without any tergiversation be condemned. But the opinions of those Fathers only are to be used for comparison, who living and teaching, holily, wisely, and with constancy, in the Catholic faith and communion, were counted worthy either to die in the faith of Christ, or to suffer death happily for Christ. Whom yet we are to believe on this condition, that that only is to be accounted indubitable, certain, established, which either all, or the more part, have supported and confirmed manifestly, frequently, persistently, in one and the same sense, forming, as it were, a consentient council of doctors, all receiving, holding, handing on the same doctrine. But whatsoever a teacher holds, other than all, or contrary to all, be he holy and learned, be he a bishop, be he a Confessor, be he a martyr, let that be regarded as a private fancy of his own, and be separated from the authority of common, public, general persuasion, lest, after the sacrilegious custom of heretics and schismatics, rejecting the ancient truth of the universal Creed, we follow, at the utmost peril of our eternal salvation, the newly devised error of one man.

[73.] Lest any one perchance should rashly think the holy and Catholic consent of these blessed fathers to be despised, the Apostle says, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, “God hath placed some in the Church, first Apostles,” of whom himself was one; “secondly Prophets,” such as Agabus, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles; “then doctors,” who are now called Homilists, Expositors, whom the same apostle sometimes calls also “Prophets,” because by them the mysteries of the Prophets are opened to the people. Whosoever, therefore, shall despise these, who had their appointment of God in His Church in their several times and places, when they are unanimous in Christ, in the interpretation of some one point of Catholic doctrine, despises not man, but God, from whose unity in the truth, lest any one should vary, the same Apostle earnestly protests, “I beseech you, brethren, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” But if any one dissent from their unanimous decision, let him listen to the words of the same apostle, “God is not the God of dissension but of peace;” that is, not of him who departs from the unity of consent, but of those who remain steadfast in the peace of consent: “as,” he continues, “I teach in all Churches of the saints,” that is, of Catholics, which churches are therefore churches of the saints, because they continue steadfast in the communion of the faith.

[74.] And lest any one, disregarding every one else, should arrogantly claim to be listened to himself alone, himself alone to be believed, the Apostle goes on to say, “Did the word of God proceed from you, or did it come to you only?” And, lest this should be thought lightly spoken, he continues, “If any man seem to be a prophet or a spiritual person, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the Lord’s commands.” As to which, unless a man be a prophet or a spiritual person,

> that is, a master in spiritual matters, let him be as observant as possible of impartiality and unity, so as neither to prefer his own opinions to those of every one besides, nor to recede from the belief of the whole body. Which injunction, whoso ignores, shall be himself ignored; that is, he who either does not learn what he does not know, or treats with contempt what he knows, shall be ignored, that is, shall be deemed unworthy to be ranked of God with those who are united to each other by faith, and equalled with each other by humility, than which I cannot imagine a more terrible evil. This it is however which, according to the Apostle’s threatening, we see to have befallen Julian the Pelagian, who either neglected to associate himself with the belief of his fellow Christians, or presumed to dissociate himself from it.
>
> [75.] But it is now time to bring forward the exemplification which we promised, where and how the sentences of the holy Fathers have been collected together, so that in accordance with them, by the decree and authority of a council, the rule of the Church’s faith may be settled. Which that it may be done the more conveniently, let this present Commonitory end here, so that the remainder which is to follow may be begun from a fresh beginning.
>
> [The Second Book of the Commonitory is lost. Nothing of it remains but the conclusion: in other words, the recapitulation which follows.]

The strongest historical point in Vincent's argument is his recognition that institutional success and theological fidelity can diverge. An emperor's support, a bishop's prestige, or the temporary dominance of a party cannot by itself settle a doctrinal dispute. This principle is especially significant because Vincent appeals to it in defense of inherited orthodoxy. Criticism of an ecclesiastical majority need not originate outside the church's own understanding of faithfulness.

His weakness is the ease with which a retrospective victory can make the earlier faithful consensus appear more uniform than the surviving record warrants. The fourth-century debates included disagreements among people who rejected Arius, and the vocabulary of substance and hypostasis acquired greater precision through those debates. Vincent's rule works best when it acknowledges such interpretation and development. It becomes misleading when used to erase them. The history already presented in this volume supplies the qualification that his compressed account requires.

The development chapter does, however, answer a crude objection to Nicaea. The appearance of a new technical term does not by itself prove the invention of a new religious object. A community may formulate an old commitment more explicitly when a dispute reveals that earlier language can be understood in incompatible ways. Whether homoousios successfully performs that task remains a question about the argument and the texts. Vincent offers a reason to ask the question carefully, rather than deciding it simply by comparing the ages of the words.

22 Anselm on Divine Substance and the Eternal Word

Anselm's Monologium belongs to the monastic intellectual world of the later eleventh century. It does not offer a new history of the council of 325. It shows what a sustained exercise of reasoning could look like inside a Latin Christian tradition that already received the equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is an important stage in Nicaea's reception. The creed had become a starting point for inquiry into what divine unity and generation could mean, rather than only a verdict to be defended against the original parties to the controversy.

The preface describes the unusual request made by Anselm's fellow monks. They wanted an argument in which the conclusions would be supported by reasoning rather than simply asserted on the authority of biblical passages. Anselm does not infer from this request that Scripture is dispensable or that his reasoning has become independent of the Christian tradition. He explicitly refers readers to Augustine. His method is an exercise undertaken within a received faith, with an account of that faith's intelligibility as its goal. The distinction matters because the absence of proof texts in a particular argument does not by itself make the argument secular or anti-ecclesiastical.

The selected sequence begins with the word substance. Anselm denies that the supreme being fits the ordinary categories by which we classify created things. A universal such as humanity is shared by many individual human beings; an individual human substance belongs to a class whose other members are distinct from it. Neither model can simply be applied to God. If the divine substance were one specimen in a class, there could be other specimens beside it. If it were a common nature distributed among individuals, the unity of God would have to be explained in the same way as the unity of a human species. Anselm regards both approaches as inadequate.

He nevertheless continues to use substance because human speech requires some way of referring to what most fully exists. That combination of denial and qualified use is central to the chapter. Technical theology does not always claim that its terms provide transparent pictures of divine reality. Sometimes a term is retained while its ordinary implications are expressly rejected. Anselm's warning should accompany every modern analogy that pictures the Trinity as three people, three pieces, or three examples of a common material. Such comparisons can make the language seem easier while changing the claim under discussion.

The following readings treat the divine Word. Anselm begins from a familiar human activity: a maker can conceive an object before producing it, and a mind can express what it knows. Yet the analogy changes when applied to the supreme being. God's Word cannot be an accidental thought added to an otherwise complete divine life, and

it cannot be a creature through which God subsequently learns about himself. The problem is to speak of a genuine Word without introducing a second, lesser substance. Chapter 27 supplies the discussion of substance; Chapters 31 through 33 provide a connected treatment of the divine Word. The intervening chapters are not reproduced.

A later chapter returns to the difference between Greek and Latin theological usage. The same word can function differently in two traditions. Anselm therefore allows for three substances in a Greek sense while denying three substances in the Latin sense he has been using. The admission is particularly valuable in a book about Nicaea. A formula cannot be judged only by matching its nouns against a later dictionary. The question is what distinctions and exclusions a writer intends the formula to express.

Anselm of Canterbury, Monologium, Preface and Chapters XXVII, XXXI-XXXIII, and LXXVIII, translated by Sidney Norton Deane, in St. Anselm: Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo, Chicago: Open Court, 1903; 1926 reprint. The selected units are complete. The intervening chapters are omitted. Deane's introductory summaries are omitted, and the source's paragraph divisions are retained. The term substance is preserved rather than silently replaced with a single modern equivalent.

Monologium Preface

CERTAIN brethren have often and earnestly entreated me to put in writing some thoughts that I had offered them in familiar conversation, regarding meditation on the Being of God, and on some other topics connected with this subject, under the form of a meditation on these themes. It is in accordance with their wish, rather than with my ability, that they have prescribed such a form for the writing of this meditation; in order that nothing in Scripture should be urged on the authority of Scripture itself, but that whatever the conclusion of independent investigation should declare to be true, should, in an unadorned style, with common proofs and with a simple argument, be briefly enforced by the cogency of reason, and plainly expounded in the light of truth. It was their wish also, that I should not disdain to meet such simple and almost foolish objections as occur to me.

This task I have long refused to undertake. And, reflecting on the matter, I have tried on many grounds to excuse myself; for the more they wanted this work to be adaptable to practical use, the more was what they enjoined on me difficult of execution. Overcome at last, however, both by the modest importunity of their entreaties and by the not contemptible sincerity of their zeal; and reluctant as I was because of the difficulty of my task and the weakness of my talent, I entered upon the work they asked for. But it is with pleasure inspired by their affection that, so far as I was able, I have prosecuted this work within the limits they set.

I was led to this undertaking in the hope that whatever I might accomplish would soon be overwhelmed with contempt, as by men disgusted with some worthless thing. For I know that in this book I have not so much satisfied those who entreated me, as put an end to the entreaties that followed me so urgently. Yet, somehow it fell out, contrary to my hope, that not only the brethren mentioned above, but several

others, by making copies for their own use, condemned this writing to long remembrance. And, after frequent consideration, I have not been able to find that I have made in it any statement which is inconsistent with the writings of the Catholic Fathers, or especially with those of St. Augustine. Wherefore, if it shall appear to any man that I have offered in this work any thought that is either too novel or discordant with the truth, I ask him not to denounce me at once as one who boldly seizes upon new ideas, or as a maintainer of falsehood; but let him first read diligently Augustine's books on the Trinity, and then judge my treatise in the light of those.

In stating that the supreme Trinity may be said to consist of three substances, I have followed the Greeks, who acknowledge three substances in one Essence, in the same faith wherein we acknowledge three persons in one Substance. For they designate by the word substance that attribute of God which we designate by the word person.

Whatever I have said on that point, however, is put in the mouth of one debating and investigating in solitary reflection, questions to which he had given no attention before. And this method I knew to be in accordance with the wish of those whose request I was striving to fulfil. But it is my prayer and earnest entreaty, that if any shall wish to copy this work, he shall be careful to place this preface at the beginning of the book, before the body of the meditation itself. For I believe that one will be much helped in understanding the matter of this book, if he has taken note of the intention, and the method according to which it is discussed. It is my opinion, too, that one who has first seen this preface will not pronounce a rash judgment, if he shall find offered here any thought that is contrary to his own belief.

Monologium 27

IT is, therefore, evident that in any ordinary treatment of substance, this Substance cannot be included, from sharing in whose essence every nature is excluded. Indeed, since every substance is treated either as universal, i. e., as essentially common to more than one substance, as being a man is common to individual men; or as individual, having a universal essence in common with others, as individual men have in common with individual men the fact that they are men; does any one conceive that, in the treatment of other substances, that supreme Nature is included, which neither divides itself into more substances than one, nor unites with any other, by virtue of a common essence?

Yet, seeing that it not only most certainly exists, but exists in the highest degree of all things; and since the essence of anything is usually called its substance, doubtless if any worthy name can be given it, there is no objection to our calling it substance.

And since no worthier essence than spirit and body is known, and of these, spirit is more worthy than body, it must certainly be maintained that this Being is spirit and not body. But, seeing that one spirit has not any parts, and there cannot be more spirits than one of this kind, it must, by all means, be an indivisible spirit. For since, as is shown above, it is neither compounded of parts, nor can be conceived of as

mutable, through any differences or accidents, it is impossible that it is divisible by any form of division.

Monologium 31

BUT here, it seems to me, there arises a question that is not easy to answer, and yet must not be left in any ambiguity. For all words of that sort by which we express any objects in our mind, that is, conceive of them, are likenesses and images of the objects to which they correspond; and every likeness or image is more or less true, according as it more or less closely imitates the object of which it is the likeness.

What, then, is to be our position regarding the Word by which all things are expressed, and through which all were created? Will it be, or will it not be, the likeness of the things that have been created through itself? For, if it is itself the true likeness of mutable things, it is not consubstantial with supreme immutability; which is false. But, if it is not altogether true, and is merely a sort of likeness of mutable things, then the Word of supreme Truth is not altogether true; which is absurd. But if it has no likeness to mutable things, how were they created after its example?

But perhaps nothing of this ambiguity will remain if - as the reality of a man is said to be the living man, but the likeness or image of a man in his picture - so the reality of being is conceived of as in the Word, whose essence exists so supremely that in a certain sense it alone exists; while in these things which, in comparison with that Essence, are in some sort non-existent, and, yet were made something through, and according to, that Word, a kind of imitation of that supreme Essence is found.

For, in this way the Word of supreme Truth, which is also itself supreme Truth, will experience neither gain nor loss, according as it is more or less like its creatures. But the necessary inference will rather be, that every created being exists in so much the greater degree, or is so much the more excellent, the more like it is to what exists supremely, and is supremely great.

For on this account, perhaps, - nay, not perhaps, but certainly, - does every mind judge natures in any way alive to excel those that are not alive, the sentient to excel the non-sentient, the rational the irrational. For, since the supreme Nature, after a certain unique manner of its own, not only exists, but lives, and is sentient and rational, it is clear that, of all existing beings, that which is in some way alive is more like this supreme Nature, than that which is not alive at all; and what, in any way, even by a corporeal sense, cognises anything, is more like this Nature than what is not sentient at all; and what is rational, more than what is incapable of reasoning.

But it is clear, for a like reason, that certain natures exist in a greater or less degree than others. For, just as that is more excellent by nature which, through its natural essence, is nearer to the most excellent Being, so certainly that nature exists in a greater degree, whose essence is more like the supreme Essence. And I think that this can easily be ascertained as follows. If we should conceive any substance that is

alive, and sentient, and rational, to be deprived of its reason, then of its sentience, then of its life, and finally of the bare existence that remains, who would fail to understand that the substance that is thus destroyed, little by little, is gradually brought to smaller and smaller degrees of existence, and at last to non-existence? But the attributes which, taken each by itself, reduce an essence to less and less degrees of existence, if assumed in order, lead it to greater and greater degrees.

It is evident, then, that a living substance exists in a greater degree than one that is not living, a sentient than a non-sentient, and a rational than a nonrational. So, there is no doubt that every substance exists in a greater degree, and is more excellent, according as it is more like that substance which exists supremely and is supremely excellent.

It is sufficiently clear, then, that in the Word, through which all things were created, is not their likeness, but their true and simple essence; while, in the things created, there is not a simple and absolute essence, but an imperfect imitation of that true Essence. Hence, it necessarily follows, that this Word is not more nor less true, according to its likeness to the things created, but every created nature has a higher essence and dignity, the more it is seen to approach that Word.

Monologium 32

BUT since this is true, how can what is simple Truth be the Word corresponding to those objects, of which it is not the likeness? Since every word by which an object is thus mentally expressed is the likeness of that object, if this is not the word corresponding to the objects that have been created through it, how shall we be sure that it is the Word? For every word is a word corresponding to some object. Therefore, if there were no creature, there would be no word.

Are we to conclude, then, that if there were no creature, that Word would not exist at all, which is the supreme self-sufficient Essence? Or, would the supreme Being itself, perhaps, which is the Word still be the eternal Being, but not the Word, if nothing were ever created through that Being? For, to what has not been, and is not, and will not be, then can be no word corresponding.

But, according to this reasoning, if there were never any being but the supreme Spirit, there would be no word at all in him. If there were no word in him, he would express nothing to himself; if he expressed nothing to himself, since, for him, expressing anything is the same with understanding or conceiving of it (intelligere), he would not understand or conceive of anything; if he understood or conceived of nothing, then the supreme Wisdom, which is nothing else than this Spirit, would understand or conceive of nothing; which is most absurd.

What is to be inferred? For, if it conceived of nothing, how would it be the supreme Wisdom? Or, if there were in no wise anything but it, of what would it conceive? Would it not conceive of itself? But how can it be even imagined that the supreme Wisdom, at any time does not conceive of itself; since a rational mind can remember not only itself, but that supreme Wisdom, and conceive of that Wisdom and of itself?

For, if the human mind could have no memory or concept of that Wisdom or of itself, it would not distinguish itself at all from irrational creatures, and that Wisdom from the whole created world, in silent meditation by itself, as my mind does now.

Hence, that Spirit, supreme as he is eternal, is thus eternally mindful of himself, and conceives of himself after the likeness of a rational mind; nay, not after the likeness of anything; but in the first place that Spirit, and the rational mind after its likeness. But, if he conceives of himself eternally, he expresses himself eternally. If he expresses himself eternally, his Word is eternally with him. Whether, therefore, it be thought of in connection with no other existing being, or with other existing beings, the Word of that Spirit must be coeternal with him.

Monologium 33

BUT here, in my inquiry concerning the Word, by which the Creator expresses all that he creates, is suggested the word by which he, who creates all, expresses himself. Does he express himself, then, by one word, and what he creates by another; or does he rather express whatever he creates by the same word whereby he expresses himself?

For this Word also, by which he expresses himself, must be identical with himself, as is evidently true of the Word by which he expresses his creatures. For since, even if nothing but that supreme Spirit ever existed, urgent reason would still require the existence of that word by which he expresses himself, what is more true than that his Word is nothing else than what he himself is? Therefore, if he expresses himself and what he creates, by a Word consubstantial with himself, it is manifest that of the Word by which he expresses himself, and of the Word by which he expresses the created world, the substance is one.

How, then, if the substance is one, are there two words? But, perhaps, identity of substance does not compel us to admit a single Word. For the Creator himself, who speaks in these words, has the same substance with them, and yet is not the Word. But, undoubtedly the word by which the supreme Wisdom expresses itself may most fitly be called its Word on the former ground, namely, that it contains the perfect likeness of that Wisdom.

For, on no ground can it be denied that when a rational mind conceives of itself in meditation the image of itself arises in its thought, or rather the thought of the mind is itself its image, after its likeness, as if formed from its impression. For, whatever object the mind, either through representation of the body or through reason, desires to conceive of truly, it at least attempts to express its likeness, so far as it is able, in the mental concept itself. And the more truly it succeeds in this, the more truly does it think of the object itself; and, indeed, this fact is observed more clearly when it thinks of something else which it is not, and especially when it thinks of a material body. For, when I think of a man I know, in his absence, the vision of my thought forms such an image as I have acquired in memory through my ocular vision and this image is the word corresponding to the man I express by thinking of him.

The rational mind, then, when it conceives of itself in thought, has with itself its image born of itself that is, its thought in its likeness, as if formed from its impression, although it cannot, except in thought alone, separate itself from its image, which image is its word.

Who, then, can deny that the supreme Wisdom, when it conceives of itself by expressing itself, begets a likeness of itself consubstantial with it, namely, its Word? And this Word, although of a subject so uniquely important nothing can be said with sufficient propriety, may still not inappropriately be called the image of that Wisdom, its representation, just as it is called his likeness.

But the Word by which the Creator expresses the created world is not at all, in the same way, a word corresponding to the created world, since it is not this world's likeness, but its elementary essence. It therefore follows, that he does not express the created world itself by a word corresponding to the created world. To what, then, does the word belong, whereby he expresses it, if he does not express it by a word, belonging to itself? For what he expresses, he expresses by a word, and a word must belong to something, that is, it is the likeness of something. But if he expresses nothing but himself or his created world he can express nothing, except by a word corresponding to himself or to something else.

So, if he expresses nothing by a word belonging to the created world, whatever he expresses, he expresses by the Word corresponding to himself. By one and the same Word, then, he expresses himself and whatever he has made.

Monologium 78

AND so it is evidently expedient for every man to believe in a certain ineffable trinal unity, and in one Trinity; one and a unity because of its one essence, but trinal and a trinity because of its three - what? For, although I can speak of a Trinity because of Father and Son and the Spirit of both, who are three; yet I cannot, in one word, show why they are three; as if I should call this Being a Trinity because of its three persons, just as I would call it a unity because of its one substance.

For three persons are not to be supposed, because all persons which are more than one so subsist separately from one another, that there must be as many substances as there are persons, a fact that is recognised in the case of more men than one, when there are as many persons as there are individual substances. Hence, in the supreme Being, just as there are not more substances than one, so there are not more persons than one.

So, if one wishes to express to any why they are three, he will say that they are Father and Son and the Spirit of both, unless perchance, compelled by the lack of a precisely appropriate term, he shall choose some one of those terms which cannot be applied in a plural sense to the supreme Being, in order to indicate what cannot be expressed in any fitting language; as if he should say, for instance, that this wonderful Trinity is one essence or nature, and three persons or substances.

> For these two terms are more appropriately chosen to describe plurality in the supreme Being, because the word person is applied only to an individual, rational nature; and the word substance is ordinarily applied to individual beings, which especially subsist in plurality. For individual beings are especially exposed to, that is, are subject to, accidents, and for this reason they more properly receive the name sub-stance. Now, it is already manifest that the supreme Being, which is subject to no accidents, cannot properly be called a substance, except as the word substance is used in the same sense with the word Essence. Hence, on this ground, namely, of necessity, that supreme and one Trinity or trinal unity may justly be called one Essence and three Persons or three Substances.

Anselm's inquiry exposes a limitation in the familiar claim that Nicaea merely substituted Greek philosophy for the simple teaching of Jesus. The medieval writer certainly uses conceptual argument, but he also criticizes the unexamined application of ordinary metaphysical categories to God. His reasoning is often directed against pictures that would make divine generation resemble the production of another finite object. One may reject his conclusions while recognizing that the reasoning has a more exact purpose than the pursuit of impressive terminology.

His human analogies are especially revealing. The Word is compared with a mind's expression, yet the comparison must not make divine life dependent on a temporal sequence of first being silent and then beginning to speak. The Nicene exclusion of a time when the Son was not remains operative here. It has become a restriction on philosophical explanation: an account that turns the Word into a late product would fail to describe the God Anselm intends.

The linguistic concession in Chapter 78 is equally substantive. Anselm does not hold that contradictory assertions become equally true through politeness. He holds that apparently contradictory expressions can convey compatible assertions when the words have different established senses. Translating a Greek formula into Latin therefore requires explanation, not only substitution. This point connects his medieval reasoning with the fourth-century attempts to reconcile one and three hypostases. The continuity lies in the problem and in the effort to define a term's use; it does not require pretending that every earlier bishop had already possessed Anselm's conceptual distinctions.

The chapter also sets a useful limit on what an anthology can establish. Anselm's work proves that medieval Latin reception included serious attempts to reason through the doctrine. It does not prove that every such argument succeeds. The reader can now assess a particular attempt: whether an eternal, self-expressive supreme being provides a convincing account of the Word, and whether the proposed account preserves a distinction that is more than a name.

23 Bernard and the Boundaries of Theological Explanation

Bernard of Clairvaux's attack on Peter Abelard introduces an argument about the limits of theological explanation inside the twelfth-century Latin Church. The accusation is not that Abelard refuses every Christian confession. Bernard's complaint is that the explanations offered beneath the familiar words divide divine perfection among the persons and turn the Son into something less than the Father. He invokes Arius to identify the danger. The fourth-century controversy has become a language through which a medieval theologian classifies a new opponent.

The reading is the opening three chapters of Bernard's long letter to Pope Innocent II against Abelard's alleged errors, conventionally numbered Letter 190 in the collected correspondence. The nineteenth-century translation reprinted in the 1904 selection numbers it Letter LX and assigns the date 1140. The proceedings at Sens are also dated 1141 in modern accounts. The selection is presented as a document of that controversy without making the translation's date an independent chronological authority. Its destination is significant: Bernard is asking the pope to judge teaching he considers dangerous. This is an intervention in an institutional process as well as a theological essay.

Bernard's central example concerns three divine attributes: power, wisdom, and loving-kindness. Associating the Father with power, the Son with wisdom, and the Spirit with love might function as a pattern of devotion or explanation. Bernard objects if the association becomes an exclusive allocation. If the Father alone possesses full power, the Son only the power of discernment, and the Spirit no power, the three persons are no longer equal. If wisdom belongs to the Son in a way that removes wisdom from the Father, the same problem appears again. A convenient way of speaking has become, in Bernard's view, a false division of God.

This is a precise issue in the reception of Nicene language. Saying that the Son has the Father's substance does not permit divinity to be subdivided into complementary specialties. The persons cannot need one another in the way that incomplete members of a committee contribute different abilities to a collective result. Each is fully divine. Bernard argues that a theory can repeat the vocabulary of the creed while allowing an explanatory model to undo its content. His case therefore requires attention to the opponent's proposed comparisons, not merely to the opponent's willingness to pronounce orthodox words.

The polemical character of the record must remain visible. Abelard's positions reach us here through Bernard's selection, quotation, paraphrase, and hostile inference. We can identify what Bernard argues against and how he argues. We cannot treat every sentence introduced as Abelard's teaching as a complete, neutral statement of Abelard's purpose. The surviving dispute requires comparison with Abelard's own

works before a judgment on all his theology can be made. This chapter's narrower question is how Bernard uses received Trinitarian commitments to criticize an explanation that he believes damages them.

Bernard also provides a useful corrective to a simplistic division between reason and faith. He attacks the presumption of explaining everything, but his reply employs distinctions, conditional arguments, and criticism of analogies. He considers what follows if a genus and species are used to describe Father and Son; he asks whether a proposition can be converted; he tests whether a divine attribute can be both common and exclusive. The dispute concerns the right operation and limits of reasoning. Bernard's own practice cannot be described adequately as a refusal to reason.

Bernard of Clairvaux, letter against certain errors attributed to Peter Abelard, conventionally Letter 190, Chapters I-III, paragraphs 1-8. Translation by Samuel J. Eales, reprinted as Letter LX in Some Letters of Saint Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, selected with a preface by Francis Aidan Gasquet, London: John Hodges, 1904, printed pages 260-271. Chapters I-III are reproduced consecutively; the remainder of the treatise and the Victorian editor's preliminary list of charges are omitted. Bernard's references and parenthetical citations are retained; editorial footnotes are omitted. Obvious digital transcription and punctuation errors have been corrected with the 1904 printing consulted.

Letter against Abelard 1

1. We have in France an old teacher turned into a new theologian, who in his early days amused himself with dialectics, and now gives utterance to wild imaginations upon the Holy Scriptures. He is endeavouring again to quicken false opinions, long ago condemned and put to rest, not only his own, but those of others; and is adding fresh ones as well. I know not what there is in heaven above and in the earth beneath which he deigns to confess ignorance of: he raises his eyes to Heaven, and searches the deep things of God, and then returning to us, he brings back unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter, while he is presumptuously prepared to give a reason for everything, even of those things which are above reason; he presumes against reason and against faith. For what is more against reason than by reason to attempt to transcend reason? And what is more against faith than to be unwilling to believe what reason cannot attain? For instance, wishing to explain that saying of the wise man: He who is hasty to believe is light in mind (Ecclus. xix. 4). He says that a hasty faith is one that believes before reason; when Solomon says this not of faith towards God, but of mutual belief amongst ourselves. For the blessed Pope Gregory denies plainly that faith towards God has any merit whatever if human reason furnishes it with proof. But he praises the Apostles, because they followed their Saviour when called but once (Hom. in Evang. 26). He knows doubtless that this word was spoken as praise: At the hearing of the ear he obeyed me (Ps. xviii. 44), that the Apostles were directly rebuked because they had been slow in believing (S. Mark xvi. 14). Again, Mary is praised because she anticipated reason by faith, and Zacharias punished because he tempted faith by

reason (S. Luke i. 20, 45), and Abraham is commended in that against hope he believed in hope (Rom. iv. 18).

2. But on the other hand our theologian says: “What is the use of speaking of doctrine unless what we wish to teach can be explained so as to be intelligible?” And so he promises understanding to his hearers, even on those most sublime and sacred truths which are hidden in the very bosom of our holy faith; and he places degrees in the Trinity, modes in the Majesty, numbers in the Eternity. He has laid down, for example, that God the Father is full power, the Son a certain kind of power, the Holy Spirit no power. And that the Son is related to the Father as force in particular to force in general, as species to genus, as a thing formed of material, to matter, as man to animal, as a brazen seal to brass. Did Arius ever go further? Who can endure this? Who would not shut his ears to such sacrilegious words? Who does not shudder at such novel profanities of words and ideas? He says also that “the Holy Spirit proceeds indeed from the Father and the Son, but not from the substance of the Father or of the Son.” Whence then? Perhaps from nothing, like everything created. But the Apostle does not deny that they are of God, nor is he afraid to say: Of whom are all things (Rom. xi. 36). Shall we say then that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son in no other way than all things do, that is, that He exists not essentially but by way of creation, and is therefore a creature like all other things. Or will this man, who is always seeking after new things, who invents what he does not find, affirms those things which are not, as though they are, will he find for himself some third way, in which he may produce Him from the Father and the Son? But, he says, “if He were of the substance of the Father, He would surely have been begotten, and so the Father would have two Sons.” As though everything which is from any substance has always as its father that from which it is. For lice and phlegm and such things, are they sons of the flesh, and not rather of the substance of the flesh? Or worms produced by rotten wood, whence derive they their substance but from the wood? yet are they not sons of the wood. Again, moths have their substance from the substance of garments, but not their generation. And there are many instances of this kind.

3. Since he admits that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son, I wonder how an acute and learned man (as at least he thinks himself) can yet deny that He proceeds in substance from the Father and the Son, unless perchance he thinks that the two first persons proceed from the substance of the third. But this is an impious and unheard of opinion. But if neither He proceeds from their substance, nor They from His, where, I pray, is the consubstantiality? Let him then either confess with the Church that the Holy Spirit is of their substance, from whom He does not deny that He proceeds, or let him with Arius deny His consubstantiality, and openly preach His creation. Again he says, if the Son is of the substance of the Father, the Holy Spirit is not; they must differ from each other, not only because the Holy Spirit is not begotten, as the Son is, but also because the Son is of the substance of the Father, which the Holy Spirit is not. Of this last distinction the Catholic Church has hitherto known nothing. If we admit it, where is the Trinity?

where is the Unity? If the Holy Spirit and the Son are really separated by this new enumeration of differences, and if the Unity is split up, then especially let it be made plain that that distinction which he is endeavouring to make is a difference of substance. Moreover, if the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the substance of the Father and the Son, no Trinity remains, but a duality. For no Person is worthy to be admitted into the Trinity whose substance is not the same as that of the others. Let him, therefore, cease to separate the procession of the Holy Spirit from the substance of the Father and the Son, lest by a double impiety he both take away number from the Trinity and attribute it to the Unity, each of which the Christian faith abhors. And, lest I seem in so great a matter to depend on human reasonings only, let him read the letter of Jerome to Avitus; and he will plainly see, that amongst the other blasphemies of Origen which he confutes, he also rejects this one, that, as he said, the Holy Spirit is not of the substance of the Father. The blessed Athanasius thus speaks in his book on the Undivided Trinity: “When I spoke of God alone I meant not the Person only of the Father, because I denied not that the Son and the Holy Spirit are of this same Substance of the Father.”

Letter against Abelard 2

4. Your holiness sees how in this man’s scheme, which is not reasoning but raving, the Trinity does not hold together and the Unity is rendered doubtful, and that this cannot be without injury to the Majesty. For whatever That is which is God, it is without doubt That than which nothing greater can be conceived. If, then, in this One and Supreme Majesty we have found anything that is insufficient or imperfect in our consideration of the Persons, or if we have found that what is assigned to one is taken from another, the whole is surely less than That, than which nothing greater can be conceived. For indubitably the greatest which is a whole is greater than that which consists of parts. That man thinks worthily, as far as man can, of the Divine Majesty who thinks of no inequality in It where the whole is supremely great; of no separation where the whole is one; of no chasm where the whole is undivided; in short, of no imperfection or deficiency where the whole is a whole. For the Father is a whole, as are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Son is a whole, as are He Himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is a whole, as are He Himself and the Father and the Son. And the whole Unity is a whole neither superabounding in the Three, nor diminished in Each Person. For they do not individually divide between Them that real and highest Good which they are, since they do not possess It in the way of participation, but are essentially the very Good. For those phrases which we most rightly use, as One from Another, or One to Another, are designations of the Persons, not division of the Unity. For although in this ineffable and incomprehensible essence of the Deity we can, by the requirements of the properties of the Persons, say One and Another in a sober and Catholic sense, yet there is not in the essence One and Another, but simple Unity; nor in the confession of the Trinity any derogation to the Unity, nor is the true assertion of the Unity any exclusion of the propria of the Persons. May that execrable similitude of genus and species be accordingly as far from our minds as it

is from the rule of truth. It is not a similitude, but a dissimilitude, as is also that of brass and the brazen seal; for since genus and species are to each other as higher and lower, while God is One, there can never be any resemblance between equality so perfect and disparity so great. And again, with regard to his illustration of brass, and the brass which is made into a seal, since it is used for the same kind of similitude, it is to be similarly condemned. For since, as I have said, species is less than and inferior to genus, far be it from us to think of such diversity between the Father and the Son. Far be it from us to agree with him who says that the Son is related to the Father as species to genus, as man to animal, as a brazen seal to brass, as force to force absolutely. For all these several things by the bond of their common nature are to each other as superiors and inferiors, and therefore no comparison is to be drawn from these things with That in which there is no inequality, no dissimilarity. You see from what unskilfulness or impiety the use of these similitudes descends.

Letter against Abelard 3

5. Now notice more clearly what he thinks, teaches, and writes. He says that Power properly and specially belongs to the Father, Wisdom to the Son, which, indeed, is false. For the Father both is, and is most truly called, Wisdom, and the Son Power, and what is common to Both is not the proprium of Each singly. There are certainly some other names which do not belong to Both, but to One or the Other alone, and therefore His own Name is peculiar to Each, and not common to the Other. For the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, for He is designated by the name of Father, not because He is the Father with regard to Himself, but with regard to His Son, and in like manner by the name of Son is expressed not that He is Son with regard to Himself, but to the Father. It is not so with power and many other attributes which are assigned to the Father and the Son in common, and not singly to Each taken by Himself. But he says, “No; we find that omnipotence belongs especially to the proprium of the Person of the Father, because He not only can do all things in union with the other two Persons, but also because He alone has His existence from Himself, and not from Another, and as He has His existence from Himself, so has He His power.” O, second Aristotle! By parity of reasoning, if such were reasoning, would not Wisdom and Kindness belong properly to the Father, since equally the Father has His Wisdom and Kindness from Himself, and not from another, just as He has His Being and His Power? And if he does not deny this, as he cannot reasonably do, what, I ask, will he do with that famous partition of his in which, as he has assigned Power to the Father and Wisdom to the Son, so he has assigned Loving Kindness to the Holy Spirit properly and specially? For one and the same thing cannot well be the proprium of two, that is, to be the exclusive property of each. Let him choose which alternative he will: either let him give Wisdom to the Son and take It from the Father, or assign It to the Father and deny It to the Son; and again, let him assign Loving Kindness to the Spirit without the Father, or to the Father without the Spirit; or let him cease to call attributes which are common, propria; and though the Father has His Power from Himself, yet let him not dare to

concede It to Him as being a proprium, lest on his own reasoning he be obliged to assign Him Wisdom and Loving Kindness which He has in precisely the same way, as His propria also.

6. But let us now wait and see in how theoretic a manner our theologian regards the invisible things of God. He says, as I have pointed out, that omnipotence properly belongs to the Father, and He makes it to consist in the fulness and perfection of Rule and discernment. Again, to the Son he assigns Wisdom, and that he defines to be not Power simply, but a certain kind of Power in God, namely, the Power of discernment only. Perhaps he is afraid of doing an injury to the Father if he gives as much to the Son as to Him, and since he dares not give Him complete power, he grants Him half. And this that he lays down he illustrates by common examples, asserting that the Power of discernment which the Son is, is a particular kind of Power, just as a man is a kind of animal, and a brazen seal a particular form of brass, which means that the power of discernment is to the power of Rule and discernment, i.e., the Son is to the Father, as a man to an animal, or as a brazen seal to brass. For, as he says, “a brazen seal must first be brass, and a man to be a man must first be an animal, but not conversely. So Divine Wisdom, which is the power of discernment, must be first Divine Power, but not conversely” (Abael. Theol. B. ii. p. 1083). Do you, then, mean that, like the preceding similitudes, your similitude demands that the Son to be the Son must first be the Father, i.e., that He who is the Son is the Father, though not conversely? If you say this you are a heretic. If you do not your comparison is meaningless.

7. For why do you fashion for yourself the comparison, and with such beating about the bush, apply it to questions long ago settled and ill-fitted for debate? Why do you bring it forward with such waste of energy, impress it on us with such a useless multiplicity of words, produce it with such a flourish, if it does not effect the purpose for which it was adduced, viz., that the members be harmonized with each other in fitting proportions? Is not this a labour and a toil, to teach us by means of it, the relation which exists between the Father and the Son? We hold according to you, that a man being given an animal is given, but not conversely, at least by the rule of your logic; for by it it is not that when the genus is given we know the species, but the species being given we know the genus. Since, then, you compare the Father to the genus, the Son to the species, does not the condition of your comparison postulate, that in like manner, when the Son is known you declare the Father to be known and not conversely; that, as he who is a man is necessarily an animal, but not conversely, so also, He who is the Son is necessarily the Father, but not conversely? But the Catholic faith contradicts you on this point, for it plainly denies both, viz., that the Father is the Son, and that the Son is the Father. For indubitably the Father is one Person, the Son another; although the Father is not of a different substance from the Son. For by this distinction the godliness of the Faith knows how to distinguish cautiously between the propria of the Persons, and the undivided unity of the Essence; and holding a middle course, to go along the royal road, turning neither to the right by confounding the Persons, nor looking to the left by dividing

> the Substance. But if you say that it rightly follows as a necessary truth that He who is the Son is also the Father, this helps you nothing; for an identical proposition is necessarily capable of being converted in such a way that what was true of the original proposition is true of the converse; and your comparison of genus and species, or of brass and the brazen seal does not admit of this. For as it does not follow as a necessary consequence that the Son is the Father, and the Father the Son, so neither can we rightly produce a convertible consequence between man and animal, and between a brazen seal and brass. For though it be true to say, “If he is a man he is an animal,” still the converse is not true, “If he is an animal he is a man.” And again, if we have a brazen seal it necessarily follows that it is brass; but if we have brass it does not necessarily follow that it is a brazen seal. But now let us proceed to his other points.
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> 8. Lo! according to him we have omnipotence in the Father, a certain power in the Son. Let him tell us also what he thinks of the Holy Spirit. That loving-kindness, he says, which is denoted by the name of the Holy Spirit is not in God power or wisdom (Theol. ii. 1085). I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven (S. Luke x. 18). So ought he to fall who exercises himself in great matters, and in things that are too high for him. You see, Holy Father, what ladders, nay what dizzy heights, he has set up for his own downfall. All power, half power, no power. I shudder at the very words, and I think that very horror enough for his confutation. Still, I will bring forward a testimony which occurs to my troubled mind, so as to remove the injury done to the Holy Spirit. We read in Isaiah: The Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of ghostly strength (Is. xi. 2). By this his audacity is plainly and sufficiently answered, even if it is not crushed. Be it that blasphemy against the Father or the Son may be forgiven, will blasphemy against the Spirit? The Angel of the Lord is waiting to cut you asunder; for you have said “The Holy Spirit in God is not power or wisdom.” So the foot of pride stumbles where it intrudes [where it ought not].

The strongest part of Bernard's criticism is his insistence that an analogy be tested by what it implies. A brazen seal is made from a material that could exist without that particular seal. A species is related to a genus through distinctions that do not simply reproduce the relation of two coequal divine persons. If these models make the Son a limited result produced from something more comprehensive, they undermine the equality they were meant to explain. Bernard is right to demand that an explanatory comparison preserve the feature under discussion.

His polemic nevertheless moves rapidly from an inference about an analogy to a verdict on its author's faith. The comparison with Arius intensifies that movement. It identifies a possible consequence as the revival of a condemned position, giving the accusation a history and an institutional urgency. That strategy should be examined rather than adopted automatically. Establishing that an analogy is inadequate is one task; establishing that its author intends to deny the Son's divinity is another. Bernard's writing is valuable evidence for medieval doctrinal policing partly because it shows how closely those tasks could become connected.

Two historical details in the translation also require care. The examples of worms, moths, and other organisms arising from material belong to an older account of natural generation. They illustrate Bernard's claim that originating from a substance need not mean being its son; they should not be imported into a modern biological explanation. Likewise, his appeal to a book on the undivided Trinity under Athanasius's name documents a medieval attribution. It should not be used here as authentication of a fourth-century author or as an additional eyewitness record of Nicaea.

The chapter's lasting contribution is the distinction between a common divine attribute and a personal relation. Fatherhood and sonship name relations that distinguish the persons. Wisdom and power, Bernard insists, do not belong to one person through the exclusion of the others. Aquinas will provide a more systematic grammar for this distinction. Bernard shows the same problem functioning earlier as the ground of an accusation, a request for judgment, and a warning about the unintended consequences of theological explanation.

24 Lateran IV on Divine Unity and the Enforcement of Faith

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 received the Nicene tradition in a Latin Church whose institutions, theological vocabulary, and relations with the Greek East had changed profoundly since 325. Convened under Innocent III, it issued a confession of faith, a judgment on a disputed account of the Trinity, and a program of ecclesiastical government. The opening constitutions let us examine doctrine and enforcement in the same documentary setting. Their conjunction is part of the evidence, not a substitute for distinguishing their contents.

The first constitution, Firmiter credimus, begins with one divine essence and three persons. It then moves through creation, the origin of evil, the incarnation, judgment, the church, the Eucharist, baptism, and repentance. The scope is already much wider than the brief confession of 325. The Son's consubstantiality belongs to a developed account of Christian belief and sacramental life. The decree also affirms the Spirit's procession from both Father and Son. That is a statement of the Latin position; it must not be silently assigned to the original Nicene creed, which did not contain it.

The second constitution concerns Joachim of Fiore's attack on Peter Lombard. The council reports that Joachim accused Lombard of making four things in God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and their common essence. In reply, it affirms that the essence is not a fourth member beside the persons. Each person is the one divine reality. Distinctions belong to the personal relations, while unity belongs to the nature. This is a precise medieval dispute about how the confession of one substance should be understood. It shows why repeating the phrase could not eliminate the need for further explanation.

The council also rejects an account of divine unity that would make it merely collective. Many believers can constitute one church while remaining many distinct human beings. The council denies that the three persons are one God only in an analogous social sense. The comparison between divine and human unity therefore has a limit. The decree's celebrated statement that every likeness between Creator and creature is accompanied by a still greater unlikeness belongs to this argument. It cautions against transferring the structure of a human group directly into the divine life.

The text does not give Joachim an independent hearing. It is the council's report of his claim and its judgment against it. Both Joachim and Lombard were dead by 1215; this was an authoritative settlement of their intellectual legacy. The decree carefully distinguishes the condemned teaching from Joachim's monastery, which it does not condemn. Fiore, sometimes represented by the Latin adjective Florensis, must not be confused with the much later Council of Florence.

The opening of the third constitution supplies the institutional sequel. Ecclesiastical condemnation is linked to secular punishment, confiscation, obligations imposed on rulers, and privileges for those who take up the cross against heresy. These measures are not contained in the Nicene creed itself. They are evidence of a later medieval arrangement in which the defense of the faith included organized coercion. Anyone arguing that correct confession necessarily produces just conduct must account for these provisions. Anyone arguing that the provisions alone refute the confession must still address the theological argument on its own terms.

Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, Constitutions 1 and 2 in full, followed by the opening of Constitution 3 through the privilege granted to those who take the cross against heresy. New English rendering prepared for this edition from the medieval Latin. Constitutions 1-2 were checked against Heinrich Denzinger, Enchiridion symbolorum, 12th edition prepared by Clemens Bannwart, Freiburg: Herder, 1913, §§428-433, printed pages 188-192. The Latin transcription of the constitutions at Wikisource provides the continuous text and the selected opening of Constitution 3. The remainder of Constitution 3 is omitted. This is a new rendering, not a reproduction of a modern English conciliar translation.

Constitution 1 The Catholic Faith

We firmly believe and plainly confess that there is only one true God, eternal and immeasurable, almighty, unchangeable, incomprehensible, and ineffable: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; three persons indeed, but one essence, substance, or nature, altogether simple. The Father is from no one, the Son from the Father alone, and the Holy Spirit equally from both, without beginning, always and without end. The Father begets, the Son is born, and the Holy Spirit proceeds. They are consubstantial and coequal, equally almighty and coeternal, one principle of all things, creator of everything invisible and visible, spiritual and bodily. By his almighty power he created together from nothing, at the beginning of time, both kinds of creature, spiritual and bodily: the angelic and the earthly; and afterward the human creature, constituted, as it were, of both, from spirit and body. For the devil and the other demons were created good in their nature by God, but they made themselves evil. The human being sinned at the devil's prompting.

This holy Trinity, undivided in the common essence and distinct in the personal properties, gave saving teaching to the human race through Moses, the holy prophets, and its other servants, according to a most orderly disposition of the times. Finally, the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, by the common action of the whole Trinity took flesh from Mary ever virgin. Conceived through the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, he became truly human, composed of a rational soul and human flesh, one person in two natures, and showed the way of life more clearly. Although immortal and incapable of suffering according to his divinity, this same person became capable of suffering and mortal according to his humanity. For the salvation of the human race he even suffered and died on the wood of the cross, descended to the lower world, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. He descended in his soul, rose in his flesh, and ascended in both together. At the end of

the age he will come to judge the living and the dead and render to each according to their works, to the rejected as well as the elect. All will rise with their own bodies, which they now bear, to receive according to their merits, whether good or evil: the former perpetual punishment with the devil, the latter everlasting glory with Christ.

There is one universal church of the faithful, outside which absolutely no one is saved. In it the same Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice. His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the appearances of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into his body and the wine into his blood by divine power, so that, to accomplish the mystery of unity, we may receive of what is his what he himself received of what is ours. No one can effect this sacrament except a priest who has been duly ordained, according to the keys of the church which Jesus Christ himself granted to the apostles and their successors.

The sacrament of baptism, consecrated in water by invocation of the undivided Trinity, namely Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, contributes to salvation for little children as well as adults when duly conferred by anyone in the church's form. If anyone falls into sin after receiving baptism, that person can always be restored through true repentance. Not only virgins and those who practice continence, but married people also, pleasing God through right faith and good action, merit to attain eternal blessedness.

Constitution 2 The Opinion of Abbot Joachim

We therefore condemn and reject the booklet or treatise which Abbot Joachim published against Master Peter Lombard concerning the unity or essence of the Trinity. He calls Peter a heretic and mad because Peter said in his Sentences that there is a certain supreme reality which is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that it neither begets, nor is begotten, nor proceeds. From this Joachim asserts that Peter established in God not so much a Trinity as a quaternity: namely the three persons and their common essence as a fourth. He openly declares that there is no reality which is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whether essence, substance, or nature, although he concedes that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one essence, one substance, and one nature.

He nevertheless acknowledges that this unity is not true and proper unity, but a kind of collective unity by resemblance, as many people are called one people and many faithful one church, according to the words, The multitude of believers had one heart and one soul; and, Whoever adheres to God is one spirit with him. Again, He who plants and he who waters are one; and, We are all one body in Christ. Again in the Book of Kings, My people and your people are one. To establish this position he chiefly adduces Christ's words about the faithful in the Gospel: Father, I will that they be one in us, as we are one, so that they may be perfected in one. For Christ's faithful, he says, are not one in the sense of a single reality common to them all. They are one in this way: one church through the unity of the catholic faith, and finally one kingdom through the union of indissoluble charity. Likewise it is read in

John's canonical epistle: There are three who bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. Immediately it adds: And there are three who bear witness on earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood, and the three are one, as is found in certain manuscripts.

We, however, with the approval of the holy and universal council, believe and confess with Peter that there is a certain single supreme reality, incomprehensible and ineffable, which truly is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: the three persons together and each of them individually. In God, therefore, there is only a Trinity, not a quaternity, because each of the three persons is that reality, namely the divine substance, essence, or nature. This alone is the principle of all things, outside which no other can be found. That reality neither begets, nor is begotten, nor proceeds; but it is the Father who begets, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds, so that the distinctions are in the persons and the unity in the nature. Although, therefore, the Father is one, the Son another, and the Holy Spirit another, they are not different things. What the Father is, the Son and Holy Spirit are, altogether the same, so that according to the orthodox and catholic faith they are believed to be consubstantial.

For the Father, eternally begetting the Son, gave him his substance, as he himself testifies: What the Father has given me is greater than all. It cannot be said that he gave the Son part of his substance and retained part for himself, since the Father's substance is indivisible, being altogether simple. Nor can it be said that in begetting he transferred his substance to the Son, as though he gave it to the Son in such a way that he did not retain it himself; otherwise he would have ceased to be substance. It is clear, therefore, that the Son in being born received the Father's substance without any diminution, and so Father and Son have the same substance. Thus Father and Son are the same reality, as is the Holy Spirit proceeding from both.

When, therefore, the Truth prays to the Father for his faithful, saying, I will that they be one in us as we are one, the word one is understood of the faithful as the union of charity in grace. Of the divine persons it denotes the unity of identity in nature. Likewise the Truth says elsewhere: Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. It is as though he said more plainly: Be perfect with the perfection of grace, as your heavenly Father is perfect with the perfection of nature, each in its own manner. For no likeness between Creator and creature can be noted without a still greater unlikeness being noted between them.

If anyone, therefore, presumes to defend or approve the aforesaid Joachim's opinion or teaching on this matter, let that person be refuted by all as a heretic. By this, however, we do not wish in any respect to detract from the monastery of Fiore, of which Joachim himself was the founder, for there is both regular institution and salutary observance there. This is especially so because Joachim himself ordered all his writings to be delivered to us for approval or correction by the judgment of the apostolic see. He dictated a letter which he signed with his own hand, in which he firmly confesses that he holds the faith held by the Roman church, which by the

Lord's disposition is mother and teacher of all the faithful. We also reject and condemn the most perverse teaching of the impious Amalric, whose mind the father of lies so blinded that his teaching should be considered not so much heretical as mad.

Constitution 3 The Opening Provisions against Heresy

We excommunicate and anathematize every heresy that raises itself against this holy, orthodox, catholic faith which we have set out above. We condemn all heretics, whatever names they are called, who have different faces but tails tied together, because in their vanity they agree in the same thing. Those condemned are to be handed over to the secular authorities present, or to their officers, to be punished with the penalty due, clerics first being degraded from their orders. The goods of those condemned, if they are laypeople, are to be confiscated; if clerics, their goods are to be assigned to the churches from which they received their stipends.

Those found to be marked by suspicion alone are to be struck by the sword of anathema unless, with regard to the grounds of suspicion and the character of the person, they demonstrate their innocence through an appropriate purgation. They are to be avoided by all until they make fitting satisfaction. If they persist in excommunication for a year, they are thereafter to be condemned as heretics.

Secular authorities, whatever offices they hold, are to be admonished and induced, and if necessary compelled through ecclesiastical censure, that, as they wish to be considered and regarded as faithful, so for the defense of the faith they publicly swear that in good faith and to the extent of their powers they will strive to remove from the territories subject to their jurisdiction all heretics identified by the church. From now on, whenever anyone is advanced to spiritual or temporal authority, that person is bound to confirm this provision by oath.

If a temporal lord, requested and admonished by the church, neglects to cleanse his territory of this heretical pollution, he is to be bound by excommunication by the metropolitan and the other bishops of the province. If he refuses to make satisfaction within a year, the matter is to be reported to the supreme pontiff, so that the pontiff may declare the lord's vassals released from their allegiance and expose his territory to occupation by Catholics. After removing the heretics, they may possess it without contradiction and preserve it in the purity of the faith, saving the right of the principal lord, provided he himself presents no obstacle or impediment in the matter. The same law is nevertheless to be observed regarding those who have no principal lords. Catholics who, having taken the sign of the cross, prepare themselves for the removal of heretics are to enjoy the indulgence and be protected by the holy privilege granted to those who go to the aid of the Holy Land.

Lateran IV establishes two historical conclusions especially clearly. First, medieval reception involved substantive doctrinal interpretation. The council was not merely preserving the sound of ancient syllables. It decided what unity could mean, denied that essence is an additional divine member, and restricted an analogy drawn from

the unity of believers. These decisions belong to the continuing history of the Nicene tradition. Their distance from 325 is visible in their subject matter, Latin terminology, and institutional setting.

Second, this council's program cannot be described as voluntary theological persuasion alone. The opening of Constitution 3 requires secular authorities to act against people identified by the church as heretics and threatens consequences for rulers who fail to comply. The verb rendered above as remove from the territory comes from exterminare, whose sense here concerns expulsion from the bounds of a jurisdiction. That lexical point must not soften the rest of the text: punishment, seizure of property, dispossession of rulers, and privileges for armed action are expressly present. The decree documents a coercive political order even without importing a modern sense into a single Latin word.

The institutional authority claimed here also differs from what the surviving Nicene documents explicitly establish. The pope occupies a central role in judging compliance and releasing subjects from allegiance. Such a program cannot be read backward as though it were a transcript of Constantine's council. The medieval church presents it as a defense of the orthodox faith; the historian must still identify which parts of that defense arose in this later setting.

The translation preserves the expanded Latin biblical wording quoted in Constitution 2, including the heavenly witnesses of 1 John. Its presence is evidence of the scripture text used in this medieval argument. It does not supply a missing line in the creed of 325. In the same way, the confession's reference to transubstantiation belongs to its account of the Eucharist in 1215. A documentary history must permit the later council to speak in its own developed vocabulary without crediting all that vocabulary to Nicaea.

25 Aquinas on Creed Making and the Grammar of the Trinity

Thomas Aquinas offers a systematic account of two questions that run through this history: how a church may formulate a creed, and how language about one essence and three persons can avoid contradiction. The selections come from different parts of the Summa Theologiae. The discussion of faith concerns the need and authority for a public summary of belief. The discussion of divine essence concerns what particular sentences can mean. Reading them together shows how institutional authority and conceptual analysis support one another in his theology.

Aquinas does not understand a creed as a replacement for Scripture. It gathers dispersed biblical teaching into a form that can be confessed, taught, and used against a specific error. Nor does he suppose that every new wording announces a new object of faith. His answer to the prohibition on composing another faith depends on the distinction between changing the faith and explaining it more explicitly when a controversy makes explanation necessary. This is a medieval answer to the objection that Nicaea, Constantinople, or a later council transgressed an earlier rule merely by adding words. The answer must be assessed as an argument about identity of meaning, not as a claim that textual change never occurred.

The article on who may issue a creed states Aquinas's account of papal authority without disguise. A definitive judgment must preserve the unity of the whole church; he assigns that responsibility to the supreme pontiff. Councils operate within this structure. This is important evidence for thirteenth-century Latin reception. It does not by itself prove that the assembly of 325 operated through the same constitutional understanding. Aquinas offers a theory of the authority by which the received faith may be explained in his own church. The historian should state that theory clearly before comparing it with the earlier evidence.

The question on essence and person moves into the grammar underlying the confession. If the Father, Son, and Spirit are the same divine essence, why are they not simply the same person? If the persons are genuinely distinct, why are there not three divine essences? Aquinas addresses these objections by distinguishing how an expression signifies something from what it refers to. A term can designate the essence while another term designates a subsisting relation. Within his account, the relations distinguish the persons without dividing the simple divine being into separate substances.

The resulting rules explain why superficially similar sentences can have different theological status. The expression God begot God can refer personally to the Father and Son. The expression the divine essence begot the divine essence would treat the essential nature as the subject of the personal relation and risk multiplying that nature. One should not assume that any substitution of words referring to the same

God preserves the same assertion. Aquinas's distinction is designed to prevent exactly the fourth reality imagined in the dispute over Lombard: an essence placed alongside the three as one additional subject.

The question is difficult because ordinary speech usually names a nature as common to several distinct individuals. Three human persons are three human beings. Aquinas denies that divine persons are individuals who possess separate instances of a shared species. The one divine essence is not divided or repeated in them. Whether this account is ultimately convincing is a philosophical and theological judgment. Historically, the account shows the precision with which a medieval defender of the creed understood the problem; he did not consider the bare repetition of one and three an adequate explanation.

Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, II-II, Question 1, Articles 9-10, followed by I, Question 39, Articles 1-4. Historical English translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province; electronic witnesses: Project Gutenberg 18755 and 17611. Printed comparison editions: The “Summa Theologica” of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part II (Second Part), First Number, Questions I-XLVI (London: R. & T. Washbourne; New York, Cincinnati, and Chicago: Benziger Brothers, 1917), pp. 23-28; and Part I, Questions XXVII-XLIX, vol. 2, second and revised edition (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1921), pp. 126-137. Each selected article is complete, including its objections, contrary authority, answer, and replies. The two groups come from different parts of the work. Printed emphasis is represented as plain text. Bracketed editorial footnotes and their markers, the electronic edition's supplementary introduction, and Gutenberg license material are omitted. One duplicated sentence in the electronic text at II-II, Question 1, Article 10, Reply 3, is removed against the 1917 printing, page 28.

Whether It Is Suitable for the Articles of Faith to Be Embodied in a Symbol?

Objection 1: It would seem that it is unsuitable for the articles of faith to be embodied in a symbol. Because Holy Writ is the rule of faith, to which no addition or subtraction can lawfully be made, since it is written (Deut. 4:2): "You shall not add to the word that I speak to you, neither shall you take away from it." Therefore it was unlawful to make a symbol as a rule of faith, after the Holy Writ had once been published.

Obj. 2: Further, according to the Apostle (Eph. 4:5) there is but "one faith." Now the symbol is a profession of faith. Therefore it is not fitting that there should be more than one symbol.

Obj. 3: Further, the confession of faith, which is contained in the symbol, concerns all the faithful. Now the faithful are not all competent to believe in God, but only those who have living faith. Therefore it is unfitting for the symbol of faith to be expressed in the words: "I believe in one God."

Obj. 4: Further, the descent into hell is one of the articles of faith, as stated above (A. 8). But the descent into hell is not mentioned in the symbol of the Fathers. Therefore the latter is expressed inadequately.

Obj. 5: Further, Augustine (Tract. xxix in Joan.) expounding the passage, "You believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1) says: "We believe Peter or Paul, but we speak only of believing 'in' God." Since then the Catholic Church is merely a created being, it seems unfitting to say: "In the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."

Obj. 6: Further, a symbol is drawn up that it may be a rule of faith. Now a rule of faith ought to be proposed to all, and that publicly. Therefore every symbol, besides the symbol of the Fathers, should be sung at Mass. Therefore it seems unfitting to publish the articles of faith in a symbol.

On the contrary, The universal Church cannot err, since she is governed by the Holy Ghost, Who is the Spirit of truth: for such was Our Lord's promise to His disciples (John 16:13): "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth." Now the symbol is published by the authority of the universal Church. Therefore it contains nothing defective.

I answer that, As the Apostle says (Heb. 11:6), "he that cometh to God, must believe that He is." Now a man cannot believe, unless the truth be proposed to him that he may believe it. Hence the need for the truth of faith to be collected together, so that it might the more easily be proposed to all, lest anyone might stray from the truth through ignorance of the faith. It is from its being a collection of maxims of faith that the symbol takes its name.

Reply Obj. 1: The truth of faith is contained in Holy Writ, diffusely, under various modes of expression, and sometimes obscurely, so that, in order to gather the truth of faith from Holy Writ, one needs long study and practice, which are unattainable by all those who require to know the truth of faith, many of whom have no time for study, being busy with other affairs. And so it was necessary to gather together a clear summary from the sayings of Holy Writ, to be proposed to the belief of all. This indeed was no addition to Holy Writ, but something taken from it.

Reply Obj. 2: The same doctrine of faith is taught in all the symbols. Nevertheless, the people need more careful instruction about the truth of faith, when errors arise, lest the faith of simple-minded persons be corrupted by heretics. It was this that gave rise to the necessity of formulating several symbols, which nowise differ from one another, save that on account of the obstinacy of heretics, one contains more explicitly what another contains implicitly.

Reply Obj. 3: The confession of faith is drawn up in a symbol in the person, as it were, of the whole Church, which is united together by faith. Now the faith of the Church is living faith; since such is the faith to be found in all those who are of the Church not only outwardly but also by merit. Hence the confession of faith is expressed in a symbol, in a manner that is in keeping with living faith, so that even if some of the faithful lack living faith, they should endeavor to acquire it.

Reply Obj. 4: No error about the descent into hell had arisen among heretics, so that there was no need to be more explicit on that point. For this reason it is not

repeated in the symbol of the Fathers, but is supposed as already settled in the symbol of the Apostles. For a subsequent symbol does not cancel a preceding one; rather does it expound it, as stated above (ad 2).

Reply Obj. 5: If we say: "'In' the holy Catholic Church," this must be taken as verified in so far as our faith is directed to the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifies the Church; so that the sense is: "I believe in the Holy Ghost sanctifying the Church." But it is better and more in keeping with the common use, to omit the 'in,' and say simply, "the holy Catholic Church," as Pope Leo observes.

Reply Obj. 6: Since the symbol of the Fathers is an explanation of the symbol of the Apostles, and was drawn up after the faith was already spread abroad, and when the Church was already at peace, it is sung publicly in the Mass. On the other hand the symbol of the Apostles, which was drawn up at the time of persecution, before the faith was made public, is said secretly at Prime and Compline, as though it were against the darkness of past and future errors.

Whether It Belongs to the Sovereign Pontiff to Draw Up a Symbol of Faith?

Objection 1: It would seem that it does not belong to the Sovereign Pontiff to draw up a symbol of faith. For a new edition of the symbol becomes necessary in order to explain the articles of faith, as stated above (A. 9). Now, in the Old Testament, the articles of faith were more and more explained as time went on, by reason of the truth of faith becoming clearer through greater nearness to Christ, as stated above (A. 7). Since then this reason ceased with the advent of the New Law, there is no need for the articles of faith to be more and more explicit. Therefore it does not seem to belong to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff to draw up a new edition of the symbol.

Obj. 2: Further, no man has the power to do what is forbidden under pain of anathema by the universal Church. Now it was forbidden under pain of anathema by the universal Church, to make a new edition of the symbol. For it is stated in the acts of the first council of Ephesus (P. ii, Act. 6) that "after the symbol of the Nicene council had been read through, the holy synod decreed that it was unlawful to utter, write or draw up any other creed, than that which was defined by the Fathers assembled at Nicaea together with the Holy Ghost," and this under pain of anathema. The same was repeated in the acts of the council of Chalcedon (P. ii, Act. 5). Therefore it seems that the Sovereign Pontiff has no authority to publish a new edition of the symbol.

Obj. 3: Further, Athanasius was not the Sovereign Pontiff, but patriarch of Alexandria, and yet he published a symbol which is sung in the Church. Therefore it does not seem to belong to the Sovereign Pontiff any more than to other bishops, to publish a new edition of the symbol.

On the contrary, The symbol was drawn up by a general council. Now such a council cannot be convoked otherwise than by the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, as stated in the Decretals. Therefore it belongs to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff to draw up a symbol.

I answer that, As stated above (Obj. 1), a new edition of the symbol becomes necessary in order to set aside the errors that may arise. Consequently to publish a new edition of the symbol belongs to that authority which is empowered to decide matters of faith finally, so that they may be held by all with unshaken faith. Now this belongs to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, "to whom the more important and more difficult questions that arise in the Church are referred," as stated in the Decretals. Hence our Lord said to Peter whom he made Sovereign Pontiff (Luke 22:32): "I have prayed for thee," Peter, "that thy faith fail not, and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." The reason of this is that there should be but one faith of the whole Church, according to 1 Cor. 1:10: "That you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you": and this could not be secured unless any question of faith that may arise be decided by him who presides over the whole Church, so that the whole Church may hold firmly to his decision. Consequently it belongs to the sole authority of the Sovereign Pontiff to publish a new edition of the symbol, as do all other matters which concern the whole Church, such as to convoke a general council and so forth.

Reply Obj. 1: The truth of faith is sufficiently explicit in the teaching of Christ and the apostles. But since, according to 2 Pet. 3:16, some men are so evil-minded as to pervert the apostolic teaching and other doctrines and Scriptures to their own destruction, it was necessary as time went on to express the faith more explicitly against the errors which arose.

Reply Obj. 2: This prohibition and sentence of the council was intended for private individuals, who have no business to decide matters of faith: for this decision of the general council did not take away from a subsequent council the power of drawing up a new edition of the symbol, containing not indeed a new faith, but the same faith with greater explicitness. For every council has taken into account that a subsequent council would expound matters more fully than the preceding council, if this became necessary through some heresy arising. Consequently this belongs to the Sovereign Pontiff, by whose authority the council is convoked, and its decision confirmed.

Reply Obj. 3: Athanasius drew up a declaration of faith, not under the form of a symbol, but rather by way of an exposition of doctrine, as appears from his way of speaking. But since it contained briefly the whole truth of faith, it was accepted by the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, so as to be considered as a rule of faith.

Whether in God the Essence Is the Same As the Person?

Objection 1: It would seem that in God the essence is not the same as person. For whenever essence is the same as person or suppositum, there can be only one suppositum of one nature, as is clear in the case of all separate substances. For in those things which are really one and the same, one cannot be multiplied apart from the other. But in God there is one essence and three persons, as is clear from what is above expounded (Q. 28, A. 3; Q. 30, A. 2). Therefore essence is not the same as person.

Obj. 2: Further, simultaneous affirmation and negation of the same things in the same respect cannot be true. But affirmation and negation are true of essence and of person. For person is distinct, whereas essence is not. Therefore person and essence are not the same.

Obj. 3: Further, nothing can be subject to itself. But person is subject to essence; whence it is called suppositum or "hypostasis." Therefore person is not the same as essence.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Trin. vi, 7): "When we say the person of the Father we mean nothing else but the substance of the Father."

I answer that, The truth of this question is quite clear if we consider the divine simplicity. For it was shown above (Q. 3, A. 3) that the divine simplicity requires that in God essence is the same as suppositum, which in intellectual substances is nothing else than person. But a difficulty seems to arise from the fact that while the divine persons are multiplied, the essence nevertheless retains its unity. And because, as Boethius says (De Trin. i), "relation multiplies the Trinity of persons," some have thought that in God essence and person differ, forasmuch as they held the relations to be "adjacent"; considering only in the relations the idea of "reference to another," and not the relations as realities. But as it was shown above (Q. 28, A. 2) in creatures relations are accidental, whereas in God they are the divine essence itself. Thence it follows that in God essence is not really distinct from person; and yet that the persons are really distinguished from each other. For person, as above stated (Q. 29, A. 4), signifies relation as subsisting in the divine nature. But relation as referred to the essence does not differ therefrom really, but only in our way of thinking; while as referred to an opposite relation, it has a real distinction by virtue of that opposition. Thus there are one essence and three persons.

Reply Obj. 1: There cannot be a distinction of suppositum in creatures by means of relations, but only by essential principles; because in creatures relations are not subsistent. But in God relations are subsistent, and so by reason of the opposition between them they distinguish the supposita; and yet the essence is not distinguished, because the relations themselves are not distinguished from each other so far as they are identified with the essence.

Reply Obj. 2: As essence and person in God differ in our way of thinking, it follows that something can be denied of the one and affirmed of the other; and therefore, when we suppose the one, we need not suppose the other.

Reply Obj. 3: Divine things are named by us after the way of created things, as above explained (Q. 13, AA. 1, 3). And since created natures are individualized by matter which is the subject of the specific nature, it follows that individuals are called "subjects," supposita, or "hypostases." So the divine persons are named supposita or "hypostases," but not as if there really existed any real "supposition" or "subjection."

Whether It Must Be Said That the Three Persons Are of One Essence?

Objection 1: It would seem not right to say that the three persons are of one essence. For Hilary says (De Synod.) that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost "are indeed three by substance, but one in harmony." But the substance of God is His essence. Therefore the three persons are not of one essence.

Obj. 2: Further, nothing is to be affirmed of God except what can be confirmed by the authority of Holy Writ, as appears from Dionysius (Div. Nom. i). Now Holy Writ never says that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are of one essence. Therefore this should not be asserted.

Obj. 3: Further, the divine nature is the same as the divine essence. It suffices therefore to say that the three persons are of one nature.

Obj. 4: Further, it is not usual to say that the person is of the essence; but rather that the essence is of the person. Therefore it does not seem fitting to say that the three persons are of one essence.

Obj. 5: Further, Augustine says (De Trin. vii, 6) that we do not say that the three persons are "from one essence [ex una essentia]," lest we should seem to indicate a distinction between the essence and the persons in God. But prepositions which imply transition, denote the oblique case. Therefore it is equally wrong to say that the three persons are "of one essence [unius essentiae]."

Obj. 6: Further, nothing should be said of God which can be occasion of error. Now, to say that the three persons are of one essence or substance, furnishes occasion of error. For, as Hilary says (De Synod.): "One substance predicated of the Father and the Son signifies either one subsistent, with two denominations; or one substance divided into two imperfect substances; or a third prior substance taken and assumed by the other two." Therefore it must not be said that the three persons are of one substance.

On the contrary, Augustine says (Contra Maxim. iii) that the word homoousion, which the Council of Nicaea adopted against the Arians, means that the three persons are of one essence.

I answer that, As above explained (Q. 13, AA. 1, 2), divine things are named by our intellect, not as they really are in themselves, for in that way it knows them not; but in a way that belongs to things created. And as in the objects of the senses, whence the intellect derives its knowledge, the nature of the species is made individual by the matter, and thus the nature is as the form, and the individual is the suppositum of the form; so also in God the essence is taken as the form of the three persons, according to our mode of signification. Now in creatures we say that every form belongs to that whereof it is the form; as the health and beauty of a man belongs to the man. But we do not say of that which has a form, that it belongs to the form, unless some adjective qualifies the form; as when we say: "That woman is of a handsome figure," or: "This man is of perfect virtue." In like manner, as in God the persons are multiplied, and the essence is not multiplied, we speak of one essence of the three persons, and three persons of the one essence, provided that these genitives be understood as designating the form.

Reply Obj. 1: Substance is here taken for the "hypostasis," and not for the essence.

Reply Obj. 2: Although we may not find it declared in Holy Writ in so many words that the three persons are of one essence, nevertheless we find it so stated as regards the meaning; for instance, "I and the Father are one (John 10:30)," and "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me (John 10:38)"; and there are many other texts of the same import.

Reply Obj. 3: Because "nature" designates the principle of action while "essence" comes from being [essendo], things may be said to be of one nature which agree in some action, as all things which give heat; but only those things can be said to be of "one essence" which have one being. So the divine unity is better described by saying that the three persons are "of one essence," than by saying they are "of one nature."

Reply Obj. 4: Form, in the absolute sense, is wont to be designated as belonging to that of which it is the form, as we say "the virtue of Peter." On the other hand, the thing having form is not wont to be designated as belonging to the form except when we wish to qualify or designate the form. In which case two genitives are required, one signifying the form, and the other signifying the determination of the form, as, for instance, when we say, "Peter is of great virtue [magnae virtutis]," or else one genitive must have the force of two, as, for instance, "he is a man of blood"--that is, he is a man who sheds much blood [multi sanguinis]. So, because the divine essence signifies a form as regards the person, it may properly be said that the essence is of the person; but we cannot say the converse, unless we add some term to designate the essence; as, for instance, the Father is a person of the "divine essence"; or, the three persons are "of one essence."

Reply Obj. 5: The preposition "from" or "out of" does not designate the habitude of a formal cause, but rather the habitude of an efficient or material cause; which causes are in all cases distinguished from those things of which they are the causes. For nothing can be its own matter, nor its own active principle. Yet a thing may be its

own form, as appears in all immaterial things. So, when we say, "three persons of one essence," taking essence as having the habitude of form, we do not mean that essence is different from person, which we should mean if we said, "three persons from the same essence."

Reply Obj. 6: As Hilary says (De Synod.): "It would be prejudicial to holy things, if we had to do away with them, just because some do not think them holy. So if some misunderstand homoousion, what is that to me, if I understand it rightly?... The oneness of nature does not result from division, or from union or from community of possession, but from one nature being proper to both Father and Son."

Whether Essential Names Should Be Predicated in the Singular of the Three Persons?

Objection 1: It would seem that essential names, as the name "God," should not be predicated in the singular of the three persons, but in the plural. For as "man" signifies "one that has humanity," so God signifies "one that has Godhead." But the three persons are three who have Godhead. Therefore the three persons are "three Gods."

Obj. 2: Further, Gen. 1:1, where it is said, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," the Hebrew original has "Elohim," which may be rendered "Gods" or "Judges": and this word is used on account of the plurality of persons. Therefore the three persons are "several Gods," and not "one" God.

Obj. 3: Further, this word "thing" when it is said absolutely, seems to belong to substance. But it is predicated of the three persons in the plural. For Augustine says (De Doctr. Christ. i, 5): "The things that are the objects of our future glory are the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." Therefore other essential names can be predicated in the plural of the three persons.

Obj. 4: Further, as this word "God" signifies "a being who has Deity," so also this word "person" signifies a being subsisting in an intellectual nature. But we say there are three persons. So for the same reason we can say there are "three Gods."

On the contrary, It is said (Deut. 6:4): "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God."

I answer that, Some essential names signify the essence after the manner of substantives; while others signify it after the manner of adjectives. Those which signify it as substantives are predicated of the three persons in the singular only, and not in the plural. Those which signify the essence as adjectives are predicated of the three persons in the plural. The reason of this is that substantives signify something by way of substance, while adjectives signify something by way of accident, which adheres to a subject. Now just as substance has existence of itself, so also it has of itself unity or multitude; wherefore the singularity or plurality of a substantive name depends upon the form signified by the name. But as accidents have their existence in a subject, so they have unity or plurality from their subject; and therefore the singularity and plurality of adjectives depends upon their

supposita. In creatures, one form does not exist in several supposita except by unity of order, as the form of an ordered multitude. So if the names signifying such a form are substantives, they are predicated of many in the singular, but otherwise if they adjectives. For we say that many men are a college, or an army, or a people; but we say that many men are collegians. Now in God the divine essence is signified by way of a form, as above explained (A. 2), which, indeed, is simple and supremely one, as shown above (Q. 3, A. 7; Q. 11, A. 4). So, names which signify the divine essence in a substantive manner are predicated of the three persons in the singular, and not in the plural. This, then, is the reason why we say that Socrates, Plato and Cicero are "three men"; whereas we do not say the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are "three Gods," but "one God"; forasmuch as in the three supposita of human nature there are three humanities, whereas in the three divine Persons there is but one divine essence. On the other hand, the names which signify essence in an adjectival manner are predicated of the three persons plurally, by reason of the plurality of supposita. For we say there are three "existent" or three "wise" beings, or three "eternal," "uncreated," and "immense" beings, if these terms are understood in an adjectival sense. But if taken in a substantive sense, we say "one uncreated, immense, eternal being," as Athanasius declares.

Reply Obj. 1: Though the name "God" signifies a being having Godhead, nevertheless the mode of signification is different. For the name "God" is used substantively; whereas "having Godhead" is used adjectively. Consequently, although there are "three having Godhead," it does not follow that there are three Gods.

Reply Obj. 2: Various languages have diverse modes of expression. So as by reason of the plurality of supposita the Greeks said "three hypostases," so also in Hebrew "Elohim" is in the plural. We, however, do not apply the plural either to "God" or to "substance," lest plurality be referred to the substance.

Reply Obj. 3: This word "thing" is one of the transcendentals. Whence, so far as it is referred to relation, it is predicated of God in the plural; whereas, so far as it is referred to the substance, it is predicated in the singular. So Augustine says, in the passage quoted, that "the same Trinity is a thing supreme."

Reply Obj. 4: The form signified by the word "person" is not essence or nature, but personality. So, as there are three personalities--that is, three personal properties in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost--it is predicated of the three, not in the singular, but in the plural.

Whether the Concrete Essential Names Can Stand for the Person?

Objection 1: It would seem that the concrete, essential names cannot stand for the person, so that we can truly say "God begot God." For, as the logicians say, "a singular term signifies what it stands for." But this name "God" seems to be a singular term, for it cannot be predicated in the plural, as above explained (A. 3). Therefore, since it signifies the essence, it stands for essence, and not for person.

Obj. 2: Further, a term in the subject is not modified by a term in the predicate, as to its signification; but only as to the sense signified in the predicate. But when I say, "God creates," this name "God" stands for the essence. So when we say "God begot," this term "God" cannot by reason of the notional predicate, stand for person.

Obj. 3: Further, if this be true, "God begot," because the Father generates; for the same reason this is true, "God does not beget," because the Son does not beget. Therefore there is God who begets, and there is God who does not beget; and thus it follows that there are two Gods.

Obj. 4: Further, if "God begot God," He begot either God, that is Himself, or another God. But He did not beget God, that is Himself; for, as Augustine says (De Trin. i, 1), "nothing begets itself." Neither did He beget another God; as there is only one God. Therefore it is false to say, "God begot God."

Obj. 5: Further, if "God begot God," He begot either God who is the Father, or God who is not the Father. If God who is the Father, then God the Father was begotten. If God who is not the Father, then there is a God who is not God the Father: which is false. Therefore it cannot be said that "God begot God."

On the contrary, In the Creed it is said, "God of God."

I answer that, Some have said that this name "God" and the like, properly according to their nature, stand for the essence, but by reason of some notional adjunct are made to stand for the Person. This opinion apparently arose from considering the divine simplicity, which requires that in God, He "who possesses" and "what is possessed" be the same. So He who possesses Godhead, which is signified by the name God, is the same as Godhead. But when we consider the proper way of expressing ourselves, the mode of signification must be considered no less than the thing signified. Hence as this word "God" signifies the divine essence as in Him Who possesses it, just as the name "man" signifies humanity in a subject, others more truly have said that this word "God," from its mode of signification, can, in its proper sense, stand for person, as does the word "man." So this word "God" sometimes stands for the essence, as when we say "God creates"; because this predicate is attributed to the subject by reason of the form signified--that is, Godhead. But sometimes it stands for the person, either for only one, as when we say, "God begets," or for two, as when we say, "God spirates"; or for three, as when it is said: "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God," etc. (1 Tim. 1:17).

Reply Obj. 1: Although this name "God" agrees with singular terms as regards the form signified not being multiplied; nevertheless it agrees also with general terms so far as the form signified is to be found in several supposita. So it need not always stand for the essence it signifies.

Reply Obj. 2: This holds good against those who say that the word "God" does not naturally stand for person.

Reply Obj. 3: The word "God" stands for the person in a different way from that in which this word "man" does; for since the form signified by this word "man"--that is,

humanity--is really divided among its different subjects, it stands of itself for the person, even if there is no adjunct determining it to the person--that is, to a distinct subject. The unity or community of the human nature, however, is not a reality, but is only in the consideration of the mind. Hence this term "man" does not stand for the common nature, unless this is required by some adjunct, as when we say, "man is a species"; whereas the form signified by the name "God"--that is, the divine essence--is really one and common. So of itself it stands for the common nature, but by some adjunct it may be restricted so as to stand for the person. So, when we say, "God generates," by reason of the notional act this name "God" stands for the person of the Father. But when we say, "God does not generate," there is no adjunct to determine this name to the person of the Son, and hence the phrase means that generation is repugnant to the divine nature. If, however, something be added belonging to the person of the Son, this proposition, for instance, "God begotten does not beget," is true. Consequently, it does not follow that there exists a "God generator," and a "God not generator"; unless there be an adjunct pertaining to the persons; as, for instance, if we were to say, "the Father is God the generator" and the "Son is God the non-generator" and so it does not follow that there are many Gods; for the Father and the Son are one God, as was said above (A. 3).

Reply Obj. 4: This is false, "the Father begot God, that is Himself," because the word "Himself," as a reciprocal term, refers to the same suppositum. Nor is this contrary to what Augustine says (Ep. lxvi ad Maxim.) that "God the Father begot another self [alterum se]," forasmuch as the word "se" is either in the ablative case, and then it means "He begot another from Himself," or it indicates a single relation, and thus points to identity of nature. This is, however, either a figurative or an emphatic way of speaking, so that it would really mean, "He begot another most like to Himself." Likewise also it is false to say, "He begot another God," because although the Son is another than the Father, as above explained (Q. 31, A. 2), nevertheless it cannot be said that He is "another God"; forasmuch as this adjective "another" would be understood to apply to the substantive God; and thus the meaning would be that there is a distinction of Godhead. Yet this proposition "He begot another God" is tolerated by some, provided that "another" be taken as a substantive, and the word "God" be construed in apposition with it. This, however, is an inexact way of speaking, and to be avoided, for fear of giving occasion to error.

Reply Obj. 5: To say, "God begot God Who is God the Father," is wrong, because since the word "Father" is construed in apposition to "God," the word "God" is restricted to the person of the Father; so that it would mean, "He begot God, Who is Himself the Father"; and then the Father would be spoken of as begotten, which is false. Wherefore the negative of the proposition is true, "He begot God Who is not God the Father." If however, we understand these words not to be in apposition, and require something to be added, then, on the contrary, the affirmative proposition is true, and the negative is false; so that the meaning would be, "He begot God Who is God Who is the Father." Such a rendering however appears to be forced, so that it is better to say simply that the affirmative proposition is false, and the negative is true.

> Yet Prepositivus said that both the negative and affirmative are false, because this relative "Who" in the affirmative proposition can be referred to the suppositum; whereas in the negative it denotes both the thing signified and the suppositum. Whence, in the affirmative the sense is that "to be God the Father" is befitting to the person of the Son; and in the negative sense is that "to be God the Father," is to be removed from the Son's divinity as well as from His personality. This, however, appears to be irrational; since, according to the Philosopher (Peri Herm. ii), what is open to affirmation, is open also to negation.

Aquinas's articles answer the idea that the medieval church merely forbade questions about a settled formula. The text stages objections that make the doctrine look contradictory, allows those objections a definite logical form, and replies by defining terms and testing sentences. That procedure does not create unlimited doctrinal liberty: the conclusions are governed by the faith he receives. It does, however, show that reasoned explanation was an internal part of orthodox theological work.

His discussion of new creeds also identifies a limit on claims of continuity. A new formulation is justified if it explains the same faith against a newly explicit error. The claim would fail if the later text introduced a different object of worship or contradicted what it professed to clarify. Aquinas supplies a rationale for legitimate clarification, not a rule that every institutionally approved change must be historically identical to every earlier statement. The earlier documents still have to be read and compared.

The strongest connection between the two selections is their treatment of unity. A creed serves the unity of a confessing church; the technical language serves the unity of the God confessed. Those unities are not the same kind of thing. The church consists of many created persons joined in belief and communion. The divine unity, in Aquinas's account, is not a collective agreement among independent beings. Keeping that distinction in view prevents a convenient political analogy from taking over the theological claim.

The medieval record therefore adds more than a long interval of passive acceptance between Athanasius and the Reformers. It contains reflection on the meaning of substance, disputes over analogy, judgments about the right to teach, a conciliar condemnation of a proposed explanation, and a systematic account of who may clarify the creed. The documents also show a powerful coercive institution surrounding that intellectual work. Both belong to the history that later defenders and critics inherited. Neither should be allowed to conceal the other.

Part V Reformation and Early Modern Criticism

26 Reformation and the Received Doctrine of God

The sixteenth-century Reformers did not begin their dispute with Rome by rejecting the Nicene doctrine of God. The Augsburg Confession opens by affirming it. This opening mattered because the confessors were answering the charge that their movement had abandoned the Christian faith. They claimed to reform the church from within a received confession, and their first article identified a doctrinal inheritance they intended to preserve. In this setting Nicaea supplied a standard of continuity that could be invoked against an accusation of novelty.

The confession was presented at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. Its first article uses the developed language of one divine essence and three persons. The reader should compare that statement with the actual text of 325, where the Holy Spirit receives only a brief affirmation and the later distinction between essence and person has not yet been expressed in the same settled form. Melanchthon's reference to Nicaea places the confession within the mature Nicene tradition. It does not establish that every clause of the sixteenth-century article had been spoken by the bishops in 325.

The selected articles also prevent a false impression that the confession treats correct belief as the entire Christian life. Article VI requires good works while refusing to make them the price of justification. Articles VII and VIII distinguish the church's unity from uniform human ceremonies and acknowledge the presence of hypocrites within its visible fellowship. Article XVI recognizes civil government, lawful public office, and just warfare. These statements will become important when later critics ask whether the churches' conduct follows the teaching of Jesus.

Augsburg Confession Article I Of God

Historical reading. Philipp Melanchthon, Augsburg Confession (1530), Articles I, III, VI, VII, VIII, and XVI, each reproduced in full. English translation by F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau, Triglot Concordia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921); Project Gutenberg eBook 275. Other articles and the confession's prefatory and concluding material are omitted. Historical spelling, bracketed alternatives, and polemical designations are retained.

Our Churches, with common consent, do teach that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting; that is to say, there is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the

term "person" they use as the Fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.

They condemn all heresies which have sprung up against this article, as the Manichaeans, who assumed two principles, one Good and the other Evil - also the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and all such. They condemn also the Samosatenes, old and new, who, contending that there is but one Person, sophistically and impiously argue that the Word and the Holy Ghost are not distinct Persons, but that "Word" signifies a spoken word, and "Spirit" signifies motion created in things.

Augsburg Confession Article III Of the Son of God

Also they teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God, did assume the human nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably enjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

He also descended into hell, and truly rose again the third day; afterward He ascended into heaven that He might sit on the right hand of the Father, and forever reign and have dominion over all creatures, and sanctify them that believe in Him, by sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts, to rule, comfort, and quicken them, and to defend them against the devil and the power of sin.

The same Christ shall openly come again to judge the quick and the dead, etc., according to the Apostles' Creed.

Augsburg Confession Article VI Of New Obedience

Also they teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification before God. For remission of sins and justification is apprehended by faith, as also the voice of Christ attests: When ye shall have done all these things, say: We are unprofitable servants. Luke 17, 10. The same is also taught by the Fathers. For Ambrose says: It is ordained of God that he who believes in Christ is saved, freely receiving remission of sins, without works, by faith alone.

Augsburg Confession Article VII Of the Church

Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.

> And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. As Paul says: One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, etc. Eph. 4, 5. 6.

Augsburg Confession Article VIII What the Church Is

> Although the Church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless, since in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith, it is lawful to use Sacraments administered by evil men, according to the saying of Christ: The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, etc. Matt. 23, 2. Both the Sacraments and Word are effectual by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, notwithstanding they be administered by evil men.
>
> They condemn the Donatists, and such like, who denied it to be lawful to use the ministry of evil men in the Church, and who thought the ministry of evil men to be unprofitable and of none effect.

Augsburg Confession Article XVI Of Civil Affairs

> Of Civil Affairs they teach that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God, and that it is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to judge matters by the Imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to make oath when required by the magistrates, to marry a wife, to be given in marriage.
>
> They condemn the Anabaptists who forbid these civil offices to Christians.
>
> They condemn also those who do not place evangelical perfection in the fear of God and in faith, but in forsaking civil offices, for the Gospel teaches an eternal righteousness of the heart. Meanwhile, it does not destroy the State or the family, but very much requires that they be preserved as ordinances of God, and that charity be practiced in such ordinances. Therefore, Christians are necessarily bound to obey their own magistrates and laws save only when commanded to sin; for then they ought to obey God rather than men. Acts 5, 29.

The first article makes two moves that are easily separated in modern discussion but joined in the confession. It affirms a shared doctrine and condemns rival interpretations. Its list of condemned teachings extends beyond the particular disagreement that occasioned the council of 325. The document therefore witnesses both to the continuing authority of the Nicene settlement and to the use of that settlement within a later confessional boundary. To quote its affirmation while overlooking its exclusions would soften the historical text.

Article III places the Son's divine identity within the story of incarnation and salvation. The Son does not become divine as a reward for a successful human life. He

assumes human nature. This connection between divine identity and the work of salvation helps explain why the Reformers retained the earlier doctrine while contesting other parts of the church's inheritance. They did not regard every inherited teaching as having the same standing, but they also did not regard everything inherited as an obstacle to reform.

The Apology, published in 1531, makes the agreement on the first article especially explicit. Melanchthon says that the adversaries approve it. He nevertheless states its exclusions with considerable severity. Agreement between the principal disputing parties did not produce a general permission to disagree about the Trinity.

The Apology on agreement concerning God

Historical reading. Philipp Melanchthon, Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531), Article I in full, translated by F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau in the 1921 Triglot Concordia; Project Gutenberg eBook 6744. The surrounding articles are omitted.

> The First Article of our Confession our adversaries approve, in which we declare that we believe and teach that there is one divine essence, undivided, etc., and yet, that there are three distinct persons, of the same divine essence, and coeternal, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This article we have always taught and defended, and we believe that it has, in Holy Scripture, sure and firm testimonies that cannot be overthrown. And we constantly affirm that those thinking otherwise are outside of the Church of Christ, and are idolaters, and insult God.

Luther's Smalcald Articles show another side of this reception. They were prepared in anticipation of a council at which the Reformers' position might have to be stated. Their first part treats the divine majesty and declares that these articles are not in contention between the two sides. The preface, by contrast, attacks the prospects of a council controlled by the existing Roman leadership. An affirmation of received Trinitarian doctrine thus stands next to fierce distrust of contemporary conciliar government.

Luther on the proposed council

Historical reading. Martin Luther, Smalcald Articles (1537), the complete prefatory text and Part I, in F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau's English translation, Triglot Concordia (1921), pp. 453-529 for the complete work; Project Gutenberg eBook 273. The prefatory text was added for the 1538 publication of the articles drafted in 1537. The later parts are omitted.

> Since Pope Paul III convoked a Council last year, to assemble at Mantua about Whitsuntide, and afterwards transferred it from Mantua, so that it is not yet known where he will or can fix it, and we on our part either had to expect that we would be summoned also to the Council or [to fear that we would] be condemned unsummoned, I was directed to compile and collect the articles of our doctrine [in order that it might be plain] in case of deliberation as to what and how far we would

be both willing and able to yield to the Papists, and in what points we intended to persevere and abide to the end.

I have accordingly compiled these articles and presented them to our side. They have also been accepted and unanimously confessed by our side, and it has been resolved that, in case the Pope with his adherents should ever be so bold as seriously and in good faith, without lying and cheating, to hold a truly free [legitimate] Christian Council (as, indeed, he would be in duty bound to do), they be publicly delivered in order to set forth the Confession of our Faith.

But though the Romish court is so dreadfully afraid of a free Christian Council, and shuns the light so shamefully, that it has [entirely] removed, even from those who are on its side, the hope that it will ever permit a free Council, much less that it will itself hold one, whereat, as is just, they [many Papists] are greatly offended and have no little trouble on that account [are disgusted with this negligence of the Pope], since they notice thereby that the Pope would rather see all Christendom perish and all souls damned than suffer either himself or his adherents to be reformed even a little, and his [their] tyranny to be limited, nevertheless I have determined meanwhile to publish these articles in plain print, so that, should I die before there would be a Council (as I fully expect and hope, because the knaves who flee the light and shun the day take such wretched pains to delay and hinder the Council), those who live and remain after me may have my testimony and confession to produce, in addition to the Confession which I have issued previously, whereby up to this time I have abided, and, by God's grace, will abide.

For what shall I say? How shall I complain? I am still living, writing, preaching, and lecturing daily; [and] yet there are found such spiteful men, not only among the adversaries, but also false brethren that profess to be on our side, as dare to cite my writings and doctrine directly against myself, and let me look on and listen, although they know well that I teach otherwise, and as wish to adorn their venom with my labor, and under my name to [deceive and] mislead the poor people. [Good God!] Alas! what first will happen when I am dead?

Indeed, I ought to reply to everything while I am still living. But, again, how can I alone stop all the mouths of the devil? especially of those (as they all are poisoned) who will not hear or notice what we write, but solely exercise themselves with all diligence how they may most shamefully pervert and corrupt our word in every letter. These I let the devil answer, or at last Gods wrath, as they deserve. I often think of the good Gerson who doubts whether anything good should be [written and] published. If it is not done, many souls are neglected who could be delivered: but if it is done, the devil is there with malignant, villainous tongues without number which envenom and pervert everything, so that nevertheless the fruit [the usefulness of the writings] is prevented. Yet what they gain thereby is manifest. For while they have lied so shamefully against us and by means of lies wished to retain the people, God has constantly advanced His work, and been making their following ever smaller and ours greater, and by their lies has caused and still causes them to be brought to shame.

I must tell a story. There was a doctor sent here to Wittenberg from France, who said publicly before us that his king was sure and more than sure, that among us there is no church, no magistrate, no married life, but all live promiscuously as cattle, and each one does as he pleases. Imagine now, how will those who by their writings have instilled such gross lies into the king and other countries as the pure truth, look at us on that day before the judgment-seat of Christ? Christ, the Lord and Judge of us all, knows well that they lie and have [always] lied, His sentence they in turn, must hear; that I know certainly. God convert to repentance those who can be converted! Regarding the rest it will be said, Woe, and, alas! eternally.

But to return to the subject. I verily desire to see a truly Christian Council [assembled some time], in order that many matters and persons might be helped. Not that we need It, for our churches are now, through God's grace, so enlightened and equipped with the pure Word and right use of the Sacraments, with knowledge of the various callings and of right works, that we on our part ask for no Council, and on such points have nothing better to hope or expect from a Council. But we see in the bishoprics everywhere so many parishes vacant and desolate that one's heart would break, and yet neither the bishops nor canons care how the poor people live or die, for whom nevertheless Christ has died, and who are not permitted to hear Him speak with them as the true Shepherd with His sheep. This causes me to shudder and fear that at some time He may send a council of angels upon Germany utterly destroying us, like Sodom and Gomorrah, because we so wantonly mock Him with the Council.

Besides such necessary ecclesiastical affairs, there would be also in the political estate innumerable matters of great importance to improve. There is the disagreement between the princes and the states; usury and avarice have burst in like a flood, and have become lawful [are defended with a show of right]; wantonness, lewdness, extravagance in dress, gluttony, gambling, idle display, with all kinds of bad habits and wickedness, insubordination of subjects, of domestics and laborers of every trade, also the exactions [and most exorbitant selling prices] of the peasants (and who can enumerate all?) have so increased that they cannot be rectified by ten Councils and twenty Diets. If such chief matters of the spiritual and worldly estates as are contrary to God would be considered in the Council, they would have all hands so full that the child's play and absurdity of long gowns [official insignia], large tonsures, broad cinctures [or sashes], bishops' or cardinals' hats or maces, and like jugglery would in the mean time be forgotten. If we first had performed God's command and order in the spiritual and secular estate we would find time enough to reform food, clothing, tonsures, and surplices. But if we want to swallow such camels, and, instead, strain at gnats, let the beams stand and judge the motes, we also might indeed be satisfied with the Council.

Therefore I have presented few articles; for we have without this so many commands of God to observe in the Church, the state and the family that we can never fulfil them. What, then, is the use, or what does it profit that many decrees and statutes thereon are made in the Council, especially when these chief matters

commanded of God are neither regarded nor observed? Just as though He were bound to honor our jugglery as a reward of our treading His solemn commandments under foot. But our sins weigh upon us and cause God not to be gracious to us; for we do not repent, and, besides, wish to defend every abomination.

O Lord Jesus Christ, do Thou Thyself convoke a Council, and deliver Thy servants by Thy glorious advent! The Pope and his adherents are done for; they will have none of Thee. Do Thou, then, help us, who are poor and needy, who sigh to Thee, and beseech Thee earnestly, according to the grace which Thou hast given us, through Thy Holy Ghost who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Father, blessed forever. Amen.

The first part on the divine majesty

Treats of the Sublime Articles Concerning the Divine Majesty, as:

I. That Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in one divine essence and nature, are one God, who has created heaven and earth.

II. That the Father is begotten of no one; the Son of the Father; the Holy Ghost proceeds from Father and Son.

III. That not the Father nor the Holy Ghost but the Son became man.

IV. That the Son became man in this manner, that He was conceived, without the cooperation of man, by the Holy Ghost, and was born of the pure, holy [and always] Virgin Mary. Afterwards He suffered, died, was buried, descended to hell, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God, will come to judge the quick and the dead, etc. as the Creed of the Apostles, as well as that of St. Athanasius, and the Catechism in common use for children, teach.

Concerning these articles there is no contention or dispute, since we on both sides confess them. Therefore it is not necessary now to treat further of them.

The preface is a polemical document. Its charges about the pope's motives and the corruption of opponents express Luther's judgment; they are not impartial findings supplied by this anthology. Yet the argument has a definite structure that can be examined without adopting its insults. Luther asks what a council would accomplish if it debated ceremonial details while failing to address preaching, pastoral care, economic injustice, and the duties of public life. He does not answer the problem of ecclesiastical misconduct by proposing a different doctrine of the Father and Son. He appeals to duties he thinks his opponents already acknowledge and neglect.

That appeal makes the preface a useful comparison with the council's ancient canons. Nicaea had regulated appointments, money, discipline, reconciliation, and liturgical practice as well as defining the Son's relation to the Father. Luther's complaint is not that an assembly must never address practical matters. It is that the choice of practical matters can become distorted, with insignia and restrictions receiving

attention while more serious obligations are ignored. The problem concerns ecclesiastical priorities and the accountability of those who set them.

His closing prayer that Christ himself convene a council is especially revealing. Luther has not lost the concept of a church assembled under divine authority. He denies that the contemporary institution can secure that authority merely by announcing a meeting or claiming continuity of office. He can consequently affirm the ancient confession and distrust the proposed council without considering those positions contradictory. The difference lies in his account of how a council's claim is tested.

The statement that there is no dispute over the first part must also be read within its stated comparison. Luther means the opposing parties whose settlement is contemplated in the articles. He is not reporting that all people calling themselves Christian in the sixteenth century accepted the same doctrine of God. Nor does his agreement with Roman opponents on the Trinity erase the disagreements about salvation, sacraments, ministry, and papal authority developed elsewhere in the work.

These confessions show reformers preserving Nicaea while disputing Rome's authority. Their stated test was fidelity to an older confession, rather than acceptance or rejection of everything inherited. Luther's defense of the ancient doctrine and distrust of a contemporary council exemplify that distinction.

27 Calvin on the Language of the Trinity

Calvin's defense of Trinitarian language begins with an objection that later critics would continue to make. If Scripture is the rule of Christian belief, why should a church require expressions that Scripture does not use? The objection concerns the terms person, Trinity, and consubstantial, but its reach is wider. Every explanation of a text employs language selected by an interpreter. Calvin asks whether forbidding all terms absent from Scripture would also forbid the act of explaining Scripture.

His answer is that an explanatory word can serve a biblical meaning without becoming an independent source of revelation. He therefore defends the use of technical terms while placing them under a standard of faithful interpretation. The word is useful when it makes a distinction that evasive agreement would otherwise conceal. If two teachers both call the Son God while assigning radically different meanings to that confession, repeating the shared word will not resolve their dispute. A more precise formulation may reveal the disagreement.

The argument closely resembles Athanasius's account of the necessity that produced the council's wording. Calvin is not simply borrowing the prestige of an ancient assembly. He is presenting a reason why its disputed expression could have been necessary. That reason can be assessed: does the added word clarify an implication of the scriptural testimony, or does it impose a meaning that the testimony does not require? The reading displays his answer and the limits he places on verbal precision.

Calvin on the need for explanatory language

Historical reading. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book I, chapter 13, sections 2-6, in Henry Beveridge's English translation first published by the Calvin Translation Society in 1845. Text from the Christian Classics Ethereal Library transcription. The chapter overview, section 1, and the translator's footnotes are omitted. Obvious transcription slips have been corrected; the historical English and Calvin's polemical judgments are otherwise retained.

2. But there is another special mark by which he designates himself, for the purpose of giving a more intimate knowledge of his nature. While he proclaims his unity, he distinctly sets it before us as existing in three persons. These we must hold, unless the bare and empty name of Deity merely is to flutter in our brain without any genuine knowledge. Moreover, lest any one should dream of a threefold God, or think that the simple essence is divided by the three Persons, we must here seek a brief and easy definition which may effectually guard us from error. But as some strongly inveigh against the term Person as being merely of human invention let us first consider how far they have any ground for doing so.

When the Apostle calls the Son of God “the express image of his person,” (Heb. 1:3), he undoubtedly does assign to the Father some subsistence in which he differs from the Son. For to hold with some interpreters that the term is equivalent to essence (as if Christ represented the substance of the Father like the impression of a seal upon wax), were not only harsh but absurd. For the essence of God being simple and

undivided, and contained in himself entire, in full perfection, without partition or diminution, it is improper, nay, ridiculous, to call it his express image (χαρακτερ). But because the Father, though distinguished by his own peculiar properties, has expressed himself wholly in the Son, he is said with perfect reason to have rendered his person (hypostasis) manifest in him. And this aptly accords with what is immediately added - viz. that he is “the brightness of his glory.” The fair inference from the Apostle’s words is, that there is a proper subsistence (hypostasis) of the Father, which shines refulgent in the Son. From this, again it is easy to infer that there is a subsistence (hypostasis) of the Son which distinguishes him from the Father. The same holds in the case of the Holy Spirit; for we will immediately prove both that he is God, and that he has a separate subsistence from the Father. This, moreover, is not a distinction of essence, which it were impious to multiply. If credit, then, is given to the Apostle’s testimony, it follows that there are three persons (hypostases) in God. The Latins having used the word Persona to express the same thing as the Greek ὑπόστατις, it betrays excessive fastidiousness and even perverseness to quarrel with the term. The most literal translation would be subsistence. Many have used substance in the same sense. Nor, indeed, was the use of the term Person confined to the Latin Church. For the Greek Church in like manner, perhaps, for the purpose of testifying their consent, have taught that there are three πρόσωπα (aspects) in God. All these, however, whether Greeks or Latins, though differing as to the word, are perfectly agreed in substance.

3. Now, then, though heretics may snarl and the excessively fastidious carp at the word Person as inadmissible, in consequence of its human origin, since they cannot displace us from our position that three are named, each of whom is perfect God, and yet that there is no plurality of gods, it is most uncandid to attack the terms which do nothing more than explain what the Scriptures declare and sanction. “It were better,” they say, “to confine not only our meanings but our words within the bounds of Scripture, and not scatter about foreign terms to become the future seed-beds of brawls and dissensions. In this way, men grow tired of quarrels about words; the truth is lost in altercation, and charity melts away amid hateful strife.” If they call it a foreign term, because it cannot be pointed out in Scripture in so many syllables, they certainly impose an unjust law - a law which would condemn every interpretation of Scripture that is not composed of other words of Scripture. But if by foreign they mean that which, after being idly devised, is superstitiously defended, - which tends more to strife than edification, - which is used either out of place, or with no benefit which offends pious ears by its harshness, and leads them away from the simplicity of God’s Word, I embrace their soberness with all my heart. For I think we are bound to speak of God as reverently as we are bound to think of him. As our own thoughts respecting him are foolish, so our own language respecting him is absurd. Still, however, some medium must be observed. The unerring standard both of thinking and speaking must be derived from the Scriptures: by it all the thoughts of our minds, and the words of our mouths, should be tested. But in regard to those parts of Scripture which, to our capacities, are dark and intricate, what forbids us to explain them in clearer terms - terms, however, kept in reverent and faithful subordination to Scripture truth, used sparingly and

modestly, and not without occasion? Of this we are not without many examples. When it has been proved that the Church was impelled, by the strongest necessity, to use the words Trinity and Person, will not he who still inveighs against novelty of terms be deservedly suspected of taking offence at the light of truth, and of having no other ground for his invective, than that the truth is made plain and transparent?

4. Such novelty (if novelty it should be called) becomes most requisite, when the truth is to be maintained against calumniators who evade it by quibbling. Of this, we of the present day have too much experience in being constantly called upon to attack the enemies of pure and sound doctrine. These slippery snakes escape by their swift and tortuous windings, if not strenuously pursued, and when caught, firmly held. Thus the early Christians, when harassed with the disputes which heresies produced, were forced to declare their sentiments in terms most scrupulously exact in order that no indirect subterfuges might remain to ungodly men, to whom ambiguity of expression was a kind of hiding-place. Arius confessed that Christ was God, and the Son of God; because the passages of Scripture to this effect were too clear to be resisted, and then, as if he had done well, pretended to concur with others. But, meanwhile, he ceased not to give out that Christ was created, and had a beginning like other creatures. To drag this man of wiles out of his lurking-places, the ancient Church took a further step, and declared that Christ is the eternal Son of the Father, and consubstantial with the Father. The impiety was fully disclosed when the Arians began to declare their hatred and utter detestation of the term ὁμοούσιος. Had their first confession - viz. that Christ was God, been sincere and from the heart, they would not have denied that he was consubstantial with the Father. Who dare charge those ancient writers as men of strife and contention, for having debated so warmly, and disturbed the quiet of the Church for a single word? That little word distinguished between Christians of pure faith and the blasphemous Arians. Next Sabellius arose, who counted the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as almost nonentities; maintaining that they were not used to mark out some distinction, but that they were different attributes of God, like many others of a similar kind. When the matter was debated, he acknowledged his belief that the Father was God, the Son God, the Spirit God; but then he had the evasion ready, that he had said nothing more than if he had called God powerful, and just, and wise. Accordingly, he sung another note - viz. that the Father was the Son, and the Holy Spirit the Father, without order or distinction. The worthy doctors who then had the interests of piety at heart, in order to defeat this man’s dishonesty, proclaimed that three subsistences were to be truly acknowledged in the one God. That they might protect themselves against tortuous craftiness by the simple open truth, they affirmed that a Trinity of Persons subsisted in the one God, or (which is the same thing) in the unity of God.

5. Where names have not been invented rashly, we must beware lest we become chargeable with arrogance and rashness in rejecting them. I wish, indeed, that such names were buried, provided all would concur in the belief that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are one God, and yet that the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that each has his peculiar subsistence. I am not so minutely precise as to fight furiously for mere words. For I observe, that the writers of the ancient Church, while

they uniformly spoke with great reverence on these matters, neither agreed with each other, nor were always consistent with themselves. How strange the formula used by Councils, and defended by Hilary! How extravagant the view which Augustine sometimes takes! How unlike the Greeks are to the Latins! But let one example of variance suffice. The Latins, in translating ὁμοούσιος used consubstantialis (consubstantial), intimating that there was one substance of the Father and the Son, and thus using the word Substance for Essence. Hence Jerome, in his Letter to Damasus, says it is profane to affirm that there are three substances in God. But in Hilary you will find it said more than a hundred times that there are three substances in God. Then how greatly is Jerome perplexed with the word Hypostasis! He suspects some lurking poison, when it is said that there are three Hypostases in God. And he does not disguise his belief that the expression, though used in a pious sense, is improper; if, indeed, he was sincere in saying this, and did not rather designedly endeavour, by an unfounded calumny, to throw odium on the Eastern bishops whom he hated. He certainly shows little candour in asserting, that in all heathen schools οὐσία is equivalent to Hypostasis - an assertion completely refuted by trite and common use.

More courtesy and moderation is shown by Augustine (De Trinit. lib. 5 c. 8 and 9), who, although he says that Hypostasis in this sense is new to Latin ears, is still so far from objecting to the ordinary use of the term by the Greeks, that he is even tolerant of the Latins, who had imitated the Greek phraseology. The purport of what Socrates says of the term, in the Sixth Book of the Tripartite History, is, that it had been improperly applied to this purpose by the unskilful. Hilary (De Trinitat. lib. 2) charges it upon the heretics as a great crime, that their misconduct had rendered it necessary to subject to the peril of human utterance things which ought to have been reverently confined within the mind, not disguising his opinion that those who do so, do what is unlawful, speak what is ineffable, and pry into what is forbidden. Shortly after, he apologises at great length for presuming to introduce new terms. For, after putting down the natural names of Father, Son, and Spirit, he adds, that all further inquiry transcends the significance of words, the discernment of sense, and the apprehension of intellect. And in another place (De Conciliis), he congratulates the Bishops of France in not having framed any other confession, but received, without alteration, the ancient and most simple confession received by all Churches from the days of the Apostles. Not unlike this is the apology of Augustine, that the term had been wrung from him by necessity from the poverty of human language in so high a matter: not that the reality could be thereby expressed, but that he might not pass on in silence without attempting to show how the Father, Son, and Spirit, are three.

The modesty of these holy men should be an admonition to us not instantly to dip our pen in gall, and sternly denounce those who may be unwilling to swear to the terms which we have devised, provided they do not in this betray pride, or petulance, or unbecoming heat, but are willing to ponder the necessity which compels us so to speak, and may thus become gradually accustomed to a useful form of expression. Let men also studiously beware, that in opposing the Arians on the one hand, and the Sabellians on the other, and eagerly endeavouring to deprive both

> of any handle for cavil, they do not bring themselves under some suspicion of being the disciples of either Arius or Sabellius. Arius says that Christ is God, and then mutters that he was made and had a beginning. He says, that he is one with the Father; but secretly whispers in the ears of his party, made one, like other believers, though with special privilege. Say, he is consubstantial, and you immediately pluck the mask from this chameleon, though you add nothing to Scripture. Sabellius says that the Father, Son, and Spirit, indicate some distinction in God. Say, they are three, and he will bawl out that you are making three Gods. Say, that there is a Trinity of Persons in one Divine essence, you will only express in one word what the Scriptures say, and stop his empty prattle. Should any be so superstitiously precise as not to tolerate these terms, still do their worst, they will not be able to deny that when one is spoken of, a unity of substance must be understood, and when three in one essence, the persons in this Trinity are denoted. When this is confessed without equivocations we dwell not on words. But I was long ago made aware, and, indeed, on more than one occasion, that those who contend pertinaciously about words are tainted with some hidden poison; and, therefore, that it is more expedient to provoke them purposely, than to court their favour by speaking obscurely.
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> 6. But to say nothing more of words, let us now attend to the thing signified. By person, then, I mean a subsistence in the Divine essence, - a subsistence which, while related to the other two, is distinguished from them by incommunicable properties. By subsistence we wish something else to be understood than essence. For if the Word were God simply and had not some property peculiar to himself, John could not have said correctly that he had always been with God. When he adds immediately after, that the Word was God, he calls us back to the one essence. But because he could not be with God without dwelling in the Father, hence arises that subsistence, which, though connected with the essence by an indissoluble tie, being incapable of separation, yet has a special mark by which it is distinguished from it. Now, I say that each of the three subsistences while related to the others is distinguished by its own properties. Here relation is distinctly expressed, because, when God is mentioned simply and indefinitely the name belongs not less to the Son and Spirit than to the Father. But whenever the Father is compared with the Son, the peculiar property of each distinguishes the one from the other. Again, whatever is proper to each I affirm to be incommunicable, because nothing can apply or be transferred to the Son which is attributed to the Father as a mark of distinction. I have no objections to adopt the definition of Tertullian, provided it is properly understood, “that there is in God a certain arrangement or economy, which makes no change on the unity of essence.” - Tertull. Lib. contra Praxeam.

Calvin distinguishes an unfamiliar expression from an alien teaching: an interpreter may use a later term to articulate an earlier text's meaning. His defense therefore requires comparison between the scriptural testimony and the Nicene formulation. Listing words absent from Scripture cannot establish that the belief expressed by them was new.

That defense of explanation leaves its correctness to be demonstrated. Calvin provides his scriptural case in sections 7 through 15, omitted here; the selection then

resumes his constructive account. The omission should not obscure the order of his argument: permission to use explanatory terms is followed by an attempt to justify this particular explanation.

His account of Arius needs to be compared with Arius's surviving letters rather than accepted as a neutral description. Arius allowed an exalted, preexistent Son and denied that the Son belonged to the same unbegotten order as the Father. He expressly distinguished the Son from the rest of creation. Calvin's description of a beginning like other creatures compresses that position into the conclusion he believes follows from it. His language about wiles, masks, and hidden poison goes further by attributing motives. The letters permit a comparison of positions; they do not independently verify Calvin's reading of Arius's intentions.

A small chronological point also matters. Calvin introduces Sabellius after his discussion of Arius, but Sabellius belongs to an earlier, third-century controversy. The sequence works as an arrangement of contrasting errors: a Son set on the creaturely side of the divine distinction, followed by a teaching that fails to preserve a real distinction within God. It should not be used as a chronology of those teachers. Historical order and the order of a theological demonstration are different questions.

Section 5 contains a striking concession. Calvin wishes that the disputed names could disappear if agreement on their meaning could be secured without them. He recognizes that the ancient writers differed in vocabulary and were not always consistent. This is a more historically discriminating position than the claim that orthodoxy has always required precisely the same dictionary. His discussion of Jerome, Hilary, and Augustine shows that words such as substance and hypostasis had to be interpreted within the usage of particular speakers.

The concession does not make his position doctrinally indifferent. He regards reluctance over a term as potentially innocent and sometimes as a way of concealing a substantive disagreement. That judgment places considerable responsibility on the person examining the reluctant speaker. Calvin recommends patience but also proposes deliberate verbal tests. The danger is clear: an examiner may move too quickly from unfamiliar speech to an accusation of dishonesty. The document gives a reason for precision without guaranteeing that those who police precision will always apply it fairly.

Calvin on unity distinction and the order of persons

Historical reading. Institutes I.13.16-20, continuing the same Beveridge translation. Sections 7-15, which supply Calvin's intervening scriptural demonstration, are omitted. The change in section numbers marks that gap. Sections 21-29 are not reproduced.

16. But as God has manifested himself more clearly by the advent of Christ, so he has made himself more familiarly known in three persons. Of many proofs let this one suffice. Paul connects together these three, God, Faith, and Baptism, and reasons from the one to the other - viz. because there is one faith he infers that there is one God; and because there is one baptism he infers that there is one faith.

Therefore, if by baptism we are initiated into the faith and worship of one God, we must of necessity believe that he into whose name we are baptised is the true God. And there cannot be a doubt that our Saviour wished to testify, by a solemn rehearsal, that the perfect light of faith is now exhibited, when he said, “Go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” (Mt. 28:19), since this is the same thing as to be baptised into the name of the one God, who has been fully manifested in the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Hence it plainly appears, that the three persons, in whom alone God is known, subsist in the Divine essence. And since faith certainly ought not to look hither and thither, or run up and down after various objects, but to look, refer, and cleave to God alone, it is obvious that were there various kinds of faith, there behoved also to be various gods. Then, as the baptism of faith is a sacrament, its unity assures us of the unity of God. Hence also it is proved that it is lawful only to be baptised into one God, because we make a profession of faith in him in whose name we are baptised. What, then, is our Saviour’s meaning in commanding baptism to be administered in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, if it be not that we are to believe with one faith in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit? But is this any thing else than to declare that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are one God? Wherefore, since it must be held certain that there is one God, not more than one, we conclude that the Word and Spirit are of the very essence of God. Nothing could be more stupid than the trifling of the Arians, who, while acknowledging the divinity of the Son, denied his divine essence. Equally extravagant were the ravings of the Macedonians, who insisted that by the Spirit were only meant the gifts of grace poured out upon men. For as wisdom understanding, prudence, fortitude, and the fear of the Lord, proceed from the Spirit, so he is the one Spirit of wisdom, prudence, fortitude, and piety. He is not divided according to the distribution of his gifts, but, as the Apostle assures us (1 Cor. 12:11), however they be divided, he remains one and the same.

17. On the other hand, the Scriptures demonstrate that there is some distinction between the Father and the Word, the Word and the Spirit; but the magnitude of the mystery reminds us of the great reverence and soberness which ought to be employed in discussing it. It seems to me, that nothing can be more admirable than the words of Gregory Nanzianzen: “᾽Ου φθάνω το ἕι νοῆσαι, καὶ τοῖς τρισὶ περιλάμπομαι οὐ φθάνω τὰ τρία διελεῖν καὶ εὶς τὸ ἐν ἀναφέρομαι” (Greg. Nanzian. in Serm. de Sacro Baptis.). “I cannot think of the unity without being irradiated by the Trinity: I cannot distinguish between the Trinity without being carried up to the unity.” Therefore, let us beware of imagining such a Trinity of persons as will distract our thoughts, instead of bringing them instantly back to the unity. The words Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, certainly indicate a real distinction, not allowing us to suppose that they are merely epithets by which God is variously designated from his works. Still they indicate distinction only, not division. The passages we have already quoted show that the Son has a distinct subsistence from the Father, because the Word could not have been with God unless he were distinct from the Father; nor but for this could he have had his glory with the Father. In like manner, Christ distinguishes the Father from himself when he says that there is another who

bears witness of him (John 5:32; 8:16). To the same effect is it elsewhere said, that the Father made all things by the Word. This could not be, if he were not in some respect distinct from him. Besides, it was not the Father that descended to the earth, but he who came forth from the Father; nor was it the Father that died and rose again, but he whom the Father had sent. This distinction did not take its beginning at the incarnation: for it is clear that the only begotten Son previously existed in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). For who will dare to affirm that the Son entered his Father's bosom for the first time, when he came down from heaven to assume human nature? Therefore, he was previously in the bosom of the Father, and had his glory with the Father. Christ intimates the distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Father, when he says that the Spirit proceedeth from the Father, and between the Holy Spirit and himself, when he speaks of him as another as he does when he declares that he will send another Comforter; and in many other passages besides (John 14:6; 15:26; 14:16).

18. I am not sure whether it is expedient to borrow analogies from human affairs to express the nature of this distinction. The ancient fathers sometimes do so, but they at the same time admit that what they bring forward as analogous is very widely different. And hence it is that I have a great dread of any thing like presumption here, lest some rash saying may furnish an occasion of calumny to the malicious, or of delusion to the unlearned. It were unbecoming, however, to say nothing of a distinction which we observe that the Scriptures have pointed out. This distinction is, that to the Father is attributed the beginning of action, the fountain and source of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and arrangement in action, while the energy and efficacy of action is assigned to the Spirit. Moreover, though the eternity of the Father is also the eternity of the Son and Spirit, since God never could be without his own wisdom and energy; and though in eternity there can be no room for first or last, still the distinction of order is not unmeaning or superfluous, the Father being considered first, next the Son from him, and then the Spirit from both. For the mind of every man naturally inclines to consider, first, God, secondly, the wisdom emerging from him, and, lastly, the energy by which he executes the purposes of his counsel. For this reason, the Son is said to be of the Father only; the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. This is done in many passages, but in none more clearly than in the eighth chapter to the Romans, where the same Spirit is called indiscriminately the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of him who raised up Christ from the dead. And not improperly. For Peter also testifies (1 Pet. 1:21), that it was the Spirit of Christ which inspired the prophets, though the Scriptures so often say that it was the Spirit of God the Father.

19. Moreover, this distinction is so far from interfering with the most perfect unity of God, that the Son may thereby be proved to be one God with the Father, inasmuch as he constitutes one Spirit with him, and that the Spirit is not different from the Father and the Son, inasmuch as he is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. In each hypostasis the whole nature is understood the only difference being that each has his own peculiar subsistence. The whole Father is in the Son, and the whole Son in the Father, as the Son himself also declares (John 14:10), "I am in the Father, and the Father in me;" nor do ecclesiastical writers admit that the one is separated from

the other by any difference of essence. “By those names which denote distinctions” says Augustine “is meant the relation which they mutually bear to each other, not the very substance by which they are one.” In this way, the sentiments of the Fathers, which might sometimes appear to be at variance with each other, are to be reconciled. At one time they teach that the Father is the beginning of the Son, at another they assert that the Son has both divinity and essence from himself, and therefore is one beginning with the Father. The cause of this discrepancy is well and clearly explained by Augustine, when he says, “Christ, as to himself, is called God, as to the Father he is called Son.” And again, “The Father, as to himself, is called God, as to the Son he is called Father. He who, as to the Son, is called Father, is not Son; and he who, as to himself, is called Father, and he who, as to himself, is called Son, is the same God.” Therefore, when we speak of the Son simply, without reference to the Father, we truly and properly affirm that he is of himself, and, accordingly, call him the only beginning; but when we denote the relation which he bears to the Father, we correctly make the Father the beginning of the Son. Augustine’s fifth book on the Trinity is wholly devoted to the explanation of this subject. But it is far safer to rest contented with the relation as taught by him, than get bewildered in vain speculation by subtle prying into a sublime mystery.

20. Let those, then, who love soberness, and are contented with the measure of faith, briefly receive what is useful to be known. It is as follows: - When we profess to believe in one God, by the name God is understood the one simple essence, comprehending three persons or hypostases; and, accordingly, whenever the name of God is used indefinitely, the Son and Spirit, not less than the Father, is meant. But when the Son is joined with the Father, relation comes into view, and so we distinguish between the Persons. But as the Personal subsistences carry an order with them, the principle and origin being in the Father, whenever mention is made of the Father and Son, or of the Father and Spirit together, the name of God is specially given to the Father. In this way the unity of essence is retained, and respect is had to the order, which, however derogates in no respect from the divinity of the Son and Spirit. And surely since we have already seen how the apostles declare the Son of God to have been He whom Moses and the prophets declared to be Jehovah, we must always arrive at a unity of essence. We, therefore, hold it detestable blasphemy to call the Son a different God from the Father, because the simple name God admits not of relation, nor can God, considered in himself, be said to be this or that. Then, that the name Jehovah, taken indefinitely, may be applied to Christ, is clear from the words of Paul, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice.” After giving the answer, “My grace is sufficient for thee,” he subjoins, “that the power of Christ may rest upon me,” (2 Cor. 12:8, 9). For it is certain that the name of Lord (Κυρίος) is there put for Jehovah, and, therefore, to restrict it to the person of the Mediator were puerile and frivolous, the words being used absolutely, and not with the view of comparing the Father and the Son. And we know that, in accordance with the received usage of the Greeks, the apostles uniformly substitute the word Κυρίος for Jehovah. Not to go far for an example, Paul besought the Lord in the same sense in which Peter quotes the passage of Joel, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” (Acts 2:21; Joel 2:28). Where this name is

> specially applied to the Son, there is a different ground for it, as will be seen in its own place; at present it is sufficient to remember, that Paul, after praying to God absolutely, immediately subjoins the name of Christ. Thus, too, the Spirit is called God absolutely by Christ himself. For nothing prevents us from holding that he is the entire spiritual essence of God, in which are comprehended Father, Son, and Spirit. This is plain from Scripture. For as God is there called a Spirit, so the Holy Spirit also, in so far as he is a hypostasis of the whole essence, is said to be both of God and from God.

The later selection makes the theological structure of this precision more explicit. Baptism, worship, creation, and the scriptural relation of Father and Son provide the setting for the doctrine. Calvin does not offer three independently existing divine beings who happen to cooperate. Each person is understood within the single divine essence, while the personal relations remain irreducible. His language of distinction without division attempts to preserve both assertions at once.

In section 19 he also distinguishes what is said of the Son absolutely from what is said of the Son in relation to the Father. Considered according to deity, the Son is not a dependent portion of God. Considered as Son, he is related to the Father as his beginning. A reader need not accept that distinction to recognize the work it performs. It addresses the apparent tension between affirming an undiminished divine nature and speaking of the Son's generation. Reducing the doctrine to a claim that three equals one leaves that actual problem untouched.

Calvin's treatment of the Spirit in section 18 receives the Western account of procession from Father and Son. That reception belongs to the sixteenth-century setting of the reading. It should not be silently inserted into the text of 325 or treated as a point accepted by all Eastern Christians. The continuity asserted by a later theologian includes interpretive developments that earlier chapters have traced through distinct disputes. A source can be a forceful witness to the Nicene tradition while also showing how that tradition has acquired a particular confessional form.

Calvin's solution places variable theological terms under the meaning he believes Scripture requires. His concession about changing vocabulary makes his constructive scriptural argument, rather than verbal antiquity alone, decisive for his defense of Nicaea.

28 Councils and Their Authority in Protestant Confessions

Calvin's treatment of councils refuses to identify an assembly's ecclesiastical status with the truth of everything it decides. The distinction does not lead him to reject Nicaea. He expressly receives its doctrinal judgment, together with those of Constantinople, the first council of Ephesus, and Chalcedon. His objection is to an account of authority that would prevent the church from examining the grounds of a decision. A council has the weight of a prior judgment; it does not thereby become the source of the revelation it interprets.

The chapter is reproduced in full because its successive qualifications are essential. A short quotation from its attacks on bishops could make Calvin appear to dispense with collective ecclesiastical judgment. A short quotation from his praise of Nicaea could make him appear to accept conciliar infallibility. In fact he advocates common deliberation, invokes the assistance of the Spirit, acknowledges the practical need to settle controversies, and insists that the resulting decision remain answerable to Scripture. His positive proposals belong to the argument as much as his denunciations.

Calvin on councils and their authority

Historical reading. John Calvin, Institutes IV.9, sections 1-14, the complete chapter body, translated by Henry Beveridge (complete translation 1845-46; Book IV in volume III, 1846), as transcribed by CCEL. The argument overview and translator's footnotes are omitted; one obvious keying slip, of if for or if, has been corrected. Older spellings of names and the historical reference Epistle 55 are retained and explained below.

1. Were I now to concede all that they ask concerning the Church, it would not greatly aid them in their object. For everything that is said of the Church they immediately transfer to councils, which, in their opinion, represent the Church. Nay, when they contend so doggedly for the power of the Church, their only object is to devolve the whole which they extort on the Roman Pontiff and his conclave. Before I begin to discuss this question, two points must be briefly premised. First, though I mean to be more rigid in discussing this subject, it is not because I set less value than I ought on ancient councils. I venerate them from my heart, and would have all to hold them in due honour. But there must be some limitation, there must be nothing derogatory to Christ. Moreover, it is the right of Christ to preside over all councils, and not share the honour with any man. Now, I hold that he presides only when he governs the whole assembly by his word and Spirit. Secondly, in attributing less to councils than my opponents demand, it is not because I have any fear that councils are favourable to their cause and adverse to ours. For as we are amply provided by the word of the Lord with the means of proving our doctrine and overthrowing the whole Papacy, and thus have no great need of other aid, so, if the

case required it, ancient councils furnish us in a great measure with what might be sufficient for both purposes.

2. Let us now proceed to the subject itself. If we consult Scripture on the authority of councils, there is no promise more remarkable than that which is contained in these words of our Saviour, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” But this is just as applicable to any particular meeting as to a universal council. And yet the important part of the question does not lie here, but in the condition which is added - viz. that Christ will be in the midst of a council, provided it be assembled in his name. Wherefore, though our opponents should name councils of thousands of bishops it will little avail them; nor will they induce us to believe that they are, as they maintain, guided by the Holy Spirit, until they make it credible that they assemble in the name of Christ: since it is as possible for wicked and dishonest to conspire against Christ, as for good and honest bishops to meet together in his name. Of this we have a clear proof in very many of the decrees which have proceeded from councils. But this will be afterwards seen. At present I only reply in one word, that our Saviour’s promise is made to those only who assemble in his name. How, then, is such an assembly to be defined? I deny that those assemble in the name of Christ who, disregarding his command by which he forbids anything to be added to the word of God or taken from it, determine everything at their own pleasure, who, not contented with the oracles of Scripture, that is, with the only rule of perfect wisdom, devise some novelty out of their own head (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18). Certainly, since our Saviour has not promised to be present with all councils of whatever description, but has given a peculiar mark for distinguishing true and lawful councils from others, we ought not by any means to lose sight of the distinction. The covenant which God anciently made with the Levitical priests was to teach at his mouth (Mal. 2:7). This he always required of the prophets, and we see also that it was the law given to the apostles. On those who violate this covenant God bestows neither the honour of the priesthood nor any authority. Let my opponents solve this difficulty if they would subject my faith to the decrees of man, without authority from the word of God.

3. Their idea that the truth cannot remain in the Church unless it exist among pastors, and that the Church herself cannot exist unless displayed in general councils, is very far from holding true if the prophets have left us a correct description of their own times. In the time of Isaiah there was a Church at Jerusalem which the Lord had not yet abandoned. But of pastors he thus speaks: “His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way” (Isa. 56:10, 11). In the same way Hosea says, “The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God” (Hosea 9:8). Here, by ironically connecting them with God, he shows that the pretext of the priesthood was vain. There was also a Church in the time of Jeremiah. Let us hear what he says of pastors: “From the prophet even unto

the priest, every one dealeth falsely." Again, "The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them" (Jer. 6:13; 14:14). And not to be prolix with quotations, read the whole of his thirty-third and fortieth chapters. Then, on the other hand, Ezekiel inveighs against them in no milder terms. "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls." "Her priests have violated my law, and profaned mine holy things" (Ezek. 22:25, 26). There is more to the same purpose. Similar complaints abound throughout the prophets; nothing is of more frequent recurrence.

4. But perhaps, though this great evil prevailed among the Jews, our age is exempt from it. Would that it were so; but the Holy Spirit declared that it would be otherwise. For Peter's words are clear, "But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily will bring in damnable heresies" (2 Peter 2:1). See how he predicts impending danger, not from ordinary believers, but from those who should plume themselves on the name of pastors and teachers. Besides, how often did Christ and his apostles foretell that the greatest dangers with which the Church was threatened would come from pastors? (Mt. 24:11, 24). Nay, Paul openly declares, that Antichrist would have his seat in the temple of God (2 Thess. 2:4); thereby intimating, that the fearful calamity of which he was speaking would come only from those who should have their seat in the Church as pastors. And in another passage he shows that the introduction of this great evil was almost at hand. For in addressing the Elders of Ephesus, he says, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30). How great corruption might a long series of years introduce among pastors, when they could degenerate so much within so short a time? And not to fill my pages with details, we are reminded by the examples of almost every age, that the truth is not always cherished in the bosoms of pastors, and that the safety of the Church depends not on their state. It was becoming that those appointed to preserve the peace and safety of the Church should be its presidents and guardians; but it is one thing to perform what you owe, and another to owe what you do not perform.

5. Let no man, however, understand me as if I were desirous in everything rashly and unreservedly to overthrow the authority of pastors. All I advise is, to exercise discrimination, and not suppose, as a matter of course, that all who call themselves pastors are so in reality. But the Pope, with the whole crew of his bishops, for no other reason but because they are called pastors, shake off obedience to the word of God, invert all things, and turn them hither and thither at their pleasure; meanwhile, they insist that they cannot be destitute of the light of truth, that the Spirit of God perpetually resides in them, that the Church subsists in them, and dies with them, as if the Lord did not still inflict his judgments, and in the present day punish the world for its wickedness, in the same way in which he punished the ingratitude of the ancient people - namely, by smiting pastors with astonishment and blindness (Zech.

12:4). These stupid men understand not that they are just chiming in with those of ancient times who warred with the word of God. For the enemies of Jeremiah thus set themselves against the truth, “Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet” (Jer. 18:18).

6. Hence it is easy to reply to their allegation concerning general councils. It cannot be denied, that the Jews had a true Church under the prophets. But had a general council then been composed of the priests, what kind of appearance would the Church have had? We hear the Lord denouncing not against one or two of them, but the whole order: “The priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder” (Jer. 4:9). Again, “The law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients” (Ezek. 7:26). Again, “Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them,” &c. (Micah 3:6). Now, had all men of this description been collected together, what spirit would have presided over their meeting? Of this we have a notable instance in the council which Ahab convened (1 Kings 22:6, 22). Four hundred prophets were present. But because they had met with no other intention than to flatter the impious king, Satan is sent by the Lord to be a lying spirit in all their mouths. The truth is there unanimously condemned. Micaiah is judged a heretic, is smitten, and cast into prison. So was it done to Jeremiah, and so to the other prophets.

7. But there is one memorable example which may suffice for all. In the council which the priests and Pharisees assembled at Jerusalem against Christ (John 11:47), what is wanting, in so far as external appearance is concerned? Had there been no Church then at Jerusalem, Christ would never have joined in the sacrifices and other ceremonies. A solemn meeting is held; the high priest presides; the whole sacerdotal order take their seats, and yet Christ is condemned, and his doctrine is put to flight. This atrocity proves that the Church was not at all included in that council. But there is no danger that anything of the kind will happen with us. Who has told us so? Too much security in a matter of so great importance lies open to the charge of sluggishness. Nay, when the Spirit, by the mouth of Paul, foretells, in distinct terms, that a defection will take place, a defection which cannot come until pastors first forsake God (2 Thess. 2:3), why do we spontaneously walk blindfold to our own destruction? Wherefore, we cannot on any account admit that the Church consists in a meeting of pastors, as to whom the Lord has nowhere promised that they would always be good, but has sometimes foretold that they would be wicked. When he warns us of danger, it is to make us use greater caution.

8. What, then, you will say, is there no authority in the definitions of councils? Yes, indeed; for I do not contend that all councils are to be condemned, and all their acts rescinded, or, as it is said, made one complete erasure. But you are bringing them all (it will be said) under subordination, and so leaving every one at liberty to receive or reject the decrees of councils as he pleases. By no means; but whenever the decree of a council is produced, the first thing I would wish to be done is, to examine

at what time it was held, on what occasion, with what intention, and who were present at it; next I would bring the subject discussed to the standard of Scripture. And this I would do in such a way that the decision of the council should have its weight, and be regarded in the light of a prior judgment, yet not so as to prevent the application of the test which I have mentioned. I wish all had observed the method which Augustine prescribes in his Third Book against Maximinus, when he wished to silence the cavils of this heretic against the decrees of councils, “I ought not to oppose the Council of Nice to you, nor ought you to oppose that of Ariminum to me, as prejudging the question. I am not bound by the authority of the latter, nor you by that of the former. Let thing contend with thing, cause with cause, reason with reason, on the authority of Scripture, an authority not peculiar to either, but common to all.” In this way, councils would be duly respected, and yet the highest place would be given to Scripture, everything being brought to it as a test. Thus those ancient Councils of Nice, Constantinople, the first of Ephesus, Chalcedon, and the like, which were held for refuting errors, we willingly embrace, and reverence as sacred, in so far as relates to doctrines of faith, for they contain nothing but the pure and genuine interpretation of Scripture, which the holy Fathers with spiritual prudence adopted to crush the enemies of religion who had then arisen. In some later councils, also, we see displayed a true zeal for religion, and moreover unequivocal marks of genius, learning, and prudence. But as matters usually become worse and worse, it is easy to see in more modern councils how much the Church gradually degenerated from the purity of that golden age. I doubt not, however, that even in those more corrupt ages, councils had their bishops of better character. But it happened with them as the Roman senators of old complained in regard to their decrees. Opinions being numbered, not weighed, the better were obliged to give way to the greater number. They certainly put forth many impious sentiments. There is no need here to collect instances, both because it would be tedious, and because it has been done by others so carefully, as not to leave much to be added.

9. Moreover, why should I review the contests of council with council? Nor is there any ground for whispering to me, that when councils are at variance, one or other of them is not a lawful council. For how shall we ascertain this? Just, if I mistake not, by judging from Scripture that the decrees are not orthodox. For this alone is the sure law of discrimination. It is now about nine hundred years since the Council of Constantinople, convened under the Emperor Leo, determined that the images set up in temples were to be thrown down and broken to pieces. Shortly after, the Council of Nice, which was assembled by Irene, through dislike of the former, decreed that images were to be restored. Which of the two councils shall we acknowledge to be lawful? The latter has usually prevailed, and secured a place for images in churches. But Augustine maintains that this could not be done without the greatest danger of idolatry. Epiphanius, at a later period, speaks much more harshly (Epist. ad Joann. Hierosolym. et Lib. 3 contra Hæres.). For he says, it is an unspeakable abomination to see images in a Christian temple. Could those who speak thus approve of that council if they were alive in the present day? But if

historians speak true, and we believe their acts, not only images themselves, but the worship of them, were there sanctioned. Now it is plain that this decree emanated from Satan. Do they not show, by corrupting and wresting Scripture, that they held it in derision? This I have made sufficiently clear in a former part of the work (see Book I. chap. 11 sec. 14). Be this as it may, we shall never be able to distinguish between contradictory and dissenting councils, which have been many, unless we weigh them all in that balance for men and angels, I mean, the word of God. Thus we embrace the Council of Chalcedon, and repudiate the second of Ephesus, because the latter sanctioned the impiety of Eutyches, and the former condemned it. The judgment of these holy men was founded on the Scriptures, and while we follow it, we desire that the word of God, which illuminated them, may now also illuminate us. Let the Romanists now go and boast after their manner, that the Holy Spirit is fixed and tied to their councils.

10. Even in their ancient and purer councils there is something to be desiderated, either because the otherwise learned and prudent men who attended, being distracted by the business in hand, did not attend to many things beside; or because, occupied with grave and more serious measures, they winked at some of lesser moment; or simply because, as men, they were deceived through ignorance, or were sometimes carried headlong by some feeling in excess. Of this last case (which seems the most difficult of all to avoid) we have a striking example in the Council of Nice, which has been unanimously received, as it deserves, with the utmost veneration. For when the primary article of our faith was there in peril, and Arius, its enemy, was present, ready to engage any one in combat, and it was of the utmost moment that those who had come to attack Arius should be agreed, they nevertheless, feeling secure amid all these dangers, nay, as it were, forgetting their gravity, modesty, and politeness, laying aside the discussion which was before them (as if they had met for the express purpose of gratifying Arius), began to give way to intestine dissensions, and turn the pen, which should have been employed against Arius, against each other. Foul accusations were heard, libels flew up and down, and they never would have ceased from their contention until they had stabbed each other with mutual wounds, had not the Emperor Constantine interfered, and declaring that the investigation of their lives was a matter above his cognisance, repressed their intemperance by flattery rather than censure. In how many respects is it probable that councils, held subsequently to this, have erred? Nor does the fact stand in need of a long demonstration; any one who reads their acts will observe many infirmities, not to use a stronger term.

11. Even Leo, the Roman Pontiff, hesitates not to charge the Council of Chalcedon, which he admits to be orthodox in its doctrines, with ambition and inconsiderate rashness. He denies not that it was lawful, but openly maintains that it might have erred. Some may think me foolish in labouring to point out errors of this description, since my opponents admit that councils may err in things not necessary to salvation. My labour, however, is not superfluous. For although compelled, they admit this in word, yet by obtruding upon us the determination of all councils, in all matters

without distinction, as the oracles of the Holy Spirit, they exact more than they had at the outset assumed. By thus acting what do they maintain but just that councils cannot err, or if they err, it is unlawful for us to perceive the truth, or refuse assent to their errors? At the same time, all I mean to infer from what I have said is, that though councils, otherwise pious and holy, were governed by the Holy Spirit, he yet allowed them to share the lot of humanity, lest we should confide too much in men. This is a much better view than that of Gregory Nanzianzen, who says (Ep. 55), that he never saw any council end well. In asserting that all, without exception, ended ill, he leaves them little authority. There is no necessity for making separate mention of provincial councils, since it is easy to estimate, from the case of general councils, how much authority they ought to have in framing articles of faith, and deciding what kind of doctrine is to be received.

12. But our Romanists, when, in defending their cause, they see all rational grounds slip from beneath them, betake themselves to a last miserable subterfuge. Although they should be dull in intellect and counsel, and most depraved in heart and will, still the word of the Lord remains, which commands us to obey those who have the rule over us (Heb. 13:17). Is it indeed so? What if I should deny that those who act thus have the rule over us? They ought not to claim for themselves more than Joshua had, who was both a prophet of the Lord and an excellent pastor. Let us then hear in what terms the Lord introduced him to his office. “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and thou shalt have good success” (Josh. 1:7, 8). Our spiritual rulers, therefore, will be those who turn not from the law of the Lord to the right hand or the left. But if the doctrine of all pastors is to be received without hesitation, why are we so often and so anxiously admonished by the Lord not to give heed to false prophets? “Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord” (Jer. 23:16). Again, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mt. 7:15). In vain also would John exhort us to try the spirits whether they be of God (1 John 4:1). From this judgment not even angels are exempted (Gal. 1:8); far less Satan with his lies. And what is meant by the expression, “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch”? (Mt. 15:14) Does it not sufficiently declare that there is a great difference among the pastors who are to be heard, that all are not to be heard indiscriminately? Wherefore they have no ground for deterring us by their name, in order to draw us into a participation of their blindness, since we see, on the contrary, that the Lord has used special care to guard us from allowing ourselves to be led away by the errors of others, whatever be the mask under which they may lurk. For if the answer of our Saviour is true, blind guides, whether high priests, prelates, or pontiffs, can do nothing more than hurry us over the same precipice with themselves. Wherefore, let no names of councils, pastors, and bishops (which may be used on false pretences as well as truly), hinder us from giving heed to the evidence both of words and facts,

and bringing all spirits to the test of the divine word, that we may prove whether they are of God.

13. Having proved that no power was given to the Church to set up any new doctrine, let us now treat of the power attributed to them in the interpretation of Scripture. We readily admit, that when any doctrine is brought under discussion, there is not a better or surer remedy than for a council of true bishops to meet and discuss the controverted point. There will be much more weight in a decision of this kind, to which the pastors of churches have agreed in common after invoking the Spirit of Christ, than if each, adopting it for himself, should deliver it to his people, or a few individuals should meet in private and decide. Secondly, When bishops have assembled in one place, they deliberate more conveniently in common, fixing both the doctrine and the form of teaching it, lest diversity give offence. Thirdly, Paul prescribes this method of determining doctrine. For when he gives the power of deciding to a single church, he shows what the course of procedure should be in more important cases - namely, that the churches together are to take common cognisance. And the very feeling of piety tells us, that if any one trouble the Church with some novelty in doctrine, and the matter be carried so far that there is danger of a greater dissension, the churches should first meet, examine the question, and at length, after due discussion, decide according to Scripture, which may both put an end to doubt in the people, and stop the mouths of wicked and restless men, so as to prevent the matter from proceeding farther. Thus when Arius arose, the Council of Nice was convened, and by its authority both crushed the wicked attempts of this impious man, and restored peace to the churches which he had vexed, and asserted the eternal divinity of Christ in opposition to his sacrilegious dogma. Thereafter, when Eunomius and Macedonius raised new disturbances, their madness was met with a similar remedy by the Council of Constantinople; the impiety of Nestorius was defeated by the Council of Ephesus. In short, this was from the first the usual method of preserving unity in the Church whenever Satan commenced his machinations. But let us remember, that all ages and places are not favoured with an Athanasius, a Basil, a Cyril, and like vindicators of sound doctrine, whom the Lord then raised up. Nay, let us consider what happened in the second Council of Ephesus when the Eutychian heresy prevailed. Flavianus, of holy memory, with some pious men, was driven into exile, and many similar crimes were committed, because, instead of the Spirit of the Lord, Dioscorus, a factious man, of a very bad disposition, presided. But the Church was not there. I admit it; for I always hold that the truth does not perish in the Church though it be oppressed by one council, but is wondrously preserved by the Lord to rise again, and prove victorious in his own time. I deny, however, that every interpretation of Scripture is true and certain which has received the votes of a council.

14. But the Romanists have another end in view when they say that the power of interpreting Scripture belongs to councils, and that without challenge. For they employ it as a pretext for giving the name of an interpretation of Scripture to everything which is determined in councils. Of purgatory, the intercession of saints,

> and auricular confession, and the like, not one syllable can be found in Scripture. But as all these have been sanctioned by the authority of the Church, or, to speak more correctly, have been received by opinion and practice, every one of them is to be held as an interpretation of Scripture. And not only so, but whatever a council has determined against Scripture is to have the name of an interpretation. Christ bids all drink of the cup which he holds forth in the Supper. The Council of Constance prohibited the giving of it to the people, and determined that the priest alone should drink. Though this is diametrically opposed to the institution of Christ (Mt. 26:26), they will have it to be regarded as his interpretation. Paul terms the prohibition of marriage a doctrine of devils (1 Tim. 4:1, 3); and the Spirit elsewhere declares that "marriage is honourable in all" (Heb. 13:4). Having afterwards interdicted their priests from marriage, they insist on this as a true and genuine interpretation of Scripture, though nothing can be imagined more alien to it. Should any one venture to open his lips in opposition, he will be judged a heretic, since the determination of the Church is without challenge, and it is unlawful to have any doubt as to the accuracy of her interpretation. Why should I assail such effrontery? to point to it is to condemn it. Their dogma with regard to the power of approving Scripture I intentionally omit. For to subject the oracles of God in this way to the censure of men, and hold that they are sanctioned because they please men, is a blasphemy which deserves not to be mentioned. Besides, I have already touched upon it (Book 1 chap. 7; 8 sec. 9). I will ask them one question, however. If the authority of Scripture is founded on the approbation of the Church, will they quote the decree of a council to that effect? I believe they cannot. Why, then, did Arius allow himself to be vanquished at the Council of Nice by passages adduced from the Gospel of John? According to these, he was at liberty to repudiate them, as they had not previously been approved by any general council. They allege an old catalogue, which they call the Canon, and say that it originated in a decision of the Church. But I again ask, In what council was that Canon published? Here they must be dumb. Besides, I wish to know what they believe that Canon to be. For I see that the ancients are little agreed with regard to it. If effect is to be given to what Jerome says (Præf. in Lib. Solom.), the Maccabees, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, and the like, must take their place in the Apocrypha: but this they will not tolerate on any account.

Calvin's appeal to Augustine in section 8 has a particular argumentative setting. Augustine did not abandon his Nicene position when he offered to debate Maximinus from shared scriptural grounds. Calvin uses the passage to argue that the truth of a doctrine can be defended without first requiring the opponent to accept the authority of the council that defined it. The move concerns the grounds on which the disputants can reason together. It is not evidence that Augustine had become indifferent to the Son's consubstantiality with the Father.

Calvin then draws a distinction within the actions of a council. An assembly may defend a true doctrine while its participants behave badly or make questionable decisions on other matters. His account of the bishops' mutual accusations at Nicaea serves this purpose. The story belongs to the later historical tradition about the

meeting, not to surviving verbatim proceedings. Yet even as Calvin tells it, the alleged misconduct does not invalidate the creed. He makes the example support a limited claim: sound judgment on one disputed doctrine does not turn the assembly into a body immune from human faults.

Several historical references in the chapter require correction or qualification. Section 9's iconoclast council is the council held at Hieria in 754, under Constantine V. Calvin's reference to Leo does not clearly identify that setting. Its later reversal belongs to the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, under Irene. The first Nicaea of 325 is a different council. Epiphanius, whose statement Calvin places after Augustine's, died in 403, before Augustine's death in 430; the order of names here should not be treated as a chronology. These slips do not decide his general argument about contradictory councils, but the reader should not inherit them as chronology.

His judgment that the decree on images came from Satan is a confessional verdict, and his compression of the distinction between veneration and worship states the dispute from his own side. The documents of 787 need to be read in their own terminology before Calvin's verdict is assessed. Similarly, his description of Nicaea as restoring peace is an idealized summary of its function. The fourth-century aftermath in this volume shows how severely the settlement continued to be contested. A council could define a boundary without securing a durable end to the conflict.

The reference to Gregory's letter in section 11 uses an older numbering, Epistle 55. The complaint is the letter commonly numbered 130 in modern collections. Calvin's response to Gregory is particularly useful: he thinks a universal condemnation of councils goes too far. His disagreement supplies evidence that criticism of conciliar misconduct did not have to develop into rejection of the whole institution. Calvin argues for discriminating reception even when the writer he is criticizing belongs to the tradition he otherwise respects.

The English Articles make a comparable distinction in confessional form. Their affirmation of the creeds is followed by a definition of ecclesiastical authority and a statement that general councils may err. The original English spelling is retained in this reading. The words can be read aloud without replacing their doctrinal sense: substaunce means substance, aucthoritie means authority, and saluation means salvation.

The English Articles on creed and council authority

Historical reading. Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, English text of 1571, Articles I, II, V, VIII, XX, and XXI, from the English column in Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, volume III, CCEL transcription. Latin and later American parallel texts are omitted. Original English spelling is preserved. Two obvious transcription slips in XXI have been corrected: he gathered to be gathered, and it declared to be declared.

Article I

There is but one lyuyng and true God, euerlastyng, without body, partes, or passions, of infinite power, wysdome, and goodnesse, the maker and preseruer of al things both visible and inuisible. And in vnitie of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substaunce, power, and eternitie, the father, the sonne, and the holy ghost.

Article II

The Sonne, which is the worde of the Father, begotten from euerlastyng of the Father, the very and eternall GOD, of one substaunce with the Father, toke man's nature in the wombe of the blessed Virgin, of her substaunce: so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were ioyned together in one person, neuer to be diuided, whereof is one Christe, very GOD and very man, who truely suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his father to vs, and to be a sacrifice, not only for originall gylt, but also for all actuall sinnes of men.

Article V

The holy ghost, proceedyng from the Father and the Sonne, is of one substaunce, maiestie, and glorie, with the Father, and the Sonne, very and eternall God.

Article VIII

The three Credes, Nicene Crede, Athanasian Crede, and that whiche is commonlye called the Apostles' Crede, ought throughlye to be receaued and beleued: for they may be proued by moste certayne warrauntes of holye scripture.

Article XX

The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and aucthoritie in controuersies of fayth: And yet it is not lawfull for the Church to ordayne any thyng that is contrarie to Gods worde written, neyther may it so expounde one place of scripture, that it be repugnaunt to another. Wherefore, although the Churche be a witnesse and a keper of holy writ: yet, as it ought not to decree any thing agaynst the same, so besides the same, ought it not to enforce any thing to be beleued for necessitie of saluation.

Article XXI

> Generall Counsels may not be gathered together without the commaundement and wyll of princes. And when they be gathered together (forasmuche as they be an assemblie of men, whereof all be not gouerned with the spirite and word of God) they may erre, and sometyme haue erred, euen in thinges parteynyng vnto God. Wherfore, thinges ordayned by them as necessary to saluation, haue neyther strength nor aucthoritie, vnlesse it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.

Article VIII gives a reason for receiving the creeds: their claims can be proved by Scripture. Article XX grants the church authority in controversies of faith while denying it authority to impose teaching contrary to Scripture. Article XXI places councils under the same restriction. These propositions are intended to work together. The church may speak authoritatively, and its speech may still be examined. The authority is real but derivative.

The first sentence of Article XXI also reveals the political setting of this account. The article reserves the gathering of general councils to the command and will of princes. It is therefore not a charter for a modern separation of church and state. The very confession that denies automatic conciliar correctness preserves a role for the ruler in the conciliar process. A history that treats the recognition of fallibility as already equivalent to religious liberty would miss that important difference.

The Westminster Confession continues the distinction between a fixed doctrine of God and the fallibility of ecclesiastical assemblies. Its original provisions also show why that distinction must be kept separate from a theory of toleration. The selections give the Trinitarian paragraph, the original statement about the civil magistrate, and the full chapter on synods and councils. They use the original numbering; the later American alterations printed alongside them in Schaff's edition are not included.

Westminster on God civil authority and councils

Historical reading. Westminster Confession, completed in 1646 and received by the Church of Scotland in 1647: II.3, XXIII.1-3, and the complete chapter XXXI. Text from the original English printed in Schaff's Creeds of Christendom, volume III, CCEL transcription. Later American alterations and alternative paragraph numbers are omitted. Paragraphs divided at the historical edition's page breaks are reunited, and a duplicated page-break fragment after Godhead is removed.

Chapter II Paragraph III

> III. In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

Chapter XXIII Paragraphs I through III

I. God, the Supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people, for his own glory and the public good, and to this end hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil-doers.

II. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate when called thereunto; in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth, so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasion.

III. The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and Sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

Chapter XXXI Of Synods and Councils

I. For the better government and further edification of the Church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils.

II. As magistrates may lawfully call a synod of ministers and other fit persons to consult and advise with about matters of religion; so, if magistrates be open enemies to the Church, the ministers of Christ, of themselves, by virtue of their office, or they, with other fit persons, upon delegation from their churches, may meet together in such assemblies.

III. It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially, to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his Word.

IV. All synods or councils since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both.

> V. Synods and councils are to handle or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or by way of advice for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate.

Westminster treats the decisions of a council as ministerial determinations. They serve the Word they interpret and are received when consonant with it. Its assertion that councils may err is broader than the suggestion that one particular assembly happened to fail. Yet the original chapter on the magistrate assigns civil authority a duty to suppress blasphemies and heresies and a role in calling synods. The confession combines institutional fallibility, doctrinal confidence, and an extensive public responsibility for religion.

The original Westminster provisions combine fallible councils, a precise Trinitarian confession, and civil suppression of heresy. They make the contrast with Locke concrete: denying ecclesiastical infallibility did not yet entail denying the magistrate's jurisdiction over religious error.

29 Locke on Toleration and the Limits of Force

John Locke approaches ecclesiastical controversy by asking what power any church or magistrate has over another person's belief. His Letter Concerning Toleration, published in 1689 and translated from Latin by William Popple, is not a history of the council of 325. Its importance here lies in the alternative account of religious authority that it places beside the older conciliar and confessional arrangements. Locke asks whether a claim to true doctrine can establish a right to compel assent or interfere with civil possessions.

The opening selection is substantial because the argument proceeds through several steps. Locke first challenges the moral credibility of persecution undertaken for the alleged salvation of its victims. He then defines civil interests and limits the magistrate's jurisdiction to them. Finally he defines a church as a voluntary society and describes the authority appropriate to its purpose. His case does not depend entirely on the contention that rulers are likely to choose the wrong religion. Even a ruler who chose correctly would face the problem that outward penalties cannot produce the inward persuasion that, on Locke's account, saving faith requires.

Locke directs this argument against the magistrate's jurisdiction over belief. The dispute with earlier confessions concerns who may punish religious error and what penalties can accomplish, rather than a fresh definition of the Trinity.

Locke on civil jurisdiction and the voluntary church

Historical reading. John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration (1689), William Popple's English translation. The body of the Constitution Society transcription supplies the historical text. This opening selection runs from Since you are pleased through the paragraph describing expulsion as the last exercise of ecclesiastical authority. The salutation and note apparatus are omitted. Indolency of body means freedom from bodily pain or distress.

Since you are pleased to inquire what are my thoughts about the mutual toleration of Christians in their different professions of religion, I must needs answer you freely that I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristic mark of the true Church. For whatsoever some people boast of the antiquity of places and names, or of the pomp of their outward worship; others, of the reformation of their discipline; all, of the orthodoxy of their faith - for everyone is orthodox to himself - these things, and all others of this nature, are much rather marks of men striving for power and empire over one another than of the Church of Christ. Let anyone have never so true a claim to all these things, yet if he be destitute of charity, meekness, and good-will in general towards all mankind, even to those that are not Christians, he is certainly yet short of being a true Christian himself. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise leadership over them," said our Saviour to his disciples, "but ye shall not be so." The business of true religion is quite another thing. It is not instituted in order to the

erecting of an external pomp, nor to the obtaining of ecclesiastical dominion, nor to the exercising of compulsive force, but to the regulating of men's lives, according to the rules of virtue and piety. Whosoever will list himself under the banner of Christ, must, in the first place and above all things, make war upon his own lusts and vices. It is in vain for any man to usurp the name of Christian, without holiness of life, purity of manners, benignity and meekness of spirit. "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." "Thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," said our Lord to Peter. It would, indeed, be very hard for one that appears careless about his own salvation to persuade me that he were extremely concerned for mine. For it is impossible that those should sincerely and heartily apply themselves to make other people Christians, who have not really embraced the Christian religion in their own hearts. If the Gospel and the apostles may be credited, no man can be a Christian without charity and without that faith which works, not by force, but by love. Now, I appeal to the consciences of those that persecute, torment, destroy, and kill other men upon pretence of religion, whether they do it out of friendship and kindness towards them or no? And I shall then indeed, and not until then, believe they do so, when I shall see those fiery zealots correcting, in the same manner, their friends and familiar acquaintance for the manifest sins they commit against the precepts of the Gospel; when I shall see them persecute with fire and sword the members of their own communion that are tainted with enormous vices and without amendment are in danger of eternal perdition; and when I shall see them thus express their love and desire of the salvation of their souls by the infliction of torments and exercise of all manner of cruelties. For if it be out of a principle of charity, as they pretend, and love to men's souls that they deprive them of their estates, maim them with corporal punishments, starve and torment them in noisome prisons, and in the end even take away their lives - I say, if all this be done merely to make men Christians and procure their salvation, why then do they suffer whoredom, fraud, malice, and such-like enormities, which (according to the apostle) manifestly relish of heathenish corruption, to predominate so much and abound amongst their flocks and people? These, and such-like things, are certainly more contrary to the glory of God, to the purity of the Church, and to the salvation of souls, than any conscientious dissent from ecclesiastical decisions, or separation from public worship, whilst accompanied with innocence of life. Why, then, does this burning zeal for God, for the Church, and for the salvation of souls - burning I say, literally, with fire and faggot - pass by those moral vices and wickednesses, without any chastisement, which are acknowledged by all men to be diametrically opposite to the profession of Christianity, and bend all its nerves either to the introducing of ceremonies, or to the establishment of opinions, which for the most part are about nice and intricate matters, that exceed the capacity of ordinary understandings? Which of the parties contending about these things is in the right, which of them is guilty of schism or heresy, whether those that domineer or those that suffer, will then at last be manifest when the causes of their separation comes to be judged of He, certainly, that follows Christ, embraces His doctrine, and bears His yoke, though he forsake both father and mother, separate from the public

assemblies and ceremonies of his country, or whomsoever or whatsoever else he relinquishes, will not then be judged a heretic.

Now, though the divisions that are amongst sects should be allowed to be never so obstructive of the salvation of souls; yet, nevertheless, adultery, fornication, uncleanliness, lasciviousness, idolatry, and such-like things, cannot be denied to be works of the flesh, concerning which the apostle has expressly declared that "they who do them shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Whosoever, therefore, is sincerely solicitous about the kingdom of God and thinks it his duty to endeavour the enlargement of it amongst men, ought to apply himself with no less care and industry to the rooting out of these immoralities than to the extirpation of sects. But if anyone do otherwise, and whilst he is cruel and implacable towards those that differ from him in opinion, he be indulgent to such iniquities and immoralities as are unbecoming the name of a Christian, let such a one talk never so much of the Church, he plainly demonstrates by his actions that it is another kingdom he aims at and not the advancement of the kingdom of God.

That any man should think fit to cause another man - whose salvation he heartily desires - to expire in torments, and that even in an unconverted state, would, I confess, seem very strange to me, and I think, to any other also. But nobody, surely, will ever believe that such a carriage can proceed from charity, love, or goodwill. If anyone maintain that men ought to be compelled by fire and sword to profess certain doctrines, and conform to this or that exterior worship, without any regard had unto their morals; if anyone endeavour to convert those that are erroneous unto the faith, by forcing them to profess things that they do not believe and allowing them to practise things that the Gospel does not permit, it cannot be doubted indeed but such a one is desirous to have a numerous assembly joined in the same profession with himself; but that he principally intends by those means to compose a truly Christian Church is altogether incredible. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at if those who do not really contend for the advancement of the true religion, and of the Church of Christ, make use of arms that do not belong to the Christian warfare. If, like the Captain of our salvation, they sincerely desired the good of souls, they would tread in the steps and follow the perfect example of that Prince of Peace, who sent out His soldiers to the subduing of nations, and gathering them into His Church, not armed with the sword, or other instruments of force, but prepared with the Gospel of peace and with the exemplary holiness of their conversation. This was His method. Though if infidels were to be converted by force, if those that are either blind or obstinate were to be drawn off from their errors by armed soldiers, we know very well that it was much more easy for Him to do it with armies of heavenly legions than for any son of the Church, how potent soever, with all his dragoons.

The toleration of those that differ from others in matters of religion is so agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the genuine reason of mankind, that it seems monstrous for men to be so blind as not to perceive the necessity and advantage of it in so clear a light. I will not here tax the pride and ambition of some, the passion and uncharitable zeal of others. These are faults from which human affairs can perhaps scarce ever be perfectly freed; but yet such as nobody will bear the plain imputation

of, without covering them with some specious colour; and so pretend to commendation, whilst they are carried away by their own irregular passions. But, however, that some may not colour their spirit of persecution and unchristian cruelty with a pretence of care of the public weal and observation of the laws; and that others, under pretence of religion, may not seek impunity for their libertinism and licentiousness; in a word, that none may impose either upon himself or others, by the pretences of loyalty and obedience to the prince, or of tenderness and sincerity in the worship of God; I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other. If this be not done, there can be no end put to the controversies that will be always arising between those that have, or at least pretend to have, on the one side, a concernment for the interest of men's souls, and, on the other side, a care of the commonwealth.

The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing their own civil interests.

Civil interests I call life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like.

It is the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure unto all the people in general and to every one of his subjects in particular the just possession of these things belonging to this life. If anyone presume to violate the laws of public justice and equity, established for the preservation of those things, his presumption is to be checked by the fear of punishment, consisting of the deprivation or diminution of those civil interests, or goods, which otherwise he might and ought to enjoy. But seeing no man does willingly suffer himself to be punished by the deprivation of any part of his goods, and much less of his liberty or life, therefore, is the magistrate armed with the force and strength of all his subjects, in order to the punishment of those that violate any other man's rights.

Now that the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to these civil concernments, and that all civil power, right and dominion, is bounded and confined to the only care of promoting these things; and that it neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the salvation of souls, these following considerations seem unto me abundantly to demonstrate.

First, because the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men. It is not committed unto him, I say, by God; because it appears not that God has ever given any such authority to one man over another as to compel anyone to his religion. Nor can any such power be vested in the magistrate by the consent of the people, because no man can so far abandon the care of his own salvation as blindly to leave to the choice of any other, whether prince or subject, to prescribe to him what faith or worship he shall embrace. For no man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictates of another. All the life and power of true religion consist in the inward and full persuasion of the mind; and faith is not faith without believing. Whatever profession we make, to whatever outward worship we conform, if we are not fully satisfied in our own mind that the one is true and the

other well pleasing unto God, such profession and such practice, far from being any furtherance, are indeed great obstacles to our salvation. For in this manner, instead of expiating other sins by the exercise of religion, I say, in offering thus unto God Almighty such a worship as we esteem to be displeasing unto Him, we add unto the number of our other sins those also of hypocrisy and contempt of His Divine Majesty.

In the second place, the care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force; but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. And such is the nature of the understanding, that it cannot be compelled to the belief of anything by outward force. Confiscation of estate, imprisonment, torments, nothing of that nature can have any such efficacy as to make men change the inward judgement that they have framed of things.

It may indeed be alleged that the magistrate may make use of arguments, and, thereby; draw the heterodox into the way of truth, and procure their salvation. I grant it; but this is common to him with other men. In teaching, instructing, and redressing the erroneous by reason, he may certainly do what becomes any good man to do. Magistracy does not oblige him to put off either humanity or Christianity; but it is one thing to persuade, another to command; one thing to press with arguments, another with penalties. This civil power alone has a right to do; to the other, goodwill is authority enough. Every man has commission to admonish, exhort, convince another of error, and, by reasoning, to draw him into truth; but to give laws, receive obedience, and compel with the sword, belongs to none but the magistrate. And, upon this ground, I affirm that the magistrate's power extends not to the establishing of any articles of faith, or forms of worship, by the force of his laws. For laws are of no force at all without penalties, and penalties in this case are absolutely impertinent, because they are not proper to convince the mind. Neither the profession of any articles of faith, nor the conformity to any outward form of worship (as has been already said), can be available to the salvation of souls, unless the truth of the one and the acceptableness of the other unto God be thoroughly believed by those that so profess and practise. But penalties are no way capable to produce such belief. It is only light and evidence that can work a change in men's opinions; which light can in no manner proceed from corporal sufferings, or any other outward penalties.

In the third place, the care of the salvation of men's souls cannot belong to the magistrate; because, though the rigour of laws and the force of penalties were capable to convince and change men's minds, yet would not that help at all to the salvation of their souls. For there being but one truth, one way to heaven, what hope is there that more men would be led into it if they had no rule but the religion of the court and were put under the necessity to quit the light of their own reason, and oppose the dictates of their own consciences, and blindly to resign themselves up to the will of their governors and to the religion which either ignorance, ambition, or superstition had chanced to establish in the countries where they were born? In the variety and contradiction of opinions in religion, wherein the princes of the world

are as much divided as in their secular interests, the narrow way would be much straitened; one country alone would be in the right, and all the rest of the world put under an obligation of following their princes in the ways that lead to destruction; and that which heightens the absurdity, and very ill suits the notion of a Deity, men would owe their eternal happiness or misery to the places of their nativity.

These considerations, to omit many others that might have been urged to the same purpose, seem unto me sufficient to conclude that all the power of civil government relates only to men's civil interests, is confined to the care of the things of this world, and hath nothing to do with the world to come.

Let us now consider what a church is. A church, then, I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God in such manner as they judge acceptable to Him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls.

I say it is a free and voluntary society. Nobody is born a member of any church; otherwise the religion of parents would descend unto children by the same right of inheritance as their temporal estates, and everyone would hold his faith by the same tenure he does his lands, than which nothing can be imagined more absurd. Thus, therefore, that matter stands. No man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but everyone joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable to God. The hope of salvation, as it was the only cause of his entrance into that communion, so it can be the only reason of his stay there. For if afterwards he discover anything either erroneous in the doctrine or incongruous in the worship of that society to which he has joined himself, why should it not be as free for him to go out as it was to enter? No member of a religious society can be tied with any other bonds but what proceed from the certain expectation of eternal life. A church, then, is a society of members voluntarily uniting to that end.

It follows now that we consider what is the power of this church and unto what laws it is subject.

Forasmuch as no society, how free soever, or upon whatsoever slight occasion instituted, whether of philosophers for learning, of merchants for commerce, or of men of leisure for mutual conversation and discourse, no church or company, I say, can in the least subsist and hold together, but will presently dissolve and break in pieces, unless it be regulated by some laws, and the members all consent to observe some order. Place and time of meeting must be agreed on; rules for admitting and excluding members must be established; distinction of officers, and putting things into a regular course, and suchlike, cannot be omitted. But since the joining together of several members into this church-society, as has already been demonstrated, is absolutely free and spontaneous, it necessarily follows that the right of making its laws can belong to none but the society itself; or, at least (which is the same thing), to those whom the society by common consent has authorised thereunto.

Some, perhaps, may object that no such society can be said to be a true church unless it have in it a bishop or presbyter, with ruling authority derived from the very apostles, and continued down to the present times by an uninterrupted succession.

To these I answer: In the first place, let them show me the edict by which Christ has imposed that law upon His Church. And let not any man think me impertinent, if in a thing of this consequence I require that the terms of that edict be very express and positive; for the promise He has made us, that "wheresoever two or three are gathered together" in His name, He will be in the midst of them, seems to imply the contrary. Whether such an assembly want anything necessary to a true church, pray do you consider. Certain I am that nothing can be there wanting unto the salvation of souls, which is sufficient to our purpose.

Next, pray observe how great have always been the divisions amongst even those who lay so much stress upon the Divine institution and continued succession of a certain order of rulers in the Church. Now, their very dissension unavoidably puts us upon a necessity of deliberating and, consequently, allows a liberty of choosing that which upon consideration we prefer.

And, in the last place, I consent that these men have a ruler in their church, established by such a long series of succession as they judge necessary, provided I may have liberty at the same time to join myself to that society in which I am persuaded those things are to be found which are necessary to the salvation of my soul. In this manner ecclesiastical liberty will be preserved on all sides, and no man will have a legislator imposed upon him but whom himself has chosen.

But since men are so solicitous about the true church, I would only ask them here, by the way, if it be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ to make the conditions of her communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the Holy Scriptures declared, in express words, to be necessary to salvation; I ask, I say, whether this be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ than for men to impose their own inventions and interpretations upon others as if they were of Divine authority, and to establish by ecclesiastical laws, as absolutely necessary to the profession of Christianity, such things as the Holy Scriptures do either not mention, or at least not expressly command? Whosoever requires those things in order to ecclesiastical communion, which Christ does not require in order to life eternal, he may, perhaps, indeed constitute a society accommodated to his own opinion and his own advantage; but how that can be called the Church of Christ which is established upon laws that are not His, and which excludes such persons from its communion as He will one day receive into the Kingdom of Heaven, I understand not. But this being not a proper place to inquire into the marks of the true church, I will only mind those that contend so earnestly for the decrees of their own society, and that cry out continually, "The Church! the Church!" with as much noise, and perhaps upon the same principle, as the Ephesian silversmiths did for their Diana; this, I say, I desire to mind them of, that the Gospel frequently declares that the true disciples of Christ must suffer persecution; but that the Church of

> Christ should persecute others, and force others by fire and sword to embrace her faith and doctrine, I could never yet find in any of the books of the New Testament.
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> The end of a religious society (as has already been said) is the public worship of God and, by means thereof, the acquisition of eternal life. All discipline ought, therefore, to tend to that end, and all ecclesiastical laws to be thereunto confined. Nothing ought nor can be transacted in this society relating to the possession of civil and worldly goods. No force is here to be made use of upon any occasion whatsoever. For force belongs wholly to the civil magistrate, and the possession of all outward goods is subject to his jurisdiction.
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> But, it may be asked, by what means then shall ecclesiastical laws be established, if they must be thus destitute of all compulsive power? I answer: They must be established by means suitable to the nature of such things, whereof the external profession and observation - if not proceeding from a thorough conviction and approbation of the mind - is altogether useless and unprofitable. The arms by which the members of this society are to be kept within their duty are exhortations, admonitions, and advices. If by these means the offenders will not be reclaimed, and the erroneous convinced, there remains nothing further to be done but that such stubborn and obstinate persons, who give no ground to hope for their reformation, should be cast out and separated from the society. This is the last and utmost force of ecclesiastical authority. No other punishment can thereby be inflicted than that, the relation ceasing between the body and the member which is cut off. The person so condemned ceases to be a part of that church.

The definition of the church as voluntary carries considerable weight. It permits a person to leave a religious society when persuaded that its teaching or worship is mistaken. It also allows a church to maintain conditions of membership. Locke does not require every congregation to retain every doctrine, or every person, within its communion. His distinction is between an ecclesiastical consequence and a civil injury. Exclusion from a religious society does not by itself authorize loss of property, imprisonment, or punishment by the state.

That distinction clarifies a feature of Nicaea that is sometimes obscured when all forms of exclusion are treated as identical. The creed's anathemas define the bounds of the confessing church. Imperial exile adds the power of the state. Whether a church may refuse communion and whether an emperor may enforce its refusal against the body and possessions of a dissenter are distinct questions. Locke supplies an argument against moving from the first authority to the second. He does not simply erase the church's power to say what it believes.

His reasoning about the magistrate also identifies a practical instability in confessional government. If civil office carries a right to prescribe saving religion, successive rulers may prescribe contradictory beliefs. The subject's prospect of salvation would then depend on an accident of political geography or a change of dynasty. The fourth-century record makes the problem concrete: imperial favor did not always operate on the same side of the Nicene controversy. Locke's argument

attacks the proposed jurisdiction rather than merely requesting a more favorable emperor.

The later portions of the letter establish the limits of his toleration. They are included because a selection consisting only of the attractive opening could misrepresent the breadth of his position. Locke refuses toleration to opinions he judges destructive of civil society, to religious claims that undermine reciprocal civil obligations, and to a church whose members transfer political allegiance to a foreign prince. His example of a Muslim owing obedience to the Mufti of Constantinople illustrates the fear of external ecclesiastical allegiance. He also explicitly excludes atheists.

The limits Locke places on toleration

Historical reading. A later selection from the same letter begins But to come to particulars and ends with Locke's restriction concerning atheists. The intervening treatment of worship, civil law, and related matters is omitted.

> But to come to particulars. I say, first, no opinions contrary to human society, or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society, are to be tolerated by the magistrate. But of these, indeed, examples in any Church are rare. For no sect can easily arrive to such a degree of madness as that it should think fit to teach, for doctrines of religion, such things as manifestly undermine the foundations of society and are, therefore, condemned by the judgement of all mankind; because their own interest, peace, reputation, everything would be thereby endangered.
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> Another more secret evil, but more dangerous to the commonwealth, is when men arrogate to themselves, and to those of their own sect, some peculiar prerogative covered over with a specious show of deceitful words, but in effect opposite to the civil right of the community. For example: we cannot find any sect that teaches, expressly and openly, that men are not obliged to keep their promise; that princes may be dethroned by those that differ from them in religion; or that the dominion of all things belongs only to themselves. For these things, proposed thus nakedly and plainly, would soon draw on them the eye and hand of the magistrate and awaken all the care of the commonwealth to a watchfulness against the spreading of so dangerous an evil. But, nevertheless, we find those that say the same things in other words. What else do they mean who teach that faith is not to be kept with heretics? Their meaning, forsooth, is that the privilege of breaking faith belongs unto themselves; for they declare all that are not of their communion to be heretics, or at least may declare them so whensoever they think fit. What can be the meaning of their asserting that kings excommunicated forfeit their crowns and kingdoms? It is evident that they thereby arrogate unto themselves the power of deposing kings, because they challenge the power of excommunication, as the peculiar right of their hierarchy. That dominion is founded in grace is also an assertion by which those that maintain it do plainly lay claim to the possession of all things. For they are not so wanting to themselves as not to believe, or at least as not to profess themselves to be the truly pious and faithful. These, therefore, and the like, who attribute unto the

> faithful, religious, and orthodox, that is, in plain terms, unto themselves, any peculiar privilege or power above other mortals, in civil concernments; or who upon pretence of religion do challenge any manner of authority over such as are not associated with them in their ecclesiastical communion, I say these have no right to be tolerated by the magistrate; as neither those that will not own and teach the duty of tolerating all men in matters of mere religion. For what do all these and the like doctrines signify, but that they may and are ready upon any occasion to seize the Government and possess themselves of the estates and fortunes of their fellow subjects; and that they only ask leave to be tolerated by the magistrate so long until they find themselves strong enough to effect it?
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> Again: That Church can have no right to be tolerated by the magistrate which is constituted upon such a bottom that all those who enter into it do thereby ipso facto deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another prince. For by this means the magistrate would give way to the settling of a foreign jurisdiction in his own country and suffer his own people to be listed, as it were, for soldiers against his own Government. Nor does the frivolous and fallacious distinction between the Court and the Church afford any remedy to this inconvenience; especially when both the one and the other are equally subject to the absolute authority of the same person, who has not only power to persuade the members of his Church to whatsoever he lists, either as purely religious, or in order thereunto, but can also enjoin it them on pain of eternal fire. It is ridiculous for any one to profess himself to be a Mahometan only in his religion, but in everything else a faithful subject to a Christian magistrate, whilst at the same time he acknowledges himself bound to yield blind obedience to the Mufti of Constantinople, who himself is entirely obedient to the Ottoman Emperor and frames the feigned oracles of that religion according to his pleasure. But this Mahometan living amongst Christians would yet more apparently renounce their government if he acknowledged the same person to be head of his Church who is the supreme magistrate in the state.
>
> Lastly, those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all; besides also, those that by their atheism undermine and destroy all religion, can have no pretence of religion whereupon to challenge the privilege of a toleration. As for other practical opinions, though not absolutely free from all error, if they do not tend to establish domination over others, or civil impunity to the Church in which they are taught, there can be no reason why they should not be tolerated.

The exclusion of atheists exposes a weakness in the argument. Locke treats belief in God as necessary to the reliability of promises, covenants, and oaths. The contention needs independent defense. A person's denial of God does not itself demonstrate dishonesty, and belief in God does not establish that a person's promises can be trusted. The letter's own criticism of religious persecutors already supplies examples of professed faith accompanied by moral failure. His restriction consequently narrows a principle whose earlier reasoning had seemed capable of wider application.

The political-allegiance exception also demands attention to evidence. A government may have legitimate grounds to address an actual transfer of civil obedience. That is different from inferring disloyalty from a religious identity without examining the person's conduct or commitments. Locke's formulation can be used to identify a genuine jurisdictional conflict, but it can also furnish a broad suspicion under which a minority's liberty is withdrawn. The strength of the general argument for toleration does not remove the need to test its exceptions.

The postscript brings the question closer to creedal boundaries. Locke distinguishes heresy within a religion from disagreement between religions, then asks what follows when a community professes Scripture as its only rule yet excludes people for refusing additional propositions. His conclusion challenges the use of non-scriptural formulations as compulsory conditions of communion. Calvin would answer that a faithful formulation explains the rule rather than adding another one. The disagreement therefore cannot be settled merely by repeating the phrase Scripture alone. It concerns what it means to interpret Scripture and when an interpretation may become a condition of fellowship.

The postscript on heresy and schism

Historical reading. The postscript to the same letter, from Perhaps it may not be amiss to the final paragraph beginning These things might have been explained. The preceding discussion of religious assemblies, ending with the farewell, is omitted. The postscript is reproduced in full.

PERHAPS it may not be amiss to add a few things concerning heresy and schism. A Turk is not, nor can be, either heretic or schismatic to a Christian; and if any man fall off from the Christian faith to Mahometism, he does not thereby become a heretic or schismatic, but an apostate and an infidel. This nobody doubts of; and by this it appears that men of different religions cannot be heretics or schismatics to one another.

We are to inquire, therefore, what men are of the same religion. Concerning which it is manifest that those who have one and the same rule of faith and worship are of the same religion; and those who have not the same rule of faith and worship are of different religions. For since all things that belong unto that religion are contained in that rule, it follows necessarily that those who agree in one rule are of one and the same religion, and vice versa. Thus Turks and Christians are of different religions, because these take the Holy Scriptures to be the rule of their religion, and those the Alcoran. And for the same reason there may be different religions also even amongst Christians. The Papists and Lutherans, though both of them profess faith in Christ and are therefore called Christians, yet are not both of the same religion, because these acknowledge nothing but the Holy Scriptures to be the rule and foundation of their religion, those take in also traditions and the decrees of Popes and of these together make the rule of their religion; and thus the Christians of St. John (as they are called) and the Christians of Geneva are of different

religions, because these also take only the Scriptures, and those I know not what traditions, for the rule of their religion.

This being settled, it follows, first, that heresy is a separation made in ecclesiastical communion between men of the same religion for some opinions no way contained in the rule itself; and, secondly, that amongst those who acknowledge nothing but the Holy Scriptures to be their rule of faith, heresy is a separation made in their Christian communion for opinions not contained in the express words of Scripture. Now this separation may be made in a twofold manner:

1. When the greater part, or by the magistrate's patronage the stronger part, of the Church separates itself from others by excluding them out of her communion because they will not profess their belief of certain opinions which are not the express words of the Scripture. For it is not the paucity of those that are separated, nor the authority of the magistrate, that can make any man guilty of heresy, but he only is a heretic who divides the Church into parts, introduces names and marks of distinction, and voluntarily makes a separation because of such opinions.

2. When any one separates himself from the communion of a Church because that Church does not publicly profess some certain opinions which the Holy Scriptures do not expressly teach.

Both these are heretics because they err in fundamentals, and they err obstinately against knowledge; for when they have determined the Holy Scriptures to be the only foundation of faith, they nevertheless lay down certain propositions as fundamental which are not in the Scripture, and because others will not acknowledge these additional opinions of theirs, nor build upon them as if they were necessary and fundamental, they therefore make a separation in the Church, either by withdrawing themselves from others, or expelling the others from them. Nor does it signify anything for them to say that their confessions and symbols are agreeable to Scripture and to the analogy of faith; for if they be conceived in the express words of Scripture, there can be no question about them, because those things are acknowledged by all Christians to be of divine inspiration and therefore fundamental. But if they say that the articles which they require to be professed are consequences deduced from the Scripture, it is undoubtedly well done of them who believe and profess such things as seem unto them so agreeable to the rule of faith. But it would be very ill done to obtrude those things upon others unto whom they do not seem to be the indubitable doctrines of the Scripture; and to make a separation for such things as these, which neither are nor can be fundamental, is to become heretics; for I do not think there is any man arrived to that degree of madness as that he dare give out his consequences and interpretations of Scripture as divine inspirations and compare the articles of faith that he has framed according to his own fancy with the authority of Scripture. I know there are some propositions so evidently agreeable to Scripture that nobody can deny them to be drawn from thence, but about those, therefore, there can be no difference. This only I say - that however clearly we may think this or the other doctrine to be deduced from Scripture, we ought not therefore to impose it upon others as a necessary article of

> faith because we believe it to be agreeable to the rule of faith, unless we would be content also that other doctrines should be imposed upon us in the same manner, and that we should be compelled to receive and profess all the different and contradictory opinions of Lutherans, Calvinists, Remonstrants, Anabaptists, and other sects which the contrivers of symbols, systems, and confessions are accustomed to deliver to their followers as genuine and necessary deductions from the Holy Scripture. I cannot but wonder at the extravagant arrogance of those men who think that they themselves can explain things necessary to salvation more clearly than the Holy Ghost, the eternal and infinite wisdom of God.
>
> Thus much concerning heresy, which word in common use is applied only to the doctrinal part of religion. Let us now consider schism, which is a crime near akin to it; for both these words seem unto me to signify an ill-grounded separation in ecclesiastical communion made about things not necessary. But since use, which is the supreme law in matter of language, has determined that heresy relates to errors in faith, and schism to those in worship or discipline, we must consider them under that distinction.
>
> Schism, then, for the same reasons that have already been alleged, is nothing else but a separation made in the communion of the Church upon account of something in divine worship or ecclesiastical discipline that is not any necessary part of it. Now, nothing in worship or discipline can be necessary to Christian communion but what Christ our legislator, or the Apostles by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have commanded in express words.
>
> In a word, he that denies not anything that the Holy Scriptures teach in express words, nor makes a separation upon occasion of anything that is not manifestly contained in the sacred text - however he may be nicknamed by any sect of Christians and declared by some or all of them to be utterly void of true Christianity - yet in deed and in truth this man cannot be either a heretic or schismatic.
>
> These things might have been explained more largely and more advantageously, but it is enough to have hinted at them thus briefly to a person of your parts.

Locke supplies a sustained challenge to the civil enforcement of religious conviction. His voluntary church retains conditions of fellowship, while his exclusions of atheists and suspected foreign allegiance restrict the liberty his central argument appears capable of supporting.

30 Newton and the Meaning of the Nicene Decree

Editorial study based on Isaac Newton, Drafts on the history of the Church, Section 5, Yahuda manuscript 15.5, especially folios 87r and 92r-98v, Newton Project normalized transcription THEM00222.

Some early modern criticism of the Nicene tradition remained private. Isaac Newton's theological manuscripts belong to that history. They cannot be treated as public interventions with the same contemporary circulation as the Augsburg Confession or Locke's Letter. They nevertheless show how a highly learned Christian reader could reconstruct the church's doctrinal past while rejecting the authority of its received Trinitarian settlement. Newton's place in the history of physics does not establish his theological or historical conclusions. The manuscript has to be assessed through its own arguments.

The discussion here concerns the drafts catalogued by the Newton Project as Drafts on the history of the Church, Section 5, manuscript Yahuda 15.5. The account supplies an original summary and analysis. Folio references allow the reader to locate the argument, especially the striking claim on folio 87r. The drafts preserve a working investigation rather than a finished book authorized by Newton for publication. Their repetitions, revisions, and competing formulations should not be smoothed into a final systematic confession without further evidence.

The history Newton wanted to explain

Newton treats the early rule of faith as a compact confession suitable for baptism and the instruction of ordinary believers. He contrasts that simplicity with the metaphysical elaboration of later theological disputes. In his reconstruction, language borrowed from philosophical accounts of divine substance introduced confusion into the Christian understanding of the Father and Son. The difficulty is therefore not merely that a council used an unfamiliar word. It is that an inherited religious message was, in his judgment, transformed by the conceptual setting in which that word acquired authority.

His account gives special importance to divine monarchy and dominion. He does not think that a statement about shared substance by itself establishes a right to divine worship. Within the drafts, he compares Christian controversies with ancient philosophical and religious claims that souls or subordinate divine beings derive from a supreme principle. If consubstantiality can be asserted of such beings, he argues, then the expression cannot by itself distinguish Christian worship from what he regards as pagan idolatry. What matters to him is the authority God grants and the relation of the Father to the appointed mediator.

This is a serious objection to a method that simply isolates one word and treats its dictionary meaning as a complete theology. Words travel between systems of thought. The fact that two writers employ a term for shared substance does not show that they affirm the same doctrine of God, creation, or salvation. Newton is right to require attention to the surrounding account. His own sharper criticism must be subjected to that requirement as well.

Newton also proposes Montanist, Sabellian, and philosophical lines of descent for later doctrine. These genealogies require evidence of chronology and transmission. Shared vocabulary alone cannot establish that one school conveyed its understanding of divine substance to another.

The claim on folio 87r

Newton advances a much stronger proposition than the familiar claim that the word consubstantial is difficult. He argues that the wording of the Nicene decree obliged converts to believe no more than that Christ was a human being who was deified after death, comparable to the deified figures of ancient religion. He thinks the same wording could also be readily accepted within other systems he regarded as corruptions of Christianity. The point is to show that the formulation failed to guard the faith it was supposed to protect.

The strength of this claim makes it testable against the creed already reproduced in this volume. The question is not whether individual expressions such as God of God or of one substance can be used in different senses. The question is whether the connected confession allows the subject it describes to begin as a merely human individual and receive deity only after dying. Newton's wider discussion moves between the first council and later theological formulations. The textual test here concerns the confession of 325 itself. Three features of that text weigh directly against the reading.

First, the creed says that all things were made through the Son. The reference includes the things in heaven and on earth. The Son is therefore described as active in the making of the world into which he later comes. A human individual whose existence begins within that world cannot straightforwardly perform the role assigned to the Son in the confession. The words presuppose a relation to creation that is prior to the story of an earthly life, death, and subsequent exaltation.

Second, the creed maintains the identity of its subject across that sequence. The only-begotten Son comes down for human salvation, becomes incarnate and human, suffers, rises, and ascends. It does not introduce one divine agent who participates in creation and then a different human agent who acquires deity after death. A theory in which a preexistent divine power merely inhabits an independently existing man would need additional distinctions that the creed's continuous confession does not

supply. Newton's proposed reading cannot be secured by detaching the incarnation from the identity of the Son already named.

Third, the distinction between being begotten and being made is reinforced by the concluding anathemas. The confession excludes claims that the Son once did not exist, came from nonbeing, or is a creature. A merely human individual elevated to divinity would have to be placed on the created side of the very boundary the creed is drawing. Reading consubstantial through a philosophical theory of divine substance would not remove those exclusions. The word belongs to a sentence and the sentence belongs to a confession with an explicitly stated limit.

These considerations make Newton's strongest assertion unconvincing as an interpretation of the whole Nicene text. His criticism gains force when it asks whether particular metaphysical expressions can be misunderstood, or whether a council should require them as conditions of fellowship. It loses force when it claims that the connected wording requires nothing beyond a human Christ deified after death. The creed's account of creation, incarnation, and the Son's exclusion from the category of creatures supplies the distinction he says it lacks.

There is also a difference between the later exaltation of Christ's humanity and the later creation of Christ's deity. Christians who affirm the creed can speak of the risen human Jesus receiving glory and universal acknowledgment without believing that the eternal Son first became divine at that point. A critic who moves from the language of exaltation to the conclusion that the Nicene confession permits a merely human origin has passed over the distinction under dispute. The narrative order of humiliation and exaltation does not by itself determine the Son's original status.

What remains of the objection

Newton's remaining questions concern the enlargement of baptismal confession and the exclusion of Christians who reject a disputed explanation. His failure to sustain the deification reading leaves those challenges to compulsory theological language open for separate assessment.

The comparison with Calvin is particularly exact. Both writers recognize that words can conceal disagreement. Calvin thinks the added term consubstantial exposes an evasion that ordinary biblical vocabulary could leave hidden. Newton thinks that the philosophical term is itself capable of admitting religious meanings foreign to the original message. The dispute therefore concerns the success of a particular clarification. It is not exhausted by saying that one writer loves Scripture and the other loves metaphysics. Both claim to protect an earlier faith from a later distortion.

Calvin has the stronger argument on the narrow textual question: the connected confession of 325 excludes a merely human beginning followed by deification. Newton's challenge to making that interpretation compulsory requires an answer

about ecclesiastical authority beyond the demonstration that his reading of the creed fails.

Newton's private drafts contribute a searching critique of technical language and its enforcement. They also propose genealogies needing further proof and a reading of the creed that its wording does not sustain. These are distinct results of examining his argument, rather than implications of his scientific reputation.

Part VI The Council in the Age of Historical Criticism

31 Gibbon on the Controversy and the Empire

Edward Gibbon turns the theological controversy into a history of institutions, passions, and public power. His eighteenth-century prose grants the bishops an extraordinary capacity for sustained argument while steadily questioning what their arguments accomplished. Nicaea becomes a case through which he examines the difficulty of enforcing intellectual agreement. The same emperor who initially asked the disputants to stop quarreling subsequently endorsed a binding settlement; his successors intervened again, and in different directions. A word adopted to bring an end to controversy became the banner under which controversy continued.

The selection begins with Gibbon's comparison between philosophical schools and the Christian church. A philosopher might honor a teacher while retaining the freedom to disagree. A bishop belonged to a society with sacraments, offices, censures, and boundaries of communion. The controversy therefore affected who could teach, worship, and govern together. For Gibbon, the institutional consequences help explain why a metaphysical question could produce such intense public conflict. The comparison also reveals his preferred standard: the cultivated inquirer who can discuss a difficult question without turning it into a condition of salvation.

That preference makes Gibbon an interested interpreter. It does not make everything he reports false. His account of repeated creeds and shifting imperial policies can be compared with the documents reproduced earlier in this volume. His interpretation of the bishops' inward purposes requires a different judgment. When he describes them as searching for an irreconcilable mark of distinction, he interprets doctrinal precision as a means of securing a party victory. Athanasius, by contrast, presents the distinction as necessary to prevent an opponent from affirming biblical phrases while emptying them of their intended meaning. The dispute between the two accounts concerns the explanation of an act that both recognize: the council deliberately chose language that Arius's position could not accept.

Gibbon's three alternative systems should be read with particular care. They are his analytical construction, not three platforms submitted to the council. His second system approaches three independent divine minds; his third reduces the distinctions to modes or names. He then places orthodoxy within a narrow space between those extremes. The exercise is effective satire, but it does not establish that a Nicene theologian must accept one of Gibbon's descriptions of his position. The earlier readings provide the strongest available way to test the construction: compare what Gibbon says a system implies with what its defenders actually affirm and deny.

Gibbon on theological controversy

Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chapter XXI, first published in volume II in 1781. Historical text revised in 1845, with notes by H. H. Milman, as transcribed in Project Gutenberg eBook 25717. The first selection runs from Christian zeal through Arian creeds, including Gibbon's quotation of Hilary. The second resumes at the conduct of the emperors and ends before the extended account of Athanasius. The intervening discussions of Arian sects and the Latin church are omitted. All footnotes and their markers are omitted. Internal headings and two divisions within long paragraphs are editorial. Electronic transcription errors three district and various f accusations are corrected to three distinct and various accusations.

Zeal of the Christians

I. A chosen society of philosophers, men of a liberal education and curious disposition, might silently meditate, and temperately discuss in the gardens of Athens or the library of Alexandria, the abstruse questions of metaphysical science. The lofty speculations, which neither convinced the understanding, nor agitated the passions, of the Platonists themselves, were carelessly overlooked by the idle, the busy, and even the studious part of mankind. But after the Logos had been revealed as the sacred object of the faith, the hope, and the religious worship of the Christians, the mysterious system was embraced by a numerous and increasing multitude in every province of the Roman world. Those persons who, from their age, or sex, or occupations, were the least qualified to judge, who were the least exercised in the habits of abstract reasoning, aspired to contemplate the economy of the Divine Nature: and it is the boast of Tertullian, that a Christian mechanic could readily answer such questions as had perplexed the wisest of the Grecian sages. Where the subject lies so far beyond our reach, the difference between the highest and the lowest of human understandings may indeed be calculated as infinitely small; yet the degree of weakness may perhaps be measured by the degree of obstinacy and dogmatic confidence. These speculations, instead of being treated as the amusement of a vacant hour, became the most serious business of the present, and the most useful preparation for a future, life. A theology, which it was incumbent to believe, which it was impious to doubt, and which it might be dangerous, and even fatal, to mistake, became the familiar topic of private meditation and popular discourse. The cold indifference of philosophy was inflamed by the fervent spirit of devotion; and even the metaphors of common language suggested the fallacious prejudices of sense and experience. The Christians, who abhorred the gross and impure generation of the Greek mythology, were tempted to argue from the familiar analogy of the filial and paternal relations. The character of Son seemed to imply a perpetual subordination to the voluntary author of his existence; but as the act of generation, in the most spiritual and abstracted sense, must be supposed to transmit the properties of a common nature, they durst not presume to circumscribe the powers or the duration of the Son of an eternal and omnipotent Father. Fourscore years after the death of Christ, the Christians of Bithynia, declared before the tribunal of Pliny, that they invoked him as a god: and

his divine honors have been perpetuated in every age and country, by the various sects who assume the name of his disciples. Their tender reverence for the memory of Christ, and their horror for the profane worship of any created being, would have engaged them to assert the equal and absolute divinity of the Logos, if their rapid ascent towards the throne of heaven had not been imperceptibly checked by the apprehension of violating the unity and sole supremacy of the great Father of Christ and of the Universe. The suspense and fluctuation produced in the minds of the Christians by these opposite tendencies, may be observed in the writings of the theologians who flourished after the end of the apostolic age, and before the origin of the Arian controversy. Their suffrage is claimed, with equal confidence, by the orthodox and by the heretical parties; and the most inquisitive critics have fairly allowed, that if they had the good fortune of possessing the Catholic verity, they have delivered their conceptions in loose, inaccurate, and sometimes contradictory language.

Authority of the Church

II. The devotion of individuals was the first circumstance which distinguished the Christians from the Platonists: the second was the authority of the church. The disciples of philosophy asserted the rights of intellectual freedom, and their respect for the sentiments of their teachers was a liberal and voluntary tribute, which they offered to superior reason. But the Christians formed a numerous and disciplined society; and the jurisdiction of their laws and magistrates was strictly exercised over the minds of the faithful. The loose wanderings of the imagination were gradually confined by creeds and confessions; the freedom of private judgment submitted to the public wisdom of synods; the authority of a theologian was determined by his ecclesiastical rank; and the episcopal successors of the apostles inflicted the censures of the church on those who deviated from the orthodox belief. But in an age of religious controversy, every act of oppression adds new force to the elastic vigor of the mind; and the zeal or obstinacy of a spiritual rebel was sometimes stimulated by secret motives of ambition or avarice.

Factions

A metaphysical argument became the cause or pretence of political contests; the subtleties of the Platonic school were used as the badges of popular factions, and the distance which separated their respective tenets were enlarged or magnified by the acrimony of dispute. As long as the dark heresies of Praxeas and Sabellius labored to confound the Father with the Son, the orthodox party might be excused if they adhered more strictly and more earnestly to the distinction, than to the equality, of the divine persons. But as soon as the heat of controversy had subsided, and the progress of the Sabellians was no longer an object of terror to the churches of Rome, of Africa, or of Egypt, the tide of theological opinion began to flow with a gentle but steady motion towards the contrary extreme; and the most orthodox doctors allowed themselves the use of the terms and definitions which had been

censured in the mouth of the sectaries. After the edict of toleration had restored peace and leisure to the Christians, the Trinitarian controversy was revived in the ancient seat of Platonism, the learned, the opulent, the tumultuous city of Alexandria; and the flame of religious discord was rapidly communicated from the schools to the clergy, the people, the province, and the East. The abstruse question of the eternity of the Logos was agitated in ecclesiastic conferences and popular sermons; and the heterodox opinions of Arius were soon made public by his own zeal, and by that of his adversaries. His most implacable adversaries have acknowledged the learning and blameless life of that eminent presbyter, who, in a former election, had declared, and perhaps generously declined, his pretensions to the episcopal throne. His competitor Alexander assumed the office of his judge. The important cause was argued before him; and if at first he seemed to hesitate, he at length pronounced his final sentence, as an absolute rule of faith. The undaunted presbyter, who presumed to resist the authority of his angry bishop, was separated from the community of the church. But the pride of Arius was supported by the applause of a numerous party. He reckoned among his immediate followers two bishops of Egypt, seven presbyters, twelve deacons, and (what may appear almost incredible) seven hundred virgins. A large majority of the bishops of Asia appeared to support or favor his cause; and their measures were conducted by Eusebius of Cæsarea, the most learned of the Christian prelates; and by Eusebius of Nicomedia, who had acquired the reputation of a statesman without forfeiting that of a saint. Synods in Palestine and Bithynia were opposed to the synods of Egypt. The attention of the prince and people was attracted by this theological dispute; and the decision, at the end of six years, was referred to the supreme authority of the general council of Nice.

Three Systems of the Trinity

When the mysteries of the Christian faith were dangerously exposed to public debate, it might be observed, that the human understanding was capable of forming three distinct, though imperfect systems, concerning the nature of the Divine Trinity; and it was pronounced, that none of these systems, in a pure and absolute sense, were exempt from heresy and error. I. According to the first hypothesis, which was maintained by Arius and his disciples, the Logos was a dependent and spontaneous production, created from nothing by the will of the father. The Son, by whom all things were made, had been begotten before all worlds, and the longest of the astronomical periods could be compared only as a fleeting moment to the extent of his duration; yet this duration was not infinite, and there had been a time which preceded the ineffable generation of the Logos. On this only-begotten Son, the Almighty Father had transfused his ample spirit, and impressed the effulgence of his glory. Visible image of invisible perfection, he saw, at an immeasurable distance beneath his feet, the thrones of the brightest archangels; yet he shone only with a reflected light, and, like the sons of the Romans emperors, who were invested with the titles of Cæsar or Augustus, he governed the universe in obedience to the will of his Father and Monarch. II. In the second hypothesis, the Logos possessed all the

inherent, incommunicable perfections, which religion and philosophy appropriate to the Supreme God. Three distinct and infinite minds or substances, three coëqual and coëternal beings, composed the Divine Essence; and it would have implied contradiction, that any of them should not have existed, or that they should ever cease to exist. The advocates of a system which seemed to establish three independent Deities, attempted to preserve the unity of the First Cause, so conspicuous in the design and order of the world, by the perpetual concord of their administration, and the essential agreement of their will. A faint resemblance of this unity of action may be discovered in the societies of men, and even of animals. The causes which disturb their harmony, proceed only from the imperfection and inequality of their faculties; but the omnipotence which is guided by infinite wisdom and goodness, cannot fail of choosing the same means for the accomplishment of the same ends. III. Three beings, who, by the self-derived necessity of their existence, possess all the divine attributes in the most perfect degree; who are eternal in duration, infinite in space, and intimately present to each other, and to the whole universe; irresistibly force themselves on the astonished mind, as one and the same being, who, in the economy of grace, as well as in that of nature, may manifest himself under different forms, and be considered under different aspects. By this hypothesis, a real substantial trinity is refined into a trinity of names, and abstract modifications, that subsist only in the mind which conceives them. The Logos is no longer a person, but an attribute; and it is only in a figurative sense that the epithet of Son can be applied to the eternal reason, which was with God from the beginning, and by which, not by whom, all things were made. The incarnation of the Logos is reduced to a mere inspiration of the Divine Wisdom, which filled the soul, and directed all the actions, of the man Jesus. Thus, after revolving around the theological circle, we are surprised to find that the Sabellian ends where the Ebionite had begun; and that the incomprehensible mystery which excites our adoration, eludes our inquiry.

Council of Nicaea AD 325

If the bishops of the council of Nice had been permitted to follow the unbiased dictates of their conscience, Arius and his associates could scarcely have flattered themselves with the hopes of obtaining a majority of votes, in favor of an hypothesis so directly averse to the two most popular opinions of the Catholic world. The Arians soon perceived the danger of their situation, and prudently assumed those modest virtues, which, in the fury of civil and religious dissensions, are seldom practised, or even praised, except by the weaker party. They recommended the exercise of Christian charity and moderation; urged the incomprehensible nature of the controversy, disclaimed the use of any terms or definitions which could not be found in the Scriptures; and offered, by very liberal concessions, to satisfy their adversaries without renouncing the integrity of their own principles. The victorious faction received all their proposals with haughty suspicion; and anxiously sought for some irreconcilable mark of distinction, the rejection of which might involve the Arians in the guilt and consequences of heresy. A letter was publicly read, and

ignominiously torn, in which their patron, Eusebius of Nicomedia, ingenuously confessed, that the admission of the Homoousion, or Consubstantial, a word already familiar to the Platonists, was incompatible with the principles of their theological system. The fortunate opportunity was eagerly embraced by the bishops, who governed the resolutions of the synod; and, according to the lively expression of Ambrose, they used the sword, which heresy itself had drawn from the scabbard, to cut off the head of the hated monster. The consubstantiality of the Father and the Son was established by the council of Nice, and has been unanimously received as a fundamental article of the Christian faith, by the consent of the Greek, the Latin, the Oriental, and the Protestant churches. But if the same word had not served to stigmatize the heretics, and to unite the Catholics, it would have been inadequate to the purpose of the majority, by whom it was introduced into the orthodox creed. This majority was divided into two parties, distinguished by a contrary tendency to the sentiments of the Tritheists and of the Sabellians. But as those opposite extremes seemed to overthrow the foundations either of natural or revealed religion, they mutually agreed to qualify the rigor of their principles; and to disavow the just, but invidious, consequences, which might be urged by their antagonists. The interest of the common cause inclined them to join their numbers, and to conceal their differences; their animosity was softened by the healing counsels of toleration, and their disputes were suspended by the use of the mysterious Homoousion, which either party was free to interpret according to their peculiar tenets. The Sabellian sense, which, about fifty years before, had obliged the council of Antioch to prohibit this celebrated term, had endeared it to those theologians who entertained a secret but partial affection for a nominal Trinity. But the more fashionable saints of the Arian times, the intrepid Athanasius, the learned Gregory Nazianzen, and the other pillars of the church, who supported with ability and success the Nicene doctrine, appeared to consider the expression of substance as if it had been synonymous with that of nature; and they ventured to illustrate their meaning, by affirming that three men, as they belong to the same common species, are consubstantial, or homoousian to each other. This pure and distinct equality was tempered, on the one hand, by the internal connection, and spiritual penetration which indissolubly unites the divine persons; and, on the other, by the preëminence of the Father, which was acknowledged as far as it is compatible with the independence of the Son. Within these limits, the almost invisible and tremulous ball of orthodoxy was allowed securely to vibrate. On either side, beyond this consecrated ground, the heretics and the dæmons lurked in ambush to surprise and devour the unhappy wanderer. But as the degrees of theological hatred depend on the spirit of the war, rather than on the importance of the controversy, the heretics who degraded, were treated with more severity than those who annihilated, the person of the Son. The life of Athanasius was consumed in irreconcilable opposition to the impious madness of the Arians; but he defended above twenty years the Sabellianism of Marcellus of Ancyra; and when at last he was compelled to withdraw himself from his communion, he continued to mention, with an ambiguous smile, the venial errors of his respectable friend.

Arian Creeds

The authority of a general council, to which the Arians themselves had been compelled to submit, inscribed on the banners of the orthodox party the mysterious characters of the word Homoousion, which essentially contributed, notwithstanding some obscure disputes, some nocturnal combats, to maintain and perpetuate the uniformity of faith, or at least of language. The consubstantialists, who by their success have deserved and obtained the title of Catholics, gloried in the simplicity and steadiness of their own creed, and insulted the repeated variations of their adversaries, who were destitute of any certain rule of faith. The sincerity or the cunning of the Arian chiefs, the fear of the laws or of the people, their reverence for Christ, their hatred of Athanasius, all the causes, human and divine, that influence and disturb the counsels of a theological faction, introduced among the sectaries a spirit of discord and inconstancy, which, in the course of a few years, erected eighteen different models of religion, and avenged the violated dignity of the church. The zealous Hilary, who, from the peculiar hardships of his situation, was inclined to extenuate rather than to aggravate the errors of the Oriental clergy, declares, that in the wide extent of the ten provinces of Asia, to which he had been banished, there could be found very few prelates who had preserved the knowledge of the true God. The oppression which he had felt, the disorders of which he was the spectator and the victim, appeased, during a short interval, the angry passions of his soul; and in the following passage, of which I shall transcribe a few lines, the bishop of Poitiers unwarily deviates into the style of a Christian philosopher. “It is a thing,” says Hilary, “equally deplorable and dangerous, that there are as many creeds as opinions among men, as many doctrines as inclinations, and as many sources of blasphemy as there are faults among us; because we make creeds arbitrarily, and explain them as arbitrarily. The Homoousion is rejected, and received, and explained away by successive synods. The partial or total resemblance of the Father and of the Son is a subject of dispute for these unhappy times. Every year, nay, every moon, we make new creeds to describe invisible mysteries. We repent of what we have done, we defend those who repent, we anathematize those whom we defended. We condemn either the doctrine of others in ourselves, or our own in that of others; and reciprocally tearing one another to pieces, we have been the cause of each other’s ruin.”

Selection break. The discussions of particular Arian sects and the Latin church are omitted; the reading resumes with Gibbon's account of imperial policy.

Conduct of the Emperors in the Arian Controversy

Such was the rise and progress, and such were the natural revolutions of those theological disputes, which disturbed the peace of Christianity under the reigns of Constantine and of his sons. But as those princes presumed to extend their despotism over the faith, as well as over the lives and fortunes, of their subjects, the weight of their suffrage sometimes inclined the ecclesiastical balance: and the

prerogatives of the King of Heaven were settled, or changed, or modified, in the cabinet of an earthly monarch.

Indifference of Constantine AD 324

The unhappy spirit of discord which pervaded the provinces of the East, interrupted the triumph of Constantine; but the emperor continued for some time to view, with cool and careless indifference, the object of the dispute. As he was yet ignorant of the difficulty of appeasing the quarrels of theologians, he addressed to the contending parties, to Alexander and to Arius, a moderating epistle; which may be ascribed, with far greater reason, to the untutored sense of a soldier and statesman, than to the dictates of any of his episcopal counsellors. He attributes the origin of the whole controversy to a trifling and subtle question, concerning an incomprehensible point of law, which was foolishly asked by the bishop, and imprudently resolved by the presbyter. He laments that the Christian people, who had the same God, the same religion, and the same worship, should be divided by such inconsiderable distinctions; and he seriously recommends to the clergy of Alexandria the example of the Greek philosophers; who could maintain their arguments without losing their temper, and assert their freedom without violating their friendship. The indifference and contempt of the sovereign would have been, perhaps, the most effectual method of silencing the dispute, if the popular current had been less rapid and impetuous, and if Constantine himself, in the midst of faction and fanaticism, could have preserved the calm possession of his own mind. But his ecclesiastical ministers soon contrived to seduce the impartiality of the magistrate, and to awaken the zeal of the proselyte. He was provoked by the insults which had been offered to his statues; he was alarmed by the real, as well as the imaginary magnitude of the spreading mischief; and he extinguished the hope of peace and toleration, from the moment that he assembled three hundred bishops within the walls of the same palace. The presence of the monarch swelled the importance of the debate; his attention multiplied the arguments; and he exposed his person with a patient intrepidity, which animated the valor of the combatants. Notwithstanding the applause which has been bestowed on the eloquence and sagacity of Constantine, a Roman general, whose religion might be still a subject of doubt, and whose mind had not been enlightened either by study or by inspiration, was indifferently qualified to discuss, in the Greek language, a metaphysical question, or an article of faith. But the credit of his favorite Osius, who appears to have presided in the council of Nice, might dispose the emperor in favor of the orthodox party; and a well-timed insinuation, that the same Eusebius of Nicomedia, who now protected the heretic, had lately assisted the tyrant, might exasperate him against their adversaries. The Nicene creed was ratified by Constantine; and his firm declaration, that those who resisted the divine judgment of the synod, must prepare themselves for an immediate exile, annihilated the murmurs of a feeble opposition; which, from seventeen, was almost instantly reduced to two, protesting bishops. Eusebius of Cæsarea yielded a reluctant and ambiguous consent to the Homoousion; and the wavering conduct of the Nicomedian Eusebius served only to

delay, about three months, his disgrace and exile. The impious Arius was banished into one of the remote provinces of Illyricum; his person and disciples were branded by law with the odious name of Porphyrians; his writings were condemned to the flames, and a capital punishment was denounced against those in whose possession they should be found. The emperor had now imbibed the spirit of controversy, and the angry, sarcastic style of his edicts was designed to inspire his subjects with the hatred which he had conceived against the enemies of Christ.

Constantine and the Orthodox Party AD 328 to 337

But, as if the conduct of the emperor had been guided by passion instead of principle, three years from the council of Nice were scarcely elapsed before he discovered some symptoms of mercy, and even of indulgence, towards the proscribed sect, which was secretly protected by his favorite sister. The exiles were recalled, and Eusebius, who gradually resumed his influence over the mind of Constantine, was restored to the episcopal throne, from which he had been ignominiously degraded. Arius himself was treated by the whole court with the respect which would have been due to an innocent and oppressed man. His faith was approved by the synod of Jerusalem; and the emperor seemed impatient to repair his injustice, by issuing an absolute command, that he should be solemnly admitted to the communion in the cathedral of Constantinople. On the same day, which had been fixed for the triumph of Arius, he expired; and the strange and horrid circumstances of his death might excite a suspicion, that the orthodox saints had contributed more efficaciously than by their prayers, to deliver the church from the most formidable of her enemies. The three principal leaders of the Catholics, Athanasius of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, and Paul of Constantinople were deposed on various f accusations, by the sentence of numerous councils; and were afterwards banished into distant provinces by the first of the Christian emperors, who, in the last moments of his life, received the rites of baptism from the Arian bishop of Nicomedia. The ecclesiastical government of Constantine cannot be justified from the reproach of levity and weakness. But the credulous monarch, unskilled in the stratagems of theological warfare, might be deceived by the modest and specious professions of the heretics, whose sentiments he never perfectly understood; and while he protected Arius, and persecuted Athanasius, he still considered the council of Nice as the bulwark of the Christian faith, and the peculiar glory of his own reign.

Constantius Favors the Arians AD 337 to 361

The sons of Constantine must have been admitted from their childhood into the rank of catechumens; but they imitated, in the delay of their baptism, the example of their father. Like him they presumed to pronounce their judgment on mysteries into which they had never been regularly initiated; and the fate of the Trinitarian controversy depended, in a great measure, on the sentiments of Constantius; who inherited the provinces of the East, and acquired the possession of the whole

empire. The Arian presbyter or bishop, who had secreted for his use the testament of the deceased emperor, improved the fortunate occasion which had introduced him to the familiarity of a prince, whose public counsels were always swayed by his domestic favorites. The eunuchs and slaves diffused the spiritual poison through the palace, and the dangerous infection was communicated by the female attendants to the guards, and by the empress to her unsuspicious husband. The partiality which Constantius always expressed towards the Eusebian faction, was insensibly fortified by the dexterous management of their leaders; and his victory over the tyrant Magnentius increased his inclination, as well as ability, to employ the arms of power in the cause of Arianism. While the two armies were engaged in the plains of Mursa, and the fate of the two rivals depended on the chance of war, the son of Constantine passed the anxious moments in a church of the martyrs under the walls of the city. His spiritual comforter, Valens, the Arian bishop of the diocese, employed the most artful precautions to obtain such early intelligence as might secure either his favor or his escape. A secret chain of swift and trusty messengers informed him of the vicissitudes of the battle; and while the courtiers stood trembling round their affrighted master, Valens assured him that the Gallic legions gave way; and insinuated with some presence of mind, that the glorious event had been revealed to him by an angel. The grateful emperor ascribed his success to the merits and intercession of the bishop of Mursa, whose faith had deserved the public and miraculous approbation of Heaven. The Arians, who considered as their own the victory of Constantius, preferred his glory to that of his father. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, immediately composed the description of a celestial cross, encircled with a splendid rainbow; which during the festival of Pentecost, about the third hour of the day, had appeared over the Mount of Olives, to the edification of the devout pilgrims, and the people of the holy city. The size of the meteor was gradually magnified; and the Arian historian has ventured to affirm, that it was conspicuous to the two armies in the plains of Pannonia; and that the tyrant, who is purposely represented as an idolater, fled before the auspicious sign of orthodox Christianity.

Arian Councils

The sentiments of a judicious stranger, who has impartially considered the progress of civil or ecclesiastical discord, are always entitled to our notice; and a short passage of Ammianus, who served in the armies, and studied the character of Constantius, is perhaps of more value than many pages of theological invectives. “The Christian religion, which, in itself,” says that moderate historian, “is plain and simple, he confounded by the dotage of superstition. Instead of reconciling the parties by the weight of his authority, he cherished and promulgated, by verbal disputes, the differences which his vain curiosity had excited. The highways were covered with troops of bishops galloping from every side to the assemblies, which they call synods; and while they labored to reduce the whole sect to their own particular opinions, the public establishment of the posts was almost ruined by their hasty and repeated journeys.” Our more intimate knowledge of the ecclesiastical transactions of the reign of Constantius would furnish an ample commentary on this

remarkable passage, which justifies the rational apprehensions of Athanasius, that the restless activity of the clergy, who wandered round the empire in search of the true faith, would excite the contempt and laughter of the unbelieving world. As soon as the emperor was relieved from the terrors of the civil war, he devoted the leisure of his winter quarters at Arles, Milan, Sirmium, and Constantinople, to the amusement or toils of controversy: the sword of the magistrate, and even of the tyrant, was unsheathed, to enforce the reasons of the theologian; and as he opposed the orthodox faith of Nice, it is readily confessed that his incapacity and ignorance were equal to his presumption. The eunuchs, the women, and the bishops, who governed the vain and feeble mind of the emperor, had inspired him with an insuperable dislike to the Homoousion; but his timid conscience was alarmed by the impiety of Ætius. The guilt of that atheist was aggravated by the suspicious favor of the unfortunate Gallus; and even the death of the Imperial ministers, who had been massacred at Antioch, were imputed to the suggestions of that dangerous sophist. The mind of Constantius, which could neither be moderated by reason, nor fixed by faith, was blindly impelled to either side of the dark and empty abyss, by his horror of the opposite extreme; he alternately embraced and condemned the sentiments, he successively banished and recalled the leaders, of the Arian and Semi-Arian factions. During the season of public business or festivity, he employed whole days, and even nights, in selecting the words, and weighing the syllables, which composed his fluctuating creeds. The subject of his meditations still pursued and occupied his slumbers: the incoherent dreams of the emperor were received as celestial visions, and he accepted with complacency the lofty title of bishop of bishops, from those ecclesiastics who forgot the interest of their order for the gratification of their passions. The design of establishing a uniformity of doctrine, which had engaged him to convene so many synods in Gaul, Italy, Illyricum, and Asia, was repeatedly baffled by his own levity, by the divisions of the Arians, and by the resistance of the Catholics; and he resolved, as the last and decisive effort, imperiously to dictate the decrees of a general council. The destructive earthquake of Nicomedia, the difficulty of finding a convenient place, and perhaps some secret motives of policy, produced an alteration in the summons. The bishops of the East were directed to meet at Seleucia, in Isauria; while those of the West held their deliberations at Rimini, on the coast of the Hadriatic; and instead of two or three deputies from each province, the whole episcopal body was ordered to march. The Eastern council, after consuming four days in fierce and unavailing debate, separated without any definitive conclusion. The council of the West was protracted till the seventh month. Taurus, the Prætorian præfect was instructed not to dismiss the prelates till they should all be united in the same opinion; and his efforts were supported by the power of banishing fifteen of the most refractory, and a promise of the consulship if he achieved so difficult an adventure. His prayers and threats, the authority of the sovereign, the sophistry of Valens and Ursacius, the distress of cold and hunger, and the tedious melancholy of a hopeless exile, at length extorted the reluctant consent of the bishops of Rimini. The deputies of the East and of the West attended the emperor in the palace of Constantinople, and he enjoyed the satisfaction of imposing

> on the world a profession of faith which established the likeness, without expressing the consubstantiality, of the Son of God. But the triumph of Arianism had been preceded by the removal of the orthodox clergy, whom it was impossible either to intimidate or to corrupt; and the reign of Constantius was disgraced by the unjust and ineffectual persecution of the great Athanasius.

What Gibbon explains and what he assumes

Gibbon's strongest historical point is that imperial patronage could change sides. The authority of Constantine did not produce an uninterrupted political establishment devoted to Athanasius. Constantius used the same resources of command, exclusion, and exile to support settlements that Nicene defenders rejected. This observation defeats a simple explanation in which one emperor invented a doctrine and thereafter imposed it successfully. It also defeats the opposite picture in which the emperor's participation merely supplied an innocent ceremonial frame. The state could determine whether a bishop occupied his see, whether opponents could assemble, and what pressure surrounded a subscription.

The quotation from Hilary strengthens this part of Gibbon's account because it comes from a defender of the Son's divinity. Frustration with multiplying formulas was not confined to unbelievers. Hilary could regard a formula as inadequate or dangerous while still trying to discover whether its supporters intended an orthodox confession. His complaint, as Gibbon deploys it, exposes the instability of religious politics. Hilary's own larger project adds something Gibbon's arrangement makes less visible: vocabulary could be negotiated in the hope of recognizing a common belief. The existence of numerous formulas establishes disagreement; it does not establish that every participant considered the underlying subject meaningless.

Gibbon's interpretation of the consubstantial term is less secure than his account of changing imperial policies. He says that its usefulness lay in stigmatizing heretics and uniting Catholics. The first part is plainly connected with the creed's function: its anathemas were intended to exclude specific propositions. The second is true as a description of the word's eventual public role. Neither part proves that the formula lacked a theological purpose. A term may identify a party precisely because the party believes it protects something important. To demonstrate that the theological justification was only a pretext would require evidence beyond the fact that the term also organized a faction.

His analysis of popular participation likewise combines insight with social condescension. The controversy reached people outside a philosophical elite because the identity of Christ mattered to their worship and hope. Gibbon presents their participation as an invitation to obstinacy among minds poorly prepared for abstraction. Yet the issue of whether Christ was a creature did not arise only because an uneducated crowd entered a philosopher's seminar. Christians already prayed, baptized, sang, and interpreted Scripture. Their practices created questions about

how Christ belonged to the divine life. Their ability to answer those questions well remains open to criticism; their involvement requires more explanation than intellectual presumption.

The passage on Constantine's original indifference is particularly revealing. Gibbon recognizes a ruler who treated the dispute as needlessly divisive before committing himself to a conciliar settlement. This is a political trajectory, not evidence that Constantine possessed no convictions of any kind. Nor does his later change of policy prove that every bishop who accepted the creed acted from fear. The documents permit a narrower and stronger judgment: Constantine wanted a unified church, supported an agreed doctrinal boundary as a means toward that end, and subsequently pursued reconciliation in ways that unsettled some defenders of the earlier settlement.

Gibbon's vocabulary can conceal the difference between explanation and verdict. Terms such as faction, enthusiasm, and zeal illuminate real features of collective behavior. Used as a complete account, they can make the belief at issue disappear before it has been understood. The historian is most persuasive when he shows how people with opposing doctrines employed comparable instruments of power. He is less persuasive when he assumes that an intricate theological distinction is self-evidently too slight to justify serious concern. The importance of a proposition cannot be measured simply by the number of letters distinguishing its technical terms.

Gibbon makes Nicaea an episode within the empire's political and intellectual history, open to comparison with other struggles for authority. His account establishes why changing imperial patronage belongs in this history. His descriptions of the bishops' motives remain interpretations to be tested against their own explanations.

32 Priestley and the Claim of Corruption

Joseph Priestley asks a different historical question from Gibbon. He wants to recover an original Christianity that he believes was obscured by later philosophy and ecclesiastical power. His history is therefore also a program of religious reform. A return to the proper humanity of Jesus would, in his judgment, restore the unity of God and release Christianity from accumulated contradictions. He does not defend Arius's theology as his own. Arius's preexistent heavenly Son remains too remote from the human Jesus whom Priestley regards as the subject of the earliest proclamation.

This difference is essential. A history that gathers every opponent of Nicaea under the name Arian would misdescribe Priestley before reaching his argument. He treats Arianism as an intermediate position: it rejected the full consubstantial divinity of the Son but retained a personal existence before Jesus's human birth. The council's defenders rejected that position because it placed the Son among creatures. Priestley rejected it because it still elevated Jesus beyond what he believed the earliest Christians had taught. Opposition to the same creed did not create agreement about Christ.

The reading reproduces the complete sixth section of the first part of his History of the Corruptions of Christianity. It provides a compact statement of his account of the controversy, its politics, and its consequences for theological language. The historical edition used here is an American reprint that announces abridgment elsewhere in the work. Its particular wording, including its presentation of Hilary, is therefore identified rather than silently substituted for a modern critical text. The section is valuable both as an argument to examine and as evidence of what a nineteenth-century reader could encounter under Priestley's name.

Priestley on the Arian controversy

Joseph Priestley, History of the Corruptions of Christianity, Part I, section VI, Of the Arian Controversy, in the edition described on its title page as in some parts abridged, with appendices, by A. A. L. (Keene, New Hampshire: J. and J. W. Prentiss, 1838), printed pages 52-57. The work was first published in 1782. Section VI is reproduced in full; the surrounding sections and the abridger's appended material are omitted. The Latin footnote on page 53 is reproduced separately below. Line-end hyphenation and repeated quotation marks at the beginning of printed lines are removed; italics are represented by plain text. Clear OCR errors are corrected against the scanned pages. Historical assertions remain Priestley's and are assessed after the reading.

There were several things relating to the divinity of Christ which had not been determined by the christian Fathers, before the time of Constantine. Thus, though the term begotten had been generally used in speaking of the origin of the Son, by way of emanation from the Father, the term created, and others of a similar meaning, had been used occasionally, and as far as appears without giving offence; nor indeed could it well have done so, in an age in which all creation was considered

as of the same kind; every substance (at least all intelligent substances, or spirits) being supposed to have been derived ultimately from the same divine essence. This language we find used by Lactantius, and Hilary, after it had begun to be disliked, and reprobated, and therefore it was probably used by them through inadvertence.

Lactantius, however, speaking of the origin of the Son, says, "as when he was created in his first spiritual birth, he was, from God alone, made a holy spirit; so in his second carnal birth, from his mother alone, he became holy flesh." Hilary says, "God the Father is the cause of all, without beginning, and solitary; but the Son was produced by the Father without time, and was created and founded before the ages. He was not before he was born, but he was born without time. Before all time he alone subsists from the Father alone." As it is not easy to give an exact translation of this passage, on account of its extreme obscurity, I shall give it at length in the note. This writer seems to have thought as the generality of the Ante-Nicene Fathers did, that there was a time when Christ was not: but we shall find that after the Arian controversy this opinion was condemned.

It was in consequence of the controversy occasioned by Sabellius in Africa that the peculiar opinions of Arius were started. Sabellius having asserted that there was no difference between the divinity of the Father and that of the Son, Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, was thought to have advanced, in opposition to him, something derogatory to our Savior, as that his divinity was so far different from that of the Father, that he was not even of the same substance with the Father; which, as we have seen, was contrary to the opinion of those who were deemed orthodox in that age. However, he justified himself in such a manner as gave satisfaction.

But not long after this, Alexander, another bishop of Alexandria, being led by the same controversy to discourse concerning Christ, in the presence of Arius, a presbyter of the same church (with whom he seems to have had some previous difference) among other things in favor of the dignity of Christ, advanced that the Father did not precede the Son a single moment, and that he had issued from all eternity out of the substance of the Father himself. This, being in some respects an advance upon the generally received doctrine, provoked Arius to reply. He allowed that Christ existed before all time, and before the ages, as the only begotten Son of God, but he said he had no being before he was begotten. He also asserted, in the course of the debate, that Christ was neither of the substance of the Father, nor formed out of pre-existing matter, but, like other things, was created out of nothing. It seems also to have been the opinion of Arius and his followers, but was not perhaps advanced at that time, that this pre-existent spirit was the only intelligent principle belonging to Christ, being in him what the soul was supposed to be in other men.

The prejudices of the christians of that age against the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ must have been very general, and very strong, to have made this doctrine of Arius so popular as we find it presently was. It was a doctrine that does not appear to have been publicly maintained before. But possibly, the difficulty of conceiving how a mere attribute of the divine nature could become a real person,

which had been the orthodox opinion, might have gradually led men to think that Christ had been produced by way of simple emanation from God, like other intelligences, or spirits. And when the scripture doctrine of the creation of all things out of nothing began to take place of the doctrine of the philosophers, who asserted the impossibility of any such creation, the opinion of Arius that Christ was made out of nothing would naturally succeed to that of his emanation from the Father; so that it is possible that the minds of the more learned christians might have been fully prepared to receive that doctrine before it was openly published by him.

Indeed, the appeal of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia, and other learned and eminent bishops of that age, proves that he did not imagine that he had advanced an opinion that was altogether peculiar to himself; and their ready reception of his doctrine, and the countenance which they gave him, who was only a presbyter, and had nothing extraordinary to recommend him, is a stronger proof of the same thing. The Arian doctrine, however, was a kind of medium between that of the simple humanity of Christ, which was far from being entirely extinguished, though it was less and less relished, and that of his proper divinity, which made him to be of the same substance with the Father, and a kind of rival of his dignity, at which it is no wonder that the minds of many revolted. This circumstance, therefore, of the Arian doctrine being the medium between two great extremes was alone sufficient to recommend it to many.

It is acknowledged, that Arius, in the course of the controversy, had many abettors in Egypt, where the difference first arose; and among them were many persons distinguished by their genius and learning, as well as by their rank and station in the world. Notwithstanding those advantages on the side of Arius, Alexander prevailed so far, that, in two councils, which he summoned on the occasion, Arius was deprived of his office, and excommunicated. Upon this he retired into Palestine, where he was countenanced by a great number of bishops, but more especially by Eusebius bishop of Nicomedia, one of the most distinguished of any of that age, both for his learning and moderation.

The Emperor Constantine, having endeavored in vain to compose these differences in the religion which he had lately professed, and especially to reconcile Arius and Alexander, at length called a general council of bishops at Nice, the first which had obtained that appellation, and in this council, after much indecent wrangling, and violent debate, Arius was condemned, and banished to Illyricum, a part of the Roman Empire very remote from Alexandria, where the controversy originated. But notwithstanding this condemnation, so far were the christians of that age from having any opinion of the infallibility of councils, that the doctrine of Arius triumphed both over the decrees of this celebrated assembly, and the authority of the Emperor, who was afterwards induced to think better of Arius. He, therefore, recalled him from banishment, and ordered Alexander his bishop to admit him to communion. But Arius died before the order could be executed. Constantius the successor of Constantine, and also some others of the Emperors, favored the Arians, and in those reigns their doctrine was by far the most generally received throughout the Roman Empire. The bishops of that profession held many councils, and they are

acknowledged to have been very full. But at length Arianism was in a great measure banished from the Roman Empire by the persecutions of the Emperor Theodosius, who interested himself greatly in favor of the Trinitarian doctrine. The Arians took refuge in great numbers among the Burgundians, Goths, Vandals, and other unconquered barbarous nations, whom they were a great means of bringing over to the christian faith, and all of them, without exception, professed the Arian doctrine, till it was overpowered by the influence and authority of the bishops of Rome. The Vandals were long the support of Arianism in Africa, but it never recovered its credit after their extirpation from that province by the arms of the Emperor Justinian.

So far was the council of Nice from giving general satisfaction, that Hilary, presently afterwards, complains of the Arians as being in all the provinces of the Roman Empire; and in the next reign Arianism was very near becoming the universal doctrine of the christian church, and of course would have been deemed orthodox.

The debates occasioned by this famous council made a great revolution both in the language, and in the opinions of those who were deemed orthodox. It is the natural effect of controversy to push men as far as possible from that extreme which they wish to avoid, so as often to drive them into the opposite extreme. This was remarkably the case on this occasion; and no controversy ever interested so many persons, and those so deeply, as this did, and indeed continues to do to this day.

In order to keep quite clear of Arianism, which made Christ to be a mere creature, those who approved of the decrees of the council began to express themselves as Mosheim acknowledges, in such a manner, as that they really substituted three Gods instead of one. And many of them seemed to imagine that they sufficiently maintained the unity of the Godhead, by asserting that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, were each of them, of the same divine nature, as three or more men have each of them the same human nature.

This was certainly giving up the unity of the divine nature; and yet being obliged by the whole tenor of revelation to maintain the doctrine of only one God, in conjunction with this new doctrine of three separate Gods, such a manifest inconsistency was introduced, as nothing could cover but the pretence that this doctrine of the Trinity was inexplicable by human reason. And then the word mystery, which had before been applied to the doctrine of the Trinity, in common with other things which were simply deemed sacred, began to be used in a new sense, and to signify not as before, a thing that was secret, and required to be explained; but something absolutely incapable of being explained, something that must be believed, though it could not be understood. But the whole doctrine, as it was afterwards generally professed, and as it now stands in every established christian church, was not finally settled before the composition of what is called the Athanasian Creed, and its reception into the offices of public worship.

When this creed was made, and by whom, is uncertain. It appeared about the end of the fifth century, and is by some ascribed to Vigilius Tapsensis. Though this creed contains a number of as direct contradictions as any person, the most skilled in logic, can draw up, it still keeps its ground, guarded from all human inspection, like

> the doctrine of transubstantiation, by this new but thin veil of mystery. But before I proceed to give a more particular account of this farther change in the doctrine, I must note by what steps the Holy Spirit came to be reckoned a distinct person in this Trinity.
>
> *Historical footnote to Priestley's second paragraph, printed page 53. The Latin is the passage he translates in that paragraph; it is reproduced to make the attribution testable.*
>
> Deus Pater est causa omnium, omnino sine initio, solitarius; filius autem sine tempore editus est a patre, et ante secula creatus et fundatus. Non erat antequam nasceretur, sed sine tempore ante omnia natus, solus a solo patre subsistit.

Testing the corruption thesis

Priestley's corruption thesis depends on reconstructing the earliest Christianity. Later changes can be classified as losses only after the earlier position has been established. His next example shows how a mistaken attribution can distort that reconstruction.

His paragraph on Hilary supplies a concrete reason to test that reconstruction closely. Priestley introduces words about the Son's being created as though Hilary were expressing his own theological judgment. The passage occurs in Hilary's On the Trinity IV.13. Hilary is there reproducing Arius's letter to Alexander, as he explicitly prepares to do in IV.11; he proceeds to denounce the doctrine in IV.14. The context therefore reverses the use to which Priestley puts the quotation. An orthodox author can preserve a heterodox statement in order to refute it. Finding the statement in that author's book does not make it his confession.

This is not a disagreement about whether the English word created has been translated with sufficient precision. The more basic issue is who is speaking. Hilary's treatise supplies an example of Arius's teaching and then attacks it. Priestley's statement that Hilary seems to have thought there was a time when Christ was not cannot be supported by that quotation. The original Latin printed in Priestley's note makes the comparison unusually accessible. It can be placed beside the letter preserved by Athanasius, On the Synods 16, as well as the parallel passage in Hilary. Both contexts identify the doctrine as Arius's.

The error damages the evidential force of this particular example. It does not justify refusing to investigate every difference between earlier and later Christian language. Priestley is right to ask whether words such as begotten and created were always used with the distinctions later imposed upon them. Earlier texts do display varied expressions, and the Nicene anathemas deliberately narrow the permissible range. A sound historical account must determine the meaning of an earlier expression in its own argument. It must also distinguish a writer's assertion from a statement he quotes, reports, qualifies, or condemns. Priestley's own example shows why that elementary work matters.

His inference from the growth of Arius's support also needs qualification. Arius appealed to bishops whom he expected to regard his position sympathetically. That expectation is evidence that his position was connected with existing networks and ways of interpreting Scripture. It is not a numerical demonstration of what most ordinary Christians had believed, still less proof that the universal original church held Priestley's own position. A highly placed group can be influential without representing the whole church. Conversely, later suppression can make a minority appear less important in the surviving record than it was. Neither possibility removes the need for positive evidence about particular places and periods.

Priestley is on firmer ground when he denies that the council produced instant universal satisfaction. Later emperors supported its opponents, and the council did not end the dispute. His counterfactual claim that victorious Arianism would simply have become orthodoxy describes how political success might alter institutional recognition; it does not establish what Christians believed before the controversy.

Priestley's account of three gods is a philosophical verdict on Nicene reasoning. The creed's defenders deny the conclusion he draws. Their insistence on one divine substance is intended to prevent the three persons from being counted as three independent beings of the same species. Priestley believes their attempted distinction cannot succeed. The dispute should therefore be presented as a dispute about the coherence of their account, rather than as an admission that they secretly recognized three gods. Quoting his verdict without that distinction would convert his criticism into an uncontested historical description.

His comments on mystery likewise mix a linguistic claim with a theological accusation. He argues that a word once applied to something revealed came to protect something incapable of rational explanation. That claim invites examination of the vocabulary in different texts. His further allegation that mystery served as a veil over contradiction requires him to show that the doctrine contradicts itself, rather than merely exceeds ordinary analogy. Hilary's own discussion of the limits of human speech offers a direct comparison: the inadequacy of language, in his account, makes careful distinctions more necessary. It does not license the simultaneous assertion and denial of the same proposition in the same respect.

Priestley deserves a place in this history because he treats the inherited creed as a historical claim subject to reconstruction, and because he speaks from within an explicitly Christian project of recovery. His chapter also provides a warning with a precise object. An argument against ecclesiastical authority can itself lean on an author's prestige and on an insufficiently examined quotation. His mistaken use of Hilary is a reason to correct the argument in detail. The correction leaves the legitimate historical questions visible while removing one piece of evidence that does not bear the weight placed upon it.

33 Newman on the Council and the Development of Doctrine

John Henry Newman gives the council's defenders a historian who is both learned and openly committed. His Arians of the Fourth Century first appeared in 1833, while he belonged to the Church of England. The edition reproduced here incorporates the later form of the work, with its 1871 revisions, and was printed in 1908. His subsequent reception into the Roman Catholic Church in 1845 did not turn a previously neutral account into a confessional one. The earlier book already assumes that a true apostolic faith can be distinguished from heresy, and it asks how that faith was defended under difficult historical conditions.

Newman's treatment deserves attention because it does not depend on pretending that a complete transcript of the council survives. He begins by acknowledging that the authentic account of its proceedings is not extant. He then reconstructs the political and ecclesiastical course from other witnesses. His account of Constantine is especially useful beside Gibbon's. Both see a ruler strongly interested in unity and initially impatient with the dispute. Newman argues that this impatience helps explain imperial intervention without making the emperor an adequate judge of the doctrine. His defense of Nicaea does not require him to make Constantine its theological genius.

His polemical judgments are equally visible. Arius's conduct becomes evidence of ambition; Alexander's delay becomes excessive meekness; an eventual exclusion becomes a duty imposed on an honest bishop. Readers should keep those judgments in view as they follow the narrative. They tell us how Newman understands the moral stakes of the conflict. Where he supplies an inference about a dead person's inner character, the inference does not gain the status of an observed fact merely because it appears in a learned history. The evidence for an action and the interpretation of its motive remain distinguishable within a single paragraph.

The second, shorter reading comes from his Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine. It makes explicit a problem that runs through the whole anthology: should the Nicene formula be used as the key to the earlier fathers, or should their earlier words be read without assuming the later formula? Newman recognizes that a defender of continuity begins with a presumption and must explain difficulties. This is a more demanding defense than the assertion that the doctrine was always expressed everywhere in exactly the same words.

Newman reconstructs the council

John Henry Newman, The Arians of the Fourth Century, chapter III, section 1, History of the Nicene Council, printed pages 236-258 in the historical pagination, in the 1908 Longmans, Green new impression of the work first published in 1833 and revised in its third edition in 1871. The complete main text of this section is reproduced from the Newman Reader transcription. Footnotes, their markers, page markers, and navigation are omitted; numbered subdivisions 1-3 are retained. The original's judgments and reconstructed chronology are Newman's and are assessed after the readings.

THE authentic account of the proceedings of the Nicene Council is not extant. It has in consequence been judged expedient to put together in the foregoing Chapter whatever was necessary for the explanation of the Catholic and Arian creeds, and the controversy concerning them, rather than to reserve any portion of the doctrinal discussion for the present, though in some respects the more appropriate place for its introduction. Here then the transactions at Nicæa shall be reviewed in their political or ecclesiastical aspect.

Subdivision 1

Arius first published his heresy about the year 319. With his turbulent conduct in 306 and a few years later we are not here concerned. After this date, in 313, he is said, on the death of Achillas, to have aspired to the primacy of the Egyptian Church; and, according to Philostorgius, the historian of his party, a writer of little credit, to have generously resigned his claims in favour of Alexander, who was elected. His ambitious character renders it not improbable that he was a candidate for the vacant dignity; but, if so, the difference of age between himself and Alexander, which must have been considerable, would at once account for the elevation of the latter, and be an evidence of the indecency of Arius in becoming a competitor at all. His first attack on the Catholic doctrine was conducted with an openness which, considering the general duplicity of his party, is the most honourable trait in his character. In a public meeting of the clergy of Alexandria, he accused his diocesan of Sabellianism; an insult which Alexander, from deference to the talents and learning of the objector, sustained with somewhat too little of the dignity befitting "the ruler of the people." The mischief which ensued from his misplaced meekness was considerable. Arius was one of the public preachers of Alexandria; and, as some suppose, Master of the Catechetical School. Others of the city Presbyters were stimulated by his example to similar irregularities. Colluthus, Carponas, and Sarmatas began to form each his own party in a Church which Meletius had already troubled; and Colluthus went so far as to promulgate an heretical doctrine, and to found a sect. Still hoping to settle these disorders without the exercise of his episcopal power, Alexander summoned a meeting of his clergy, in which Arius was allowed to state his doctrines freely, and to argue in their defence; and, whether from a desire not to overbear the discussion, or from distrust in his own power of accurately expressing the truth, and anxiety about the charge of heresy brought against himself, the Primate, though in no wise a man of feeble

mind, is said to have refrained from committing himself on the controverted subject, "applauding," as Sozomen tells us, "sometimes the one party, sometimes the other." At length the error of Arius appeared to be of so serious and confirmed a nature, that countenance of it would have been sinful. It began to spread beyond the Alexandrian Church; the indecision of Alexander excited the murmurs of the Catholics; till, called unwillingly to the discharge of a severe duty, he gave public evidence of his real indignation against the blasphemies which he had so long endured, by excommunicating Arius with his followers.

This proceeding, obligatory as it was on a Christian Bishop, and ratified by the concurrence of a provincial Council, and expedient even for the immediate interests of Christianity, had other Churches been equally honest in their allegiance to the true faith, had the effect of increasing the influence of Arius, by throwing him upon his fellow-Lucianists of the rival dioceses of the East, and giving notoriety to his name and tenets. In Egypt, indeed, he had already been supported by the Meletian faction; which, in spite of its profession of orthodoxy, continued in alliance with him, through jealousy of the Church, even after he had fallen into heresy. But the countenance of these schismatics was of small consideration, compared with the powerful aid frankly tendered him, on his excommunication, by the leading men in the great Catholic communities of Asia Minor and the East. Cæsarea was the first place to afford him a retreat from Alexandrian orthodoxy, where he received a cordial reception from the learned Eusebius, Metropolitan of Palestine; while Athanasius, Bishop of Anazarbus in Cilicia, and others, did not hesitate, by letters on his behalf, to declare their concurrence with him in the full extent of his heresy. Eusebius even declared that Christ was not very or true God; and his associate Athanasius asserted, that He was in the number of the hundred sheep of the parable, that is, one of the creatures of God.

Yet, in spite of the countenance of these and other eminent men, Arius found it difficult to maintain his ground against the general indignation which his heresy excited. He was resolutely opposed by Philogonius, Patriarch of Antioch, and Macarius of Jerusalem; who promptly answered the call made upon them by Alexander, in his circulars addressed to the Syrian Churches. In the meanwhile Eusebius of Nicomedia, the early friend of Arius, and the ecclesiastical adviser of Constantia, the Emperor's sister, declared in his favour; and offered him a refuge, which he readily accepted, from the growing unpopularity which attended him in Palestine. Supported by the patronage of so powerful a prelate, Arius was now scarcely to be considered in the position of a schismatic or an outcast. He assumed in consequence a more calm and respectful demeanour towards Alexander; imitated the courteous language of his friend; and in his Epistle, which was introduced into the foregoing Chapter, addresses his diocesan with studious humility, and defers or appeals to previous statements made by Alexander himself on the doctrine in dispute. At this time also he seems to have corrected and completed his system. George, afterwards Bishop of Laodicea, taught him an evasion for the orthodox test "of God," by a reference to 1 Cor. xi. 12. Asterius, a sophist of Cappadocia,

advocated the secondary sense of the word Logos as applied to Christ, with a reference to such passages as Joel ii. 25; and, in order to explain away the force of the word "Only-begotten," ([monogenes],) maintained, that to Christ alone out of all creatures it had been given, to be fashioned under the immediate presence and perilous weight of the Divine Hand. Now too, as it appears, the title of "True God" was ascribed to Him by the heretical party; the "of an alterable nature" was withdrawn; and an admission of His actual indefectibility substituted for it. The heresy being thus placed on a less exceptionable basis, the influence of Eusebius was exerted in Councils both in Bithynia and Palestine; in which Arius was acknowledged, and more urgent solicitations addressed to Alexander, with the view of effecting his re-admission into the Church.

This was the history of the controversy for the first four or five years of its existence; that is, till the era of the battle of Hadrianople (A.D. 323), by the issue of which Constantine, becoming master of the Roman world, was at liberty to turn his thoughts to the state of Christianity in the Eastern Provinces of the Empire. From this date it is connected with civil history; a result natural, and indeed necessary under the existing circumstances, though it was the occasion of subjecting Christianity to fresh persecutions, in place of those which its nominal triumph had terminated. When a heresy, condemned and excommunicated by one Church, was taken up by another, and independent Christian bodies thus stood in open opposition, nothing was left to those who desired peace, to say nothing of orthodoxy, but to bring the question under the notice of a General Council. But as a previous step, the leave of the civil power was plainly necessary for so public a display of that wide-spreading Association, of which the faith of the Gospel was the uniting and animating principle. Thus the Church could not meet together in one, without entering into a sort of negotiation with the powers that be; whose jealousy it is the duty of Christians, both as individuals and as a body, if possible, to dispel. On the other hand, the Roman Emperor, as a professed disciple of the truth, was of course bound to protect its interests, and to afford every facility for its establishment in purity and efficacy. It was under these circumstances that the Nicene Council was convoked.

Subdivision 2

Now we must direct our view for a while to the character and history of Constantine. It is an ungrateful task to discuss the private opinions and motives of an Emperor who was the first to profess himself the Protector of the Church, and to relieve it from the abject and suffering condition in which it had lain for three centuries. Constantine is our benefactor; inasmuch as we, who now live, may be considered to have received the gift of Christianity by means of the increased influence which he gave to the Church. And, were it not that in conferring his benefaction he burdened it with the bequest of an heresy, which outlived his age by many centuries, and still exists in its effects in the divisions of the East, nothing would here be said, from mere grateful recollection of him, by way of analyzing the state of mind in which he

viewed the benefit which he has conveyed to us. But his conduct, as it discovers itself in the subsequent history, natural as it was in his case, still has somewhat of a warning in it, which must not be neglected in after times.

It is of course impossible accurately to describe the various feelings with which one in Constantine's peculiar situation was likely to regard Christianity; yet the joint effect of them all may be gathered from his actual conduct, and the state of the civilized world at the time. He found his empire distracted with civil and religious dissensions, which tended to the dissolution of society; at a time too, when the barbarians without were pressing upon it with a vigour, formidable in itself, but far more menacing in consequence of the decay of the ancient spirit of Rome. He perceived the powers of its old polytheism, from whatever cause, exhausted; and a newly-risen philosophy vainly endeavouring to resuscitate a mythology which had done its work, and now, like all things of earth, was fast returning to the dust from which it was taken. He heard the same philosophy inculcating the principles of that more exalted and refined religion, which a civilized age will always require; and he witnessed the same substantial teaching, as he would consider it, embodied in the precepts, and enforced by the energetic discipline, the union, and the example of the Christian Church. Here his thoughts would rest, as in a natural solution of the investigation to which the state of his empire gave rise; and, without knowing enough of the internal characters of Christianity to care to instruct himself in them, he would discern, on the face of it, a doctrine more real than that of philosophy, and a rule of life more severe and energetic even than that of the old Republic. The Gospel seemed to be the fit instrument of a civil reformation, being but a new form of the old wisdom, which had existed in the world at large from the beginning. Revering, nay, in one sense, honestly submitting to its faith, still he acknowledged it rather as a school than joined it as a polity; and by refraining from the sacrament of baptism till his last illness, he acted in the spirit of men of the world in every age, who dislike to pledge themselves to engagements which they still intend to fulfil, and to descend from the position of judges to that of disciples of the truth.

Concord is so eminently the perfection of the Christian temper, conduct, and discipline, and it had been so wonderfully exemplified in the previous history of the Church, that it was almost unavoidable in a heathen soldier and statesman to regard it as the sole precept of the Gospel. It required a far more refined moral perception, to detect and to approve the principle on which this internal peace is grounded in Scripture; to submit to the dictation of truth, as such, as a primary authority in matters of political and private conduct; to understand how belief in a certain creed was a condition of Divine favour, how the social union was intended to result from an unity of opinions, the love of man to spring from the love of God, and zeal to be prior in the succession of Christian graces to benevolence. It had been predicted by Him, who came to offer peace to the world, that, in matter of fact, that gift would be changed into the sword of discord; mankind being offended by the doctrine, more than they were won over by the amiableness of Christianity. But He alone was able thus to discern through what a succession of difficulties Divine truth advances to its

final victory; shallow minds anticipate the end apart from the course which leads to it. Especially they who receive scarcely more of His teaching than the instinct of civilization recognizes (and Constantine must, on the whole, be classed among such), view the religious dissensions of the Church as simply evil, and (as they would fain prove) contrary to His own precepts; whereas in fact they are but the history of truth in its first stage of trial, when it aims at being "pure," before it is "peaceable;" and are reprehensible only so far as baser passions mix themselves with that true loyalty towards God, which desires His glory in the first place, and only in the second place, the tranquillity and good order of society.

The Edict of Milan (A.D. 313) was among the first effects of Constantine's anxiety to restore fellowship of feeling to the members of his distracted empire. In it an absolute toleration was given by him and his colleague Licinius, to the Christians and all other persuasions, to follow the form of worship which each had adopted for himself; and it was granted with the professed view of consulting for the peace of their people.

A year did not elapse from the date of this Edict, when Constantine found it necessary to support it by severe repressive measures against the Donatists of Africa, though their offences were scarcely of a civil nature. Their schism had originated in the disappointed ambition of two presbyters; who fomented an opposition to Cæcilian, illegally elevated, as they pretended, to the episcopate of Carthage. Growing into a sect, they appealed to Constantine, who referred their cause to the arbitration of successive Councils. These pronounced in favour of Cæcilian; and, on Constantine's reviewing and confirming their sentence, the defeated party assailed him with intemperate complaints, accused Hosius, his adviser, of partiality in the decision, stirred up the magistrates against the Catholic Church, and endeavoured to deprive it of its places of worship. Constantine in consequence took possession of their churches, banished their seditious bishops, and put some of them to death. A love of truth is not irreconcilable either with an unlimited toleration, or an exclusive patronage of a selected religion; but to endure or discountenance error, according as it is, or is not, represented in an independent system and existing authority, to spare the pagans and to tyrannize over the schismatics, is the conduct of one who subjected religious principle to expediency, and aimed at peace, as a supreme good, by forcible measures where it was possible, otherwise by conciliation.

It must be observed, moreover, that subsequently to the celebrated vision of the Labarum (A.D. 312), he publicly invoked the Deity as one and the same in all forms of worship; and at a later period (A.D. 321), he promulgated simultaneous edicts for the observance of Sunday, and the due consultation of the aruspices. On the other hand, as in the Edict of Milan, so in his Letters and Edicts connected with the Arian controversy, the same reference is made to external peace and good order, as the chief object towards which his thoughts were directed. The same desire of tranquillity led him to summon to the Nicene Council the Novatian Bishop Acesius, as well as the orthodox prelates. At a later period still when he extended a more

open countenance to the Church as an institution, the same principle discovers itself in his conduct as actuated him in his measures against the Donatists. In proportion as he recognizes the Catholic body, he drops his toleration of the sectaries. He prohibited the conventicles of the Valentinians, Montanists, and other heretics; who, at his bidding, joined the Church in such numbers (many of them, says Eusebius, "through fear of the Imperial threat, with hypocritical minds"), that at length both heresy and schism might be said to disappear from the face of society. Now let us observe his conduct in the Arian controversy.

Doubtless it was a grievous disappointment to a generous and large-minded prince, to discover that the Church itself, from which he had looked for the consolidation of his empire, was convulsed by dissensions such as were unknown amid the heartless wranglings of Pagan philosophy. The disturbances caused by the Donatists, which his acquisition of Italy (A.D. 312) had opened upon his view, extended from the borders of the Alexandrian patriarchate to the ocean. The conquest of the East (A.D. 323) did but enlarge his prospect of the distractions of Christendom. The patriarchate just mentioned had lately been visited by a deplorable heresy, which having run its course through the chief parts of Egypt, Lybia, and Cyrenaica, had attacked Palestine and Syria, and spread thence into the dioceses of Asia Minor and the Lydian Proconsulate.

Constantine was informed of the growing schism at Nicomedia, and at once addressed a letter to Alexander and Arius jointly; a reference to which will enable the reader to verify for himself the account above given of the nature of the Emperor's Christianity. He professes therein two motives as impelling him in his public conduct; first, the desire of effecting the reception, throughout his dominions, of some one definite and complete form of religious worship; next, that of settling and invigorating the civil institutions of the empire. Desirous of securing an unity of sentiment among all the believers in the Deity, he first directed his attention to the religious dissensions of Africa, which he had hoped, with the aid of the Oriental Christians, to terminate. "But," he continues, "glorious and Divine Providence! how fatally were my ears, or rather my heart, wounded, by the report of a rising schism among you, far more acrimonious than the African dissensions... On investigation, I find that the reason for this quarrel is insignificant and worthless... As I understand it, you, Alexander, were asking the separate opinions of your clergy on some passage of your law, or rather were inquiring about some idle question, when you, Arius, inconsiderately committed yourself to statements which should either never have come into your mind, or have been at once repressed. On this a difference ensued, Christian intercourse was suspended, the sacred flock was divided into two, breaking the harmonious unity of the common body... Listen to the advice of me, your fellow-servant: - neither ask nor answer questions which are not upon any injunction of your law, but from the altercation of barren leisure; at best keep them to yourselves, and do not publish them... Your contention is not about any capital commandment of your law; neither of you is introducing any novel scheme of divine worship; you are of one and the same way of thinking, so that it is in your power to

unite in one communion. Even the philosophers can agree together, one and all, in one dogma, though differing in particulars... Is it right for brothers to oppose brothers, for the sake of trifles?... Such conduct might be expected from the multitude, or from the recklessness of boyhood; but is little in keeping with your sacred profession, and with your personal wisdom." Such is the substance of his letter, which, written on an imperfect knowledge of the facts of the case, and with somewhat of the prejudices of Eclectic liberalism, was inapplicable, even where abstractedly true; his fault lying in his supposing, that an individual like himself, who had not even received the grace of baptism, could discriminate between great and little questions in theology. He concludes with the following words, which show the amiableness and sincerity of a mind in a measure awakened from the darkness of heathenism, though they betray the affectation of the rhetorician. "Give me back my days of calm, my nights of security; that I may experience henceforth the comfort of the clear light, and the cheerfulness of tranquillity. Otherwise, I shall sigh and be dissolved in tears... So great is my grief, that I put off my journey to the East on the news of your dissension... Open for me that path towards you, which your contentions have closed up. Let me see you and all other cities in happiness; that I may offer due thanksgivings to God above, for the unanimity and free intercourse which is seen among you."

This letter was conveyed to the Alexandrian Church by Hosius, who was appointed by the Emperor to mediate between the contending parties. A Council was called, in which some minor irregularities were arranged, but nothing settled on the main question in dispute. Hosius returned to his master to report an unsuccessful mission, and to advise, as the sole measure which remained to be adopted, the calling of a General Council, in which the Catholic doctrine might be formally declared, and a judgment promulgated as to the basis upon which communion with the Church was henceforth to be determined. Constantine assented; and, discovering that the ecclesiastical authorities were earnest in condemning the tenets of Arius, as being an audacious innovation on the received creed, he suddenly adopted a new line of conduct towards the heresy; and in a Letter which he addressed to Arius, professes himself a zealous advocate of Christian truth, ventures to expound it, and attacks Arius with a vehemence which can only be imputed to his impatience in finding that any individual had presumed to disturb the peace of the community. It is remarkable, as showing his utter ignorance of doctrines, which were never intended for discussion among the unbaptized heathen, or the secularized Christian, that, in spite of this bold avowal of the orthodox faith in detail, yet shortly after he explained to Eusebius one of the Nicene declarations in a sense which even Arius would scarcely have allowed, expressed as it is almost after the manner of Paulus.

Subdivision 3

The first Ecumenical Council met at Nicæa in Bithynia, in the summer of A.D. 325. It was attended by about 300 Bishops, chiefly from the eastern provinces of the empire, besides a multitude of priests, deacons, and other functionaries of the Church. Hosius, one of the most eminent men of an age of saints, was president. The Fathers who took the principal share in its proceedings were Alexander of Alexandria, attended by his deacon Athanasius, then about 27 years of age, and soon afterwards his successor in the see; Eustathius, patriarch of Antioch, Macarius of Jerusalem, Cæcilian of Carthage, the object of the hostility of the Donatists, Leontius of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, and Marcellus of Ancyra, whose name was afterwards unhappily notorious in the Church. The number of Arian Bishops is variously stated at 13, 17, or 22; the most conspicuous of these being the well-known prelates of Nicomedia and Cæsarea, both of whom bore the name of Eusebius.

The discussions of the Council commenced in the middle of June, and were at first private. Arius was introduced and examined; and confessed his impieties with a plainness and vehemence far more respectable than the hypocrisy which was the characteristic of his party, and ultimately was adopted by himself. Then followed his disputation with Athanasius, who afterwards engaged the Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia, Maris, and Theognis. The unfortunate Marcellus also distinguished himself in the defence of the Catholic doctrine.

Reference has been already made to Gibbon's representation, that the Fathers of the Council were in doubt for a time, how to discriminate between their own doctrine and the heresy; but the discussions of the foregoing Chapter contain sufficient evidence, that they had rather to reconcile themselves to the adoption of a formula which expedience suggested, and to the use of it as a test, than to discover a means of ejecting or subduing their opponents. In the very beginning of the controversy, Eusebius of Nicomedia had declared, that he would not admit the "from the substance" as an attribute of our Lord. A letter containing a similar avowal was read in the Council, and made clear to its members the objects for which they had met; viz. to ascertain the character and tendency of the heresy; to raise a protest and defence against it; lastly, for that purpose, to overcome their own reluctance to the formal and unauthoritative adoption of a word, in explanation of the true doctrine, which was not found in Scripture, had actually been perverted in the previous century to an heretical meaning, and was in consequence forbidden by the Antiochene Council which condemned Paulus.

The Arian party, on the other hand, anxious to avoid a test, which they themselves had suggested, presented a Creed of their own, drawn up by Eusebius of Cæsarea. In it, though the expression "of the substance" or "consubstantial" was omitted, every term of honour and dignity, short of this, was bestowed therein upon the Son of God; who was designated as the Logos of God, God of God, Light of Light, Life of Life, the Only-begotten Son, the First-born of the whole creation, of the Father before all worlds, and the Instrument of creating them. The Three Persons were

confessed to be in real hypostasis or subsistence (in opposition to Sabellianism), and to be truly Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Catholics saw very clearly, that concessions of this kind on the part of the Arians did not conceal the real question in dispute. Orthodox as were the terms employed by them, naturally and satisfactorily as they would have answered the purposes of a test, had the existing questions never been agitated, and consistent as they were with certain producible statements of the Ante-Nicene writers, they were irrelevant at a time when evasions had been found for them all, and triumphantly proclaimed. The plain question was, whether our Lord was God in as full a sense as the Father, though not to be viewed as separable from Him; or whether, as the sole alternative, He was a creature; that is, whether He was literally of, and in, the one Indivisible Essence which we adore as God, "consubstantial with God," or of a substance which had a beginning. The Arians said that He was a creature, the Catholics that He was very God; and all the subtleties of the most fertile ingenuity could not alter, and could but hide, this fundamental difference. A specimen of the Arian argumentation at the Council has already been given on the testimony of Athanasius; happily it was not successful. A form of creed was drawn up by Hosius, containing the discriminating terms of orthodoxy; and anathemas were added against all who maintained the heretical formulæ, Arius and his immediate followers being mentioned by name. In order to prevent misapprehension of the sense in which the test was used, explanations accompanied it. Thus carefully defined, it was offered for subscription to the members of the Council; who in consequence bound themselves to excommunicate from their respective bodies all who actually obtruded upon the Church the unscriptural and novel positions of Arius. As to the laity, they were not required to subscribe any test as the condition of communion; though they were of course exposed to the operation of the anathema, in case they ventured on positive innovations on the rule of faith.

While the Council took this clear and temperate view of its duties, Constantine acted a part altogether consistent with his own previous sentiments, and praiseworthy under the circumstances of his defective knowledge. He had followed the proceedings of the assembled prelates with interest, and had neglected no opportunity of impressing upon them the supreme importance of securing the peace of the Church. On the opening of the Council, he had set the example of conciliation, by burning publicly, without reading, certain charges which had been presented to him against some of its members; a noble act, as conveying a lesson to all present to repress every private feeling, and to deliberate for the well-being of the Church Catholic to the end of time. Such was his behaviour, while the question in controversy was still pending; but when the decision was once announced, his tone altered, and what had been a recommendation of caution, at once became an injunction to conform. Opposition to the sentence of the Church was considered as disobedience to the civil authority; the prospect of banishment was proposed as the alternative of subscription; and it was not long before seven of the thirteen dissentient Bishops submitted to the pressure of the occasion, and accepted the creed with its anathemas as articles of peace.

Indeed the position in which Eusebius of Nicomedia had placed their cause, rendered it difficult for them consistently to refuse subscription. The violence, with which Arius originally assailed the Catholics, had been succeeded by an affected earnestness for unity and concord, so soon as his favour at Court allowed him to dispense with the low popularity by which he first rose into notice. The insignificancy of the points in dispute which had lately been the very ground of complaint with him and his party against the particular Church which condemned him, became an argument for their yielding, when the other Churches of Christendom confirmed the sentence of the Alexandrian. It is said, that some of them substituted the "homœusion" ("like in substance"), for the "homoüsion" ("one in substance") in the confessions which they presented to the Council; but it is unsafe to trust the Anomœan Philostorgius, on whose authority the report rests, in a charge against the Eusebian party, and perhaps after all he merely means, that they explained the latter by the former as an excuse for their own recantation. The six, who remained unpersuaded, had founded an objection, which the explanations set forth by the Council had gone to obviate, on the alleged materialism of the word which had been selected as the test. At length four of them gave way; and the other two, Eusebius of Nicomedia and another, withdrawing their opposition to the "homoüsion," only refused to sign the condemnation of Arius. These, however, were at length released from their difficulty, by the submission of the heresiarch himself; who was pardoned on the understanding, that he never returned to the Church, which had suffered so much from his intrigues. There is, however, some difficulty in this part of the history. Eusebius shortly afterwards suffered a temporary exile, on a detection of his former practices with Licinius to the injury of Constantine; and Arius, apparently involved in his ruin, was banished with his followers into Illyria.

Newman on reading earlier theology

John Henry Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, Part I, chapter IV, section 1, instance 5, The Homoüsion, printed pages 133-134, in the text revised in 1878. The complete instance is reproduced from Project Gutenberg eBook 35110, which transcribes the sixth-edition text through a later reprint. Only Newman's nineteenth-century words are reproduced; the later publisher's material, electronic apparatus, and page markers are omitted.

The next instance I shall take is from the early teaching on the subject of our Lord's Consubstantiality and Co-eternity.

In the controversy carried on by various learned men in the seventeenth and following century, concerning the statements of the early Fathers on this subject, the one party determined the patristic theology by the literal force of the separate expressions or phrases used in it, or by the philosophical opinions of the day; the other, by the doctrine of the Catholic Church, as afterwards authoritatively declared. The one party argued that those Fathers need not have meant more than what was afterwards considered heresy; the other answered that there is nothing to prevent their meaning more. Thus the position which Bull maintains seems to be

> nothing beyond this, that the Nicene Creed is a natural key for interpreting the body of Ante-nicene theology. His very aim is to explain difficulties; now the notion of difficulties and their explanation implies a rule to which they are apparent exceptions, and in accordance with which they are to be explained. Nay, the title of his work, which is a "Defence of the Creed of Nicæa," shows that he is not investigating what is true and what false, but explaining and justifying a foregone conclusion, as sanctioned by the testimony of the great Council. Unless the statements of the Fathers had suggested difficulties, his work would have had no object. He allows that their language is not such as they would have used after the Creed had been imposed; but he says in effect that, if we will but take it in our hands and apply it equitably to their writings, we shall bring out and harmonize their teaching, clear their ambiguities, and discover their anomalous statements to be few and insignificant. In other words, he begins with a presumption, and shows how naturally facts close round it and fall in with it, if we will but let them. He does this triumphantly, yet he has an arduous work; out of about thirty writers whom he reviews, he has, for one cause or other, to "explain piously" nearly twenty.

A defense that acknowledges development

Newman's opening acknowledgment about the missing proceedings is historically important. A defender of the council can recognize documentary limits without abandoning the council's theological authority. This makes it possible to distinguish two claims often combined in popular accounts: that the council's doctrine was right, and that every detail of its debates can be narrated with certainty. The first is Newman's confessional judgment. The second he does not assert. His reconstruction must therefore be weighed through the sources he uses, including witnesses who wrote later or participated in the controversy on one side.

His narrative also shows why the emperor cannot serve as a sufficient explanation of the creed's wording. Constantine's initial desire to quiet the dispute gave him no obvious reason to prefer the most exacting possible theological boundary. Newman accordingly places decisive importance on the bishops' discovery that familiar scriptural expressions could be affirmed with incompatible meanings. A formula that Arius could repeat while preserving his position would not have settled the issue the majority believed it had assembled to settle. This reconstruction matches the logic of Athanasius's later defense, even where the details of the council's sequence remain difficult to establish.

Newman directly disputes Gibbon's account of the bishops' difficulty in finding the disputed word. The two histories agree that an expression had to exclude the position being condemned; they disagree over whether that necessity was a partisan maneuver or a defense of the meaning of the church's confession. To decide between them, the reader needs the actual alternatives. A Son called God by appointment, a Son produced from nothing before the ages, and a Son begotten from the Father's

own being are not simply three temperaments wearing different badges. They make different assertions about the source and status of the one through whom God saves.

Nevertheless, Newman's treatment of Arius's character is often more confident than the evidence warrants. He dismisses a report of generosity because he distrusts the historian reporting it, but then uses Arius's supposed ambitious character to make a contrary reconstruction plausible. That reasoning risks becoming circular: the hostile portrait helps discredit favorable testimony, and the discrediting of favorable testimony leaves the hostile portrait dominant. Arius's own surviving letters should be read before accepting such a portrait. They do not settle every question of motive, but they give access to claims that are lost when an opponent's psychology replaces his argument.

His treatment of the Nicene subscriptions provides another reason to distinguish the outline from the details. The sequence involving Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, refusal to sign, exile, and eventual reconciliation is described with an explicit acknowledgment of difficulty. That qualification matters. The reader should not turn the concluding paragraph into a precise official record of a single moment at Nicaea. The earlier documentary chapters preserve the letters and formula more directly. Newman's reconstruction is a nineteenth-century attempt to connect the surviving pieces into a sequence, and some of the connections carry more certainty than others.

In the Development reading, Newman describes George Bull as testing whether the council's conclusion supplies a natural key to earlier writings. That method can explain a body of evidence, provided resistant passages can count against it. A reading protected from every possible difficulty would establish little.

Newman's opposing point also holds: an earlier author's failure to express the later doctrine does not by itself express its denial. Yet a possible orthodox reading remains a possibility until the author's argument and other statements support it. The following references put that problem into particular texts.

Priestley's recovery of original simplicity and Newman's account of development must both answer to this earlier evidence. The decisive comparison concerns what each writer actually says about Christ, generation, distinction, and divine unity.

Newman's defense recognizes political contingency, incomplete records, and changes of expression. Its historical strength lies in making continuity a claim that requires explanation. The earlier evidence permits a more definite assessment of that claim than either reassurance or general suspicion can supply.

Earlier witnesses for testing continuity

The following second- and third-century readings give Priestley's and Newman's reconstructions a common test. Read the complete cited chapters, including their arguments and their opponents, rather than collecting isolated titles for Christ. These witnesses show what particular authors taught before 325; they do not furnish a census of the earliest Christian communities.

Ignatius, Letter to the Ephesians 18.2, in the middle recension: the same sentence calls Jesus God and describes his conception from David's line through Mary and the Holy Spirit. The divine designation belongs to the one born in human history. This is substantial evidence against placing every such designation after Nicaea. It supplies no developed definition of the relation between divine substance and distinct persons. The reference is to the middle recension, not the later expanded form of the Ignatian letters.

Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 61 and 128: Justin presents the Word as begotten from the Father before created things, divine and numerically distinct, using the analogy of one fire kindling another without diminution. He also speaks of the Father's will in this generation. These chapters establish a preexistent divine Word in a second-century argument. Their order of explanation and language of will require comparison with Athanasius; they cannot simply be substituted for the Nicene formula.

Tertullian, Against Praxeas 2, 3, and 9: chapter 2 joins divine unity to a threefold distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit and explicitly uses the language of one substance. Chapter 9 nevertheless describes the Father as the whole substance and the Son as derived from it, with expressions of rank that a later reader must examine. Chapter 3 reports resistance among ordinary believers to his account of the three. This is evidence both of an early Latin precedent for Nicene reasoning and of disputed reception; Tertullian's polemical description is not a reliable numerical survey of all Christians.

These texts make a wholesale fourth-century invention of divine Christology historically untenable. They also prevent an account in which the complete later vocabulary was already used uniformly. Newman has substantial earlier material from which to argue continuity, but must explain differences rather than suppress them. Priestley can demonstrate change and disagreement, but these passages obstruct an undifferentiated reconstruction of the pre-Nicene church as holding his own account of a merely human Christ.

Reading references: Ignatius, Ephesians 18.2, and Justin, Dialogue 61 and 128, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, volume 1 (Buffalo, 1885); Tertullian, Against Praxeas 2, 3, and 9, in volume 3 (Buffalo, 1885). The source register supplies the historical translations and online locations. These are references with editorial summaries, not additional reproduced extracts.

34 Philaret and the Orthodox Confession

Philaret of Moscow supplies a nineteenth-century Orthodox account of the creed as a living rule of instruction. His Longer Catechism does not ask a pupil to reconstruct the council from contradictory witnesses. It teaches the confession the church has received and then explains its parts. Its authority comes from a synodally approved ecclesiastical setting, not from the personality of an isolated theologian. The title itself places instruction within the Russian church and empire: the work was examined by the Holy Governing Synod and published by imperial order for schools and Orthodox Christians.

This setting makes the catechism a different kind of source from Gibbon's history or Priestley's project of recovery. It shows what institutional reception looks like after many centuries. The council's language has become part of baptismal identity, worship, education, and the interpretation of Scripture. The pupil is taught to understand that language rather than to regard it as an optional speculation. Yet the catechism also makes distinctions that popular accounts sometimes lose. It attributes the received creed to the first two ecumenical councils, names their different controversies, and gives their dates as 325 and 381.

The selected questions follow three connected matters: the origin and authority of the received creed; its account of the Son; and its account of the Holy Spirit and the church. They allow a comparison with the Latin and Protestant witnesses without reducing Eastern Christianity to a refusal of Western additions. Philaret gives a positive description of unity, divine life, and membership in Christ. His objection to adding the Filioque belongs within that account, where the common confession's received wording is itself an object of fidelity.

Philaret on the received creed

Philaret of Moscow, The Longer Catechism of the Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church, translated by R. W. Blackmore in The Doctrine of the Russian Church (Aberdeen, 1845), reproduced in Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, volume 2. Questions 66-75, 90-95, 129-150, and 238-261 are reproduced, with the breaks explicitly marked. Question numbers are Schaff's. Blackmore's English is retained; editorial footnotes, page markers, and original changes of type are omitted. Schaff's heading names a Moscow 1830 source edition; this date is not substituted for the 1845 English translation. The later received creed is reproduced as part of the catechism's question 67 and must be distinguished from the shorter 325 text.

The origin and structure of the creed

66. What is the Creed?

The Creed is an exposition, in few but precise words, of that doctrine which all Christians are bound to believe.

67. What are the words, of this exposition?

They are as follows:

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

2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made;

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

4. And was crucified for us, under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried;

5. And rose again the third day according to the Scripture;

6. And ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;

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

8. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the Prophets.

9. I believe one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

10. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.

11. I look for the resurrection of the dead;

12. And the life of the world to come. Amen.

68. From whom have we this exposition of the faith?

From the Fathers of the first and second œcumenical Councils.

69. What is an œcumenical Council?

An assembly of the Pastors and Doctors of the Catholic Church of Christ, as far as possible, from the whole world, for the confirmation of true doctrine and holy discipline among Christians.

70. How many œcumenical Councils have there been?

Seven: 1, Of Nicæa; 2, Of Constantinople; 3, Of Ephesus; 4, Of Chalcedon; 5, The second of Constantinople; 6, The third of Constantinople; 7, The second of Nicæa.

71. Whence is the rule for assembling Councils?

From the example of the Apostles, who held a Council in Jerusalem. Acts xv. This is grounded also upon the words of Jesus Christ himself, which give to the decisions of the Church such weight that whosoever disobeys them is left deprived of grace as a heathen. But the mean, by which the œcumenical Church utters her decisions, is an œcumenical Council.

Tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Matt. xviii. 17.

72. What were the particular occasions for assembling the first and second œcumenical Councils, at which the Creed was defined?

The first was held for the confirmation of the true doctrine respecting the Son of God, against the error of Arius, who thought unworthily of the Son of God; the second, for the confirmation of the true doctrine respecting the Holy Ghost, against Macedonius, who thought unworthily of the Holy Ghost.

73. Is it long ago that these Councils were held?

The first was held in the year 325 from the birth of Christ; the second in 381.

74. What method shall we follow in order the better to understand the œcumenical Creed?

We must notice its division into twelve articles or parts, and consider each article separately.

75. What is spoken of in each several article of the Creed?

The first article of the Creed speaks of God as the prime origin, more particularly of the first Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, and of God as the Creator of the world;

The second article, of the second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

The third article, of the incarnation of the Son of God;

The fourth article, of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ;

The fifth article, of the resurrection of Jesus Christ;

The sixth article, of the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven;

The seventh article, of the second coming of Jesus Christ upon earth;

The eighth article, of the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Ghost;

The ninth article, of the Church;

The tenth article, of Baptism, under which are implied the other Sacraments also;

The eleventh article, of the future resurrection of the dead;

The twelfth article, of the life everlasting.

Selection break. The reading resumes with questions 90-95; the intervening questions are omitted.

The Trinity

90. How are we to understand these words of the Creed, I believe in one God the Father?

This is to be understood with reference to the mystery of the Holy Trinity; because God is one in substance but trine in persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost - a Trinity consubstantial and undivided.

91. How does holy Scripture speak of the Blessed Trinity?

The chief texts on this point in the New Testament are the following: Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Matt. xxviii. 19. There are three that bear record in heaven - the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. 1 John v. 7.

92. Is the Holy Trinity mentioned in the Old Testament also?

Yes; only not so clearly. For instance: By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the Breath of his mouth. Psalm xxxiii. 6. Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Isaiah vi. 3.

93. How is one God in three Persons?

We can not comprehend this inner mystery of the Godhead; but we believe it on the infallible testimony of the Word of God. The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 1 Cor. ii. 11.

94. What difference is there between the Persons of the Holy Trinity?

God the Father is neither begotten, nor proceeds from any other Person: the Son of God is from all eternity begotten of the Father: the Holy Ghost from all eternity proceeds from the Father.

95. Are the three Hypostases or Persons of the Most Holy Trinity all of equal majesty?

Yes; all of absolutely equal divine majesty. The Father is true God, the Son equally true God, and the Holy Ghost true God; but yet so that in the three Persons there is only one Tri-personal God.

Selection break. The reading resumes with questions 129-150; the intervening questions are omitted.

The Son

129. How are we to understand the names Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

Son of God is the name of the second Person of the Holy Trinity in respect of his Godhead: This same Son of God was called Jesus, when he was conceived and born on earth as man; Christ is the name given him by the Prophets, while they were as yet expecting his advent upon earth.

130. What means the name Jesus?

Saviour.

131. By whom was the name Jesus first given?

By the Angel Gabriel.

132. Why was this name given to the Son of God at his conception and birth on earth?

Because he was conceived and born to save men.

133. What means the name Christ?

Anointed.

134. Whence came the name Anointed?

From the anointing with holy ointment, through which are bestowed the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

135. Is it only Jesus, the Son of God, who is called Anointed?

No. Anointed was in old time a title of kings, high-priests, and prophets.

136. Why, then, is Jesus, the Son of God, called The Anointed?

Because to his manhood were imparted without measure all the gifts of the Holy Ghost; and so he possesses in the highest degree the knowledge of a prophet, the holiness of a high-priest, and the power of a king.

137. In what sense is Jesus Christ called Lord?

In this sense: that he is very God; for the name Lord is one of the names of God.

138. What says holy Scripture of the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John i. 1.

139. Why is Jesus Christ called the Son of God, Only-begotten?

By this is signified that he only is the Son of God begotten of the substance of God the Father; and so is of one substance with the Father; and consequently excels, beyond comparison, all holy angels and holy men, who are called sons of God by grace. John i. 12.

140. Does holy Scripture call Jesus the Only-begotten?

It does. For instance, in the following places of the Evangelist John: The Word was made 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 i. 14. No man hath, seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. John i. 18.

141. Why in the Creed is it said further of the Son of God that he is begotten of the Father?

By this is expressed that personal property by which he is distinguished from the other Persons of the Holy Trinity.

142. Why is it said that he is begotten before all worlds?

That none should think there was ever a time when he was not. In other words, by this is expressed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God from everlasting, even as God the Father is from everlasting.

143. What mean in the Creed the words Light of light?

Under the figure of the visible light they in some manner explain the incomprehensible generation of the Son of God from the Father. When we look at the sun, we see light: from this light is generated the light visible every where beneath; but both the one and the other is one light, indivisible, and of one nature. In like manner, God the Father is the everlasting Light. 1 John i. 5. Of him is begotten the Son of God, who also is the everlasting Light; but God the Father and God the Son are one and the same everlasting Light, indivisible, and of one divine nature.

144. What force is there in the words of the Creed, Very God of very God?

This: that the Son of God is called God in the same proper sense as God the Father.

145. Are not these words from holy Scripture?

Yes. They are taken from the following passage of John the Divine: We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us [light and] understanding, that we may know the true God, and be in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 1 John v. 20.

146. Why is it further added of the Son of God in the Creed that he is begotten, not made?

This was added against Arius, who impiously taught that the Son of God was made.

147. What mean the words, Of one substance with the Father?

They mean that the Son of God is of one and the same divine substance with God the Father.

148. How does holy Scripture speak of this?

Jesus Christ himself speaks of himself and of God the Father thus: I and the Father are one. John x. 30.

149. What is shown by the next words in the Creed, By whom all things were made?

This: that God the Father created all things by his Son, as by his eternal Wisdom and his eternal Word.

All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which was made. John i. 3.

150. Of whom is it said in the Creed, that he came down from heaven?

Of the Son of God.

Selection break. The reading resumes with questions 238-261; the intervening questions are omitted.

The Spirit and the church

238. In what sense is the Holy Ghost called the Lord?

In the same sense as the Son of God, that is, as very God.

239. Is this witnessed by holy Scripture?

It is plain from the words spoken by the Apostle Peter to rebuke Ananias: Why hath Satan fitted thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? and further on, Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. Acts v. 3, 4.

240. What are we to understand by this, that the Holy Ghost is called the Giver of life?

That he, together with God the Father and the Son, giveth life to all creatures, especially spiritual life to men.

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God. John iii. 5.

241. Whence know we that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father?

This we know from the following words of Jesus Christ himself: But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. John xv. 26.

242. Does the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father admit of any change or supplement?

No. First, because the Orthodox Church, in this doctrine, repeats the very words of Jesus Christ; and his words, without doubt, are an exact and perfect expression of the truth. Secondly, because the second œcumenical Council, whose chief object was to establish the true doctrine respecting the Holy Ghost, has without doubt sufficiently set forth the same in the Creed; and the Catholic Church has acknowledged this so decidedly, that the third œcumenical Council in its seventh canon forbade the composition of any new Creed.

For this cause John Damascene writes: Of the Holy Ghost, we both say that he is from the Father, and call him the Spirit of the Father; while we nowise say that he is from the Son, but only call him the Spirit of the Son. (Theol. lib. i. c. 11; v. 4.)

243. Whence does it appear that the Holy Ghost is equally with the Father and the Son, and, together with them, to be worshiped and glorified?

It appears from this, that Jesus Christ commanded to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Matt. xxviii. 19.

244. Why is it said in the Creed that the Holy Ghost spake by the prophets?

This is said against certain heretics, who taught that the books of the Old Testament were not written by the Holy Ghost.

245. Does holy Scripture witness that the Holy Ghost really spake by the prophets?

The Apostle Peter writes: For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Pet. i. 21.

246. Did not the Holy Ghost speak also by the Apostles?

Certainly he did. Unto the prophets, says also the Apostle Peter, it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Pet. i. 12.

247. Why, then, is there no mention of the Apostles in the Creed?

Because when the Creed was composed none doubted of the inspiration of the Apostles.

248. Was not the Holy Ghost manifested to men in some very special manner?

Yes. He came down upon the Apostles, in the form of fiery tongues, on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

249. Is the Holy Ghost communicated to men even now likewise?

He is communicated to all true Christians. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 1 Cor. iii. 16.

250. How may we be made partakers of the Holy Ghost?

Through fervent prayer, and through the Sacraments.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Luke xi. 13.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Titus iii. 4-6.

251. What are the chief gifts of the Holy Ghost?

The chief and more general are, as reckoned by the Prophet Isaiah, the following seven: the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of might, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of the Lord, or the gift of piety and inspiration in the highest degree. Isaiah xi. 2.

252. What is the Church?

The Church is a divinely instituted community of men, united by the orthodox faith, the law of God, the hierarchy, and the Sacraments.

253. What is it to believe in the Church?

It is piously to honor the true Church of Christ, and to obey her doctrine and commandments, from a conviction that grace ever abides in her, and works, teaches, and governs unto salvation, flowing from her one only everlasting Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

254. How can the Church, which is visible, be the object of faith, when faith, as the Apostle says, is the evidence of things not seen?

First, though the Church be visible, the grace of God, which dwells in her, and in those who are sanctified in her, is not so; and this it is which properly constitutes the object of faith in the Church.

Secondly, the Church, though visible so far as she is upon earth, and contains all Orthodox Christians living upon earth, still is at the same time invisible, so far as she is also partially in heaven, and contains all those that have departed hence in true faith and holiness.

255. On what may we ground the idea that the Church is at once upon earth and in heaven?

On the following words of the Apostle Paul, addressed to Christians: Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus Christ the Mediator of the new covenant. Heb. xii. 22-24.

256. How are we assured that the grace of God abides in the true Church?

First, by this: that her Head is Jesus Christ, God and man in one person, full of grace and truth, who fills his body also, that is, the Church, with like grace and truth. John i. 14, 17.

Secondly, by this: that he has promised his disciples the Holy Ghost to abide with them forever, and that, according to this promise, the Holy Ghost appoints the pastors of the Church. John xiv. 16.

The Apostle Paul says of Jesus Christ, that God the Father gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body. Eph. i. 22, 23. The same Apostle says to the pastors of the Church: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Bishops, to feed the Church of our Lord and God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts xx. 28.

257. How are we further assured that the grace of God abides in the Church even till now, and shall abide in it to the end of the world?

Of this we are assured by the following sayings of Jesus Christ himself and his Apostle: I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matt. xvi. 18. I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matt. xxviii. 20. Unto him, God the Father, be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Eph. iii. 21.

258. Why is the Church one?

Because she is one spiritual Body, has one Head, Christ, and is animated by one Spirit of God. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Eph. iv. 4-6.

259. Are we still more expressly assured that Jesus Christ is the one only Head of the one Church?

The Apostle Paul writes, that for the Church, as the building of God, other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. Wherefore the Church, as the Body of Christ, can have no other Head than Jesus Christ.

The Church, being to abide through all generations of time, needs also an ever-abiding head; and such is Jesus Christ alone.

Wherefore, also, the Apostles take no higher title than that of ministers of the Church. Col. i. 24, 25.

260. What duty does the unity of the Church lay on us?

That of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph. iv. 3.

261. How does it agree with the unity of the Church, that there are many separate and independent churches, as those of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Russia?

These are particular churches, or parts of the one Catholic Church: the separateness of their visible organization does not hinder them from being all spiritually great members of the one body of the Universal Church, from having one Head, Christ, and one spirit of faith and grace. This unity is expressed outwardly by unity of Creed, and by communion in prayer and Sacraments.

An Eastern rule of reception

The catechism's first historical distinction is also one of its most useful. The creed in question 67 includes the expanded confession of the Spirit, the church, baptism, resurrection, and the life to come. Question 68 assigns its exposition to the fathers of both Nicaea and Constantinople. The answer does not attribute every clause to 325. This distinction prevents a common anachronism while preserving the Orthodox conviction that the two councils belong to one authoritative confession. Historical development and ecclesiastical continuity are joined rather than treated as alternatives.

The definition of an ecumenical council also deserves notice. Philaret describes an assembly drawn, as far as possible, from the whole world. That qualification does real work. It does not make universality depend on the physical attendance of every bishop or on a modern global census. At the same time, the catechism does not offer a

purely procedural test by which any sufficiently numerous meeting becomes ecumenical. It writes from within a tradition that has already identified seven councils as authoritative. Its definition explains that received recognition; it does not reconstruct every contested step by which the recognition arose.

Philaret grounds conciliar authority in the example of the apostles and in Christ's teaching about the church. The appeal to Acts 15 is an argument from precedent. A believer who accepts the authority of that apostolic gathering may ask how the precedent extends to later bishops, how a council's fidelity is recognized, and why a disputed meeting should be received. The catechism assumes an ecclesial answer to those questions. It cannot by itself demonstrate to an outsider that every later claim of authority follows from the apostolic example. Its historical value here is to show precisely how an Orthodox teaching text connects the two.

The questions about the Son make clear why Priestley's own theology cannot be called a variant of this confession. For Philaret, the Son is begotten from the Father's substance and is the maker of all things. Men and angels can be called sons by grace; the Only-begotten Son is not placed in that class. The explanation of Light of light attempts to make eternal generation intelligible without a material division or a temporal sequence. Its success as an analogy may be debated, but its intended exclusions are unmistakable. The catechism is not presenting Jesus as a creature later promoted to divine rank.

The short Trinity selection also contains a historically significant textual problem. Question 91 cites the heavenly-witnesses wording associated with 1 John 5:7, alongside the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19. That wording is absent from the earliest Greek manuscript tradition and from modern critical editions of the Greek New Testament; it should not be treated as secure evidence for the wording available at Nicaea. Its presence here is evidence for the scriptural text and apologetic practice received by this nineteenth-century catechism. Removing it silently would make the historical source look less complicated than it is. Recognizing the problem also does not remove the catechism's other biblical arguments, which have to be assessed on their own merits. For this textual distinction, see Daniel B. Wallace, The Textual Problem in 1 John 5:7-8, and the Greek text of the SBL Greek New Testament at that passage.

The account of procession states an Eastern position with unusual directness. Philaret appeals to Christ's words that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, to the sufficiency of the council of Constantinople, and to the prohibition of another creed at Ephesus. A Western theologian can agree that the Father is the ultimate source while arguing that procession through or from the Son can be stated without introducing two sources. Philaret's answer rejects the proposed supplement. The dispute thus concerns both theological meaning and the authority to alter a common formula. A satisfactory account of the controversy must address both aspects; a claim that the

difference is merely verbal does not settle the question of who may change the wording.

His description of the church supplies a further comparison with later Western debates. Particular churches can retain their own arrangements while belonging to the one church through their common relation to Christ and their shared confession. The answer recognizes historical plurality within a theological unity. It does not locate that unity in the possession of one universal earthly administrator. This is a substantial Eastern account of the authority through which Nicaea continues to be received. It cannot be represented adequately by asking only whether the Orthodox accept or reject a later Roman definition.

Philaret's catechism also complicates a simple opposition between doctrine and life. Its creed is embedded within a larger catechetical structure that proceeds to hope, prayer, love, and the commandments. The selected pages concentrate on faith because that is the subject under examination. The rest of the work prevents us from inferring that Orthodox instruction consisted only of metaphysical statements. Tolstoy's later charge must therefore be framed more precisely than an allegation that the church taught nothing about conduct. The serious question is how the institution connected what it taught about Christ with the practices it permitted or sanctioned.

35 Tolstoy on the Creed and Christian Conduct

Leo Tolstoy brings the history of Nicaea back to a question about obedience. The institutions that confessed the Son's divinity had also authorized punishment, blessed armies, and taught Christians to perform duties within the state. Tolstoy reads the commands of Jesus as placing those practices under judgment. His dispute with ecclesiastical Christianity is therefore not exhausted by the question of whether a technical term was philosophically justified. He asks whether the entire doctrinal system has diverted attention from doing what Jesus said.

My Religion is the historical English title of the work also known as What I Believe. The reading uses Huntington Smith's 1885 version, which was translated from a French intermediary. This matters when a precise phrase is made to carry interpretive weight: it is a historical English presentation of Tolstoy's argument, rather than a new direct translation from Russian. Its place in the anthology is nonetheless clear. It records a sustained nineteenth-century attack on the authority of the churches and their use of the Nicene confession, circulated in English while its author was alive.

Tolstoy's chapter moves from the creed's contents to the organization of Christian society. His claim is cumulative. If the church makes assent to a divine history the decisive requirement, and if the state can claim the Christian's obedience while engaging in violence, the practical commands of Jesus can be rendered secondary. The final images of soldiers, prisons, and public punishment give this charge a concrete object. They are not objections to an isolated syllable. They challenge a pattern of life that Tolstoy believes institutional Christianity has helped make possible.

The argument should receive a full hearing without being granted every historical premise. A creed is a particular kind of text, and the omission of a detailed ethical code from it does not demonstrate that the church lacked moral instruction. Earlier selections in this volume include disciplinary rules and confessions that explicitly address conduct. Tolstoy's sharper question survives that correction: can a church teach ethical commands while organizing its public life around practices that evade them? Answering that question requires attention to what the churches did and permitted, as well as to what they formally confessed.

Tolstoy on confession and obedience

Leo Tolstoy, My Religion, translated from the French by Huntington Smith (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1885), chapter XI, selected opening portion through the complete paragraph ending forsaken, and is rapidly falling to destruction, as transcribed in Project Gutenberg 43794. The selection is continuous apart from omission of translator's notes 22 and 23 and their markers. The rest of chapter XI is omitted. This is the historical English translation through French, not a new direct translation from Russian. Body wording and historical spelling are retained apart from one obvious correction: the transcription's ice should not have been partakers is emended to we should not have been partakers in the quotation of Matthew 23:30. Line wrapping is removed.

THE doctrine of Jesus is to bring the kingdom of God upon earth. The practice of this doctrine is not difficult; and not only so, its practice is a natural expression of the belief of all who recognize its truth. The doctrine of Jesus offers the only possible chance of salvation for those who would escape the perdition that threatens the personal life. The fulfilment of this doctrine not only will deliver men from the privations and sufferings of this life, but will put an end to nine-tenths of the suffering endured in behalf of the doctrine of the world.

When I understood this I asked myself why I had never practised a doctrine which would give me so much happiness and peace and joy; why, on the other hand, I always had practised an entirely different doctrine, and thereby made myself wretched? Why? The reply was a simple one. Because I never had known the truth. The truth had been concealed from me.

When the doctrine of Jesus was first revealed to me, I did not believe that the discovery would lead me to reject the doctrine of the Church. I dreaded this separation, and in the course of my studies I did not attempt to search out the errors in the doctrine of the Church. I sought, rather, to close my eyes to propositions that seemed to be obscure and strange, provided they were not in evident contradiction with what I regarded as the substance of the Christian doctrine.

But the further I advanced in the study of the Gospels, and the more clearly the doctrine of Jesus was revealed to me, the more inevitable the choice became. I must either accept the doctrine of Jesus, a reasonable and simple doctrine in accordance with my conscience and my hope of salvation; or I must accept an entirely different doctrine, a doctrine in opposition to reason and conscience and that offered me nothing except the certainty of my own perdition and that of others. I was therefore forced to reject, one after another, the dogmas of the Church. This I did against my will, struggling with the desire to mitigate as much as possible my disagreement with the Church, that I might not be obliged to separate from the Church, and thereby deprive myself of communion with fellow-believers, the greatest happiness that religion can bestow. But when I had completed my task, I saw that in spite of all my efforts to maintain a connecting-link with the Church, the separation was complete. I knew before that the bond of union, if it existed at all, must be a very slight one, but I was soon convinced that it did not exist at all.

My son came to me one day, after I had completed my examination of the Gospels, and told me of a discussion that was going on between two domestics (uneducated persons who scarcely knew how to read) concerning a passage in some religious book which maintained that it was not a sin to put criminals to death, or to kill enemies in war. I could not believe that an assertion of this sort could be printed in any book, and I asked to see it. The volume bore the title of "A Book of Selected Prayers; third edition; eighth ten thousand; Moscow: 1879." On page 163 of this book I read:--

"What is the sixth commandment of God?

"Thou shalt not kill.

"What does God forbid by this commandment?

"He forbids us to kill, to take the life of any man.

"Is it a sin to punish a criminal with death according to the law, or to kill an enemy in war?

"No; that is not a sin. We take the life of the criminal to put an end to the wrong that he commits; we slay an enemy in war, because in war we fight for our sovereign and our native land."

And in this manner was enjoined the abrogation of the law of God! I could scarcely believe that I had read aright.

My opinion was asked with regard to the subject at issue. To the one who maintained that the instruction given by the book was true, I said that the explanation was not correct.

"Why, then, do they print untrue explanations contrary to the law?" was his question, to which I could say nothing in reply.

I kept the volume and looked over its contents. The book contained thirty-one prayers with instructions concerning genuflexions and the joining of the fingers; an explanation of the Credo; a citation from the fifth chapter of Matthew without any explanation whatever, but headed, "Commands for those who would possess the Beatitudes"; the ten commandments accompanied by comments that rendered most of them void; and hymns for every saint's day.

As I have said, I not only had sought to avoid censure of the religion of the Church; I had done my best to see only its most favorable side; and knowing its academic literature from beginning to end, I had paid no attention whatever to its popular literature. This book of devotion, spread broadcast in an enormous number of copies, awakening doubts in the minds of the most unlearned people, set me to thinking. The contents of the book seemed to me so entirely pagan, so wholly out of accord with Christianity, that I could not believe it to be the deliberate purpose of the Church to propagate such a doctrine. To verify my belief, I bought and read all the books published by the synod with its "benediction" (blagoslovnia), containing

brief expositions of the religion of the Church for the use of children and the common people.

Their contents were to me almost entirely new, for at the time when I received my early religious instruction, they had not yet appeared. As far as I could remember there were no commandments with regard to the beatitudes, and there was no doctrine which taught that it was not a sin to kill. No such teachings appeared in the old catechisms; they were not to be found in the catechism of Peter Mogilas, or in that of Beliokof, or the abridged Catholic catechisms. The innovation was introduced by the metropolitan Philaret, who prepared a catechism with proper regard for the susceptibilities of the military class, and from this catechism the Book of Selected Prayers was compiled. Philaret's work is entitled, The Christian Catechism of the Orthodox Church, for the Use of all Orthodox Christians, and is published, "by order of his Imperial Majesty."

The book is divided into three parts, "Concerning Faith," "Concerning Hope," and "Concerning Love." The first part contains the analysis of the symbol of faith as given by the Council of Nice. The second part is made up of an exposition of the Pater Noster, and the first eight verses of the fifth chapter of Matthew, which serve as an introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, and are called (I know not why) "Commands for those who would possess the Beatitudes." These first two parts treat of the dogmas of the Church, prayers, and the sacraments, but they contain no rules with regard to the conduct of life. The third part, "Concerning Love," contains an exposition of Christian duties, based not on the commandments of Jesus, but upon the ten commandments of Moses. This exposition of the commandments of Moses seems to have been made for the especial purpose of teaching men not to obey them. Each commandment is followed by a reservation which completely destroys its force. With regard to the first commandment, which enjoins the worship of God alone, the catechism inculcates the worship of saints and angels, to say nothing of the Mother of God and the three persons of the Trinity ("Special Catechism," pp. 107, 108). With regard to the second commandment, against the worship of idols, the catechism enjoins the worship of images (p. 108). With regard to the third commandment, the catechism enjoins the taking of oaths as the principal token of legitimate authority (p. 111). With regard to the fourth commandment, concerning the observance of the Sabbath, the catechism inculcates the observance of Sunday, of the thirteen principal feasts, of a number of feasts of less importance, the observance of Lent, and of fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays (pp. 112-115). With regard to the fifth commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother," the catechism prescribes honor to the sovereign, the country, spiritual fathers, all persons in authority, and of these last gives an enumeration in three pages, including college authorities, civil, judicial, and military authorities, and owners of serfs, with instructions as to the manner of honoring each of these classes (pp. 116-119). My citations are taken from the sixty-fourth edition of the catechism, dated 1880. Twenty years have passed since the abolition of serfdom, and no one has taken the

trouble to strike out the phrase which, in connection with the commandment of God to honor parents, was introduced into the catechism to sustain and justify slavery.

With regard to the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," the instructions of the catechism are from the first in favor of murder.

"Question.--What does the sixth commandment forbid?

"Answer.--It forbids manslaughter, to take the life of one's neighbor in any manner whatever.

"Question.--Is all manslaughter a transgression of the law?

"Answer.--Manslaughter is not a transgression of the law when life is taken in pursuance of its mandate. For example:

"1st. When a criminal condemned in justice is punished by death.

"2d. When we kill in war for the sovereign and our country."

The italics are in the original. Further on we read:--

"Question.--With regard to manslaughter, when is the law transgressed?

"Answer.--When any one conceals a murderer or sets him at liberty" (sic).

All this is printed in hundreds of thousands of copies, and under the name of Christian doctrine is taught by compulsion to every Russian, who is obliged to receive it under penalty of castigation. This is taught to all the Russian people. It is taught to the innocent children,--to the children whom Jesus commanded to be brought to him as belonging to the kingdom of God; to the children whom we must resemble, in ignorance of false doctrines, to enter into the kingdom of God; to the children whom Jesus tried to protect in proclaiming woe on him who should cause one of the little ones to stumble! And the little children are obliged to learn all this, and are told that it is the only and sacred law of God. These are not proclamations sent out clandestinely, whose authors are punished with penal servitude; they are proclamations which inflict the punishment of penal servitude upon all those who do not agree with the doctrines they inculcate.

As I write these lines, I experience a feeling of insecurity, simply because I have allowed myself to say that men cannot render void the fundamental law of God inscribed in all the codes and in all hearts, by such words as these:--

"Manslaughter is not a transgression of the law when life is taken in pursuance of its mandate... when we kill in war for our sovereign and our country."

I tremble because I have allowed myself to say that such things should not be taught to children.

It was against such teachings as these that Jesus warned men when he said:--

"Look, therefore, whether the light that is in thee be not darkness." (Luke xi. 35.)

The light that is in us has become darkness; and the darkness of our lives is full of terror.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense ye make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive greater condemnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides....

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye witness to yourselves, that ye are sons of them that slew the prophets. Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers.... I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel....

"Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven."

Of a truth we might say that all this was written but yesterday, not against men who no longer compass sea and land to blaspheme against the Spirit, or to convert men to a religion that renders its proselytes worse than they were before, but against men who deliberately force people to embrace their religion, and persecute and bring to death all the prophets and the righteous who seek to reveal their falsehoods to mankind. I became convinced that the doctrine of the Church, although bearing the name of "Christian," is one with the darkness against which Jesus struggled, and against which he commanded his disciples to strive.

The doctrine of Jesus, like all religious doctrines, is regarded in two ways,--first, as a moral and ethical system which teaches men how they should live as individuals, and in relation to each other; second, as a metaphysical theory which explains why men should live in a given manner and not otherwise. One necessitates the other. Man should live in this manner because such is his destiny; or, man's destiny is this way, and consequently he should follow it. These two methods of doctrinal expression are common to all the religions of the world, to the religion of the Brahmins, to that of Confucius, to that of Buddha, to that of Moses, and to that of the Christ. But, with regard to the doctrine of Jesus, as with regard to all other doctrines, men wander from its precepts, and they always find some one to justify their deviations. Those who, as Jesus said, sit in Moses' seat, explain the metaphysical theory in such a way that the ethical prescriptions of the doctrine cease to be regarded as obligatory, and are replaced by external forms of worship, by ceremonial. This is a condition common to all religions, but, to me, it seems that it never has been manifested with so much pomp as in connection with

Christianity,--and for two reasons: first, because the doctrine of Jesus is the most elevated of all doctrines (the most elevated because the metaphysical and ethical portions are so closely united that one cannot be separated from the other without destroying the vitality of the whole); second, because the doctrine of Jesus is in itself a protest against all forms, a negation not only of Jewish ceremonial, but of all exterior rites of worship. Therefore, the arbitrary separation of the metaphysical and ethical aspects of Christianity entirely disfigures the doctrine, and deprives it of every sort of meaning. The separation began with the preaching of Paul, who knew but imperfectly the ethical doctrine set forth in the Gospel of Matthew, and who preached a metaphysico-cabalistic theory entirely foreign to the doctrine of Jesus; and this theory was perfected under Constantine, when the existing pagan social organization was proclaimed Christian simply by covering it with the mantle of Christianity. After Constantine, that arch-pagan, whom the Church in spite of all his crimes and vices admits to the category of the saints, after Constantine began the domination of the councils, and the centre of gravity of Christianity was permanently displaced till only the metaphysical portion was left in view. And this metaphysical theory with its accompanying ceremonial deviated more and more from its true and primitive meaning, until it has reached its present stage of development, as a doctrine which explains the mysteries of a celestial life beyond the comprehension of human reason, and, with all its complicated formulas, gives no religious guidance whatever with regard to the regulation of this earthly life.

All religions, with the exception of the religion of the Christian Church, demand from their adherents aside from forms and ceremonies, the practice of certain actions called good, and abstinence from certain actions that are called bad. The Jewish religion prescribed circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath, the giving of alms, the feast of the Passover. Mohammedanism prescribes circumcision, prayer five times a day, the giving of tithes to the poor, pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prophet, and many other things. It is the same with all other religions. Whether these prescriptions are good or bad, they are prescriptions which exact the performance of certain actions. Pseudo-Christianity alone prescribes nothing. There is nothing that a Christian is obliged to observe except fasts and prayers, which the Church itself does not recognize as obligatory. All that is necessary to the pseudo-Christian is the sacrament. But the sacrament is not fulfilled by the believer; it is administered to him by others. The pseudo-Christian is obliged to do nothing or to abstain from nothing for his own salvation, since the Church administers to him everything of which he has need. The Church baptizes him, anoints him, gives him the eucharist, confesses him, even after he has lost consciousness, administers extreme unction to him, and prays for him,--and he is saved. From the time of Constantine the Christian Church has prescribed no religious duties to its adherents. It has never required that they should abstain from anything. The Christian Church has recognized and sanctioned divorce, slavery, tribunals, all earthly powers, the death penalty, and war; it has exacted nothing except a renunciation of a purpose to do evil on the occasion of baptism, and this only in its

early days: later on, when infant baptism was introduced, even this requirement was no longer observed.

The Church confesses the doctrine of Jesus in theory, but denies it in practice. Instead of guiding the life of the world, the Church, through affection for the world, expounds the metaphysical doctrine of Jesus in such a way as not to derive from it any obligation as to the conduct of life, any necessity for men to live differently from the way in which they have been living. The Church has surrendered to the world, and simply follows in the train of its victor. The world does as it pleases, and leaves to the Church the task of justifying its actions with explanations as to the meaning of life. The world organizes an existence in absolute opposition to the doctrine of Jesus, and the Church endeavors to demonstrate that men who live contrary to the doctrine of Jesus really live in accordance with that doctrine. The final result is that the world lives a worse than pagan existence, and the Church not only approves, but maintains that this existence is in exact conformity to the doctrine of Jesus.

But a time comes when the light of the true doctrine of Jesus shines forth from the Gospels, notwithstanding the guilty efforts of the Church to conceal it from men's eyes, as, for instance, in prohibiting the translation of the Bible; there comes a time when the light reaches the people, even through the medium of sectarians and free-thinkers, and the falsity of the doctrine of the Church is shown so clearly that men begin to transform the method of living that the Church has justified.

Thus men of their own accord, and in opposition to the sanction of the Church, have abolished slavery, abolished the divine right of emperors and popes, and are now proceeding to abolish property and the State. And the Church cannot forbid such action because the abolition of these iniquities is in conformity to the Christian doctrine, that the Church preaches after having falsified.

And in this way the conduct of human life is freed from the control of the Church, and subjected to an entirely different authority. The Church retains its dogmas, but what are its dogmas worth? A metaphysical explanation can be of use only when there is a doctrine of life which it serves to make manifest. But the Church possesses only the explanation of an organization which it once sanctioned, and which no longer exists. The Church has nothing left but temples and shrines and canonicals and vestments and words.

For eighteen centuries the Church has hidden the light of Christianity behind its forms and ceremonials, and by this same light it is put to shame. The world, with an organization sanctioned by the Church, has rejected the Church in the name of the very principles of Christianity that the Church has professed. The separation between the two is complete and cannot be concealed. Everything that truly lives in the world of Europe to-day (everything not cold and dumb in hateful isolation),--everything that is living, is detached from the Church, from all churches, and has an existence independent of the Church. Let it not be said that this is true only of the decayed civilizations of Western Europe. Russia, with its millions of civilized and uncivilized Christian rationalists, who have rejected the doctrine of the

> Church, proves incontestably that as regards emancipation from the yoke of the Church, she is, thanks be to God, in a worse condition of decay than the rest of Europe.
>
> All that lives is independent of the Church. The power of the State is based upon tradition, upon science, upon popular suffrage, upon brute force, upon everything except upon the Church. Wars, the relation of State with State, are governed by principles of nationality, of the balance of power, but not by the Church. The institutions established by the State frankly ignore the Church. The idea that the Church can, in these times, serve as a basis for justice or the conservation of property, is simply absurd. Science not only does not sustain the doctrine of the Church, but is, in its development, entirely hostile to the Church. Art, formerly entirely devoted to the service of the Church, has wholly forsaken the Church. It is little to say that human life is now entirely emancipated from the Church; it has now, with regard to the Church, only contempt when the Church does not interfere with human affairs, and hatred when the Church seeks to re-assert its ancient privileges. The Church is still permitted a formal existence simply because men dread to shatter the chalice that once contained the water of life. In this way only can we account, in our age, for the existence of Catholicism, of Orthodoxy, and of the different Protestant churches.
>
> All these churches--Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant--are like so many sentinels still keeping careful watch before the prison doors, although the prisoners have long been at liberty before their eyes, and even threaten their existence. All that actually constitutes life, that is, the activity of humanity towards progress and its own welfare, socialism, communism, the new politico-economical theories, utilitarianism, the liberty and equality of all social classes, and of men and women, all the moral principles of humanity, the sanctity of work, reason, science, art,--all these that lend an impulse to the world's progress in hostility to the Church are only fragments of the doctrine which the Church has professed, and so carefully endeavored to conceal. In these times, the life of the world is entirely independent of the doctrine of the Church. The Church is left so far behind, that men no longer hear the voices of those who preach its doctrines. This is easily to be understood because the Church still clings to an organization of the world's life, which has been forsaken, and is rapidly falling to destruction.

The force and the limits of Tolstoy’s charge

Tolstoy's opening test gives the discussion a moral clarity that should not be evaded. A church's historical prestige does not answer an accusation that it has taught people to disobey Jesus. A precise doctrine of the Son does not make a particular war just, a prison humane, or a punishment permissible. The council's defenders need reasons for those practices that can be examined independently of their claim to possess an orthodox creed. Where churchmen appeal to correct belief as a substitute for answering the accusation, Tolstoy has identified a real evasion.

His account of the creed, however, depends on an overly complete opposition. The Nicene text was written to identify the God Christians confess and the Son through whom they understand their salvation. It was not designed as an inventory of every Christian obligation. The twenty canons show that the same council also addressed the use of office, the restoration of penitents, clerical households, and financial misconduct. Canon 17 condemns clerical usury. Canon 12 makes military return after renunciation an issue of penitential discipline, whatever further disputes attend its scope. Canon 13 protects the dying person's access to communion. Those provisions are sufficient to refute a claim that the council took no interest in conduct.

The same correction applies to the later confessions in the anthology. The Augsburg Confession's article VI teaches the necessity of good works while refusing to make them the basis of justification. Article XVI then permits civil offices, judgments, punishments, and just wars. A defender of that confession cannot be accused accurately of forgetting to discuss conduct. He can be challenged on the compatibility of the conduct he expressly permits with the commands of Jesus. Tolstoy's argument becomes stronger when stated at that level because it confronts the church's actual ethical position rather than substituting the absence of ethics for disagreement about ethics.

This distinction is especially important for war. The familiar Nicene phrases do not themselves command a Christian to serve in an army. Nor do they contain an explicit rule that resolves every later argument over public force. Churches supplied those arguments through biblical interpretation, accounts of legitimate authority, and theories of justice. Tolstoy rejects the resulting permissions because he reads nonresistance as a binding rule of discipleship. His opponents can therefore answer only by explaining why their interpretation of the relevant commands is better, or why other duties qualify their application. Invoking Nicaea's authority does not by itself supply that explanation.

Tolstoy also reverses a tendency visible in some defenders of the council. Where they infer the importance of a proposition from its relation to worship and salvation, he asks whether propositions have displaced the duties through which salvation is to be lived. His reading brings a neglected kind of evidence into the discussion: the ordinary person's practical situation. What does the church teach a soldier when he is ordered to kill? What does it tell an official responsible for a punishment? What happens when institutional loyalty collides with a believer's understanding of Christ's command? Those questions cannot be settled by describing the controversy as a quarrel among ancient philosophers.

His historical explanation remains less convincing than the ethical interrogation. From the fact that a later institution misused a doctrine, it does not follow that the doctrine was invented for that misuse. Athanasius's accounts of divine sonship and salvation give substantive reasons for his position. The explanation cannot be replaced without argument by a story in which bishops devised metaphysics to excuse

violent society. The moral record of a church can undermine its pretension to unquestionable trustworthiness. It cannot, by itself, demonstrate that every claim in its confession is false. Tolstoy has to dispute the theological argument as well if he wants that larger conclusion.

Conversely, the theological argument cannot erase the moral record. A defender who shows that Tolstoy misdescribes the creed's literary purpose has answered only part of the challenge. He must still examine the church's alliances, its disciplinary choices, its treatment of opponents, and its teaching about force. Constantine's hostile language toward Jews in his Easter letter is one concrete instance in the earlier documents. Recognizing that such language is absent from the creed protects an important textual distinction. It does not make the language acceptable or remove its consequences from the history of Christian conduct.

Tolstoy's rhetoric can tempt a reader to imagine that the choice lies between an entirely corrupt institutional history and a self-evident moral teaching preserved outside every institution. His own interpretation requires decisions about Scripture, translation, context, and the relation of different commands. It too has a history. The fact that he makes those decisions with extraordinary force does not exempt them from examination. A serious encounter with him should therefore preserve the moral urgency of his questions while refusing to make his reconstruction the new unquestionable authority.

The resulting judgment is definite. Tolstoy's allegation that creedal Christianity simply replaced conduct is too sweeping to survive the documents collected here. His challenge to institutions that confess Christ while permitting coercion and war remains substantial. Nicaea supplies no historical guarantee that its heirs will live consistently with their confession. The anthology ends its nineteenth-century readings at this point because the dispute has reached beyond a verdict on an ancient meeting. It asks what authority a binding confession should have over the people and institutions that continue to speak it.

What the Documents Establish

A decision with intelligible boundaries

The strongest historical conclusion of this collection is that the creed of 325 addressed a substantial disagreement and adopted a formula with restrictive force. Arius's letters and Athanasius's defenses make the disagreement intelligible even where they disagree about its proper statement. The Son's status before the world, his relation to the Father, and the meaning of generation were not interchangeable rhetorical preferences. They determined what Christians could mean when they worshiped the Son and attributed salvation to him.

The creed's language has to be assessed as a connected text. Its description of the Son as begotten rather than made, its assertion of creation through him, and its rejection of a time when he did not exist limit the range of readings it can sustain. Newton's proposed accommodation of a merely human Christ deified after death fails that test. It gives insufficient weight to the relationship among clauses and to the distinction the closing anathemas enforce. A legitimate question about the wisdom of requiring a metaphysical term does not rescue this particular interpretation.

The selection also shows why the label Arian requires precision. Arius did not simply describe Jesus as an ordinary man promoted to divine status. Later parties grouped under his name did not invariably hold an identical system. A history that gives the original opponent a direct hearing is better able to identify the differences among positions and the sometimes polemical work performed by the label.

Authority grew through reception

The second conclusion is that Nicaea's authority belongs to a history. The council did not produce an immediately uncontested settlement that later Christians merely repeated. Its supporters had to defend its terminology, reconcile differences among allies, and explain how it related to subsequent definitions. The documents associated with 362, 381, and 451 show that this work was consequential.

The existence of that work does not force the conclusion that the original doctrine was abandoned. It does prevent the claim that the full later technical vocabulary and liturgical confession were already settled uniformly in 325. Continuity and development have to be examined together. A later author can preserve what he regards as the same faith while making distinctions that an earlier document did not state in the same form.

Medieval reception makes the issue particularly clear. The prohibitions against another faith or creed did not remove the need to determine which explanations were legitimate. Vincent's distinction between growth and alteration, the arguments of

medieval theologians, and the treatment of conciliar inheritance in the East show different ways of answering that question. None can be reduced to the instruction that no later Christian should ever ask what a formula means.

The Reformation readings add a further distinction. Acceptance of Nicaea's confession could coexist with criticism of councils and rejection of later claims to authority. Augsburg's affirmation and Calvin's defense of theological terminology establish that the Reformation did not simply begin Christianity again without the inherited doctrinal vocabulary. At the same time, the demand that councils be judged by Scripture altered the way institutional authority was explained.

Imperial power shaped the conditions

The third conclusion concerns political power. Constantine's intervention, the public presentation of the assembly, and the penalties attached to ecclesiastical conflict belong to the history of Nicaea. They cannot be removed in order to protect the council from uncomfortable evidence. Eusebius's praise is itself a document of the alliance between Christian belief and imperial government.

The evidence also resists a theory that explains the entire doctrinal result as the emperor's invention. The theological dispute preceded the assembly, and the participants supplied substantive reasons for their positions. Imperial policy changed, and persons later honored as defenders of Nicaea could suffer under Christian emperors. The course of Athanasius's career is especially difficult to reconcile with a story of a single, permanent political victory delivered in 325.

Power nevertheless changed the costs of disagreement. Exile, the suppression of books, and state intervention in ecclesiastical affairs could not turn an invalid argument into a valid one. They could alter who was able to teach, which institutions retained influence, and how dissenters lived. The political history is therefore essential even where it does not settle the theological dispute.

Conduct is part of the evidence

The fourth conclusion is that the churches' moral and institutional practices must be examined alongside their confessions. The canons show that the council itself addressed concrete conduct. Rules about reconciliation, usury, clerical households, ordination, and communion for the dying cannot be dismissed as though they were unrelated to the council's activity. They also require close interpretation rather than easy conversion into complete modern programs.

This record places a limit on Tolstoy's totalizing criticism. It is historically inaccurate to say that creedal Christianity had no concern for moral duties. The conciliar canons and later confessional articles contain such duties. Augsburg's treatment of good works and civil affairs is particularly relevant to a comparison between profession, obedience, and participation in political institutions.

The check of Gregory's farewell oration supplies a particularly concrete limit on moral accusation. The old English translation can make his praise of believers sound like a readiness to kill others. The Greek distinguishes being separated from this life from separating one of the Three from the Godhead: the believers would accept death rather than surrender their confession. That correction removes an accusation the passage does not support. His explicit criticism of episcopal ambition and political retaliation remains important evidence.

The existence of moral teaching does not establish its consistent practice. Tolstoy's more specific challenge survives: a church may teach duties while accommodating conduct that contradicts them. Whether military service, coercion, or a particular form of obedience can be reconciled with Christ's teaching requires engagement with the competing interpretations. Producing an orthodox creed is not a substitute for that engagement.

The anti-Jewish rhetoric in Constantine's Easter circular deserves a direct judgment. It degrades a people in the course of defending Christian uniformity. Its presence in an important imperial document should be acknowledged without turning it into a clause of the Nicene creed or attributing every expression to every bishop. Accurate attribution strengthens moral criticism by directing it toward what the evidence actually records.

The value and limits of later critics

Gibbon's narrative makes the public consequences of theological conflict difficult to ignore. Priestley's account raises the question of how a historian identifies an original teaching and measures later departures from it. Newman supplies a different account of development and continuity. These writers bring substantial intellectual commitments to their histories, and their disagreements are not settled simply by deciding which one sounds more modern.

The later Eastern witness matters for the same reason. Philaret's catechism presents Nicaea within a continuing ecclesiastical and liturgical life. This is not the standpoint of Gibbon or Tolstoy. It supplies evidence for the way a received creed organizes teaching within a church. The distinction between catechesis and historical reconstruction helps readers understand what the source can establish without discounting its significance.

A century-spanning collection also shows that later authors did not inherit an untouched object. They received texts through languages, translations, liturgies, schools, disputes, and institutions. The Nicene inheritance could function as a confession, a test of continuity, an argument for authority, a point of controversy, or an object of historical criticism. Its endurance depended partly on its capacity to enter these different settings.

A final historical judgment

Nicaea was a consequential exercise of Christian doctrinal and institutional authority. Its confession drew a meaningful boundary around the Son's relation to the Father. Its disciplinary work addressed the organization and conduct of churches. Its imperial setting gave its settlement forms of public power that theology alone could not supply. Its later authority was sustained through explanation, conflict, reception, and teaching across many centuries.

The documents do not justify an immaculate portrait of the people and institutions involved. They also do not justify reducing the entire history to a fraudulent invention by rulers or bishops. The strongest accounts preserve the theological seriousness, the political pressures, the subsequent developments, and the moral failures together, assigning each the weight its evidence supports.

Theological readers will continue to disagree about whether the council confessed the truth about God. Historical readers can nevertheless reach firmer conclusions about the questions the council addressed, the propositions it excluded, the uses later Christians made of it, and the failures that accompanied those uses. Those conclusions give both belief and criticism a more demanding object than an idealized council or a convenient villain.

Chronology

Early fourth century

The dispute between Alexander of Alexandria and Arius develops before the council of 325. Surviving letters reveal a controversy about the Son's generation, divine status, and relation to the Father. The precise dating of some early letters remains uncertain.

325

Constantine convenes the council at Nicaea in Bithynia. The council adopts a confession with anathemas, issues disciplinary canons, and addresses matters including the Meletian division and the common observance of Easter. Its surviving documents do not constitute a verbatim transcript of the assembly.

335 to 337

Athanasius is condemned at Tyre and sent into exile under Constantine. Arius dies in 336. Constantine dies in 337. These events belong to the unsettled aftermath of the council, not to a simple sequence of permanent Nicene triumph.

340s to 350s

Competing assemblies and confessions seek agreement on the Son's relation to the Father. The controversies involve exiles, restorations, regional alliances, and changing imperial policies. Hilary's account of rival formulas belongs to this setting.

362

The assembly at Alexandria produces the Tome to the Antiochenes. It examines what Christians mean by speaking of one or three hypostases and seeks agreement where differently worded formulas can express compatible intentions.

379 to 381

Gregory of Nazianzus preaches in Constantinople and becomes involved in the city's ecclesiastical conflicts. The council of 381 belongs to the development of the received Nicene tradition. Its fuller confession is distinguished in this volume from the text of 325.

431

The Council of Ephesus invokes the authority of the inherited faith and prohibits the production of another faith or creed. Later disputes require an interpretation of how that prohibition relates to authorized explanation and subsequent conciliar definitions.

451

The Council of Chalcedon receives earlier creedal statements in the course of defining its Christological position. The proceedings supply important evidence for the public reception of the confession associated with Constantinople in 381.

553 and 681

The second and third councils at Constantinople receive the earlier councils while addressing further Christological disputes. Their statements illustrate the continuing use of Nicene authority in controversies different from the original disagreement with Arius.

Eighth century

John of Damascus presents a developed account of the Christian faith in Greek. His treatment of the Trinity belongs to the Eastern transmission and systematic explanation of the inherited confession.

754 and 787

The iconoclast council of 754 and the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 take opposed positions concerning images. The council of 787 invokes the authority of earlier ecumenical councils. It is a different gathering from the First Council of Nicaea in 325.

Ninth century

Photius becomes a major participant in disputes involving the churches of Constantinople and Rome. Arguments concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit bring the received creed, theological language, and the authority to change a confession into a new setting.

Eleventh century

The estrangement between Rome and Constantinople develops through events and disagreements extending beyond the familiar date of 1054. Anselm's theological writing, including the Monologion of the 1070s, presents an important Latin account of the reasoning used to explain Christian belief.

1140 to 1141

The dispute over Peter Abelard's teaching brings Bernard of Clairvaux into a controversy about the exposition and defense of inherited doctrine. The letters selected here show the force and limits of Bernard's appeal to authority.

1215

The Fourth Lateran Council issues a confession of faith and addresses the teaching associated with Joachim of Fiore. Its treatment of divine unity and the three persons belongs to the medieval Latin reception of Trinitarian doctrine.

Thirteenth century

Thomas Aquinas examines the formulation of creeds and the theological vocabulary of essence and person. His questions distinguish the content of faith from the occasions and authority through which that content is stated more explicitly.

Fifteenth century

Attempts at union between Eastern and Western churches bring the procession of the Spirit, conciliar authority, and the received confession into renewed dispute. Mark of Ephesus becomes a prominent opponent of the Florentine union.

1530 and 1537

The Augsburg Confession affirms the decree of Nicaea while presenting the teaching of the evangelical churches. Luther's Smalcald Articles subsequently articulate confessional commitments in another Reformation setting. These documents combine continuity with earlier doctrine and conflict over later ecclesiastical authority.

Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Calvin, the English Articles, and Reformed confessions distinguish the authority of Christian doctrine from an unrestricted claim that councils cannot err. Their use of Nicene language shows that criticism of councils need not imply rejection of the Nicene confession.

1689

Locke's Letter Concerning Toleration appears. Its arguments place the powers of civil rulers and religious associations under examination. The question of enforcing assent is distinguishable from the question of a doctrine's truth.

Early eighteenth century

Newton studies early Christian doctrine and conciliar history. The manuscript discussed here challenges the interpretation of Nicene wording. This volume summarizes and tests the argument rather than reproducing an extended modern transcription of the manuscript.

1781 and 1782

Gibbon's account of fourth-century theological controversy appears within the continuation of his history of the Roman Empire. Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity develops a different account of doctrinal change, framed by his understanding of primitive Christianity.

1833 and 1845

Newman's Arians of the Fourth Century appears in 1833. His Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine follows in 1845. The later work supplies an influential defense of continuity through doctrinal development.

1845

R. W. Blackmore's English translation makes Philaret's Longer Catechism available to English readers. The text used here is identified through its historical publication and its later reproduction in Philip Schaff's collection of creeds.

1880s

Tolstoy's account of his religious convictions criticizes the relationship between ecclesiastical belief and Christian conduct. The selected English translation of My Religion appeared in 1885 and was made through a French version; that mediation is identified in the source note.

1890s and 1900

The historical English translations used for many patristic and conciliar readings appear in the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers series. Their late publication dates belong to the history of translation, not to the dates of the ancient works they reproduce.

Glossary

Anathema
A formal condemnation or exclusion. The anathemas attached to the confession of 325 identify propositions the council rejected. The word's practical implications depend on the ecclesiastical and political setting.

Arian
A term used for Arius and, more broadly, for positions his opponents regarded as related to his teaching. It can conceal important differences among later parties. The surviving statements of a particular writer are more precise evidence than the label alone.

Begotten and made
The creed distinguishes the Son's generation from the production of creatures. Begotten is not intended to describe a bodily division of the Father. The force of the distinction emerges from the complete account of the Son's relation to the Father.

Canon
A rule. The twenty disciplinary canons received as belonging to Nicaea regulate ecclesiastical matters. Canon can also refer to a list of scriptural books; that different use must not be confused with the council's disciplinary rules.

Catholic
In early documents, language of the universal or whole church, often used to identify the speaker's claim to the authentic church. Its meaning in a particular source should not be silently equated with every later institutional use.

Consubstantial
A traditional English rendering of the relation expressed by homoousios. The term concerns a common divine essence or being. It does not identify a chemical or physical substance.

Creed and symbol
A concise confession of faith. Symbol in these theological translations commonly means such a confession or identifying formula, rather than an image that is merely suggestive.

Economy
In theological usage, God's ordering of creation and salvation, often with particular reference to the incarnation. It is not a reference to financial arrangements unless the context indicates that ordinary meaning.

Ecumenical council
A council received as having authority for the whole church. The recognition and enumeration of such councils belong to the histories of the churches that receive them; the title does not by itself reconstruct every stage of reception.

Essence and substance
Terms used to speak about what God is. Their exact relationship to person and hypostasis depends on author, language, and date. Older translations do not always employ them with a single standardized distinction.

Filioque
The Latin expression meaning and from the Son, associated with the Western addition to the clause concerning the Holy Spirit's procession. The controversy involves both theology and the authority to alter the received creed. It was not the issue decided at Nicaea in 325.

Generation
The Son's being begotten of the Father. Nicene defenders distinguish eternal generation from a temporal beginning and from the making of creatures. Older uses of origin do not necessarily imply a beginning in time.

Homoiousios
Of like or similar substance. Its historical users should be read in their particular settings. Similarity of spelling to homoousios does not make the disagreements reducible to a typographical quarrel.

Homoousios
Of one substance or essence. A central term in the confession of 325. Its interpretation depends on its accompanying clauses and exclusions, not solely on every use it had before or after the council.

Hypostasis
A Greek term with a changing technical history. In the 325 anathemas it appears beside ousia. Later orthodox usage commonly distinguishes three hypostases in one ousia. The later distinction must not be imposed unchanged on every earlier occurrence.

Incarnation
The Son's becoming human. In the creed the subject who comes down and becomes incarnate is the same Son through whom all things were made. This connection matters when assessing interpretations that begin with an exclusively human Christ.

Logos
Word or reason. In Christian theological usage, commonly the Word identified with the Son. Its scriptural and philosophical associations require attention to the author employing it.

Monarchianism
A family of positions associated with protecting divine unity or monarchy. The label is not a complete account of any particular writer's meaning. Polemical uses may group different accounts together.

Nature and person
Terms used with increasing technical precision in Trinitarian and Christological debate. One divine essence in three persons and two natures in the one Christ answer different questions. They must not be collapsed into a single formula.

Nicene and Niceno Constantinopolitan
Nicene may refer to the council of 325, its particular confession, or the later tradition that receives it. Niceno Constantinopolitan commonly identifies the fuller confession associated with 381. The date and text intended should always be specified where the distinction matters.

Ousia
Greek for being, essence, or substance in these debates. It is the second element of homoousios. Modern associations of substance with matter can mislead readers of its theological use.

Procession
A term used of the Holy Spirit's relation of origin. Its treatment in Greek and Latin traditions generated disputes that require more than a word-for-word comparison of translations.

Reception
The processes through which a council or teaching is acknowledged, interpreted, transmitted, and used by later communities. Reception includes further councils, liturgy, catechesis, theological explanation, and institutional practice.

Sabellian
A polemical designation associated with accounts thought to compromise the distinction among Father, Son, and Spirit. Accusations of Sabellianism should be distinguished from evidence for a person's own stated view.

Subintroducta
A woman introduced into a cleric's household, particularly in forms of spiritual companionship that raised disciplinary concern. The term in Canon 3 is not simply a synonym for a wife. Its historical scope requires explanation.

Synod
An assembly or council. The titles of later works translated On the Synods or On the Councils often refer to multiple assemblies and their competing formulas rather than to Nicaea alone.

Theotokos
God bearer, traditionally translated Mother of God. In the fifth-century disputes it concerns the identity of the one born from Mary. The relevant conciliar texts explain the Christological purpose of the title.

Unbegotten
Language identifying the Father as without generation or origin from another. Arguments about whether this term defines the divine essence play a significant role in disputes about the Son. Older spellings and distinctions between unbegotten and uncreated require care.

Editions and Editorial Method

The historical readings reproduce the editions identified in the chapter source notes and source register. The underlying works and their English translations are separate bibliographical objects. An ancient author's text may be unprotected while a modern translation remains protected. This volume therefore identifies the historical English edition actually used, or labels a newly prepared rendering and identifies its underlying text.

The selection preserves connected arguments and complete shorter documents where practical. Chapter notes identify selected sections and omissions. Editorial headings, introductions, and explanatory paragraphs are distinguished from the historical reading. An adversary's words quoted within a historical work remain part of that work's presentation; the commentary identifies attribution problems where they affect interpretation.

Spelling and characteristic phrasing of the historical translations are generally retained. Typographic ligatures, nonbreaking spaces, soft hyphens, and line-break artifacts may be normalized. Footnote reference numbers that refer to omitted apparatus are removed. Substantive corrections to a transcription are identified where applicable. Neither historical translation nor present commentary is represented as a newly discovered account of the council.

The historical texts were selected from editions whose terms have expired in the United States, together with expressly identified new renderings of unprotected older texts. The U.S. Copyright Office states that works published in the United States before January 1, 1931, are in the public domain. Rights in particular editions and translations, and the laws of other territories, remain separate questions. The source register records the publication details on which this edition relies.

The introductions and annotations were prepared with assistance from OpenAI ChatGPT and reviewed in the course of compilation. No exclusive copyright is claimed in the historical public-domain readings or in solely AI-generated expression. Any rights in human-authored contributions and in the human selection, revision, and arrangement belong to their author. New renderings are identified at their point of use.

The original additions provide historical orientation, close explanation of difficult language, comparison of competing arguments, and judgments about specific claims. They do not seek to replace the historical texts with a single doctrinal verdict. The concluding essay separates the historical conclusions supported by the collected evidence from theological judgments the evidence alone cannot establish.

Source Register

Alexander of Alexandria - Letter to Alexander, preserved in Theodoret, Ecclesiastical History I.3

Edition: Theodoret, Ecclesiastical History, in NPNF, second series, volume 3. Translation: Blomfield Jackson. Date: 1892. Readings: Complete letter; Theodoret's following narrative and modern footnotes omitted.

Ancient original; historical English translation published in 1892 and public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf203.iv.viii.i.iv.html

Anselm of Canterbury - Monologium

Edition: St. Anselm: Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo, Open Court, 1903; 1926 reprint. Translation: Sidney Norton Deane. Date: 1903. Readings: Preface; Chapters XXVII, XXXI-XXXIII, LXXVIII.

1903 English translation, 1926 reprint; public domain in the United States. Deane died in 1943; no assertion here about all foreign jurisdictions.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/anselm/basic_works.all.html

Arius - Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, preserved in Theodoret, Ecclesiastical History I.4

Edition: NPNF, second series, volume 3. Translation: Blomfield Jackson. Date: 1892. Readings: Complete letter; historian's following narrative omitted.

Ancient original; historical English translation published in 1892 and public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf203.iv.viii.i.v.html

Arius and associated presbyters and deacons - Profession to Alexander of Alexandria, preserved in Athanasius, De Synodis 16

Edition: Athanasius Select Works and Letters, edited by Archibald Robertson, NPNF, second series, volume 4. Translation: John Henry Newman, revised for the 1892 edition. Date: 1892. Readings: Section 16 salutation and complete profession; Athanasius's surrounding comments omitted.

Ancient original; historical English edition published in 1892 and public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.xxii.ii.ii.html

Athanasius of Alexandria - De Decretis and Tome to the Antiochenes

Edition: Select Works and Letters, NPNF second series, volume 4, edited by Archibald Robertson. Translation: John Henry Newman, revised for this edition, for De Decretis; Archibald Robertson edition for the Tome. Date: 1892. Readings: De Decretis 1-5, 19-24, 30-32; Tome to the Antiochenes, salutation and sections 1-9; appended signatures/subscriptions 10-11 omitted.

Ancient texts in the identified 1892 English edition, public domain in the United States. Editorial apparatus omitted; paragraph and section boundaries retained.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/npnf204/cache/npnf204.pdf

Augustine of Hippo - On Baptism against the Donatists

Edition: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, first series, volume 4. Translation: J. R. King; revised and annotated by Chester D. Hartranft. Date: 1887. Readings: Book II, Chapters 2-4, paragraphs 3-5.

Historical English translation published before 1931; public domain in the United States. Modern presentation and editorial front matter excluded.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf104.all.html

Augustine of Hippo - On the Trinity

Edition: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, first series, volume 3. Translation: Arthur West Haddan; revised and annotated by W. G. T. Shedd. Date: 1887. Readings: Book I, Chapters 4-7, paragraphs 7-14.

Historical English translation published before 1931; public domain in the United States. Only the historical text is reproduced, not CCEL's modern front matter.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103.all.html

Basil of Caesarea - Letter 214 to Count Terentius

Edition: NPNF second series, volume 8. Translation: Blomfield Jackson. Date: 1895. Readings: Complete letter 214, excluding title and original editorial footnotes.

Ancient work in 1895 English translation, public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf208.ix.ccxv.html

Bernard of Clairvaux - Letter against certain errors attributed to Peter Abelard

Edition: Some Letters of Saint Bernard, selected with a preface by Francis Aidan Gasquet, London: John Hodges, 1904. Translation: Samuel J. Eales. Date: 1904. Readings: Letter LX in this edition, conventionally Letter 190; Chapters I-III, paragraphs 1-8; printed pages 260-271.

Historical Eales translation reprinted in 1904; public domain in the United States. Gasquet's preliminary commentary and modern CCEL notices excluded.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/bernard/letters.all.html

Church of England - Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion

Edition: English text of 1571, in Philip Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, volume III, first published 1877; CCEL transcription. Translation: Original historical English text. Date: 1571. Readings: English column, Articles I, II, V, VIII, XX, XXI.

The sixteenth-century English text and Schaff historical presentation are public domain in the United States. Latin and American variants excluded. Original spelling preserved; two keying corrections disclosed.

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.iv.xi.html

Council of Florence; Eugene IV - Laetentur caeli, decree of union with the Greeks, 6 July 1439

Edition: Session VI; Latin text reproduced by the Holy See, with Bullarium Romanum, Turin edition, volume V (1860), pages 39-41, identified among the printed witnesses. Translation: New English rendering prepared for this volume. Date: 2026. Readings: Continuous doctrinal passage on procession and Filioque, from Quod Spiritus sanctus to symbolo fuisse appositam; surrounding preamble and later articles omitted.

Underlying Latin decree of 1439 is public domain; new English rendering prepared with AI assistance from that Latin. Modern English translations and modern editorial notes are not reproduced.

https://www.vatican.va/content/eugenius-iv/la/documents/bulla-laetentur-caeli-6-iulii-1439.html

Council of Nicaea - Creed and anathemas, twenty canons, and synodal letter to Alexandria

Edition: Henry R. Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, NPNF, second series, volume 14. Translation: Henry R. Percival, editor and compiler of the historical English texts. Date: 1900. Readings: Creed and anathemas, Canons 1-20, and complete synodal letter. Surrounding editorial notes, epitomes, and excursuses omitted.

Ancient originals; historical English edition published in 1900 and public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/npnf214/cache/npnf214.pdf

Councils of Constantinople and Chalcedon - Creed, letter, canons, and acts

Edition: Henry R. Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, NPNF second series, volume 14. Translation: Henry R. Percival, editor and translator. Date: 1900. Readings: 381 received creed, synodal letter to Theodosius, canons 1-3; Chalcedon Session II opening through acclamation of 381 creed; Chalcedon Definition with acclamation.

Ancient documents in the 1900 English edition, public domain in the United States. Later commentaries omitted; the historical edition itself abridges the acts. One bracketed supply of such corrects deficient English in the final prohibition.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/npnf214/cache/npnf214.pdf

Cyril of Alexandria - Second letter to Nestorius

Edition: The Seven Ecumenical Councils, NPNF second series, volume 14. Translation: Henry R. Percival, editor and translator of the collection. Date: 1900. Readings: Complete second letter; Ephesus first-session acts; Canons 7-8; Canon 8 translation clarification checked against Bright, second edition (1892), Greek text, pages XXVII-XXVIII.

Historical English edition published in 1900; public domain in the United States. Modern editorial adaptations are not used.

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.x.v.html

Daniel B. Wallace - The Textual Problem in 1 John 5:7-8

Edition: Bible.org, June 25, 2004. Translation: Not applicable. Date: 2004. Readings: Consulted for the manuscript history of the heavenly-witnesses wording cited in Philaret question 91; no text reproduced. Compare also Michael W. Holmes, editor, The Greek New Testament SBL Edition, 2010, 1 John 5:7-8.

Modern copyrighted reference consulted and paraphrased briefly; no passage from the article or modern Bible translation is reproduced.

https://bible.org/article/textual-problem-1-john-57-8

Edward Gibbon - The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

Edition: Historical text revised in 1845, with notes by H. H. Milman; Project Gutenberg eBook 25717. Translation: Not applicable; English original. Date: 1845. Readings: Chapter XXI: Christian zeal through Arian creeds; then conduct of the emperors through the paragraph ending with the persecution of Athanasius. Intervening sectarian and Latin-church discussions omitted; footnotes omitted.

Gibbon died in 1794. The selected English main text was published long before 1931 and is public domain in the United States. No modern introductory material or Milman footnotes reproduced.

https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/25717/pg25717-images.html#chap21.1

Eusebius of Caesarea - Letter to the People of His Diocese concerning Nicaea

Edition: Athanasius Select Works and Letters, edited by Archibald Robertson, NPNF, second series, volume 4. Translation: John Henry Newman, revised for the 1892 edition. Date: 1892. Readings: Sections 1-11 complete, including the two confessions quoted by Eusebius. Editorial footnotes and running headers omitted.

Ancient original; historical English edition published in 1892 and public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.ix.ii.html

Eusebius of Caesarea, including documents attributed to Constantine - Life of Constantine II.64-73 and III.6-24

Edition: Eusebius Church History and Life of Constantine, NPNF, second series, volume 1. Translation: Ernest Cushing Richardson. Date: 1890. Readings: II.64-73 complete; III.6-24 complete, distributed across chapters in their original sequence. Edition footnotes omitted.

Ancient original; historical English translation published in 1890 and public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/npnf201/cache/npnf201.pdf

Eusebius of Nicomedia - Letter to Paulinus of Tyre, preserved in Theodoret, Ecclesiastical History I.5

Edition: NPNF, second series, volume 3. Translation: Blomfield Jackson. Date: 1892. Readings: Complete letter; following narrative omitted.

Ancient original; historical English translation published in 1892 and public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf203.iv.viii.i.vi.html

Fourth Lateran Council - Constitutions 1-3

Edition: Latin: Denzinger, Enchiridion symbolorum, 12th ed., prepared by Clemens Bannwart, Herder, 1913, §§428-433, pp. 188-192, for Constitutions 1-2; continuous Latin transcription at Wikisource for the opening of 3. Translation: New English rendering prepared for this edition with AI assistance. Date: 1913. Readings: Constitutions 1-2 complete; Constitution 3 opening through the Holy Land privilege, ending Catholici vero ... conceditur.

Underlying medieval Latin and 1913 Latin edition are public domain in the United States. English rendering is newly generated for this edition and is not copied from a modern copyrighted English translation. Denzinger scan: https://librinostri.catholica.cz/download/Denzinger 1913-r.pdf

https://la.wikisource.org/wiki/Concilium_Lateranum_IV

Gregory of Nazianzus - Oration 42

Edition: NPNF second series volume 7. Translation: Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow. Date: 1894. Readings: Sections 14-17 and 21-25; source editorial introduction and footnotes omitted.

Ancient work in 1894 English translation, public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.iii.xxv.html

Gregory of Nazianzus - Oration 42 section 15 in Greek

Edition: Ancient Greek text displayed on the Church of Cyprus website; consulted October 2026. Translation: No historical translation reproduced from this page; adjacent clarification is a new editorial rendering. Date: 2026. Readings: The Greek clause contrasting being separated from this life with separating one of the Three from the Godhead, consulted to correct the voice of the first verb in the 1894 English translation.

Ancient Greek wording is public domain. Only the brief ancient clause and grammatical forms inform the new annotation; modern website commentary and apparatus are not reproduced.

https://churchofcyprus.org.cy/40159

Hilary of Poitiers - De Synodis or On the Councils

Edition: NPNF second series volume 9. Translation: L. Pullan. Date: 1899. Readings: Sections 63-77 and 85-92; sections 78-84 omitted; original editorial footnotes omitted. An adjacent new note corrects the historical English rendering of Unigenitus in section 64 against the Latin (Patrologia Latina 10, col. 499).

Ancient work in 1899 English translation, public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf209.ii.iv.ii.html

Hilary of Poitiers - On the Trinity

Edition: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 9, 1899. Translation: E. W. Watson (Book IV); the historical volume also contains other translators' contributions. Date: 1899. Readings: Book IV.11-14 consulted to test Priestley's use of Hilary; summarized in the commentary, not reproduced as a second full reading.

Historical 1899 translation public domain in the United States. Modern website apparatus excluded.

https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/330204.htm

Ignatius of Antioch - Letter to the Ephesians

Edition: Ante-Nicene Fathers, volume 1, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), shorter form corresponding to the middle recension. Translation: Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Date: 1885. Readings: Reading reference: chapter 18, especially 18.2. Consulted and summarized in the comparison following Newman; no passage reproduced. The longer expanded recension is not the text cited.

The 1885 historical translation is public domain in the United States. Only an original editorial summary and a reading reference are supplied; modern website apparatus is not reproduced.

https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm

Isaac Newton - Drafts on the history of the Church, Section 5

Edition: Yahuda manuscript 15.5; Newton Project normalized transcription THEM00222. Translation: Newton wrote in English; no new translation quoted. Readings: Original editorial summary, especially folio 87r; no historical extract.

Used for original summary and criticism only. The project transcript and modern editorial expression are not reproduced at length. No claim of blanket public-domain clearance for every form of the formerly unpublished manuscript is made.

https://www.newtonproject.ox.ac.uk/view/texts/normalized/THEM00222

John Calvin - Institutes of the Christian Religion I.13

Edition: Henry Beveridge translation first published Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845; CCEL transcription. Translation: Henry Beveridge. Date: 1845. Readings: Sections 2-6 and 16-20, with a marked gap.

Beveridge translation, first published 1845, is public domain in the United States. CCEL contemporary metadata and editorial web material are not reproduced. Keying corrections are logged in the research package and the 1845 scan's OCR was used to check obvious English slips.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iii.xiv.html

John Calvin - Institutes of the Christian Religion IV.9

Edition: Beveridge translation, 1845-46; Book IV in volume III, 1846; CCEL transcription. Translation: Henry Beveridge. Date: 1846. Readings: Complete chapter body, sections 1-14; overview and footnotes omitted.

Public-domain historical English translation, Book IV published 1846. One transparent keying correction from of if to or if is disclosed.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.vi.x.html

John Henry Newman - An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine

Edition: Sixth-edition text, revised 1878, transcribed in Project Gutenberg 35110 through a later reprint. Translation: Not applicable; English original. Date: 1878. Readings: Part I chapter IV section 1 instance 5 The Homoüsion, pages 133-134, complete.

Only the nineteenth-century authorial text is reproduced. Later reprint publisher material and electronic apparatus excluded. The 1878 text is public domain in the United States.

https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35110/35110-h/35110-h.htm

John Henry Newman - The Arians of the Fourth Century

Edition: New impression. London: Longmans, Green, 1908; incorporates the third-edition revision of 1871. Translation: Not applicable; English original. Date: 1908. Readings: Chapter III section 1 complete main text, historical pages 236-258. Footnotes omitted. The site index reproduces the 1908 title page and 1871 advertisement.

English text first published 1833, revised 1871, selected impression 1908: public domain in the United States. No modern website commentary or navigation reproduced.

https://www.newmanreader.org/works/arians/chapter3-1.html

John Locke - A Letter Concerning Toleration

Edition: William Popple English translation, first published 1689; Constitution Society transcription of the historical text. Translation: William Popple. Date: 1689. Readings: Opening through ecclesiastical expulsion; later restrictions beginning But to come to particulars through atheists; complete postscript on heresy and schism.

The historical translation is public domain. Locke died 1704 and Popple 1708. Modern site apparatus is excluded; paragraphing follows the digital text. The 1823 Works volume VI supplies an additional historical comparison source. The digital typo unsurp is corrected to usurp against the 1823 Works, volume VI, p. 6.

https://constitution.org/2-Authors/jl/tolerati.htm

John of Damascus - Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, book I

Edition: NPNF second series, volume 9. Translation: S. D. F. Salmond. Date: 1899. Readings: I.1-2, 6-8, 10 complete chapters; other chapters omitted.

Historical English translation of 1899; public domain US. Salmond died in 1905; the translation is also outside a standard life plus 70 term.

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf209.iii.iv.i.viii.html

Joseph Priestley - History of the Corruptions of Christianity

Edition: In some parts abridged, with appendices, by A. A. L. Keene, New Hampshire: J. and J. W. Prentiss, 1838. Translation: Not applicable; English original. Date: 1838. Readings: Part I section VI in full, printed pages 52-57; Latin note page 53 included. Surrounding sections and appended matter omitted.

1838 English edition and original 1782 work are public domain in the United States. The selected OCR was corrected against images of all six printed source pages; no modern annotations reproduced.

https://archive.org/details/historyofcorrupt00prie

Justin Martyr - Dialogue with Trypho

Edition: Ante-Nicene Fathers, volume 1, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885). Translation: Marcus Dods and George Reith. Date: 1885. Readings: Reading references: chapters 61 and 128. Consulted and summarized in the comparison following Newman; no passage reproduced.

The 1885 historical translation is public domain in the United States. Only an original editorial summary and reading references are supplied; modern website apparatus is not reproduced.

https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01285.htm ; https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01289.htm

Leo Tolstoy - My Religion

Edition: New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1885. Project Gutenberg 43794. Translation: Huntington Smith, from the French. Date: 1885. Readings: Chapter XI opening through the complete paragraph ending forsaken, and is rapidly falling to destruction; translator notes 22 and 23 omitted; remainder of chapter omitted. One obvious transcription error is corrected: ice to we in the quotation of Matthew 23:30 (printed page 217).

1885 English translation is public domain in the United States. Tolstoy died 1910. No modern translation or introduction reproduced.

https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/43794

Mark Eugenikos of Ephesus - Letter to George Scholarius

Edition: Louis Petit, Documents relatifs au Concile de Florence II, Patrologia Orientalis 17, part 2 (1923), document XVI, pages 460-464; PG 160, columns 1092-1096. Translation: New English rendering prepared for this volume. Date: 2026. Readings: Complete letter, after the Council of Florence.

Underlying Greek public domain; new translation compared with public-domain Greek and Latin edition of 1923. No modern English translation reproduced.

https://archive.org/details/patrologiaorient17pariuoft

Martin Luther - Smalcald Articles

Edition: Triglot Concordia, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921, pp. 453-529 for complete work; Gutenberg 273. Translation: F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau. Date: 1921. Readings: Complete publication preface added in 1538 and Part I of the 1537 articles.

The selected 1921 translation is public domain in the United States. This is not the different On the Councils and the Churches translation in Philadelphia Works volume V, published in 1931. The 1915 date of volume I does not date volume V; that translation was deliberately not used.

https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/273

Philaret of Moscow - The Longer Catechism of the Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church

Edition: R. W. Blackmore, The Doctrine of the Russian Church. Aberdeen 1845; reproduced in Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, volume 2, historical text with copyright dates 1877, 1905, and 1919. Translation: R. W. Blackmore. Date: 1845. Readings: Questions 66-75, 90-95, 129-150, and 238-261, inclusive. Intervening questions and Schaff footnotes omitted.

Blackmore’s 1845 translation and Schaff’s pre-1931 historical apparatus are public domain in the United States. Only the historical catechism text is reproduced; modern CCEL description and navigation excluded.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds2.vi.iii.ii.html

Philipp Melanchthon - Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Edition: Triglot Concordia, 1921; Project Gutenberg eBook 6744. Translation: F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau. Date: 1921. Readings: Article I complete.

The 1921 English translation is public domain in the United States. Digital introductory and license material is not reproduced.

https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6744

Philipp Melanchthon - Augsburg Confession

Edition: Triglot Concordia, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921; Project Gutenberg eBook 275. Translation: F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau. Date: 1921. Readings: Articles I, III, VI, VII, VIII, XVI, each complete.

The 1921 English translation is public domain in the United States. Author died 1560; translators Bente died 1930 and Dau died 1944. Only the historical text is reproduced.

https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/275

Photius of Constantinople, traditional attribution - Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit, sections 2-7

Edition: Patrologia Graeca, volume 102, columns 280-288, Joseph Hergenröther text. Translation: New English rendering prepared for this volume. Date: 2026. Readings: Connected sections 2-7; the preface in section 1 and later sections omitted.

Underlying Greek and nineteenth-century printed edition public domain; new English translation prepared with AI assistance. No modern English translation reproduced.

https://archive.org/details/patrologiaecurs11migngoog

Second Council of Constantinople - Fourteen capitula

Edition: The Seven Ecumenical Councils, NPNF second series, volume 14. Translation: Henry R. Percival, editor and translator. Date: 1900. Readings: All fourteen capitula; editorial discussion within XI omitted.

Historical English edition of 1900; public domain US.

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xii.vii.html

Second Council of Nicaea - Decree, Canons 1-3, and letter to emperor and empress

Edition: The Seven Ecumenical Councils, NPNF second series, volume 14. Translation: Henry R. Percival, editor and translator. Date: 1900. Readings: Complete decree of 787, complete Canons 1-3, complete synodal letter; the iconoclast definition of 754 not reproduced.

Historical English edition of 1900; public domain US.

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xvi.xii.html

Socrates Scholasticus - Ecclesiastical History

Edition: NPNF second series, volume 2. Translation: Historical Bagster translation revised by A. C. Zenos. Date: 1890. Readings: Book II chapters 20, 22-23, 26, complete after headings; original editorial footnotes omitted.

Ancient work in 1890 English translation, public domain in the United States. Embedded letters quoted as transmitted by Socrates.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/npnf202/cache/npnf202.pdf

Socrates Scholasticus, preserving letters and an edict attributed to Constantine - Ecclesiastical History I.7 and I.9

Edition: Socrates and Sozomenus Ecclesiastical Histories, NPNF, second series, volume 2. Translation: Earlier English translation revised by A. C. Zenos. Date: 1890. Readings: I.9 complete letter to Alexandria, complete decree against Arius's writings, complete letters on churches, fifty copies of Scripture, and the church at Jerusalem. Intervening narrative and other documents omitted; each selection separately headed. I.7 opening paragraph is reproduced for Hosius's mission; Socrates's following partial version of the peace letter is omitted because Eusebius's fuller version is printed.

Ancient originals; historical English translation published in 1890 and public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf202.ii.iv.ix.html

Tertullian - Against Praxeas

Edition: Ante-Nicene Fathers, volume 3, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885). Translation: Peter Holmes. Date: 1885. Readings: Reading references: chapters 2, 3, and 9. Consulted and summarized in the comparison following Newman; no passage reproduced.

The 1885 historical translation is public domain in the United States. Only an original editorial summary and reading references are supplied; modern website apparatus is not reproduced.

https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0317.htm

Third Council of Constantinople - Definition of Faith

Edition: The Seven Ecumenical Councils, NPNF second series, volume 14. Translation: Henry R. Percival, editor and translator. Date: 1900. Readings: Complete definition in the edition’s abbreviated form for the recited creeds.

Historical English edition of 1900; public domain US.

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xiii.x.html

Thomas Aquinas - Summa Theologiae

Edition: Fathers of the English Dominican Province translation. Electronic text: Project Gutenberg 17611 and 18755. Printed comparison editions: Part II (Second Part), First Number, Questions I-XLVI (London: R. & T. Washbourne; New York, Cincinnati, and Chicago: Benziger Brothers, 1917), pp. 23-28; Part I, Questions XXVII-XLIX, vol. 2, second and revised edition (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1921), pp. 126-137. Translation: Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Date: 1917 and 1921 printed comparison editions. Readings: II-II, Question 1, Articles 9-10 complete; I, Question 39, Articles 1-4 complete.

The historical English translation is public domain in the United States. Gutenberg electronic witnesses are identified separately from the printed comparison editions; an exact printing date for the Gutenberg base text is not asserted. Gutenberg editorial introduction, license, and modern added materials are excluded. II-II electronic witness: https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/18755. Part I comparison scan: https://archive.org/details/summatheologicao02thom; its catalog gives 1920, but the volume has a 1921 approval, and the 1921 edition identification follows the Online Library of Liberty edition statement. No modern Liberty Fund front matter is reproduced.

https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/17611

Vincent of Lérins - Commonitory

Edition: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 11. Translation: C. A. Heurtley. Date: 1894. Readings: Chapters II-V, XXIII, XXVIII, complete listed chapters.

1894 English translation; public domain in the United States.

https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf211.all.html

Westminster Assembly - Westminster Confession of Faith

Edition: Original English text, 1646-47, in Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, volume III; CCEL transcription. Translation: Original English text. Date: 1647. Readings: II.3; XXIII.1-3; XXXI complete in original numbering.

Historical English text is public domain. Schaff prints American alterations and their numbering alongside the original; only the original provisions are selected. The page-break duplicate fragment is corrected.

https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.iv.xvii.ii.html

Further Reading in Modern Scholarship

These studies provide routes into questions raised by the documents. They include historical reconstructions and theological interpretations whose methods and conclusions differ. Their inclusion identifies useful further reading; it does not make them additional historical witnesses or imply agreement with every argument. Modern translations and scholarly prose in these works are not reproduced in the anthology.

Nicaea and the Fourth-Century Controversies

Kim, Young Richard, ed. The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. A useful first companion to the anthology: its essays examine the council's setting, proceedings, consequences, and later reception from several scholarly perspectives.

Hanson, R. P. C. The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988. An extensive reconstruction of the controversies between Nicaea and Constantinople. Consult it when comparing rival creeds, the changing alliances of bishops, and the meanings assigned to disputed terms.

Ayres, Lewis. Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Explains why the theology later called pro-Nicene cannot simply be read off the wording of 325. Especially useful beside the Hilary, Basil, Gregory, and Athanasius chapters.

Behr, John. The Way to Nicaea. The Formation of Christian Theology, vol. 1. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001. Offers a theological reading of the writers before Nicaea. Read alongside the early-text references in the Priestley-Newman comparison to examine what continuity can mean before the fourth-century vocabulary became settled.

Anatolios, Khaled. Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011. Interprets the doctrinal reasoning of the fourth-century debates, with sustained attention to how the identity of Christ and accounts of salvation belong together. A constructive theological approach to compare with the anthology's historical judgments.

Drake, H. A. Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Provides a fuller political setting for Constantine's dealings with bishops. Useful for examining the relation between imperial attempts at agreement and the subsequent use of exclusion and coercion.

Eastern and Medieval Reception

Siecienski, A. Edward. The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Follows the procession dispute through its Greek and Latin settings. Consult beside Photius, Florence, and Mark of Ephesus to distinguish the history of a creedal addition from arguments about its theological meaning.

Gill, Joseph. The Council of Florence. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959. A detailed study of the council's negotiations and attempted union. Its account supplies context for both the settlement reproduced here and Mark's refusal; its perspective should be compared with the Eastern witnesses themselves.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Vol. 3, The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. Places Anselm, Bernard, Lateran IV, and Aquinas within a longer history of medieval doctrine. Useful for tracing how earlier confessions became subjects of scholastic explanation and institutional definition.

Emery, Gilles. The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God. Translated by Matthew Levering. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011. A modern Catholic exposition of divine persons, relations, and missions. It helps readers follow the conceptual grammar in the Aquinas selections and identify what a contemporary defender thinks that grammar explains.

Reformation, Dissent, and Development

Muller, Richard A. Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725. 2nd ed. Vol. 4, The Triunity of God. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003. Extends the Reformation chapters into the later Protestant schools. Useful for examining the continued use of Nicene and medieval distinctions within churches that disputed Roman claims about authority.

Snobelen, Stephen D. “Isaac Newton, Heretic: The Strategies of a Nicodemite.” The British Journal for the History of Science 32, no. 4 (1999): 381-419. doi:10.1017/S0007087499003751. Examines the relation between Newton’s private religious convictions and his public position. Read beside his manuscript discussion to understand the social and legal setting of a dissent that remained largely unpublished.

Schofield, Robert E. The Enlightened Joseph Priestley: A Study of His Life and Work from 1773 to 1804. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. Situates Priestley’s mature theological controversies within his work in philosophy, science, and politics. It helps explain the intellectual commitments behind his account of doctrinal corruption without deciding the accuracy of each historical citation.

Ker, Ian. John Henry Newman: A Biography. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. First published 1988. Places Newman’s account of doctrinal development within his intellectual and ecclesiastical life. Consult when comparing a theory of faithful development with Priestley’s interpretation of the same historical changes as corruption.

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