

Arianism: Notes from Various websites

Arianism is a heresy which arose in the fourth century, and denied the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINE

First among the doctrinal disputes which troubled Christians after Constantine had recognized the Church in A.D. 313, and the parent of many more during some three centuries, Arianism occupies a large place in ecclesiastical history. It is not a modern form of unbelief, and therefore will appear strange in modern eyes. But we shall better grasp its meaning if we term it an Eastern attempt to rationalize the creed by stripping it of mystery so far as the relation of Christ to God was concerned. In the New Testament and in Church teaching Jesus of Nazareth appears as the Son of God. This name He took to Himself (Matthew 11:27; John 10:36), while the Fourth Gospel declares Him to be the Word (Logos), Who in the beginning was with God and was God, by Whom all things were made. A similar doctrine is laid down by St. Paul, in his undoubtedly genuine Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians. It is reiterated in the Letters of Ignatius, and accounts for Pliny's observation that Christians in their assemblies chanted a hymn to Christ as God. But the question how the Son was related to the Father (Himself acknowledged on all hands to be the one Supreme Deity), gave rise, between the years A.D. 60 and 200, to a number of Theosophic systems, called generally Gnosticism, and having for their authors Basilides, Valentinus, Tatian, and other Greek speculators. Though all of these visited Rome, they had no following in the West, which remained free from controversies of an abstract nature, and was faithful to the creed of its baptism. Intellectual centres were chiefly Alexandria and Antioch, Egyptian or Syrian, and speculation was carried on in Greek. The Roman Church held steadfastly by tradition. Under these circumstances, when Gnostic schools had passed away with their "conjugations" of Divine powers, and "emanations" from the Supreme unknowable God (the "Deep" and the "Silence") all speculation was thrown into the form of an inquiry touching the "likeness" of the Son to His Father and "sameness" of His Essence. Catholics had always maintained that Christ was truly the Son, and truly God. They worshipped Him with divine honours; they would never consent to separate Him, in idea or reality, from the Father, Whose Word, Reason, Mind, He was, and in Whose Heart He abode from eternity. But the technical terms of doctrine were not fully defined; and even in Greek words like essence (ousia), substance (hypostasis), nature (physis), person (hyposopon) bore a variety of meanings drawn from the pre-Christian sects of philosophers, which could not but entail misunderstandings until they were cleared up. The adaptation of a vocabulary employed by Plato and Aristotle to Christian truth was a matter of time; it could not be done in a day; and when accomplished for the Greek it had to be undertaken for the Latin, which did not lend itself readily to necessary yet subtle distinctions. That disputes should spring up even among the orthodox who all held one faith, was inevitable. And of these wranglings the rationalist would take advantage in order to substitute for the ancient creed his own inventions. The drift of all he advanced was this: to deny that in any true sense God could have a Son; as Mohammed tersely said afterwards, "God neither begets, nor is He begotten" (Koran, 112). We have learned to call that denial Unitarianism. It was the ultimate scope of Arian opposition to what Christians had always believed. But the Arian, though he did not come straight down from the Gnostic, pursued a line of argument and taught a view which the speculations of the Gnostic had made familiar. He described the Son as a second, or inferior God, standing midway between the First Cause and creatures; as Himself made out of nothing, yet as making all things else; as existing before the worlds of the ages; and as arrayed in all divine perfections except the one which was their stay and foundation. God alone was without beginning, unoriginate; the Son was originated, and once had not existed. For all that has origin must begin to be.

Such is the genuine doctrine of Arius. Using Greek terms, it denies that the Son is of one essence, nature, or substance with God; He is not consubstantial (homouousios) with the Father, and therefore not like Him, or equal in dignity, or co-eternal, or within the real sphere of Deity. The Logos which St. John exalts is an

attribute, Reason, belonging to the Divine nature, not a person distinct from another, and therefore is a Son merely in figure of speech. These consequences follow upon the principle which Arius maintains in his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, that the Son "is no part of the Ingenerate." Hence the Arian sectaries who reasoned logically were styled Anomoeans: they said that the Son was "unlike" the Father. And they defined God as simply the Unoriginate. They are also termed the Exucontians (ex ouk onton), because they held the creation of the Son to be out of nothing.

But a view so unlike tradition found little favour; it required softening or palliation, even at the cost of logic; and the school which supplanted Arianism from an early date affirmed the likeness, either without adjunct, or in all things, or in substance, of the Son to the Father, while denying His co-equal dignity and co-eternal existence. These men of the Via Media were named Semi-Arians. They approached, in strict argument, to the heretical extreme; but many of them held the orthodox faith, however inconsistently; their difficulties turned upon language or local prejudice, and no small number submitted at length to Catholic teaching. The Semi-Arians attempted for years to invent a compromise between irreconcilable views, and their shifting creeds, tumultuous councils, and worldly devices tell us how mixed and motley a crowd was collected under their banner. The point to be kept in remembrance is that, while they affirmed the Word of God to be everlasting, they imagined Him as having become the Son to create the worlds and redeem mankind. Among the ante-Nicene writers, a certain ambiguity of expression may be detected, outside the school of Alexandria, touching this last head of doctrine. While Catholic teachers held the Monarchia, viz. that there was only one God; and the Trinity, that this Absolute One existed in three distinct subsistences; and the Circuminsession, that Father, Word, and Spirit could not be separated, in fact or in thought, from one another; yet an opening was left for discussion as regarded the term "Son," and the period of His "generation" (genesis). Five ante-Nicene Fathers are especially quoted: Athenagoras, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus, and Novatian, whose language appears to involve a peculiar notion of Sonship, as though It did not come into being or were not perfect until the dawn of creation. To these may be added Tertullian and Methodius. Cardinal Newman held that their view, which is found clearly in Tertullian, of the Son existing after the Word, is connected as an antecedent with Arianism. Petavius construed the same expressions in a reprehensible sense; but the Anglican Bishop Bull defended them as orthodox, not without difficulty. Even if metaphorical, such language might give shelter to unfair disputants; but we are not answerable for the slips of teachers who failed to perceive all the consequences of doctrinal truths really held by them. >From these doubtful theorizings Rome and Alexandria kept aloof. Origen himself, whose unadvised speculations were charged with the guilt of Arianism, and who employed terms like "the second God," concerning the Logos, which were never adopted by the Church -- this very Origen taught the eternal Sonship of the Word, and was not a Semi-Arian. To him the Logos, the Son, and Jesus of Nazareth were one ever-subsisting Divine Person, begotten of the Father, and, in this way, "subordinate" to the source of His being. He comes forth from God as the creative Word, and so is a ministering Agent, or, from a different point of view, is the First-born of creation. Dionysius of Alexandria (260) was even denounced at Rome for calling the Son a work or creature of God; but he explained himself to the pope on orthodox principles, and confessed the Homoousian Creed.

HISTORY

Paul of Samosata, who was contemporary with Dionysius, and Bishop of Antioch, may be judged the true ancestor of those heresies which relegated Christ beyond the Divine sphere, whatever epithets of deity they allowed Him. The man Jesus, said Paul, was distinct from the Logos, and, in Milton's later language, by merit was made the Son of God. The Supreme is one in Person as in Essence. Three councils held at Antioch (264-268, or 269) condemned and excommunicated the Samosatene. But these Fathers would not accept the Homoousian formula, dreading lest it be taken to signify one material or abstract substance, according to the usage of the heathen philosophies. Associated with Paul, and for years cut off from the Catholic communion, we find the well-known Lucian, who edited the Septuagint and became at last a martyr. From this learned man

the school of Antioch drew its inspiration. Eusebius the historian, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Arius himself, all came under Lucian's influence. Not, therefore, to Egypt and its mystical teaching, but to Syria, where Aristotle flourished with his logic and its tendency to Rationalism, should we look for the home of an aberration which had it finally triumphed, would have anticipated Islam, reducing the Eternal Son to the rank of a prophet, and thus undoing the Christian revelation.

Arius, a Libyan by descent, brought up at Antioch and a school-fellow of Eusebius, afterwards Bishop of Nicomedia, took part (306) in the obscure Meletian schism, was made presbyter of the church called "Baucalis," at Alexandria, and opposed the Sabellians, themselves committed to a view of the Trinity which denied all real distinctions in the Supreme. Epiphanius describes the heresiarch as tall, grave, and winning; no aspersion on his moral character has been sustained; but there is some possibility of personal differences having led to his quarrel with the patriarch Alexander whom, in public synod, he accused of teaching that the Son was identical with the Father (319). The actual circumstances of this dispute are obscure; but Alexander condemned Arius in a great assembly, and the latter found a refuge with Eusebius, the Church historian, at Caesarea. Political or party motives embittered the strife. Many bishops of Asia Minor and Syria took up the defence of their "fellow-Lucianist," as Arius did not hesitate to call himself. Synods in Palestine and Bithynia were opposed to synods in Egypt. During several years the argument raged; but when, by his defeat of Licinius (324), Constantine became master of the Roman world, he determined on restoring ecclesiastical order in the East, as already in the West he had undertaken to put down the Donatists at the Council of Arles. Arius, in a letter to the Nicomedian prelate, had boldly rejected the Catholic faith. But Constantine, tutored by this worldly-minded man, sent from Nicomedia to Alexander a famous letter, in which he treated the controversy as an idle dispute about words and enlarged on the blessings of peace. The emperor, we should call to mind, was only a catechumen, imperfectly acquainted with Greek, much more incompetent in theology, and yet ambitious to exercise over the Catholic Church a dominion resembling that which, as Pontifex Maximus, he wielded over the pagan worship. From this Byzantine conception (labelled in modern terms Erastianism) we must derive the calamities which during many hundreds of years set their mark on the development of Christian dogma. Alexander could not give way in a matter so vitally important. Arius and his supporters would not yield. A council was, therefore, assembled in Nicaea, in Bithynia, which has ever been counted the first ecumenical, and which held its sittings from the middle of June, 325. (See FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAIA). It is commonly said that Hosius of Cordova presided. The Pope, St. Silvester, was represented by his legates, and 318 Fathers attended, almost all from the East. Unfortunately, the acts of the Council are not preserved. The emperor, who was present, paid religious deference to a gathering which displayed the authority of Christian teaching in a manner so remarkable. From the first it was evident that Arius could not reckon upon a large number of patrons among the bishops. Alexander was accompanied by his youthful deacon, the ever-memorable Athanasius who engaged in discussion with the heresiarch himself, and from that moment became the leader of the Catholics during well-nigh fifty years. The Fathers appealed to tradition against the innovators, and were passionately orthodox; while a letter was received from Eusebius of Nicomedia, declaring openly that he would never allow Christ to be of one substance with God. This avowal suggested a means of discriminating between true believers and all those who, under that pretext, did not hold the Faith handed down. A creed was drawn up on behalf of the Arian party by Eusebius of Caesarea in which every term of honour and dignity, except the oneness of substance, was attributed to Our Lord. Clearly, then, no other test save the Homoeousion would prove a match for the subtle ambiguities of language that, then as always, were eagerly adopted by dissidents from the mind of the Church. A formula had been discovered which would serve as a test, though not simply to be found in Scripture, yet summing up the doctrine of St. John, St. Paul, and Christ Himself, "I and the Father are one". Heresy, as St. Ambrose remarks, had furnished from its own scabbard a weapon to cut off its head. The "consubstantial" was accepted, only thirteen bishops dissenting, and these were speedily reduced to seven. Hosius drew out the conciliar statements, to which anathemas were subjoined against those who should affirm that the Son once did not exist, or that before He was begotten He was not, or that He was made out of nothing, or that He was of a different substance or essence from the Father, or was created

or changeable. Every bishop made this declaration except six, of whom four at length gave way. Eusebius of Nicomedia withdrew his opposition to the Nicene term, but would not sign the condemnation of Arius. By the emperor, who considered heresy as rebellion, the alternative proposed was subscription or banishment; and, on political grounds, the Bishop of Nicomedia was exiled not long after the council, involving Arius in his ruin. The heresiarch and his followers underwent their sentence in Illyria. But these incidents, which might seem to close the chapter, proved a beginning of strife, and led on to the most complicated proceedings of which we read in the fourth century. While the plain Arian creed was defended by few, those political prelates who sided with Eusebius carried on a double warfare against the term "consubstantial", and its champion, Athanasius. This greatest of the Eastern Fathers had succeeded Alexander in the Egyptian patriarchate (326). He was not more than thirty years of age; but his published writings, antecedent to the Council, display, in thought and precision, a mastery of the issues involved which no Catholic teacher could surpass. His unblemished life, considerate temper, and loyalty to his friends made him by no means easy to attack. But the wiles of Eusebius, who in 328 recovered Constantine's favour, were seconded by Asiatic intrigues, and a period of Arian reaction set in. Eustathius of Antioch was deposed on a charge of Sabellianism (331), and the Emperor sent his command that Athanasius should receive Arius back into communion. The saint firmly declined. In 325 the heresiarch was absolved by two councils, at Tyre and Jerusalem, the former of which deposed Athanasius on false and shameful grounds of personal misconduct. He was banished to Trier, and his sojourn of eighteen months in those parts cemented Alexandria more closely to Rome and the Catholic West. Meanwhile, Constantia, the Emperor's sister, had recommended Arius, whom she thought an injured man, to Constantine's leniency. Her dying words affected him, and he recalled the Libyan, extracted from him a solemn adhesion to the Nicene faith, and ordered Alexander, Bishop of the Imperial City, to give him Communion in his own church (336). Arius openly triumphed; but as he went about in parade, the evening before this event was to take place, he expired from a sudden disorder, which Catholics could not help regarding as a judgment of heaven, due to the bishop's prayers. His death, however, did not stay the plague. Constantine now favoured none but Arians; he was baptized in his last moments by the shifty prelate of Nicomedia; and he bequeathed to his three sons (337) an empire torn by dissensions which his ignorance and weakness had aggravated.

Constantius, who nominally governed the East, was himself the puppet of his empress and the palace-ministers. He obeyed the Eusebian faction; his spiritual director, Valens, Bishop of Mursa, did what in him lay to infect Italy and the West with Arian dogmas. The term "like in substance", *Homoiousion*, which had been employed merely to get rid of the Nicene formula, became a watchword. But as many as fourteen councils, held between 341 and 360, in which every shade of heretical subterfuge found expression, bore decisive witness to the need and efficacy of the Catholic touchstone which they all rejected. About 340, an Alexandrian gathering had defended its archbishop in an epistle to Pope Julius. On the death of Constantine, and by the influence of that emperor's son and namesake, he had been restored to his people. But the young prince passed away, and in 341 the celebrated Antiochene Council of the Dedication a second time degraded Athanasius, who now took refuge in Rome. There he spent three years. Gibbon quotes and adopts "a judicious observation" of Wetstein which deserves to be kept always in mind. From the fourth century onwards, remarks the German scholar, when the Eastern Churches were almost equally divided in eloquence and ability between contending sections, that party which sought to overcome made its appearance in the Vatican, cultivated the Papal majesty, conquered and established the orthodox creed by the help of the Latin bishops. Therefore it was that Athanasius repaired to Rome. A stranger, Gregory, usurped his place. The Roman Council proclaimed his innocence. In 343, Constans, who ruled over the West from Illyria to Britain, summoned the bishops to meet at Sardica in Pannonia. Ninety-four Latin, seventy Greek or Eastern, prelates began the debates; but they could not come to terms, and the Asiatics withdrew, holding a separate and hostile session at Philippopolis in Thrace. It has been justly said that the Council of Sardica reveals the first symptoms of discord which, later on, produced the unhappy schism of East and West. But to the Latins this meeting, which allowed of appeals to Pope Julius, or the Roman Church, seemed an epilogue which completed the Nicene legislation, and to this effect it was quoted by Innocent I in his correspondence with the bishops of Africa.

Having won over Constans, who warmly took up his cause, the invincible Athanasius received from his Oriental and Semi-Arian sovereign three letters commanding, and at length entreating his return to Alexandria (349). The factious bishops, Ursacius and Valens, retracted their charges against him in the hands of Pope Julius; and as he travelled home, by way of Thrace, Asia Minor, and Syria, the crowd of court-prelates did him abject homage. These men veered with every wind. Some, like Eusebius of Caesarea, held a Platonizing doctrine which they would not give up, though they declined the Arian blasphemies. But many were time-servers, indifferent to dogma. And a new party had arisen, the strict and pious Homoiousians, not friends of Athanasius, nor willing to subscribe to the Nicene terms, yet slowly drawing nearer to the true creed and finally accepting it. In the councils which now follow these good men play their part. However, when Constans died (350), and his Semi-Arian brother was left supreme, the persecution of Athanasius redoubled in violence. By a series of intrigues the Western bishops were persuaded to cast him off at Arles, Milan, Ariminum. It was concerning this last council (359) that St. Jerome wrote, "the whole world groaned and marvelled to find itself Arian". For the Latin bishops were driven by threats and chicanery to sign concessions which at no time represented their genuine views. Councils were so frequent that their dates are still matter of controversy. Personal issues disguised the dogmatic importance of a struggle which had gone on for thirty years. The Pope of the day, Liberius, brave at first, undoubtedly orthodox, but torn from his see and banished to the dreary solitude of Thrace, signed a creed, in tone Semi-Arian (compiled chiefly from one of Sirmium), renounced Athanasius, but made a stand against the so-called "Homoean" formulae of Ariminum. This new party was led by Acacius of Caesarea, an aspiring churchman who maintained that he, and not St. Cyril of Jerusalem, was metropolitan over Palestine. The Homoeans, a sort of Protestants, would have no terms employed which were not found in Scripture, and thus evaded signing the "Consubstantial". A more extreme set, the "Anomoeans", followed Aetius, were directed by Eunomius, held meetings at Antioch and Sirmium, declared the Son to be "unlike" the Father, and made themselves powerful in the last years of Constantius within the palace. George of Cappadocia persecuted the Alexandrian Catholics. Athanasius retired into the desert among the solitaries. Hosius had been compelled by torture to subscribe a fashionable creed. When the vacillating Emperor died (361), Julian, known as the Apostate, suffered all alike to return home who had been exiled on account of religion. A momentous gathering, over which Athanasius presided, in 362, at Alexandria, united the orthodox Semi-Arians with himself and the West. Four years afterwards fifty-nine Macedonian, i.e., hitherto anti-Nicene, prelates gave in their submission to Pope Liberius. But the Emperor Valens, a fierce heretic, still laid the Church waste.

However, the long battle was now turning decidedly in favour of Catholic tradition. Western bishops, like Hilary of Poitiers and Eusebius of Vercellae banished to Asia for holding the Nicene faith, were acting in unison with St. Basil, the two St. Gregories [of Nyssa and Nazianzus --Ed.], and the reconciled Semi-Arians. As an intellectual movement the heresy had spent its force. Theodosius, a Spaniard and a Catholic, governed the whole Empire. Athanasius died in 373; but his cause triumphed at Constantinople, long an Arian city, first by the preaching of St. Gregory Nazianzen, then in the Second General Council (381), at the opening of which Meletius of Antioch presided. This saintly man had been estranged from the Nicene champions during a long schism; but he made peace with Athanasius, and now, in company of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, represented a moderate influence which won the day. No deputies appeared from the West. Meletius died almost immediately. St. Gregory Nazianzen, who took his place, very soon resigned. A creed embodying the Nicene was drawn up by St. Gregory of Nyssa, but it is not the one that is chanted at Mass, the latter being due, it is said, to St. Epiphanius and the Church of Jerusalem. The Council became ecumenical by acceptance of the Pope and the ever-orthodox Westerns. From this moment Arianism in all its forms lost its place within the Empire. Its developments among the barbarians were political rather than doctrinal. Ulphilas (311-388), who translated the Scriptures into Maeso-Gothic, taught the Goths across the Danube an Homoean theology; Arian kingdoms arose in Spain, Africa, Italy. The Gepidae, Heruli, Vandals, Alans, and Lombards received a system which they were as little capable of understanding as they were of defending, and the Catholic bishops, the monks, the sword of Clovis, the action of the Papacy, made an end of it before the eighth century. In the form which it took

under Arius, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Eunomius, it has never been revived. Individuals, among them are Milton and Sir Isac Newton, were perhaps tainted with it. But the Socinian tendency out of which Unitarian doctrines have grown owes nothing to the school of Antioch or the councils which opposed Nicaea. Neither has any Arian leader stood forth in history with a character of heroic proportions. In the whole story there is but one single hero -- the undaunted Athanasius -- whose mind was equal to the problems, as his great spirit to the vicissitudes, a question on which the future of Christianity depended.

Arianism Versus the Council of Nicaea

By Brother John Raymond
Church History

Introduction

Arianism with its fundamental Trinitarian controversy must not be looked upon as an isolated theory by its founder Arius. Its appeal, which began in Alexandria and spread through the whole Empire, must be seen in the context of the times. The Church emerged in a Jewish and Greek world. The question occupying this non-Christian world was the contrast between the "One and the Many, between the ultimate unity that lay behind the visible universe and the incalculable variety that exists in the world (Ward 1955, 38)." The relationship between God and the world had to be solved. The Jews proposed a supreme God who created by His word. It was an idea of a mediating "Word or Wisdom - the Word which is pronounced, the Wisdom which is created - whereby the Father communicated Himself to man and took possession of him (Guitton 1965, 81)." The Greeks could not see how a finite and changeable world could come from an eternal and changeless God. They proposed the idea of a "mediating Intelligence or even Word, a first emanation of the first principle which reduced the distance between God and the world (Guitton 1965, 81)." The primitive Church had to "reconcile the notions they had inherited from Judaism with those they had derived from philosophy. Jew and Greek had to meet in Christ. They had to find an answer that would agree with the revelation they had received from Christ as recorded in the scriptures (Ward 1955, 39)." This struggle for a reconciliation of thought reached its climax with the Arian controversy. The Church responded with the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea that brought together Scriptural and philosophical thought to explain the Trinity. The Council did triumph over Arianism but only after fifty years of bitter battling. Imperial support and confusion in theological terminology were the principal reasons for such a long drawn out battle as we will see.

Arius and His Teaching

Arius, who was born in Egypt in 256 A.D., was a parish priest in Alexandria. He had studied under St. Lucian of Antioch, the founder of the school of Antioch, who had earlier been condemned for holding that Christ was only a man; although he was later reconciled. He is called the "Father of Arianism" because "Arius and almost all the 4th-century Arian theologians were his students. Calling themselves Lucianists and Collucianists, they developed his adoptionist and subordinationist tendencies into a full heresy (Harkins 1967, 1057, 1058)." With this background Arius struggled with the question of the Trinity. His teaching in Alexandria was the following: "Personal distinctions were not eternally present within the nature of God. . . the Godhead Himself was responsible for them. . . Identifying the eternal Godhead with the Father and regarding the Logos as no more than a power or quality of the Father, he said that before time began the Father had created the Son by the power of the Word to be His agent in creation. The Son was not therefore to be identified with the Godhead, He was only God in a derivative sense, and since there was once when he did not exist He could not be eternal. Arius stressed the subordination of the Logos to such an extent as to affirm His creaturehood, to deny His eternity and to assert His capacity for change and suffering (Ward 1955, 41)." This teaching of Arius "drove

the distinctions outside the Deity and thus destroyed the Trinity. It meant solving the difficulty of the One and the Many by proposing a theory of one Supreme Being and two inferior deities (Ward 1955, 43)." The Person of Christ "belonged to no order of being that the Church could recognize. . . He was neither God nor man (Ward 1955, 42)."

Arius Versus the Alexandrian Bishop

Arius' views began to spread among the people and the Alexandrian clergy. Alexander the Bishop called a meeting of his priests and deacons. The Bishop insisted on the unity of the Godhead. Arius continued to argue that since the Son was begotten of the Father then at some point He began to exist. Therefore there was a time when the Son did not exist. Arius refused to submit to the Bishop and continued to spread his teaching. Alexander called a synod of Bishops of Egypt and Libya. Of the hundred Bishops who attended eighty voted for the condemnation and exile of Arius. After the synod Alexander wrote letters to the other Bishops refuting Arius' views. In doing so the Bishop used the term "homoousios" to describe the Father and Son as being of one substance. Alexander "used a term which was to become the keyword of the whole controversy (Ward 1955, 43, 44)."

With the decision of the synod Arius fled to Palestine. Some of the Bishops there, especially Eusebius of Caesarea, supported him. From here Arius continued his journey to Nicomedia in Asia Minor. The Bishop of that city, Eusebius, had studied under Lucian of Antioch. He became Arius' most influential supporter. From this city Arius enlisted the support of other Bishops, many of whom had studied under Lucian. His supporters held their own synod calling Arius' views orthodox and condemning Bishop Alexander of Alexandria. Arius seemed to have good grounds for this condemnation. The term homoousios was rejected by Alexander's own predecessor Dionysius when arguing against the Sabellians (who claimed the Father and Son were identical). All this controversy was taking place just as the Church was emerging from Roman oppression.

Constantine and Ossius

With the rise of Constantine to power Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine had politically united the Empire but he was distressed to find a divided Christianity. Constantine, certainly not understanding the significance of the controversy, sent Ossius his main ecclesiastical adviser with letters to both Alexander and Arius. In the letters he tried to reconcile them by saying that their disagreement was merely just a matter of words. Both of them really were in agreement on major doctrines and neither were involved in heresy. The letters failed to have an effect.

In 325 A.D. Ossius presided over a Council of the Orient in Antioch that was attended by fifty-nine bishops, forty-six of whom would soon attend the Council of Nicaea. This Council in Antioch was a forerunner of the latter Council in Nicaea. Under the influence of Ossius a new Church practice was inaugurated - that of issuing a creedal statement. At this Council Arianism was condemned, a profession of faith resembling the Alexandrian creed was promulgated and three Bishops who refused to agree with the teaching of this Council were provisionally excommunicated until the Council of Nicaea.

In the summer of that year, probably under the suggestion of Ossius, Constantine called for a general council of the Church at Nicaea in Bithynia. That an Emperor should invoke a Council should not be considered unusual since in Hellenistic thought he "was given by God supreme power in things material and spiritual (Davis 1987, 56)."

The Council of Nicaea

The General Council was well attended by the major sees of the Eastern Empire. Also some Western Bishops were present. Because of old age and sickness Pope Sylvester did not attend but sent two papal legates. The total number of Bishops who attended the Council has been disputed. Eusebius of Caesarea who attended it claimed 250; Athanasius also in attendance mentioned 300; after the Council a symbolic number of 318 was used; modern scholars put the number at 220.

If there were minutes taken of the Council proceedings they are no longer in existence. We know from the writings of Rufinus that "daily sessions were held and that Arius was often summoned before the assembly; his arguments attentively considered. The majority, especially those who were confessors of the Faith, energetically declared themselves against the impious doctrines of Arius (LeClercq 1913, 45)."

Concerning the Creed that was drafted at the Council "Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius of Alexandria and Philostorgius have given divergent accounts of how this Creed was drafted (DeClercq 1967, 792)." But from one reconstruction of the events Eusebius of Nicomedia offered a creed that was favorable to Arian views. This creed was rejected by the Council. Eusebius of Caesarea proposed the baptismal creed used in Caesarea. Although accepted it does not seem to form the basis of the Council's Creed. Attempts were made to construct a creed using only scriptural terms. These creeds proved insufficient to exclude the Arian position. "Finally, it seems, a Syro-Palestinian creed was used as the basis for a new creedal statement . . . The finished creed was preserved in the writings of Athanasius, of the historian Socrates and of Basil of Caesarea and in the acts of the Council of Chalcedon of 451 (Davis 1987, 59)." When the creed was finished eighteen Bishops still opposed it. Constantine at this point intervened to threaten with exile anyone who would not sign for it. Two Libyan Bishops and Arius still refused to accept the creed. All three were exiled.

The Creed and an Analysis

Some parts of the literal translation of the Nicaea Creed are as follows:

"We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance (ousia) of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of the same substance (homoousios) with the Father, through whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth . . . Those who say: 'There was a time when He was not, and He was not before He was begotten;' and that 'He was made out of nothing;' or who maintain that 'He is of another hypostasis or another substance,' or that 'the Son of God is created, or mutable, or subject to change,' the Catholic Church anathematizes (LeClercq 1913, 45)."

The Arians were very clever in twisting phrases in creedal statements to reflect their own doctrine. The Son being "begotten of the Father" was seen by them as saying that the Son was created from nothing. But to counter their doctrine the phrase "begotten not made" was added to the creed that totally ruled out their position of the Son having a beginning. Another Arian teaching was that the Son was God by grace and name only. The creedal statement "true God of true God" was an affirmation that the Son was really truly God against this Arian position. The most important statement in the creed that affirms "that the Son shares the same being as the Father and is therefore fully divine" was the phrase "of one substance (homoousios) with the Father" (Davis 1987, 61). This statement totally destroyed the Arian view of the Son as an intermediary being between God and Creation.

In case the creed was not enough to end the Arian controversy anathemas were attached directly condemning Arian positions. The Arian denial of the Son's co-eternity with the Father is expressed in the two phrases "there was when the Son of God was not" and "before He was begotten He was not." The Arian belief in the Son being created out of nothing is expressed in the phrase "He came into being from things that are not." The Arian

doctrine that the Son being a creature was subject to moral changeability and only remained virtuous by an act of the will is expressed in the phrase "He is mutable or alterable." Finally the Arian position of the Son as subordinate to the Father and not really God is expressed in the phrase "He is of a different hypostasis or substance." With these specific anathemas against them the Arians and their heresy seemed to be finished.

Terminology Problem

With the Eastern Church using Greek and the Western Church using Latin misunderstandings were bound to arise over theological terminology. One instance of confusion is the statement "He is of a different hypostasis or substance." The two words in the Eastern Church were seen to be synonymous. In the West hypostasis meant person. So for a Westerner the Council would look as if it was condemning the statement that the Son was a different Person from the Father, which would clearly be erroneous. Only later would the East come to distinguish hypostasis from substance (ousia) as in the West. This instance of confusion "points up the terminological difficulty which continued to bedevil Eastern theology and to confuse the West about the East's position (Davis 1987, 63)."

A second and very important term used by the Council was homoousios. At that time this word could have three possible meanings. "First, it could be generic; of one substance could be said of two individual men, both of whom share human nature while remaining individuals. Second, it could signify numerical identity, that is, that the Father and the Son are identical in concrete being. Finally, it could refer to material things, as two pots are of the same substance because both are made of the same clay (Davis 1987, 61)." The Council intended the first meaning to stress the equality of the Son with the Father. If the second meaning for the word was taken to be the Council's intention it would mean that the Father and Son were identical and indistinguishable - clearly a Sabellian heresy. The third meaning gave the word a materialistic tendency that would infer that the Father and Son are parts of the same stuff.

Along with these possible misunderstandings of the meaning of the word homoousios the history of the word is closely associated with heresies. The word was originally used by the Gnostics. The word had even been condemned at the Council of Antioch in 268 regarding its use by the Adoptionist Paul of Samosata. Another factor making the word unpopular was that it was never used in Sacred Scripture.

The Council's defeat by Arianism

It is not surprising that with its use of the word homoousios the Council could be called into question. Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia gained the confidence of Emperor Constantine. He convinced Constantine that the Council's use of the word homoousios was Sabellian (Father and Son were identical). The Emperor now favored the Arians. With the death of Constantine the Empire was divided between his sons. Constantine who ruled in the West favored Nicaea while his brother Constantius who ruled the East was anti-Nicaea. Supporters of Nicaea in the East especially Bishop Athanasius were deposed and excommunicated by the Council of Antioch. This Council directly attacked the Nicaea Council by promulgating its own creed that omitted the phrases "from the substance of the Father" and "homoousios." Some attempts were made to find a substitute word for homoousios. As many as fourteen Councils were held between 341 and 360 "in which every shade of heretical subterfuge found expression . . . The term 'like in substance,' homoiousion . . . had been employed merely to get rid of the Nicene formula (Barry 1913, 709)." Not all Arians, or their new name of Semi-Arian, agreed with this new word. One group emphasized that the Father and Son were "dissimilar" or anomoios. Another group used the word "similar" or homoios to describe the Father and Son relationship.

With the death of Constantine in 337 his anti-Nicaea brother Constantius became sole ruler of the Empire. The new Emperor demanded that all the Bishops of his Empire should agree with the homoios formula. In 359 he

summoned two Councils, one in the East at Seleucia and the other in the West at Rimini. Both Councils, under the Emperor's threats and with rationalizing arguments aimed at calming consciences, were induced to sign the homoios formula. "This Homoean victory was confirmed and imposed on the whole Church by the Council of Constantinople in the following year" which condemned the terms homoousios, homoiousios and anomoios (Ward 1955, 57). It seemed that the Arians had triumphed over the Nicaea creed.

The Final Battle

The seeming triumph of homoeism was short lived. First it gained its popularity solely by imperial imposition. With the death of Constantius in 361 it collapsed. Second by persecuting both homoousios and homoiousios supporters alike "it brought about better understanding and, ultimately, reconciliation between the two groups (DeClercq 1967, 793)." Athanasius an ardent defender of the homoousios position and following the Alexandrian train of thought had begun his reasoning with the unity of God. From there he had concluded that the Son and Spirit Who shared that unity must have the same essential substance. The Cappadocian Fathers Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa were associated with Homoiousians. The point of departure for them as well as the Antiochenes had been the individual aspect of the divine personality. With the help of Athanasius they came to the realization that the three Persons as God must share the same identical substance also. By using the term homoiousios the Cappadocian Fathers "had never meant to deny the unity but only to preserve the distinction of persons (Ward 1955, 58)." Both came to the conclusion that although they used different terms what they meant to say was the same. The Cappadocian Fathers came to accept the term homoousios. Athanasius, on the other hand, accepted the Cappadocian formula for the Trinity - one substance (ousia) in three persons (hypostaseis).

At about the same time as Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers were reaching an agreement another development was taking place. The East and the West were arriving at a better understanding of each others theological terminology. At the Synod of Alexandria in 362 the Nicene Creed was re-affirmed, the terms ousia and hypostasis were explained and Macedonianism (sometimes referred to as another form of Semi-Arianism in its subordination of the Holy Spirit) was condemned. Under the Eastern Emperor Valens (364-378) homoeism still had imperial favor.

In the West Ambrose of Milan led the fight for the Nicene Creed. At the Council of Sirmium in 378, with the support of the Western Emperor Gratian, six Arian Bishops were deposed. A series of laws were passed in 379 and 380 the Emperor prohibited Arianism in the West.

In the East with the succession of Valens by a Nicene sympathizing Emperor Theodosius I all exiled Bishops under Valens to return to their sees. In 381 he convoked a regional Council at Constantinople. The first canon from this Council states that "the faith of the 318 fathers who assembled at Nicaea in Bithynia is not to be made void, but shall continue to be established (Davis 1987, 126)." In 380 the Emperor Theodosius outlawed Arianism. The last victory over Arianism came in 381 with the Council of Constantinople in the East and the Council of Aquileia in the West. Both of them "sealed the final adoption of the faith of Nicaea by the entire Church (DeClercq 1967, 793)."

Conclusion

The Council of Nicaea was victorious in the end. It took over fifty years of bitter battling between the upholders of the Council of Nicaea and those against it. The Arian heresy seemed finished when the Council so specifically anathematized their teachings one by one. The Arian doctrines condemned were the following: The Son was created by the Father out of nothing. Thus the Son was not God in the strict sense but by grace and in name only. The Father and Son did not share the same substance. The Son being a creature was subject to

moral changeability and only remained virtuous by an act of the will.

Terminology difficulties had kept the door open for the Arians to continue after the Council. This was especially true with the term *homoousios* (of the same substance) used by the Council to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son. The Arians took advantage of one of the term's other meaning, that of identity, to claim that the Council said the Father and Son were identical thereby invalidating the Council. The Arians then started producing their own creeds either eliminating this term or substituting another for it. This led to the breaking up of the Arians into diverse groups according to which term they supported - *anomoios* (dissimilar), *homoios* (similar) or *homoiousion* (like in substance).

It is obvious that Imperial involvement in the controversy determined at any given moment whether the Council of Nicaea or the Arianism was dominating the controversy. With the imposition of the term *homoios* on the Church by the Emperor Constantius the work of the Council of Nicaea seemed doomed. But the popularity of this term died with the Emperor. The persecution of both the *Homoousians* and the *Homoiousians* forced them to begin to dialogue. With the two great representatives of these positions, St. Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers, finding theological grounds for their eventual agreement the way was paved for the triumph of the Council of Nicaea. This incident later coupled with Eastern and Western Emperors who were pro-Nicaea led to the final Arian downfall.

Works Cited

The New Catholic Encyclopedia. 1967. New York: McGraw-Hill
Book Co. Vol. 1. Arianism, by V.C. Declercq.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia. 1967. New York: McGraw-Hill
Book Co. Vol. 8. St. Lucian of Antioch, by P. W. Harkins.

Davis S.J., Leo D. 1987. The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787):
Their History and Theology. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc.

Guittou, Jean. 1965. Great Heresies and Church Councils. New York:
Harper and Row.

Herbermann, Charles G., Edward A. Pace, Conde B. Pallen,
Thomas J. Shahan, John J. Wynne, eds. 1913. The Catholic
Encyclopedia. New York: The Encyclopedia Press. Vol. 1,
Arianism, by William Barry.

Herbermann, Charles G., Edward A. Pace, Conde B. Pallen,
Thomas J. Shahan, John J. Wynne, eds. 1913. The Catholic
Encyclopedia. New York: The Encyclopedia Press. Vol. 11,
Councils of Nicaea, by H. Leclercq.

Ward D.D., Bishop J.W.C. 1955. The Four Great Heresies. London: A.R.
Mowbray and Co. Limited

ISAAC NEWTON: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY AND HIS VIEWS AS AN ARIAN

1. Dates

Born: Woolsthorp, seven miles south of Grantham, Lincolnshire, 25 Dec. 1642

Died: London, 20 March 1727

Dateinfo: Dates Certain

Lifespan: 85 2Father: Agr Isaac Newton père was a yeoman farmer, who might perhaps be called gentry since he was the lord of a minor manor. The background of the family was yeoman, however, and Isaac the father could not read or write. He died before his only son was born. Newton never lived with his stepfather, the Rev. Barnabas Smith, and he hated Smith. Clearly Newton was reared in properous circumstances.

2. Father

Occupation:

3. Nationality

Birth: English

Career: English

Death: English

4. Education

Schooling: Cambridge, M.A.

Newton matriculated in Cambridge in 1661. B.A. 1665. M.A. 1668.

5. Religion

Affiliation: Anglican, Heterodox Newton was born into the Anglican church and publicly conformed to it. At about thirty, he convinced himself that Trinitarianism was a fraud and that Arianism was the true form of primitive Christianity. Newton held these views, very privately, until the end of his life. On his death bed he refused to receive the sacrament of the Anglican church.

6. Scientific Disciplines

Primary: Mathematics, Mechanics, Optics

Subordinate: Physics, Natural Philosophy, Alchemy

There is no need to list anything to justify the three primary disciplines or physics. Newton always considered himself a natural philosopher, and the central strand of his scientific development consisted of his speculations on the nature of physical reality, speculations that led him away from the reigning mechanical philosophy and to a major modification of it that asserted the existence of forces acting at a distance. Newton's long investigation of alchemy is well established from his surviving manuscripts. If the catalogue had room, the discipline of chemistry ought also to be included. In Newton's own career, alchemy clearly overweighed chemistry.

7. Means of Support

Primary: Academia, Personal Means, Government Newton was elected a Fellow of Trinity College in 1667 and remained one until he resigned the fellowship in 1701. The fellowship produced about £50-£60 per annum. He was appointed Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in 1669, with an income of about £100. He retained the chair until he resigned it in 1701.

Although it is difficult wholly to decypher his personal estate, he was the heir to his father's property at Woolsthorpe, and his stepfather added a property as part of the marriage settlement. It appears that Newton had income of about £150 from the estate. What is not clear is the point at which he received it--was it at the

time of his majority (for he was his father's heir), or was it at the time of his mother's death? Note that his stepfather, who died when Newton was eleven, was a very wealthy man, so that his mother had an extensive estate after Smith's death.

Newton was appointed Warden of the Mint (salary £500) in 1696. He moved then from Cambridge to London, where he lived for more than thirty years. In 1699 he became Master, a position he held until his death. The income from this position (which had a base salary of £400) varied according to the amount of money coined, but averaged about £2000. Newton died quite a wealthy man.

8. Patronage

Types: Academic, Scientist, Government Official, Court Official It is a basic fact about Newton, which sets him off from most of the scientists of the age, that he stood fairly resolutely aside from the scramble for patronage. His personal estate, which always insured his survival, may be relevant here.

Nevertheless, there were points at which he, like everyone else, needed patrons, and he had them. First, in Cambridge. Someone had to have stood behind the election, first to a scholarship and then to a fellowship in Trinity, of an unconnected student who ignored the established curriculum. He was not in fact wholly unconnected. Humphrey Babington, one of the Senior Fellows in Trinity, was the brother of the woman with whom Newton lodged while a student in grammar school in Grantham. Although this is not established beyond doubt, it appears probable that Babington stood behind Newton's appointments in Trinity.

Although it is again not established beyond possible doubt, it appears virtually certain that Isaac Barrow arranged for Newton to succeed him as Lucasian Professor. And it is highly likely that it was Barrow, who was then Master of Trinity, who arranged for the royal dispensation that freed Newton from the necessity of ordination in 1675 and made possible his continuation in Cambridge. Charles Montague, a very prominent member of the Whig junto, arranged Newton's appointment to the Mint in 1696, and later his knighthood. I am listing him as governmental official.

In the second and third decades of the 18th century, Newton had a close relation with Princess Caroline, whom he called his "particular friend," and (more distantly) her husband, who became George II. There is no evidence of which I am aware of material favors that Newton received, but I am listing this nevertheless as courtly patronage.

9. Technological Involvement

Types: Instruments, Applied Mathematics, Navigation, Metallurgy

In addition to his reflecting telescope, Newton devised an improved sextant in 1699, and a huge composite burning glass in 1704.

In 1670 he offered a series for the area under a circle to help a computer, and later he developed his method of interpolation for the same purpose.

Beginning in 1714 he served on the government's Board of Longitude. Newton experimented with different alloys, looking for the best reflecting metal to use in his telescope.

10. Scientific Societies

Memberships: Royal Society, 1672; President, 1703 Académie Royal des Sciences, 1699, Foreign Associate. There is abundant evidence that Newton was acquainted with clandestine circles of alchemists from whom he received alchemical manuscripts.

He corresponded with Boyle, Locke, Fatio, Halley, Gregory, and others. There is a full edition of his correspondence. One should mention here his quarrels with Hooke and Flamsteed, and especially the bruising priority dispute with Leibniz.

Sources

Richard S. Westfall, *Never at Rest*, (Cambridge, 1980). I have drawn up this sketch by skimming through my biography to remind myself of details. In writing the biography, I consulted all of the existing literature on Newton, of course, and references to the rest of the literature can be found in the bibliography and notes in *Never at Rest*.

Compiled by:

Richard S. Westfall

Department of History and Philosophy of Science

Indiana University