

The Council of Nicaea and Subsequent Arian-Themed Councils up to 360 A.D.

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摘要：本文闡述了由325年第一次尼西亞大公會議到360年君士坦丁堡會議之間的教會會議歷史。文章圍繞這些會議所發生的事情及頒佈的信經作出介紹，用以凸顯尼西亞大公會議的教導並非如一般所想，立刻被廣為接納。反之，尼西亞的神學思想在往後幾十年卻不斷地受到不同亞略異端派別的挑戰。在君士坦丁大帝的召喚下，眾主教們於325年尼西亞大公會議確認了此會議所制訂的信經，達致教會團結。教會團結於360年元旦再現；不一樣的是，參與會議的主教們是在亞略派皇帝君士坦提烏斯催迫下，確認了「相似派」的教義，而非正統信仰。縱然後來正統獲得了最後勝利，這篇文章旨在強調的，是這兩個年份中間，教會所經歷的混亂局面，為要使讀者們對尼西亞信經是怎樣成為今天正統信仰準則的背景加深了解。

Abstract: This paper explores the history of the councils of the Church between the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (360). It discusses the happenings at these councils and the various creeds promulgated by them, to highlight that—contrary to popular belief—the reception of the Council of Nicaea was not immediate nor were its teachings well-received. In fact, Nicene theology had to face many serious challenges posed by various Arian groups in the period that followed. The Church was united under Emperor Constantine, who made the bishops append their signatures to the Nicene Creed in 325. Unity would once again be achieved in 360, but this time by the Arian Emperor Constantius, who secured the signatures of the bishops to the Homoian doctrine late at night on New Year's Eve 359. Although the final victory would eventually belong to the Nicenes, the aim of this essay is to underline the chaotic situation between those years, in order that one may better appreciate the context from which the Nicene Creed emerged to become the standard of orthodoxy it is today.

Arianism was the main Christological heresy that plagued the Christian world of the first few centuries. Those less theologically versed would presume simplistically that this archetypal heresy had been settled once and for all by the Council of Nicaea (325) through its promulgation of the Nicene Creed, which anathematizes Arian teachings. But this is in fact very far from the truth. There had been more than two dozen Arian-themed councils from the incipency of Arianism in 318 to its being outlawed by Emperor Theodosius in 389. While it was the orthodox that held the upper-hand at the Council of Nicaea (325), at many of the councils that followed, it was the voice of the various Arian groups that prevailed, especially when the empire was ruled by an emperor sympathetic towards the Arian cause. Despite this period of tumult, the Church was able to emerge on the right side. Yet, before that final victory, the orthodox would suffer a serious setback at the Council of Constantinople in 360, when all of the grounds gained at the Council of Nicaea in 325 seemed to have been eradicated. It is the purpose of this essay to explore the various turns of tides between the Council of Nicaea and that point of seemingly irreversible defeat for the Nicenes in 360, in order that the eventual victory of orthodoxy over the Arian heresy that plagued the early centuries of Christianity be better appreciated.

I) Events Leading up to Nicaea

In 313, Emperor Constantine granted freedom of religion to Christians with the Edict of Milan. Christianity entered a new era, with emperors having vested interests in matters of the Church. With

the view that “Christianity was a religion fit for the new empire,”¹ Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea (325) only one year after he became the sole Roman emperor. The emperor was less interested in the theological dispute of Arianism than in regaining Church unity, and less concerned about the bishops’ interpretation of the *homoousios* than about obtaining their subscription to it.²

The Council of Nicaea did not come out of a vacuum. A series of events and councils led up to it. It was a period in which terminologies to describe the person of Christ were still fluid. In fact, “an articulated orthodoxy came into being only in response to the challenge posed by Arius.”³ The lack of consensus even spilled over to the dating of the councils. This essay follows the dating of Hanson for the Arianism-related councils.⁴

The beginning of the Arian crisis has traditionally been dated at 318.⁵ Its main character, Arius (256-336),⁶ was a Libyan-born priest.

1 Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, rev. ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), p. 61.

2 J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), pp. 253-254.

3 Colm Luibheid, *Eusebius of Caesarea and the Arian Crisis* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981), p. 13.

4 Hanson in turn follows the chronology of Opitz, in H.-G. Opitz, “Die Zeitfolge des arianischen Streites von den Anfängen bis zum Jahre 328,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 33, no. 2 (1934): 131-159, for events of the Arian controversy in its early years up to 328. R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (Grand Rapids: T&T Clark, 2005), p. 133.

5 Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), p. 50.

6 Arius was born around 256. Scholars disagree about the year of his death, though most think that it happened in 336. Cf. Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 3, 265. See *Ibid.*, p. 265 n. 106 for the various opinions regarding Arius’ year of death.

In 314 he was given the special permission to preach as a priest at the church of Baucalis in Alexandria by Alexander of Alexandria.⁷ In 318, he publically criticised the Christology of his bishop Alexander and this marked the beginning of the Arian controversy.⁸ Alexander of Alexandria, who firmly believed in the unity of the Godhead and whose stance Arius considered as Sabellian, called the Council of Alexandria (320). He gathered a hundred bishops of Egypt and Libya of whom eighty voted for the excommunication and exile of Arius, who had refused to sign a confession of orthodoxy.⁹ Nevertheless, the theology of Arius was vindicated and declared orthodox by two small councils—the Council of Bithynia in Nicomedia (320) convened by Eusebius of Nicomedia and the Council of Caesarea in Palestine (321/322) at which Arius associated his views with that of bishops including Eusebius of Caesarea.¹⁰ Afterwards, a further Council of Antioch (325) was held. The majority of the bishops at this council supported the position of

7 Richard E. Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God: The Struggle to Define Christianity during the Last Days of Rome* (New York: Harcourt, 1999), p. 52.

8 Hanson, *The Search*, 3. The subtitle of Hanson's book *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* also shows that Hanson considers 318 the beginning of the Arian dispute. Kelly also dates the beginning of the Arian crisis to 318. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 231.

9 Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 53; Hanson, *The Search*, p. 134. Hanson thinks that with hindsight it is more difficult to justify Alexander's position of counting Arius as adamantly heretical when the crisis first broke out. "To many highly intelligent people such as Eusebius of Nicomedia, his namesake of Caesarea, and Asterius, Arianism seemed at the worst one extreme and drastic but not an unacceptable option among many." Hanson, *The Search*, p. 145.

10 Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 17; Hanson, *The Search*, p. 135; Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, pp. 59-60.

Alexander of Alexandria.¹¹ Of the 59 bishops who attended, 56 signed the synodal letter which presented their faith in credal form and anathematised those who considered the Son as a creature. The three who refused to sign, including Eusebius of Caesarea, were provisionally excommunicated.¹²

II) The Council of Nicaea (325)

A new council that was supposed to be held at Ancyra was eventually moved to Nicaea.¹³ The acts of this council have not survived.¹⁴ This ecumenical or universal council was targeted not only to deal with the Arian issue, but also with the schism of Melitius of Lycopolis in Alexandria and the date of Easter.¹⁵ The Nicene canons also demonstrate the council's need to resolve a plethora of disciplinary and organisational issues.

At the council, the date of Easter for all churches was unified,

11 Rowan Williams, *Arius*, p. 58.

12 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 208; Luibhéid, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, pp. 46-48.

13 Rowan Williams, *Arius*, p. 58. Edwards suggests that Constantine changed the venue because he then believed that Marcellus of Ancyra was innocent and Nicaea could be a tribunal for Theognis of Nicaea. Mark Edwards, "The first Council of Nicaea," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 1, *Origins to Constantine*, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 558.

14 Karl Baus et al., *The Imperial Church from Constantine to the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Anselm Biggs, *History of the Church 2*, ed. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), p. 25.

15 Edwards, "The first Council of Nicaea," p. 552.

hence realising Constantine's desire for uniformity.¹⁶ Athanasius later claimed that 318 bishops attended the council.¹⁷ But many of the participants seemed less than fully knowledgeable about the Arian controversy and they simply followed the lead of the key figures who were resolved to condemn the heresy.¹⁸ Arius, Theonas and Secundus were degraded from the presbyterate, excommunicated, and exiled along with the deacon Euzoius, while Theognis of Nicaea and Eusebius of Nicomedia were deposed.¹⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea was on the other hand rehabilitated upon his acceptance of the creed with the word *homoousios*.²⁰

16 Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, p. 61. "Unity of doctrine was, however, not so clearly a matter for an episcopal gathering as was conformity in worship." Edwards, "The first Council of Nicaea," p. 554.

17 Athanasius was deacon and secretary to Alexander of Alexandria at the time of Nicaea. The number 318 was symbolic, based on the 318 men led by Abraham to save Lot (Gen 14:14). Modern scholars estimate approximately 250-300 bishops, with the majority from the East, about twenty from North Africa and only a few representatives from the West, including two priests who acted as legates of Rome, Constantine's confidant Ossius of Cordoba, and a few others. Norman P. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church. A Short History* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), pp. 15-16. The number 318, read as TIH (*Tau Iota Eta*) in Greek, also represents the Cross and Jesus. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, p. 58.

18 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 90.

19 Edwards, "The first Council of Nicaea," p. 564; Rowan Williams, *Arius*, p. 70. An edict was issued against Arius in 333, which renewed the condemnation of his doctrine and ordered the destruction of his writings. Manilo Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 11 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1975), p. 117.

20 A. Carraker, "Eusebius of Caesarea," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), p. 339. Eusebius of Caesarea was willing to accept the word *homoousios* but not in a corporeal sense. He did not yield his theological stance in subscribing to the creed. Though the creed rejected the word κτίσμα which he had previously tolerated, he had always considered the Son as distinct from other creatures. Luibhéid, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, pp. 56-57.

a) The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed²¹ promulgated by the council contains many specifically anti-Arian clauses. It clearly states that Christ is “God from God, light from light” (θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός), “begotten not made” (γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα), “from the substance of the Father” (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς) and therefore “consubstantial with the Father” (ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί). The supposed sayings of Arius on Christ—“there once was when he was not” (ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν), “before he was begotten he was not” (πρὶν γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν), “he came to be from things that were not” (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐγένετο), he was “from another hypostasis or substance” (ἐξ ἐτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας), and “is subject to change or alteration” (τρέπτόν ἢ ἀλλοιωτόν)—were also anathematised.

The creed’s assertion that the Son is “God from God” is traditional, but that he is “light from light” is a denunciation of Arius’ claim in his letter to Alexander that the Son to Father relation is not as Hieracas’ notion of “one torch from another” (λύχνον ἀπὸ λύχνου).²² Arius did admit in his letter to Alexander that the Son “was not before his generation” (οὐκ ἦν πρὸ τοῦ γεννηθῆναι) and in his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia that “he was not, before he was begotten” (πρὶν γεννηθῆναι [...] οὐκ ἦν), which corresponds with “before he was begotten he was not” (πρὶν γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν) in the Nicene anathema. However,

21 The text of the Nicene Creed quoted hereafter is from Concilium Nicaenum I, “Expositio fidei CCCXVIII partum,” in Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed and Ward; Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), pp. 5-6.

22 Edwards, “The first Council of Nicaea,” p. 562.

Edwards doubts that Arius, who believed in a timeless though not eternal generation, would ever have asserted that “there once was when he was not” (ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν).²³

The creed equates *hypostasis* (ὑποστάσεως) with substance (οὐσίας). The subtle differences between ὑποστάσεως and οὐσίας would cause heated debates in the decades that followed, until a clarification was made at the Council of Alexandria (362). Hanson therefore judges the Nicene Creed to be “a mine of potential confusion.”²⁴

There is another obscurity regarding whether the *homoousion* (ὁμοούσιον) in the creed refers to a generic or numeric identity. But the word was key to achieving the emperor’s goal of having a formula acceptable to both orthodox Greeks and Latins by virtue of Arius’ rejection of it.²⁵

The letter of the synod²⁶ repeats the creed’s first three anathemas against Arius and concretises the last two. Christ being “subject to change or alteration” at the end of the Nicene Creed is replaced by Christ being “capable of (δεκτικὸν) evil (κακίας) and goodness (ἀρετῆς)” in the synodal letter. Christ being “from another hypostasis or substance” in the Nicene Creed becomes Christ being “a creature” (κτίσμα) and “a work” (ποίημα) in the synodal letter. That Christ is “a creature”

23 Edwards, “The first Council of Nicaea,” p. 563.

24 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 168.

25 André de Halleux, “La réception du symbole œcuménique, de Nicée à Chalcédoine,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 61 (1985): 11.

26 The text of this letter quoted hereafter is from Concilium Nicaenum I, “Epistula nicaeni concilii ad Aegyptios,” in Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, pp. 16-17.

(κτίσμα) is something claimed specifically by Arius in his letters to Alexander of Alexandria and Eusebius of Nicomedia. But there is no anathema against such saying of Arius at the end of the Nicene Creed.

In “A Textual Variant in the Creed of the Council of Nicaea” (1993), Wiles observes that the phrase ἡ κτιστόν is actually included in many older texts of the Nicene Creed, though in recent times the shorter version without ἡ κτιστόν begins to prevail.²⁷ He claims that Arius’ principle opponents would have wanted in the Nicene Creed a condemnation of the actual Arian term κτίσμα besides the affirmation that the Son is “begotten not made” (γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα).²⁸ He

27 Wiles notes that ἡ κτιστόν is included in the Nicene anathemas in the earlier edition of Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 1st ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), p. 216, but not the more recent Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 5. M. F. Wiles, “A Textual Variant in the Creed of the Council of Nicaea,” *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993) 428-429. While Wiles is right in observing that recent texts of the Nicene Creed tend not to include the phrase ἡ κτιστόν, he does not seem to have noticed that even Kelly, in his newer edition of the same book, has also taken out the phrase ἡ κτιστόν. Cf. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), p. 216.

28 Prior to Nicaea, both unbegotten (ἀγέννητος) and uncreated (ἀγένητος) referred to “the uncreated, intransitory and ideal being with which the world of coming into being, passing away and *doxa* is contrasted.” Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 2nd ed., trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), p. 230. According to Hanson, Athanasius had difficulty distinguishing between the ἀγέννητος and ἀγένητος in *Orationes contra Arianos*, letting the opportunity to claim the Son as eternally begotten (thus not *agenetos*) but uncreated (*agenetos*) slip away. Hanson, *The Search*, p. 433. Cf. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.9.33. Athanasius was unwilling to refer to the Son as *agenetos* due to its equivocality. The three meanings of *agenetos* according to Athanasius as expressed by Hanson are: “something which could come into existence but has not done so, like a tree which is not yet a boat,” “something which has not come into existence and never could, like a four-sided triangle or an even odd number,” and “that which exists but has not come into existence from any source.” Hanson, *The Search*, p. 432. Cf. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.9.30. Obviously, the Son is *agenetos* in the third sense.

believes it to be “factually sound” to maintain that Athanasius had interpolated the words ἡ κτιστόν in his quoting of the Nicene anathemas. In so doing, Athanasius has successfully “prevented generations of Christians from seeing [the teaching of Arius] in a clear light.”²⁹

It had been wrongly conjectured that the Nicene Creed was based on the Creed of Caesarea. This misunderstanding results from the claim of Eusebius of Caesarea, in his letter to the church of Caesarea about the happenings at the council, that he presented a creed to the council which the emperor declared as orthodox and requested the bishops at the council to sign it simply after adding the word *homoousios*.³⁰ But what Eusebius submitted was actually a document which included both a creed and an explanation to demonstrate his orthodoxy.³¹ Kelly deems that what Eusebius presented was neither the Nicene Creed nor the Caesarean Creed, but a creed of his own, combining baptismal creeds based on the Caesarean model, not with the intention that it should become the creed of the council, but to vindicate himself. What Eusebius meant in his letter was that there was a compatibility in doctrine between the creed he presented and the Nicene Creed.³² As for the source of the Nicene

29 Wiles, “A Textual Variant,” pp. 430-433 (quotation from pp. 432, 433). Even though Arius actually described the Son as κτίσμα but not ποίημα—ποίημα being the stronger term explicitly rejected by Dionysius of Rome—Athanasius would “claim that to be a κτίσμα is the same as to be a ποίημα.” The bishop of Alexandria would also include both κτίσμα and ποίημα in his summarising of the Nicaea anathemas in *De decretis* and *Epistula ad Afros*. “It was not a big step to include the words ἡ κτιστόν when he is quoting rather than summarising the anathemas.” *Ibid.*, pp. 431-432 (quotation from p. 432).

30 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 214, 217.

31 Luibhéid, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, pp. 54-55.

32 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 182, 221. Indeed, the context in which the creed of Eusebius was presented made it impossible that it would become the Nicene Creed. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

Creed, Kelly admits that one cannot be more precise than claiming that it came from local baptismal creeds of the Syro-Palestinian type.³³

b) The *Homoousios*

According to Ayres, there is no such thing as clearly a defined Nicene theology.³⁴ The most distinctive feature of Nicene theology is the *homoousios* (ὁμοούσιος).³⁵ Tanner attributes the inclusion of this word in the creed as the council's response to Arius' explicit rejection of the Son being *homoousios* with the Father in his letter to Alexander.³⁶ Simonetti sees the term as a positive affirmation of orthodox doctrine by the council.³⁷ Nevertheless, this word did not appear in writings in the two decades following Nicaea.³⁸ Kelly considers the absence of this word even in the works of Athanasius as evidence that the Council of Nicaea had not actually taught any positive theology.³⁹

The silence over the word *homoousios* other than its role as the bullet against Arianism is understandable. For orthodox theologians, it means

33 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 227, 229. So the Nicene and Caesarean Creeds "are therefore related, not, however, as offspring to parent, but as two denizens of one and the same ecclesiastical region." *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.

34 Even the "original Nicene" theologies of Athanasius of Alexandria and Marcellus of Ancyra are quite different. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 99.

35 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 142.

36 Tanner, "Greek Metaphysics," *The Church in Council*, p. 209. Arius might have in mind the condemnation of Paul of Samosata at Antioch when he purposely rejected the word ὁμοούσιος. The use of a term condemned at Antioch by Nicaea has over the years been rationalised as a condemnation of the *homoousion* in a material sense at Antioch, but an approval of it in a spiritual sense at Nicaea. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

37 Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 81.

38 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 96.

39 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 259.

a numerical identity of primary substance (πρώτη οὐσία) of the Father and the Son. But it could also refer to a generic identity of secondary substance (δευτέρα οὐσία) like that of two human beings, or even a material identity, like that of two clay pots.⁴⁰ Its equivocality is both the reason for its adoption at Nicaea and its being rejected in the many councils that followed Nicaea. There are several objections against the use of the term *homoousios*. First, its ambiguous meaning could suggest a materialistic connotation which would imply that the Father and the Son are separable portions of one substance. Second, it suggests the old heresy of Sabellianism, which considers the Father and the Son as identical. Third, the term has been used by previous heretics, including Paul of Samosata, who was condemned at the Council of Antioch (268). Fourth, this word is not scriptural.⁴¹ Grillmeier commends the Nicene fathers for having the courage to use this unbiblical word as “a truly kerygmatic course of action to take, in full accord with the tradition.”⁴²

c) Reception of Nicaea

Creeds prior to the Arian controversy were baptismal creeds. The Arian crisis made the previously relatively free schemes of *regula fidei* insufficient and thus necessitated the ecumenical “canonisation” of the “exposés de foi.”⁴³ Though the Nicene Creed was not used at baptisms or liturgies, nor was it intended for the laity,⁴⁴ by its being the first creed

⁴⁰ Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 244-245; Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 61.

⁴¹ Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 238.

⁴² Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 270.

⁴³ De Halleux, “La réception du symbole œcuménique,” pp. 7-8.

⁴⁴ Edwards, “The first Council of Nicaea,” p. 5.

promulgated by an ecumenical council, “it was the first which could claim universal authority in a legal sense.”⁴⁵

But what Nicaea promulgated did not immediately receive the universal acclaim it has today. There is a common misconception that the Nicene Creed was promulgated to become “a binding and universal formula of Christian faith with a carefully chosen terminology,” but this idea was “unlikely to have occurred to anyone at Nicaea simply because the idea that any creed might so serve was as yet unheard of.”⁴⁶ After all, the council was concerned with much more than just the Arian crisis. “It has long been established that neither the creed nor the council of Nicaea exhibited any unique authority until almost three decades after the council.”⁴⁷ The creed was rarely cited immediately after Nicaea, nor was it used much by Athanasius until later. Yet, the prominent status of the Nicene Creed comes not only from how it was received at the time, but how it was received and evaluated by posterity.⁴⁸

According to Kelly, the West did not have any direct access to important Arian texts like the letters of Arius until probably 355 when the first Latin translations were published and Hilary of Poitiers

45 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 207. The new conciliar creeds which may include anathemas were aimed “to have a far more than local authority” and meant to serve as “tests of the orthodoxy of Christians in general.” *Ibid.*, p. 205.

46 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 85.

47 Daniel H. Williams, “Another Exception to Later Fourth-Century ‘Arian’ Typologies: The Case of Germinius of Sirmium,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4, no. 3 (1996): 336.

48 Norman Tanner, “The Book of the Councils: Nicaea I to Vatican II,” in *The Church in Council: Conciliar Movements, Religious Practice and the Papacy from Nicaea to Vatican II* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2011), p. 179.

introduced them to the West.⁴⁹ In fact, the bishops at the Council of Ariminum (359) were willing to accept a supposedly orthodox creed different from that of Nicaea, and it was only after then that Nicaea became the “sole expression of orthodoxy in the west.”⁵⁰

III) The Uncertain Status of Nicaea after Nicaea

After Nicaea, Constantine gradually moved away from his Nicene stance towards that of Arianism. Simonetti attributes this to Constantine’s desire to remove anti-Arian bishops of the big cities like Eustathius of Antioch and Athanasius of Alexandria so that a more moderate and thus more easily controllable tendency would prevail.⁵¹ Eusebius of Nicomedia became Constantine’s confidant⁵² and this “most prominent Arian bishop in his realm” even baptised the emperor at his deathbed.⁵³

The tide was turning against the Nicenes. At the Council of Nicaea or Nicomedia (327-328), the views of Arius and Euzoius, who presented a creed declaring the Son as begotten from the Father before all ages

49 The West, however, did know about the Nicaea event, and bigger sees may even have owned copies of the Nicene Creed and canons in their original Greek language with Latin translations. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 258. Hilary himself admitted that he had not heard about the Nicene faith before his exile in 355/356. “fidem Nicaenam numquam nisi exsulaturus audivi.” Hilary of Poitiers, *De synodis* 91 (PL 10: 545).

50 Daniel H. Williams, “Another Exception,” p. 336 n. 4. Cf. *Idem, Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Nicene-Arian Conflicts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p. 7.

51 Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, pp. 101-102.

52 This could partly be due to the trust he earned from Constantia, Constantine’s stepsister, who lived in Nicomedia. Baus et al., *The Imperial Church*, p. 29.

53 J. E. Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 89.

without the *homoousios*, were deemed orthodox.⁵⁴ At the Council of Antioch (330) presided over by Eusebius of Caesarea, Eustathius of Antioch was charged with Sabellianism and deposed.⁵⁵ Asclepas of Gaza was deposed at a separate Council of Antioch (330 or 331).⁵⁶ The Council of Caesarea in Palestine (334) aimed to examine Athanasius of Alexandria, not for his doctrine, but for his alleged misconduct.⁵⁷ Refusing to appear, Athanasius was summoned to the Council of Tyre (335) at which he was condemned, deposed, and excommunicated for his use of violence.⁵⁸ Constantine's attitude towards Arius has also changed towards favouring rehabilitating him quietly.⁵⁹ The emperor called a council in Jerusalem in September between the two sessions of Tyre for the dedication of the church of the Holy Sepulchre to reunify the various Christian factions in celebration of the 30th anniversary of his accession. The persons of Arius and Euzoius were readmitted, and

54 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 178; Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 119; Rowan Williams, *Arius*, p. 75.

55 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 209, 211, 277-278; Baus et al., *The Imperial Church*, p. 30. On the other hand, Eustathius has also been considered a follower of the Adoptionist Paul of Samosata and a forerunner of Nestorius. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 296. Simonetti dates the deposition of Eustathius around 327 instead. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 107.

56 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 278. Simonetti dates the deposition of Asclepas at 327. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 103.

57 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 258. Athanasius was alleged to have murdered the Arian bishop Arsenius of Hypsele. Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, p. 120.

58 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 99; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 259, 261; Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 128. Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum were on the Meroitic Commission that condemned Athanasius. Hanson, *The Search*, p. 591.

59 Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, pp. 120, 122.

the Melitians were reintegrated.⁶⁰

Then at the Council of Constantinople (336) proposed by Eusebius of Nicomedia, the eastern bishops, together with western bishops including Valens and Ursacius, deposed and exiled the extreme Alexandrian Marcellus of Ancyra for holding the ideas of Paul of Samosata, and put Basil of Ancyra in his place.⁶¹ So Nicaea had failed to definitively wipe out the Arian heresy, and the power and wavering attitude of the emperor had enhanced its comeback. A lot could still be done by anti-Nicene theologians.

To vindicate himself, Athanasius held the grand Council of Alexandria (338), and St. Anthony came from the desert to demonstrate his support for him.⁶² But Constantine died in 337 and the empire was shared between his sons Constantius II, Constantine II and Constans I.

60 Frederick W. Norris, "Greek Christianities," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 2, *Constantine to c. 600*, ed. Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 74; Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, p. 131; Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 128; Rowan Williams, *Arius*, pp. 78-79. It is questionable whether the decisions of the provincial Council of Tyre could overturn that of the general Council of Nicaea. Michel Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident 335-430*, Patristica Sorbonensia 8, ed. H.-I. Marrou (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), p. 271. However, the doctrine of Arius remained under the condemnation of the Council of Nicaea (325) and the edict of 333 which renewed the condemnation. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 133.

61 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 217; Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, pp. 133-134. For an exposition of the doctrine of Marcellus, see Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 217-235. Hanson considers the doctrine of Marcellus as "outright Sabellianism." *Ibid.*, p. 224. To Marcellus, *homoousios* implies not only the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son, but also their being identical (ταυτούσιος). *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230. It was said that Arius assented to the Nicene Creed (hiding his genuine belief, according to Athanasius) and was supposed to be restored to communion by the order of the emperor, but he died the night before. Rowan Williams, *Arius*, pp. 80-81.

62 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 267; Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 141.

It came as no surprise that the Eusebians, with the approval of the Arian Constantius, were able to reiterate the deposition of Athanasius at the Council of Antioch (338/399).⁶³ On the other hand, the death of Constantine opened an opportunity for the Pope to take control of the situation—an opportunity not available during Constantine's reign, when the emperor was seen as the "true and proper head of the whole Church."⁶⁴ Thus, Pope Julius I convoked the Council of Rome (341). The Eusebians refused to attend. The 50 bishops gathered readmitted Marcellus of Ancyra, whose theology they found orthodox, and declared Athanasius, whose conduct they found irreproachable, the lawful bishop of Alexandria.⁶⁵ The overturning of one council's decision by another council during this chaotic period paints a vivid picture of the vulnerability of the Nicene decisions. This helps explain why later theologians would have to be so defensive about Nicaea as the unquestionable standard of orthodoxy.

The uncertain status of Nicaea only went from bad to worse. On the occasion of the dedication of the golden church, 97 oriental bishops—many of them were Eusebians hostile to Athanasius—gathered for the Dedication Council of Antioch (341), as a reaction to the council of

63 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 104.

64 "la nuova realtà che vedeva nell'imperatore il vero e proprio capo di tutta la chiesa." Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 151.

65 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 109; Baus et al., *The Imperial Church*, p. 36; Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, p. 82; Hanson, *The Search*, p. 270; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 264. Simonetti views this council a decisive moment of western intervention in the Arian controversy. It demonstrates that the bishop of Rome cannot be disinterested in the matter. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 150. The rehabilitation of Marcellus scandalised the easterners. *Ibid.*, p. 153. For Hanson, the western bishops had made an oversimplified judgement about Marcellus' orthodoxy due to their limited knowledge of Nicaea and the western tradition of Monarchianism. Hanson, *The Search*, p. 272.

Pope Julius I.⁶⁶ The bishops at this council disassociated themselves from Arius, claiming at the beginning of the First Creed of Antioch that they as bishops could not possibly be followers of a priest.⁶⁷

The Second Creed of Antioch (Dedication Creed) was intended to be a substitute for the Nicene Creed. It is not adamantly Arian in nature, for it claims that the Son is the exact image of the *ousia* of the Father, but it is strongly anti-Sabellian and anti-Marcellan.⁶⁸ This creed would later be associated with the Homoiousians.⁶⁹ A group of bishops stayed after the council to draw up the Fourth Creed of Antioch and targeted it as a *via media* formula between Arianism and the Nicene faith.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the Catholics could not accept this *via media* faith as orthodox faith. With Nicene faith as the standard of orthodoxy, a middle position between Arianism and the Nicene faith would already be too Arian for Catholics.⁷¹

66 Henry R. Percival, ed., *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series 14, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Reprint, Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 105; Hanson, *The Search*, p. 285; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 264.

67 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 123, 285; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 264-265. Cf. “Ἡμεῖς οὐτε ἀκόλουθοι Ἀρείου γεγόναμεν· πῶς γὰρ ἐπίσκοποι ὄντες ἀκολουθοῦμεν πρεσβυτέρῳ;” Athanasius of Alexandria, *De synodis* 22.3 (SC 563: 248).

68 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 287-288; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 268-270. This creed has Origen, Asterius and Eusebius of Caesarea as its sources. Hanson, *The Search*, p. 290.

69 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 765.

70 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 292; Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 164. Meslin points out that all four Antiochene creeds are silent about the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son for fear of neo-Sabellianism. Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident*, pp. 258-259.

71 The spectrum from extreme Arianism to extreme Sabellianism spanned from the faith of the Anomoians to that of the Homoians, Homoiousians, Homoousians, Marcellans and Photinians. Each group claimed to be the *via media* between the other extremes they situated between. The search for orthodoxy was therefore not only a search for the *via media*, but a search for the right *via media*.

a) Council of Sardica (343)

The Council of Sardica (343) was initiated by the orthodox western emperor Constans. 178 bishops were present—98 were from the West and 80 from the East.⁷² Hanson calls the council a “débacle” since it never met as one council and the western and eastern bishops ended up accusing each other as Arians and Sabellians respectively.⁷³ The oriental bishops commenced by challenging why Athanasius, Marcellus of Ancyra and Asclepas of Gaza, who had been deposed, were present at the council. Their attempt failed, the eastern bishops left and met instead at Philippopolis where they issued an encyclical that explained their objections against Athanasius and Marcellus, and excommunicated a list of western bishops. Hoping still to reach an agreement with the westerners, they also attached the relatively placating Fourth Creed of Antioch (341) which mentions neither the *homoousios* nor God as three *hypostases*, and appending to it anathemas that condemn, among others, those who claim there are three gods.⁷⁴

The westerners stayed to continue the meeting. This Western Council of Sardica defended Athanasius, Marcellus and Asclepas, and excommunicated a great number of eastern bishops. They decided to reissue the Nicene Creed rather than formulate a new one, and a doctrinal statement was drawn up as an explanation of the creed by

⁷² Hanson, *The Search*, p. 294; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 274.

⁷³ Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 295, 306, xvii.

⁷⁴ Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, p. 85; Hanson, *The Search*, p. 298; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 275-276; *Idem*, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 248.

Ossius of Cordova and Protogenes of Sardica.⁷⁵ The Sardican statement attacks the Arian heresy which claims that the Son is not coeternal with the Father. “It is most absurd to affirm that the Father ever existed without the Son, for that this could never be the case has been testified by the Son himself, who said, *I am in the Father, and the Father in me and I and the Father are one.*”⁷⁶ Against the Arian interpretation that Jn 10:30 implies a harmony of will between the Father and Son, this orthodox Sardican council argues for the consubstantiality between the Father and Son as one *hypostasis*.

The following words uttered by our Lord, *I and the Father are one*, are by some persons explained as referring to the concord and harmony which prevail between the Father and the Son; but this is a blasphemous and perverse interpretation. All we Catholics have condemned their foolish and lamentable opinion [...]. [...] those holy words *I and the Father are one* point out the oneness of the *hypostasis*, which is one both of the Father and of the Son.⁷⁷

75 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, pp. 124-125; Baus et al., *The Imperial Church*, p. 38; Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, pp. 85-86; Hanson, *The Search*, p. 300; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 277; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 242.

76 The English translation is from J. Stevenson and W. H. C. Frend, ed., *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), p. 16. “Ἀποστόλου γὰρ ἐστὶ λέγειν ποτὲ πατέρα μὴ γεγενῆσθαι· πατέρα χωρὶς υἱοῦ μὴτε ὀνομάζεσθαι μὴτε εἶναι δύνασθαι, ἔστιν αὐτοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ μαρτυρία· Ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἑσμεν.” “The Doctrinal Statement of the Western Council of Sardica,” in Theodoret of Cyrus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.8.41 (SC 501: 370). Cf. Jn 14:10, Jn 10:30.

77 The English translation is from Stevenson and Frend, ed., *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, pp. 16-17. “Ἀυτῆ δὲ αὐτῶν ἡ βλάσφημος καὶ διεσθαρμένη ἐρμηνεῖα· τοῦτου ἕνεκα εἰρηκέναι αὐτὸν φιλονεικοῦσιν Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἑσμεν διὰ τὴν συμφωνίαν καὶ τὴν ὁμόνοιαν. Κατέγνωμεν πάντες οἱ καθολικοὶ τῆς μωρᾶς καὶ οἰκτρᾶς αὐτῶν διανοίας. [...] ὅτι ἡ ἱερὰ φωνὴ ἐλάλησεν Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἑσμεν, καὶ διὰ τὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως ἐνότητα, ἥτις ἐστὶ μία τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μία τοῦ υἱοῦ.” “The Doctrinal Statement of the Western Council of Sardica,” in Theodoret of Cyrus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.8.45-47 (SC 501: 372).

b) Attempts of Reconciliation

Striving to reconcile with the West, the Council of Antioch (344) produced a creed called the Long-lined Creed (*Ecthesis Macrostichos*) based on the Fourth Creed of Antioch (341). The words *hypostasis* and *ousia* which had caused previous confusion were avoided. The phrase “three *hypostases*” feared by the West as implying three gods was replaced by “three things and three *prosôpa*” (τρία πράγματα και τρία πρόσωπα). A new formulation that would become important in the future was used, describing the Son as *homoiôs*—like in all things to the Father (τῷ πατρὶ κατὰ πάντα ὅμοιος). Four eastern bishops took the *Macrostich* to the Council of Milan (345) to explain their viewpoint to the westerners and Emperor Constans. But their mission did not succeed because they refused to condemn Arius as demanded by the western bishops.⁷⁸

From the use of *homoousios* at Nicaea to the avoidance of its use in later creeds and councils, endeavours to settle theological disputes had been made through careful choice of using or not using certain words to satisfy the greatest majority.

Notwithstanding the failed reconciliation attempt, the eastern and western bishops did agree to jointly condemn Photinus of Sirmium—Marcellus’ extreme disciple—at the Council of Milan (345).⁷⁹ Photinus would again be condemned at the Council of Milan (347), the First

78 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 309, 312; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 279-280; Meslin, *Les Ariens d’Occident*, p. 265.

79 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 236; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 280.

Council of Sirmium (347/348), and finally deposed at the Second Council of Sirmium (351).⁸⁰ Photinus was a strict monarchist who considered that Christ had no pre-existence, was born of Mary, and given special power (δραστική ἐνέργεια) by the Father. His insistence that Christ had a human soul such that as a complete man he could save the humanity which he had assumed presents Photinus reductively to those in the fourth and fifth century as an Adoptionist, who sees Christ as a mere man adopted by God with only a moral union with the Logos who was raised to the status as the Son by his merits.⁸¹

It is also worth mentioning that at the Councils of Milan, Valens and Ursacius, who used to be anti-Nicenes, dropped their charges against Athanasius and turned around to condemn Arius. Hanson remarks that such was the “reconciliation” between the East and West during this period, “when these two expert students of the imperial wind began to veer towards the pro-Nicene side.”⁸² However, at the Council of Antioch (349), Athanasius was condemned again.⁸³

IV) Under the Influence of Constantius II (337/351-361)

Constantine I, who controlled the West, died in 337, and Constantius, who ruled the East, became the sole emperor of the Roman empire by

⁸⁰ Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 236, 313.

⁸¹ Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 237-238; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 296; Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, pp. 204-206. Simonetti comments that one could see a continuity between Photinus and Paul of Samosata through Marcellus of Ancyra. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 206.

⁸² But Valens and Ursacius did not positively accept the *homoousios*. Hanson, *The Search*, p. 313.

⁸³ Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, pp. 143-144.

353. Simonetti evaluates that the religious policies of Constantine and the intense interest of Constantius in religious matters had effectively made the emperor become the true head of the Church.⁸⁴ Just as the political situation with two emperors favoured a separation of the Eastern and Western churches, with one emperor alone, a return to Church unity was favoured.⁸⁵ Hanson calls Constantius “a devout man” who saw in Homoianism “the best chance of uniting the church.”⁸⁶ To achieve this end, the Arian emperor would convene a series of councils to the favour of the Homoians.⁸⁷

Brown explains that Constantius’ Homoian inclination came from his preference for the middle road, given that Arianism was more acceptable to those more cultured in philosophy “against the suspect new piety of Athanasius.” Besides depicting Christ as a Neo-Platonic intermediary less than God, the Arian portrayal of Christ as God’s representative, like a governor acting as Constantius’ representative, added “a new court society” appeal to Arianism.⁸⁸

84 Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, pp. 213, 565. However, Constantine’s authority and prestige had allowed him to control Church affairs according to his pleasure. But his successors, though with the same ambition, did not have the same prestige. Thus, their efforts in intervening into the matters of the Church did not come with the same ease and absence of resistance as when the empire was under the reign of Constantine. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

85 Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 213.

86 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 324-325. However, Constantius did waver his stance from 344 to 351 and favoured the Homoiousians in 358. *Ibid.*, p. 324. Though Constantius had gone down in history as a relentless Arian who cruelly persecuted the Nicenes, Hanson remarks that the emperor was actually quite tolerant compared to other Roman emperors, and he was lenient especially to Hilary. *Ibid.*, pp. 318, 321-322.

87 Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, p. 201.

88 Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, p. 90.

At the Second Council of Sirmium (351), Valens and Ursacius were said to have reversed away from their new “pro-Nicene” stance.⁸⁹ Photinus was not only condemned again after debating with Basil of Ancyra; he was finally deposed.⁹⁰ The council promulgated the First Creed of Sirmium (351), which is based on the Fourth Creed of Antioch (341) with 26 added anathemas, of which 14 go against the extremes of Photinus, Marcellus and Sabellius on the one hand, and 3 go against extreme Arianism on the other.⁹¹ This creed, which does not ban the word *ousia*, was looked upon positively by Hilary as a formulation necessary to counteract the western supporters of Photinus.⁹² Hanson sees this more anti-Nicene creed as a foreshadowing of the Sirmium Creed of 357.⁹³

Indeed, the pro-Nicenes would suffer greater setbacks in the next few councils. At the Council of Arles (353), with Saturninus of Arles being one of the few bishops in Gaul who favoured the Arian Constantius, Athanasius was condemned.⁹⁴ At the Council of Milan (355), the bishops were under imperial order to condemn Athanasius. Eusebius of Vercelli, a committed Nicene, presented the Nicene Creed and said he would be willing to do so if the bishops would sign the creed. It is said that when Dionysius of Milan was going to sign, Valens of Mursa struck the pen from his hand and Constantius moved the

89 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 329.

90 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 325, 592.

91 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 326, 328.

92 Daniel H. Williams, “Another Exception,” pp. 341-342.

93 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 329.

94 Ralph W. Mathisen, “Arles,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), p. 61; Hanson, *The Search*, p. 342.

council from the Milan church to his palace. This is said to be the point at which “Constantius’ claim to direct the Church reached its climax.”⁹⁵ Eusebius of Vercelli, Dionysius of Milan and Lucifer of Calaris were deposed and exiled.⁹⁶ The Arian Auxentius, who would become Hilary’s arch-rival, succeeded to the see of Milan, making Milan the “center of Arian resistance to the Nicene Creed.”⁹⁷ Soon after, Hilary of Poitiers was called to the Council of Béziers (356)⁹⁸ for publically excommunicating Saturninus of Arles, who acted as Constantius’ policy executor in Gaul, and was exiled by Constantius as a result.⁹⁹

a) Anomoian Surge

The situation became more severe for the pro-Nicenes. The stage was set for stronger anti-Nicene sentiments. It was during this period that the radical Arians had their relatively most successful days, especially at the Third Council of Sirmium (357). But due to Constantius’ preference for the middle road within Arianism, the Anomoians had never been able to completely dominate any council. Yet, perhaps because of the radical nature of Anomoianism, it attracted great attention on a polemical level. Both Basil and Gregory of Nyssa would write specifically against Eunomius.

95 This is seen by Constantius’ action of transferring the council from the Milan church to his palace. Baus et al., *The Imperial Church*, p. 82.

96 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 333-334, 507.

97 Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, p. 92.

98 The exact date of this council is not known, but Hanson conjectures that it was held in 356. Hanson, *The Search*, p. 332. Baus dates this council at 353. Baus et al., *The Imperial Church*, p. 42.

99 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 332, 461-462.

The Third Council of Sirmium (357) was a small council at which Valens, Ursacius and Germinius were present,¹⁰⁰ but its ramifications were huge. Meslin finds this the first occasion on which the Illyrian bishops quit the *via media*.¹⁰¹ Hilary called the Second Creed of Sirmium produced by the council “the blasphemy” since it explicitly forbids the words *ousia*, *homoousios* and *homoiousios*, and its agnostic attitude towards the generation of the Son gives room to Arian interpretations that the Son was generated from nothing or from a substance different from the Father.¹⁰² Hanson considers this overtly anti-Nicene creed the Homoian manifesto and finds it not strikingly Anomoian,¹⁰³ but Williams questions this claim since the Homoians were not a coherent group and the creed does not claim that the Son was *homoios* to the Father.¹⁰⁴ Simonetti judges that this creed marked a total liquidation of Nicene faith as well as a tolerance towards the Anomoian doctrine.¹⁰⁵

It should be noted that the bishops of Africa and Gaul did condemn the blasphemy of Ursace and Valens at this council.¹⁰⁶ This shows that even when the wind blew in great favour of the Arians, the African bishops did remain orthodox.

100 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 343-344.

101 Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident*, p. 278.

102 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 286-287; Daniel H. Williams, “Another Exception,” p. 343. This Second Creed of Sirmium in Latin is the first document with the word *homoiousios*. Hanson, *The Search*, p. 346.

103 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 346-347.

104 Daniel H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 19.

105 Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 233; *Idem*, “Arianesimo latino,” *Studi Medievali* Serie Terza 8, no. 2 (1967): 674.

106 G. Folliet, “L'Épiscopat Africain et la crise Arienne au IV^e siècle,” *Revue des Études Byzantines* 24 (1966): 212.

b) Homoiousian Reaction

Responding to the Council of Sirmium (357), Basil of Ancyra, a Homoiousian, summoned the Council of Ancyra (358). It is worth mentioning that the Homoiousians did not really use the word ὁμοιούσιος (*homoiousios*). They instead say that the Son is like the Father according to *ousia* (ὅμοιος κατ' οὐσίαν), otherwise the Son would not be a Son but only a creature. Yet, the Son must not be identical with the Father lest there be Sabellianism.¹⁰⁷ Of the 19 anathemas of the council, most focus on condemning the Sabellianism of Marcellus as well as Anomoianism which claims that the Son is *anomoios* in *ousia* from the Father, and a few go against the *homoousios*.¹⁰⁸

According to Folliet, Basil of Ancyra relied on the adherence of Africa to his Homoiousian doctrine, though it is difficult to tell how he had won them to his cause.¹⁰⁹ Considering that Hilary had, from his exile, written to bishops of Gaul and Britain suggesting to them not to reject the Homoiousians who had denounced the *anomoios*,¹¹⁰ though the African bishops had not been hard core Nicenes on this occasion, they could not be said to have adhered to a blatantly Arian way either.

The Fourth Council of Sirmium (358) formulated the Third Creed of Sirmium, which is now lost. The creed is supposed to have included the Second Creed of Antioch (341), the First Creed of Sirmium (351),

¹⁰⁷ Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 349, 353-354, 486.

¹⁰⁸ Hanson, *The Search*, p. 355.

¹⁰⁹ Folliet, "L'Épiscopat Africain," p. 213.

¹¹⁰ Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, p. 96.

a condemnation of the *homoousion*, and a declaration that the Son is “like in *ousia* and in everything else” with the Father.¹¹¹

c) Homoian Triumph

Despite the temporary success of the Anomoeans and the Homoiousians, it was the Homoians that would eventually triumph, since they were backed by Emperor Constantius. It had been the desire of the emperor to hold a new council as significant as the Council of Nicaea had been to Constantine to restore religious unity.¹¹² The Fifth Council of Sirmium (359) was the preparatory meeting for such a council. It produced the Fourth Creed of Sirmium on 2nd May 359—thus called the “Dated Creed”—which declared that “the Son is like the Father in all respects (ὅμοιον κατὰ πάντα), as the holy Scriptures also declare and teach.”¹¹³ Supposed to be a compromise creed between the Homoians and the Homoiousians, its rejection of the unscriptural word *ousia*—lest it confuses the laity (thus not banning its use among theologians)—is much milder than that in the Second Creed of Sirmium (357).¹¹⁴

The real showdown between the various groups of Arians and the

111 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 360.

112 Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 243.

113 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 364. Mark of Arethusa was the author of the Dated Creed, under the influence of Germinius of Sirmium. *Ibid.*, p. 363. Cf. “Ὅμοιον [...] τὸν υἱὸν τῷ πατρὶ κατὰ πάντα ὡς καὶ αἱ ἄγλαι γραφαὶ λέγουσὶ τε καὶ διδάσκουσι.” Athanasius of Alexandria, *De synodis* 8.7 (SC 563: 200).

114 Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 364-365. Valens had attempted to remove the phrase “in all respects,” but was forced by Constantius to accept it. *Ibid.*, p. 365; Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident*, p. 284.

Nicenes began at the dual councils of Seleucia and Ariminum (359). Approximately 160 eastern bishops were present at the eastern Council of Seleucia. The majority of them were Homoiousians led by Basil of Ancyra and George of Laodicea who favoured a ratification of the Dedication Creed (341). But the minority Homoians led by Akakius of Caesarea walked out and met separately to adopt instead the Dated Creed (359) along with a condemnation of *homoousios*, *homoiousios* and *anomoios*.¹¹⁵

At the parallel western Council of Ariminum, an assembly of 400 bishops gathered. Forewarned by the anti-Arian bishops at Seleucia about the necessity to stay steadfast against Arianism, the orthodox majority at Ariminum were able to endorse the Nicene Creed in the first session, overpowering the 20 percent Arian minority led by Valens, Ursacius and Auxentius of Milan who favoured the Dated Creed. They sent a delegation of 10 bishops led by Restitutus of Carthage to explain their decision to Emperor Constantius. But at the meeting between the majority and the minority arranged by the emperor at Niké on 10 October 359, Restitutus of Carthage and the delegation strangely overturned their own pro-Nicene stance and subscribed to the Creed of Niké, which is the Dated Creed with “in all aspects” (κατὰ πάντα) removed. In addition, the Council of Niké prohibited the unscriptural word *ousia* and the phrase “one *hypostasis*.” The emperor sent Valens back to Ariminum to secure the support of the western bishops. The bishops at the second session of Ariminum succumbed to the political pressure and unanimously accepted the pre-formulated Homoian

¹¹⁵ Baus et al., *The Imperial Church*, p. 49; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 372-373; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 292. Hanson considers the Council of Seleucia (359) “as much a débacle as” the Council of Sardica (343). Hanson, *The Search*, p. 372.

Niké-Ariminum Creed.¹¹⁶ Allegedly, the western bishops were being misled to inadvertently denouncing the Nicene faith by Valens' "fraudem diaboli," since the bishop of Mursa appended to the Homoian creed anti-Arian anathemas which included the claim that the Son was not a creature as other creatures, veiling the implication that the Son was therefore but a creature.¹¹⁷ Constantius finally got the signatures of the Homoiousian delegation from Seleucia at Constantinople late at night on 31 December 359 so that outward unity of the Church was re-established under the Homoian banner by New Year 360.¹¹⁸

116 Baus et al., *The Imperial Church*, pp. 48, 83; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 375-380; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 291; W. Löhr, "Western Christianities," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 2, *Constantine to c. 600*, ed. Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 13; Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 321. Hanson suggests that Niké in Thrace was chosen as the meeting place due to its resonance to Nicaea. Hanson, *The Search*, p. 378. Williams believes that it was probably Valens who initiated the removal of the phrase "in all aspects," since he had attempted to do the same, though unsuccessfully, at the Fifth Council of Sirmium (359). Daniel H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 25. Baus notes that the fifteen or so bishops who had doubts about the Ariminum Creed thought that they could still make supplementary explanations after signing. Baus et al., *The Imperial Church*, 48. Williams thinks that the Homoian triumph at Ariminum was "largely due to the naiveté of the majority of western bishops" and the fact that western bishops, despite their original adherence to the Nicene faith, "were not prepared to suffer exile for it if another creed could be demonstrated as equally orthodox." Daniel H. Williams, "Politically Correct in Milan," p. 443. According to Ayres, the banning of *ousia* terminologies at Sirmium (357) and the 359-360 councils was aimed not to make peace but to displace traditions like depicting the Son as "light from light" towards a more subordinationistic formulation. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 432.

117 Daniel H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 28, 30-31. Cf. "fraudem diaboli et conspirantia aduersus ecclesiam domini haereticorum ingenia cognouimus." "Epistula synodi Parisiensis," in Hilary of Poitiers, *Coll. antiariana* A.1.1 (CSEL 65: 43). Meslin, on the other hand, does not think that Valens committed fraud, since both Valens and Ursacius had never stated their view on whether the Son is a creature. Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident*, p. 287. Yet, Meslin's view that Valens and Ursacius were sincere theologians rather than opportunists has been criticised. Daniel H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 29.

118 Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, p. 98; Hanson, *The Search*, p. 379; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 292.

This new-found unity of the Church under the Homoian doctrine favoured by Constantius thus replaced the hard-won unity of Church and doctrinal orthodoxy achieved by the Council of Nicaea (325) under the leadership of Constantine. Jerome, shocked at the apparent discouraging circumstance faced by the orthodox Nicenes, made a noteworthy statement that would become famous for so fittingly describing the situation at the time. He bemoaned that “the whole world groaned and wondered to find itself Arian.”¹¹⁹ Though posterity did not consider the Council of Ariminum (359) an ecumenical council, the decisions made at this council would certainly have seemed the ultimate standard of authority on New Year’s Day 360, especially since there were as many as 400 bishops at Ariminum, but only 318 at Nicaea.

The Homoian creed was then published by the Council of Constantinople (360) under slightly varied wording, declaring that “the Son is like the Father, as the divine Scriptures say and teach.”¹²⁰ Though the Constantinople Creed (360) was promulgated under an imperial edict, it was the Niké-Ariminum Creed (359) that was more frequently cited by Homoians and Nicenes alike in the West, and was the creed that Ulfila brought back to the Goths.¹²¹

119 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 293. Cf. “Ingemuit totus orbis, et Arianum se esse miratus est.” Jerome, *Altercatio luciferiani et orthodoxi* 19 (CCL 79B: 48).

120 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 294. Cf. “Ὁμοιον [...] τῷ πατρὶ τὸν υἱόν, ὡς λέγουσιν αἱ θεῖαι γραφαὶ καὶ διδάσκουσιν.” Athanasius of Alexandria, *De synodis* 30.2 (SC 563.288). The word *hypostasis* was also disallowed in relating the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Constantinople Creed (360). Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, 338. Simonetti suggests that while the Niké prohibition of “one *hypostasis*” is anti-Sabellian, the Constantinople ban of “*hypostasis*” without the word “one” (μία) weakens the prestige of the Homoiousian Dedication Creed (341) with the term *hypostasis*. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

121 Daniel H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 35.

The Homoian Creed of Ariminum has been considered as a neutral or a politically designed formula of compromise.¹²² In response, radical Arians, led by Euzoius of Antioch, held the Council of Antioch (361) to voice their say, declaring that the Son is unlike the Father in *ousia* as well as will (κατὰ βούλησιν), and arguing that the Son was from nothing (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων). The Anomoian attempt failed, as the council confirmed the Niké-Constantinople Creed in the end.¹²³

Ending Remarks

On New Year's Day 360, it might have appeared that the Homoians had won their final victory. But this would not be the case; their triumph would not be for long. Ironically, it was when the pagan emperor Julian succeeded to the throne in 361 that the Nicenes began to have a new chance. Not an Arian Christian like his predecessor, Julian issued an edict to allow the return of bishops exiled under Constantius. The Nicene bishop Hilary of Poitiers, who had been exiled in 356, was able to enjoy freedom again under this new circumstance. At his suggestion, the Gallic bishops gathered at the Council of Paris (361), and worked

122 “Avec la garantie impériale, triomphe donc une formule neutre, susceptible de rallier le grand nombre.” Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident*, p. 291. “In definitiva, la formula di Rimini presenta carattere accentuatamente politico: vuole essere formula di compromesso, tale da poter contentare tutti, e perciò evita di affrontare quello che ormai era diventato il fondamentale punto di contrasto fra Ariani e ortodossi, cioè la natura del rapporto che collega il Figlio con il Padre.” Simonetti, “Arianesimo latino,” 676. Constantius presents the Ariminum formula as the middle line between the extremes of Anomoianism on the one hand, and of the Homoiousians and Homoiousians on the other. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 339.

123 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 573. Philostorgius, who was himself an Anomoian, mentioned that radical Arians like Aetius actually preferred the word *heterousios* to *anomoios*. *Ibid.*, pp. 573-574, 601. For Hanson, Anomoianism never became popular due to its insistence on the use of metaphysics. *Ibid.*, *The Search*, p. 611.

on countering the effects of the Council of Ariminum. But it would be naïve to think that it would henceforth be smooth sailing for the Nicenes. The orthodox would have to struggle hard for two more decades before the various types of Arians—Anomoians as well as Homoian Arians—would be explicitly anathematized by canon 1 of the Council of Constantinople (381).

The Nicene Creed is the very creed that defines our Christian identity. Canon 7 of the Council of Ephesus (431) forbade the production of any creed other than that of Nicaea. The Constantinople Creed (381), which is essentially the creed Catholics today recite at Mass every Sunday, was considered by the Council of Chalcedon (451) as the seal to the Nicene Creed (325), thus more properly called the Nicene-Constantinople Creed, and most commonly called the Nicene Creed by the faithful. With the name of this rule of faith and standard of orthodoxy attached to the Council of Nicaea, it is easily to overlook the fact that this first and very important ecumenical council actually failed to eradicate the Arian heresy it sought to curtail once and for all. It is the aim of this essay to highlight how the years between Nicaea and 360 were years of turmoil. On the one hand, the Council of Nicaea (325) was the beginning rather than the last of a concerted effort by the orthodox against the Arians. On the other hand, even though 1st January 360 appeared to have been a day of crushing defeat for the orthodox, it would be from this darkest moment—when the world groaned to find itself Arian—that the Church would eventually emerge victorious.