

## ABSTRACT

The Apostolic Tradition in the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret

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This dissertation analyzes the transposition of the apostolic tradition in the fifth-century ecclesiastical histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. In the early patristic era, the apostolic tradition was defined as the transmission of the apostles' teachings through the forms of Scripture, the rule of faith, and episcopal succession. Early Christians, e.g., Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, believed that these channels preserved the original apostolic doctrines, and that the Church had faithfully handed them to successive generations.

The Greek historians located the quintessence of the apostolic tradition through these traditional channels. However, the content of the tradition became transposed as a result of three historical movements during the fourth century: (1) Constantine inaugurated an era of Christian emperors, (2) the Council of Nicaea promulgated a creed in 325 A.D., and (3) monasticism emerged as a counter-cultural movement. Due to the confluence of these sweeping historical developments, the historians assumed the Nicene creed, the monastics, and Christian emperors into their taxonomy of the apostolic tradition.

For reasons that crystallize long after Nicaea, the historians concluded that pro-Nicene theology epitomized the apostolic message. They accepted the introduction of new vocabulary,

e.g. *homoousios*, as the standard of orthodoxy. In addition, the historians commended the pro-Nicene monastics and emperors as orthodox exemplars responsible for defending the apostolic tradition against the attacks of heretical enemies.

The second chapter of this dissertation surveys the development of the apostolic tradition. Chapter Three reviews recent developments in modern scholarship on the ‘Arian controversy’ and briefly summarizes the events of the fourth century. The focus then turns to the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates and Sozomen, both of whom relied primarily on the polemical writings of Athanasius. Theodoret departs from the narrative of his predecessors, which allows him to chronicle a more nuanced development of the Nicene party. Chapter Four analyzes the monastic theologies of the historians, while Chapter Five examines the apostolic vocation of the Christian emperors.

The Apostolic Tradition in the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret

by

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A Dissertation

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*To Jennifer*



## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Between the years A.D. 438-450, three Greek historians – Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret – penned ecclesiastical histories that chronicled the epochal events of the fourth and early fifth centuries. Their stated purpose in writing these proceedings was a collective interest in continuing the work begun by Eusebius of Caesarea, whose own church history narrated ecclesial progress from the ascension of Christ to the accession of emperor Constantine.<sup>1</sup> Eusebius' successors shared many similarities in their respective accounts; all three historians chronicled Constantine's pro-Christian legislative agenda<sup>2</sup> and the mercurial bond between Church and Empire that emerged during this period. Most importantly of all, the dominant motif of the 'Arian controversy' governed the organization and composition of these later histories, which narrated the resultant rise of Nicene orthodoxy that is found to be the apostolic solution to the divisions that fractured the perceived unity of the one, holy Christian Church. The ecclesiastical historians appealed to the wisdom of the Fathers who convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 as the inheritors of the apostolic tradition; they asserted that the Nicene creed was the logical doctrinal *telos* of biblical revelation.

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<sup>1</sup> Rufinus of Aquileia (and possibly Gelasius of Caesarea) also wrote 'continuations' of Eusebius' ecclesiastical history.

<sup>2</sup> Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (HE) 1.18; Sozomen, HE 1.8-9; Theodoret, HE 1.2.3; HE 1.2 (NPNF 2:3, 33). The chapter numbers in the Sources Chrétiennes volumes of Theodoret do not align correctly with the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (NPNF) volume. Henceforth, all citations of Theodoret's HE will be listed with the SC chapter divisions, followed by the corresponding NPNF chapter divisions.

Within a century of their respective publications, these three works came to be known collectively as the tripartite history. In the early decades of the sixth century, Cassiodorus commissioned an abridged version that translated the Greek histories into Latin; they were condensed into a single twelve volume compilation, the *Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita* (HT).<sup>3</sup> Cassiodorus' project was the primary means by which the tripartite histories were read in medieval Europe.<sup>4</sup> The HT offered no original material, i.e., it was a select narrative of the histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. Socrates' work served as a prototype upon which excerpts from Sozomen and Theodoret were added or substituted as needed. The primary value of the HT to modern scholarship is due to its use as a standard reference work for medieval scholars, viz. it established the texts of the three Greek histories for those who could only read Latin.<sup>5</sup>

In this dissertation I propose to analyze the transposition of the apostolic tradition in the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. In this context, 'transposition' is analogous to the operation in musical theory whereby a collection of notes is reproduced in a different key, by raising or lowering in pitch. C.S. Lewis argued

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<sup>3</sup> James J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 216, 246. Cassiodorus wrote the preface to the work, and either advised or edited the volume. Theodore, a reader at St. Sophia in Constantinople, compiled and abridged the materials into the twelve volume edition. Epiphanius Scholasticus penned the Latin translation at Vivarium at the direction of Cassiodorus. The Latin translation was widely read in Western Europe during the medieval era. References to the work can be dated as early as 560-566.

<sup>4</sup> M.L.W. Laistner, "The Value and Influence of Cassiodorus' Ecclesiastical History." *Harvard Theological Review* 41.1 (1948): 51-67. Laistner explains that the *Historia Tripartita* increased in value in the west beginning in the ninth century for two reasons. First, the HT covered the period from 395 to 439. Rufinus' Latin continuation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* concluded with the events of the fourth century. Thus, the HT was the only work that offered detailed information about the Eastern Church in the 40 years following the death of Theodosius I. Second, the HT was a Greek history. Besides the fascination which the Latins had with eastern events, tensions were becoming increasingly heated between Eastern and Western Christians. The HT could be cited for refutations of Eastern theological positions because it addressed issues such as iconoclasm and the procession of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>5</sup> Frederic A. Bieter, *The Syntax of the Cases and Prepositions in Cassiodorus' Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1938), xviii.

that transposition – he was thinking of the transition of a musical score from an orchestra to a piano piece – was rife with theological implications. For example, he distinguished between transposition and development. A Developmentalist, Lewis explained, views continuity by claiming that one thing slowly turns into another thing. Transposition, on the other hand, explains how one reality can be drawn into another reality. The sacramental act of the Eucharist is both the natural act of eating, and also is invested with a new (spiritual) meaning. It does not cease to be the former as it becomes the latter.<sup>6</sup> The ancient historians do not explicitly name ‘transposition’ as a concept for the changes made to the apostolic tradition during the fourth century. It is the argument of this dissertation that they transposed into the definition of the apostolic tradition the council and creed of Nicaea, the monastics, and Christian emperors. In other words, they have drawn these new channels into the reality of the ecclesiastical tradition that was handed over to them by Eusebius of Caesarea. Furthermore, they identified Nicene orthodoxy as the epitome of the apostolic tradition, rather than an innovation. The historians reject the view that tradition has developed from one thing into another; instead, they conclude that continuity has been preserved by the Nicene creed and its proponents.

No later than the second century the apostolic tradition had come to be defined as the transmission of the apostles’ teachings through the forms of Scripture, episcopal succession, and the canon of truth; i.e., the rule of faith. These channels were not perceived to be in conflict with each other. Rather, they were believed to be unified in

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<sup>6</sup> C.S. Lewis, “Transposition,” in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, ed. Walter Hooper, rev. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1980), 54-73.

their presentation of apostolic doctrine.<sup>7</sup> The rule of faith was the proper reference by which to interpret Scripture, and it accurately encapsulated the tradition the apostles had passed down to their episcopal successors.<sup>8</sup> Eusebius established the model for chronicling the delivery of the tradition by listing the lines of episcopal succession in the apostolic sees. His successors shared Eusebius' priority in demonstrating the veracity of the claims made by contemporary churches as inheritors of the apostolic witness to the lordship of Christ.

The fifth-century church historians located the quintessence of apostolic doctrine through these traditional channels. However, the content of the tradition became transposed as a result of three historical movements: (1) pro-Christian legislation administered by Constantine; (2) post-Nicene controversies; and (3) the growth of the monastic movement. The confluence of these sweeping historical developments directly affected the reception of the apostolic tradition by Christian churches. Bishops introduced new vocabulary, e.g., *homoousios*, to confirm traditional dogmas. The historians commended new classes of "orthodox" Christians, e.g. monastics and faithful emperors, for assuming the responsibility of defending the apostolic tradition against the attacks of 'Arian' enemies. As a result of these historical developments in the Christian churches, the historians assumed them into their taxonomy of the apostolic tradition.

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<sup>7</sup> A.N.S. Lane, "Scripture, Tradition and Church: An Historical Survey," *Vox Evangelica* 9 (1975), 37-55; Richard Bauckham, "Tradition in Relation to Scripture and Reason," in *Scripture, Tradition, and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine*, edited by R. Bauckham and B. Dewey (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 117-45. Lane and Bauckham explain this symbiotic relationship between Scripture and Tradition as "co-inherence". According to the Fathers, the content of the Tradition coinheres with the content of Scripture. Episcopal succession, the *regula fidei*, and Scripture do not constitute separate revelatory sources.

<sup>8</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.22.1. (SC 264.308). While the rule of faith was declared to be of apostolic origin, the content of the rule varied slightly from church to church. See Eric F. Osborn, "Reason and the Rule of Faith in the Second Century AD," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 40-61.

Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret applied the appellation of ‘apostolic’ to designate continuity between the teachings and practices of the earliest Christians and their own contemporary ecclesiastical setting. The word ‘apostle’ derives from the office held by Jesus’ disciples, who were invested with the responsibility to preserve the original gospel proclamation. In order to demonstrate approval of a particular theological position, we will find that the historians name it ‘apostolic,’ because they perceived it to be faithful to the earliest Christian *kerygma*. ‘Apostolic’ and derivations thereof are found to describe tradition, churches, doctrines, bishops, the Nicene creed, monks, and emperors. These designations hold in common that the succession of the gospel can be demonstrated through various channels, but remain true to the writings of Scripture. As we will observe in Chapter Two, Eusebius held up episcopal succession as the primary means of chronicling the faithful delivery of apostolic teaching within the Christian Church. After Nicaea, the fifth-century historians continued to note the importance of the apostolic sees; however, they prioritized the importance of a spiritual succession. Having witnessed the appointments of anti-Nicene bishops into episcopal positions, they became champions of pro-Nicene prelates as the rightful claimants to those sees. In other words, only those who promoted a *homoousian* theology are the true apostolic successors after A.D. 325. Succession was now defined according to doctrinal faithfulness with the apostles, rather than election or appointment. The aim of this dissertation is to examine the changing ecclesial landscape of the fourth century, and to analyze the augmentation of the apostolic tradition in the ecclesiastical histories.

*Council and Creed of Nicaea*

The Council of Nicaea (325) was a pivotal event in ecclesiastical history according to the fifth-century narrative. Bishops from around the Roman Empire were invited to an assembly hosted by Constantine for the purpose of settling a dispute that originated in Alexandria between bishop Alexander and Arius, one of his presbyters. The theological debate centered on the intra-Trinitarian relations of the Father and Son: Arius argued that the Son came into existence according to the Father's will, while Alexander countered that the Son was by nature the immutable Logos. The council proclaimed in its creedal statement that the Son was one in substance (*'homoousios'*) with the Father.

For reasons that crystallize long after Nicaea, the historians concluded that pro-Nicene theology epitomized the apostolic message. As a result, the council was prominently recognized by them as the paramount ecclesiastical event of the fourth century. Not only was the language of *homoousios* approved by the episcopal attendees, but they came together in fundamental unity with Constantine to defeat the alleged subversion of Arius and his supporters. According to these histories, the unity of the bishops resulted from faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles in Scripture and the tradition that had been passed to them by their episcopal predecessors. Nicaea became canonical for the development of Trinitarian theology. Socrates even went as far as to equate the Nicene creed with the rule of faith.<sup>9</sup>

Following the logic of earlier polemics, the church historians portrayed the anti-Nicene movement, especially as represented by the anti-Athanasians, Homoians, and

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<sup>9</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.27.8 (SC 493, 126).

Eunomians, as those who threatened to destroy the catholic unity of the Christian Church in the fourth century. They expressed acrimony against the various parties of anti-Nicenes precisely because these ‘Arians’ opposed the apostolic tradition. According to these narratives, the anti-Nicenes divided the Catholic Church by colluding to remove faithful bishops from their sees, and deceiving an unsuspecting Constantius into supporting heretical doctrines.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Emergence of Monasticism*

The growing phenomenon and influence of Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism was a distinguishing feature of the fifth-century histories. In his church history, Eusebius demonstrated the utmost reverence for ascetic disciplines, even going so far as to label a second-century Jewish sect as both ‘Christian’ and ‘apostolic’ (ἀποστολικούς ἄνδρας) for their austere practices.<sup>11</sup> The influence of St. Antony and the communities of Nitria, Scetis, etc., however, would not come about until after Eusebius’ death. In their continuations, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret introduced the desert fathers as the unmatched exemplars of ‘apostolic’ conduct for their pursuit of virtue and dedication to the monastic philosophy.

As evinced by the example of Eusebius, the later Greek historians were not the first commenters to label ascetic Christians with the appellation of ‘apostolic.’ John

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<sup>10</sup> As we will examine in chapter three, Socrates and Sozomen narrated an ‘Arian conspiracy’ that resulted in the depositions of Athanasius and Eustathius from the sees of Alexandria and Antioch, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> “And indeed, when [Philo] describes with the utmost exactitude the manner of life of our ascetics, it is plain that he not only knew, but also approved, extolled, and venerated the apostolic men of his day, who apparently were of Hebrew race and therefore still observed most of the ancient customs in a somewhat Jewish fashion.” Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.17.2 (SC 31, 72). Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine*. Trans. H.J. Lawlor and J.E.L. Oulton (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1927), 48.

Chrysostom and John Cassian offered similar praise, observing that those who perfectly emulated Jesus were worthy of the apostolic designation. Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret distinguished themselves by defining the apostolicity of the monastic community as founded on both ascetic disciplines and faithfulness to Nicene orthodoxy. A common feature found in all three histories is an unmitigated castigation of emperor Valens (364-378) for his alleged persecution of Nicene monks. Their collective narrations depicted binary opposition between pro-Nicene monks who suffer at the hands of their ‘Arian’ imperial persecutors. Late fourth-century ascetics received sublime recognition from Christian historians for their practices of *askesis*, and willingness to resist persecution in faithful defense of Nicaea.

### *Christian Emperors*

Upon taking up the work of narrating the impact of Constantine’s conversion and reign on the Christian Church, the Greek historians discovered that they faced the daunting task of moderating Eusebius’ excessive encomium. In addition to his approval of the new imperial legislation in favor of the Christians – prohibiting sacrifices to idols, establishing Sunday as a day of rest from official business, granting judicial powers to bishops, etc. – Eusebius depicted Constantine as an *alter Christus*, sitting with Christ in heaven protecting the Christian empire.<sup>12</sup> Socrates opened his church history by denouncing Eusebius’ uncritical bias toward Constantine.<sup>13</sup> His own work, however, was not devoid of imperial panegyric. While Socrates mitigated the rhetorical extravagances of his predecessor – absent are any allusions to Constantine as an *alter Christus* – he

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<sup>12</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.67.3 (Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller 7, 145).

<sup>13</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.1.2 (SC 477, 44).



continued to laud the first Christian emperor as akin to a thirteenth apostle. Sozomen and Theodoret followed his example by portraying Constantine as the archetype of the “good king” in the Hebrew Scriptures. Their collective praise was rooted not only in the pro-Christian legislation, but found a complementary source in his role of hosting and defending the Nicene council.

In their assessments of Constantine’s successors, the fifth-century historians approved of those who defended Nicaea, and castigated those who denied the doctrinal legitimacy of *homoousios*. Theodosius I emerged as a *nova Constantinus* by convening the Council of Constantinople in 381 to ratify Nicene orthodoxy as Catholic dogma. The apostolicity of Theodosius was further enhanced by his baptism at the hands of a Nicene bishop; for the first time a Christian emperor received the baptismal rite in the prime of his life.<sup>14</sup> The historians judged the records of emperors by a standard of virtue, piety, and preservation of the apostolic tradition, defined according to the standard of Nicaea.

Having surveyed the major historical movements of the fourth century – and their impact on the apostolic tradition according to Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret – the next section will evaluate the persons behind these Christian histories. In the following section, we will analyze the personal details and sources behind the fifth-century ecclesiastical histories that preserved many of our best primary texts from that era.

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<sup>14</sup> Theodosius requested baptism in Thessalonica at a time when he was believed to be near death. Afterwards he recovered from his illness, and gave credit to his Nicene baptism.

## *The Historians*

### *Socrates of Constantinople*

Socrates of Constantinople remains an enigmatic figure. No other writings – extant or otherwise – have been attributed to him, so we are left to devise a biography of him based almost solely on internal material found in his ecclesiastical history. We have one ancillary piece of data about him: the Armenian version of his work and one of the Greek manuscripts attached the cognomen of *scholasticus* to his name; but even the meaning of this moniker is in dispute.<sup>15</sup> From this it is often assumed that Socrates was a lawyer. However, the evidence within the text does not demonstrate any legal expertise on the part of the author.<sup>16</sup> *Scholasticus* was likely a cognomen to designate that Socrates had access to classical Greek *padeia*, an education based on the study of pagan Greek authors.<sup>17</sup> He had at least a rudimentary understanding of Latin, and evinced philosophical and theological formation.<sup>18</sup> He cited Plato, Plotinus, Porphyry, and

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<sup>15</sup> The Greek manuscript in question is *Laurentianus* 69.5. For a manuscript history, see Pierre Perichon, “Pour une édition nouvelle de l’historien Socrate: Les manuscrits et les versions.” *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* 53.1: 112-20; G.C. Hansen, *Sokrates Kirchengeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), ix-xxxiii.

<sup>16</sup> For further reading, see Theresa Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 13-14; Pierre Maraval, introduction to *Socrate de Constantinople: Histoire Ecclésiastique Livre I*, Sources Chrétiennes 477 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2004), 10-11; Martin Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates: Untersuchungen zu Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode und Person* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 215-217. Chesnut argues that Socrates was a lawyer, but provides only the speculative evidence that the historian ended his history with the promulgation of the Theodosian Code. Glenn F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Historians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 176.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Gelzer, “Zum Hintergrund der hohen Schätzung der paganen Bildung bei Sokrates von Konstantinopel,” in *Die Welt des Sokrates*, ed. Balbina Bäbler and Heinz-Günther Nesselrath (Munich: Leipzig, 2001), 111-124.

<sup>18</sup> Socrates acknowledged that he used Rufinus’ ecclesiastical history as a source, and there is no reason to believe he read a Greek translation. Cf. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 19.

Libanius, while defending educated theologians of the Alexandrine tradition, e.g. Origen, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius of Pontus.<sup>19</sup>

*Biography.* In a rare moment of self-disclosure, Socrates acknowledged that he was born and educated in Constantinople, and was residing there while writing his church history. He admitted that his chronicle focused particularly on his own city because he witnessed some of the events in his own lifetime, and also because it was the capital city, thereby making its history worthy of recognition.<sup>20</sup> He was a pupil of Helladius and Ammonius, two grammarians who were expelled from Alexandria after 389 because they served as pagan priests.<sup>21</sup> Socrates' education offers us a clue as to his birth year. If he took up studies with Helladius and Ammonius in 390, then we can estimate his birth year to be ca. 380, since most young boys in Late Antiquity commenced their education at the age of ten.<sup>22</sup> Urbainczyk also points us to the preface of Book VI, where we find the ancient historian asserting that he will take up the events of his own age.<sup>23</sup> Book VI spans the reign of Arcadius (395-408), which leads Urbainczyk to plausibly suggest that Socrates was fifteen years old in 395.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Socrates, *HE* 3.23.3-5 (SC 493, 334-336).

<sup>20</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.24.9 (SC 505, 244).

<sup>21</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.16.9 (SC 505, 196). T.D. Barnes, "Ammianus Marcellinus and His World." *Classical Philology* 88 (1993): 61-63.

<sup>22</sup> Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 19. Socrates only says that he studied with them in his youth. *HE* 5.16.9 (SC 505, 196). Cf. Valesius, "De Vita et Scriptis Socratis atque Sozomeni" (1668: *Patrologiae Graecae* 67.19). Henceforth, *Patrologiae Graecae* will be abbreviated as *PG*.

<sup>23</sup> Socrates, *HE* 6.pref.6 (SC 505, 256); cf. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 19.

While the date of Socrates' death cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty, we can delimit the date of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* to a period between 439 and 443. His history concluded in the year 439; he named Theodosius II as a living emperor, which places the date of composition prior to 450. Furthermore, he commended Proclus of Constantinople (d. 446) as a living bishop.<sup>25</sup> Socrates' references to empress Eudocia by name give us our best evidence that the project was completed prior to 443, depending on when one dates her conviction of adultery and subsequent exile from Constantinople.<sup>26</sup> It is generally agreed that Socrates would not have mentioned her by name afterwards. Therefore, we can date the *terminus* of his iteration of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* between 439 and 443.

While Socrates was quick to condemn the 'Arians' for their rejection of Nicaea, he was slow to reject many heretical parties that aligned themselves with the creed.<sup>27</sup> He showed favor to the Novatians, using their sources, giving the names of their bishops, and including information about their history throughout his project. He also criticized bishops who persecuted Novatian causes.<sup>28</sup> He provided details about the education and ranks of Novatians.<sup>29</sup> His overall irenic spirit towards the Novatians led one scholar to

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<sup>25</sup> Socrates, *HE* 7.41 (SC 506).

<sup>26</sup> See *HE* 7.21.10, 7.44.1, and 7.47.2 for references to Eudocia. Holum dates her exile in 443, while Maraval avers a date of late 441 or early 442. He also argues that the completion of the *HE* was likely in 439/440. Maraval, SC 477, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Examples include the 'Macedonians' and Nestorius, for whom Socrates expressed some measure of sympathy. While it would be helpful to compare his attitude to the Donatists, Socrates makes no mention of them. Cf. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 19, 24-29.

<sup>28</sup> Socrates, *HE* 6.19-21 (SC 505, 342-346).

<sup>29</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.9.5 (SC 505, 44); *HE* 5.21.2-3 (SC 505, 212); *HE* 7.12.2-3 (SC 506).

conclude that Socrates was himself a Novatian.<sup>30</sup> The difficulty with this claim is that Socrates distinguished between the Novatians and “the church.” The historian Valesius pointed to a couple of passages where Socrates separated the Novatians from the Catholics, rather than writing of the Novatians as the orthodox church.<sup>31</sup> In Book II he expressed admiration towards the Novatians for their zeal in resisting the persecution of the ‘Arians.’ Yet he still wrote that “the church and Novatians were being persecuted,” as if the Novatians were separate from the Catholic mainstream.<sup>32</sup> Later, in Book V, he asserted that the Novatians “separated” from the Church.<sup>33</sup>

The favoritism shown to the Novatians – despite their separation from the catholic churches – begs the question: Why was Socrates more generous to them than to other sects? The Novatian adherence to Nicene orthodoxy appears to be the underlying reason for the irenic spirit shown to them in this ecclesiastical history. In his narration of Nicaea, Socrates first addressed the Novatians. According to an oral source, the Novatian bishop Acesius was asked by Constantine if he would assent to the creed. He agreed on the grounds that the council had not innovated in their summary of the faith; the creed was faithful to the teachings of the apostles. The Novatian separation from the Church was due to austere positions stemming from the Decian persecution; otherwise, Socrates

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<sup>30</sup> Wallraff, *Sokrates*, 235-257.

<sup>31</sup> Valesius, “De Vita et Scriptis Socratis atque Sozomeni” (1668: *PG* 67.19-20).

<sup>32</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.38.25 (SC 493, 194): Ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐκκλησία ὕστερον, ὡς ἔφην, ἐπὶ Ἰουλιανοῦ ἀνέστη, τότε δὲ ἅμω οἱ τε τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ οἱ Ναυατιανοὶ ὁμοίως ἠλαύνοντο. “Consequently, then, as I said, the church was raised up under Julian; but at that time the people of the church and the Novatians were being persecuted.”

<sup>33</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.19.2 (SC 505, 206): Ἀφ’ οὗ Ναυατιανοὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας διεκρίθησαν, τοῖς ἐπτακόσις ἐν τῷ ἐπὶ Δεκίου διωγμῷ κοινωνῆσαι μὴ θελήσαντες. “Since the Novatians separated themselves from the church, because they did not agree to enter into communion with those who had lapsed during the persecution under Decius.”

asserted, they were in complete doctrinal agreement with the catholic churches. In Book VII, the ancient historian approved of the comment made by Atticus of Constantinople that the Novatians shared in the persecutions of Arian emperors, and were likewise faithful adherents to Nicene orthodoxy.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps Socrates, in favoring the Novatians for siding with the Catholics in their defense of Nicaea, was imitating the teachings of his former bishop in Constantinople?

*Historiographical Methodology.* The *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Socrates was commissioned by a man named Theodore, “O holy man of God.” Despite three dedications to him by Socrates, we know only that Theodore was likely a cleric and patron of the project.<sup>35</sup> The result of the commission was an ecclesiastical history in seven books, following the model established by Eusebius of Caesarea. In both ecclesiastical histories, the respective authors cited documents verbatim, and explained them in a historical narrative according to the author’s personal summaries.

Socrates furnished his audience with insight into his historiographical method in the preface to Book V, where he acknowledged that the conflicts among bishops served as the “dominant motif of the work.”<sup>36</sup> If the classical historians followed a historiographical method that led them to narrate wars as the primary subject of history, then for the ecclesiastical historian the primary subject of history was church councils.

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<sup>34</sup> Socrates, *HE* 7.25.15-16 (SC 506).

<sup>35</sup> Chesnut links this Theodore with a Theodorus who served as a commissioner of the Theodosian Code. This is a speculative suggestion, as there is no evidence linking the two men. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, 177.

<sup>36</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.pref.2 (SC 505, 148). H. Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Grossen zu Theodosius II. Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Socrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 227.

Beginning with Nicaea, Socrates demarcated a path to the 381 council in Constantinople through Tyre, Antioch, Serdica, Sirmium, Milan, Ariminum, Seleucia, Constantinople (360), and Alexandria. The sum total of this conciliar chronicle was a ‘victory’ for Nicaea as the orthodox statement of faith at the second ecumenical council. But despite his focus on intra-church ‘battles,’ Socrates defended his secondary concern in chronicling the developing dependence of the Church on the Roman emperors. Here we find yet again Socrates copying the Eusebian model, as each book corresponds to the reign of an emperor or emperors. Book I deals with the reign of Constantine; Book II targeted Constantius and his brothers; Book III focused on Julian and Jovian; Book IV on Valentinian and Valens; Book V on Gratian and Theodosius I; Book VI on Arcadius; and Book VII centered on Theodosius II.

*Sources.* In his preface to Book II, Socrates addressed Theodore regarding his use of sources. He had initially relied on Rufinus’ ecclesiastical history – a Latin continuation of Eusebius written at the end of the fourth century – but he had found chronological errors that needed correction.<sup>37</sup> We find the strongest evidence of Rufinus as a source in Book 1 of Socrates’ iteration, where there are direct parallels in the accounts of Helena’s discovery of the cross, and the conversion of the Indians and the Iberians.<sup>38</sup> Socrates’ dependence on Rufinus declined as he discovered the writings of Athanasius and began to modify his own work. Even more importantly, he wrote that the initial draft of Book I was absent of primary documents, e.g. Constantine’s letters, out of

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<sup>37</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.1.2 (SC 493, 18).

<sup>38</sup> Maraval, *SC* 477, 24. It is important to note here that Rufinus did not preserve primary documents as Eusebius had done, and as Socrates would later.

concern that the work might be too bulky in length and tedious to read.<sup>39</sup> Fortunately for later readers, Socrates changed his mind and incorporated these texts!

Despite his reproach of Rufinus' chronological errors, which led Socrates to correct his own work before proceeding, he gave credit to Rufinus as a source in the compilation of his ecclesiastical history. In recent years some scholars have argued that Rufinus consulted a church history written by Gelasius of Caesarea, and that the latter translated without attribution the work of the former.<sup>40</sup> The historical work in question is not extant in its completed form; fragments from three codices in the library of Photius have survived.<sup>41</sup> Photius attributed these anonymous fragments to Gelasius of Caesarea, a Palestinian bishop who attended the Council of Constantinople in 381 and died at the end of the fourth century. The ecclesiastical history began with the reign of Diocletian, and concluded with the death of Arius. Over the course of the last century, a debate has been waged as to whether Rufinus consulted and translated Gelasius, or vice versa.<sup>42</sup> Freidhelm Winkelmann, a German scholar who credits Gelasius as the original text of which Rufinus paraphrased, contends that Socrates did not consult Rufinus, as the ancient historian claimed, but instead used Gelasius' continuation.<sup>43</sup> Of course this raises the

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<sup>39</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.1.5 (SC 493, 20).

<sup>40</sup> This theory was first proffered by Anton Glas. Anton Glas, *Die Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisareia* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914).

<sup>41</sup> Photius served as the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople from 858-867 and again from 877-886.

<sup>42</sup> For further reading on the Gelasius question, see Peter van Nuffelen, "Gelase de Cesaree, un compilateur du cinquième siècle," *Byzantische Zeitgeist* 95 (2003), 621-639; Philip R. Amidon, trans. *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia*, with an introduction by Amidon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), xiii-xvii.

<sup>43</sup> F. Winkelmann, "Untersuchungen zur Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisareia." In *Sitzungsberichte der Deutschen Akad. A. Wiss. K. f. Sprachen, Lit. U. Kunst.* (Berlin, 1965), 70-102;



question: why would Socrates criticize Rufinus' edition if he was reading from Gelasius' church history? The thesis that Socrates was relying on Gelasius instead of Rufinus is problematic. Maraval opposes Winkelmann, noting that the first mention of Gelasius as an ecclesiastical historian is not until the end of the fifth century. Meanwhile, our extant ancient sources credit Rufinus with his history, providing us with no evidence that the Latin historian borrowed his text from his Greek counterpart. Meanwhile, in cases where Rufinus' obvious dependence on outside sources was once explained with reference to Gelasius, it has now been demonstrated that he used Western sources, including Jerome's *Chronicle*.<sup>44</sup> This debate will undoubtedly continue; however, for the above reasons I will take Socrates at his word that he consulted Rufinus as a source, rather than the Gelasius' history.

For much of Book I, Socrates relied on Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*, but with a critical approach. The continuator depended on the *VC* for the basic narrative, and then augmented that story with additional sources of information, e.g., Constantine's letters. Eusebius was his primary source for chronicling the Council of Nicaea, despite their oppositional attitudes towards the proceedings and outcomes.<sup>45</sup> Socrates quoted verbatim from the *VC* Constantine's letter to Alexander and Arius, to Eusebius of Nicomedia, and to Eusebius of Caesarea himself. Furthermore, Socrates quoted Eusebius from one of his works against Marcellus.<sup>46</sup>

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"Charakter und Bedeutung der Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisareia," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 1 (1966): 346-385.

<sup>44</sup> Maraval, *SC* 477, 25-28.

<sup>45</sup> Socrates' use of Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* as a source for the Council of Nicaea will be further examined in chapter three.

<sup>46</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.21 (*SC* 493, 88-96).

As alluded to earlier, Socrates corrected Rufinus' chronology after reading from the works of Athanasius.<sup>47</sup> He adopted much of the Alexandrian bishop's attitude about the 'Arian controversy' into his own chronicle of fourth-century developments, while many of the primary source materials are direct copies. On the death of Arius and the events leading up to it, Socrates depended on Athanasius' *epistula ad Serapionem de morte Aarii* and the *epistula ad episcopos Aegypti et Libyae*. Many of the letters from both Constantine and the ecclesiastical councils are cited in *de decretis nicaenae synodi*. Thirty-six documents from the *Apologia Contra Arianos* were quoted verbatim.<sup>48</sup> No other source influenced Socrates' theological mindset to the same extent as Athanasius.

Other sources worthy of recognition include a collection of synodical acts by Sabinus of Heraclea, a bishop of the 'Macedonian' sect. Socrates often criticized Sabinus for distorting historical facts to misrepresent the 'Nicene' position. Despite his negative appraisal of Sabinus, Socrates mentioned his text on no less than ten occasions. The ancient historian also consulted the works of the anti-Nicene bishops Arius and Eunomius, using their comments to demonstrate their so-called heretical positions. Socrates expressed pride in his use of oral sources, which became increasingly more

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<sup>47</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.1.2 (SC 493, 18). Socrates, *HE* 1.6.9-10 (SC 477, 66). For more information on the epistolary collection of Alexander (*Collection d'Alexandre*) from which Socrates draws as sources for his history, see Peter van Nuffelen, *Un Héritage de Paix et de Piété* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 315-319. Nuffelen contends that Socrates may be drawing from the same collection that was used by Epiphanius, which consisted of approximately seventy letters written by Alexander to various bishops located mostly in Palestine. Bishops named here include Macarius of Jerusalem, Asclepius of Gaza, Longinus of Ascalon, and Macrinus of Jamnia. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 69.4.3-4. Furthermore, Nuffelen notes that while Sozomen is equally condemning of Arius, he used a different collection of sources, known as the *Collection alexandrine*. These documents were composed in the last quarter of the fourth century, sent to Carthage in 419, and partially preserved in a Latin translation in the Codex Veronensis LX [58]. Nuffelen, *Un Héritage de Paix et de Piété*, 321. Nuffelen argues that this collection rewrote history to demonstrate a unified link between the Alexandrian 'Arians' and the Meletians.

<sup>48</sup> Timothy David Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 192-195.

common in the latter books as he began to chronicle the events of his own era. Urbainczyk reminds us that Socrates found oral sources less reliable than written ones, and only reliable if confirmed by groups of people.<sup>49</sup> The citation of Auxanon, the Novatian bishop who reported his conversation with Constantine at Nicaea, must be regarded as an unusual instance where Socrates depended on a single oral source without support.<sup>50</sup>

### *Sozomen*

Salamanus Hermeias Sozomenos (Sozomen) was a contemporary of Socrates in Constantinople.<sup>51</sup> Sozomen opens a window for us to view a glimpse of his genealogical heritage. He hailed from Palestine, and was likely born in Bethelia, a village near Gaza.<sup>52</sup> His grandparents – former pagans – were converted to Christianity by the monk Hilarion, who moved to the area from Egypt in the early decades of the fourth century. Sozomen's grandfather, an educated man gifted in mathematics, became a student of the Scriptures. During the reign of Julian (361-363), the family went into exile to escape maltreatment, but returned after the emperor's death. Sozomen's family helped build the first churches and monasteries in the area; his early education may have been

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<sup>49</sup> Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 55.

<sup>50</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.13.2-3 (SC 306, 170).

<sup>51</sup> Sozomen's full name comes from Photius. Photius, *Bibliothèque*, codex 30.

<sup>52</sup> Sozomen chronicles his family heritage in *HE* 5.16. He tells his readers that Bethelia was a town noted for its temples, which were venerated for their antiquity and architecture.

administered by the resident monks.<sup>53</sup> He moved to Constantinople after 425 to serve as a lawyer and layperson, but likely never entered the religious life himself.<sup>54</sup>

*Ecclesiastical History.* Sozomen's ecclesiastical history was initially the final episode of a much larger project. In the preface, Sozomen admitted that he wanted to write a history of the Church that commenced with the ascension of Christ.<sup>55</sup> On further reflection, however, histories of this period had already been chronicled by Clement, Hegesippus, and Eusebius of Caesarea.<sup>56</sup> Since another history would likely suffer from redundancy, Sozomen chose instead to write a summary of that period in two books.<sup>57</sup> His consideration in chronicling a single historical text from the time of Christ to his own era demonstrates a mindset within Christian history that there is continuity of doctrine and practice within the Church according to divine providence.<sup>58</sup> That continuity takes

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<sup>53</sup> Sozomen may have been educated at a Christian monastery. He tells us that four brothers – Salamines, Phuscon, Malachion, and Crispion – were educated in philosophy by Hilarion; in addition, he reports that it was not uncommon for Palestinian youths to receive instruction from local ascetics. Nevertheless, Sozomen does not report on his own educational background. Sozomen, *HE* 6.32 (SC 495, 418-422). For further reading on the pedagogy of youth in late fourth-century monasteries, see Basil, *Regulae brevius tractatae*, 292 (PG 31 1288B); John Chrysostom, *On Vainglory*, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 2.3.10 (SC 306, 242).

<sup>55</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.1.12 (SC 306, 116).

<sup>56</sup> It is not clear which historical text by “Clement” is being referenced here. Sozomen, *HE* 1.1.12 (SC 306, 116, fn 1).

<sup>57</sup> This summary is not extant.

<sup>58</sup> Various Christian versions of universal chronologies are extant, demonstrating that Sozomen was not unique in his historiographical goal. Eusebius' *Chronicle* supplies chronological tables intended to document Hebrew history alongside that of the Greeks and Romans, while also showing the providential synchronism between the incarnation and Augustus' Roman Empire. Epiphanius, in his *Panarion*, narrated world history by beginning with Adam, and concluding with the contemporaneous events of the fourth century. Latin writers in Late Antiquity attempted similarly ambitious projects, including Orosius, whose *Historiarum Adversum Paganos* chronicled a division of time into three parts: from Adam to Romulus, from Romulus to Christ, and from Christ to the present day (ca. 417). Timothy David Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), 111-120; Frances Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 3-8; Frank Williams, introduction to *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*. Translated by Frank

the form of the apostolic tradition, which adopts and transposes Nicaea into itself as the authoritative expression of orthodoxy.

The nine books of the *HE* are organized in pairs according to the reigns of emperors. Books 1-2 cover the reign of Constantine (324-337). Books 3-4 are devoted to the sons of Constantine (337-361). Books 5-6 survey the era of Julian (361-363), Jovian (363-364), Valentinian I (364-375), and Valens (364-378). Books 7-8 review the reigns of Gratian (367-383), Valentinian II (375-392), Theodosius I (379-395), and Arcadius (395-408). Book 9 was dedicated to Theodosius II (408-439).

The ninth book as we have received it in the ancient manuscripts does not harmonize with the plan that Sozomen announced in his dedication. He intended for it to cover the reign of Theodosius II from the death of his father in 408 to his seventeenth consulate in 439.<sup>59</sup> Book IX concludes, however, with the year 425. The dedication of the *HE*, addressed to Theodosius II, not only informs us about the abbreviation of the project, but it helps us to date the work. Sozomen notes that, at the time of his writing the dedication, Theodosius II had recently visited the city of Heraclea in Pontus by way of Bithynia.<sup>60</sup> This imperial journey took place during the summer of 443.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the dedication was likely written either late 443 or early 444. Whether the dedication was written after the completion of the project, or prior, remains an opaque matter. Grillet, in his introduction to the Sources Chrétiennes edition of the *HE*, suggests three

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Williams. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Brill, 2009), xi-xxxiv; David Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 135-149.

<sup>59</sup> Sozomen, *HE* Ded. 19 (SC 306, 100).

<sup>60</sup> Sozomen, *HE* Ded, 13 (SC 306, 98).

<sup>61</sup> Bernard Grillet, introduction to *Sozomène: Histoire Ecclésiastique Livres I-II*, Sources Chrétiennes 306 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1983), 27; Chesnut, *The First Christian Historians*, 201.

possibilities.<sup>62</sup> First, the end of Book IX was not preserved. The difficulty with this proposal is that all of the manuscripts end at the same place. Second, the end of Book IX was subject to imperial censorship. For this theory to be accurate, Sozomen must have completed his history prior to Eudocia's exile in 443. Afterwards, according to this hypothesis, Theodosius would have removed the texts dealing with that unpleasant period. This hypothesis does not explain why the book ends with the events of 425, rather than up to 439. These fourteen years constituted a positive era for the Theodosian reign, marked by the Council of Ephesus, the election of Proclus as bishop of Constantinople, and the promulgation of the Theodosian Code. The third and most likely reason for the abrupt end to Book IX is the unexpected death of the author.

*Historiography.* While Sozomen did not credit Socrates as a source, the preface of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* has the markings of someone who wanted to explain how his own work differed from that of his predecessor.<sup>63</sup> He announced that his history will include the record of the Church as it evangelized the barbarians and Persian empire. Furthermore, he sought to account for the origination and expansion of the monastic communities, which Socrates had only briefly summarized. Sozomen was so interested in anecdotes and biographical details that one scholar observed that his work was more a “gossip column” than a serious history.<sup>64</sup> Even if we put aside that harsh critique, we do find here a text that places less emphasis on verbatim citations of primary documents, in favor of a narrative that prioritizes truth and historical accuracy. Why did Sozomen

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<sup>62</sup> Grillet, SC 306, 28.

<sup>63</sup> Sozomen's dependence on Socrates has been summarized by Chesnut, *The First Christian Historians*, 205-206.

<sup>64</sup> Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 33.

eschew document transcription, except where absolutely necessary? In his own words, those documents have been preserved elsewhere.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, every ecclesiastical ‘party’ safeguarded their own collection of documents that favored their own narrative; Sozomen announced here at the beginning that he will chronicle the ascendancy of the ‘Catholic’ Church as the most faithful guardian of divine truth.<sup>66</sup> Truth is equivalent with orthodoxy, so that historical objectivity requires the denunciation of errors for sects that have marred the true doctrine of Christ.<sup>67</sup>

To say that Sozomen does not receive a stellar assessment from modern historians would be a severe understatement. His uncritical acceptance of miraculous accounts and hagiographical anecdotes leads to questions about his ability to objectively judge the historical evidence.<sup>68</sup> As previously mentioned, he used Socrates’ history as a template for his own, without acknowledging his dependence. These lapses, in the view of modern historiographical standards, have contributed to a lacuna in research into Sozomen’s history.<sup>69</sup> By comparison, more monographs have been written about the writings of Socrates and Theodoret. For example, Theresa Urbainczyk has published full-length manuscripts on the latter two, while passing over Sozomen. This dissertation will take notice of Sozomen’s penchant for writing hagiographical biographies and

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<sup>65</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.1.13 (SC 306, 116): τῶν δὲ περαιτέρω τὴν κατάληψιν ἐθήρασα ἀπὸ τῶν τεθέντων νόμων διὰ τὴν θρησκείαν καὶ τῶν κατὰ καιροὺς συνόδων καὶ νεωτερισμῶν καὶ βασιλικῶν καὶ ἱερατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν, ὧν αἱ μὲν εἰσέτι νῦν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις καὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σφύζονται, αἱ δὲ σποράδην παρὰ τοῖς φιλολόγοις φέρονται.

<sup>66</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.16-17 (SC 306, 118).

<sup>67</sup> Grillet, SC 306, 33-34.

<sup>68</sup> These incidents are covered in greater detail in chapters three and four.

<sup>69</sup> Nuffelen observes that no monograph has been devoted to Sozomen because many questions can be clarified without anything more than an overview of his work. His own recent study has attempted to fill in some of the gaps in Sozomen research. Nuffelen, *Un Héritage de Paix et de Piété*, xxii.

incorporating supernatural accounts, which contribute to his interpretation of the apostolic tradition.

### *Theodoret of Cyrus*

Theodoret was born in Antioch in 393 to a wealthy family of landowners. The nature of his birth is telling: Theodoret's barren mother sought aid from a local holy man. Macedonius the Barley-Eater promised her a son, provided that he would be devoted to the service of God.<sup>70</sup> Theodoret was the recipient of a religious education; he was privately instructed by Peter the Galatian and Macedonius, among other ascetics.<sup>71</sup> While he never mentions his formal education, it is likely that Theodoret followed the classical *paideia*, as demonstrated by his citations of classical writers, e.g., Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes.<sup>72</sup> Congruous to his Syriac background, he was fluent in both Greek and Syriac.<sup>73</sup> At the age of twenty-three, Theodoret's parents died; he sold all of his possessions and distributed them to the poor before embracing the monastic life. After seven years he was appointed as the bishop of Cyrus, a small Syrian city halfway between Antioch and the Euphrates river. He served the church there for three decades as a supporter of Nicene orthodoxy. Furthermore, he made an impact on

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<sup>70</sup> Theodoret, *Historia Religiosa* 9, 13; 1 Samuel 1.

<sup>71</sup> Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 323.

<sup>72</sup> Carla Spadavecchia, "The Rhetorical Tradition in the Letters of Theodoret of Cyrus," in *From Late Antiquity to Early Byzantium: Proceedings of the Byzantinological Symposium in the Sixteenth International Eirene Conference*, ed. Vladimir Vavrinek (Prague: Academia 1985): 249-252; Theresa Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: The Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 18-19.

<sup>73</sup> Canivet believes that Theodoret's Greek was so pure that it likely was the acquired language, and that Syriac was his first language. P. Canivet, *Histoire d'une entreprise apologétique de Ve siècle* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1958), 25, n.3. Urbainczyk, however, argues that it was unlikely that Syriac was his first language, since Theodoret's social status was not that of a peasant. Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, 16.



the local community by using ecclesiastical revenues to supervise building projects, including bridges, porticoes, and an aqueduct.<sup>74</sup>

Theodoret, a leader among those labeled as the ‘Antiochene school,’ concluded his history with the death of Theodore of Mopsuestia in 428. Thus, he deftly avoided any mention of the Nestorian controversy. During this period, Theodoret refused to assent to the condemnation against Nestorius, and was himself banned from the second council of Ephesus in 449 due to his attacks against Cyril of Alexandria. Chesnut suggests that Theodoret ended his history ‘early’ to avoid dealing with the Nestorian controversy, while Young proposes that the bishop-historian wanted to encourage unity during the turbulent 440s by reminding all sides of their common war with the surviving ‘Arian’ factions.<sup>75</sup> Not only are these proposals plausible, they fit with the aims of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* – the ‘Arian controversy’ was a work of the devil to sow dissension into a unified catholic church under a single Christian emperor. The concord achieved at Nicaea was due to the faithfulness of its Fathers in composing an apostolic creed. Concord among the Christian churches can only be maintained through obedience to the apostolic dogma, as expressed at Nicaea.<sup>76</sup>

In a departure from the histories of Socrates and Sozomen, Theodoret does not introduce his work, or even selected chapters, with a long preface to explain his historiographical methodology. He simply declares his intention to continue the story of the Church at the point at which Eusebius had terminated his ecclesiastical history.<sup>77</sup> The

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<sup>74</sup> Chesnut, *The First Christian Historians*, 208.

<sup>75</sup> Chesnut, *The First Christian Historians*, 212; Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 36-37.

<sup>76</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.11-13 (SC 501, 206).

<sup>77</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.1.4 (SC 501, 142); *HE* 1.1 (NPNF 2:3, 33).

“essential goal” of his text is to fix the memory of the events that have taken place in the churches and remember the illustrious gestures and cautionary tales of those who have achieved fame.<sup>78</sup> Theodoret’s writing style aimed to uplift the moral and spiritual examples of the “great” bishops of the fourth century, e.g., Athanasius, Eustathius of Antioch, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, etc.<sup>79</sup> He eschewed the more objective historiographical ambitions of Socrates in favor of stories that framed clergymen and monks as heroes of orthodoxy and successors of the apostles.<sup>80</sup>

Primary source documents account for nearly forty percent of the entire work, which suggests the important role that Theodoret places upon them.<sup>81</sup> They serve as evidence in his “case” against the heretics and in support of Nicene orthodoxy. But Theodoret was a preacher, not a lawyer. The documents quoted verbatim are used by the author to defend the ‘apostolic’ truth against opponents of orthodoxy. In his account of the burgeoning controversy, Theodoret narrates Arius’ reproachable conduct in opposing Alexander, the successor to the apostles in Alexandria. The *HE* contains a letter written from Alexander of Alexandria to his namesake in Byzantium, in order “no one may suspect that I invented what was said.”<sup>82</sup> Lest his audience think that he trusted too much in Alexander’s letter, Theodoret attached Arius’ epistle to Eusebius of Nicomedia.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.1.2 (SC 501, 142). Cf. Annick Martin, introduction to *Théodore de Cyr : Histoire Ecclésiastique Tome I (Livres I-II)*, Sources Chrétiennes 501 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2006), 39.

<sup>79</sup> Not unlike how the Book of Chronicles exalted the kings of Judah.

<sup>80</sup> Martin, SC 501, 40-42.

<sup>81</sup> Martin, SC 501, 63.

<sup>82</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.3.4 (SC 501, 152); *HE* 1.2 (NPNF 2:3, 34).

<sup>83</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.5 (SC 501, 190-194); *HE* 1.4 (NPNF 2:3, 41).

Because Theodoret sometimes takes his commentary from the primary source documents and then cites it as evidence to defend theological truth, he has been criticized by modern historians for this self-referential loop.<sup>84</sup>

In her introduction to the *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, Annick Martin has plausibly suggested that Theodoret's selection of primary source documents was largely drawn from the archives of the Church of Antioch.<sup>85</sup> At the very least, his selection of materials presented an Antiochene version of ecclesiastical history. His presentation of the Council of Nicaea demonstrates his access to documents that were not cited, and perhaps were not available, to Socrates and Sozomen. Throughout his iteration of the *HE*, the church of Antioch played a more prominent role in the ascension of Nicene orthodoxy. He named two confessors from the Syriac region present at the council: James of Nisbis and Paul of Neo-Caesarea; both of whom were unnamed by earlier ecclesiastical historians.<sup>86</sup> In the opening ceremony, Eustathius was named as the bishop who sat in the first row and delivered a speech addressing the Emperor; Eusebius had left the bishop's identity anonymous.<sup>87</sup> A sermon from Eustathius on Proverbs 8:22 was included in Theodoret's narrative of Nicaea, designed to refute the contrary interpretation of Eusebius of Nicomedia.<sup>88</sup> Theodoret's access to the collection of documents preserved by the churches in Antioch, combined with his own interest in promoting the theological

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<sup>84</sup> Glanville Downey, in his article on historiographical methodology in fifth-century church historians, surveys the work of Socrates, Sozomen, and Evagrius; he excludes Theodoret completely. Cf. Martin, SC 501, 65.

<sup>85</sup> Martin, SC 501, 68-75.

<sup>86</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.4-6; *HE* 1.6 (NPNF 2:3, 43).

<sup>87</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3.11 (GCS 7, 83); Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.10; *HE* 1.6 (NPNF 2:3, 43). Barnes argues that the anonymous bishop was Ossius of Cordova. Timothy David Barnes, "Emperor and Bishops, AD 324-44: Some Problems," *American Journal of Ancient History* 3 (1978): 56-57.

<sup>88</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.8.1-5 (SC 501, 210-212); *HE* 1.7 (NPNF 2:3, 44).

concerns of the ‘Antiochene school,’ was instrumental in his chronicle of the ascension of Nicene orthodoxy.

### *Chapter Summaries*

This dissertation will examine the historical writings of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret by focusing specifically on their respective interpretations of the apostolic tradition in the post-Nicaea years. Before we analyze the transposition of Nicaea, the monastics, and Christian emperors into the tradition, Chapter Two will survey the development of the apostolic tradition in the early church. This chapter will explore how the early Christians understood their tradition to be handed on from Jesus to the local churches, across the generations. Among the earliest extant writings on the nature of tradition is Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses*. In his refutation of the gnostics, Irenaeus appealed to the apostolic tradition as the correct hypothesis for interpreting Scripture. He averred that the apostles handed over to the churches a ‘canon of truth,’ which the episcopal successors were expected to preserve. His presentation of Scripture and Tradition as the co-inherence of the one gospel was repeated in varying degrees in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea. The latter prioritized the preservation of the apostolic tradition in his ecclesiastical history by demonstrating episcopal succession in the apostolic sees of Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria. The continuators of Eusebius’ ecclesiastical history inherited his accentuation of the apostolic tradition in their own works.

Chapter Three will focus on the Council of Nicaea and the ascendancy of Nicene orthodoxy. The chapter is organized into three sections. “Nicaea in the Ecclesiastical Histories” will review recent developments in modern scholarship on the ‘Arian

controversy’ and briefly summarize the events of the fourth century that led to the ratification of the Nicene creed at the Council of Constantinople in 381.<sup>89</sup> “Nicaea in the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates and Sozomen” will examine the writings of Socrates and Sozomen, both of whom relied heavily on the polemical writings of Athanasius, and thereby chronicled a facile division between the catholic ‘Nicene’ party and the schismatic ‘Arians,’ who conspired to replace the Nicene creed with another creed more consonant with their theological ideals. “Nicaea in the Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret” will turn to Theodoret’s chronicle of Nicaea and its central role as the stimulant of the ‘Arian controversy.’ Unlike his predecessors, Theodoret presented a more nuanced narrative of the burgeoning Nicene party. By relying more on Antiochene documents, and less on the writings of Athanasius, he chronicled a post-Nicaea history that eschewed any full formation of a Nicene theological party until the 350s.

Chapter Four will examine the monastic theologies of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. Christian holy men and monks were presented as archetypes of apostolic conduct through their pursuit of virtue and ascetic disciplines. Ascetic practice was believed to undergird the monastic philosophy, which can be mastered through the imitation of Christ. The chapter will survey the history of Christian asceticism, and examine early associations of the monastic vocation as the epitome of ‘apostolicity.’ Finally this chapter will argue that the fifth-century historians linked the desert fathers to Nicaea as a witness to the veracity of Nicene orthodoxy.

Chapter Five will examine the apostolic vocation of the Christian emperors in the writings of the ancient historians. The successors of Eusebius imitated his precedent by

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<sup>89</sup> As we will observe in greater detail in chapter three, the ‘Arian controversy’ does not come to a conclusion after the 381 council.

praising those Augustii who modeled themselves after Constantine – the first Christian emperor and exemplar of the ‘good’ ruler who acted as a bishop appointed by God over those outside the Church. The fifth-century historians honored Constantine for his role in hosting Nicaea and defending its settlement of the Alexandrian controversy. This chapter will assert that later pro-Nicene emperors, most notably Theodosius I, are assigned this apostolic designation for their legal and ecclesial promotion of Nicaea.

The subjects of the apostolic tradition and Nicene orthodoxy have been the foci of interest in numerous articles and monographs in recent decades. This dissertation acts as a contribution in the advancement of scholarship illuminating our understanding of how ancient historians interpreted the transposition of Nicaea into the apostolic tradition in the fourth century.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Historical Survey of the Apostolic Tradition

The fifth century historians that are the subject of this dissertation – Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret – all hold in common the basic assumption that the teachings of contemporary Christian churches were in direct continuity with those of the apostles. In other words, the apostles handed over (παράδοσις) the tradition to the churches they planted. The overseers of these churches were responsible for receiving the teachings of the apostles – hence the ‘apostolic’ tradition – and faithfully passing them on to their successors. The ancient historians were confident not only that they could identify the content of the apostolic tradition, but that the apostolic deposit preceded any and all corrupted forms, which came to be called ‘heresies.’

The Jewish Scriptures and apostolic writings were claimed by the early churches as the foundational texts for identifying the content of the tradition.<sup>1</sup> Scripture, the rule of faith, and apostolic succession were recognized by the early Christians as the components that tied together to ensure that the gospel was handed over faithfully to each succeeding generation. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, among others, asserted that the Scriptures and the Tradition were unified in teaching the economy of divine salvation. When faced with opposition, e.g., Gnostics and Marcionites, second-century Christians

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<sup>1</sup> For further reading on the development of the New Testament canon, see William R. Farmer and Denis M. Farkasfalvy, *The Formation of the New Testament Canon: An Ecumenical Approach* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Lee M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, rev. ed. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995); Harry Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

began appealing to the apostolic tradition that they had inherited. Believing themselves to be in fundamental agreement with churches everywhere, they wrote of this apostolic tradition as the orthodox teaching of the catholic (universal) Church.

This chapter will briefly provide a sampling of the early Church's prioritizing of the apostolic tradition, beginning with the writings of the New Testament, and terminating with Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius' continuators inherited many of their assumptions about the apostolic tradition from him. Before we can proceed with an analysis of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret on their respective transpositions of Nicaea, the monastic movement, and Christian emperors into the apostolic tradition, it is necessary that we establish the burgeoning re-interpretation of παράδοσις by the primitive Church, and how it functioned as a means of securing the fidelity of the apostolic *kerygma* long after the death of Jesus' earliest disciples.

### *Tradition in the Apostolic Era*

Yves Congar defines 'Tradition' as the "handing on, under the action of the Holy Spirit, in its witnessing, of the significance of the events concerning Christ when seen in reference to the whole plan of God."<sup>2</sup> The New Testament word for 'tradition' is παράδοσις, which is found on thirteen occasions, and most often refers to objective content that is handed down.<sup>3</sup> In the earliest decades of the church's history, such

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<sup>2</sup> Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and Theological Essay* (New York: MacMillan, 1966), 18. Cf. Pelikan defines tradition as "simultaneously the process of communication and its content." It is both the handing down of Christian teaching and that which was handed down. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition Volume 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ferguson, "Paradosis and Traditio: A Word Study," in *Tradition & The Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.*, ed. Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander J. Hwang (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 8. Παράδοσις is used nine times



activity of handing down was the oral transmission of Jesus' teachings, which would later come to be written down in the gospels, and included in the writings of the apostles.

Paul's use of παράδοσις – whether delivered orally or in writing – encapsulates doctrine, customs, and liturgical practices (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; 2 Thes 2:15).<sup>4</sup>

A potential contradiction arises in the employment of the concept of παράδοσις in the New Testament. Jesus appeared to reject the 'tradition of the elders' in the gospels; in contrast, Paul exhorted the church in Corinth to pass on the teachings which he himself received "from the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:23).<sup>5</sup> Humphrey observes that Jesus did not blame the Pharisees for following in the traditional ways (Mark 7). In an atmosphere permeated with the concept of tradition, Jesus rejected the elevation of human commandments that were intended to aid in the keeping of the divine Torah.<sup>6</sup> Vanhoozer suggests that it was Jesus himself who provided the primordial *regula fidei* by insisting that He was the fulfillment of the law and prophets.<sup>7</sup> In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes that Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4), signaling that he substituted the Lord

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in reference to Pharisaic interpretations of the Law. The plural form, παραδόσεις, is found in 1 Cor. 11:2 and 2 Thes. 3:6, and in those cases appears in reference to doctrine. Cf. R.P.C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ferguson, "Paradosis and Traditio," 8.

<sup>5</sup> For further reading on the Jewish distinction between the oral tradition and written transmission, see Henry Wansbrough, ed. *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, Eric J. Sharpe, trans. (Lund: G.W.K. Gleerup, 1961).

<sup>6</sup> Edith Humphrey, *Scripture and Tradition: What the Bible Really Says* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 56.

<sup>7</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 195.

for the ‘tradition of the elders.’ Jesus became the content of Tradition, commissioning the apostles to proclaim the gospel to the nations, under His authority.<sup>8</sup>

The earliest writings about the apostolic witness – the synoptic gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the letters of Paul – preserve the content of the *kerygma*.<sup>9</sup> As found in Acts, the core confession of faith by the Jerusalem church was the conviction that Jesus died, was buried, and then raised from the dead (Acts 2:23-24; 32-36; 3:13-18; 4:2-11.).<sup>10</sup> Paul confirmed and recited this kerygmatic formula, beliefs which he assumes exist among his readers; they are formulas that he received, and passed on to the recipients of his epistles (Rom. 1:4; 4:25; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:4).<sup>11</sup> The cross is also a central feature of Paul’s written correspondence. “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Hultgren names Paul’s Christology as “theopractic;” viz., Christ is the agent of redemption on God’s initiative. “God has established Jesus as Lord and Christ; he is the vindicated redeemer; and the new age has been inaugurated.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 196.

<sup>9</sup> Mark and Paul’s letters have been dated prior to 70 AD; Matthew and Luke-Acts are given a date between 80-90 AD. Other sources are either contested or later. Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 26.

<sup>10</sup> The speeches of Peter and Paul in Acts have been a subject of intense scrutiny. While Luke may be basing the speeches on traditions that had been passed on to him, many scholars have concluded that he has edited them into his own compositions. Cf. Martin Dibelius, “The Speeches in Acts and Ancient Historiography,” in his *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956), 138-85; Eduard Schweizer, “Concerning the Speeches in Acts,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 208-16; Arland J. Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 27.

<sup>11</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture’s Fascination with Diversity has Reshaped our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 63.

<sup>12</sup> Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 44.

Paul's use of the *kerygma*, and his affirmation of παράδοσις, signals the importance placed on oral tradition by the first generation of disciples. The Septuagint served as their scriptural text. The apostles developed an oral κανὼν that provided them a Christological rule for interpreting the LXX. They read the Jewish Scriptures according to the intervention of Christ into human history, as the fulfillment of the covenant between God and Israel. Christians read the Old Testament as a book about Christ, and found Christ throughout the canon.<sup>13</sup> Philip disclosed to the Ethiopian eunuch that Isaiah's suffering servant motif is a prophecy of the coming Christ (Acts 8:26-40).<sup>14</sup> Paul unraveled the allegorical meaning behind Abraham's two wives; Hagar personifies the descendants of Abraham who follow the law, while Sarah exemplifies the true heirs of God's promise in Christ (Gal. 4:21-31).<sup>15</sup> Before these exegetical accounts were narrated and codified in books that would become part of the New Testament canon, they functioned orally to preserve and teach the first generation of Christ's position as the center of human history.

Paul concludes his letter to the church in Galatia by exhorting them to follow the κανὼν; the context of this exhortation is his own desire to boast only in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and not in the flesh or the law (Gal. 6:12-16). The 'rule' of which Paul

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<sup>13</sup> F.F. Bruce, "Scripture in Relation to Tradition and Reason," in *Scripture, Tradition and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine, Essays in Honour of Richard P. D. Hanson*. Edited by Richard Bauckham and Benjamin Drewery (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 48. Bruce points to the example of how Christians and Jews read the same texts, but with very different interpretations. Justin Martyr read the Old Testament as a book about Christ, while Trypho found that the Old Testament had nothing to say about Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Vanhoozer reminds us that this incident is evidence in Acts of the work of the Spirit in bringing about a mutual indwelling of canon and community. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 210.

<sup>15</sup> Humphrey notes that Paul was himself probably trained both in the Hillel and Shammai schools, and did not reject the rabbinic principles of interpretation but adapted them to his new rule of faith, that the Scriptures point to Jesus. Humphrey, *Scripture and Tradition*, 52.

writes is a standard of Christian faith and practice, rather than a list of biblical texts. Paul formulates a similar admonition in 1 Corinthians 11, when he instructs the church elders on the proper observance of communion. He passed on the *παράδοσις* that he himself received (1 Cor. 11:2, 23). In these instances, there is a ‘rule’ or standard of practice that Christians are expected to emulate. The *κανών* incorporates both the doctrinal and practical deposit of faith that the apostles are passing on to the churches. The two pillars of authority on which Christians stood, argues Williams, are the apostolic canon of Scripture and the theological canon of apostolicity.<sup>16</sup> The theological canon is made present in the form of liturgy, sacraments, creeds, etc. Neither Paul nor Luke found these two ‘pillars’ to be in conflict with one another; rather, they were two sides to the same coin.<sup>17</sup> Together the two ‘pillars’ of Scripture and Tradition presented the totality of the *παράδοσις* that was handed over to the Church.

The successors of the apostles embraced the continuity of Jesus’ teachings with the apostolic *kerygma* that was affirmed in Paul’s letters. One can see this understanding at work by the end of the first century when Clement of Rome wrote:

The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus the Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the apostles are from Christ. ... Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ ... they went forth with the full assurance that the Holy Spirit gives, preaching the good news that the kingdom of God was about to come. So, preaching both in the country and in the towns, they appointed their firstfruits, when

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<sup>16</sup> D.H. Williams, ed. *Tradition, Scripture, and Interpretation: A Sourcebook of the Ancient Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 23.

<sup>17</sup> For further reading on the unity of Scripture and Tradition in Paul and Luke, see Humphrey, *Scripture and Tradition*, 75-89.

they had tested by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons for the future believers.<sup>18</sup>

The oral tradition gradually gave way to the written tradition, as the teachings of the apostles were preserved in the gospels and epistles. The oral tradition declined significantly during the course of the second century, and dissolved completely by the middle of the third century.<sup>19</sup> Justin Martyr, ca. 155 AD, writes that by his time readings of the apostolic writings had become common in the weekly liturgy; furthermore, they were read in kinship with the prophets:

And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits.<sup>20</sup>

Clement and Justin prioritize the apostolic witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Their memory of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is preserved in the writings that now begin to be read alongside the Hebrew Scriptures.

### *Irenaeus*

Irenaeus, a bishop of Lyon in the late second century, wrote extensively on the apostolic tradition in his treatise *Adversus Haereses*. Writing in opposition to various gnostics, including Valentinus and Marcion, Irenaeus appealed to the apostolic tradition as the correct ὑπόθεσις for interpreting Scripture.<sup>21</sup> In Book I, he denounces the

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<sup>18</sup> 1 Clement 42.1-4. Quoted from *The Apostolic Fathers*, trans. J.B. Lightfoot (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 75.

<sup>19</sup> R.P.C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, 50; Joseph T. Lienhard, *The Bible, The Church, and Authority: The Canon of the Christian Bible in History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 33.

<sup>20</sup> *Apology* 1.47.

<sup>21</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.8.1 (SC 264, 112-116). Irenaeus is borrowing from classical literature for the grammar of ‘hypothesis.’ Just as classical writers, e.g., Homer, intended for their audience

Valentinians for adapting the teachings of Jesus to their opinions, rather than conforming themselves to the gospel. He uses the memorable illustration of an artist who constructs a beautiful image of a king out of jewels, only to rearrange the pieces into the form of a dog or fox. In like manner do the Valentinians rearrange the apostolic proclamation of Christ – King of Kings – into a debase scheme that distorts the Scriptures. In his study of the formation of Christian theology, John Behr embarks upon a classical study of the Hellenistic use of ὑπόθεσις. He calls attention to Aristotle’s definition of hypotheses as the first principles of demonstrations.<sup>22</sup> The nature of first principles is that they cannot be proven, or else they would be dependent on something prior to them.<sup>23</sup> Irenaeus asserts that the Valentinians form their hypotheses from sources other than Scripture. The apostolic church, he counters, keeps the canon of truth (τὸν κανόνα τῆς ἀληθείας), which testifies to the true hypothesis of Scripture.<sup>24</sup> One must have a criteria, or rule, to see the illustration of the king and not the dog or fox.

The rule, according to Irenaeus, can be summarized as follows: The faith handed over from the apostles to the Church proclaims that one God, the Father almighty, sent Christ Jesus, the Son, to become incarnate. The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets of

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to read poems according to a certain plot or structure, so must readers of Scripture interpret the biblical texts according to its own rule, which the Gnostics reject. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.9.4 (SC 264, 146-150); Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London: Routledge, 1997), 47-49. In addition, ‘canon’ and ‘criteria’ were terms used in philosophical and legal contexts. For further reading, see Eric Osborn, “Reason and the Rule of Faith in the Second Century AD,” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 40-61; John J. L’Keefe and R.R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 36-42.

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.1.2 (1013a17); cf. John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea, Vol. 2, Part 1, The Formation of Christian Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 32.

<sup>23</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.4.2 (1006a, 6-12); cf. Behr, *The Way to Nicaea, Vol. 2, Part 1*, 33.

<sup>24</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.9.4 (SC 264, 146-150).

the economy of divine salvation; viz., Christ was born of a virgin, suffered and died, was resurrected from the dead, and ascended into heaven. In the coming Judgment, the wicked will suffer everlasting torment, while the righteous will receive immortality and everlasting glory.<sup>25</sup>

Irenaeus maintains that the apostles handed over one faith to one Church; the canon of truth delineates the boundaries of divine revelation. Although scattered across the earth, the apostolic Church in all places is a unified body of believers, speaking harmoniously with one mouth and one soul.<sup>26</sup> Behr contends that the canon is not an arbitrary principle designed to exclude legitimate voices; its purpose is the proper expression of the hypothesis of Scripture.<sup>27</sup> The assertion of one faith and one Church necessarily entails the exclusion of any rival faiths or ‘churches.’ If there is one hypothesis for the correct interpretation of Scripture, then other hypotheses must necessarily be excluded from doctrinal proliferation or liturgical observation. The arrangement of jewels constructs one portrait of a king; the rearrangement of jewels into any other picture is a corruption of the original design.

In Book III, Irenaeus reiterates the importance of the apostles in handing down the tradition (*tradiderunt*) to the Church.<sup>28</sup> Having been sent to the ends of the earth, they

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<sup>25</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.10.1 (SC 264, 154-158).

<sup>26</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.10.2 (SC 264, 158-160). The authority of the rule comes from its divine origin, through the economy of law, prophets, Christ, apostles, and church. Cf. Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 147.

<sup>27</sup> Behr, *The Way to Nicaea, Vol. 2, Part 1*, 36-37. Irenaeus wrote of the hypothesis of Scripture; later Latin writers, e.g., Tertullian, spoke of Scripture’s *ratio*, while Athanasius called it the *skopos* of Scripture. Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum (de praescr.)* 9 (SC 46, 101-102); Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 1.44, 1.53. Harry Gamble, “The Formation of the New Testament Canon and Its Significance for the History of Biblical Interpretation,” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, Alan J. Hauer and Duane F. Watson, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1 (SC 211, 30).

composed the gospel accounts of the life and passion of the Christ. Irenaeus credits the apostles Matthew and John, respectively, with the gospels named after them. Mark, we are told, wrote an account that he heard from Peter, while Luke narrated a story from Paul's perspective. Irenaeus underscores the vital role of the apostles in the writing of the most foundational texts of the Church.

According to Irenaeus, his opponents denied the essential mediation of the apostles in handing down the divine revelation. They appealed to an oral tradition that was independent from the Scriptures.<sup>29</sup> So brazen was their confidence in their own interpretation of salvation history that Valentinus, Marcion, etc., believed themselves to be wiser than the apostles and their episcopal successors.<sup>30</sup> Irenaeus avers that for his opponents, the truth resides in their own respective interpretations of the gospel, and not in either Scripture or tradition. Their oral 'tradition' cannot be found in Scripture, and for that reason they deny authority to the biblical texts.

Irenaeus turns to the argument of apostolic succession as a means of demonstrating that the apostolic tradition has been preserved in the Church. The gospel continues to be proclaimed throughout the world, having been passed down in a direct line of succession. He disputes the notion that any secret oral tradition was passed down; all such 'mysteries' would have been imparted to the presbyters who presided over the local churches.<sup>31</sup> The apostles desired that the churches be constituted with the same teachings they received from Jesus. The church in Rome is cited as an example here.

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<sup>29</sup> Irenaeus opposes the Gnostics for imparting hidden mysteries to their followers, which contradicted both themselves and the apostolic preaching. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.3.1 (SC 211, 32-34).

<sup>30</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.2.2 (SC 211, 32). For further reading on Irenaeus' use of *haeresis*, see Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 150-153.

<sup>31</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.3.1 (SC 211, 32-34).



Peter and Paul, according to Irenaeus, appointed Linus as the first presbyter-bishop.<sup>32</sup> Irenaeus proceeds to list all of the episcopal successors to the apostles, who taught the same gospel to their followers as they received from their predecessors. Thus, the apostolic tradition for Irenaeus is defined as the preaching of the gospel by the successors of the apostles. The content of the *kerygma* is found in the Scriptures, as interpreted through the κανόνα. Irenaeus concludes that “the proofs [of things contained] in the Scriptures cannot be shown except from the Scriptures themselves.”<sup>33</sup> Scripture and Tradition are not two independent sources of truth; they co-inhere to proclaim one gospel.<sup>34</sup>

The co-inherence of Scripture and Tradition derives from the harmony of God’s economy.<sup>35</sup> All things originate from the one God.<sup>36</sup> The canon testifies to the truth of the Son’s ineffable generation from the Father.<sup>37</sup> Irenaeus exhorts his readers to investigate the divine mysteries in Scripture with the assurance that they are perfect,

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<sup>32</sup> Monarchical episcopacy was not established in Rome until the end of the second century or later. Irenaeus also cites lists of presbyter-bishops in Smyrna and Ephesus. See Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Cf. Behr, *The Way to Nicaea, Vol. 2, Part 1*, 42-43.

<sup>33</sup> The canon of truth is the true gnosis. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.12.9 (SC 211, 216-224); 4.33.8 (SC 100, 818-820). Cf. Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 148.

<sup>34</sup> The fullness of divine revelation is found in Scripture; the unity of Scripture and Tradition does not imply that Tradition augments or completes Scripture. Flesseman-van Leer offers this insight: “tradition is the living *kerygma* of the church in its full identity with the revelation of Jesus Christ given to his apostles.” E. Flesseman-van Leer, *Tradition and Scripture in the Early Church* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1954), 103.

<sup>35</sup> The Latin translation here is *consonantia*, which is used in the rhetorical sense of the general principle of coherence. See Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 159-161.

<sup>36</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2.25.1 (SC 294, 250).

<sup>37</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2.28.6 (SC 294, 282-284).

having been spoken into existence by the Logos of God and the Spirit.<sup>38</sup> The canon provides a harmonious interpretation of Scripture, bringing the individual parts into a coherent whole.

### *Tertullian*

Writing at the end of the second century, Tertullian appealed to a similar framework of apostolic tradition in *de praescriptione haereticorum*, a treatise against various ‘heretics,’ e.g. Marcion, Valentinus, and Apelles. He opens by addressing the question of their very existence. It should come as no surprise that heretics oppose the apostolic tradition; Jesus himself predicted the appearance of wolves in sheep’s clothing.<sup>39</sup> St. Paul also warned that heresies would emerge, by accounting for sins of the flesh and the depravity of the human will. Unity within the catholic churches requires conformity with the *kerygma*. Submission to authority, even under divine government, requires death to the self. The apostles, Tertullian counters, introduced no novel teachings; they faithfully delivered the gospel they received from Christ to the churches.<sup>40</sup>

The opponents to the catholic churches challenged their scriptural interpretations. Similarly to Irenaeus, Tertullian appealed to the *regula fidei* as the correct exegesis for

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<sup>38</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2.28.2 (SC 294, 270-272).

<sup>39</sup> Matthew 7:15; cf. Tertullian, *de praescriptione haereticorum* 4, 7 (SC 46, 93). Philosophy, the material of the world’s wisdom, instigates the rise of heresy. Separation between Athens and Jerusalem is necessary because the gospel does not need Stoic, Platonic, or dialectic addenda. The gospel is itself complete. Of course, this argument does not prevent Tertullian from employing Stoic reasoning in defense of his position. Cf. Eric Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27-47.

<sup>40</sup> Tertullian, *de praescr.* 6 (SC 46, 95).

reading the biblical texts.<sup>41</sup> Those who deny the *regula* will eisegetically read their own opinions into Scripture.<sup>42</sup> Tertullian takes his appeal to the *regula* one step farther than Irenaeus. Not only has the *regula* been passed down by the apostles, he says the rule was taught to them by Christ himself. This appears to be an overstatement by Tertullian, since the evidence for this assertion is lacking.<sup>43</sup> Hanson argues that Tertullian equates the *regula* with *traditio* – it is the original teaching of the apostles that was handed down to the churches.<sup>44</sup> Hanson’s argument finds support in Tertullian’s claim that the transmission of the *regula fidei* can be trusted because all of the catholic churches teach the same rule.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, a comparison of the *regulae* in Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, etc., reveal a common tradition of biblical exegesis, strongly related to the apostolic *kerygma*. Tertullian’s opponents had argued that the catholic churches corrupted the deposit of faith. In his counter argument, Tertullian marvels that so many churches had gone astray, yet somehow maintain the same faith and practices. The universal harmony of the churches demonstrates to him that they are the apostolic Church. Apostolic succession is

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<sup>41</sup> Tertullian, *de praescr.* 13 (SC 46, 106-107). The rule of faith in Carthage: “There is one only God, and He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called His Son, and, under the name of God, was seen “in diverse manners” by the patriarchs, heard at all times in the prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth He preached the new law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified, He rose again the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises; and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of their flesh.” *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 3:249.

<sup>42</sup> Tertullian, *de praescr.* 14 (SC 46, 107).

<sup>43</sup> See Flesseman-van Leer, *Tradition and Scripture*, 146-150; Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, 97; Williams, *Tradition, Scripture, and Interpretation*, 71.

<sup>44</sup> Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, 97.

<sup>45</sup> Tertullian, *de praescr.* 28 (SC 46, 124).

an assurance of apostolic teaching because there is agreement of doctrinal teaching. The ‘heretics’ practice a diversity of traditions; the catholic churches, by contrast, hold together into one unified faith.<sup>46</sup>

The consequence, for the heretics, of their resistance to reading Scripture through the lens of the apostolic *kerygma* is that Tertullian refuses them the use of the biblical texts. Scripture belongs to the Church, not to those who abuse the sacred writings with a heretical hermeneutic.<sup>47</sup> They corrupt the texts through diverse interpretations, which vex those who attempt to engage them in disputation. For this reason Tertullian exhorts Christians to avoid appealing to Scripture in debating heretics.<sup>48</sup> Both sides will claim access to truth, and neither side will make up ground in persuading the other.<sup>49</sup> Only the hermeneutic of the *regula fidei* can ensure that the correct Christian faith and practice is found in Scriptural reasoning. Irenaeus and Tertullian are not unique voices on this front.

While Tertullian does share Irenaeus’ emphasis on the apostolic foundation of the episcopate, differences do emerge on closer examination. For Tertullian the succession of the episcopal office demonstrates continuity with the apostles; however, the authority of the original apostles is not limited to the bishops. He claims that he himself is the heir to the apostles (‘*heres apostolorum*’) in *de praescriptione haereticorum*.<sup>50</sup> Here we find the claim made that those who are faithful to preserve the doctrines of the apostles are

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<sup>46</sup> Tertullian, *de praescr.* 32 (SC 46, 130).

<sup>47</sup> Tertullian, *de praescr.* 15 (SC 46, 109). Cf. Geoffrey Dunn, *Tertullian* (London: Routledge, 2004), 20.

<sup>48</sup> Dunn wryly observes that Tertullian did not follow his own advice here; he often engaged with heretics in Scriptural debate. Dunn, *Tertullian*, 22.

<sup>49</sup> Tertullian, *de praescr.* 19 (SC 46, 111-112).

<sup>50</sup> Tertullian, *de praescr.* 37 (SC 46, 140).

themselves apostolic. Such a position is a refutation to the claim that the authority of the original apostles was based solely on a historical connection.<sup>51</sup> As we will see, Tertullian and Origen hold this position in common.

### *Origen*

In the preface to *On First Principles*, Origen recognizes the diversity of teachings on matters of Christian doctrine and practice. The resolution needed for unifying these divergent sects – or, perhaps less ambitiously, identifying the true church – is located in the tradition of the church and the apostles (*ecclesiastica et apostolica traditio*).<sup>52</sup> Like Irenaeus and Tertullian, Origen agrees that the teachings of the apostles have been handed down in an unbroken line of succession. A “definite line and unmistakeable rule (*regula*)” governs the handling of the tradition by Christians who seek to receive training in wisdom.<sup>53</sup> Ledegang reminds us that the appeal to apostolic unity was effective because of their perceived unanimity in matters of faith, while Origen looked around and saw a multitude of different opinions.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>52</sup> Origen, *Peri Archon (PA)* pref.2 (GK 82, 7.9-13). H. Görgemanns and H. Karpp, *Origenes: Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992). For a list of Origen’s works and their modern editions, see M. Geerard, ed., *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 141-186. Cf. Origen, *Origen: On First Principles*, transl. G.W. Butterworth (Gloucester, MA: 1973).

<sup>53</sup> Origen, *PA* pref.2 (GK 82, 7.9-13). See Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) for further reading on Origen’s understanding of the scriptural interpreter.

<sup>54</sup> Fred Ledegang, “Origen’s View of Apostolic Tradition,” in *The Apostolic Age in Patristic Thought*, ed. A. Hilhorst (Boston: Brill, 2004), 135.

While the terms κανὼν τῆς πίστεως and κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας are not found in Origen's Greek corpus<sup>55</sup>, we do find references to κανὼν<sup>56</sup>, κανὼν ἐκκλησιαστικός<sup>57</sup>, and κανὼν τῆς ἐκκλησίας.<sup>58</sup> In an extant Greek fragment of Book IV of *On First Principles*, Origen explains that the rule of the Church functions as a hermeneutical tool. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Church reads Scripture according to its spiritual sense, rather than merely holding to the literal level. With the epistles of Galatians and Hebrews in mind, Origen believes that the allegorical reading of the Alexandrian church is the same approach as that which was practiced by the apostles.<sup>59</sup> The mention of the *kerygma* as the articles of faith which have been handed down appears to demonstrate a connection in Origen's thought between the content of the apostolic preaching and the ecclesiastical rule. Both the *kerygma* and the rule of the Church summarize the interpretation of Scripture, and find their support in the biblical texts.

The rule ("apostolic teaching"), according to Origen, originates with God, who is Creator and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>60</sup> The harmony of creation is located in God's revelation of Himself to Israel and to the Gentiles, as the gospel was manifested to

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<sup>55</sup> For further discussion on the terms for the rule used in Origen's corpus, see Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 127-131; R.P.C. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition* (London: S.P.C.K., 1954), 91-113; and Heinz Ohme, *Kanon ekklesiastikos: die Bedeutung des altkirchlichen Kanonbegriffs* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 185-213.

<sup>56</sup> *PA* 4.2.2 (GK 700, 308.11-16); *Dialogue with Heraclides* 10.14.

<sup>57</sup> *Homilies on Jeremiah* 5.14.1; *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 74.

<sup>58</sup> *PA* 4.2.2 (GK 700, 308.11-16); *Series of Commentaries on Matthew* 46.

<sup>59</sup> *PA* pref.2 (GK 84, 8.14-18); Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 127-128.

<sup>60</sup> *PA* pref.4 (GK 88, 10.2-4).

the prophets and apostles in the Old and New Testaments. In an echo of the kenosis hymn of Philippians 2, Jesus emptied himself of divinity to take on human flesh; his incarnation differed only in his conception of a virgin by the Holy Spirit. Having been raised from the dead, Jesus appeared to the disciples and ascended into heaven. Origen designated the incarnation as the key to human history and the allegorical interpretation of Scripture.<sup>61</sup> The revelation of the μυστήριον is Christ's legacy to the apostles, and from the apostles to the Church, through the Holy Spirit. Thus, only the Church can interpret her own Scriptures.<sup>62</sup> The content of the Church's teaching is found in the Scriptures, which are composed by the Spirit. The Spirit communicates the gospel to the world through the literal meaning of the text, which is obvious to most readers, and the spiritual meaning, which is hidden from the majority. The 'inspired' meaning is only available to those who are graced by the Spirit in wisdom and knowledge.

There is a notable absence in Origen's corpus of any appeal to episcopal succession as a guarantor of the apostolic tradition. In this regard he distances himself from Irenaeus, who had invoked the church in Rome and her unbroken line of presbyter-bishops that linked to the apostolic founders. Origen's appeal is to the Church – the 'ecclesiastical canon,' and the 'ecclesiastical tradition' – as the guarantor that the apostolic tradition had been faithfully handed down. Joseph Trigg, in his perceptive essay on Origen's doctrine of religious leadership, has demonstrated that genuine spiritual authority does not reside in the church's official hierarchy, but rather in the

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<sup>61</sup> Louis Bouyer, "Holy Scripture and Tradition as Seen by the Fathers," in *Eastern Churches Quarterly* (1947): 1-3; Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, 35.

<sup>62</sup> Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, 36.

charismatic teacher who possesses spiritual insight and holiness of life.<sup>63</sup> Apostles and teachers are depicted as inspired exegetes gifted by God with access to divine truths revealed by the mystical interpretation of Scripture.<sup>64</sup> The office of the bishop would ideally be a charismatic teacher; however, Origen too often witnessed clerics who operated more as tyrants than spiritual elites.<sup>65</sup> The successor to Peter and his ‘keys’ is the one who imitates Christ; this power is not limited to a monarchical bishop, but is available to all who seek spiritual perfection.<sup>66</sup> Origen’s position on charismatic authority later became influential for the monastic tradition, where the holy man exercised influence on both the laity and the church.

### *Eusebius of Caesarea*

The fifth-century historians believed themselves to be continuators of Eusebius’ ecclesiastical history, while Eusebius believed himself to be an intellectual heir to Origen.<sup>67</sup> On the subject of apostolic succession, however, Eusebius chose a more conventional path than Origen. While the latter had little or no interest in acknowledging a succession of bishops, the former communicated an interest in chronicling the

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<sup>63</sup> Joseph W. Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership,” *Church History* 50.1 (March 1981), 16. For a historical survey of the parallel developments of charismatic and legal authority in Eastern Christianity, see Karl Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum eine Studie zu Simeon dem Neuen Theologen* (Leipzig, 1898).

<sup>64</sup> Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual,” 12.

<sup>65</sup> Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 16.8 (GCS 10.494.3-4). Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual,” 14.

<sup>66</sup> Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 12.14 (GCS 40.96.6-10); Ledegang, “Origen’s View of Apostolic Tradition,” 137.

<sup>67</sup> Robert M. Grant, “Early Alexandrian Christianity,” *Church History* 40 (1971): 133-144.



successors to the holy apostles in his opening chapter of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>68</sup> The first book of the church history is replete with the exploits of Jesus' disciples. The missionary activities of Paul and Peter laid a foundation of churches throughout the eastern Mediterranean region.<sup>69</sup> The apostles and their direct successors are credited with the establishment of churches in Gaul, Rome, Athens, and Corinth.<sup>70</sup> James, the brother of Jesus, served as the first bishop in Jerusalem. While he was not an apostle, Eusebius records that he was elected to the episcopate by the apostles, thereby marking the see as another instance of apostolic origins.<sup>71</sup> The history of the church in the previous three centuries was a continuation of Luke's account of the Acts of the Apostles. Jesus' closest disciples, having been sent out into the world by the Holy Spirit, proclaimed the gospel to the ends of the earth; churches grew in numbers in response to the apostolic *kerygma* (Acts 1:8). Citing from Origen's Genesis commentary, Eusebius repeats the story that the apostles divided the world into regions for their evangelistic missions: Thomas was sent to Parthia, Andrew to Scythia, John to Asia, etc.<sup>72</sup> The disciples of the apostles, having been animated by an ardent passion for true philosophy, continued the work of building the churches and proclaiming the gospel throughout the world. Eusebius names

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<sup>68</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 1.1.1 (SC 31, 3).

<sup>69</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 3.4.1 (SC 31, 100).

<sup>70</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 3.4 (SC 31, 100).

<sup>71</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 2.1; 2.23. Cf. Adelbert Davids, "The Era of the Apostles According to Eusebius," in *The Apostolic Age in Patristic Thought*, edited by A. Hilhorst (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 199. Eusebius borrows his datum on James the Just from the sixth book of Clement of Alexandria's *Hypotyposes*, now lost.

<sup>72</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 3.1.1 (SC 31, 97); Cf. Ferguson, "Paradosis and Traditio," 16; Davids, "The Era of the Apostles According to Eusebius," 197. Origen's commentary has not survived. Dennis R. MacDonald, "Legends of the Apostles," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, edited by Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 176-177.

some of these disciples, which include Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, and Papias.<sup>73</sup>

From these humble beginnings the apostolic witness that ‘Jesus is Lord’ was faithfully delivered to their episcopal successors, whose lines of succession can be traced from the first century to the writing of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Grant speculates that Eusebius’ model for listing the lines of succession was Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses*, which lists the twelve presbyter-bishops of Rome.<sup>74</sup> He also suggests that Eusebius provides the episcopal lists for Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch to give “less emphasis” on Rome. It is more likely, however, that Eusebius was strengthening the claim of the apostolic sees to their respective founders, further cementing the connection between his contemporary church and its apostolic foundation.<sup>75</sup>

Eusebius’ purview of history carried over to his exegetical study of Scripture. In his essay on Eusebius’ interpretation of biblical commentaries, Michael Hollerich observes that the historian was convinced “that the events of history were the best demonstration of the truth of Christianity, if it could be shown...that the Hebrew Scriptures foresaw the origin and spread of Christianity.”<sup>76</sup> In both his commentaries and historical writings, the biblical texts are shown to be divinely inspired documents that reveal God’s authorship of history. Eusebius wrote as an apologist of the divine

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<sup>73</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 3.38.1 (SC 31, 152).

<sup>74</sup> Robert Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 45. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.3.2 (SC 211, 34-38).

<sup>75</sup> Eusebius lists the episcopal successors up to the end of Book 7, but makes no further updates in Books 8-10. Cf. Richard Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999), 44-45.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Hollerich, “Eusebius as Polemical Interpreter,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, edited by Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 589.

economy of salvation. While Eusebius did not list the development of the canon of Scripture as one of the chief matters to be enumerated in the introduction to his church history, he did comment upon the attitudes of several Christian bishops towards various disputed books.<sup>77</sup> The center of history – and the criteria by which the canon of Scripture was selected – is Christ, who was both the subject of the Hebrew prophets and the proclamation of the apostles. All of Scripture announces the advent of Christ in history. Ecclesiastical history records the chronological narrative of Christ's Church, as she continues the work of evangelizing the kingdom of God throughout the world.

### *Orthodoxy and Heresy*

The traditional view of the development of Christian orthodoxy as articulated above was challenged by Walter Bauer in his 1934 thesis *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei in ältesten Christentum*.<sup>78</sup> Bauer argued that in many locations of the Mediterranean basin – e.g., Edessa, Egypt, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Crete – heresy was either the only manifestation of Christianity, or the majority among the collected adherents.<sup>79</sup> The sum total of orthodox Christians was numerically inferior to the heretics for many decades after the post-apostolic age.<sup>80</sup> On this point Bauer rejected the early catholic assertion

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<sup>77</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 1.1 (SC 31, 3); 3.3.3 (SC 31, 99); 5.8.1 (SC 41, 35); Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian*, 126.

<sup>78</sup> An English translation was published in 1971 by a team from the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins. Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, edited by Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

<sup>79</sup> Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, xxii.

<sup>80</sup> Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 231.

that orthodoxy was temporally prior to heresy.<sup>81</sup> Orthodoxy, as it emerged in the second century, was the form of Christianity represented by the majority in Rome. The influence of the Roman church led to an expansion of its authority over other churches. 1 Clement serves as a key witness to Bauer's thesis; he argues that this epistle demonstrates the imposition of its interest on the church in Corinth in a way that is dissimilar to that of other letters from the same period.<sup>82</sup> Rome appealed to apostolic authority to justify her own actions, a move which would be later copied by orthodox bishops in Antioch and Alexandria.<sup>83</sup> The apostles came to appear alongside the Old Testament and Jesus himself as a third authority for Christian doctrine and practice.<sup>84</sup> Paul was elevated to the position of the Church's Apostle. He was marked with the 'ecclesiastical,' ('orthodox'), and anti-heretical, stamp.<sup>85</sup>

Bauer's thesis has come under attack for many reasons, including his refusal to define the terms 'orthodox' and 'heretic'; an inability to demonstrate the minority status of orthodox Christians; and an over-reliance on Roman influence, coupled with an evasion of the importance evinced by the churches of Asia Minor. His establishment of the position that 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' would refer to "what one customarily and usually understands them to mean" neglects to take into account the complex difficulty of

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<sup>81</sup> For a summary of the traditional, or classical, theory of the origin of heresy, see H.E.W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1954): 3-35.

<sup>82</sup> Frederick W. Norris, "Ignatius, Polycarp, and 1 Clement: Walter Bauer Reconsidered" *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976): 37.

<sup>83</sup> Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 112-118.

<sup>84</sup> Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 212.

<sup>85</sup> Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 226.

identifying competing ecclesial parties and their evolving ideological stances.<sup>86</sup> Such a statement creates even further problems in apportioning majority and minority divisions within local congregations. Frederick Norris studied Bauer's observations on the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp; he found that the latter was unable to prove the 'orthodox' Christians held a minority status in Antioch and Smyrna.<sup>87</sup> Bauer theorizes that the rise of monepiscopacy in Rome is indicative of a minority culture wanting to seize control of the community.<sup>88</sup> He ignored the existence of the episcopal office that pre-dated Ignatius in Asia Minor.<sup>89</sup> The existence of monepiscopacy in Antioch at a date earlier than Rome is evidence that ecclesiastical 'orthodoxy', centered around the office of bishop, did not originate in Rome and thereafter spread to churches in other regions.

Bauer asserts that the Roman church invoked the writings and memories of Peter and Paul as one of many tactics that resulted in leadership and organizational superiority for the 'ecclesiastical' position against the various heretical groups.<sup>90</sup> Appeal to the apostles as authorities against the heretics – 'false prophets' – commences as early as the texts of the New Testament.<sup>91</sup> Bauer ignores or facetiously dismisses the legacy of the

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<sup>86</sup> Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, xxii.

<sup>87</sup> Norris, "Ignatius, Polycarp, and 1 Clement," 25-26.

<sup>88</sup> Hultgren finds Bauer's claim that Ignatius' lack of secure standing as the bishop of Antioch is evidence that heresy preceded orthodoxy to be untenable. At most Bauer would be able to claim a mixed orthodoxy/heterodox situation, rather than a chronological priority of heresy. Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 12.

<sup>89</sup> Norris, appealing to Hegesippus in Eusebius' ecclesiastical history (*HE* 4.22.4), suggests that monepiscopacy originated in Jerusalem. He also agrees that it is not evidence in Rome at the beginning of the second century. Norris, "Ignatius, Polycarp, and 1 Clement," 38. Cf. William Telfer, *The Office of Bishop* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1962).

<sup>90</sup> Harrington provides a helpful summary of Bauer's thesis on this point. Daniel Harrington, "The Reception of Walter Bauer's *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* during the Last Decade," *Harvard Theological Review* 73.1-2 (1980): 289-298.

<sup>91</sup> Ephesians 2:20; Jude 17-19; 2 Peter 2:1; 3:2.

apostles that were attested to in Antioch and Asia Minor, all chronologically prior to any possible Roman influence.<sup>92</sup> Amidst this ever expanding list of criticisms, we may wonder why Bauer's thesis ever received so much attention in the first place? What value did he bring to the problem of the development of orthodoxy and heresy in early Christianity? Hultgren answers this question by acknowledging that Bauer accurately criticized one aspect of the traditional view: Jesus never revealed "pure doctrine" to the disciples.<sup>93</sup> Since the time of Walter Bauer's thesis, it is no longer possible to read Irenaeus, Tertullian, or Origen without understanding that doctrine underwent development as generations of Christians continued to reflect upon the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The issue that Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, etc., were forced to face was how to remain faithful to the original deposit of faith that Jesus' earliest disciples handed over to the churches they instituted.

### *Creeds*

We cannot neglect the role of creeds as a teaching function of the early Church. Prior to the Council of Nicaea no such universal standard 'test of orthodoxy' existed in the ecclesiastical tradition.<sup>94</sup> The conditions created by the 'Arian controversy' led to the perception that such a standard was necessary. Formulas of faith arose as affirmations of

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<sup>92</sup> See Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 13 for further explanation of these Petrine and Pauline 'legacies' from the late first and early second centuries.

<sup>93</sup> Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 13. Perhaps Bauer has in mind the legend, repeated by Rufinus, of the apostles meeting together at a common location prior to dispersing on their missionary journeys, for the purpose of settling on a universal creed, later known as the Apostles Creed. *Comm. in symb. apost.* 2 (CCL 20, 134f.).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 207.

belief by catechumens at the observance of baptism. In this section we will survey the evolution of the confessional formulas up to the early decades of the fourth century.

Kinzig and Vinzent define a creed as the “formal pledge of allegiance to a set of doctrinal statements concerning God and his relationship to his creation in general and mankind in particular.”<sup>95</sup> The New Testament is bereft of any formal creeds; however, there are compact confessions, e.g. κύριος Ἰησοῦς, ‘Jesus is Lord.’<sup>96</sup> The Christian inheritance of the confessional orientation derived from its’ Jewish heritage. The monotheistic covenant, typified by the Shema: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4), became the first article of most early Christian creeds, viz. “I believe in one God.”<sup>97</sup> Statements of faith were required prerequisites for baptism in the Acts of the Apostles. The Ethiopian eunuch, prior to his baptism by the apostle Philip, confessed as follows: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”<sup>98</sup> Catchwords like ‘Jesus is Lord’ and ‘Jesus is the Christ’ functioned as formulas for teaching the faith to catechumens and baptismal candidates.

By the second and third centuries, baptismal confessions took the form of answers to interrogatory questions.<sup>99</sup> We find a detailed explanation of the baptismal rite in Ps-

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<sup>95</sup> Wolfram Kinzig and Markus Vinzent, “Recent Research on the Origin of the Creed,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 50.2 (1999): 540. The declaratory form of a creed contains the word “I/we believe” while an interrogatory form asks “Do you believe?” followed by an answer of “I/we believe.”

<sup>96</sup> Christians were likely conscious that their affirmation of κύριος Ἰησοῦς contained within in an implicit denial of *kurios Kaisar*, ‘Caesar is Lord’. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Longman, 1972), 15.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. E. Glenn Hinson, “Confessions or Creeds in Early Christian Tradition,” *Review and Expositor* 76.1 (1979): 5.

<sup>98</sup> See also Acts 16:14; Acts 16:30; Romans 10:9; 1 Tim. 6:12; Heb. 4:14.

<sup>99</sup> Interrogatory creeds are also attested in Palestine, Cappadocia, and Alexandria in the third century. Cf. Origen, *Hom. Num.* 5.1; Cyprian, *Fp* 75.10f.; Eusebius, *HE* 7.9.2 (SC 41, 174); Kinzig and Vinzent, “Research Research on the Origin of the Creed,” 543.

Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition*, written ca. 215 in Rome. At this time there had not yet developed a declaratory creed that becomes so ubiquitous in the fourth century. Instead, we find an interrogatory pattern of questions and answers:

When the one being baptized goes down into the waters the one who baptizes, placing a hand on him, should say thus: "Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?" And he who is being baptized should reply: "I believe." Let him baptize him once immediately, having his hand placed upon his head. And after this he should say: "Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit and Mary the virgin and was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was dead [and buried] and rose on the third day alive from the dead and ascended in the heavens and sits at the right hand of the Father and will come to judge the living and the dead?" And when he has said, "I believe," he is baptized again. And again he should say: "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit and the holy church and the resurrection of the flesh?" And he who is being baptized should say: "I believe." And so he should be baptized a third time.<sup>100</sup>

The affirmation of faith by the candidate remains an integral part of the rite, in the form of the assertion "I believe." The faith being affirmed is Trinitarian in form, and contains many of the same elements found in the *kerygma*. Hanson observes that fundamentally the Church is a teaching Church.<sup>101</sup> Neophytes were expected to conform to the beliefs and practices of the community. Initiation into the congregation led some to think of baptism as an oath or promise that initiated the candidate into the community of Christ's body.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 21:12-18, trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 111-112.

<sup>101</sup> Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, 52. Cf. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 50-51.

<sup>102</sup> Tertullian describes profession of faith at baptism as a *sacramentum*. *Ad martyras* 3.1; *Adv. Marcionem* 1.28.2; *De Anima* 1.4; *De Corona* 11.1,7; 13.7; *Scorpiace* 4.5; *De Idololatria* 19.2. Cyprian, *De Lapsis* 7.13; *Ad Demetrianum* 26. Cf. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, 67.



Until recently, the scholarly consensus held that the earliest extant declaratory creed was produced by Eusebius of Caesarea at the Council of Nicaea in 325:<sup>103</sup>

We believe in one God, the Father, almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;  
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Logos of God, God from God, light from light, life from life, Son only begotten, first-begotten of all creation, begotten before all ages from the Father, through Whom all things came into being, Who because of our salvation was incarnate, and dwelt among men, and suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the Father, and will come again in glory to judge living and dead;  
We believe also in one Holy Spirit.<sup>104</sup>

Presuming that Eusebius was familiar with this creed, it would be dated to the latter half of the third century.<sup>105</sup> He claims to have received this creed during catechetical instruction and baptism: ἐν τῇ κατηχήσει καὶ ὅτε τὸ Λουτρον ἐλαμβάνομεν.<sup>106</sup> A new proposal, however, has cast doubt on the assertion that declaratory creeds evolved out of the interrogatory forms. Kinzig and Vinzent claim that declaratory creeds are more closely linked to the rule of faith and the ‘Arian controversy.’ According to this thesis, Eusebius – who had been excommunicated at a council that met in Antioch in 324-5 – drafted a confession based on the Antiochene Creed, so that he might be received back into the Church.<sup>107</sup> Therefore the confession formulated at the synod of Antioch, based

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<sup>103</sup> Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, 69; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 181-183.

<sup>104</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.29-30 (SC 477, 100).

<sup>105</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 183.

<sup>106</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.37 (SC 477, 104).

<sup>107</sup> Eusebius’ excommunication status was suspended, so that he continued to function as the bishop of Caesarea during the interim between Antioch and Nicaea. It must also be noted that while he implies that the creed of Nicaea was based on the Eusebian creed, Kelly has demonstrated that upon close inspection enough differences emerge for this to be unlikely. He conjectures that the Nicene creed belongs to the Jerusalem family of creeds, but admits that the evidence is too sparse to make any definitive conclusions. Kinzig and Vincent, “Recent Research on the Origin of the Creed,” 552. The synodal letter of the Council of Antioch, known only in Syriac, was discovered in 1905 by Eduard Schwartz. For more on this council and its creed, see Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 208-211; R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the*

on various *regulae fidei*, baptismal interrogations, and confessions of faith, became the first synodal creed.<sup>108</sup> The primary strength of this claim is that Kinzig and Vincent recognize the interdependency and organic growth of the creedal confessions that populated the ecclesial landscape in the first half of the fourth century. The authors of these creeds drew up their formulae based partly on received traditions, and partly in response to the arguments of their opponents. The theory of Kinzig and Vincent offers a reasonable explanation for the formulaic similarities between the various κανόν/ *regulae* and the emergent creeds that come to eventually replace them by the end of the patristic era. In Chapter Three we will explore in greater detail the evolution of post-Nicene creeds, as the various parties shape their confessions while the Christological controversy continues to escalate. Furthermore, we will consider Socrates' statement that the Nicene creed was itself a κανὼνα τῆς ἀληθείας. His statement is enigmatic if declaratory creeds evolved from baptismal confessions only; however, it is likely evidence that he perceived the organic connection between the creeds and previous confessions of the Christian Tradition.

### *Conclusion*

As we have seen from this survey of the apostolic tradition in the early church, appeal to παράδοσις / *traditio* was an attempt to unerringly preserve the original apostolic teaching, and hand it down to successive generations. Second and third century Christians testified that the Tradition, in the form of the rule of faith, had been faithfully passed down to them from the apostles, and that the same rule was now employed among

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*Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (London: T&T Clark, 1988; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 146-151.

<sup>108</sup> Kinzig and Vincent, "Recent Research on the Origin of the Creed," 555.

all the catholic churches as a hermeneutical aid in reading Scripture. Following their model, the ancient historians received the apostolic tradition as an authentic deposit of faith that guaranteed the legitimacy of the Church's witness to the divine economy of salvation.

In the years leading up to the Council of Nicaea in 325, a dispute arose in the Alexandrian church in regards to the divinity of Jesus. Both bishop Alexander and his presbyter Arius appealed to the apostolic tradition on behalf of their respective positions. The locus of the doctrinal battle was Scripture, with each side identifying favorite proof-texts to defend their terrain. Likewise, the rule of faith favored neither side, as its article on Christ was insufficiently precise on the issue of the Son's essential relationship to the Father. The fifth-century historians turn to apostolic succession as the crucial pivot that should have resolved the dispute. Alexander was a bishop and Arius a presbyter: case closed. When Arius received support from an 'outside' bishop – Eusebius of Nicomedia – the incredulous outrage flows from the letters of Alexander and his advocates. The historians ignore the Council of Antioch, focusing instead on Nicaea. As we will ascertain in the next chapter, the Nicene creed is favored by Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret as the apostolic answer to the Alexandrian dispute. They do not consider it at the level of a regional synod that settled a local matter; Nicaea becomes elevated to the status of a universal creed that represents the orthodox dogma of the catholic Church.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Nicaea in the Ecclesiastical Histories

In chapter two we observed the historical development of the apostolic tradition as the means for establishing doctrinal authority in the Christian churches. In the fourth century the tradition would be put to its greatest test when a hermeneutical controversy erupted in Alexandria about the intra-Trinitarian relationship between the Father and Son. When both sides appealed to Scripture and Tradition as authorities, emperor Constantine intervened into ecclesiastical affairs by hosting a council of bishops in Nicaea. The Nicene overseers drafted a creed that characterized the Son as one in substance (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father, despite the absence of such language in either Scripture or the *regula fidei*.<sup>1</sup> The decision at Nicaea to employ non-scriptural language as a means of elucidating Trinitarian ontology accelerated the development of the most fundamental Christian doctrine. The resulting Nicene orthodoxy was identified by the Greek historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret as the perfect epitome of the apostolic tradition that had been passed down to the catholic churches at the beginning of the fourth century.

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<sup>1</sup> The Nicene creed included “catchwords” that were probably absent in any earlier formularies. Eusebius of Caesarea claimed that the Nicene creed was based on a baptismal creed of his own church, and ὁμοούσιος was added at the suggestion of Constantine. In his comparison of the two creeds, Kelly finds this to be highly unlikely. However, he adds that the Nicene statement does appear to be to be an independent formulary even when the contentious language is removed, suggesting that the interpolated creed is probably derived from a local baptismal creed in the Syro-Palestinian region. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 220-230.

## *Socrates of Constantinople*

In the preface to his ecclesiastical history, Socrates declares the purpose behind his project. He aspires to continue the historiographical work that Eusebius instituted a century before. The “Father of Church History” had concluded his ten-volume chronicle of the Christian Church with the accession of Emperor Constantine. Socrates criticizes Eusebius for neglecting any mention of Arius, choosing instead to conclude with the triumphant ascension of the first Christian ruler and the defeat of Licinius. As Socrates observes, Eusebius’ panegyric history would no doubt have elicited praise from Constantine himself.<sup>2</sup> Since Eusebius was supposedly more interested in encomium, and less interested in relating the facts accurately, the lot had now fallen to Socrates to fill in the gaps of that controversy.<sup>3</sup> Socrates determines therefore to write the details of the events that took place from the era of Eusebius to those of his own day, which coincide with the codification of the Theodosian Code.<sup>4</sup>

This allusion to Arius in the preface is not a randomly placed comment. Socrates’ work is a historical project that chronicles the adoption of Nicene orthodoxy by the Church. From beginning to end he defends the apostolicity of Nicaea by championing those who supported *homoousios* and deprecating those who opposed its authority. For

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<sup>2</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.1.2 (SC 477, 44).

<sup>3</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.1 (SC 493, 18).

<sup>4</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.1.2 (SC 477, 44). Promulgated in A.D. 438, the Theodosian Code codified Roman law. John Matthews, “The Making of the Text,” in *The Theodosian Code*, edited by Jill Harries and Ian Wood (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 19. Roman law confirmed Catholic Christianity, specifically defined as the tradition upheld at Nicaea, as normative religion. Michele R. Salzman, “*Superstitio* in the Codex Theodosianus and the persecution of Pagans”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987): 172-88. Chesnut suggests that Socrates’ profession as a lawyer explains why he concludes an ecclesiastical history with the “great development in jurisprudence during his career.” Chesnut, *The First Christian histories*, 176. The Theodosian Code contains the constitutions spanning the period from Constantine’s accession to its promulgation, enacted January 1, 439 – the same time span of the *HE*.

Socrates, Nicene orthodoxy is commensurate with the apostolic tradition, and was immediately hailed as such.<sup>5</sup> He chronicles a historical narrative that commences with the Council of Nicaea, whose bishops gathered to quash Arius and his heretical Christological teachings. From the council of Nicaea in 325 until the council of Constantinople in 381, a struggle ensued to articulate the nature of the Father-Son relationship.<sup>6</sup> Numerous councils met thereafter, not only to ordain bishops or address matters of polity, but also to find the grammar that adequately expressed both the unity of Father and Son, while also making a distinction between the persons of the Trinity so as to avoid a modalistic model of the Godhead. This iteration of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* overreaches in its claim that all councils after 325, with the unique exception of Constantinople 381, met for the purpose of overturning Nicaea, which had already articulated the apostolic rule of *homoousios*.<sup>7</sup> This is the argument presented by Socrates, who concludes that Nicaea perfectly expressed both the canon of truth and the biblical witness.

### *Sozomen of Constantinople*

Sozomen appears to have had a copy of Socrates' text in front of him as he wrote his own work. He does not attribute anything to Socrates, but there is no doubt that much of the material was directly copied. Despite Sozomen's reliance upon Socrates for much

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<sup>5</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.31 (SC 477, 102).

<sup>6</sup> According to the historical narratives of all three iterations of the *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, the Nicene-Arian controversy is resolved when the Nicene Creed is affirmed at the Council of Constantinople 381. Such a tidy resolution is incompatible with the overwhelming evidence to the contrary; however, even reputable scholars, e.g. R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God 318-381*, have been enticed by the facile *terminus ad quem* of 381.

<sup>7</sup> See Socrates' narration of the Council of Antioch 341 (*HE* 2.8) and the aborted Council of Serdica 343/4 (*HE* 2.20).

of his material, the Palestinian historian produced a document that discloses a narrative distinguished by his peculiar voice. He inaugurates the project with an address to Emperor Theodosius II, who is praised for cultivating personal virtue (ἀρετὰς) and piety (εὐσεβεία).<sup>8</sup> In the preface to the work he articulates a desire to write a history that opens with the reign of Constantine and concludes with Theodosius II, but with an emphasis upon the monastics, and the relations between the empire and the Persians/barbarians.<sup>9</sup> For Sozomen, the history of the church in the previous century is not merely the triumph of Catholic Christianity over Arian Christianity, but it is the expansion of the Church throughout the world, and the triumph of Truth, Virtue, and Piety over heresy and schism. In this version of the *HE*, Catholic Christianity is defined by faithfulness to Nicaea, which was led by Fathers who were themselves faithful to the apostolic tradition. The Fathers are validated in their excogitation of the Nicene creed by supernatural wonders. In addition, Roman emperors are established as men who have been entrusted with preserving Nicene Orthodoxy, which is the true form of Catholic Christianity.

### *Theodoret of Cyrus*

Like Socrates, Theodoret's main theme is the 'Arian'-Catholic conflict.<sup>10</sup> Chesnut argues that Theodoret writes extensively about the conflict because of pastoral problems he was continuing to have that were directly attributable to that history even

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<sup>8</sup> Sozomen, *HE* pref.15 (SC 306, 100).

<sup>9</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.1.18 (SC 306, 118).

<sup>10</sup> Glenn Chesnut wryly notes that this ecclesiastical history could have been subtitled "An Account of the Arian Controversy." Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 210.

seventy years after Constantinople 381. Perhaps because of this personal history, Theodoret chronicles a different story about the Catholic struggle against Arianism in the years following Nicaea. Unlike Socrates and Sozomen, Theodoret does not narrate a struggle between Arians and Nicenes in the years between 325 and 350. Similar to modern historians, Theodoret sees Nicene orthodoxy as a developing phenomenon that initially took shape in the late 350s. However, he fails to properly credit the changing grammar of the critical terminology of *ousia* and *hypostasis* which achieved a favored status by Theodosius and the Council of Constantinople in 381. According to Theodoret's account, Divine Providence is credited for the ascendancy of Nicene orthodoxy, through the work of the pro-Nicene bishops Jovian, Valentinian, Gratian, and Theodosius I.

### *Modern Scholarship*

The legacy of Nicaea and the controversy surrounding "Arians," Athanasius, and *homoousios* has been the subject of intense scrutiny by scholars of patristic theology over the course of the last fifty years. In 1962 Maurice Wiles published an article in defense of Arius, arguing that the great heresiarch needed some measure of rehabilitation from the previous characterizations of modern historians, e.g. H.M. Gwatkin and T.E. Pollard.<sup>11</sup> Wiles suggested that Arius was not the "utterly illogical and unspiritual" theologian that Gwatkin and Pollard had depicted him to be.<sup>12</sup> For one thing, Wiles recalled that current knowledge of Arius' theology is founded on short fragments

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<sup>11</sup> H.M. Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1882); T. Pollard, "The Origins of Arianism." *Journal of Theological Studies* 9.1 (Apr 1958): 103-111.

<sup>12</sup> Maurice F. Wiles, "In Defence of Arius," *Journal of Theological Studies* 13.2 (October, 1962): 339.



preserved for polemical purposes by his opponents. He also argued that Arius' teachings are not logically precluded from having a soteriological concern, as Gwatkin and Pollard had asserted.<sup>13</sup> In the end, Wiles did not intend to claim Arius' theological superiority; but he did open the door to further studies merely by asserting that the differences between the two sides were not as absolute as Gwatkin and Pollard had previously assumed. As Robert Gregg astutely observed, it was during this period that scholarly work on this topic indicated the "need for critical review of accepted interpretations of Arius and the Arians."<sup>14</sup>

The bread crumb that Wiles left behind in the wake of his article – the suggestion that there may indeed have been an 'Arian' soteriology – was picked up in the 1970s by Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh. They published several articles which culminated in a 1981 monograph entitled *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation*. As the subtitle indicates, Gregg and Groh postulated a supposed Arian soteriology, built on an adoptionist Christology. Like previous scholars, Gregg and Groh recognized that the criticism of Arius' Christ is that the Son is a creature who becomes promoted to divinity. But they were unique in their emphasis upon the 'Arian's' emphasis of the Son's moral free choice.<sup>15</sup> Human salvation hinges upon the free will of the servant Son, because humanity becomes adopted as sons of God in the same manner that Christ did.<sup>16</sup> As

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<sup>13</sup> Wiles, "In Defence of Arius," 346-347.

<sup>14</sup> Robert C. Gregg, ed. *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments: Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies* (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1985), ii.

<sup>15</sup> Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 13.

<sup>16</sup> Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 28.

believers walk in obedience according to the example of Christ, thus is grace conferred upon them as grace was conferred by God upon Christ.<sup>17</sup>

T.A. Kopecek focused on the ‘Anomoian’ theology of Aetius and Eunomius in his 1979 monograph *A History of Neo-Arianism*. They were largely derided for their assertion that the Son is unlike the Father in essence. Kopecek provides an account of ecclesiastical events spanning from 328 to 395, but he is most interested in analyzing three extant works: Aetius’ *Syntagmation*, and Eunomius’ *Apologia* and *Apologia apologiae*.<sup>18</sup> The ‘neo-Arian’ epithet is unfortunate, as Kopecek himself argues that Aetius took a position “diametrically opposed” to Arius.<sup>19</sup> The association with Arius is largely due to their shared opposition to Alexander and Athanasius, seen most clearly in their common conviction that the Son does not share in the same substance as the Father. It should also be noted that Kopecek’s historical analysis synthesized not only Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, but also Philostorgius, the ‘Arian’ historian.

In 1983 the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies met in Oxford, with Arianism serving as the focus of a significant number of essays. “Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments” was published as a compendium of those essays in 1985. Twenty-two papers provided new insights into Arius’ own theology, i.e. his contribution to the *Thalia*, and also sought to illuminate the theological, historical, and political motivations of the so-called ‘Arians.’<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 84.

<sup>18</sup> The *Apologia apologiae* survives in fragments only.

<sup>19</sup> T.A. Kopecek, *A History of neo-Arianism* (Cambridge, Mass: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 124. Whereas Arius taught a mutable Logos, Aetius averred that the Son is immutable.

<sup>20</sup> Even at this recent date scholars attending the conference continued to speak of a homogenous party of fourth-century believers known as ‘Arians.’ For examples see P.C. Burns, “Hilary of Poitiers’

In 1987 Rowan Williams published his landmark work, *Arius*.<sup>21</sup> Of the many contributions that Williams made to the scholarship on the person and theology of Arius, three of them deserve special mention because of their direct treatment by this project. First, Williams distinguished himself by treating Arius separately from “Arianism.” In Part II, Williams dissects Arius’ theology by treating only those texts that can be properly identified as having been written from the hand of Arius himself. While Williams does believe that the *Thalia* was initially written by Arius, he acknowledges that there are only three texts that can undoubtedly be ascribed to Arius: 1) the confession of faith presented to Alexander, 2) a letter written to Eusebius of Nicomedia, and 3) the confession presented to Constantine after Nicaea.<sup>22</sup> By limiting himself to these texts, Williams signifies that he is dismissing Athanasius’ polemical creation of an ‘Arian’ party as a useful category for unifying Arius with the later anti-Nicenes and ‘neo-Arians.’<sup>23</sup>

Second, Williams argues that Arius was not a heretic who offered innovative teachings that countered the established doctrines of the catholic churches. In fact, Williams even goes so far as to suggest that Arius legitimately believed himself to be a

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Confrontation with Arianism in 356 and 357,” in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments: Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies*, Robert C. Gregg, ed. (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1985), 287-302 and R.P.C. Hanson, “The Arian Doctrine of the Incarnation,” in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments: Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies*, Robert C. Gregg, ed. (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1985), 181-211. Rowan Williams does not even comment on the unhelpful use of the term “Arianism” in his 1987 edition of *Arius*. It is only in his 2001 reprint when he admits that there is no one ‘Arian’ agenda or “tradition of loyalty to a single authoritative teacher (247).” In 1987 he was still naming “Arianism” as a “loose and uneasy coalition of those hostile to Nicaea in general and the *homoousios* in particular (166).”

<sup>21</sup> Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy & Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 95.

<sup>23</sup> Williams calls the possibility of a coherent system “founded by a single great figure and sustained by his disciples” a “fantasy.” Williams, *Arius*, 82.

“traditionalist,” and concludes that Arius was a “committed theological conservative.”<sup>24</sup>

Arius was not the upstart heretic who defied the established Orthodox churches as chronicled in the histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret.

Third, Williams advances the thesis that Arius was not simply a Neoplatonist philosopher. Rather, he finds him to be a biblical theologian, as much so as Alexander or Athanasius. The controversy is essentially one about biblical hermeneutics.<sup>25</sup> This is not to say that Arius does not use Greek philosophy. Indeed, part III of *Arius* is devoted to an examination of Arius’ Christology as fundamentally influenced by Plotinian cosmology and logic.<sup>26</sup> But what Williams stresses is that Arius was influenced in his Christology by philosophy, but was primarily interested in submitting it through his biblical exegesis.

A year later, R.P.C. Hanson published a comprehensive work that addressed the entire controversy from 318 to 381: *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*. Hanson introduced his project by announcing that the “Arian controversy” is a misnomer. Arius himself was not a significant figure, other than sparking the explosion that led to the fourth-century dialogue regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. And like Williams before him, Hanson finds that the fourth century is not the story of a Church that is defending an established orthodox position, but is a search for orthodoxy, “conducted by

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<sup>24</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 156, 175. More specifically, Williams labels Arius a conservative Alexandrian.

<sup>25</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 108.

<sup>26</sup> Williams, 231, 265. Stead persuasively argues that Neo-Plotinian influence need not be invoked to explain certain doctrinal difficulties in Arius’ theology. Williams admits that his assertion is unproven, but stands by his claim that the question remains open. Rist argues that Plotinus’ writings did not enter into Christian thinking until after the Council of Nicaea, with the one exception of Eusebius of Caesarea, who knew a “small amount” of Plotinus. Christopher Stead, “Was Arius a Neoplatonist?” in *Studia Patristica* 32 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997): 39-51. John Rist, “Plotinus and Christian Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, Lloyd P. Gerson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 394-396.

the method of trial and error.”<sup>27</sup> Hanson puts this method to the test in his analysis of the pro-Nicene position as it develops throughout the fourth century. The pro-Nicenes discovered that the questions about the essence of God could not be answered purely by scriptural language, “because the questions are about the meaning of biblical language itself.” For Hanson, and for this project as well, the fourth-century search for the Christian doctrine of God becomes an ideal test case for the development of doctrine.<sup>28</sup>

The most recent work to make a comprehensive contribution to this field of study is Lewis Ayres’s *Nicaea and its Legacy*. While Ayres surveys nearly the same chronological period as Hanson did, he does so with comparative brevity and a tighter focus.<sup>29</sup> Ayres seeks specifically to offer a historical narrative for how “pro-Nicene” theologies became counted as orthodox by the end of the fourth century.<sup>30</sup> Along the way, he jettisons the simplistic ‘Arian’ vs. ‘Nicene’ categories that dominated fourth-century scholarship throughout the twentieth century.

Over the past fifty years, scholarship on the fourth-century ecclesiastical developments has focused on stripping away the polemics of ancient interpreters, and clarifying the grammar of the various theological parties. Recent works have eschewed the formerly standard ‘Arian’ against ‘Nicene’ historical paradigm, realizing that such polemical language oversimplifies the complexity of the doctrinal disputations. Nicaea’s

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<sup>27</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, xx. Cf. Joseph Lienhard, review of *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381*, by R.P.C. Hanson, *Theological Studies* 51.2 (June 1990): 334-337.

<sup>28</sup> Hanson, xxi.

<sup>29</sup> Rather than end his text at Constantinople 381, Ayres includes a chapter each on Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

legacy has also sustained some revision, as careful theological research brought to light that its status as an ‘ecumenical’ council was not by immediate acclamation, but was instead a developing narrative. In the next section we will turn to a survey of the historical developments that led to Nicaea’s affirmation by the Council of Constantinople (381).<sup>31</sup>

### *Historical Review of Theological Developments*

Each of the historians under scrutiny in this project – Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret – affirm that Nicene orthodoxy is the perfect representation of the apostolic tradition. These assertions are exhibited primarily through their narration of the ecclesiastical and political events in the fourth century. While they agree on the affirmation of Nicaea as the witness of the apostles, their chronicles take alternate routes to arrive at the ‘triumph’ of Constantinople 381. In the following historical narrative I will summarize the development of the Nicene creed from its initial confirmation to its re-affirmation at the Council of Constantinople 381, when it was affirmed as an ecumenical statement of the apostolic faith. While it is recognized that the controversy did not find full resolution in the fourth century, the ensuing narrative will conclude at that point because each of these historians turns to other ecclesiastical matters in the succeeding years.

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<sup>31</sup> In all three Greek histories, the Council of Constantinople (381) is decisive in authority for its ratification of Nicaea. Modern studies of this council encounter difficulties in assessing its role, most notably due to the absence of any mention of a Constantinopolitan Creed until 451 at the Council of Chalcedon. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed was publicly read at the 451 council, to no objection. Kelly notes that its connection with Nicaea was “taken for granted,” and that later tradition asserted that the Constantinopolitan Creed was formed by adding a few anti-heretical formulas to the Nicene creed. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 297-299. None of the Greek histories provides a copy of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, mentioning only that the Nicene creed was ratified.

### *Conflict Between Alexander and Arius*

Only a few short years following Constantine's victory over Maximinus, a theological controversy erupted in Alexandria.<sup>32</sup> Believing himself to be a student in conformity with the forefathers of the faith, Arius argued in a letter to Alexander that there can only be one God, alone Unbegotten.<sup>33</sup> The Father begat an Only-Begotten Son, through Whom the universe was made. The Son is an immutable and perfect creature, "but not as one of the creatures." Father, Son, and Spirit are three *hypostases*.<sup>34</sup> The Son is not co-eternal with the Father, but was begotten apart from time. Only the Father is ingenerate (ἀγέννητος) and Monad.<sup>35</sup> The Son was begotten, not according to nature, but by the will of God.<sup>36</sup> Arius pleaded with Alexander; not only was he faithful to the teachings of the Fathers, but his teachings on the Son's relations with the Father preserved the Church's tradition from that of Valentinus, Sabellius, or Manicheus.<sup>37</sup>

Alexander convened a council which dismissed Arius on the charge that the latter had asserted doctrines that were contrary to Scripture. He rejected the suggestion that the

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<sup>32</sup> Opitz dated the genesis of the controversy in 318, beginning with Arius' letter addressed to Eusebius of Nicomedia. H.G. Opitz, "Die Zeitfolge des arianischen Streites von den Anfängen bis zum Jahr 328," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 33 (1934): 131-59.

<sup>33</sup> Arius' letter dates to 320, according to Opitz' chronology. In the letter, likely written while he was still in Egypt, Arius defends his teachings as consistent with the faith he has received from Alexander. Copies of the letter were preserved by Athanasius and Epiphanius. Athanasius, *De synodis* 16; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 69.7.

<sup>34</sup> Hans-Georg Opitz, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Arianischen Streites* (Berlin: Leipzig, 1934) 30, 64.15. Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 97.

<sup>35</sup> Opitz, *Urk.* 6, 12.6, 12.9. *Letter of Arius to Alexander*. J. Stevenson, ed. *A New Eusebius: Documents illustrating the history of the Church* 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (London: S.P.C.K., 1987), 326-327. Cf. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 142.

<sup>36</sup> Opitz, *Urk.* 6, 12.6.

<sup>37</sup> Opitz, *Urk.* 6, 12.3. *Letter of Arius to Alexander*. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, 326.

Son came into existence, as well as the subsequent implication that there was a time when the Father was not the Father.<sup>38</sup> He also scorned the idea that the Son is a creature, which implies mutability. His nature is immutable, because he is the perfect image of the Father's essence. The Son's begotten status does not rule out his eternality. Taking a page from Origen, Alexander asserted the eternal generation of Christ.<sup>39</sup> John Behr observes that Arius focused on those texts that describe Christ in human terms, while Alexander quoted those passages that speak of the Son's divinity with the Father.<sup>40</sup> For the latter, Christ is the immutable Son by nature. He did not advance to that status.<sup>41</sup> Alexander argued that the Father and Son are coeternal and correlative.

The debate became contentious enough to reach Constantine. He sent an emissary, Ossius of Cordova, to Alexandria with a letter demanding the resolution of their "unimportant matters."<sup>42</sup> The emperor recognized that there was a partisan divide between the two sides, which threatened to abrogate ecclesial harmony. He urged them to set aside their theological squabbling, and restore the unity of fellowship. Ossius attended a synod in Alexandria, but it is not known what determination (if any) was made about this debate.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.6.9 (SC 477, 66).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Manlio Simonetti, *Studi sull'Arianesimo* (Rome: Editrice Studium, 1965): 116-120; Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 143.

<sup>40</sup> Behr, *The Nicene Faith, Vol. 2, Part 1*, 125; Opitz, *Urk.* 13.29-30.

<sup>41</sup> Behr, *The Nicene Faith, Vol. 2, Part 1*, 127.

<sup>42</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.7.13 (SC 477, 84).

<sup>43</sup> Athanasius affirms that a synod was held, but he writes about it only in the context of the Meletian controversy. *Apol. Sec.* 74.3f., 76.3.



The matter was taken up next at a council held in Antioch during the spring of 325. Ossius wrote in a letter addressed to Alexander of Thessalonica that the gathered bishops produced a statement of faith asserting that the unchangeable and immutable Son was not begotten by volition or adoption, but shares in the substance (*hypostasis*) of the Father. They affirmed that Alexander's teaching on the Son was taught by the apostles and Scripture, and that anyone who shared Arius' teachings should be expelled from the Church. The letter concluded with an acknowledgement of an upcoming "great and priestly" council at Ancyra.<sup>44</sup>

### *Nicaea*

Constantine moved the location of the "great and priestly" council from Ancyra to Nicaea. The Council of Nicaea met from May to July 325. Later called an ecumenical (*οἰκουµενικός*) council – whereby bishops from around the empire were summoned to meet at Nicaea – it was the largest gathering of bishops ever assembled.<sup>45</sup> Attendees included Ossius, Alexander, Athanasius, and Arius from Alexandria, as well as the two Eusebii (Nicomedia and Caesarea).<sup>46</sup> The exact number of bishops who attended the Nicene council has been its own source of controversy. Eusebius of Caesarea estimated

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<sup>44</sup> Opitz *Urk.* III No. 18.8-13 (38,39). For further reading about Ossius' letter on the Council of Antioch 325, see Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 146-151.

<sup>45</sup> The earliest texts that identify Nicaea as an ecumenical council date from 338. While the epithet would later come to mean a 'world-wide' council with greater authority, secular uses by artist and actor associations indicated a tax-exempt status. Chadwick wonders if the "ecumenical" council of Nicaea was a special plea for an exemption from tax. Henry Chadwick, "The Origin of the Title 'Oecumenical Council'" *Journal of Theological Studies* 23.1 (April 1972): 132-134.

<sup>46</sup> Ossius likely presided over the council. See Hanson, *The Search*, 154-155. Athanasius' attendance at Nicaea is presumed. Cf. *De decretis* 20:1.

that about 250 bishops attended.<sup>47</sup> Eustathius of Antioch placed his estimate at 270 bishops present.<sup>48</sup> Athanasius says there were approximately 300 attendees.<sup>49</sup> Socrates pinpoints the number of bishops subscribing to Nicaea at exactly 318 attendees.<sup>50</sup> Hanson estimates that by A.D. 370, the exact count of 318 bishops became a consensus figure, despite the lower estimates from eyewitnesses, e.g. Eusebius and Eustathius.<sup>51</sup> The number 318 was aimed at legitimizing the status of Nicaea as an ecumenical council by linking it to a biblical witness. Abraham had that same number of colleagues in his company (Gen. 14:14). For those writers who placed the number of bishops at 318, this was a claim of divine providence and prophetic fulfillment on Nicaea.

The bishops at Nicaea exiled Arius and his supporters Theognis of Nicaea and Secundus of Ptolemais. The creed that was affirmed at Nicaea asserted that the Son is consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father.<sup>52</sup> The Nicene bishops concluded that the Son shared the same essence as the Father, and was not counted as a creature (κτίσμα) as Arius had averred.<sup>53</sup> The Son is fully divine – begotten, not made. They rejected any suggestion of the Son as a material creature, who was produced by the Father’s will.

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<sup>47</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3.8 (GCS 7, 81).

<sup>48</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.8.1 (SC 501, 210); *HE* 1.7 (NPNF 2:3, 44).

<sup>49</sup> Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 66.

<sup>50</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.31 (SC 477, 100).

<sup>51</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 156. Maraval suggests that the number 318 emerges closer to 360. He gives credit to Hilary of Poitiers for first numbering the attendees at Nicaea in his *De synodis* 86 (*PL* 10.538B), which he dates between August 358 and May 359. (SC 477, 101, n.3.) Cf. C.H. Turner, *Ecclesiae occidentalis monumenta iuris antiquissima* (Oxford: Oxonii, 1899-1939). EOMIA is a Latin collection of canons, creeds, and letters of various councils held in the fourth century. Tome 1, Fascicle 1, pp. 35-101 contain lists of the names of bishops who attended Nicaea.

<sup>52</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.29 (SC 477, 100).

<sup>53</sup> Opitz, *Urk.* 6, 12.9-10. *Letter of Arius to Alexander*. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, 326.

Arius had previously rejected *homoousion* in his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia. The creed anathematized anyone who taught that the Son was of a different *ousia* than the Father, or that “there was (a time) when He (the Son) was not,” which was a statement directed specifically at Arius.<sup>54</sup> The council also rejected any notion that the Son came into existence from nothing, a claim which was not even accepted by Arius’ supporters.

In his letter to the church in Caesarea, Eusebius defends his decision to subscribe to the creed. It is apparent that the bishop was somewhat embarrassed about his signature, which compelled him to explain why he would agree to a statement of faith that included a technical word he opposed.<sup>55</sup> Eusebius argues that *homoousios* does not imply material corporality or division of substance.<sup>56</sup> This statement is also an early indication that the language of Nicaea was marked by a certain fluidity of interpretation. For example, the creed insists that anyone who asserts that the Son is of a different *hypostasis* from the Father is anathematized.<sup>57</sup> *Hypostasis* and *ousia* are synonymous terms in the Nicene creed. The Cappadocians would later distinguish between the two terms, so that *ousia* alluded to the divine essence, while *hypostasis* invoked plurality.

The bishops at Nicaea appear to have subscribed to *homoousios* as a means toward one end: the exclusion of Arius and his teaching of the Son. It would be nearly two decades before anyone re-affirms *homoousios* in writing. Not until the 350s do we

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<sup>54</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.30 (SC 477, 100).

<sup>55</sup> His language also indicates that news of the creed traveled to Caesarea quickly enough that he had to write them a letter, as they had already heard about his choice to sign it.

<sup>56</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.50 (SC 477, 110). This was one of Arius’ concerns, because it was too closely identifiable with “Manichaeism.” Arius, *Epistle to Alexander* 3; Opitz, *Urk.* 6, 12-13.; cf. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 93-94. It may well be that *homoousios* was also condemned by the council that deposed Paul of Samosata in 268. Ayres suggests that Paul’s usage of the term was probably materialistic.

<sup>57</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.30 (SC 477, 100).

find Athanasius arguing that Nicaea was a standard of orthodox dogma.<sup>58</sup> The bishops at Nicaea did not believe themselves to be establishing a creed that would serve as a litmus test for orthodoxy. They believed themselves to be quelling a local controversy.

### *Post-Nicaea Aftermath*

The doctrinal controversy quieted down in the years between the council of Nicaea and Constantine's death in 337. Because of the emperor's role in hosting the council and affirming its creed, no one dared declare openly against it while he lived. However, this period was not devoid of activity. All of the exiles were eventually reinstated to communion by Constantine, despite objections from Alexander of Byzantium and Athanasius of Alexandria, who replaced Alexander after the latter's death in 328. Eustathius of Antioch, one of the staunch defenders of the Nicene creed, was deposed from his see. Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to the city formerly known as Byzantium.

A council met in 335 to determine Athanasius' fitness as the bishop of Alexandria. While he would later claim that this trial was the work of "Arians," the charges brought against him were due to behavior, not doctrine. He was accused of breaking a sacred chalice and cutting off the hand of a man, Arsenius, in anger. The charges were dropped when Athanasius was able to produce Arsenius, with his limbs fully intact. However, the bishop was still condemned for the destruction of the chalice. Constantine was willing to void the council's condemnation, but when he heard that

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<sup>58</sup> I am working under the assumption that *De decretis* should be dated to this period. Barnes dates it to 352/3. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 198.

Athanasius threatened to vitiate the corn shipments from Alexandria, the emperor banished him to Trier.<sup>59</sup>

A.D. 337 was a watershed year for the fourth-century controversies. Arius, having been reinstated by Constantine, died on his way to the cathedral in Constantinople. Athanasius took special joy in noting that Arius' death took place in a similar manner to that of Judas Iscariot. Constantine also died that year, on the feast day of Pentecost, having been baptized in Nicomedia.<sup>60</sup>

### *The Reign of Constantius (337-361)*

Constantine was succeeded by three sons, who divided up the Roman Empire amongst themselves. Athanasius was reinstated as bishop of Alexandria, but only briefly. He was again exiled from his see, and for much of the 340s he resided in Rome, where he enjoyed the hospitality of Bishop Julius. It was likely during his time in Rome that Athanasius wrote *Orationes Contra Arianos*, in which he first called Eusebius of Nicomedia an "Arian." At the time that he wrote this text, Athanasius did not defend Nicaea, and only professes *homoousios* on one instance.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, he observed on multiple occasions that the Son is like (ὅμοιος) the Father.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Apologia Contra Arianos* 87.1; Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 24.

<sup>60</sup> Socrates notes that Constantine was baptized in Nicomedia, but does not name the clergyman who performs the rite. Socrates, *HE* 1.39.2 (SC 477, 260). Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 259-60.

<sup>61</sup> *Orationes Contra Arianos* (CA) 1.9.

<sup>62</sup> Athanasius, *CA* 1.21; 1.44; 1.52; 2.17; 3.10; 3.11; 3.20. He also says that the Son is 'like the Father in all things': *CA* 1.21; 1.40; 2.18. Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 54.

Meanwhile, in 341 a council of bishops met in Antioch in coordination with the dedication of a church.<sup>63</sup> They appear to have organized it in response to Julius' Council of Rome.<sup>64</sup> The bishops produced a creed that opened with a response, perhaps directed at Athanasius and his pejorative label of them as 'Arians,' which wondered how they could be labeled as such when he was a presbyter and they were prelates.<sup>65</sup> The bishops at Antioch devised three statements of faith (a fourth creed was added several months later) that omitted any reference to the Son sharing in the same *ousia* as the Father. The second statement issued by the council, better known as the 'Dedication Creed,' may have been an implicit qualification of Nicaea by claiming that the Son is the ἄτρεπτόν τε καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον τῆς θεότητος, οὐσίας τε καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ βουλῆς καὶ δόξης τοῦ πατρὸς ἀπαράλλακτον εἰκόνα.<sup>66</sup> The creed went on to state that the Triune God is three in *hypostasis*, but one in agreement: ὡς εἶναι τῇ μὲν ὑποστάσει τρία, τῇ δὲ συμφωνίᾳ ἓν.<sup>67</sup> The so-called 'Fourth Creed' of Antioch excluded any mention of the Son's *ousia*, and anathematized those who say that the Son is of a

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<sup>63</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 3.4.

<sup>64</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 284-5.

<sup>65</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.10.4 (SC 493, 42). The bishops also asserted that they had not embraced any other faith than that established from the beginning.

<sup>66</sup> "The immutable and unchanging image of the Divinity, substance and power, and counsel and glory of the Father." Socrates, *HE* 2.10.11 (SC 493, 44). Ayres observes this statement in the negative, stating that it is "not clear if this text directly aims at supplanting Nicaea." He goes on to affirm that the bishops almost certainly intended to offer "a better and clearer affirmation of faith than Nicaea." Either way, the framers of the Antioch creeds did not directly reference Nicaea. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 119.

<sup>67</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.10.14 (SC 493, 46). *συμφωνία* was the word used to describe the concordant sound made by an orchestra who performs a harmonic piece of music.

different *hypostasis* from the Father. Hanson finds that this creed was a reconciling formula, devised to avoid offending anyone.<sup>68</sup>

The tension between Julius and Athanasius on the one hand, and Eusebius of Constantinople (formerly of Nicomedia) on the other, made its way to Emperor Constans. He urged Constantius to convene another council, this time at Serdica (343/4).<sup>69</sup> This particular city was chosen because it stood at a halfway point between the Eastern and Western halves of the Roman Empire.<sup>70</sup> However, the council never met. Socrates wrote that the Eastern bishops refused to meet with their Western counterparts if Athanasius and Paul of Constantinople were present, since they had been exiled from their respective churches. When the Western bishops refused this request, the two sides assembled in separate locations and published anathemas against each other. The Western bishops remained at Serdica, where they affirmed the unity of divine essence between the Son and the Father, while the Eastern bishops moved to Philippopolis and penned letters condemning Julius, Ossius, Marcellus, Athanasius, etc.<sup>71</sup>

The decade of the 350s in ecclesiastical history was dominated by Constantius, who became the sole emperor in 351. A council was held in Sirmium that year, where

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<sup>68</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 291.

<sup>69</sup> Constans wrote to Constantius, who was engaged in battle against the Persian army, in the winter of 342/3. Constantius agreed to his request. Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 69.

<sup>70</sup> Hanson, *The Search*, 293.

<sup>71</sup> Four extant versions of the synodal letter survive: Hilary, *Coll. Ant.* ser. B, 2.1 (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 65. 103-126); Athanasius, *Apol. C. Ar.* 44-49; Theodoret, *HE* 2.8 (SC 501, 350); Cod. Ver. LX (58), edited in *EOIMA* 1.4. Socrates alleges that the Western bishops affirmed Nicaea and the doctrine of *homoousios*, but this cannot be defended with the synodal letter. Socrates, *HE* 2.20.11 (SC 493, 86).

Photinus (the bishop of that city) was condemned.<sup>72</sup> He was an advocate of Marcellus, the former bishop of Ancyra, who was a staunch supporter of Nicaea, and the usage of *ousia* language to explain the Son's relationship to the Father. The bishops at Sirmium (351) produced a creed that reduplicated the 'Fourth Creed' of Antioch. They also attached anathemas that specifically refuted the idea that the Son is an extension of the Father's *ousia*. While those who said that the Son is generated by the Father's will as one of the creatures were anathematized, so were those who argued that the Son is unbegotten (ἀγέννητον) and without beginning (ἀναρχον).<sup>73</sup>

A council was held in Milan (355) after being called by Constantius. During the council the emperor took it upon himself to expel Athanasius from his see. The bishop, who was in Alexandria and absent from the council, went into hiding in the early months of 356, and did not emerge for the rest of the emperor's reign. For much of this time he traveled amongst the monks of Upper and Lower Egypt.

While Athanasius was in exile, the church in Sirmium hosted another gathering of bishops in 357. Because Socrates and Sozomen confuse the two Sirmium councils of 351 and 357, it is unclear exactly who attended the latter synod.<sup>74</sup> Germinius of Sirmium was present, as well as Ursacius and Valens. Ossius was present, but unwillingly so, as he was

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<sup>72</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.29.1 (SC 493, 132); Cf. Behr, *The Nicene Faith, Vol. 2, Part 1*, 84; Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 109.

<sup>73</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.30.28 (SC 493, 142); Cf. Hanson lists all twenty-six anathemas, with helpful notes on several of the more obtuse statements. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 326-328.

<sup>74</sup> Note that the Sirmium 357 gathering was small, perhaps a dozen attendees. None of the ancient sources call it a council. Hilary prefers the description of 'The Blasphemy of Sirmium.' Hilary, *De syn.* 10 (Patrologia Latina 10, 486). The bishops did not compose a creed, but a document that Barnes calls a 'position paper' or 'manifesto.' Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 137; Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 139.



being manipulated by Constantius, even as he was approaching his centenarian birthday.<sup>75</sup> The declaration that was composed by these bishops, which was modeled on the ‘Fourth Creed’ of Antioch, explicitly rejected the mention of *ousia* in speaking about the Son. “For it is clear that only the Father knows how he begot his Son, and the Son how he was begotten by the Father.”<sup>76</sup> There are clear subordinationist tendencies in the creed: “the Father is greater, and the Son is subjected in common with all the things which the Father subjected to him.” While Nicaea is not explicitly named, there was no doubt that its theological positions were denounced.<sup>77</sup>

Another development of the 350s was the emergence of Aetius and Eunomius onto the theological landscape. They were so radical that, according to Socrates, even the ‘Arians’ refused them fellowship. While the other theological positions of this decade, including *homoousians*, *homoiousians*, and *homoians*, were perspectives on the nature of the divine essence, i.e., whether the Son was “like” (ὅμοιος) the Father, “like-in-essence” (ὁμοιούσιος) to the Father, or “one essence” (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father, the Eunomians distinguished themselves by asserting that the Son was essentially “dissimilar” (ἀνόμοιος) to the Father.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Barnes provides further explication about Ossius’ ordeals at that time. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 138.

<sup>76</sup> Hilary, *De synodis* 11. Translation by Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 345.

<sup>77</sup> Phoebadius of Agen wrote that the Sirmium creed forbid bishops from preaching the Nicene creed, since the phrase ‘*homoousios*’ was specifically targeted. *Liber contra arianos* 6.2 (CCL 64, 1985), 23-54. Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 141.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, Vol. 2, Part 1, 88.

### *Ariminum and Seleucia*

The greatest threat to Nicaea in the fourth century, according to Socrates, was not the emergence of the Eunomians. Rather, it was the twin councils of Ariminum and Seleucia. In an apparent attempt to mediate a position between Nicaea and Eunomius, Constantius called for these councils to meet, with the Western bishops convening at Ariminum and the Eastern bishops at Seleucia. Rather than draw up a new confession of faith, a small group of bishops in Sirmium composed a statement of faith on Pentecost of 359. This statement was known as the ‘Dated Creed.’<sup>79</sup> It proposed that the Son is like (ὁμοιον) the Father “according to the Scriptures” (κατὰ τὰς γραφάς) and “in all things” (κατὰ πάντα).<sup>80</sup> The creed concluded with an acknowledgement that *ousia* language was removed since there was no mention of it in regards to the Godhead in Scripture. In the place of essence language, the creed affirmed only that Scripture finds that the Son is “like the Father in all things.”<sup>81</sup> Because of the mediatorial stance of the creed, the bishops at both Ariminum and Seleucia were expected to sign off on it.<sup>82</sup>

The division that took place at Ariminum is instructive for the importance that Nicaea had come to achieve in the prior decade. A majority of bishops reaffirmed Nicaea rather than the new ‘Dated Creed.’ The minority, led by Ursacius and Valens, rejected any affirmation of Nicaea and left to hold their own meeting. Delegations from both the

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<sup>79</sup> Traditionally, creeds were not dated. Critics of the creed, e.g. Athanasius, mocked the fact that it was dated as proof that it did not accurately represent the timeless and universal apostolic tradition.

<sup>80</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.37.19 (SC 493, 166); *HE* 2.37.24 (SC 493, 168).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, Vol. 2, Part 1, 90.

<sup>82</sup> Hanson argues that Constantius sought to exclude the extreme Arians, represented by Aetius and Eunomius, on one end of the spectrum, and the Nicenes, represented by Athanasius, on the other end. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 362.

pro- and anti-Nicaea bishops traveled to Nike for the purpose of presenting their case to Constantius, who agreed to receive only the group represented by Ursacius and Valens. The pro-Nicaea delegation was pressured to renounce Nicaea and instead subscribe to a nearly identical version of the ‘Dated Creed.’ Socrates explains that the synod was moved to Nike because of its similarity in name to “Nicaea.”

The council at Seleucia convened in September of 359. While Ariminum was a gathering of 400 bishops, Seleucia was substantially smaller, with approximately 160 bishops present. Similar to Ariminum, two groups quickly formed, with one group wanting to affirm Nicaea (although without the *homoousios* clause),<sup>83</sup> and the other group wanted to affirm a revised version of the inoffensive Dedication Creed from Antioch (341). The group wanting to affirm the revised version of Nicaea was led by Acacius of Caesarea.<sup>84</sup> The bishops seeking to affirm the Dedication Creed met clandestinely, and subscribed to it without the minority bishops present. Not able to resolve their differences, the two groups also sent rival delegations to Constantius.

With delegations from both councils now present near Constantinople, and near to Constantius, pressure was put on them to agree to a revised Dated Creed, which outlined a Homoian Christology. Through a series of diplomatic maneuvers, the Homoian position was affirmed on the final day of the year 359. In January of 360, the Council of Constantinople approved this Homoian creed before deposing those bishops, e.g., Eleusius of Cyzicus and Basil of Ancyra, who had most vigorously opposed it.

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<sup>83</sup> For further discussion, see Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 163. Ayres suggests that Socrates may simply be repeating Athanasius in *De Synodis* 12. It is improbable that the *homoiousions* would have introduced the Nicene creed for confirmation, even if *homoousios* would be replaced with *homoiousios*.

<sup>84</sup> This creed rejected *homoousion*, *homoiousion*, and also *anhomoion*, and instead commended *homoios*. Cf. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 373.

The following years would see tremendous changes in the relationship between empire and churches. In February 360 Julian, Constantius' cousin, was proclaimed Augustus. Barnes argues that it was during this time that Julian issued an edict allowing exiled bishops to return to their churches.<sup>85</sup> Athanasius returned to his see upon hearing the news in 362. In November 361, Constantius died of illness. Julian enacted pagan reforms, canceling the benefits and privileges that the Christians had enjoyed for half a century.

#### *Alexandria and Antioch in the 360s*

The council of Alexandria met in 362, only weeks after Athanasius returned to his see following Julian's edict. Socrates does not offer any excerpts from either of the two extant documents that were produced by the council.<sup>86</sup> However, he does offer a summary of the proceedings of the council, which focus especially on two points. First, the council claimed that in the incarnation, the Logos assumed not only human flesh, but also a human *psyche*. Socrates argues that this was the teaching of the apostolic tradition all along; he does not provide an explanation for why it became so urgent a matter that a fourth-century council finally affirmed the doctrine. Grillmeier suggests that this assertion is aimed at Apollinaris of Laodicea, who affirmed Nicaea but taught that the incarnate *Logos* did not possess a human *nous*.<sup>87</sup> However, Spoerl demonstrates that an affirmation of a human psychology in the incarnate Logos is more likely aimed at

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<sup>85</sup> Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 154.

<sup>86</sup> *Epistula Catholica*. Text in M. Tetz, "Ein enzyklisches Schreiben der Synode von Alexandrien (362)," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 79, no. 3-4 (1988): 271-73; *Tomus ad Antiochenos* (PG 25.796-809).

<sup>87</sup> Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition Volume One: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, John Bowden, trans., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 318-328.

Marcellus and Photinus.<sup>88</sup> The fact that Apollinarius' disciples signed the *Tome* would seem to support Spoerl's thesis.<sup>89</sup>

Another important result from the council was the determination that the usage of *ousia* and *hypostasis* were necessary to refute the Sabellian error.<sup>90</sup> For the first time, a council distinguished between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, and applied those words to the logic of unity and distinction in the Godhead. Nicaea had employed the words univocally. The creed stated that the Son was *homoousios* with the Father, and anathematized anyone who claimed that the Son was "of another *hypostasis* or *ousia*." For the period from 318 to 381 there was much confusion over the definition and distinction between these two words. At Alexandria (362) this confusion was addressed, with the result being that a precision of language and concept was realized. This distinction of vocabulary served two purposes. First, a provision was made to provide clarity to a confusion of language that had existed for the entirety of this controversy. Second, Nicaea could now become the "standard point of reference" for those parties who opposed the Homoian creed, but could not embrace a Nicene creed that was perceived to be a specter of modalistic theology.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Kelly McCarthy Spoerl, "Apollinarian Christology and the Anti-Marcellan Tradition" *Journal of Theological Studies* 45.2 (October 1994): 545-568. According to Marcellus, the Word can be spoken of as other than God, i.e. the Son, only as he is human; as God he is the same *hypostasis*. Eusebius of Caesarea accused Marcellus of an adoptionist Christology, because the logic of his position led to one of three errors: 1) the Father became incarnate, 2) Christ possessed a human soul, and was merely a human being, or 3) the body of Christ functioned without a soul or mind. Athanasius' assertion in the *Tomus* that the incarnate Logos did not lack *psyche*, *aesthesis*, and a *nous* was an attempt to reconcile divided parties in Antioch on the basis of Nicaea. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical Theology* 1.20.41-3; Marcellus Frags. 72-75 V (70-74 K-H); 85-86 V (63-64 K-H); 96 V (76 K-H); Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, vol. 1, 73-74; 97-99.

<sup>89</sup> Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, vol. 2, Part 1, 98.

<sup>90</sup> Socrates, *HE* 3.7.15 (SC 493, 278).

<sup>91</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 175.

Meanwhile, the church in Antioch was experiencing its share of doctrinal and ecclesial disputes. Meletius, elected bishop in 360, announced his sympathy towards Nicaea, to the surprise of Constantius.<sup>92</sup> Meletius was exiled a month after taking office.<sup>93</sup> Over the course of the next several years, as first Constantius and then Julian died, the church in Antioch was home to numerous factions vying for control of its see.<sup>94</sup> Jovian, who favored the Nicene creed instead of the Homoian creed of Nike, promoted Meletius back to the bishopric.<sup>95</sup> In 363 a council led by Meletius met in Antioch and affirmed Nicaea.<sup>96</sup>

### *Imperial Influence*

Following his death, Jovian was succeeded by his son Valentinian, who elevated his brother Valens as co-emperor. Socrates notes that while both brothers professed the Christian faith, Valentinian respected the Nicene creed, and Valens held to the so-called ‘Arian’ faith.<sup>97</sup> The fifth-century historians collectively condemn Valens as the worst of the successors to Constantine due to his willingness to use violence in advancing his political causes. He is especially scorned for his assaults against the pro-Nicene effort.

Following the deaths of Valentinian (375) and Valens (378), Gratian, the senior Augustus, promoted Theodosius as Augustus over the East. According to all three

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<sup>92</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.44 (SC 493, 230-232). According to Socrates and Sozomen, this announcement came in the form of a sermon that rejected the recently approved Homoian creed.

<sup>93</sup> Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 149.

<sup>94</sup> For further information on the situation in Antioch between 360 and 363, see Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 640-653.

<sup>95</sup> Socrates, *HE* 3.24.4 (SC 493, 350).

<sup>96</sup> Socrates, *HE* 3.25.9 (SC 493, 354).

<sup>97</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.1.5 (SC 505, 24). Cf. Ayres, 169.

iterations of the *HE*, Theodosius plays an essential role in the triumph of Nicaea. He was responsible for replacing ‘Arian’ bishops with pro-Nicene bishops. He called the Council of Constantinople for the specific purpose of affirming Nicaea. For his role in calling a council that established Nicaea as the ecumenical standard of orthodoxy, the emperor was found to have secured unity in the empire, just as Constantine had done decades earlier in convening Nicaea in 325.<sup>98</sup>

In 380 Theodosius fell ill, and as had become custom after Constantine, requested baptism from the bishop of Thessalonica, where he was located at the time of his illness. According to Socrates, Theodosius was himself a *homoousian*, and desired an orthodox bishop to baptize him. Ascholi of Thessalonica confirmed that his church “continued to guard unchanged the faith which from the beginning was handed over by the apostles and confirmed in the Nicene synod.”<sup>99</sup> In all likelihood, Ascholi was influential in Theodosius’ profession of Nicaea. Theodosius was baptized, but unexpectedly recovered from his disease, and went on to rule for another fifteen years.

### *Council of Constantinople (381)*

In 381 a council of bishops met in Constantinople. Perhaps 150 bishops attended the synod, all from Greek sees. The council at Constantinople went forward with the confirmation of the Nicene Creed.<sup>100</sup> However, no recorded acts of the council survive, and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed does not appear anywhere until the Council of

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<sup>98</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.20 (SC 477, 96); *HE* 5.10.7 (SC 505, 176).

<sup>99</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.6.5 (SC 505, 160-162): μένουσι φυλάσσοντες ἀσάλευτον τὴν ἄνωθεν μὲν καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκ τῶν ἀποστόλων παραδοθεῖσαν πίστιν, ἐν δὲ τῇ κατὰ Νίκαιαν συνόδῳ βεβαιωθεῖσαν.

<sup>100</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.8.14 (SC 505, 170).

Chalcedon in 451.<sup>101</sup> Neither Socrates, Sozomen, nor Theodoret include this creed in their ecclesiastical histories. According to their writings, the importance of Constantinople is almost solely because of its re-affirmation of Nicaea, not because it made any significant alterations to the Nicene creed.

The Council of Constantinople did not end the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century. In fact, only a couple of years later Theodosius called another council in Constantinople, still hoping to re-establish unity and iron out significant theological differences. According to Socrates, Sisinnius, a lector in the church at Constantinople, advised Nectarius to ask each of the sect leaders to produce a written doctrinal position on the relationship of the Father to the Son.<sup>102</sup> Sisinnius was motivated from a desire to know if any of the sects would pay deference to the fathers who ruled the Church prior to the current divisions. The emperor received the written statements of faith, and read them alone. Once he emerged, Theodosius approved only the faith of the *homoousians*, because they did not introduce separation in the Trinity. Socrates ardently maintains that Nicaea perfectly expressed the apostolic tradition, functioning as a universal canon of truth for churches in both the Eastern and Western provinces of the empire. Having been led by the Holy Spirit, and perfectly reflecting the divine will, Nicaea became the standard of orthodoxy. Only when the whole of the Christian Church embraced Nicaea would she possess the peace and harmony that comes from living in unity with the Triune God.

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<sup>101</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 805, 812.

<sup>102</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.10.10 (SC 505, 176).



The Church was not unified in the decades following Nicaea. Instead, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret deplore the Arian conspiracy that worked to overturn Nicaea and replace its creed with unorthodox statements that denied the Son's consubstantial relationship with the Father. The affirmation of a Homoian creed in 359 represented an attack against not only Nicaea, but also the apostolic tradition. They evince no recognition that the non-Nicene parties in this controversy also appealed to the apostolic tradition in defense of their doctrinal positions.

Having recognized that the univocal grammar of *ousia* and *hypostasis* had unnecessarily turned many bishops against a Nicene creed that sounded too modalistic, Athanasius and his pro-Nicene colleagues finally distinguished between unity and distinction among the persons of the Trinity. Once this new hermeneutic of Nicaea was articulated, the road was paved for some in the various non-Nicene parties to come together in agreement against an unsatisfying and innocuous Homoian creed. When Constantinople 381 confirmed Nicaea, the fifth-century historians discover that peace and harmony were restored to the Church as the apostolic tradition was finally preserved. In Part II, we will analyze the contributions that Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret offer to the transposition of Nicaea with the apostolic tradition.

### *Nicaea in the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates and Sozomen*

The previous section surveyed the development of Nicaea from its initial convocation as a council designed to settle a local dispute, to its affirmation as an ecumenical council nearly six decades later. Now we turn to three of the earliest historians who chronicled this development, all of whom affirmed Nicaea as the epitome and transposition of the apostolic tradition. Too often overlooked in the study of their

histories is the fundamental division between the chronicles of Socrates and Sozomen when compared to that of Theodoret. The former two historians, both writing in Constantinople, depict the Nicene creed as having been immediately hailed as a rule of faith consistent with the apostolic witness. They also portray a facile division between the catholic ‘Nicene’ party and the schismatic ‘Arians’ who convened council after council in an ultimately futile attempt to overthrow Nicaea. Their annals of fourth-century developments result from an excessively faithful reliance on the history presented by Athanasius, who, especially in his later works, exalts the Nicene creed to a universal status and condemns his ‘Arian’ opponents. Theodoret, on the other hand, makes no such assertions of an immediate accession for the Nicene creed. Neither does he claim that a ‘Nicene’ party existed before the mid-350s. Because he writes a more nuanced record of ecclesiastical history, we must be wary of too easily grouping these three historians together as if they present one unified account of the ascendancy of Nicene orthodoxy.

In the following section we will examine each of these histories, with a specific focus on their respective narratives of the Nicene council, and the subsequent controversy in the fourth century. We will examine four aspects in the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates and Sozomen:

1. Arius is portrayed as the arch-heretic who disrupts the unity and harmony of the Christian churches by introducing doctrine on the Trinity that is in opposition to the teaching of the apostolic tradition.

2. The grammar of *homoousios*, used to combat the ‘Arian heresy,’ is found to be grounded in the apostolic *kerygma*. The unity and harmony of the apostles can be restored to the Church through adoption of *homoousios*.

3. The sequence of councils from the 340s to the 380s is a direct result of a division between the ‘Arian’ and ‘Nicene’ parties. This ecclesial split can be identified as early as Nicaea itself.

4. The Nicene creed was predicated on the *κανών* of truth, which is proffered as the source of ecclesiastical unity. Both confessions functioned as metanarratives of the Christian story, which were authoritative because of their faithfulness in transmitting the teachings of the apostles.

Following this study of Socrates and Sozomen’s narratives, we will turn to the ecclesiastical history of Theodoret. The latter’s castigation of Arius is equally as severe as his predecessors. Likewise, his approval of Nicaea as a confession in accordance with the apostolic writings finds similar agreement. But closer study will reveal that the bishop of Cyrus diverges from his Constantinopolitan counterparts in his narration of the sequence of councils following Nicaea. While he mimics Athanasius’s opposition to the ‘Arians,’ Theodoret is cautious to avoid any duplication of the bishop’s polemical recapitulations. There is no overt mention of a ‘Nicene’ party in Theodoret’s history before the 350s. Despite writing later than his predecessors, his historical rehearsal of the fourth-century controversy more accurately reflects the discoveries of modern patristic scholarship. For this reason, it is perhaps remarkable that Theodoret’s theology of apostolic tradition is as complementary to Socrates and Sozomen’s as it is. Despite their differences in historical recounting, they are congruous in their approval of Nicaea’s affirmation at Constantinople 381.

In the following analysis of the doctrinal development of Nicene orthodoxy, as narrated by these Greek historians, little attention will be paid to the doctrinal particulars

of each individual council. This is for two reasons. First, the historians themselves were only interested in such developments insofar as they demonstrated the heretical intentions of the ‘Arians,’ who are said to be opposing Nicaea and *homoousios* at every turn. Second, the aim of this dissertation is to examine the transposition of Nicaea into the apostolic tradition.

This study will conclude with a proposal of how we can understand *paradosis* in light of this doctrinal controversy. Each of these historians argues that catholic theology of the Triune God remains true to the teaching of the apostles, despite the introduction of vocabulary that is alien to Scripture. Furthermore, such grammar was necessary to safeguard the teaching of the apostles against heretical deviations. However, we must remember that these are not theological writings, *per se*. They are historical writings, and therefore not intended to parse out the theological minutiae that were borrowed from Athanasius, the Cappadocians, etc. Nevertheless, we can deduce some ideas regarding the question of how catholic churches remained true to the apostolic tradition, while permitting new language, e.g. *homoousios*. In contrast, these three Greek historians all agree that it was the ‘Arians’ who introduced novelty and innovation into the church, not the ‘Nicenes.’

#### *Arius in the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates and Sozomen*

According to the ecclesiastical histories, it was the Alexandrian presbyter Arius who sparked a firestorm<sup>103</sup> of theological controversy that consumed Christian churches

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<sup>103</sup> Socrates used this exact metaphor. Socrates, *HE* 1.6.1 (SC 477, 62).

for over a century and beyond.<sup>104</sup> Both historians placed the blame squarely with Arius because the presbyter accused his bishop of teaching a Trinitarian theology that too nearly resembled Sabellianism.<sup>105</sup> Socrates surmises that Arius went to the opposite extreme and separated the Son's existence from the Father, so that only the Father had a beginning in existence. He offers this succinct summarization of the presbyter's Christological teaching: "If the Father begat the Son, he who was begotten had a beginning of existence, and from this it is clear that there was (a time) when the Son was not. It therefore follows from necessity, that he had his *hypostasis* from nothing."<sup>106</sup> Socrates copies Alexander's epistle, penned to bishops "everywhere," which presumptively served as an explanation for why this counted as heresy.<sup>107</sup> Alexander accuses the 'apostate' of teaching that the Son is a creature (κτίσμα) whose essence is

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<sup>104</sup> In a certain sense, the controversy resurfaced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Works dealing with the implications of "Arianism" in modernity include John Henry Newman's *Arians of the Fourth Century*, Maurice Wiles' *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries*, and Lewis Ayres' *Nicaea and its Legacy*.

<sup>105</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.5.2 (SC 477, 60). Socrates does not elucidate the content of "Sabellianism." The oft repeated fourth-century charge of Sabellianism refers to the third-century figure of Sabellius, about whom little is known. According to Epiphanius in the *Panarion* 62 (GCS 31:390-391), Sabellius taught that the Father and Son were one person, whom he called the "Sonfather." It is worth noting that the ancient records on Sabellius are scant enough that we should proceed cautiously in assessing his teachings. Cf. Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 151.

<sup>106</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.5.2 (SC 477, 60): εἰ ὁ πατήρ ἐγέννησεν τὸν υἱὸν, ἀρχὴν ὑπάρξεν ἔχει ὁ γεννηθείς· καὶ ἐκ τούτου δῆλον ὅτι ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν ὁ υἱός, ἀκολουθεῖ τε ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἔχειν αὐτὸν τὴν ὑπόστασιν.

<sup>107</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.6.6 (SC 477, 64). Alexander's encyclical letter, sometimes called the *henos somatos* because of its opening words, is reprinted by Socrates in *HE* 1.6. This letter is one of the best extant sources about Arius' own arguments. But while Socrates may have been in agreement with Alexander's polemic against Arius, he does not offer any unique contributions beyond Alexander's critique, except for the above statement in *HE* 1.5.2. Cf. Behr, *The Nicene Faith, Vol. 2, Part 1*, 63; Williams, Arius, 48ff, 254; G.C. Stead, "Athanasius' Earliest Written Work" *Journal of Theological Studies* 39.1 (Ap 1988): 76-91. Stead argues that the treatment of Arianism in *henos somatos* is consonant with the undisputed works of Athanasius. He suggests that the young deacon drafted the letter on behalf of his bishop. For a rebuttal, see Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 151.

alien to that of the Father (Οὔτε δε ὅμοιος κατ' οὐσίαν).<sup>108</sup> He is mutable and susceptible to change. Because the Son came into existence, there was a time when God was not the Father: “Οὐκ ἀεὶ ὁ Θεὸς πατὴρ ἦν, ἀλλ' ἦν ὅτε ὁ Θεὸς πατὴρ οὐκ ἦν.”<sup>109</sup>

Alexander closes his encyclical by exhorting his readers to turn away from Arius and those who agree with these teachings, since they destroy the souls of men.<sup>110</sup> Drawing heavily from John's gospel, the letter emphasizes biblical passages that point towards the Son's co-existence with the Father. As the perfect image of the Father, the Word exists from the beginning, and all things were made through the Son. Therefore, the Son could not have been “made out of nothing.” Alexander castigates Arius for suggesting that the Son is mutable, capable of both virtue and vice. This ‘blasphemous assertion’ clearly violates Paul's claim that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).<sup>111</sup>

Arius' teachings provoked a damning response, both from his Alexandrian contemporaries and later church historians. Socrates and Sozomen both argue that his teachings were novel and innovative, viz. they were not representative of the witness of Scripture.<sup>112</sup> They further claim that Arius' reasoning was responsible for the kindled fire that spread evil teachings from Alexandria to Egypt and Libya, and ultimately to all of

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<sup>108</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.6.9-10 (SC 477, 66).

<sup>109</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.6.9 (SC 477, 66).

<sup>110</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.6.30 (SC 477, 74). Cf. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 34-35.

<sup>111</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.6.18 (SC 477, 70). Socrates attributes the authorship of Hebrews to the apostle.

<sup>112</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.6.1 (SC 477, 62); Sozomen, *HE* 1.15.3 (SC 306, 184).

the Eastern Mediterranean churches.<sup>113</sup> Despite the condemnations of later historians, Arius and Alexander found common ground in their appeals to tradition as the source of their Christological teachings. All doctrines of the Christian Church must be grounded in the apostolic *kerygma*. Any affirmations that hinted toward innovation were immediately renounced as the path towards schism, and not proper to the catholic churches. Socrates adamantly avers that Arius taught alien doctrines, while Alexander affirmed the teachings of the apostles.

Once Arius was expelled from the Alexandrian church, he embarked upon a letter writing campaign to elicit episcopal support. One willing recipient was Eusebius of Nicomedia.<sup>114</sup> As Socrates frames the narrative, the formation of the ‘Arian’ party commenced when this foreign bishop took sides with a presbyter in a local dispute. To make matters worse, the city of Nicomedia hosted an imperial palace, providing Eusebius a measure of influence with the emperor and bishops of that region.<sup>115</sup> Socrates chastises him for sowing confusion among the Eastern bishops by writing to them on Arius’ behalf. The bishops were divided, with some choosing Eusebius’ side, while others found Alexander’s arguments more compelling.<sup>116</sup> The Melitians also sided with Arius;

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<sup>113</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.6.2 (SC 477, 62). Schisms in Alexandria continued as a result of Arius’ deposition until he was banished from the city. Epiphaius, *Panarion* 69.4; Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 5.

<sup>114</sup> In his letter to Eusebius, Arius notes that he was a “co-Lucianist.” Perhaps Eusebius was a fellow student of Lucian of Antioch. Unfortunately, there are no extant writings of Lucian. Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 30.

<sup>115</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.6.33 (SC 477, 74).

<sup>116</sup> Sozomen offers an additional episode in this narrative. He reports that Eusebius of Nicomedia convened a council in Bithynia to elicit support for Arius. When the council members could not convince Alexander to resume communion with the deposed presbyter, they licensed him to begin officiating again. Williams notes that if this licensure applied to Arius’ activities in Alexandria, that would be most eccentric. He suggests that they may have licensed Arius to officiate in Palestine. Sozomen, *HE* 1.15.9-12 (SC 306, 188-190); Williams, *Arius*, 51. Cf. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 35-43.

however, it is likely that they stood with Arius more out of political spite rather than doctrinal sympathies.<sup>117</sup>

### *The Unity and Harmony of the Nicene creed*

In his recapitulation of the council of Nicaea, Socrates relies primarily upon the epistle written by Eusebius to his church in Caesarea. He possesses additional sources, including letters written by the council's bishops, and Constantine's epistles to various figures, e.g. the church at Alexandria and Macarius of Jerusalem.<sup>118</sup> A common motif in Socrates' selection of literature is Constantine's call for unity and harmony among the Christian churches. He extrapolates from the emperor's exhortation that faithfulness to the Nicene creed is the path towards ecclesiastical peace, on the basis that the fathers at Nicaea were led to apostolic truth through the grace of the Holy Spirit. This motif will become a recurrent theme throughout the remainder of Socrates' *HE*, as he narrates an ecclesiastical division between two parties, one of which defends Nicaea, and the other which seeks its annulment. For this historian, the Church cannot unify until all ecclesiastical parties affirm Nicaea. Rejection of Nicaea is tantamount to a renunciation of apostolic doctrine.

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<sup>117</sup> The Melitians were named after Melitius, the bishop of Lycopolis. Melitius ordained priests during the Great Persecution of 303-311. At the conclusion to the persecution, he believed Peter of Alexandria was too lenient in his requirements for readmission to the church. Melitius refused to receive lapsed Christians into communion with his fellowship. Sozomen reports that Arius was removed from his ecclesial position for opposing Peter's anathematization of Meletius. Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 38-40. Kopecek, citing Epiphanius, argues that the Alexandrian controversy began when Meletius denounced Arius to Alexander. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 3-4; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 69.3.

<sup>118</sup> Wallraff provides an extensive analysis of Socrates' use of ἐκκλησία. The historian applies the word to cover a wide variety of instances, which can be generalized into the following five categories: 1. The institution of the Church, 2. Local churches in terms of the bishopric, 3. 'parties' formed by a theological agenda, 4. A single community within the diocese, and 5. Church buildings. Martin Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates: Untersuchungen Zu Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode Und Person* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997): 29-41.



The chief purpose for the convening of the council was to quell the disruption that began in Alexandria. Ossius of Cordova delivered a letter to Alexander and Arius on behalf of Constantine, rebuking them both for disrupting the harmony of the one faith and entering into vulgar and childish follies (Δημώδη ταῦτά ἐστιν καὶ παιδικαῖς ἀνοίαις).<sup>119</sup> Ossius' commission did not fulfill its objective, but the emperor was undeterred. In his opening statement to the Nicene council, he again exhorted the bishops to find harmony and unity (συμφωνίαν καὶ ὁμόνοιαν).<sup>120</sup> The urgency of the emperor's exhortation was witnessed by all in a sign of reconciliation. Constantine had received a number of petitions containing grievances of the bishops against one another. He admonished them for putting their animosity ahead of Christ, and burned the petitions.<sup>121</sup> The symbolism was unmistakable. The episcopal participants of the Nicene council were expected to recover theological unity, and overcome their divisions by whatever means were necessary. So important was Constantine's call for unity to Socrates, that he included this letter in his history, even though the emperor did not demonstrate favor to Alexander over Arius.

In his summary of the council, Socrates sees a harmonious connection between the emperor's call for unity and the adoption of the creed by 318 subscribers.<sup>122</sup> The Nicene bishops were of one voice (ὁμοφωνήσαντες) and one opinion

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<sup>119</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.7.10 (SC 477, 84).

<sup>120</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.18 (SC 477, 96).

<sup>121</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.19 (SC 477, 96); Sozomen, *HE* 1.17.4 (SC 306, 194). Cf. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 215.

<sup>122</sup> As seen earlier in this chapter, the number '318' was replete with biblical and prophetic implications by the end of the fourth century. Cf. Colm Luibheid, *The Council of Nicaea* (Galway: Galway University Press, 1982): 73-75.

(ὁμοδοξήσαντες).<sup>123</sup> The adoption of the Nicene creed by an ecumenical gathering of bishops marked a new ecclesiastical era. Speaking with one voice, the Nicene bishops, in concordance with Emperor Constantine, affirmed the consubstantial (one substance) nature of the Son with the Father. The Church was ideally a unified body, i.e., without division, and so was the Triune God. The ‘Arians’ were guilty of dividing the Son from the Father. They reduced the Son to the status of a creature, as one who was made from nothing (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐγένετο).<sup>124</sup> Their division of the Divine Unity was in opposition to the apostolic tradition, and resulted in a fracture of Christian churches.

Socrates focuses his attention against Sabinus of Heraclea, who was one of Nicaea’s chief critics in the late fourth century.<sup>125</sup> The latter’s work, known as the *Synagogue*, was influential enough that Socrates was refuting his arguments a half century later. Sabinus is explicitly named on ten occasions throughout the *HE*, which suggests that opposition to Nicaea as the universally established standard of orthodoxy had not ceased with the Council of Constantinople 381.<sup>126</sup> The *Synagogue* contained an edited collection of decrees published by the synods of that era. Socrates contends that the collection was not faithful to history, since he either alters or omits the affairs of the council.<sup>127</sup> Sabinus, whose own convictions represented those of the Macedonian party,

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<sup>123</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.31 (SC 477, 100-102).

<sup>124</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.30 (SC 477, 100).

<sup>125</sup> Barnes dates the *Synagogue* to 370 A.D. The work is not extant. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 7.

<sup>126</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.24-26; 1.9.28; 2.15.8-11; 2.17.10-11; 2.20.5; 2.39.8; 3.10.11; 3.25.18; 4.12.41; 4.22.1. Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 206. Wallraff conjectures that Socrates also uses Sabinus as a source in some of the earlier Alexandrian material, although no explicit citation is provided. Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates*, 44-46.

<sup>127</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.25 (SC 477, 98).

criticized the bishops at Nicaea as simpletons (ἄφελεις) and laymen with no professional knowledge (ἰδιώτας).<sup>128</sup> But Socrates responds that Nicaea achieved the goal established in the opening address by Constantine. The bishops were led to unanimity (ὁμόνοιαν), like-mindedness (ὁμογνώμονας), and agreement of opinion (ὁμοδόξους).<sup>129</sup> The faith explicated at Nicaea was written down after much research and investigation. The creed crafted there was discussed with minute accuracy. Constantine was right to say that the terms explicated at Nicaea were effected by the Holy Spirit, expressing the thought of God Himself.<sup>130</sup> The Nicene conveners were authorities, illuminated by God and the grace of the Holy Spirit, and incapable of erring from the truth: κατελάμποντο δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, οὐδαμῶς γε ἀστοχῆσαι τῆς ἀληθείας ἠδύναντο.<sup>131</sup>

Sozomen took a more supernatural route in affirming divine providence over Nicaea. He narrated accounts of miraculous events as a means of validating the divine approval. One tale recounts the pagan philosopher who was converted by a Christian confessor. The confessor witnessed to the philosopher by quoting a text that appears to

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<sup>128</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.25 (SC 477, 98). The ‘Macedonians’ are also known as the *Pneumatomachi*, or ‘Assailants of the Spirit.’ Socrates cites Sabinus in *HE* 3.25.19 (SC 493, 356), noting that in the 360s the ‘Macedonians’ allied with Meletius of Antioch to confirm the Nicene creed. They also confirmed adherence to the Nicene creed in writing to Liberius of Rome, which Socrates likewise confirms from Sabinus in *HE* 4.12. However, the ‘Macedonians’ never ascribed to the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit, which raised suspicions in the writings of both Socrates and Sozomen. Socrates writes that Sabinus was supportive of Valens’ persecutions of pro-Nicene Christians, since he was always partial to the ‘Arians.’ *HE* 4.22.1 (SC 505, 78).

<sup>129</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.27 (SC 477, 100).

<sup>130</sup> Wallraff suggests that this idea is a polemical turn against Sabinus, which now becomes a reference point in Socrates’ own theological thinking. Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates*, 50.

<sup>131</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.9.28 (SC 477, 124).

be his community's rule of faith. The philosopher was so enraptured by the rule that he immediately took it as his own faith. Compare that account with a similar story related by Socrates. He writes of an unsophisticated confessor (ὁμολογητῶν) who shared a simple faith, thereby censuring the pagan philosophers. While Sozomen's philosopher converted to Christianity, Socrates' pagan merely assented to the confessor.<sup>132</sup> A second tale recalls a miracle wrought by Alexander of Byzantium.<sup>133</sup> According to this story, a school of pagan philosophers complained to Constantine about his favor towards the Christians. The philosophers gathered to debate with Alexander, but when one of them stood up to speak, the bishop commanded him to be silent. The philosopher was instantly muted. These stories are intriguing because the antagonists were not Arius or his followers, but instead pagans who had been threatened by the rise of Christianity during Constantine's reign. The protagonists of these stories are Christians who exhibit a biblical flair for the dramatic in their power struggles with representatives of false gods. The placement of these stories in the midst of the Nicene council suggests an implicit affirmation by Sozomen that Nicene Christianity overcame not just 'Arianism' in the fourth century, but paganism as well.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates*, 47.

<sup>133</sup> Byzantium was renamed Constantinople in 330 AD. Cf. Jonathan Harris, *Constantinople: Capital of Byzantium* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007). Cf. Barnes, "Emperors and Bishops A.D. 324-344: Some Problems," *American Journal of Ancient History* 3 (1978): 66.

<sup>134</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.18 (SC 306, 198ff.). Cf. Luibheid. *The Council of Nicaea*, 72-73. Williams has demonstrated that by the second half of the fourth century, neo-Nicenes began applying the rhetorical strategy of identifying Homoians with religious paganism to discredit the Homoian claim that they themselves were the true church. Williams, "Necessary Alliance of Polemical Portrayal? Tracing the Historical Alignment of Arians and Pagans in the Later Fourth Century," *Studia Patristica* 29 (Louvain: Peeters, 1997): 178-194.

Socrates concludes his summary of Nicaea by offering a personal anecdote about the Novatian bishop Acesius. Acesius defended himself to Constantine as pro-Nicene by claiming to have received the rule (ῥῆγον) of faith from “the beginning, from the time of the apostles.”<sup>135</sup> Constantine pressed him about his separation from the Church, to which Acesius responded that the Novatian sect was stricter in its requirements for repentance than the rest of the churches in the empire. According to this account, Constantine humorously rebuked him, saying “take a ladder, Acesius, and climb into heaven alone.” This pericope points to Socrates’ Novatianist proclivity, as he include them into the ‘Nicene’ party, and henceforth into the apostolic tradition.<sup>136</sup>

Sozomen concludes Book I of his ecclesiastical history with an anecdote from Constantine’s *vicenalia* celebration, which occurred immediately following the close of the Nicene council. Just as he had done in his opening statement to the council, Constantine again exhorted the bishops to be of one mind and at peace with one another.<sup>137</sup> Constantine’s supplication would not be answered affirmatively during the course of the fourth century (if ever). But for both Socrates and Sozomen, affirmation of Nicaea by the catholic churches was the sole path towards ecclesial unity and apostolic harmony.

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<sup>135</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.10.2 (SC 477, 140). Cf. Sozomen, *HE* 1.22 (SC 306, 210ff.): ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκ τῶν ἀποστολικῶν χρόνων παρείληφα. Τον ὅρον literally refers to a boundary, limit, or border. It can also mean the rule or measure of a thing.

<sup>136</sup> Wallraff accepts the historicity of this account, whose authenticity is orally attested by an eyewitness, “not prone to falsehood.” Wallraff notes that the 8<sup>th</sup> canon of Nicaea is sympathetic to the Novatians. Also, the quip recorded by Socrates between Acesius and Constantine leaves the emperor in a ‘victorious’ position, which makes its’ oral lore more believable. Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates*, 50-52.

<sup>137</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.25.2 (SC 306, 216).

### *Division between 'Nicens' and 'Arians'*

Socrates and Sozomen chronicle the post-Nicaea years as a dispute between a 'Nicene' faction, who sought to defend the apostolic tradition, and an 'Arian' faction, who conspired to subvert the new creed. The extant textual evidence, outside of these ecclesiastical histories, presents us with difficulties in defending this narrative.

Documents dated between 325 and 340 barely mention Nicaea, which has led modern scholars to refute the existence of, and sharp division between, any 'Arian' and 'Nicene' parties during this period. Such a disjuncture is anachronistic, as it portrays an early emergence of fully formed theological parties which do not come into existence until several decades later. The Constantinopolitan historians relied too heavily on an historical narrative penned by the elder Athanasius, who depicted the events of his early years in the Alexandrian bishopric through the lens of struggles he was experiencing in his later years.

The ecclesiastical histories chronicle a division between the 'Arian' party and the 'Nicene' party following the conclusion of the Council of Nicaea. The 'Arian' party was led by Arius, the Eusebii, Theognis, Asterius the Sophist, and the Melitians.<sup>138</sup> The champions of the 'Nicene' party were Athanasius, Eustathius of Antioch, Alexander of Byzantium, and Marcellus of Ancyra. Socrates and Sozomen accuse the 'Arians' of launching a clandestine conspiracy that resulted in the reinstatement of exiled anti-Nicene bishops, the deposition of legitimately elected pro-Nicene clerics, and a series of councils designed to overturn Nicaea, which ultimately results in the confirmation of a Homoian creed at Constantinople 360.

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<sup>138</sup> Kopecek provides a thorough summary of the leading 'Arians' in the years immediately prior to, and following, the Council of Nicaea. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (Cambridge, Mass: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 48-59.

Once we grant that the assessment of the narrative presented within the ecclesiastical histories is, at best, problematic, the question turns to the possibility of whether or not we can capture any authentic insight from their potentially unreliable chronicles of the so-called ‘Arian controversy.’ Certainly they invite criticism for their facile narrative of a heretical ‘Arian’ party that coalesces around opposition to the orthodox ‘Nicenes,’ who faithfully protect the apostolic teachings of the catholic church. In this section, I will suggest that if we read beyond the polemical layer, we will observe the evolution of two theological trajectories. Recent studies have offered closely related ways of observing this evolution. Lienhard observed that there are two theological parties: myahypostatics and dihypostatics. Ayres suggests that four theological trajectories can be identified, but they emerge from “two distinct trends.” Most recently, Anatolios has proposed that two distinct parties form: those who unite behind a theology of being and the other faction who unites behind a theology of will. In this section I will explain some of the merits of these positions, and how Socrates and Sozomen help us to better understand the distinctions between the various theological trajectories of the fourth century.

### *Was There an ‘Arian’ Conspiracy?*

In his study of post-Nicaea developments, Gwatkin detected three successive aims of Eusebian policy.<sup>139</sup> First, they sought to reinstate those ‘Arian’ bishops who had been

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<sup>139</sup> Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism*, 65-66. Gwatkin borrows the nomenclature of the ‘Eusebians’ from Athanasius and Socrates, including in this party Arius, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Eusebius of Nicomedia. For further reading, see David Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the “Arian Controversy”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Gwynn posits that the ‘Eusebian’ party is purely a construction a Athanasius’ polemic. For a refutation of Gwynn’s thesis, see Barnes review. T.D. Barnes, *Journal of Theological Studies* 58 (2007): 715-18.

exiled either at Nicaea, or soon thereafter.<sup>140</sup> The next step was to remove Nicene episcopal leaders by whatever charges they could invent. The third and final step of Eusebian policy was the replacement of the Nicene creed with a new definition more palatable to them and less controversial. In other words, they wanted to excise the *homoousios* clause and anathemas.

Gwatkin's analysis relies upon an undeviated reading of the ecclesiastical histories, which chronicles just such a polemical rehearsal of the post-Nicaea developments. In his account of the reinstatement of Eusebius and Theognis, Socrates groups the characters of this drama into two factions. He reports that Eusebius and Theognis, who opposed the *homoousios* clause, were motivated by their 'Arian' mindset and opposition to Athanasius.<sup>141</sup> Consequently, they can claim to be the founding members of the 'Arian' party. It is also said of Eusebius of Caesarea that he belongs to this faction, partly due to his opposition against Eustathius of Antioch. Athanasius and Eustathius are said to be ardent supporters of Nicaea, and specifically of the *homoousios* clause. In the parlance of Socrates, the 'Arians' fell into heresy (κακοδοξίας), while the 'Nicens' taught truth (ἀλήθειαν).<sup>142</sup> Faith in the Son's consubstantial nature with the Father had become a defining feature of catholic Christianity.

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<sup>140</sup> Kopecek argues that the Eusebians established two goals: the reinstatement of Arius to the Alexandrian priesthood and the deposition of Nicene defenders. The first of these aims failed, while the second succeeded. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 76.

<sup>141</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.23.2 (SC 477, 208).

<sup>142</sup> Socrates *HE* 1.23.1 (SC 477, 208).



Socrates and Sozomen insert this two-party narrative into their chronicles of the expulsions of Eustathius and Athanasius.<sup>143</sup> According to the historians, bishops faithful to Nicaea were targeted for replacement by the Eusebians, each of whom were removed amidst spurious circumstances. The ancient witnesses disputed one another regarding Eustathius' deposition. Depending on who recorded the proceedings of the Council of Antioch in 328,<sup>144</sup> the bishop was removed for either Sabellian beliefs, "unholy deeds," fathering an illegitimate child, or insulting Constantine's mother.<sup>145</sup> Despite this apparent diversity of ecclesial charges, Socrates, Sozomen, and Athanasius find agreement in their common assertion that Eustathius was a faithful pro-Nicene who was removed under false pretenses. Athanasius claimed that he, too, was falsely charged by an ecclesiastical council of 'Arians' for his pro-Nicene beliefs, an argument supported by the Constantinopolitan historians. According to Socrates, the 'Eusebians' (οἱ Εὐσέβιον) conspired (συμφράττονται) against the Alexandrian bishop at the Council of Tyre in 335.<sup>146</sup> It is reported that Athanasius' opponents sought to remove him for his refusal to

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<sup>143</sup> Paul of Constantinople is also reported to be a pro-Nicene victim of 'Arian' belligerence. Socrates, *HE* 2.6.

<sup>144</sup> The date of Eustathius' deposition continues to be a matter of scholarly debate. Bardy put the date at 330/1. Chadwick moved the date much earlier to ca. 326. Barnes argued for a date of 327. Hanson responded to Chadwick with a date of 328/9, but then revised his thesis to the more conventional 330/1. Most recently, Burgess has pegged the deposition during the last months of 328, based on recently discovered Syriac documents. Gustave Bardy, *Recherches sur Lucien d'Antioche et son Ecole*, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1936); Henry Chadwick, "The Fall of Eustathius of Antioch," *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (1948): 27-35; T.D. Barnes, "Emperor and Bishops, AD 324-344: Some Problems," *American Journal of Ancient History* 3 (1978): 53-75; Hanson, "The Fate of Eustathius of Antioch" *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 95.2 (1984): 171-179; Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 209; Richard W. Burgess, "The Date of the Deposition of Eustathius of Antioch," *Journal of Theological Studies* 51.1 (2000): 150-160.

<sup>145</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.24.1 (SC 477, 212); Sozomen, *HE* 2.19.1 (SC 306, 306); Theodoret, *HE* 1.21.6 (SC 501, 284); Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum ad Monachos*, 4.

<sup>146</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.27.6 (SC 477, 224).

re-admit Arius to the Alexandrian priesthood following Constantine's reinstatement of the infamous cleric.

When we look more closely at the evidence behind the depositions of Eustathius and Athanasius, it becomes difficult for us to accept the narrative that these two bishops were removed for their part as leaders of a 'pro-Nicene' party, or that an 'Arian' conspiracy worked behind the scenes to remove them as episcopal leaders so that the Nicene symbol could eventually be overturned. The variety of charges reported for the cause of Eustathius's deposition demonstrates that his exile was a complicated affair. It is unlikely that he was deposed because of sexual impropriety or an egregious imperial insult. Socrates and Theodoret both report that the city of Antioch was divided, to the extent that Eustathius's closest followers seceded from the church and began meeting separately.<sup>147</sup> This would be an unlikely development if his discretions were based on behavioral misconduct. The few extant documents we have from Eustathius reveal that the charge of Sabellianism, as chronicled by Socrates, was the more plausible basis of his removal from the see of Antioch.<sup>148</sup>

While Eustathius' ouster appears to have been the result of a theological dispute, the evidence behind Athanasius' expulsion leads us to conclude that his removal was

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<sup>147</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.24.5 (SC 477, 214); Theodoret, *HE* 1.22.2 (SC 501, 286). Cf. Kelley McCarthy Spoerl, "Two Early Nicenes: Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra," in *In the Shadow of the Incarnation: Essays on Jesus Christ in the Early Church in Honor of Brian E. Daley, S.J.* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008): 124; R.P.C. Hanson, "The Fate of Eustathius of Antioch," 178. Kopecek provides a helpful summary of the Antioch church in the years immediately following Eustathius' deposition. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 53-54.

<sup>148</sup> For further analysis of Eustathius's extant theological writings, see Spoerl, "Two Early Nicenes": 121-148 and Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 208-238. Spoerl surveys the *de Engastrimytho* and finds no mention of *homousios*. However, Eustathius does speak of the single *hypostasis* of divinity. Furthermore, it is said that the Son is divine by nature. Hanson argues that it is not surprising that Eustathius was charged with Sabellianism, since he appears "confused" in his distinctions of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

based on episcopal misconduct. Socrates and Sozomen take Athanasius's account *prima facie*, viz. he was the victim of a conspiracy by the Eusebians to replace him with a like-minded 'Arian' substitute. Socrates records that they desired Athanasius's removal because he 'ardently' contended for the Nicene creed.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, the bishop initially refused to attend the Council of Tyre, where he was charged with four counts of contempt for the emperor and church councils, as well as behavioral misconduct.<sup>150</sup> Socrates defends Athanasius's reticence to attend the synod, based on the fear that innovations might be made to the Nicene creed.<sup>151</sup> However, the historian provides no evidence to defend this assertion. Instead, he focuses on the perceived injustices that were brought against the Alexandrian bishop at Tyre, including false charges of murder and the destruction of a sacred chalice.<sup>152</sup> Socrates, following Athanasius, disputes the legitimacy of a council of 'Arians' to depose the Alexandrian bishop; however, he makes no mention of any doctrinal charges, nor does he provide the name of any 'Arian' bishop seeking to alter the Nicene creed at that time.

Socrates relied extensively on the writings of Athanasius in his ecclesiastical history. In the preface to Book II, Socrates laments that he initially relied on Rufinus as a source, whose chronological errors were numerous. He turned to Athanasius as a source, who was present as an eyewitness to many of the ecclesiastical events that mark the

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<sup>149</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.23 (SC 477, 208-212).

<sup>150</sup> Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 23.

<sup>151</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.28 (SC 477, 232).

<sup>152</sup> Socrates accepts Athanasius' accounting of these charges and finds him innocent, based on the report from *Apologia contra arianos* 65-72. Socrates, *HE* 1.27-29 (SC 477, 222-236).

development of Nicene orthodoxy in the fourth century.<sup>153</sup> Accordingly, the Alexandrian bishop emerges as an orthodox hero in his account. Socrates draws from a number of creeds and letters of emperors and bishops, but he does not always provide the sources of these documents.<sup>154</sup> He does mention Sabinus and Athanasius, both of whom include copies of ancient documents. One example from Athanasius is his *Apologia Contra Arianos*, which includes thirty-six such documents.<sup>155</sup> Geppert finds over fifty citations of that work in Socrates.<sup>156</sup>

Having reinstated ‘Arian’ bishops, and achieved the exile of their opponents, Gwatkin’s “third plank” of the Eusebian policy could now proceed. Socrates and Sozomen lament that with Constantine’s death, the ‘Arians’ now moved to annul Nicaea and replace it with a creed that eschewed any reference to divine substance in its theological grammar.<sup>157</sup> In his preface to Book II of the *HE*, Socrates addresses Theodore, the named recipient, with a note stating that he wants to set the story straight about how bishops during the 340s continually altered the faith.<sup>158</sup> He goes on to report

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<sup>153</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.1.3 (SC 493, 18).

<sup>154</sup> Scholars who have recently attempted to discern the documentary sources of Socrates include Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates*, and Nuffelen, *Un Heritage de Paix et de Piété*. Geppert’s *Die Quellen* remains the standard reference for the citations found in Socrates’ *HE*.

<sup>155</sup> Franz Geppert, *Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Socrates scholasticus* (Leipzig: Dieterich’sche Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1898): 26-31. Cf. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 51; Athanasius, *apologia contra arianos*, *PG* 25.239-410.

<sup>156</sup> Geppert, *Die Quellen*, 27.

<sup>157</sup> Socrates, in his chronicle of Constantine’s death, depicts the emperor as the defender of Nicaea. Only with his death could the ‘Arian conspiracy’ move to the final phase of supplanting it with a new creed. Socrates, *HE* 1.38 (SC 477, 254-258). Maraval defends the claim by the ancient historians that Constantine remained ‘faithful’ to Nicaea, despite his baptism by Eusebius of Nicomedia. Maraval, “Constantin Est-il Devenu Arien? Le Témoignage Des Historiens Anciens” *Théophilyon* 10.2 (2005): 371-384.

<sup>158</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.1.6 (SC 493, 20). οἱ ἐπίσκοποι τὴν πίστιν κατὰ βραχὺ μεταποιῶντες ἐξέδωκαν.

that Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea conceived an opportunity after the emperor's death. This was the condition they needed to expunge the grammar of *homoousios*, and replace the Nicene creed with a new definition of the faith.<sup>159</sup>

Eastern bishops met in January 341 to dedicate a church whose construction had begun during the reign of Constantine. Ninety bishops were present for the 'Dedication Council,' but the list of the absent is as noteworthy as those who attended. Julius of Rome, Athanasius of Alexandria, and Marcellus of Ancyra were among the absentees.<sup>160</sup> Eusebius, formerly the bishop of Nicomedia but now responsible for the church in Constantinople, convened the synod. According to Socrates, the Council of Antioch 341 intended to "overturn" (ἀνατροπή) and "demolish" (καθαίρεσει) the doctrine of *homoousios*.<sup>161</sup> However, this appears to be an exaggerated statement. For example, the canons of the council opened with an appeal to "the holy and great council of Nicaea."<sup>162</sup> The extant documents provide no mention of an attempt to annul the Nicene creed.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.2.2 (SC 493, 22); Sozomen, *HE* 3.1. The critique of the historians is that the 'Arians' sought to write a "new" creed, i.e. an innovative symbol. However, both Nicene and non-Nicenes alike eschewed novelty, seeking instead to ground the faith in the apostolic tradition. Of course, the hinge on which this controversy swung was the question of how to adapt the theology of the Triune God with *paradosis*.

<sup>160</sup> Socrates observes wryly that the council did not include Julius, nor any representative from the see of Rome, which violated an ecclesiastical canon. It is unclear which canon Socrates is referencing here. Socrates, *HE* 2.8.4 (SC 493, 36). Cf. Maraval, SC 493, fn. 3, 37.

<sup>161</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.8.2 (SC 493, 36).

<sup>162</sup> Canon 1 of the Council of Antioch, 341, Domenico Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* 2.1308c, as cited in Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, Vol. 2, Part 1, 77.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. L.W. Barnard, "East-West Conciliatory Moves and their Outcome in the Period 341-351 AD" *Heythrop Journal* 20.3 (1979): 243-256; Joseph Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth Century Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 166-172. Barnard contends that the creeds published at Antioch 341 were actually 'anti-Arian,' intended to be conciliatory moves to their Western counterparts. Julius and Athanasius did not perceive of their conciliatory intention due to their support of Marcellus, who was the "bone of contention" between East and West. Lienhard analyzes each of the four creeds according to their anti-'Arian' and anti-'Marcellan' phrases.

While Socrates may have overstated the intentions of the Antioch attendees, the creedal statements produced by that council distance themselves from the modalist language that marked the Nicene creed. The second statement, better known as the “Dedication Creed,” focused on the Word as the image of the Father and omitted any mention of the Son as consubstantial with the Father. The Son is “begotten of the Father before all ages, God of God.” Also, the Son is “immutable and inconvertible; the unfaltering image of the Divinity, Substance (*ousia*) and Power, and Counsel and Glory of the Father.” The creed ends with anathemas against anyone who teaches contrary to Scripture, or affirms “that there is or was a period or an age before the Son of God existed,” or says that the Son “is a creature as one of the creatures.”<sup>164</sup> Near the same time as the synod, the Franks made incursions into Gaul, and there were violent earthquakes in the East, especially at Antioch. Socrates does not conceal his disapproval of the Council of Antioch. He points to these imperial threats and natural disasters as proof of divine displeasure with the Dedication Council.<sup>165</sup>

The Council of Antioch 341 exposed a deepening division in the Christian churches. In their narration of the failed Council of Serdica (343/4), Socrates and Sozomen portray that division as an ever-widening gulf between Eastern and Western bishops. A geographical breach was already in place even before the bishops arrived at Serdica. Ecclesial representatives from the East met in Philippolis, which is situated

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<sup>164</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.10.16-17 (SC 493, 46). Καὶ εἴ τις παρὰ τὴν ὑγιὴ τῶν γραφῶν ὁρθὴν πίστιν διδάσκει λέγων ἢ καιρὸν ἢ αἰῶνα εἶναι ἢ γεγονέναι πρὸ τοῦ γεννηθῆναι τὸν υἱόν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω. Καὶ εἴ τις λέγει τὸν υἱὸν κτίσμα ὡς ἐν τῶν κτισμάτων ἢ γέννημα ὡς ἐν τῶν γεννημάτων καὶ μὴ ὡς αἱ θεῖαι γραφαὶ παραδέδωκαν τῶν προειρημένων ἕκαστον. Kopecek observes that these anathemas are both anti-Arius and anti-Marcellus. He argues that the Council of Antioch sought to find a middle ground between the two aforementioned “extremes.” His claim conflicts with Socrates, but probably represents a more accurate summary. Kopecek, *A History of neo-Arianism*, 81.

<sup>165</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.10.21-22 (SC 493, 48).

approximately 100 miles from Serdica. They decided to present their argument, as a bloc unit, to the council: those bishops whose cases required review should not be allowed to sit as members of the council. When the Eastern prelates arrived in Serdica, they discovered that their Western counterparts, who outnumbered them approximately ninety to seventy-six, rejected their proposal.<sup>166</sup> The Council of Serdica splintered before it was called to order. When Constantius' letter arrived, announcing his military victory over the Persians, the Eastern bishops used that announcement to excuse themselves and return to Philippolis. They published a letter that excommunicated many Western bishops, including Athanasius, Marcellus, and Julius. They affirmed a creed nearly identical to the Fourth Creed of Antioch 341. Meanwhile, the Western bishops remained at Serdica, where they produced several documents, including synodical letters that defended Athanasius and Marcellus.

Ayres astutely observes that the geographical nomenclature of 'Eastern' and 'Western' bishops is, at best, a clumsy tool of analysis.<sup>167</sup> Athanasius used these categories in his *Historia Arianorum*, and Socrates and Sozomen likewise find them useful for narrating the conflict. A couple of examples will suffice to demonstrate the problems of this analytical tool. Two of the Eastern bishops withdrew from their colleagues and joined the Western side soon after arriving at Serdica. Nearly half of the 'Western' prelates were from locales east of Italy.<sup>168</sup> 'East' and 'West' were not shorthand for 'Greek' and 'Latin' speaking clergy, as we might assume. This facile

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<sup>166</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.20.5 (SC 493, 84).

<sup>167</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 123.

<sup>168</sup> See Hilary, *Adv. Ursacius et Valens* 1.4c for a list of signatures, which demonstrate that many of the 'Westerners' were from Eastern provinces.

narration serves as yet another example of the insistence by the historians of a dualism in the Church between two camps: those bishops who defend the apostolic tradition, and others who oppose it. For Socrates and Sozomen, Christians are either orthodox or heretics, ‘Nicene’ or ‘Arian.’ At Serdica, and thereafter, they are accounted as either ‘Western,’ or ‘Eastern.’

The conspiracy narrative provided by Socrates and Sozomen offers one explanation for the rise of anti-Nicene sentiment in the mid-fourth century; however, the evidence of such collusion is lacking. As we have just adumbrated, each “plank” in the conspiracy theory crumbles under close scrutiny. Furthermore, the status of Nicaea in the period prior to 350 is marked by fluidity. The extant texts do not ‘remember’ the Nicene creed as a fixed standard of orthodoxy. Indeed, even the Western prelates at Serdica were willing to draft a new doctrinal statement that might more explicitly define the Son’s nature. In any case, why would Eusebius and his ‘party’ conspire to overturn the Nicene creed, which they considered as nothing more than a doctrinal statement of a regional council, hosted by an emperor who wanted simply to quell a particular argument? The idea of a universal creed had not yet been conceived.<sup>169</sup> The *regula fidei* was a quasi-fluid creed-like statement that varied in its details from church to church. Not until the 350s do we find Athanasius beginning to write about Nicaea in universal terms. It is at this point in the fourth century that we can begin speaking of theologically based ‘parties’ who promote certain fixed theological positions, vying against one another for ecclesial power.

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<sup>169</sup> On this point I am in agreement with Ayres, who argues that the Nicene creed was designed to (1) earn the approval of a majority present, and (2) repudiate the perceived errors of Arius and his supporters. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 99.



We must remember that the historians did not write objective narratives, nor did they pretend to remove themselves from their subjects. Their unveiled, subjective bias in favor of the ascendancy of Nicene orthodoxy is clear. They read Athanasius' accounts sympathetically. As historians, they seek to supply an account that explains how the Nicene creed was acclaimed by an ecumenical council during Constantine's reign, only to fall into disfavor and controversy, before finally achieving affirmation at Constantinople 381. What could explain those years when its symbol was rejected by so many churches, and it was so nearly usurped by its enemies? A conspiracy theory, supplied by Nicaea's greatest confessor, adeptly summarizes this historical sequence.

#### *The Two-Party System of the Fourth Century*

The narrative of an 'Arian conspiracy' relies on the fundamental premise that two theological parties emerged after 325, with one camp motivated to usurp the catholic status of the other. The rejection of this narrative has led some scholars to question why the ecclesiastical historians of the period insist in chronicling a "two-party system" when it is increasingly apparent that Nicaea did not birth two fully formed theological camps with ideological agendas designed to suppress one another. Over the course of the past two decades, four scholars – Joseph Lienhard, Michel Barnes, Lewis Ayres, and Khaled Anatolios -- have written insightful essays on this matter.<sup>170</sup> They have offered valuable contributions to our understanding of the development of Nicene orthodoxy. Moreover,

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<sup>170</sup> R.P.C. Hanson also deserves mention for rejecting this facile dualism that is narrated by Socrates and Sozomen. He addresses the question 'Was there an Arian Conspiracy?' in *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 274-284, which has been a tremendous help in forming my own reflections on this question. My omission of his work in this section is not an implicit criticism; rather, he does not offer an alternative typology to the 'Nicene-Arian' narrative that is found in the ancient histories. For that reason, I have focused instead on the scholars named above.

their proposals have aided us in explaining how this deeply polemical narrative became the standard paradigm for interpreting the history of the fourth century.

Lienhard rejects the nomenclature of ‘Arian’ and ‘Nicene,’ as well as alternatives such as ‘Antiochene’ and ‘Alexandrian.’<sup>171</sup> However, he accepts the suggestion that in the two or three decades after Nicaea two sides formed with competing theological priorities. Lienhard points to a letter penned by Julius of Rome ca. 341, which defined the two parties as the ‘Eusebians’ and the ‘Athanasians.’ After observing that these names would be anachronistic, he finds the center of the controversy to be the term *hypostasis*. He identifies two fundamental typologies, labeled as ‘miahypostatic’ and ‘dyohypostatic’ theologies. The ‘miahypostatic’ tradition, represented by Marcellus of Ancyra and Athanasius, is marked by a strict Christian monotheism. God is one *ousia* and one *hypostasis*. Dyohypostatic theology can be found in the writings of the Eusebians. For them, there is one God, who is unbegotten (ἀγέννητος). Both the Father and Son exist as hypostases. Dyohypostatic theology, while facilely accounting for divine distinction, provides an unsatisfactory account of monotheism. Miahypostatic theology emphasizes the unity of the Godhead, but struggles to present any real account of distinction between the Father and Son.

Michel Barnes observes that the fourth-century controversy results from the two fundamental insights of Christianity, i.e., God is both unity and diversity. Christians offer up prayers to the one God, while being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Because these insights are not equally valued, conflict ensues. Alexander emphasized God’s singularity, while Arius sympathized with divine diversity. Barnes

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<sup>171</sup> Joseph Lienhard, “The ‘Arian’ Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered,” *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 415-437.

notes that the Nicene creed emphasized ‘sameness’ and unity in God. The Son is of the same *ousia* as the Father, is ‘true God,’ ‘Light from Light,’ etc. Those who say that the Son is of a different *hypostasis* from the Father are anathematized. Many of the conflicts after 325 resulted from the ‘modalist’ overtones of the creed. It was not until the terms *homoousios* and *hypostasis* were reinterpreted to allow for distinction within the Godhead did Nicaea begin to function canonically.<sup>172</sup>

Ayres, responding to Lienhard’s article, finds his proposal of ‘miahypostatic’ and ‘dyohypostatic’ theologies to be a helpful tool, but ultimately only one feature of the “epiphenomenon of this wider debate.”<sup>173</sup> Ayres proposes that there existed four distinct theological trajectories, while agreeing with Barnes that within those trajectories, two distinct trends can be identified: ‘sameness’ and ‘diversity.’<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, he admits that most theologians of this era combine some element of ‘sameness’ and diversity, but maintains that they all prioritize one tendency over the other. ‘Sameness’ theologians argue for a real sharing of the Son with the Father, while those who emphasize diversity employ relational language to advocate for a hierarchical nature within the Trinity.

Most recently, Anatolios has added his own contributions to this conversation with the publication of *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*.<sup>175</sup> He credits Lienhard, Barnes, and Ayres for their work in elucidating the

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<sup>172</sup> Michel Barnes, “The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon,” in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (London: Routledge, 1998): 47-67.

<sup>173</sup> Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 41ff.

<sup>174</sup> The four trajectories include (1) Alexander and Athanasius and friends, (2) Eusebians, (3) Marcellus, and (4) Western anti-adoptionists.

<sup>175</sup> Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

complexities of fourth-century theological politics. They have all identified the two primary theological trends, which provide “coherence” to the debates between Nicaea and Constantinople.<sup>176</sup> The difficulty, as Anatolios sees it, is to find the trajectory that links Alexander, Athanasius, and the Cappadocians as a single line of continuity, while also finding common relations between Arius, the Eusebians, and Eunomius. Of course, the former have all been labeled as ‘pro-Nicene,’ while the latter were associated with the moniker of ‘anti-Nicene.’ According to Anatolios, this is the limitation of Lienhard’s categories. The Cappadocians understood themselves to be validating Nicaea, although at the literal level they “would have to be designated as dyohypostatic.”<sup>177</sup> His solution is to distinguish between those theologians who speak of the Trinity as a unity of being, and those who speak of a unity of will. Recognizing that all theologians of this period allowed for both sameness and diversity within the Trinity, Anatolios asserts that the ‘pro-Nicene’ theologians designated the relations between Father and Son in terms of their unity of being, while the ‘anti-Nicene’ theologians insisted that the relationship was one of will, and not being. Among those theologians who affirm the primacy of Christ by associating him with the will of the Unbegotten, Anatolios focuses on Arius, Asterius, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Eunomius of Cyzicus. For those theologians who describe the relation of the Son and Father in the language of being, he addresses the writings of Alexander of Alexandria, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Apollinaris of Laodicea. In the second half of his monograph, Anatolios focuses on the development of Nicene orthodoxy in the writings of Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine.

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<sup>176</sup> Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 31.

<sup>177</sup> Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 29.

Anatolios begins his assessment of Arius and the theologians who promote a Trinitarian unity of will by noting that they identified themselves within the apostolic tradition. The Alexandrian presbyter claimed to have received his teaching from Alexander himself, and he reached out to regional bishops once he was spurned. This placed Arius, and those who followed in this tradition, into the “flow” of Christian experience.<sup>178</sup> Despite the efforts of the Greek historians to claim that non-Nicenes were marked by novelty and innovation, this tradition was one response to a “conflict of interpretation within a common horizon of Christian experience.”<sup>179</sup> The theologians who prioritized the Son’s relation to the Father by will emphasized the primacy of the one God through the grammar of ἀγέννητος (“unbegotten”) and μονάς (“sole”). Two such unbegotten beings would be a contradiction for monotheists. Christ is the product of the divine will, who became the mediator for the rest of creation. He is the model of humanity’s obedience to God’s benevolent purpose. The soteriology of these theologians reflects their voluntarist metaphysics. Christ is the teacher who manifests the will of the Father, giving humanity access to “transformative divine power.”<sup>180</sup>

The theologians who promoted a unity of being in Anatolios’s paradigm prioritized a radical distinction between Creator and creation. There was no qualification of the Son as both Creator and creature, as there was with the theologians in the unity-of-will camp. The emphasis of these theologians who prioritized the unity-of-essence was

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<sup>178</sup> Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 42ff. He rejects the supposition that Arius was influenced more by Platonic rationalism than by biblical exegesis.

<sup>179</sup> Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 44.

<sup>180</sup> Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 66, 97. Anatolios is here pointing to the soteriology of Eusebius of Caesarea, which is consistent with a voluntarist metaphysics. In his *Demonstration of the Gospel*, Jesus is presented as the “teacher and exemplar of both divine rule and human obedience.” *Dem. ev.* 4.12.

on Christ's divinity. They rejected the charge made against them of two Unbegottens, preferring instead to speak of Christ as the Only-begotten Word and Wisdom of the Father. The *kenosis* of the Only-begotten Son, who shares the same essence as the Father, makes possible the participation of humanity into the Trinitarian life according to grace.<sup>181</sup>

In the last twenty years, Lienhard, Barnes, Ayres, and Anatolios have suggested fundamental typologies for mapping the contours of the shifting ground that marked the fourth-century trinitarian controversy. These typologies have been helpful towards narrating the developments of the various parties that took sides against each other. However, it is essential that we remember the challenge that comes with drawing the map in the first place. Trinitarian language was an evolving process at this time, with the rules of grammar changing at a rapid pace. Socrates and Sozomen were two of the earliest historians to apply facile typologies in an attempt to narrate the changing landscape. Their attempts to demarcate an ecclesiastical division between 'Nicones' and 'Arians' has been rejected by the above scholars as unhelpful and misleading. Yet, scholars have continued to propose their own typologies in an attempt to narrate the controversy. Ancient figures such as Eusebius of Emessa and Germinius of Sirmium continue to frustrate our attempts to create models that adequately chronicle the developing grammar.<sup>182</sup> The typology of the ancient historians, riddle with subjective bias, does reveal that the essential aspect of their narrative is the emerging role of Nicaea as the

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<sup>181</sup> Athanasius, *CA* 2.59; Cf. Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 125.

<sup>182</sup> See Maurice Wiles, "The Theology of Eusebius of Emesa," *Studia Patristica* 19 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989): 267-280, and Daniel H. Williams, "Another Exception to Later Fourth-Century "Arian" Typologies: The Case of Germinius of Sirmium" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4.3 (1996): 335-357.

primary factor in the apostolic tradition. In the next section we will see how they recount the doctrinal turn toward Nicaea in the latter half of the fourth century.

### *The Creed of Nike-Constantinople*

In their chronicles of the years following the Council of Serdica, Socrates and Sozomen continue to narrate an ‘Arian’ conspiracy against the Nicene party and its *homoousian* creed. This two-party paradigm becomes increasingly difficult to maintain in the 350s with the emergence of additional theological trajectories. During this period proposals are proffered which advocate the Son’s ‘likeness’ (ὁμοιος), ‘dis likeness’-in-essence (ἀνόμοιος), and ‘likeness-in-essence’ (ὁμοιούσιος), with the Father. Of these emerging theological camps, only Aetius and Eunomius, labeled ‘Anomoians’ by the historians for their suggestion that the Son is ‘dissimilar’ to the Father, are exempted by the historians as legitimate associates within the ‘Arian’ party.<sup>183</sup> Those who advocate that the Son is *homoios* or *homoiousios* are categorized as ‘Arians,’ presumably because they oppose Nicaea. However, Aetius and Eunomius are perceived to be too extreme even for those who oppose the doctrine of *homoousios*.<sup>184</sup> Socrates credits Aetius’ study of Aristotle, and his correlative disinterest in the Christian Scriptures, as the cause behind

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<sup>183</sup> The problem of taxonomy with Aetius and Eunomius is no less severe than it was with the ‘Arians.’ The opponents of those who aver that the Son is dislike in regard to essence with the Father derisively labeled them ‘Anomoians,’ despite their teachings that that the Son is like the Father in many ways. In his monograph on this sect, Kopecek borrowed the label of ‘Neo-Arians.’ T. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (Cambridge, Mass: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979). Ayres attempts to overcome this problem by referring to Aetius and Eunomius as ‘Heterousians,’ which indicates the key distinction between themselves and the Homoians. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 145.

<sup>184</sup> In his summary of Aetius’ deposition from the diaconate at the Council of Constantinople 360, Sozomen is not as quick to distance the deacon from the other ‘Arians.’ The historian cites a tradition that Aetius was not deposed “willingly” by Acacius of Caesarea. Kopecek argues that Acacius needed to dismiss Aetius to clear himself of imperial suspicion that might result from being theologically associated with him. Sozomen, *HE* 4.24.2 (SC 418, 320).

his heretical instructions. “For this reason (study of Aristotle’s *Categories*), he was unable to comprehend how there could be generation without a beginning, and how that which was begotten can be co-eternal with him who begat.”<sup>185</sup> Socrates posits that the Nicene emphasis on the co-eternal divine essence is a uniquely Christian position, revealed only through revelation. Study of the Greek philosophers, e.g. Aristotle, Plato, and Plotinus, combined with ignorance of the Christian fathers, e.g. Clement, Africanus, and Origen, leads one to heresy.<sup>186</sup> The Nicene creed is submitted as the orthodox statement because it applies both the teaching of Scripture and the fathers.

In the chronicles of the ecclesiastical histories, the ratification of a Homoian creed serves as the apex of the ‘Arian conspiracy.’ According to the respective narratives, Athanasius and the Nicene creed are consistently under assault by opponents of *homoousios*. Both the creed of Sirmium 351 and the ‘manifesto’ of Sirmium 357 are reproduced to demonstrate the acute lengths by which anti-Nicenes opposed the doctrine of the essential unity of the Father and Son. These ‘Arian’ efforts crescendo into the ‘Dated Creed’ of May 359, when all references to the *ousia* of the Father and Son are abolished, on the basis that Scripture nowhere mentions this singularity of divine essence.

Yet again, we find Socrates relying on Athanasius as his primary source in recounting the events leading up to the Council of Ariminum.<sup>187</sup> Citing from *De synodis*,

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<sup>185</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.35.9 (SC 493, 158). Jerome also notes Aristotle’s influence on the ‘Arians,’ although he does not single out Aetius or Eunomius. *Dialogus contra Luciferianos* 11 (*PL* 23.166). Kopecek maintains that Aetius opposed the Homoousians on identical theological territory. Philostorgius (*HE* 3.17) includes a note that Aetius, once he had been trained in sacred doctrine, moved to Alexandria ca. 350 to oppose Athanasius’ consubstantialist teachings. For a comparison of Aetius’ theology with Athanasius’ *de decretis*, see Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 120-128.

<sup>186</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.35. 8-10 (SC 493, 158).

<sup>187</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.37 (SC 493, 160-188); Athanasius, *De synodis* 8-10.



Constantius is condemned for forcing ecclesiastical leaders to sign a creedal formula that overturned Nicaea. A May 359 meeting of bishops gave birth to this formula, and became an instant source of derision by Athanasius and a number of his Western counterparts. They mocked the ‘Dated Creed,’ so called because the date of its composition (Pentecost 359) was fixed to the end of the document. Athanasius was severely critical of this formula, arguing that it could not be the rule of faith, handed down to the Church by the apostles. The true catholic faith cannot be so dated, since it is the timeless faith of the fathers, viz. the prophets and apostles. Socrates overlooks Athanasius’ use of the red herring argument, noting that the Nicene Creed is unlike the ‘Dated Creed,’ because while the latter was composed in a particular time and place, the fathers at Nicaea merely passed on the tradition as it had been handed to them.<sup>188</sup>

In 359 Constantius convened the synods at Ariminum and Seleucia to promote unity within the churches. Ecclesiastical unity was fractured after two decades of perennial councils, the result of which was the further division of the Church. The doctrine of *homoousios* proved to be a stumbling block that made it impossible for opponents to bridge the widening theological gap. The historians were clearly pleased with the approval of Nicaea and the condemnation of the ‘Arians’ by the bishops at the first session of Ariminum. Socrates cites the epistle that was produced by the conveners, who believed themselves to be in conformity with the tradition of the prophets, gospels, and apostles, as revealed through Jesus Christ.<sup>189</sup> By ratifying the Nicene creed, they found that the fathers at Nicaea faithfully produced a catholic definition. Sozomen lauds

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<sup>188</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.37.29-30 (SC 493, 170).

<sup>189</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.37.55 (SC 493, 176).

the Ariminum bishops for rejecting all non-Nicene creeds, according to his assumption that all other statements of the faith were disconnected from the apostolic tradition through their innovations.<sup>190</sup> By contrast, the second session of Ariminum was tragic, due to Constantius' insistence that the convened bishops either sign the Nike Creed or risk ejection from their bishoprics.<sup>191</sup> Socrates and Sozomen recognize Constantius' maneuver as political interference in the church, rather than a conciliar approval of an admittedly specious collection of signatures. They also argue that the movement of the Ariminum delegation to Nike, and subsequent adoption of the 'Dated Creed' in a city that sounds suspiciously like 'Nicaea,' was a political maneuver to dupe unsuspecting bishops who favored the latter statement.<sup>192</sup>

The ancient historians were effusive in their praise of the first session of Ariminum, but cast blame at Constantius for the disappointing result of the second session. In regards to the Eastern bishops meeting in Seleucia, they wrote with bitter contempt. Seleucia was recognized as an overt attempt to replace Nicaea. Socrates reports that the party of Acacius introduced the Nicene creed, directly for the purpose of

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<sup>190</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 4.17.7 (SC 418, 272).

<sup>191</sup> The reversal of the bishops in the second session of Ariminum is explained by Socrates and Sozomen as the result of imperial pressure. Western writers later reported that Valens duped the council members through a profession of anti-'Arian' anathemas. They were led to believe that the Nike creed was not in disharmony with the Nicene creed. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, 26-37; Y.M. Duval, "'La Manœuvre fraudulente' de Rimini à la recherche du Liber adversus Ursacium et Valentem," in *Hilaire et son temps : Actes du colloque de Poitiers, 29 septembre – 3 octobre* (Paris, 1969), 51-103.

<sup>192</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.37.96 (SC 493, 188); Sozomen, *HE* 4.19.8 (SC 418, 288). Following Athanasius' lead, Constantius is convicted by the ancient historians of conspiring to advance the Homoian agenda. Socrates does not chronicle the events of 358, when Constantius was prepared to accept the *homoiousion* proposal from Basil of Ancyra. Sozomen quotes from Constantius' letter to Antioch, in which the emperor espouses the Son's likeness according to essence with the Father (*HE* 4.14). However, the historian provides no satisfactory explanation for Constantius' later endorsement of the 'Dated Creed' and its adoption of the Homoian position.

producing another in its place.<sup>193</sup> Meanwhile, the party of George of Laodicea reportedly sought to approve the Nicene creed, but with the addendum that *homoousios* be removed. While *prima facie* it seems improbable that a ‘Homoiousian’ party would suggest adopting nearly the entirety of the Nicene creed, it is apparent that the 325 council was a matter of some discussion.<sup>194</sup> Acacius of Caesarea, the successor of Eusebius, penned a letter observing that *homoousios* and *homoiousios* were problematic terms that “troubled the minds of many.”<sup>195</sup> Eleusius of Cyzicus objected to Acacius, asking him to explain exactly how the Son is like the Father. Acacius’ response, that the Son was like the Father in respect to will only, and not in essence, brought to light the fundamental division between the *homoiousian* and *homoian* parties.<sup>196</sup> Like Ariminum, the council divided into majority and minority camps, and both sent envoys to Constantius. Likewise, the emperor applied similar pressure on the Seleucian delegation to accept the Nike creed, which was later ratified at the Council of Constantinople in January 360.

Commenting on the series of councils that culminated with Constantinople 360, Jerome famously observed that “the whole world groaned, and was astonished to find itself Arian.”<sup>197</sup> In that same section, he wrote that “the ship of Apostles was in peril, she was driven by the wind, her sides beaten with the waves: no hope was now left.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.39.18 (SC 493, 204).

<sup>194</sup> Kopecek suggests that the Homoiousians proposed to accept the Nicene creed, but with *homoiousios* substituted for *homoousios*. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 200. Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 163.

<sup>195</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.40.11 (SC 493, 208).

<sup>196</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.40.31 (SC 493, 212). Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 147.

<sup>197</sup> Jerome, *Dialogus contra Luciferianos* 19 (PL 23.172C).

<sup>198</sup> Jerome, *Dialogus contra Luciferianos* 19 (PL 23.172C).

Socrates and Sozomen observe the panoply of councils with similar consternation, but not nearly to the extent exhibited by Jerome. Reflecting on the historical sequence from 325 to 360, Socrates applies the metaphor of a “labyrinth” to the various definitions of the apostolic faith that were composed.<sup>199</sup> While a labyrinth is marked by darkness, which would also serve as an appropriate statement for this historical sequence in the *HE*, Constantinople 360 does not mark a victory or culmination of Homoian theology in the writings of Socrates and Sozomen. It is a temporary benchmark to be remembered for the trials that were required to approve Nicaea, which would come to be re-affirmed at Constantinople 381.

#### *Alexandria and Antioch*

A turning point in the fourth-century ecclesiastical controversies arrived in the form of a council convened by Athanasius and Eusebius of Vercelli in Alexandria (362).<sup>200</sup> Socrates relies on two sources for his assessment of the synodical proceedings: Rufinus’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Tomus ad Antiochenos*,<sup>201</sup> a letter written soon

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<sup>199</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.41.17 (SC 493, 222).

<sup>200</sup> Armstrong writes of this council as the “rallying point” from which Nicene orthodoxy advanced to its “final victory.” C.B. Armstrong, “The Synod of Alexandria and the Schism at Antioch in AD 362” *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1921): 214. Jerome remarked that this council “snatched the whole world out of the jaws of Satan.” *Adversus Luciferanos* 20 (PL 23.172C).

<sup>201</sup> Rufinus, *HE* 10.30; *PG* 26.795-810. Socrates, *HE* 3.7 (SC 493, 274-280). Maraval observes that Socrates neglects any mention of the offer of reconciliation in the *Tomus* to those bishops who signed the Nike creed at Ariminum. Maraval sees this as the result of Socrates’ Novatian proclivity, since that group disapproved of the pardon offer. Another extant primary document, the *Epistula Catholica*, was written by a sub-committee following the council. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 156-157. A critical edition of this letter has been provided by Tetz. M. Tetz, ‘Ein enzyklisches Schreiben der Synode von Alexandrien (362),’ *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 79 (1988): 262-281. On Socrates’ use of Rufinus as a source on this synod, see Y-M Duval, “La Place et L’importance du Concile d’Alexandrie de 362 dans l’Histoire de L’Église de Rufin d’Aquilée” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 47 (2001) : 283-302.

afterwards to two quarreling pro-Nicene parties in Antioch.<sup>202</sup> The bishops who gathered together affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and also considered the question of Christ's human soul.<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, they affirmed that the language of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, having recently been banned by the Nike-Constantinople creed, were admissible and necessary terms; i.e., they functioned as a refutation of Sabellianism. The *Tomus* makes the extraordinary claim, for the first time, that not all who believe the Father, Son, and Spirit to be three *hypostases* are speaking of three hierarchically ranked beings.<sup>204</sup> Socrates argues that the Alexandrian council clarified the semantic confusion between the definitions for *hypostasis* and *ousia*, which functioned as synonymous terms since Nicaea. This 'adjustment' of the theological grammar was seen as an affirmation of Nicaea, and an advancement upon the Greek philosophers, who did not define *hypostasis* as carefully as they did *ousia*. Maraval points out that "hypostase a été ainsi utilise par Aristote avec le sens de substance, réalité matérielle."<sup>205</sup> Athanasius recognized that *hypostasis* must be stripped of any material implications in order to reconcile the various theological camps who opposed the Homoian creed signed at Nike-Constantinople. For Nicaea to be the touchstone of orthodoxy, a logic of unity and distinction within the Godhead had to be more carefully articulated.

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<sup>202</sup> The Meletians and the Eustathians. Eusebius of Vercelli and Asterius of Petra delivered this epistle to Antioch, hoping to reconcile the two factions. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 157-158; Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, 65-66; Pettersen, "The Arian Context of Athanasius' *Tomus Ad Antiochenos VII*," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41.2 (Ap 1990): 183-198.

<sup>203</sup> While it is unlikely that the Nicene bishops addressed the divinity of the Holy Spirit, we cannot say for certain that this is the case, since no extant minutes of the council exist.

<sup>204</sup> Socrates, *HE* 3.7.15 (SC 493, 278); Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 174.

<sup>205</sup> Socrates, *HE* 3.7.16 ft.2 (SC 493, 279).

The historians also trumpet Nicaea's triumph in the person of Meletius of Antioch. Sozomen writes that Meletius had been ordained by 'Arian' bishops, and his followers had been baptized by 'Arian' priests. Additionally, Meletius' fame was widespread, and he was an eloquent speaker. When the see of Antioch was vacated, Eudoxius of Constantinople appointed him. Much to his surprise, Meletius turned out to be a Nicene supporter. He openly declared that the Son is *homoousios* with the Father. In one instance Meletius resorted to sign language when the archdeacon attempted to block him from speaking. The newly installed bishop expressed his devotion to the Nicene creed, and taught that those who opposed Nicaea deviated from the truth.<sup>206</sup> Meletius was ultimately banished from Antioch by Constantius. The account of Meletius aids Sozomen in his demonstration that the *homoousion* position continued to attract a number of adherents after Constantinople 360, and not only in Alexandria.

On the occasion of Jovian's accession, a council met in Antioch (363) to, in the words of Sozomen, "confirm Nicaea."<sup>207</sup> A letter was written to Jovian by the bishops of the synod, in which they declared that the faith that was "anciently" set forth by Nicaea was maintained. The most remarkable aspect of this council was the embrace of the Nicene creed by former Homoians. Zachhuber notes that this is the first time that non-Nicenes adopted the formula of Nicaea.<sup>208</sup> The reason given by Socrates for the quick

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<sup>206</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 4.28.9 (SC 418, 348). Meletius' sermon, as preserved by Epiphanius, does not contain an explicit affirmation of *homoousios*. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.29.1ff. Philostorgius is reported to have written that Meletius affirmed the consubstantialist doctrine. Philostorgius, *HE* 5.5. For further discussion of this point, see Spoerl, "The Schism at Antioch since Cavallera" in *Arianism after Arius*: 101-126. Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 175-176; Alvyn Pettersen, "The Arian Context of Athanasius of Alexandria's *Tomus Ad Antiochenos* VII" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41.2 (Ap 1990): 183-198.

<sup>207</sup> Jovian was himself sympathetic to Nicene theology.

<sup>208</sup> Johannes Zachhuber, "The Antiochene Synod of AD 363 and the Beginnings of Neo-Niceneism" *Zeitschrift Fur Antikes Christentum* 4.1 (2000): 83-84.

turn towards *homoousion* was the need to counter the ‘Anomians’ argument that the Son was begotten ‘out of non-existence.’<sup>209</sup>

In the West, momentum for Nicaea swelled after Ariminum. Following the death of Liberius (d.366), controversy marked the church in Rome. According to Sozomen, the pro-Nicene candidate Damasus was elected to the see.<sup>210</sup> However, a deacon by the name of Ursinus divided the church when he was passed over for the episcopal office. Sozomen notes that while Ursinus did successfully sow dissension in the church, the people were united in their adherence to Nicaea. They “who believed in Nicaea came together both to praise and glorify the three persons, equal in power.”<sup>211</sup> Around the same time, the church in Milan was also in turmoil. Auxentius sought to introduce innovations into ecclesiastical doctrine, including ‘Arian’ dogma about the dissimilarity of the Son and Holy Spirit. Bishops in the West held a council, and declared that Auxentius would be exiled from communion. The council confirmed the faith of Nicaea, and denied Ariminum.<sup>212</sup> The bishops gathered at Illyria wrote a letter to the church in Rome, expressing their commitment to Nicene doctrine. They claimed that their faith was founded on the doctrine of the apostles, and confirmed by the Fathers at Nicaea. The Nicene bishops “established a wall against the weapons of the devil, and rejected the

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<sup>209</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.4 (SC 495, 260-266); Cf. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 652.

<sup>210</sup> Socrates (*HE* 4.29) notes that Damasus’ elevation caused a great disturbance. Ammianus Marcellinus (*Rerum Gestarum* XXVII.3.12,13) records that 137 citizens were killed in a single day.

<sup>211</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.23.3 (SC 495, 350-352). Πάντες τὰ δόξαντα τοῖς ἐν Νικαίᾳ συνελθοῦσιν ἐπήνουν καὶ τριάδα ἰσότιμον τε καὶ ἰσοδύναμον ἐδόξαζον. Williams notes that Ursinus was not a Homoian deacon, as he is portrayed. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, 137-8.

<sup>212</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.23.5 (SC 495, 352). For further discussion of the opposition to Auxentius, see Williams, “Politically Correct in Milan: A Reply to ‘Diehard Homoians and the Election of Ambrose’” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5.3 (1997): 441-446.

deadly poison (of Arius) by this antidote.”<sup>213</sup> The antidote that they spoke of was the belief in the *homoousios* of the Father and Son. Ariminum introduced innovations to the principles laid down by the fathers at Nicaea. Furthermore, Sozomen avers, the faith established at Nicaea was written on the authority of the apostles, which perfectly expressed the Catholic religion.<sup>214</sup>

### *Pro-Nicene Emperors and the Council of Constantinople 381*

In their narrative of the ratification of Nicene orthodoxy at Constantinople 381, Socrates and Sozomen focus on two primary factors. First, as we just summarized, Nicene bishops clarified the terminology of *ousia* and *hypostasis*. Second, providential aid was manifested in the form of emperors predisposed to the *homoousion* cause. Theodosius I is most notably extolled for his faithfulness to Nicaea, and his work to establish the Nicene creed as the orthodox statement of faith for Christian churches throughout the Roman Empire.

Following the death of Julian, Socrates and Sozomen engage in a practice of acclaiming the pro-Nicene emperors and castigating the ‘Arian’ rulers. The assessment of emperors during this period is reminiscent of the Deuteronomistic historian, who equated “good” kings with faithfulness to Yahweh, while “bad” kings constructed altars to Baal. It should come as no surprise that for the ecclesiastical historians, the “good” kings were pro-Nicene, while the “bad” kings built altars to the false gods of ‘Arianism.’ Jovian, Valentinian, and Gratian are identified as ‘Nicene’ supporters, while Valens is

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<sup>213</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.23.10 (SC 495, 356). Οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν τριακόσιοι δέκα ὀκτὼ ἐπίλεκτοι, εἰς Νίκαιαν γενομένου σκέμματος, τοῦτο τὸ τεῖχος ὑπεναντίον τῶν ὀπλῶν τοῦ διαβόλου ὤρισαν καὶ ταύτῃ τῇ ἀντιδότῳ τὰ θανάσιμα φάρμακα ἀπεώσαντο.

<sup>214</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.23.13 (SC 495, 358).



castigated as an ‘Arian’ ruler. Both Jovian and Valentinian are remembered for their partiality towards ‘Nicene’ orthodoxy. Socrates writes of Jovian that “he had from the beginning adhered to the *homoousion* faith, and openly declared that he preferred this to all others.”<sup>215</sup> Williams observes that while Jovian and Valentinian may have favored the Nicene faith, they shunned religious controversies.<sup>216</sup> Valens is presented by the historians as the ‘Arian’ villain by contrast to his ‘Nicene’ brother Valentinian.<sup>217</sup> As chronicled in the *HE*, Valentinian eschewed the use of violence against the ‘Arians,’ while Valens inflicted suffering on those who opposed the Arian cause.<sup>218</sup> Socrates insists that Valens waged a war against all who affirmed *homoousios*.<sup>219</sup> In the narrative of the *HE*, the pro-Nicenes suffered much persecution from Valens for their identification with the doctrine of *homoousios*, including banishment, exile, torture, and even execution. Ayres observes that Valens’ Homoian faith was more pragmatic than by conviction, while Barnes notes that Valens did not require bishops to subscribe to the

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<sup>215</sup> Socrates, *HE* 3.24.2 (SC 493, 350). Ὁ δὲ ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὲν τῇ ὁμοουσίᾳ πίστει προσέκειτο, τότε δὲ πᾶσιν εἰρηνικῶς προσεφέρετο.

<sup>216</sup> Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, 71. Ehrhardt adds that Valentinian I “abstained from meddling in church affairs.” Arnold Ehrhardt, “The First Two Years of Emperor Theodosius I” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 15 (1964): 2.

<sup>217</sup> For further reading on the contrasting religious policies of Valentinian and Valens, see Guy Sabbah, “Sozomène et la Politique Religieuse des Valentiniens” in *Historiographie de L’église des Premiers Siècles*, ed. Bernard Pouderon et Yves-Marie Duval (Paris: Beauchesne, 2001): 293-314. Sabbah notes that Valentinian approved, or at least accepted, the religious policy of Valens – a surprising thesis if Valentinian was as decidedly ‘pro-Nicene’ as Sozomen chronicles.

<sup>218</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.1.13 (SC 505, 24).

<sup>219</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.2.5 (SC 505, 28). Socrates claims that Valens went so far as to drown many of his opponents in the Orontes river. Cf. *HE* 4.15-19; 4.32 for stories of Valens’ persecution of the *homoousions*.

Homoian creed of 360. He appointed Basil of Caesarea, a prominent Nicene bishop, to reorganize the diocese of Armenia.<sup>220</sup>

Theodosius' introduction to the historical narrative is spoken of in terms that hearken back to Constantine. Whereas the latter had convened the Council of Nicaea for the purpose of uniting the Roman Empire under one religion, the former summoned the Council of Constantinople (381) so that peace and harmony might be restored through re-affirmation of the Nicene creed.<sup>221</sup> Theodosius' faithfulness to Nicaea led Socrates to laud him in encomiastic language: "[He] was descended from a noble family in Spain, and had acquired so distinguished a celebrity for his prowess in the wars, that he was universally considered worthy of imperial dignity, even before Gratian's election of him."<sup>222</sup> The imperial praise continues in the account of Theodosius' decision to receive baptism from a Nicene bishop, Ascholius of Thessalonica. Ascholius is reported by Socrates to have replied that he preserved "unshaken that faith which from the beginning was delivered by the apostles, and had been confirmed in the Nicene synod."<sup>223</sup> Socrates approves of his order delivered to Demophilus of Constantinople, who must submit to Nicene theology, or risk expulsion from the churches of that city. Once he rejected

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<sup>220</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 223; Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 161; For further reading on Basil's contentious relationship with Valens, see Raymond van Dam, "Emperor, Bishops, and Friends in Late Antique Cappadocia" *Journal of Theological Studies* 37.1 (Ap 1986): 53-76.

<sup>221</sup> For a comparison between Theodosius and Constantine on this and other matters regarding ecclesiastical councils, see E.D. Hunt, "Imperial Law or Councils of the Church? Theodosius I and the Imposition of Doctrinal Uniformity," in *Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (Woodbridge: Boydell Pr, 2007), 57-68.

<sup>222</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.2.2 (SC 505, 154).

<sup>223</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.6.5 (SC 505, 162).

Nicene orthodoxy, the non-Nicenes were removed from the city, thereby creating “peace and harmony” under one faith.<sup>224</sup>

The Council of Constantinople met during the summer of 381. No *acta* or minutes of the council are extant, which points to the probable proposal that the participants did not consider themselves to be convening an ecumenical council.<sup>225</sup> Remarkably few sources survive that contain any details of the itinerary of the synod; Socrates and Sozomen provide some of the most valuable data about its’ proceedings. According to the historians, Constantinople 381 was convened for the purpose of confirming (βεβαιωθείσης) Nicaea.<sup>226</sup> Of the canons from this synod, which have been preserved, the first of them establishes the commitment to Nicaea:

The faith of the 318 fathers who met at Nicaea in Bithynia must not be set aside but must be maintained as binding, and every heresy must be anathematized, and in particular that of the Eunomians, or Anomoeans, and that of the Arians, or Eudoxians, and that of the Semi-Arians, or Pneumatomachians, and that of the Sabellians, and that of the Marcellians, and that of the Photinians, and that of the Apollinarians.<sup>227</sup>

An aspect of this council that has puzzled modern scholars pertains to the production of a creed at Constantinople 381, which was read aloud at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, but not preserved by any of the historians who wrote prior to the latter date. This raises a number of questions. If the council produced a new creed, why was it ignored in the historical writings? If Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret were knowledgeable of such a creed, why did they make no mention of it? Kelly has written the most persuasive

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<sup>224</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.7 (SC 505, 162-164).

<sup>225</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 805.

<sup>226</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.8.14 (SC 505, 170); Sozomen *HE* 7.7.4 (SC 516, 96).

<sup>227</sup> Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* 3.557; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 506.

argument on this matter. He argues that a doctrinal statement need not be the exact reduplication of the 325 Nicene creed in order for it to be approved as “the faith of Nicaea.”<sup>228</sup> A local creed that is Nicene in its general character may still be a ‘Nicene’ creed, even if it expresses some semantic differences. According to this line of thinking, Kelly can observe that the bishops at Constantinople affirmed Nicaea, while not conceiving of themselves as promulgating a new creed.<sup>229</sup> Socrates and Sozomen, having been convinced that the council confirmed Nicaea, recorded and preserved the intentions of those who gathered at Constantinople.

### *The κανών of Truth*

In this chapter we have witnessed three aspects of the Nicene creed as the transposition into the apostolic tradition in the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates and Sozomen. We now turn to a fourth aspect: Socrates’ avowal of the Nicene creed as a predication upon the ‘canon of truth,’ and therefore the source of ecclesiastical unity. In Book II, during his analysis of the Serdica council, Socrates claims that at that time (ca. 340s) the Nicene creed was the canon of truth in the West.<sup>230</sup> There are two difficulties with this assertion. First, we must acknowledge that conciliar creeds did not derive from

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<sup>228</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 323ff.

<sup>229</sup> “That it should do this by adopting what was really a different formula from that of Nicaea may appear paradoxical to us, until we recall that at this stage importance attached to the Nicene teaching rather than to the literal wording of N.” Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 325. See also, Barnes, “The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon.” Barnes considers the question of how a creed begins to function canonically by considering the importance attached to the tradition of ‘three persons in one nature.’ The Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed of 381 has been interpreted in light of this formula, despite the absence of πρόσωπον.

<sup>230</sup> Socrates, *HE* 2.27.8 (SC 493, 126). Αἱ δὲ περὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα πόλεις καὶ Ἰλλυριοὺς καὶ τὰ ἐσπέρια μέρη ἔμενον ἔτι ἀσάλευτοι τῷ συμφωνεῖν τε ἀλλήλαις καὶ τὸν παραδοθέντα ἐκ τῆς ἐν Νικαίᾳ συνόδου κανόνα κρατεῖν.

the canon of truth/rule of faith. The canons were local and oral formula that, while sharing many commonalities with other congregations, also evinced some variation. By contrast, conciliar creeds were written statements proffered by councils for doctrinal purposes. The canons were, for the most part, used as teaching and hermeneutical aids.<sup>231</sup>

Second, if we allow that Socrates' claim may be accurate, this would be the earliest evidence of Nicaea functioning canonically in the West. It is difficult to maintain Socrates' claim, given that a bishop as notable as Hilary wrote that he had not heard the Nicene creed recited in the liturgy even as late as 356.<sup>232</sup> Once we take this evidence into account, it is probable that Socrates has confused the dating of the West's appropriation of Nicene orthodoxy by more than a decade.

Despite these historical difficulties in assessing Socrates' claim, the question remains: how does he see Nicaea functioning as a κανών? First, both the κανών and the creeds (including Nicaea) functioned as a metanarrative of the Christian story of creation, incarnation, redemption, and consummation.<sup>233</sup> Early Christian theologians, e.g. Irenaeus and Tertullian, defended the "catholic" reading of Scripture against heresy through citation of the *regula fidei*, which maintains the true ὑπόθεσις of the apostolic teachings.<sup>234</sup> While the story was adapted to the needs of the local community, its'

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<sup>231</sup> Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, 92.

<sup>232</sup> Hilary, *De synodis*, 91 (PL 10.545a). Cf. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, 16-17; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 258; Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 118.

<sup>233</sup> For a lengthy analysis of the narrative character of the rule of faith and the early creeds, see Paul Blowers, "The *Regula Fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith," *Pro Ecclesia* 6.2 (1997): 199-228.

<sup>234</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2.25.4-2.26.1 (SC 294: 254-258); Tertullian, *De praescr.* 1.8.1 (SC 264: 112-116); 1.9.4 (SC 264: 150).

manifestation in the *κανόνη* was universally significant. This *narratio* of the divine story is the basic thread linking the *κανόνα* with their later creedal counterparts.<sup>235</sup>

Second, Nicaea is apostolic in its character. This is a feature common to both the ‘canon of truth’ and creeds. Both formulae were deemed authoritative because they properly transmitted the teaching of the apostles about Jesus Christ. The canons of the ancient sees can be dated chronologically prior to Nicaea. Socrates links Nicaea to apostolic authority by uniting it with the canons that were chronologically prior to 325.

Third, Nicaea functioned as a test of orthodoxy. This was also a function of the ‘canons of truth’ beginning in the late second century.<sup>236</sup> Nicene orthodoxy was authoritative not only because it accurately presented the teaching of the apostles, but also was approved by an ecumenical council of fathers under Constantine, and ratified by a second ecumenical gathering in Theodosius I’s reign. This gave Nicaea a universal appeal that could not be claimed by any other creedal formula, including the Nike-Constantinople creed of 359/360. For Socrates, the former was willingly acclaimed by two ecumenical councils, while the latter was confirmed only through deceit and imperial pressure.

### *Summary*

In this chapter we have surveyed four aspects of the transposition of the apostolic tradition in the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates and Sozomen. First, they castigated Arius as the arch-heretic whose disruption of the unity within the Christian churches resulted in the need for the Nicene council. Second, they found the grammar of

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<sup>235</sup> Blowers, “The *Regula Fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith,” 220.

<sup>236</sup> Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, 65.

*homoousios* to be founded upon the apostolic *kerygma*. Unity and harmony within the Christian churches can be restored only through adoption of this crucial doctrine. Faithfulness to the *kerygma* was tested during the conciliar battles in the decades of 341-381, as ‘Arian’ opponents defied Nicaea by proposing that the persons of the Triune God are not related by unity-of-essence, but by unity-of-will (third aspect). Nicene orthodoxy eventually ‘triumphed’ at the Council of Constantinople 381, because it was founded upon the κανόνα of truth (fourth aspect). The authority for the κανόνα, and of Nicaea itself, can be located in its faithfulness to the apostolic witness. Ultimately, all doctrinal authority must be founded upon the apostles, who preserved the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As documented in this chapter, the historical narratives of Socrates and Sozomen are not without their difficulties when compared with extant writings of the fourth century. Upon discovering that Rufinus’ ecclesiastical history was riddled with errors, Socrates turned to Athanasius, whose own writings are subjective and polemical. The Athanasian perspective is largely adopted by the historians, who themselves laud the triumph of Nicene orthodoxy and the ‘defeat’ of the ‘Arians.’ In the course of narrating the ascension of Nicaea as catholic dogma, they fail to note that the pro-Nicene party lacked cohesion and definition until the 350s. In their chronicles, the Nicene creed was immediately equated with the apostolic tradition. The ratification of Nicaea at the Council of Constantinople 381 was a formality that served to denigrate the ‘Arians’ and assure its role as orthodox theology. In the following section, we will turn to Theodoret, who provides a corrective to this narrative. While Theodoret follows Socrates and Sozomen by acclaiming the rise of Nicene orthodoxy, he does not chronicle the existence

of a Nicene party from 325 to the mid-350s. When compared to his predecessors, Theodoret relies far less on the influence of Athanasius in his chronicling of the reception of Nicaea in the fourth century.

### *Nicaea in the Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret*

In his prologue to Book I, Theodoret announces that his point of departure will be the conclusion of Eusebius' history of the Church, begun more than a century earlier. He notes that the latter had taken up the task of chronicling ecclesiastical history from the time of the holy Apostles to the reign of Constantine. By concluding his narrative with the peace that had been won by the first Christian emperor, Eusebius omitted any mention of either the Alexandrian conflict or the Council of Nicaea. In contrast, Theodoret made the 'Arian' controversy the primary province of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. He will take up the task of narrating the apostolic succession of the Church through the difficult decades that were marked by dissension and division.

Theodoret's focus on the 'Arian' controversy is not unlike his ancient historian predecessors. Like the latter, the controversy is engendered by the conflict between Arius and Alexandria. The Nicene creed communicates the teaching of the apostles. Those who follow Arius and oppose Nicaea are labeled as 'Arians.' After 325 the churches of the Roman Empire are marred by a theological quarrel over the divine nature, which is exacerbated by the influence of 'Arian' emperors, e.g. Constantius and Valens. Finally, the Council of Constantinople 381 ratifies Nicaea, and the restoration of unity within the Church is underway.

While these similarities are numerous and noteworthy, Theodoret distinguishes himself from his historian predecessors in several aspects. He finds Nicaea to be apostolic



because the framers of the creed were themselves the holy ‘fathers’ who spiritually descended from Christ’s first disciples. The guarantee of apostolicity is found in holy confessors of Christ. This is a consistent theme in Theodoret’s writing. Arius’ opposition is found to be rebellious not simply because his teaching was heretical, but because he confronted Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria and heir of the apostles. Whereas Socrates and Sozomen had emphasized divine providence in the production of the Nicene creed, Theodoret accentuates the sacred character of its architects.

Theodoret further distinguishes himself from Socrates and Sozomen through his chronicle of the post-Nicaea developments. As we have just clarified, the latter historians narrate an ‘Arian’ conspiracy to overthrow the authority of Nicaea, and replace it with a like-minded creed. This ‘conspiracy’ is ultimately successful when the Homoian statement endorsed by the Nike-Constantinople creed was established in 360. Theodoret alters the details of this narrative by eschewing such a conspiracy. He continues to chronicle a division between two parties, one of which is the ‘Arian’ faction that seeks to divide the Church. But unlike his predecessors, Theodoret does not note the emergence of a Nicene party until the 350s. He finds that those who articulate a Divinity which is unified by essence are not representative of a theological camp, so to speak, but of catholic dogma. We now turn to Theodoret’s narrative of the fourth-century controversy by focusing on his interpretation of Nicaea’s transposition into the apostolic tradition.

### *Arius*

Theodoret launches his historical narrative by contrasting Constantine’s emergence with the burgeoning controversy in Alexandria. The Church that had been founded by the apostles had moved into a new era, marked by a Christian emperor.

Constantine was a new breed of apostle, having been called by God to end persecution against Christians and support the Church in her evangelistic endeavors. It is not long, however, before the discord in Alexandria disrupts the peace that had emerged from the Edict of Milan. Theodoret does not distinguish himself from Socrates and Sozomen by placing the blame for this discord on the theological ‘innovations’ of Arius. All three historians are consistent in their praise of Alexander and correlative disapproval of his presbyter. However, a subtle distinction emerges when we compare their respective emphases in regards to the nature of the apostolic tradition that Arius is disparaging. Theodoret gives more prominence to the importance of Alexander’s role as the bishop, charged with passing on the doctrines of the apostles to his congregation. According to the text, Arius resisted the apostolic teachings of Alexander (ταῖς ἀποστολικαῖς Ἀλεξάνδρου διδασκαλίαις).<sup>237</sup> The bishop’s faithfulness to the apostolic doctrines is above reproach, for he is in accordance with their interpretation of Scripture. Biblical fidelity makes Alexander an advocate (συνήγορος) of the apostolic dogma.<sup>238</sup>

Theodoret is unequivocal in his position that Arius’ belief in a created Son directly violated the apostolic doctrine of the Son’s equal nature with the Father, as taught by Alexander. Belying his Nicene bias, Theodoret even claims that in the early days of the dispute, Arius opposed Alexander, and by extension the truth of the apostolic doctrine, when he denied that the Son was the same *ousia* as the Father.<sup>239</sup> This is an

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<sup>237</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.2.10 (SC 501, 148); *HE* 1.1 (NPNF 2:3, 34).

<sup>238</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.2.12 (SC 501, 150); *HE* 1.1 (NPNF 2:3, 34). *συνήγορος* was designated for a person who served as a defense attorney. Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1322b; Aristotle, *Athenaion Politeia* 54.2.

<sup>239</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.2.11 (SC 501, 148); *HE* 1.1 (NPNF 2:3, 34). Unexpected support for the usage of *ousia* language prior to Nicaea may be found in Philostorgius’ church history. Photius reports that

especially bold claim. Theodoret deviates from Alexander's own language, taken from his letter to Alexander of Byzantium, which is found in *HE* 1.4.<sup>240</sup> In this epistle, the Alexandrian bishop argues that Arius denies the eternal divinity of Christ and the glory that the Son shares with the Father.<sup>241</sup> Alexander stresses the coeternity of the Father and Son, calling the Son an image of the Father.<sup>242</sup> However, the usage of *ousia* would have to wait until Nicaea. By linking Alexander's early teaching on Divinity with the Nicene creed, Theodoret seeks to further validate his apostolic credentials.

In the narrative of the *HE*, one of the primary responsibilities of the bishop is the defense of Scripture. Alexander fulfilled the expectations of the episcopal office by promoting catholic dogma against one who "opposed the truth." He wrote letters to Philogonius of Antioch and Eustathius of Beroea, who were reported by Theodoret to be "those who defended the doctrines of the Apostles."<sup>243</sup> If we take the *he philarchos* letter as an example, it is apparent that Alexander perceived that his own role as heir of the apostles was the proper exegesis of Scripture. He comments on the actions of his fellow bishops, who have also undertaken a letter writing campaign on behalf of Arius, by

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Alexander and Ossius of Cordova acknowledged the Son as consubstantial with the Father. If accurate, these would be the only two such reports. Philostorgius, *HE* 1.7.

<sup>240</sup> The *he philarchos* letter of Alexander of Alexandria is addressed to "Alexander." Schwartz and Opitz amended the recipient's name as "Alexander of Thessalonica," due to the absence of a formal address to a colleague. Williams and Barnes have recently argued that the amendment is unnecessary, since forms of ecclesiastical address had not been uniform at this date (320s). Williams, *Arius*, 291 fn3; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 376 fn 151.

<sup>241</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.4.4 (SC 501, 156); *HE* 1.3 (NPNF 2:3, 35). τῆς ἀρχῆθεν θεότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ δόξης ἀλέκτου τοὺς λόγους ἀποστρεφόμενοι.

<sup>242</sup> Urk. 23.29-30; Urk. 24.4-5. Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 59; Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 12.

<sup>243</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.4.62 (SC 501, 188); *HE* 1.3 (NPNF 2:3, 41). Cf. For further reading on Alexander's letter writing campaign, see Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 10.

observing that they have violated the apostolic rule (κανόνα) through their actions.<sup>244</sup>

These fellow-ministers, who are left unidentified by Alexander, breached the *canon* by binding themselves to a presbyter against his bishop. These assertions are followed by an extensive exegetical survey of the Scriptures, intended to prove that Arius and his supporters contradict the teachings of the apostles. Theodoret concludes his inspection into the ante-Nicene church by lamenting the state of the Church at the beginning of the ‘Arian controversy.’ The unified body of Christ had been torn asunder by a presbyter and his supporters, who profaned the apostolic tradition by opposing the rule of episcopal succession.<sup>245</sup>

In his monograph on the person and theology of Arius, Rowan Williams observes that pre-Nicene writers, e.g. Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, fixed the standard of catholicity to the continuity of teachers with the apostles of Christ.<sup>246</sup> An unbroken line of succession assured a continuity of interpretation of the sacred texts. This authoritative teacher was normally the bishop; however, a tension was introduced into the churches during the third century – Origen represents one famous example. The exegetical authority of a lower cleric leads to a tacit critique of episcopal authority. Williams calls this the Origenian view of parallel hierarchies. He notes that the Alexandrian church was ill-equipped for a conflict between a bishop who sought monarchical episcopal authority against a presbyter licensed to teach Scripture according to the ideals of a ‘school’ tradition. For this reason Arius appeals to Eusebius of Nicomedia as a ‘fellow-Lucianist,’

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<sup>244</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.4.9 (SC 501, 158-160); *HE* 1.3 (NPNF 2:3, 35). For a list of Alexander’s exegetical citations, see Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 12-13.

<sup>245</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.6.10 (SC 501, 200); *HE* 1.5 (NPNF 2:3, 43).

<sup>246</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 82-91.

for they both apparently sat under the tutelage of the charismatic teacher Lucius of Antioch. One of Arius' misfortunes is that this 'school' tradition was slowly giving way to the more permanent 'episcopal' tradition, which gained further permanence after Nicaea.<sup>247</sup> This shift in the understanding of tradition and authority is yet another reason why Theodoret could criticize Arius as a rebel against Alexander's authority. Theodoret does not recognize the 'school' tradition of Lucius as a valid authority. The "parallel hierarchies" were tolerated for a time, because the Church did not possess the means to establish universally binding decisions. After Constantine and Nicaea, a 'network' becomes available to reinforce this emerging 'Catholic' model of hierarchical authority.

#### *Apostolic Authority of the Nicene Conveners*

The body of Christ, having been fractured by the rebellion of Arius against Alexander, was in dire need of unity. Theodoret joins his historian predecessors in their claim that the path of unity was found in the council of Nicaea. Theodoret's Constantine appeals to apostolic doctrine out of a desire for unity.<sup>248</sup> He discerns the importance of tracing the contemporary Church with the apostles. In his remarks to the council, the emperor informs the bishops that the gospels are the apostolic writings, and that they teach what is necessary about the divine nature. Once again we have seen an ecclesiastical historian confirm the imperial call for doctrinal unity at Nicaea, for the good of both the empire and the Church. The added emphasis on "apostolic gifts" (ἀποστολικοῖς χαρίσμασι) in Theodoret comes from the recognition that all parties in

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<sup>247</sup> Williams also labels the 'episcopal' tradition as the new 'Catholic' model of the Church. Williams, *Arius*, 87.

<sup>248</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.11 (SC 501, 206); *HE* 1.6 (NPNF 2:3, 44).

the ‘Arian’ controversy could agree that they sought the teachings of the apostles on the matter of the divine nature of Christ.<sup>249</sup> The call of doctrinal unity was equivalent to an implicit appeal to apostolic dogma.

Theodoret establishes that the Nicene attendees were men of unrivaled spiritual excellence. Among the reported 318 bishops were several confessors who had lost body parts during the Great Persecution. There were so many confessors that it was said that they looked like an assembly of martyrs.<sup>250</sup> As mentioned above, the ecclesiastical history maintains that these men were endowed with apostolic gifts. Theodoret compares the episcopal confessors to the Apostle Paul, who boasted to the church in Corinth that he had endured stoning, being beaten with rods, and 39 lashes (2 Cor. 11:24-25).<sup>251</sup> By connecting the attendees with Paul, the historian is establishing them as men whose authority to define the apostolic doctrine of Christ in line with the earliest disciples would be unquestioned.

James Kelhoffer has recently argued that the evidence of the prominent role for confessors is unsatisfactory, as it is based solely on Theodoret’s claim.<sup>252</sup> He notes that Athanasius and Eusebius make no such claim for the presence of confessors at Nicaea, while Rufinus, Socrates, and Sozomen mention only Paphnutius of Egypt. Theodoret’s only other contribution in explicitly identifying a confessor is the bishop Paul of

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<sup>249</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.3 (SC 501, 202); *HE* 1.6 (NPNF 2:3, 43).

<sup>250</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.6 (SC 501, 202); *HE* 1.6 (NPNF 2:3, 43).

<sup>251</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.3 (SC 501, 202); *HE* 1.6 (NPNF 2:3, 43). The confessors “bore in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

<sup>252</sup> James Kelhoffer, “The Search for Confessors at the Council of Nicaea” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19.4 (2011): 589-599. Kelhoffer directs his argument against Barnes, who accepts Theodoret’s claim. T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981): 214, 379 n.52. Cf. Ramsay MacMullen, *Constantine* (New York: Dial, 1969): 172-73.

Neocaesarea, who had been maimed under Licinius.<sup>253</sup> He concludes, therefore, that Theodoret generalizes the presence of many confessors based on the reported presence of one or two. If we accept Kelhoffer's thesis, then the question must be raised as to why Theodoret makes this generalization. It is possible that the historian knows of other sources, no longer extant, which name more confessors. Another plausible explanation is that he wants to elevate the stature of the Nicene conveners. The veneration of the council would be raised by the presence of confessors who had suffered during the recent persecutions. If we accept the premise that Theodoret has exaggerated the influence of confessors, we are still left with the impression that he wants to elevate the esteem of the bishops at Nicaea.

As he did with Alexander, Theodoret again places a subtle emphasis on the apostolic authority of their episcopal successors. Socrates had stamped his approval on Nicaea based on divine providence, while Sozomen had claimed a supernatural government upon the council of 325. Theodoret's *HE* underscores that the Nicene conveners were confessors, gifted with divine grace to properly exegete the Scriptures according to an apostolic hermeneutic. The apostolic character of the synod ministers, in coordination with the resultant concord of doctrinal unity, confirms the ecumenicity of the Nicene creed.

*Was there an 'Arian Conspiracy' in Theodoret's Historia Ecclesiastica?*

We now turn to the subject of ecclesial developments in the two or three decades after Nicaea, with a focus on the evolving claim of the Nicene creed as a universal standard of orthodoxy. In a previous section, we observed that Socrates and Sozomen

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<sup>253</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.5 (SC 501, 202); *HE* 1.6 (NPNF 2:3, 43).

both chronicled the emergence of a two-party alignment within the Church after Nicaea: the heterodox ‘Arian’ party and the catholic ‘Nicenes.’ The upstart ‘Arians,’ having been rejected at Nicaea, devised a conspiratorial plot to remove the doctrine of *homoousios* from the creed, and substitute in its place a definition of the faith that eschewed all references to *ousia* and *hypostasis*. The plan nearly succeeded with the confirmation of the Nike-Constantinople creed of 360. However, the success of the Council of Alexandria in 362 to more precisely define the grammar of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, in coordination with the accession of pro-Nicene emperors, helped to assure the ratification of the Nicene creed by the Council of Constantinople in 381.

As we will ascertain in the following section, the suggestion of an ‘Arian conspiracy’ by Socrates and Sozomen has now been rejected by a consensus of recent patristic scholarship. However, there has been little study of Theodoret’s alternative narrative in his iteration of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>254</sup> While Theodoret does retain the pejorative label of ‘Arian’ as a definition of those who oppose Nicaea, he does not chronicle a covert conspiracy against its creed, nor does he note the existence of a ‘Nicene’ party in the decades of the 330s and 340s. Let us now turn to the development of recent scholarship on this question, which will be followed by a closer examination of Theodoret’s account of the development of Nicene orthodoxy.

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<sup>254</sup> Annick Martin has recently written on Theodoret’s account of ‘Arian’ origins. She argues that the *HE* opens with a sequential unit of theological discourse designed to demonstrate the heretical nature of Arius and his supporters. This sequence takes place according to three stages: 1. The beginning of the dispute in Alexandria; 2. The Nicene Council; 3. The ‘Arian’ madness that resulted from their rejection of Nicaea, concluding in the horrible death of Arius. Annick Martin, “L’origine de l’arianisme vue par Théodoret,” in *Historiographie de L’église des Premiers Siècles*, eds. Bernard Pouderon et Yves-Marie Duval (Paris : Beauchesne, 2001) : 349-359.



*Review of Recent Scholarship on the Development of Nicene Theology*

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the function of Nicaea as an ecumenical council evolved in the years following 325. The ecclesiastical histories of Socrates and Sozomen contributed to the misperception that Nicaea and its doctrine of *homoousios* were immediately hailed as the standard of orthodoxy for the catholic Church. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gwatkin spoke of this period between Nicaea (325) and Sirmium (357) as a struggle between ‘Nicenes’ and ‘Arians.’<sup>255</sup> According to Gwatkin’s historical paradigm, the Nicenes, e.g. Athanasius and Marcellus, worked tirelessly to defend the Nicene definition against the heretical Arians, who held council after council to replace the Nicene creed with a subordinationist formula. Gwatkin’s paradigm was such that he could speak of ‘Nicene’ reactions to Constantine’s death and the ill-fated council at Serdica (343/4). The Dedication creed (341) was perceived as a threat to the Nicene symbol, while Serdica was a victory for the Nicene party.<sup>256</sup>

In his seminal work *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, Hanson offered a corrective to Gwatkin’s historical paradigm. He believed that Athanasius could not be regarded as a zealous supporter of Nicaea until at the earliest his second exile (339-346).<sup>257</sup> During the time beforehand (328-338) the controversy appeared to be settled, since Constantine had reinstated the Nicaea exiles, including Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia. According to Hanson, Eusebius and his party do not attempt to create a substitute for Nicaea until the Dedication Creed (341 A.D.).<sup>258</sup> Hanson also finds that the

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<sup>255</sup> Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism*, 64-68.

<sup>256</sup> Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism*, 66.

<sup>257</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 275.

<sup>258</sup> Hanson, 290. Hanson admits that the Dedication Creed makes no mention of Nicaea.

Eastern bishops who left Serdica and met at Philippopolis composed a statement to substitute for Nicaea.<sup>259</sup> During this period of the 340s, Hanson names Athanasius and his followers the ‘pro-Nicene’ party.

T.D. Barnes followed Hanson with his historical monograph, *Athanasius and Constantius*. Barnes found that the Nicene creed and the term *homoousios* became prominent again in theological debate no earlier than the 350s. It was Athanasius who brought it back into prominence by writing the treatise *De decretis* and sending it to the bishop of Rome.<sup>260</sup> Barnes also distinguishes his interpretation of the period from Hanson by avoiding the use of the ‘pro-Nicene’ epithet. Barnes even goes so far as to argue that the creed produced by the Eastern bishops at Serdica, which was identical with that of the Council of Antioch in 342, “ignored” the theological issues raised by *homoousios*.<sup>261</sup>

In 2004, John Behr and Lewis Ayres both published books about the fourth-century controversy. Behr keeps open the possibility that the Dedication Creed and the Philippopolis statement both have Nicaea in mind, but he does not commit to the idea. He does agree with Barnes, however, that Athanasius turned towards the Nicene Creed as the “true expression of the faith and the only secure rallying point” sometime immediately following the first council of Sirmium (351).<sup>262</sup>

Ayres emphasizes the complexity of the ‘pro-Nicene’ epithet. He argues that Nicene theology was a “fluid and diverse phenomenon” that kept evolving, such that in

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<sup>259</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 297-299.

<sup>260</sup> Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 112.

<sup>261</sup> Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 75.

<sup>262</sup> Behr, *The Nicene Faith, Vol.2 Part I*, 84.

these years of 325-350 we cannot speak of a “unitary and clearly defined” Nicene theology.<sup>263</sup> This is equally true both in the East and the West, as Ayres argues that growing opposition by Latin bishops to Sirmium 351 prompted a “turn to Nicaea.” But there is little evidence to support the suggestion that western bishops exhibited any allegiance to Nicaea that would motivate such opposition to Sirmium.<sup>264</sup>

As we can see from this survey of recent scholarship, the trend has been to observe that the emergence of a Nicene party, who sought to elevate its creed to a universal standard, was three decades in the making. Not until the 350s did Athanasius begin to turn back to Nicaea as the suitable theological response to Eusebius and his party.

### *The Post-Nicaea Years*

In the following section, I will present Theodoret’s chronicle of the post-Nicaea years by focusing on three events in which he offers divergent narratives from his historian predecessors: (1) the ‘conspiracy’ against Athanasius; (2) the banishment of Eustathius of Antioch; and (3) the death of Arius.

#### *“Conspiracy” against Athanasius*

During his post-Nicaea exile, Arius wrote a letter to Constantine, seeking to demonstrate that his faith was orthodox. Socrates is convinced that Arius suppresses the truth in this letter.<sup>265</sup> Once the emperor reinstated Arius, Athanasius refused to receive

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<sup>263</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 99.

<sup>264</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 136.

<sup>265</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.27.1. (SC 477, 222).

him in Alexandria. Socrates and Sozomen name this occasion as the instance when the conspiracy against Athanasius commences.<sup>266</sup> Furthermore, Socrates reports that Athanasius's first ouster from Alexandria was the direct result of 'Arian' efforts. Athanasius was called to defend himself at Tyre (335 A.D.) but he was unwilling to attend on account of a fear that changes would be made to the Nicene Creed.<sup>267</sup> This statement is consistent with a narrative that Athanasius was under attack by the 'Arian' party in a conspiracy to overthrow Nicaea. But as we established earlier, Athanasius was not called to Tyre to defend any doctrinal position. He was called there to account for his alleged malevolent behavior. He was charged with smashing a sacred chalice and murdering Arsenius, bishop of Hypsele.<sup>268</sup> Even Socrates does not include any doctrinal issues in his historical reconstruction of Tyre. While Athanasius was exiled from Alexandria, doctrinal issues were not at the root of the conflict.

Theodoret does not deny that Athanasius was a defender of Nicaea who made enemies of the Melitians and the Eusebians. But he does not chronicle the same account of Athanasius' exile as a doctrinal battle between 'Arians' and 'Nicones.' Athanasius apparently had no difficulty in attracting enemies. Theodoret assumes that the Melitians and Eusebians joined forces to depose a common enemy. But he does not claim that the Meletians adopted any 'Arian' convictions, as his predecessors had surmised. Theodoret does affirm that Athanasius was accused of baseless crimes at Tyre, including the murder

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<sup>266</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.27.2 (SC 477, 224); Sozomen, *HE* 2.18.2 (SC 306, 302). The historians include the Meletians as co-conspirators against Athanasius. Sozomen even falsely claims that the 'Arians' and Melitians hold the same theological opinions. 2.21.4 (SC 306, 314).

<sup>267</sup> Socrates, *HE* I.28.4. (SC 477, 232). Neither Sozomen nor Theodoret affirm this accusation.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos* 63.4; Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 21.

of Arsenius.<sup>269</sup> But he makes no pretense that Athanasius initially avoided the synod (or the earlier council at Caesarea) to defend a Nicene position.<sup>270</sup> As recent scholars have concluded, and as Theodoret attests, Athanasius was called to Tyre because of his behavior, not to test his orthodoxy.<sup>271</sup>

### *Eustathius of Antioch*

Athanasius was not the only target of the joint ‘Arian’ conspiracy in Socrates’ account. It is reported that Eustathius accused Eusebius of Caesarea of perverting the Nicene Creed, which led to the bishop of Antioch becoming a target for expulsion.<sup>272</sup> Indeed, he was deposed at a synod in Antioch, based on the accusation that he supported Sabellius. However, Sozomen mentions the possibility that he was accused of defiling the priesthood by “unholy deeds.”<sup>273</sup> But Sozomen reveals what he believes is the more likely reason for Eustathius’ expulsion: the bishop defended the actions taken at Nicaea.<sup>274</sup>

Theodoret provides an alternative account of Eustathius’ expulsion. Similarly to his predecessors, Theodoret identifies Eustathius’ deposition as an unjust affair that was initiated by ‘Arians,’ who he names: Eusebius of Caesarea, Patrophilus of Scythopolis,

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<sup>269</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.28-30 (SC 501, 310-321). Theodoret also includes a charge of rape as one of the crimes brought against Athanasius.

<sup>270</sup> Athanasius was originally called to defend himself against behavioral crimes at Caesarea. Only after he refused to attend the council at Caesarea did he finally attend the council at Tyre.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* 19-33.

<sup>272</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.23.8. (SC 477, 212).

<sup>273</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.24.2. (SC 477, 214); Sozomen, *HE* II.19.1. (SC 306, 306). Cf. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 208-17.

<sup>274</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 2.19.1 (SC 306, 306). Kopecek provides a traditional summary of this narrative. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 53-54.

Aetius of Lydda, and Theodotus of Laodicea.<sup>275</sup> In this account, they did not accuse him of Sabellianism, but instead plotted to remove the bishop by bribing a prostitute to fraudulently identify Eustathius as the father of her child. But unlike the account from Socrates and Sozomen, the ‘Arians’ sought to remove Eustathius, not because he was a leader of the ‘Nicene’ party, but because was a “great champion of Truth” (τῆς ἀληθείας πρόμαχος ὁ μέγας Εὐστάθιος).<sup>276</sup> Nowhere in the story is Eustathius identified specifically as ‘Nicene,’ despite his record as an ardent supporter of its creed.<sup>277</sup> Nor is there any mention of a ‘Nicene’ party, formed to combat the machinations of the ‘Arians.’ If there was any moment during this period (325-337) that we would expect a bishop to be labeled by Theodoret as ‘Nicene,’ Eustathius would be a prime candidate. He had been a vocal supporter of Nicaea, and yet in this account he is not explicitly named as such.

### *The Death of Arius*

The climax of Book I in Socrates’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* discloses the deaths of Arius and Constantine. They stand in stark contrast to each another: one, a heretic whose theological innovations were condemned at Nicaea, but who managed to divide the Church; and the other, the first Christian emperor who convened the ecumenical council and himself confessed the Nicene faith.<sup>278</sup> Even the manner of their deaths points

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<sup>275</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.21.4 (SC 501, 282).

<sup>276</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.21.3 (SC 501, 282); NPNF 2:3 (57).

<sup>277</sup> Theodoret even cites an excerpt from a letter written by Eustathius, in which he defends the Nicene creed against the condemnation of the Eusebians and ‘Ariomaniacs.’ Theodoret, *HE* 1.8.1-5 (SC 501, 210-212); NPNF 2:3 (44).

<sup>278</sup> Socrates *HE* 1.38.11 (SC 477, 258).

to the divide that had been created on the theological battleground of the early fourth century. Arius died through a violent bowel movement, while Constantine received Christian baptism and passed on cheerfully. Later he was laid to rest in the Church of the Holy Apostles.<sup>279</sup>

In Socrates' history, the last event of Arius' life was yet another example of the divide that had come to exist between 'Arians' and 'Nicenes.' Alexander of Byzantium was ordered to readmit Arius to fellowship. The people were divided into two factions: those who supported Arius, and those who supported the Nicene Creed.<sup>280</sup> Alexander, believing himself to be the guardian of Nicene orthodoxy, prostrated himself in prayer to seek God's guidance in preventing the Nicene faith from suffering violation.<sup>281</sup> The next morning, Arius died during his journey to the church in Constantinople.

Theodoret presents this story in a way that is markedly different from Socrates. In a move that is emblematic of his direct reliance upon primary texts, the historian cites Athanasius' letter to Serapion, who provides the earliest account of Arius' death.<sup>282</sup> It is interesting to note that Athanasius himself did not use the categories of 'Arian' or 'Nicene' party. He did mention the Eusebians, but did not refer to them as followers of Arius. Socrates had employed both this letter and Rufinus' account as his sources for interpreting this narrative as an Arian-Nicene conflict. Theodoret defers to Athanasius'

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<sup>279</sup> Socrates *HE* 1.40.2 (SC 477, 262).

<sup>280</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.37.4 (SC 477, 252).

<sup>281</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.37.5 (SC 477, 252).

<sup>282</sup> In the extant writings of Athanasius, there are two accounts of the death of Arius. The *Letter to Serapion* can be dated within five years of the event. Athanasius wrote to Serapion in response to claims that Arius had been received into the church before his death. Athanasius' claim refutes that story. Barnes estimates that the date of Arius' death was July 24, 336. Cf. Barnes, "The Exile and Recalls of Arius," *Journal of Theological Studies* 60.1 (April 2009): 120-122.

letter, which offers no language for the existence of such parties; nor does it address Alexander of Byzantium as a guardian of Nicaea. Based on these examples, it appears that Socrates and Sozomen idealize the authoritative role of Nicaea in the years prior to Constantine's death. Meanwhile, Theodoret provides nearly no authoritative role for Nicaea during this same period.

### *The Reign of Constantius*

Book II of Theodoret's *Historia Ecclesiastica* recounts the reign of Constantius from the death of his father in 337 to his own passing in 361. As previously narrated, Socrates and Sozomen had chronicled this period as the triumph of the 'Arians,' who successfully conspired to overturn Nicaea, which succeeded with the 'triumph' of the Nike-Constantinople creed of 360. Theodoret does report on many of the same councils as his predecessors, including Milan (355), Ariminum (359), and Seleucia (359).<sup>283</sup> However, the curious absence of any mention of the councils at Antioch (341) and Sirmium, as well as the lack of any summary for the 'Dated Creed,' indicates that he discounts the suggestion that the 'Arian conspiracy' is the dominant motif of this era. He again eschews any mention of a 'Nicene' party that is at work to defend and affirm that creed as an ecumenical standard of orthodoxy. Instead, what we find is that Theodoret shifts the focus towards Constantius' heavy handed role in aiding the Eusebians in their work to affirm an 'Arian' creed. The beginnings of a pro-Nicene party finally emerge in the late 350s when an alternative to Constantius and the 'Arians' was necessary to refute their anti-*ousia* disposition.

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<sup>283</sup> Theodoret also offers a concise summary of the division at Serdica (343/4), and copies the synodical letter written by the Western bishops. Theodoret, *HE* 2.7 (SC 501, 348-350); NPNF 2:3 (67).



Theodoret juxtaposes Constantius' religious positions with those of Athanasius. He opens Book II with a letter from the emperor, who lauds the great virtue of the exiled bishop.<sup>284</sup> Athanasius was welcomed back by the rich and the poor; only the Eusebians were agitated by his return. Constantius' weakness is unfavorably contrasted with Athanasius' steadfast faith in remaining true to the "apostolic faith."<sup>285</sup> While the emperor was easily persuaded to abandon the faith of his father, Athanasius endured a series of exiles in his stance against heretical opposition.<sup>286</sup> By the time Constantius took over sole rule of the East in 337, the Alexandrian bishop had already persevered against the charges at Tyre, and the subsequent exile in Trier. Theodoret continues to narrate the persecutions against him, e.g. the "false accusations" by the Eusebians that were made to Julius of Rome, the second exile that led Athanasius to travel to the imperial city, the refusal of the 'Arian' bishops to allow him to be seated at Serdica, and finally the third exile that was preceded by his death warrant from the emperor himself. While these events spanned a period of approximately twenty years, they were narrated in quick succession by Theodoret over the course of a mere ten chapters. Throughout the narration, Athanasius is distinguished as a champion of the apostolic faith, who never wavered from orthodox dogma.

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<sup>284</sup> Constantine had intended to recall Athanasius, but was prevented from fulfilling this action by his death. Constantius' letter, which was addressed to the church in Alexandria, announced the recall. Athanasius, *Apologia contra arianos* 87.4; *Historia Arianorum* 8.2. Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 34.

<sup>285</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 2.4.4 (SC 501, 342). *HE* 2.3 (NPNF 2:3, 66).

<sup>286</sup> Theodoret modifies a story written in Rufinus' *HE* of an anonymous Arian priest who was in the emperor's court by means of his sister. This unknown priest was able to persuade Constantius to refute Nicene theology because the emperor's mind "was like reeds driven to and fro by the wind." Theodoret, *HE* 2.3.6 (SC 501, 340). *HE* 2.2 (NPNF 2:3, 66); Rufinus, *HE* 10.16; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 69.12.7.

The malignancy of Theodoret's Constantius reaches its climax with the ecclesiastical councils of the late 350s. Theodoret recounts a bleak picture of an emperor who seeks to institute 'Arian' theology by removing episcopal opponents from influence. The emergence of the Nicene party is chronicled as an organic movement in the face of an organized, yet heterodox, party led by a tenacious emperor with a calculated agenda.

Theodoret's recognition that a rudimentary 'Nicene' party emerged in the late 350s frames his analysis of the Ariminum and Seleucia councils. He affirms the confessions provided by the western pro-Nicene bishops, which are evidenced by their letters addressed to Constantius. They equated the faith of the prophets, apostles, and evangelists with doctrinal matters agreed upon at Nicaea, which stood as a witness against the 'Arian' heresy.<sup>287</sup> He angrily denounces the Nike creed, because the western bishops only subscribed to it out of the fear that they would be removed from their sees by imperial order. Furthermore, he recognizes the Eastern bishops at Seleucia primarily to criticize their refusal to reinstate Cyril of Jerusalem, the "earnest champion of the apostolic decrees."<sup>288</sup> In yet another curious move, he abstains from any narration of the contentious debate between the Homoian and Homoiousian parties.

Another noticeable vacuum in Theodoret's account of Constantius' reign is any notion of a Homoian "triumph" at the Council of Constantinople in 360. The bishop of Cyrus is undoubtedly critical of the synod that denounced all uses of *ousia* as proper

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<sup>287</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 2.19.2 (SC 501, 418). *HE* 2.15 (NPNF 2:3, 80).

<sup>288</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 2.27.3 (SC 501, 458). *HE* 2.22 (NPNF 2:3, 87). Theodoret extols Cyril at this time due to his later pro-Nicene proclivity. But ca. 359, he was not the pro-Nicene champion that is portrayed in the *HE*. For a more extensive summary of Cyril's development as a theologian, see Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 398ff.; Rebecca Lyman, "A Topography of Heresy: Mapping the Rhetorical Creation of Arianism," in *Arianism after Arius*, ed. Michel Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark): 48-53; Peter van Nuffelen, "The Career of Cyril of Jerusalem (c.348-87): A Reassessment," *Journal of Theological Studies* 58.1 (Ap 2007): 134-146.

descriptors of the Logos, and resulted in the elevation of Eunomius to the see of Cyzicus.<sup>289</sup> However, it is worth noting that Theodoret does not characterize the Council of Constantinople as the crest of a conspiratorial wave that began with the Eusebian power grab following the death of Constantine in 337. Instead, he places the blame at the feet of Constantius for being weak enough to be persuaded by the ‘Arians’ to leave his father’s Nicene, i.e. apostolic, faith.

#### *Pro-Nicene Emperors and the Council of Constantinople 381*

Socrates describes the Council of Alexandria (362) as a watershed moment that helped the pro-Nicene party overcome the Homoian “triumph” at Constantinople 360, and laid the groundwork for the eventual Nicene ratification at Constantinople 381. Since Theodoret does not perceive of Constantinople 360 as the apex of an ‘Arian conspiracy’ to replace Nicaea with a substitute creed, he has no need of a ‘watershed’ moment that turns the tide against the ‘Arians.’ However, the task remains for him to narrate how it transpired that a party which was losing support, both imperially and ecclesiastically, ascended to a dominant position only two decades later.

Imperial support for the pro-Nicene party arrived with the accession of Jovian in 364. One of his first acts was to recall exiled bishops to their sees, and restore to the churches those prelates who held fast to the Nicene faith.<sup>290</sup> Perhaps even more significantly, the new emperor requested from Athanasius some form of catechetical instruction on the faith. Theodoret duly records that Athanasius exhorted the emperor to

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<sup>289</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 2.28. Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 148-9.

<sup>290</sup> Theodoret claims that this was his first edict. Theodoret, *HE* 4.2.3 (*SC* 530, 186).

“keep the faith defined at Nicaea, which was in harmony with apostolic dogma.”<sup>291</sup> The Alexandrian bishop penned a letter to Jovian that accused the Arians of committing heresy and schism within the Catholic Church.<sup>292</sup> He urged the emperor to embrace the faith formulated by the fathers at Nicaea. The Nicene fathers anathematized the ‘Arian’ heresy, because it was not the divine and apostolic faith. Ignoring similar claims from his opponents, Athanasius affirms that the Nicene dogma is the Catholic faith, which spans all the borders of the Roman Empire. Near the end of his letter, he reproduces the Nicene Creed, emphasizing that this is the divine and apostolic faith that needs no alteration. He argues that the Homoians are ‘Arians’ because of their opposition to *homoousios*, and their insistence that the Son is merely ‘like’ the Father, not ‘very God of God.’<sup>293</sup>

Again we see Theodoret emphasizing the importance of an apostolic agent in support of Nicaea. In the early years of the controversy, he recorded that the tradition was passed down through the episcopal office, so that Arius’ ‘disobedience’ was an act of rebellion against Alexander, who represented the apostolic succession. The Nicene creed was an apostolic definition of the faith because it was framed by catholic bishops. In the later years of the controversy, he returns to this theme, but offers a variant interpretation. In order for Nicaea to be supported against alternative ‘Arian’ creeds, it requires an apostolic emperor. In the previous paragraph, we noted that Theodoret identifies Jovian

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<sup>291</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.2.5 (SC 530, 186). Ὁ δὲ τοὺς λογισμωτέρους τῶν ἐπισκόπων ἀγείρας ἀντέγραψε τὴν ἐν Νικαίᾳ ἐκτεθείσαν πίστιν φυλάττειν παρακαλῶν ὡς τοῖς ἀποστολικοῖς συμβαίνουσιν δόγμασιν.

<sup>292</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.3 (SC 530, 188-194). Barnard contends that Athanasius delivered the letter in person, in advance of an ‘Arian’ delegation which sought to install their own bishop in Alexandria. L.W. Barnard, “Athanasius and the Emperor Jovian,” in *Studia Patristica* 21 (1989): 384-389.

<sup>293</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.3.13 (SC 530, 194).

as the first such emperor to come to its defense. Valentinian, Gratian, and Theodosius I are also acclaimed for their defense of Nicaea.

Valentinian is extolled by Theodoret for his role in convening the council of Illyricum in 366, which confirmed the Nicene creed. They declared the Son to be *homoousios* with the Father.<sup>294</sup> Their confirmation of Nicaea also served as proclamation of the piety of Valentinian.<sup>295</sup> Theodoret does not single out any of the bishops at Illyricum, despite his attachment of their synodical letter to Book IV of the *HE*. His focus instead is on Valentinian for his role in calling the council to order.<sup>296</sup> Gratian is likewise favored for his Nicene policies. Theodoret praises him for adhering to “godliness” (εὐσέβειαν).<sup>297</sup> Such piety is revealed when Gratian recalled those Nicene bishops who had been exiled by Valens, and their church buildings returned from the possession of ‘Arian’ factions.<sup>298</sup> However, Gratian’s most notable act as emperor, according to Theodoret, may have been his appointment of Theodosius I as his fellow colleague.

### *The ‘End’ of the ‘Arian’ Controversy*

Theodoret introduces Theodosius I as a man of faith. Two signs of his faith are offered. The first sign comes when the Romans troops are led to victory by the general’s

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<sup>294</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.8.1 (SC 530, 206); *HE* 4.7 (NPNF 2:3, 111).

<sup>295</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.7.10 (SC 530, 204); *HE* 4.7 (NPNF 2:3, 111).

<sup>296</sup> It has been suggested that the Council of Illyricum affirmed Nicaea in order to please Valentinian. However, this is not the interpretation of Theodoret.

<sup>297</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.2.1 (SC 530, 334); *HE* 5.2 (NPNF 2:3, 132). In the NPNF volume, Jackson translates εὐσέβειαν as “true religion.”

<sup>298</sup> Barnes defends Theodoret’s chronology of Gratian’s reign, and provides a helpful summary of the years 378-383. T.D. Barnes, “The Collapse of the Homoeans in the East” in *Studia Patristica* 29 (1997): 3-16.

faith over barbarians at the Danube river. The second sign comes in the form of a dream in which Theodoret sees a vision of Meletius of Antioch investing him with the imperial robe and crown. According to the *HE*, this vision was confirmed when Theodoret recognized Meletius at the Council of Constantinople 381, without having to be told which of the 150 bishops was him.<sup>299</sup>

Theodoret's narrative of the Council of Constantinople 381 shares two significant commonalities with his historian predecessors.<sup>300</sup> First, his narrative is as succinct, perhaps even more so, than those of Socrates and Sozomen. Yet again we have no record of a new creed having been promulgated at Constantinople. Theodoret emphasizes the chronicle of the revolving presidents for the synod more than the debates themselves. Second, the importance of the council derives from its ratification of Nicaea. His summary of the council ends with the synodical epistle issued by the attending bishops. He refers to it as a summary of the apostolic doctrine.<sup>301</sup> The bishops offered thanks to God for the suffering of the Arian controversy, sufferings which were directly the result of the sins of the Church. God poured out His mercies upon the Church by restoring her back to health after a long illness.<sup>302</sup> Such suffering was a blessing, because it led to the ratification of the faith embodied at Nicaea. It is the true and ancient faith, the faith that

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<sup>299</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 7-8 (SC 530, 352-364); *HE* 6-7 (NPNF 2:3, 135). Ehrhardt takes a cynical approach to this "sign," arguing that Theodosius needed Meletius so that the Council of Constantinople 381 would have any measure of credibility. Ehrhardt, "The First Two Years of Theodosius I" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 15 (1964): 16-17.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 296-331; Simonetti, *La Crisi*, 527-41; Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 791-823; Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 253-260.

<sup>301</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.8.12 (SC 530, 364); *HE* 5.8 (NPNF 2:3, 136).

<sup>302</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.9.6 (SC 530, 366); *HE* 5.9 (NPNF 2:3, 137).

began at baptism, and the faith that teaches Christians to believe in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>303</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In the second chapter, it was noted that Eusebius, by entitling his work as an “ecclesiastical history,” distinguished between orthodox Christian theologians and nonorthodox heretics.<sup>304</sup> By directly linking “orthodox” theologians with the apostles, Eusebius did not perceive that any evolution of dogma had occurred in the three centuries he chronicles in the *HE*.<sup>305</sup> The Christian narrative of orthodox theologians in the late third century was perceived to be an exact likeness of the apostolic writings from the first century. This was the “basic structural element” in his theology of history.<sup>306</sup> This Eusebian view of history is emulated by Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret in their ecclesiastical chronicles. Recent scholarship has critiqued them for the facile manner in which they adapt the narrative of “orthodox” and “heretic” into a polemical contrast between “Catholic” and “Arian.” The reduction of ecclesiastical history into these binary categories blinds them from any perception of doctrinal development; nonetheless, we can recognize the developments that they could not see, and even note the differences between their narratives in the construction of Nicene orthodoxy.

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<sup>303</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.9.10-11 (SC 530, 370); *HE* 5.9 (NPNF 2:3, 138).

<sup>304</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 3.3.2, 4.7.5, 5.27.1, 6.18.1, 7.27.2. Cf. Chesnut, “Radicalism and Orthodoxy: The Unresolved problem of the First Christian Histories” *Anglican Theological Review* 65.3 (July 1983): 293, 303 ft.3.

<sup>305</sup> Harnack and Bauer have both written extensively on this problem. Harnack, *History of Dogma*. Translated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> German edition by N. Buchanan (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961); Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*.

<sup>306</sup> Chesnut, “Radicalism and Orthodoxy,” 294.

One prominent aspect within the historical writings of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret is their common assertion that the Nicene creed was transposed as an essential element into the apostolic tradition. Each writer arrived at that conclusion by means of a mutual narrative, which consisted of a broadly chronicled historical outline that began with the conflict between Arius and Alexander, and concluded with the ratification of Nicaea at the Council of Constantinople 381. In other words, the ‘Arian controversy’ served as the spine which linked the connective tissue of ecclesiastical history during the fourth century. The numerous similarities in these histories provided the inspiration for Cassiodorus to combine them into a single volume tripartite history in the sixth century.

Despite the many commonalities, differences do emerge upon closer examination. For Socrates and Sozomen, Nicaea is ‘apostolic’ because it was the handiwork of divine providence. This interpretation infused them with confidence enough to proclaim with Athanasius that Nicaea was immediately received as the standard of orthodoxy. Consequently, ecclesiastical history between 325 and 381 is narrated as a division within the church between the upstart ‘Arian’ faction and the catholic ‘Nicene’ party. The ‘Arians’ conspired to topple the Nicene creed and substitute another in its place, and nearly succeeded with the confirmation of the Nike-Constantinople creed. However, divine providence moved against the opponents of orthodoxy, and Nicaea was finally ratified by the council of Constantinople in 381.

According to Theodoret, Nicaea receives its apostolic mandate from the holy confessors who formulated its creed. Because the framers of the Nicene creed were themselves apostolic in character, the creedal statement they produced was likewise written in the spirit of the apostles. Out of the conflict between Arius and Alexander



arose a dispute between two distinct parties. Theodoret does mimic his predecessors by labeling the followers of Arius as ‘Arians.’ Those who sided with Athanasius did not immediately define themselves as ‘Nicene,’ but simply believed themselves to be catholic. By eschewing any narration of the councils of Antioch and Sirmium, Theodoret implicitly rejects the suggestion that the reign of Constantius served as the height of an ‘Arian conspiracy.’ However, by the time that the councils of Ariminum and Seleucia convened in 359, a ‘Nicene’ party had emerged in opposition to the ‘Arians.’ It is at this time that *homoousios* becomes the watchword equivocal to a standard of orthodoxy. Movement in favor of Nicaea intensified after the death of Julian, as pro-Nicene emperors rallied behind its creed. Theodosius I provided the most extensive support when he convened the council of Constantinople in 381. Nicaea’s status as a standard of orthodoxy is confirmed by examination of both its holy framers, and the ‘apostolic’ emperors who came to its defense in the latter half of the fourth century. Paul Parvis writes that in Theodoret’s *HE* the welfare of the empire depends on “the piety of the ruler.”<sup>307</sup> Nicaea is ‘apostolic’ because those who wrote it and defended it are themselves orthodox. Tradition is a living organism. It is alive in the persons who continue to propagate the teachings of Christ. Tradition lives because the God of the apostles is the same God who continues to infuse His Spirit in the contemporary bishops and emperors, who are charged with the leadership of the Church. The drama of biblical history is continuing to be played out in the Church’s history.

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<sup>307</sup> Paul Parvis, “Theodoret’s Bias: The Aim of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*” in *Studia Patristica* 48 (2010): 21-26.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Apostolic Role of Nicene Monastics

According to the ecclesiastical historians, the usage of the ‘apostolic’ epithet was not reserved solely for the Nicene creed. The burgeoning sub-culture of monks and desert fathers were also marked by their ‘apostolic’ behavior. In the following chapter, it will be argued that Christian anchorites and cenobites are designated as such because of two characteristics: (1) ascetic disciplines, and (2) advocacy and adherence to Nicene orthodoxy. St. Antony receives credit from the historians as the paragon of monastic practice. Antony’s nearly universal acclaim derives from Athanasius’s biography, which lauds him for his transcendent faith and unparalleled wisdom. The fifth-century historians were not unaware that monasticism emerged as a counter culture movement in the previous century. Their approval of the monastic philosophy as an apostolic commission is not based on an explicit genealogical link to the original disciples of Jesus. St. Antony cannot be traced back to the apostles in the same way that Athanasius and Julius of Rome can claim episcopal succession. The apostolic ‘commission’ of Antony and pro-Nicene monks is located in the emulation of the behavior and faith of the first disciples.

This chapter will also address the theology of asceticism, which acts as the foundation for monastic practice. Origen formulates much of the early monastic philosophy. While his ascetic theology is not explicitly cited by the historians, Origen’s influence can be detected in the writings of Evagrius, which are quoted extensively by

Socrates. We can also trace Origin's influence on Sozomen, who explicitly endorses a 'monastic philosophy' that is distinguished from all other ancient philosophical schools. While numerous parallels come to light when comparing Christian asceticism with its pagan counterparts, the burgeoning monastic movement of the fourth century allowed little in the way of polytheistic likeness. Increasingly large numbers within the Church moved to the outskirts of villages, and then into the harsh desert climate. Initially these pious men and women sought out solitude, but they came to congregate in communities. The largest of these 'cities' of the Egyptian desert were Nitra and Scetis, both of which required several days journey from Alexandria. Cenobitic communities were formed early in the fourth century by Pachomius, who found that spiritual growth was enhanced by the coordination and association of like-minded disciples.

This chapter will begin with a brief history of Christian asceticism. The advent of monastic activity in the fourth century cannot be understood without some prior establishment of its theological underpinning. Likewise, the identification of these ascetics with the 'apostolic' epithet can be dated to the century before Antony. Who were these ascetics, and why were they being recognized for their apostolic role in Christian communities? Once this question has been addressed, then we will turn to the evolution of asceticism into the monastic practice that produced both the hermetic desert fathers like Antony, and also the communal practitioners of Pachomius and the 'cities' of Nitria and Scetis.

In the following sections we will investigate the monastic theologies as presented in the histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. Socrates establishes the prominent role that the desert fathers played in fourth-century Egypt and Palestine. Through the

genre of short biographies, his ecclesiastical history introduces readers to the holy men who exemplified apostolic lives. His lengthy citations from Evagrius Ponticus address the theological ideals that they strove to perfect. It is in the writings of Evagrius that we discover the necessity of Nicene orthodoxy. For a monk to live the apostolic life, he must worship the Triune God, three in persons and one in essence. Worship of a heterodox God cannot lead to the inner transformation of the soul, which is the source of apostolic behavior. With Sozomen the focus turns to the monastic philosophy. He affirms the necessity of virtue, which is formed through the habituation of *askesis*. Ascetic practice undergirds the monastic philosophy, which is mastered through the imitation of Christ. Our survey of the ecclesiastical historians on monasticism concludes with Theodoret, who contributed an entire volume to the subject with the *Religious History*. His perspective is unique among the historians for a variety of reasons. Theodoret was himself a monk before accepting the call to episcopal ministry in Cyrus. As a Syriac Christian, he sought to demonstrate that the Palestinian monks were as equally zealous as their Egyptian counterparts.

### *History of Asceticism*

Eusebius recognized that the Christian Church had accommodated ascetics even in its earliest years. However, his scant evidence for this claim is conspicuous based on his selection of a single source: Philo's *On the Contemplative Life*. The ascetic group in question, the Therapeutae, are erroneously identified as Christians by Eusebius.<sup>1</sup> But Philo's description of them illuminates the reason why Eusebius labeled them as

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian*, 72-76; James Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 14-18.

“apostolic men” (ἀποστολικούς ἄνδρας).<sup>2</sup> They renounced (ἀποταζαμένους) their worldly goods. They rendered pure worship to God and read together the sacred Scriptures. Self-control was their most prized virtue. They limited their bodily intake of food. Eusebius was familiar enough with Christian practices of asceticism in the early fourth century, viz. Philo’s description sounded like just such a group with whom he would have been familiar. By providing the *Therapeutae* with a Christian pedigree, the authority of Christian ascetic development was further validated. Just as Eusebius had altered Philo’s text, John Cassian later amends it in his *Institutes* by removing the name *Therapeutae*, choosing instead to call them ‘monks’ (*monachi*).<sup>3</sup>

Eusebius traced a genealogical line of bishops from the contemporary period back to the apostles themselves, to demonstrate apostolic succession of leadership and doctrine in the Christian churches. He does not offer such a link between contemporary and ancient ascetical groups. His historian continuators likewise follow suit. Sozomen distinguishes himself from the other historians by suggesting that St. Antony had ascetic predecessors: Elijah and John the Baptist.<sup>4</sup> While Sozomen links Antony to those prophetic figures so as to include him in the larger story of God’s *heilsgeschichte*, it is also a tacit assertion that the history of Christian asceticism predates the famous hermit. In this section we will briefly summarize the development of ascetic practices and theology by focusing on Origen and third-century Syrian wanderers.

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<sup>2</sup>Eusebius, *HE* 2.17.2 (SC 31, 72).

<sup>3</sup> John Cassian, *Institutes* 2.5-6; Richard J. Goodrich, “John Cassian, the *Instituta Aegyptiorum*, and the Apostolic Church,” in *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity: Inheritance, Authority, and Change*, ed. J.H.D. Scourfield (Oakville, CT: The David Brown Book Co., 2007), 323-333.

<sup>4</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.12.9 (SC 306, 166).

## Origen

In Eusebius' ecclesiastical history, Origen is the paradigm of Christian asceticism.<sup>5</sup> He devoted himself to piety through numerous personal disciplines, including fasting, sleeping on the floor, and poverty of material dependency. His manner of life is said to be a genuine philosophy, which attracted pupils to come to Alexandria and study the Scriptures with him.<sup>6</sup> Origen's teachings on the body and the soul were formative for later Christian thinking, especially as it relates to the theology of monasticism. Here is a brief synopsis of the subject, as found in his seminal work *Peri Archon (First Principles)*.<sup>7</sup> In this text Origen presents his exegetical hermeneutic of Scripture on creation and anthropology.

All souls and rational natures were originally created by God to be incorporeal.<sup>8</sup> These rational creatures were endowed with free will. In their freedom, the souls could voluntarily choose to make progress by means of the imitation of God, or deteriorate through negligence.<sup>9</sup> Only the soul of Jesus clung to God in an inseparable union.<sup>10</sup> All other souls fell into their material bodies through negligence. As Peter Brown observes, the body was necessary for the soul to be healed and ultimately restored to the likeness of

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rebecca Lyman, "Origen as Ascetic Theologian: Orthodoxy and Authority in the Fourth-Century Church" in *Origeniana Septima* (1999): 187-194.

<sup>6</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 6.3.8 (SC 41, 88). Origen's pupils even included "Gentiles," i.e., non-Christians.

<sup>7</sup> Origen, *On First Principles*, introduction by Henri de Lubac, xxviii. The text was composed prior to Origen's departure from Alexandria to Caesarea in 231. According to some of Origen's defenders, the teachings of Origen on the soul were his speculations put forward for discussion, not settled dogma. Origen, *On First Principles*, with an introduction by G.W. Butterworth (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1973), xxxvii.

<sup>8</sup> Origen, *PA* 1.7.1 (SC 252, 180).

<sup>9</sup> Origen, *PA* 2.9.2 (SC 252, 245).

<sup>10</sup> Origen, *PA* 2.6.3.

God.<sup>11</sup> However, “the body was always a limit and a source of frustration.”<sup>12</sup> Despite its limitations, it was a “positive act of divine mercy. ...the body was necessary for the slow healing of the soul.”<sup>13</sup> “The gentle precision of God’s mercy ensured that each body was adjusted to the peculiar needs of its soul down to the finest details.”<sup>14</sup> Humans held the capacity to hasten their restoration through training and education. The body required disciplined training, because the “delights of the flesh” enticed humans away from spiritual things.<sup>15</sup> The passions that lay concealed within need to emerge so that they can be purified and healed.<sup>16</sup>

Drawing on his reading of the apostle Paul, Origen depicted Christians as athletes and soldiers who wrestle against cosmic powers. When the soul unites with the Spirit in opposition to the flesh, a struggle ensues. The soul must fight against the temptations of the body for it to become a “vessel of honor,” prepared for good works.<sup>17</sup> The same evil spirits and demons who corrupted Judas’ heart into betraying Christ are actively tempting all rational souls to give in to the desires of the flesh. Just as an athlete trains to overcome his opponent in competition, Christians prepare for spiritual combat to resist the temptations that the flesh faces. The archetype for spiritual warfare is the patriarch

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 164-165; Origen, *PA* 2.11.3.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, *The Body and Society*, 164.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, *The Body and Society*, 164-165.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *The Body and Society*, 165-166.

<sup>15</sup> Origen, *PA* 3.4.4 (SC 268, 150).

<sup>16</sup> Origen, *PA* 3.1.13 (SC 268, 144).

<sup>17</sup> Origen, *PA* 3.1.23 (SC 268, 146).

Jacob, who wrestled with divine powers and prevailed in the struggle.<sup>18</sup> Training for this type of warfare requires spiritual tenacity rather than bodily strength. The “principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this world” seek to induce believers to abandon faith in God’s righteousness (Eph. 6:12). Origen exhorted his students to stand fast like Job, who lost his family and property, yet remained faithful to God.<sup>19</sup>

In his eschatological summation, Origen affirms that the highest good for humanity is to become like God.<sup>20</sup> The end is like the beginning, and in the beginning God made humanity in the image and likeness of God. He distinguishes between image and likeness, e.g. humans were created in the image of God, but do not become remade into the divine likeness until the *eschaton*. The responsibility for obtaining perfect likeness falls on humanity, who is charged with the task of imitating God. Through training in purity, holiness, and the virtues, souls will ascend to receive their spiritual bodies, when the saints have been joined to God and made “one spirit” with Him.<sup>21</sup>

While *Peri Archon* offered the theoretical *apologia* for ascetic behavior, his other works suggested more practical application. Fasting, prayer, and celibacy were the antidotes to the poisons of the passions. The passions, such as anger, veiled the mind from seeing the glory of God.<sup>22</sup> Christ set the example for overcoming the passions by fasting in the desert. By imitating Christ in ascetic behavior, Christians were empowered

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<sup>18</sup> Origen, *PA* 3.2.5 (SC 268, 172). Origen does not appear to believe that Jacob’s struggle was against Yahweh.

<sup>19</sup> Origen, *PA* 3.2.6 (SC 268, 172).

<sup>20</sup> Origen, *PA* 3.6.1 (SC 268, 154).

<sup>21</sup> Origen, *PA* 3.6.6 (SC 268, 154).

<sup>22</sup> Origen, *Homily on Jeremiah* 5.9.



to likewise conquer the demons who tempt believers to remain ensnared by carnal desires.<sup>23</sup>

### *Third-Century Syrian Ascetics*

The ascetics in the era prior to the fourth-century emergence of Antony and the desert fathers were often identified not only by their renunciation of material dependency and virginity, but also by their removal to the outskirts of villages and cities. Others wandered from village to village, choosing not to settle permanently in one location. Daniel Caner traces the development of these wandering ascetics in *Wandering, Begging Monks*. He observes this phenomenon in third-century Syria, where small numbers of Christians would wander in pursuit of freedom from care (*amerimnia*).<sup>24</sup> They were motivated by ‘apostolic’ precedent, believing that their conduct witnessed to the world of a Savior who Himself practiced ascetic disciplines and wandered from village to village.

Caner points to two texts as evidence that ascetic wanderers in third-century Syria endeavored to imitate the apostles through their piety. One such text is *The Acts of Thomas*, which is believed to have been written in Syria at the beginning of the third century.<sup>25</sup> It tells a story about the apostle Judas Thomas, who was purportedly sold as a slave by Jesus to a merchant who delivered him to King Gundaphor in India. The ruler requested Thomas to build him a palace. When he came to check on the progress of the construction, local residents informed the king that the palace had not been built. They reported that the ascetic and pious Thomas was wandering about the villages, teaching

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<sup>23</sup> Origen, *Homily on Exodus* 2.3.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 33, 56.

<sup>25</sup> A.F.J.Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 15.

about God, and healing the sick. He was either a sorcerer or an apostle, because “he fasts much and prays much, and eats bread and salt and drinks water, and wears one garment, and takes nothing from any man for himself; and whatever he has he gives to others.”<sup>26</sup>

The multitudes described Thomas’ conduct in ways that could have been ascribed to Jesus. And through his imitation of Jesus, Thomas also attracted followers who likewise imitated the apostle.

Pseudo-Clement’s *Letters to Virgins* is the second text proffered by Caner for its link between third-century asceticism and apostolic imitation. While the letter was originally attributed to Clement of Rome, the *Letters* have been recently dated to a third-century Syriac origin.<sup>27</sup> They are written to those who preserve their virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.<sup>28</sup> The purpose of virginity is to perfect the true believer, hearkening back to Jesus’ command in the Sermon on the Mount to be perfect.<sup>29</sup> The holy life saves the chaste person who seeks perfection, and also serves God. Ps-Clement urges Christians to imitate Christ and the apostles by conquering the appetites of the flesh through virginity.<sup>30</sup> In their imitation of Christ and the apostles, ascetic wanderers fulfill Jesus’ call for workmen who will reap the harvest for the Kingdom (Matt. 9:37).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Acts of Thomas* 20, (65).

<sup>27</sup> Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 66.

<sup>28</sup> Ps-Clement, *Epistle to Virgins* (EV) 1.1.

<sup>29</sup> EV 1.2.

<sup>30</sup> EV 1.6.

<sup>31</sup> EV 1.13.3-4.

Caner finds that the asceticism practiced by the recipients of Ps-Clement's letters was "in the service of apostleship."<sup>32</sup> They are apostolic for two reasons. First, they are true representatives of Christ by crucifying their flesh and pursuing holy and pure conduct. Second, they proclaim the message of Christ to others through their perfect example in imitating Christ and the apostles. Ps-Clement juxtaposes this proper form of apostolic imitation with those workmen who appear as children of light but are in fact children of darkness; malevolent; misleaders; and frauds who practice iniquity and wickedness.<sup>33</sup>

### *Evolution of Monasticism*

The earliest record of a Christian ascetic receiving the descriptor of 'monk' comes in 324. In his noteworthy essay, E.A. Judge documented the notation of Isaac the *monachos* in a secular business record.<sup>34</sup> Of some significance is the fact that Isaac is labeled as a 'monk' by civil authorities rather than by an ecclesiastical official. This suggests that the figure of the Christian monk may have already been in widespread usage in Egypt by this time. James Goehrig proposes that Isaac was an active member of the community rather than an itinerant preacher.<sup>35</sup> The first evidence we have of a

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<sup>32</sup> Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 67.

<sup>33</sup> *EV* 1.13.

<sup>34</sup> E.A. Judge, "The Earliest Use of Monachos for Monk and the Origins of Monasticism," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 20 (1977): 72-89.

<sup>35</sup> James Goehrig, *Ascetics, Society, and Desert*, 22.

Christian ascetic fleeing into the remote desert, rather than remaining on the outskirts of the community or wandering from village to village, is in the *Vita Antonii*.<sup>36</sup>

### *Antony*

Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret all denote Antony as the founder and exemplar of Egyptian monasticism.<sup>37</sup> His biography was written by Athanasius shortly after the hermit's death c. 356.<sup>38</sup> The *Vita Antonii* chronicles Antony's life story, beginning with his youth in Egypt, where he was raised in an affluent family. When still a young man, Antony heard a gospel reading at church of Jesus' message to the rich young ruler, which he interpreted as a command for him to sell what he possessed and give it to the poor. Antony distributed his inheritance to the needy and entrusted his sister to a community of virgins who lived in their village.<sup>39</sup>

The motif of Antony's life was a movement from the communal nature of the village to the isolation of the remote desert. Following his conversion to an ascetic philosophy, he chose to emulate a local holy man by practicing the disciplines of fasting and prayer. Some time later, Antony entered into the tombs that were positioned outside

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<sup>36</sup> Jerome composed a biography of Paul of Thebes (*Vita S. Pauli*), claiming that his flight to the desert was even earlier than Antony's. Most scholars doubt the historical veracity of Paul. William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 105.

<sup>37</sup> Antony has historically been credited as the "Father of Monasticism," despite the absence of such credit from Athanasius. Bartelink observes that in the *VA*, Athanasius even makes references to the existence of 'hermitages' of monks. Bartelink, *VA* (SC 400, 137).

<sup>38</sup> Athanasius' authorship of the *Vita Antonii* has been challenged by Barnes. T.D. Barnes, "Angel of Light or Mystic Initiate? The Problem of the *Life of Antony*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 353-368. For refutations of Barnes, see Andrew Louth, "St. Athanasius and the Greek *Life of Antony*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 504-509; David Brakke, "The Greek and Syriac Versions of the *Life of Antony*," *Le Museon* 107 (1994): 29-53; G.J.M. Bartelink, "Introduction" to the *Vie D'Antoine* (Sources Chrétiennes 400, 1994), 27-76.

<sup>39</sup> *Vita Antonii* 3.

the village. Devotion to God led him to retreat still further outside. He withdrew to a deserted fort and settled there for twenty years.<sup>40</sup> During Antony's time in solitude, he was empowered by God's presence. Like Moses, his face was said to have shone from dwelling in God's glory. After emerging from solitude, Antony attracted many followers, which led Athanasius to claim that the desert had been made a city of monks.<sup>41</sup> These monks desired to imitate Antony's rigorous ascetic disciplines. The *Vita* describes him as a man of God who was empowered to heal the sick, cast out demons, and teach others with power and conviction. Yet, again Antony sought to live in further isolation, and he journeyed to the Upper Thebaid. At the Inner Mountain he settled permanently, devoting himself to prayer and fasting.<sup>42</sup> However, even in the remote desert mountain Antony could not maintain strict solitude. Visiting monks continued to seek and find him for the purpose of imitating the desert father in his rigorous ascetic disciplines. His ascetic perfection required the seclusion of the desert. For all of Antony's followers in the fourth century, the locus of ascetic perfection was not the village, but the desert.

From the perspective of the *Vita*, the ascetic life of discipline originated with obedience. Antony obeyed the gospel reading to sell his possessions and give them to the poor. He emulated the goodness of the old man who taught him the solitary life.<sup>43</sup> He learned the virtues of graciousness, patience, and long-suffering from other zealous ascetics in his village. "And having been filled in this manner, he returned to his own place of discipline, from that time gathering the attributes of each in himself, and striving

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<sup>40</sup> *Vita Antonii* 12-14.

<sup>41</sup> *Vita Antonii* 14.

<sup>42</sup> *Vita Antonii* 49.

<sup>43</sup> *Vita Antonii* 3.

to manifest in himself what was best from all.”<sup>44</sup> Despite living in the remote Egyptian desert, he submitted himself to ecclesiastical authorities by honoring the rule of the Church and humbling himself in the presence of presbyters and deacons.<sup>45</sup> Athanasius credited Antony with intensely practicing the disciplines.<sup>46</sup> He often prayed throughout the night without succumbing to sleep. When sleep did come, Antony rested on the hard ground without the use of a mat. He only ate once per day, and sometimes only once every other day. Meals did not include meat and wine, but simply bread and water. The only possessions owned by Antony at his death were two sheepskins and a cloak.

The disciplines that Antony learned from his mentors were necessary to mortify the body and strengthen the soul. His vigilance in keeping the ascetic disciplines was necessary to emerge victorious from combat with the demons. The *Vita* portrays him as a cosmic warrior on behalf of God’s holy forces. Through his prayers and bodily mortification, Antony engaged in combat with Satan. The beasts of the desert are portrayed as manifestations of demons who intend bodily harm against the servants of the Lord.<sup>47</sup> Through training and ascetic disciplines, Antony became an athlete who defeated the demons. Biblical admonitions to “walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:4) and “I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19) are sprinkled into the texts in numerous places. By metaphorically dying to the pleasures of the body daily, Antony

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<sup>44</sup> *Vita Antonii* 4. For Antony and the monks, obedience was a kind of crucifixion, a death to self. Cf. Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 243.

<sup>45</sup> *Vita Antonii* 67.

<sup>46</sup> *Vita Antonii* 7.

<sup>47</sup> *Vita Antonii* 9.

imitates Jesus' victory over Satan on the cross. "Athanasius' ... Antony was the avatar of Christ's victory over the devil and opponent of the gods of paganism. The monk's successful resistance of the demonic became an argument for the superiority of Christianity in its conflict with paganism, and he succeeded the martyr as the Christian on the front line of that conflict."<sup>48</sup>

As he drew to a conclusion, Athanasius accentuated Antony's orthodox convictions. In one episode, the pioneering desert father journeyed down from his mountain abode to Alexandria for the purpose of rejecting 'Arian' overtures of fellowship.<sup>49</sup> Antony castigated them as heretics whose doctrines were worse than serpents' poison. In fact, they did not differ from the pagans when they taught that the Son is a creature. As if to put the final nail in the 'Arian' coffin, Athanasius' Antony taught his disciples that the heretics did not derive their teaching from the apostles, but from "their father, the devil."<sup>50</sup>

The *Vita Antonii* describes Antony the Great as a man who emulated his Lord through ascetic practices and orthodox beliefs. By imitating Christ faithfully, he was himself worthy of emulation by the monks who followed him into the desert. We now turn to a man who was credited by Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret for establishing some of the oldest monasteries that housed these burgeoning communities of ascetic Christians.

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<sup>48</sup> David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 46-47.

<sup>49</sup> *Vita Antonii* 69.

<sup>50</sup> *Vita Antonii* 82.

## *Pachomius*

Pachomius converted to Christianity around the age of twenty when he met Christians while serving as a conscript in the Roman army.<sup>51</sup> In a prayer, he agreed to convert if God would release him from commitment to the army. Upon his release a few months later, Pachomius was baptized and took up the ascetic philosophy as a student of Palamon, who lived in Upper Egypt. On one occasion, likely in the 320s, the young student was collecting wood in the deserted village of Tabennesis when he received a vision to build a monastery.<sup>52</sup> When that monastery overflowed, a second community was formed in the deserted village of Pbow.<sup>53</sup> Soon a network of monastic settlements spread along the Nile river in Upper Egypt.<sup>54</sup> They came to be known as the *koinonia*. There were nine monasteries and two convents at the time of Pachomius' death in 346. According to one source, 3,000 monks had joined the Pachomian monasteries by that time, and that number doubled by the end of the fourth century.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Multiple *Lives of Pachomius* are extant in the Coptic, Greek, and Arabic languages. They represent different viewpoints in the history of Pachomian monasticism. Cf. Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 25; Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 17-18.

<sup>52</sup> Dunn, 26. For further reading about why a fourth-century village might become deserted, see James Goehrig, "Withdrawing from the Desert: Pachomius and the Development of Village Monasticism in Upper Egypt" *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 267-85.

<sup>53</sup> Pbow is the only Pachomian monastery whose location is still identifiable. The fifth-century basilica built on the site lies in the modern village of Faw Qibli. Cf. Peter Grossmann, "The Basilica of St Pachomius" *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (1979): 232-236; Goehrig, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert*, 96.

<sup>54</sup> The desert fathers were sagacious in their reorganization of deserted space. In addition to deserted villages, the monks put to use deserted tombs (*Vita Antonii* 8), fortresses (*Vita Antonii* 12), and temples (*Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 5).

<sup>55</sup> Palladius, *Lausiac History* vii; Cf. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church*, 22.



Unlike Antony's remote desert abode, the Pachomian monasteries were located near villages and along the Nile river.<sup>56</sup> They were often built on quite fertile land, so that the community codes included instructions for farming and irrigation.<sup>57</sup> The Rule of Pachomius governed the organization and function of the *koinonia*, and came to be used by coenobitic monks outside of their fellowship. The monks in the *koinonia* lived in houses that grouped approximately twenty individuals. Within each house were cells where two or three monks would be boarded. They were expected to become literate, so that they could recite the psalms. Daily communal services were held in the midday and evening, consisting of psalm reading and prayers.

Contemporaries regarded Pachomius as the spiritual descendant of patriarchs, prophets, and the apostles.<sup>58</sup> Rousseau argues that this emphasis upon his authority was out of fear that tradition was being threatened, since continuity was not guaranteed. In order to safeguard their own existence, the descendants of Pachomius articulated a line from the Bible and early church to Pachomius and later generations. The Pachomian community perceived itself as parallel to the episcopal succession that marked the apostolic sees.

James Goehrig contends that, despite traditional assumptions, Pachomius was not the founder of coenobitic monasticism, just as Antony was not the founder of anchoritic

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<sup>56</sup> The Pachomian *Koinonia* spanned a distance of 175 kilometers along the Nile. Such a distance was made possible by the ease of transportation on the river. Cf. Goehrig, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert*, 95; Dunn, *Emergence of Monasticism*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> Dunn, 32.

<sup>58</sup> Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church*, 23.

monasticism.<sup>59</sup> Athanasius overtly admits that Antony learned anchoritic monasticism from a village holy man. Likewise, Pachomius was not the first monk to found a community. Three of the nine monasteries in the *Koinonia* were of independent origin, not founded directly by the Pachomians.<sup>60</sup> Goehrig observes that Pachomius' innovation was not the foundation of coenobitic monasticism, but the creation of a system of monasteries under one common rule.<sup>61</sup> While Goehrig is right to point out the influences of Antony and Pachomius, ancient historians credit those two monks as innovators and founders of the two primary forms of desert monasticism. They may not have been the 'pure' innovators that the historians want to promote, but they were certainly inspirational figures for the thousands of monks who followed them in practicing Christian asceticism in the remote Egyptian desert.

### *Scetis and Nitria*

Two of the largest communities of monks in Egypt during the fourth century were found in Scetis and Nitria. The Scetis community was founded by Macarius the Egyptian -- not to be confused with Macarius the Alexandrian, both of whom were included in Sozomen's catalog of holy men. Macarius the Egyptian practiced as a village ascetic until the villagers attempted to force him to serve as a cleric. He fled to another village, where a young woman accused him of impregnating her.<sup>62</sup> The villagers seized and humiliated him. Rather than object to the false accusation, Macarius humbly accepted the

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<sup>59</sup> James Goehrig, "The Origins of Monasticism" in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992) 235-55.

<sup>60</sup> Goehrig, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert*, 28; *Bo* 50-55; *G1* 54.

<sup>61</sup> Goehrig, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert*, 31.

<sup>62</sup> *Apophthegmata Patrum* Macarius 1 (*PG* 65: 260; *CS* 59:124-5).

responsibility of marriage. He worked night and day to support the pregnant woman. But when it came time for her to give birth, labor was delayed. Thinking that the delayed birth was due to her own false accusation, the woman admitted her culpability. Macarius was exonerated, and he again fled, this time to Scetis.

The Scetis community was located approximately 80 miles south of Alexandria.<sup>63</sup> The monks lived in individual cells, widely scattered across a vast area approximately twenty-two miles long. The cells were in caves or small bungalows built out of mud brick or stones against the rock face of the valley. Most of the cells contained two small rooms; one for work and hosting visitors, and the other for prayer. The monks engaged in some manual labor during the day, such as rope making and basket weaving. These activities allowed for monotonous repetition, during which the monk could pray and recite the psalms.

The monastic community at Nitria was founded by Amoun. Palladius explains that Amoun was pressured by his uncle into marriage when he was twenty-two years old.<sup>64</sup> After the wedding ceremony, Amoun pulled out a biblical text to read with his new bride. While reading from 1 Corinthians, he instructed her about virginity and chastity. Having been convinced that they should follow this path, Amoun and his wife lived in the same house, but in separate beds. After eighteen years of this arrangement, Amoun's wife convinced him to live separately, so that his virtue would not go unnoticed. Sometime between 325 and 330, he built himself two domed cells at Nitria

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<sup>63</sup> Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 174.

<sup>64</sup> Palladius, *Lausiac History* 8.1.

and lived there for twenty-two years.<sup>65</sup> Like Macarius, Amoun soon attracted disciples, and the settlement became one of the largest monastic communities in Egypt. Palladius estimated that 5,000 inhabitants lived in Nitria by the end of the fourth century.<sup>66</sup>

### *The Apostolic Heritage of Early Monasticism*

In this brief summary of early Christian ascetic practices, we have seen the claim of apostolicity in a number of texts. Eusebius found the second-century Therapeutae sect to be apostolic, primarily because of their renouncement of material possessions, limited intake of food, and virginity. The *Acts of Thomas* and Ps-Clement's *Letters to Virgins* were both third-century texts that held asceticism up as the highest standard of Christian behavior. In the case of *The Acts of Thomas*, an apostle was exalted as one who emulated Jesus, and who was therefore worthy of himself being imitated. Thomas was worthy of emulation due to his ascetic impulse to practice celibacy and poverty. Like Jesus, he had no home to call his own (Mt 8:20). The *Letters to Virgins* likewise establishes apostolicity in the context of *imitatio Christi*. The holy men addressed in this letter were apostolic exemplars because they practiced sexual abstinence. These third-century Syrian wanderers were inspired by Jesus' appointment of the seventy disciples who walked from town to town in pairs (carrying no purse, bag, or sandals) to proclaim that the Kingdom of God was near (Lk 10:1-16).

Writing near the end of the fourth century, John Chrysostom claimed that the desert in Egypt had become better than any Paradise, because Christ's kingdom now

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<sup>65</sup> Nitria was named about the mineral niter, which was extracted in abundance in this region. It was a commodity used primarily for cleaning linen.

<sup>66</sup> Palladius, *Lausiac History* 7.2.

shone forth in the monastic martyr-virgins.<sup>67</sup> These monks, the foremost of whom was Antony the Great, imitated the zeal of the apostles through their daily cycles of prayer and fasting. The *Vita Antonii* had demonstrated what the law of Christ perfectly required.<sup>68</sup> John Cassian argued that the Jerusalem community, as described in Acts, was the foundation of coenobitic monasticism: “The multitude of believers had one heart and one soul, and none of them said that what he possessed was his own, but all things were common to them. They sold their possessions and their belongings and distributed them to all as each had need” (Acts 4:32-34). Cassian also claimed that after the death of the apostles, the multitudes grew lukewarm and spoiled the “perfection” of the Jerusalem church.<sup>69</sup> Only those with apostolic fervor continued in the ascetic philosophy, and they chose to live in the secluded places to continue the teaching handed down by the apostles. Both the coenobitic and anchoritic forms of monasticism represented apostolic perfection.<sup>70</sup>

The application of the “apostolic” appellation to early Christian ascetics conveys the common theme of the imitation of Christ. Those who emulated Jesus and the apostles, especially Paul, through prayer, fasting, and virginity, were said to be like the apostles through their virtuous conduct. None of the ascetics mentioned thus far held any form of ecclesiastical office, and were not installed as apostles by any bishop.

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<sup>67</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Matthaëum homilia* 8.6. PG 57.87.

<sup>68</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Matthaëum homilia* 8.7. PG 57.88.

<sup>69</sup> John Cassian, *Collatio* 18.4. For further reading on Cassian’s proposal that Egyptian ascetics preserved the original fervor of the apostolic church, see Goodrich, “John Cassian, the *Instituta Aegyptiorum*, and the Apostolic Church.”

<sup>70</sup> Cassian is vituperative in his response to the sarabaites, who fail to submit to the authority of either coenobitic discipline or an anchoritic superior. He links them to the biblical figures of Ananias and Sapphira, who were killed by the Holy Spirit for refusing to give all of their property to the Church.

Furthermore, Antony and Pachomius both eschewed any call for ordination. The ascetic wanderers in third-century Syria likewise did not hold office, and held only a tenuous relationship with the Church. They were labeled as ‘apostles’ because of their strict imitation of Jesus in celibacy and poverty, as well as homelessness. They were more properly described as ‘apostolic’ rather than ‘apostles.’

While the ‘apostolic’ ascetics often did not become martyrs, they were believed to have imitated Jesus even through sacrificial death. Both Antony and Pachomius are spoken of as disciples who faithfully emulated Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians that followers of the Lord deny their own lives, and crucify themselves to Christ (Gal 2:20). In his letter, Ammon puts those words in the mouth of Pachomius, during a speech to a small group of monks. Pachomius goes on to affirm that his followers have renounced possessions to live in poverty, in accordance with Christ, who was a model of the monastic way.<sup>71</sup> As he did with the passages on material renouncement, Antony sought a more literal interpretation of texts about dying for Christ. When Maximin’s persecution produced martyrs in Egypt, many holy men and ascetics made themselves available to the civil authorities. During the Great Persecution, Antony desired to become one of the martyrs, and even traveled to Alexandria to make himself available.<sup>72</sup> He came to the attention of both a judge and a prefect. The *Vita* concludes that the Lord protected Antony from martyrdom, so that he might become a daily martyr through his ascetic disciplines.<sup>73</sup> Because of his faithfulness to the Lord in daily martyrdom, many imitators

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<sup>71</sup> *Letter of Ammon* 23.

<sup>72</sup> *Vita Antonii* 46.

<sup>73</sup> *Vita Antonii* 47. According to Origen and Tertullian, faithful believers were forbidden from volunteering for martyrdom. Only God could choose whether or not one would become a martyr.

chose to follow Antony. Prior to the fourth century, the honorific title of ‘apostolic’ was not accorded in reference to any particular rule or creed; neither did it refer to devotion to any particular doctrine or dogma. A transformation in the grammar of ‘apostolic’ is manifested in the fifth-century ecclesiastical histories. Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret labeled the desert fathers ‘apostolic’, not only because of their virtuous conduct, but also for their adherence to Nicaea.

### *Monasticism in Socrates’ Historia Ecclesiastica*

Recent studies of monasticism in Socrates’ ecclesiastical history have focused on the comparatively small role of the holy men when contrasted with their increasingly important function in the life of the Church. Wallraff<sup>74</sup>, Hanson<sup>75</sup>, and Nuffelen<sup>76</sup> have all observed that monasticism appears as little more than a digression amidst the chronicling of the Nicene-‘Arian’ controversy. Socrates ignores the growth of the urban monastic phenomenon in Constantinople, and may not know the influence of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus in the shaping of Asian monasticism. The aforementioned “digression” can be found in *HE* 4.23, in the form of extended quotations from Palladius’ *Historia Lausiaca* and two works from Evagrius Ponticus: the *Praktikos* and the *Gnostikos*. In addition, Socrates borrows from Rufinus his narrative of Valens’

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<sup>74</sup> Martin Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates: Untersuchungen zu Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode und Person* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 117-122.

<sup>75</sup> Günther Christian Hansen, “Le monachisme dans l’historiographie de l’Église ancienne” in *Historiographie de l’Église des premiers siècles*, edited by Bernard Pouderon et Yves-Marie Duval (Paris : Beauchesne, 2001), 139-147.

<sup>76</sup> Peter van Nuffelen, *Un Héritage de paix et de piété: Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven : Uitgeverij Peeters, 2004), 200-204.

anti-Nicene bias against the Egyptian monks. Outside of these sources, it appears that Socrates has little to write about monasticism.

Recently, Martin George has offered an alternative interpretation of Socrates' attitude towards the monastic philosophy.<sup>77</sup> He looks beyond the digression to see that the historian ended his ecclesiastical history by lauding the ascetic efforts of Paul the Novatian bishop and the emperor Theodosius II – two men who serve as the ideal clergyman and monarch. Upon his election to the bishopric of the Novatians, Paul is reported to have founded a monastery, and adopted the monastic philosophy by dedicating himself to the ascetic life of the desert fathers.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, he imitated the desert monks exactly as Evagrius had prescribed, by practicing fasts and silence, while abstaining from animal products and only occasionally taking oil and wine.<sup>79</sup> Paul, whom Socrates knew from his own experience, served as an advocate for the poor, interceded on behalf of criminals, and visited prisoners in their cells.<sup>80</sup> George determined that through a careful reading of the writings of Evagrius and other monastic sources, Socrates “hatte klare Kriterien für sein Urteil über Paulos und andere Bischöfe entwickelt.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Martin George, “Sokrates und die Mönche in der Wüste,” in *Welt des Sokrates von Konstantinopel*, ed. Bablina Babler and Heinz-Günther Nesselrath (Leipzig: K.G. Saur Verlag, 2001), 182-197.

<sup>78</sup> Socrates, *HE* 7.17.2 (SC 506). Διεδέξατο δὲ τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν Παῦλος, ὃς πρότερον μὲν λόγων Ῥωμαϊκῶν διδάσκαλος ἦν, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα πολλὰ χαίρειν τῇ γραμματικῇ φράσας ἐπὶ τὸν ἀσκητικὸν ἐτράπη βίον καὶ συστησάμενος ἀνδρῶν σπουδαίων μοναστήριον οὐκ ἀλλοιότερον τῶν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ μοναχῶν διετέλει.

<sup>79</sup> Socrates, *HE* 7.17.3-4 (SC 506).

<sup>80</sup> Socrates, *HE* 7.17.5 (SC 506).

<sup>81</sup> George, “Sokrates und die Mönche in der Wüste,” 184.



The monastic ethos was not only the Christian ideal for religious officials, but it also could serve as the model for political rulers. George found that Theodosius II was the ideal of the pious monarch because of his quasi-monastic conduct.<sup>82</sup> His palace was like a monastery (ἀσκητηρίου) where the emperor and his sisters would rise early in the morning to sing hymns to God.<sup>83</sup> Fasting, prayer, and Scripture reading were some of the many practices that earned Socrates' admiration of Theodosius. By adopting the monastic philosophy, the emperor was portrayed as the anti-type of Julian the Apostate, who could not control his "anger, grief, or pleasure."<sup>84</sup> By contrast, Theodosius did not seek revenge against his enemies, nor did he administer capital punishment on convicted wrongdoers. So great was the emperor's piety in the eyes of Socrates that on one occasion the entire city of Constantinople worshipped God as a single congregation (ἐκκλησία).<sup>85</sup>

George concludes that since monasticism is the role model for bishops and emperors in Socrates' ecclesiastical history, it is not a mere "digression" from political and ecclesial developments in the fourth and fifth centuries. The numerous references and quotations from Evagrius' writings demonstrate that the desert monks serve as the ideal model for all Christians.<sup>86</sup> We will now turn to the sources that Socrates utilizes in his presentation of the monastic phenomenon: Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca* (*HL*), Evagrius'

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<sup>82</sup> George, "Sokrates und die Mönche in der Wüste," 184.

<sup>83</sup> Socrates, *HE* 7.22.4 (SC 506).

<sup>84</sup> Socrates, *HE* 7.22.7-8 (SC 506); George, "Sokrates und die Mönche in der Wüste," 182.

<sup>85</sup> Socrates, *HE* 7.22.17 (SC 506).

<sup>86</sup> George, "Sokrates und die Mönche in der Wüste," 185.

*Monachikos*, and Rufinus' ecclesiastical history. Socrates' usage of Palladius and Evagrius demonstrates that the apostolic heritage of monasticism resides in the holy practices of the ascetics, while his employment of Rufinus indicates that he found the monks to have earned additional apostolic credentials due to their defense of pro-Nicene dogma.

### *Holy Men*

Palladius, the historian of Egyptian monasticism, wrote the *Historia Lausiaca* ca. 419/420. The *HL* is a collection of biographies of the holy men and women whom he met while living in Egypt. He dedicated himself to the ascetic life in Jerusalem, lived in Nitria for nine years, and was later consecrated as the bishop of Helenopolis.<sup>87</sup> Outside of these few biographical markers, we know remarkably little about Palladius. He left no confessions or memoirs. However, it is known that he was a pupil of Evagrius Ponticus. Meyer writes that Palladius gave no treatise on ascetic theology, but that the *HL* may be considered a manual of ascetic theology taught by the means of the biographical lives of the monks in the Egyptian and Syrian deserts.<sup>88</sup> We also know that Palladius was in communication with Basil of Caesarea. In a letter written to Epiphanius, Basil notes that he once assured Palladius that he could not support any additions to the Nicene creed except to ascribe the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit.<sup>89</sup> Many of the examples that

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<sup>87</sup> R.T. Meyer, "Holy Orders in the Eastern Church in the Early Fifth Century as seen in Palladius" in *Studia Patristica* 16.2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1985), 38.

<sup>88</sup> R.T. Meyer, "Palladius as Biographer and Autobiographer" in *Studia Patristica* 17.1 (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Pr, 1982), 66.

<sup>89</sup> Basil, *Ep.* 258.2; Cf. E.D.Hunt, "Palladius of Helenopolis: a Party and its Supporters in the Church of the Late Fourth Century" *Journal of Theological Studies* 24.2 (October 1973): 460.

Socrates provides of the holy men and women of the desert are transcribed from Palladius.

#### *Amoun*

Drawing from Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca*, Socrates extols the virtues of the holy men who contributed to the emergence of monasticism as a widespread phenomenon. He conveys ignorance on the subject of the exact origins of Egyptian monasteries, saying only that they were founded at an early time.<sup>90</sup> Socrates lauds Amoun for his chastity and renunciation of the secular life. So many people emulated him that the mountains of Nitria and Scetis were "filled with monks."<sup>91</sup> Amoun and the monks at Nitria and Scetis were worthy of emulation because they were "distinguished for their asceticism" (τῇ ἀσκήσει διαπρέψαντες) and they led "apostolic lives" (ἀποστολικὸν βίον).<sup>92</sup> In this context, the 'apostolic' epithet applies scrupulously to the austere asceticism of the Nitrian community.

The monks were sublime in their ascetic disciplines, to the extent that they were said to have achieved remarkable feats that bordered on the supernatural.<sup>93</sup> Socrates provides a litany of examples to support his thesis that the ascetic disciplines enabled the

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<sup>90</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.23.2 (SC 505, 80-82). ἐκ μακρῶν τῶν χρόνων ἔλαβε τὴν ἀρχήν. Hansen argues that Socrates gives Amoun credit as the founder of Egyptian monasticism. This is an overstatement of Socrates' own claim, which is that Amoun and Antony were contemporaries, and both were among the earliest ascetics to make the desert a permanent dwelling. Hansen, "Le monachisme dans l'historiographie de l'Église ancienne" in *Historiographie de l'Église des premiers siècles*, ed. Bernard Pouderon et Yves-Marie Duval (Paris : Beauchesne, 2001), 143.

<sup>91</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.23.13 (SC 505, 84). ἐκ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν μοναχῶν. Socrates credits Amoun with founding the community at Nitria, but seems to be unclear about the origins of the Scetis community.

<sup>92</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.23.14 (SC 505, 84).

<sup>93</sup> Each of the following examples can be found in *HE* 4.23.

monks to act in miraculous ways.<sup>94</sup> He reports the fantastic story that Amoun was carried across a river by an angel so as not to see himself naked. Isidore lived forty years without entertaining even a mere thought of sin. Macarius the Egyptian cast out so many devils, and cured so many diseases, that he deserved his own treatise to record all of them. It was apparent to Socrates that these holy men were favored by God, as demonstrated by their unearthly deeds.

### *Didymus the Blind*

According to Palladius, Didymus was blinded at the age of four years old, but overcame this handicap in spectacular fashion.<sup>95</sup> He was famous for advanced learning in such wide ranging subjects as grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, and music. He also dictated writings on the Trinity, and commentaries on Origen's *Peri Archon*. Antony the Great was said to have offered his own endorsement of Didymus, saying that he sees God with the same eyes as the angels. The ultimate praise from Socrates comes in his summary statement that the blind man was a great "bulwark" of the true faith who triumphantly refuted the sophistry (σοφίσματα) of the 'Arians.'<sup>96</sup>

### *Cappadocians*

Gregory of Nazianzus is noted first for having taught Evagrius Pontus, and later he is paired with Basil of Caesarea as champions of orthodoxy who embraced the

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<sup>94</sup> Socrates adds details to these stories that are not found in any extant version of the *Historia Lausiaca*, indicating that he probably had access to a copy that does not survive. Socrates, *HE* 4.23.2 (SC 477, 82) fn. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Palladius, *Lausiaca History* 4.

<sup>96</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.25.11 (SC 505, 106).

monastic life. Similarly to Didymus, Gregory and Basil were students of Origen's writings, which equipped them to oppose the 'Arians' who misinterpreted those same works. One of those 'Arians' was emperor Valens, who summoned Basil to a tribunal in Antioch. Basil was worthy of commendation in Socrates' eyes for defending the doctrine of *homoousios* in front of the heretical Caesar. The bishop's integrity may have sparked something in the emperor's mind, because he sent for Basil to pray for his ill son. Basil responded with a request for the unification of the Church, suggesting that nothing short of that would lead to the child's healing. Valens refused, and the child died; this event further confirmed the veracity of Basil's orthodox faith for Socrates.<sup>97</sup>

#### *Moses and the Saracenes*

One of the final events in the reign of Valens is also one of the more enigmatic in the conflict between Nicenes and non-Nicenes in the 370s. The 'Saracenes,' as they were called by the ancient Romans, were Bedouin Arabs who lived near the fluid borders of the empire. Led by Queen Mavia, they caused numerous problems for their imperial neighbors. A peaceful solution was presented in the request of the Saracenes that a monk named Moses, who was born as one of their own, be ordained as bishop.<sup>98</sup> He was sent to Alexandria for ordination, but at the sight of Lucius (the 'Arian' bishop), he declined. According to Moses, Lucius had blood on his hands from the earlier conflicts between the 'Arians' and the desert fathers.<sup>99</sup> Upon leaving Alexandria, Moses went to the monks

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<sup>97</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.26.17 (SC 505, 112).

<sup>98</sup> The historians do not explain why Mavia requested the consecration of this particular bishop. Shahid speculates that the previous bishop of the Saracenes had died or somehow become unacceptable. Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1989), 143.

<sup>99</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.36.4 (SC 505, 140).

who lived in exile in the Egyptian wilderness, and was ordained there under suspicious circumstances. This action satisfied Mavia's demand of the Romans, and further exacerbated the conflict between Nicenes and 'Arians' in Alexandria. In each of the previous examples – Didymus, the Cappadocians, and Moses – Socrates approves of their ascetic disciplines in coordination with their pro-Nicene polemical positions.

### *Evagrius Ponticus*

In the midst of his panegyric to the Egyptian monks, Socrates quotes extended sections from two texts by Evagrius Ponticus. Evagrius was not a native to Egypt; he was a deacon from Constantinople who visited this severe land with its rigorous desert inhabitants.<sup>100</sup> He lived in Nitria for two years, and then lived out the remaining fourteen years of his life in Kellia. At a time when most of the desert fathers bartered for food and materials by basket making and weaving ropes, Evagrius worked as a calligrapher. Among his extant writings are a theological trilogy on the ascetic life (*Monachikos*) that includes the *Praktikos* and the *Gnostikos*.<sup>101</sup> Socrates values his insights into the monastic institution by reprinting excerpts from these texts. The excerpts have in common admonitions toward virtuous conduct by the holy men of the desert.

*The Praktikos* takes its title from the Greek word πρακτική, which alludes to contemplation of the physical world and of God.<sup>102</sup> In this treatise, Evagrius explains

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<sup>100</sup> Evagrius served Gregory of Nazianzus during the Council of Constantinople in 381. This put him on the front lines for the pro-Nicene cause. An example of Evagrius' pro-Nicene writings can be found in his letter *De fide*, which was errantly preserved as Basil's *Letter 8*. See Harmless, p.313; A.M. Casiday, ed. *Evagrius Ponticus* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 23.

<sup>101</sup> The third treatise in the trilogy is the *Kephalaia gnostica* (*The Gnostic Chapters*). Evagrius himself puts these three treatises together as a collection. Evagrius, *Letter to Anatolius* 9. PG 40: 1221c.

<sup>102</sup> Evagrius, *Praktikos* 1.

that the ascetic life is the spiritual method for cleansing the affective part of the soul.<sup>103</sup>

The monk who progresses in the ascetic life diminishes the influence of the passions in the soul, by means of the acquisition of virtue. The beginning of the monastic life is concerned with *praktike*. Later in the monastic life, the goal is to acquire knowledge in the rational part of the soul, but this is not possible without first establishing virtue in the passionate part of the soul.<sup>104</sup>

The *Praktikos* is comprised of a century (a grouping of one hundred chapters). The final ten chapters of the *Praktikos* form a mini-collection of sayings (*apophthegmata*). This is the excerpt that Socrates inserts into the *HE*. These sayings of the holy monks praise Macarius the Egyptian and Macarius the Alexandrian, who were Evagrius' mentors in Kellia. They were exemplars for Evagrius in the ascetic disciplines. He lauds his teachers for their limitations of food, water, and sleep. Through the discipline of their bodily wants, the path became open to inculcating the virtues in the soul.

In chapter 89 of the *Praktikos*, Evagrius interprets the Platonic notion of the soul with its three parts: the rational (*logistikon*), the concupiscible (*epithymetikon*), and the irascible (*thymikon*). These correspond to the rational, appetitive, and spirited parts in the dialogues of the *Phaedrus* (246a ff.), *Republic* (435c ff.), and *Timaeus* (69c ff.).<sup>105</sup> Evagrius credits his knowledge of the soul to Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>106</sup> His writing also

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<sup>103</sup> Evagrius, *Praktikos* 78.

<sup>104</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, *Evagrius ponticus: Ad Monachos*, introduction and commentary, p.10.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Andrew S. Mason, *Plato* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 111.

<sup>106</sup> Evagrius, *Praktikos* 89.

demonstrates an affinity for the cosmology and anthropology of Origen.<sup>107</sup> A monk who desires knowledge of the kingdom of God is required to free himself from the passions. The demons use the passions to fight against the monks. There are eight categories of thoughts: gluttony, impurity, avarice, sadness, anger, *acedia*, vainglory, and pride.<sup>108</sup> Many of the chapters in the *Praktikos* are devoted to instructions on combating these thoughts that influence the passions in the soul. Ultimately, the virtues “cleanse” the corruptible soul. The goal is for the concupiscible part of the soul to desire virtue, while the irascible part of the soul fights to obtain it. Then, the rational part of the soul will apply itself to the contemplation of created things.<sup>109</sup> From the concupiscible part of the soul comes continence, charity, and temperance. From the irascible part of the soul comes courage and patience. The rational part of the soul produces prudence, understanding, and wisdom. The virtue of justice is located in the whole of the soul.<sup>110</sup>

The first letter of Antony the Great offers some light on this relationship between ascetic disciplines and the inculcation of virtue in the soul.<sup>111</sup> Antony explains that the body is purified through prayer and fasting, so that the lusts of the flesh are cut off. Once the body reaches a state of purification, then the Spirit leads the soul to repentance. The

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Michael O’Laughlin, “The Anthropology of Evagrius Ponticus and Its Sources,” in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy* (Notre Dame, ID: Notre Dame Press, 1988), 357-373.

<sup>108</sup> Evagrius, *Praktikos* 6. These eight vices are in early version of the seven deadly sins that will later be listed by Gregory the Great.

<sup>109</sup> Evagrius, *Praktikos* 86.

<sup>110</sup> Evagrius, *Praktikos* 89.

<sup>111</sup> For a discussion about the authorship of these letters, see Samuel Rubenson, “Christian Asceticism and Emergence of the Monastic Tradition,” in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 49-57; Also see Rubenson, *The Letters of Antony: Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (1990); Cf. Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monks*, 16. While I have accepted these letters are authentic to Antony, the question itself is outside the scope of this chapter. The theological basis for the monastic life is the concern of this chapter.



mind learns from the Spirit how to purify the body and soul. It separates the body and soul from the “fruits of the flesh” which had been mingled with the members of the body “since the first transgression, and brings back each of the members of the body to its original condition.”<sup>112</sup> The mind now has authority over the body. Thus, the ascetic disciplines aid the body and soul to return to its original, uncorrupted prelapsarian state.

The second part of Evagrius’ theological trilogy on the monastic life is *The Gnostic*. This treatise was comprised of fifty chapters. It addresses those monks who have achieved an advanced level of practice, whom he calls “knowers” (*gnostikoi*). These Knowers are the teachers in the monastic communities, and need further instruction in biblical exegesis and theology. Socrates copied chapters 44-48 in the *HE*. This excerpt covers the virtues (prudence, fortitude, temperance, justice) required for contemplation, as stated by Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>113</sup> Exercise of the virtues strengthens knowledge of Truth.<sup>114</sup>

Socrates concludes his reflection on Evagrius by referring the reader back to Palladius’ *Lausiac History*.<sup>115</sup> Palladius observed that Evagrius was a man who lived in apostolic fashion. When he was attacked by three demons, who were disguised as an ‘Arian,’ a ‘Eunomian,’ and an ‘Apollinarian’ (i.e., non-Nicenes), Evagrius defeated them by his *gnosis*.<sup>116</sup> “In {his} scheme, conflict with demons became primarily a matter of

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<sup>112</sup> Antony, *Ep.* 1, in *The Letters of Antony the Great*, trans. Derwas J. Chitty (Oxford: SLG Press, 1995), 2; *PG* 40:977.

<sup>113</sup> Evagrius refers to him as Gregory the Just. The grouping of these virtues together did not originate with Gregory, although Evagrius gives him the credit. *Gnostikos* 44.

<sup>114</sup> Evagrius attributes this claim to Basil of Caesarea. *Gnostikos* 45.

<sup>115</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.23.75 (SC 505, 98).

<sup>116</sup> Palladius, *Lausiac History* 38.

one's thoughts. The goal was to rid oneself of the evil thoughts that the demons introduced, to clear one's head, so to speak, or to clarify one's vision, so that one could know God once again in a manner beyond all thoughts. .. By gaining increasingly precise knowledge of the demons – their identities, their characteristic strengths, their inter-relationships, their origin and nature – the monk gained mastery over them and over his own responses to them.”<sup>117</sup> The *telos* of *gnosis* is the contemplation of the Triune God. The pure prayer of the *nous* transcends logic and rational thought, so that the knower directly intuites God according to the mystical sense.<sup>118</sup> Like Origen, Evagrius speculated that God will restore all of creation in Himself through oneness in Christ. Divinity and humanity come together in the one person of Christ. The pro-Nicene Evagrius committed to both Origen's cosmology and Nicene Christology in his theological speculations of the mind's ascent to God.

#### *The Monastic Institution during the Reign of Valens*

The reign of Emperor Valens (364-378) is portrayed by Socrates as an era of violence by the 'Arians' against Nicene orthodoxy. He provides numerous examples of such persecution. When Eudoxius, the bishop of the 'Arian' congregation in Constantinople, died, imperial troops were sent to the city to ensure that the 'Arian' successor, Demophilus, took ecclesiastical office. The Nicene candidate, Evagrius, was banished from the city, along with Eustathius of Antioch, who ordained him as the bishop of Constantinople. Socrates alleges that the 'Arians' grew bolder in their harassment of

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<sup>117</sup> Brakke, *The Demons and the Making of the Monk*, 52.

<sup>118</sup> Evagrius, *De Oracione* 117.

the Homoousian party, leading to false imprisonments and beatings.<sup>119</sup> On another occasion, Valens ordered the execution of eighty clerics who complained of their “ill-usage.” The local prefect put them on a ship, and ordered it to burn in the middle of the Gulf of Aztecus (modern day Gulf of Izmit). The crew took refuge in a small barge, while the clerics were burned alive.<sup>120</sup> The emperor was also reported by Rufinus to have martyred Homoousians in Antioch by drowning, a charge which Socrates repeats.<sup>121</sup>

It is in this context of imperially sponsored violence that Socrates introduces the persecution of the Egyptian monks. In Egypt the persecution was arranged in concert with the appointment of Lucius the Homoian as the successor to Athanasius.<sup>122</sup> The Nicene successor, Peter, was said to have escaped from prison and fled to Rome. The political and ecclesiastical leaders in Alexandria worked together to persecute the Nicenes, including the desert fathers. Lucius was helped by Vindaonius Magnus, the commander-in-chief of Valens’ army.<sup>123</sup> Rufinus claimed that they put nineteen priests on trial, who were exiled to the city of Heliopolis.<sup>124</sup> Armed men attacked the pacifist monks ferociously, slaughtering them with cruel force.<sup>125</sup> Socrates does not hesitate to place the blame ultimately at the feet of Valens for initially issuing the edict of

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<sup>119</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.15.4 (SC 505, 66).

<sup>120</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.16.5 (SC 505, 68).

<sup>121</sup> Rufinus, *HE* 11.5; Socrates, *HE* 4.17.3 (SC 505, 70).

<sup>122</sup> The Homoian party had been working towards installing Lucius as bishop for nearly ten years before Athanasius’ death in 371. Cf. Lenski, 255.

<sup>123</sup> Magnus was also a pagan and former supporter of Julian.

<sup>124</sup> Rufinus, *HE* 11.6.

<sup>125</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.17 (SC 505, 70).

persecution against the Nicene faction in Alexandria.<sup>126</sup> Some monks were sentenced before the tribunals, others cast into prison, and some were tortured.<sup>127</sup>

### *Summary of Socrates*

*Prima facie*, it appears that the presence of monastic Christians in the ecclesiastical history of Socrates is nothing more than a digression. Once the matter is pursued past the surface level, we discover that the monastic life is at the heart of Christian faith for the historian. Both the ideal bishop (Paul of Constantinople) and monarch (Theodosius II) are lauded for their ascetic qualities. While the monastic vocation may be romanticized to a degree for faithfulness in the practice of ascetic disciplines, it is not out of the question for lay Christians to emulate their conduct. The recollection of the biographies of holy men and women serves a pedagogical purpose: the imitation of Christ is the expected norm for baptized believers. In the church history of Socrates, the contention that the monastics were apostolic was suitable for two reasons. First, they lived pious lives of strict disciplines. Second, they defended the doctrine of *homoousios* which was confirmed at Nicaea.

In the ecclesiastical history of Socrates, the monastics became martyrs of Nicene Christianity. And those who were persecuted and tortured, but not martyred, became living witnesses to the doctrine of *homoousios*. Imperial troops found monks praying, healing diseases, and exorcising demons. Socrates compares their suffering to that of the Old Testament saints who were revered for their examples of faith (Heb. 11). He then brings an end to his promotion of the pro-Nicene monastics by praising the two

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<sup>126</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.24.1 (SC 505, 100).

<sup>127</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.24.1 (SC 505, 100).

Macarius's. As the story goes, these two ascetics were banished to a remote island, populated by an idolatrous temple and a pagan priest who was worshiped by the inhabitants as a god. When the two Christian monks cast out the demon from the priest's daughter, then all of the island's inhabitants converted to Christianity – including the priest himself. By becoming the channel of salvation for others, Socrates argues that the truth of Nicene Christianity was confirmed.<sup>128</sup>

In the midst of these laudatory remarks on the orthodox doctrines of the monastics we find a brief history of cenobitic monasticism in Egypt. Here we get a thorough examination of this second part of the apostolic function of monasticism in Socrates' text. He focuses specifically on several figures, including Amoun, who was so revered that the mountains of Nitria and Scetis were filled with believers seeking to emulate his example.<sup>129</sup> The list of monks included Didymus the Blind, whose mastery of grammar and rhetoric helped him to fully expose the philosophical sophistry of the "Arians."<sup>130</sup> Socrates spells out why he recounts the biographies of these saints. They were distinguished for their strict discipline and apostolic lives.<sup>131</sup> He hopes that his audience (the Christians in Constantinople) will correct themselves by these paragons of faith. All of the urban Christians were not expected to flock to the desert to become hermits. But they were expected to model their moral conduct after these monastic heroes of the faith. Apostolicity is defined by emulation, rather than succession. Socrates determined that the model of monastic theology was Evagrius, who proposed that virtuous conduct and

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<sup>128</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.24.18 (SC 505, 104).

<sup>129</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.23.13 (SC 505, 84).

<sup>130</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.25.11 (SC 505, 106).

<sup>131</sup> Socrates, *HE* 4.23.14 (SC 505, 84).

Nicene orthodoxy are progressions along the same continuum. The ascetic disciplines are the spiritual method by which one purifies the part of the soul that is the seat of the passions.<sup>132</sup> One who progresses in purifying the soul of the passions through *askesis* is also acquiring the virtues. The goal of pursuing the ascetic disciplines and virtue is *apatheia*, which is necessary to embark on a life of divine contemplation. Theology, for Evagrius, is a knowledge of God that comes through prayer. In prayer, Christians encounter the Triune God, as defined by the Nicene Creed. Therefore, the characteristics of ascetic disciplines, virtue, and Nicene orthodoxy are stages of one single progression for the “spiritual athlete” who pursues mystical contemplation of the divine Trinity. Orthodox knowledge of the Triune God is necessary for the effective purification of the soul. Those monks who contemplate a created Christ practice *askesis* in vain.

### *Monasticism in Sozomen’s Historia Ecclesiastica*

#### *Monastic Philosophy*

Beginning with Book I of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Sozomen depicted the monastic way of life as a *philosophia*. The “monastic philosophy” was a deliberate reference to the Hellenistic Schools of Philosophy that were so popular in Late Antiquity. Pierre Hadot suggests that the connection between the secular philosophical life and the monastic life should not come as a surprise, since there are numerous analogies between them.<sup>133</sup> Ancient philosophers underwent a conversion experience from the world into a community that fell under the direction of a spiritual master. They practiced the spiritual

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<sup>132</sup> Evagrius, *Praktikos* 50.

<sup>133</sup> Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* Michael Chase, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 247.

exercises required by a commitment to *askesis*. Such asceticism often took the form of a denial of wealth and comfort, as well as dietary changes and a devotion to contemplation.

Sozomen commends these ascetic qualities that are practiced by the desert monks, while simultaneously praising them for *not* pursuing the “secular” philosophies, e.g mathematics and dialectics. The philosophies of the world claimed to pursue virtue and goodness, but only the monastics actually exercised these sublime pursuits. Virtue (*arête*) cannot be simply displayed or exhibited, but must be practiced (*askesis*).<sup>134</sup> Purification of the soul and the performance of good works are useful, but not sufficient for the purpose of seeking the true Good.<sup>135</sup> The pursuit of *arête* will assist one in reaching perfection only if one worships God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). In his summarization of the monastic philosophy, Sozomen lists a number of qualities that are possessed by those who demonstrate the truth of the gospel through virtuous conduct.<sup>136</sup> They live in poverty and celibacy, forsaking the wealth of this world and the satisfaction of the passions of the soul. They are absorbed in the worship of God, and their hope is placed in a future destiny.<sup>137</sup>

Of the three fifth-century iterations of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Sozomen is the only chronicler who constructed a timeline of monasticism, spanning a period from its ‘origins’ to the contemporary era. He marks the genesis of the monastic philosophy with

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<sup>134</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.12.2 (SC 306, 162). οὐ γὰρ ἐπιδείκνυται ἀρετὴν, ἀλλ’ ἀσκεῖ παρ’ οὐδὲν ποιουμένη τὴν πρὸς ἀνθρώπους δόξαν.

<sup>135</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.12.8 (SC 306, 166).

<sup>136</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.12.1 (SC 306, 162). Οὐχ ἥκιστα δὲ ἐπισημοτάτην τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἔδειξαν καὶ τὸ δόγμα ἀνέσχον ταῖς ἀρεταῖς τοῦ βίου οἱ τότε μετιόντες τὴν μοναστικὴν πολιτείαν.

<sup>137</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.12.6. (SC 306, 164).

the biblical figures of Elijah and John the Baptist.<sup>138</sup> Because of their ascetic practices, e.g. fasting and desert dwelling, they were naturally linked with the monastic communities.<sup>139</sup> We could anticipate that a historian such as Sozomen would want to connect the monastic philosophy with the biblical witness. Such a connection would ground it more deeply as an older form of Christian practice, whereas the emergence of monasticism can only tenuously be dated before the movement of Antony into the Egyptian desert. For Sozomen to claim the monastic philosophy as the perfect form of the Christian life, a correlation to the Scriptures would be necessary. Linking the desert Christians with those apostles and prophets of God validates his argument.

Sozomen continues his narrative of bridging the prophets with the desert fathers by supporting Eusebius' claim that the monastic philosophy originated with a Jewish community known as the Therapeutae. Knowledge of these second-century ascetics comes from Philo, who described their practices in the treatise *De vita contemplativa*.<sup>140</sup> Eusebius borrows from Philo a description of the ascetic practices of this group, noting that they appear to have lived similarly to the holy men who inhabited many local villages in Egypt and Syria. Sozomen's summary focuses on the relinquishment of property by the group, as well as their fasting and liturgical practices.<sup>141</sup> He concludes

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<sup>138</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.12.9 (SC 306, 166). Sozomen may be borrowing the suggestion that monasticism originated with Elijah and John the Baptist from Jerome: *Vita S. Pauli* (1.1).

<sup>139</sup> "Elijah and John the Baptist were biblical examples of 'holy fathers' who 'were solitary in the desert' and were able to achieve 'righteousness' not by dwelling among people but by 'having first practiced much quiet.' Only in the desert could the monk practice quietness, 'see the adversary' and 'overcome' him with divine assistance, and finally return to human society as a spiritual guide." Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, 15.

<sup>140</sup> Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*, in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, ed. Vincent Wimbush (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 136-155.

<sup>141</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.12.10 (SC 306, 166-168).



the summary of them by suggesting that they must have embraced Christianity, because there are no historical vestiges of this philosophy earlier than the *Vita Antonii*. It seems that even in the fifth century, a debate emerged about the origins of Christian monasticism, with one side claiming that the monastic philosophy came to fecundity with the Therapeutae, and the other side claiming that it emerged with the religious persecutions of the Christians by the Romans.

While the origins of monasticism remain opaque, one thing for Sozomen is clear: Antony represents the perfection and epitome of the monastic philosophy.<sup>142</sup> He achieved that status through ascetical exercises, the rigor of which made him famous far beyond Egypt's borders. A précis of the *Vita Antonii* is provided in the *HE*, which lists the practices that qualified Antony as the epitome of the monastic philosophy. The listing of Antony's ascetical practices serves a purpose for Sozomen. He emphasizes the acquisition of *arête* that is the result of *askesis*. Sozomen demonstrates that he is a close reader of Athanasius, who himself placed this same emphasis in the *Vita*. Antony is the summit of perfection, the model for all other ascetics who may consider a desert calling.

Why was it important that the fourth-century ascetics moved out of the village outskirts and into the remote desert wilderness? Samuel Rubenson suggests that these extreme Christians were creating an autonomous *polis*.<sup>143</sup> Living in the desert provided the freedom to practice the apostolic faith of the first Christians. By practicing ascetic disciplines and conducting themselves in Nicene orthodoxy, the desert Christians were

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<sup>142</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.13.1 (SC 306, 168). Ἀλλ' εἴτε Αἰγύπτιοι εἴτε ἄλλοι τινὲς ταύτης προὔστησαν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῆς φιλοσοφίας, ἐκεῖνο γοῦν παρὰ πᾶσι συνωμολόγηται, ὡς εἰς ἄκρον ἀκριβείας καὶ τελειότητος ἤθεσι καὶ γυμνασίοις τοῖς πρέπουσιν ἐξήσκησε ταυτηνὶ τοῦ βίου τὴν διαγωγὴν Ἀντώνιος ὁ μέγας μοναχός.

<sup>143</sup> Samuel Rubenson, "Christian Asceticism and Emergence of Monastic Tradition," 53.

living apostolic lives, and served as witnesses to urban Christians that such practice was possible. Athanasius' statement that the desert became a city was not simply an idle comment about the population of monks in uninhabited lands – but a statement about citizenship in the midst of a suddenly Christian friendly empire. Ascetics left the world to register themselves as citizens of heaven.<sup>144</sup>

*The “Entire Multitude” of Monks: Non-Nicene Monasticism*

Sozomen claims that when the council of Serdica fell through, the whole multitude of monks joined the pro-Nicene cause. First, this is unlikely since there was no pro-Nicene cause in the 340s.<sup>145</sup> Second, we know for certain that the entire multitude of monks was not pro-Nicene. The *Letter of Ammon*, written by a Bishop named Ammon to Theophilus of Alexandria, affirms that there were “heretical” monks, including one who nearly served as his teacher.<sup>146</sup> Ammon lived in the Pachomian monastery of Pbow for three years, and in the letter he passes on stories about Pachomius that he received from Theodore, Pachomius' successor. While the particular heretical persuasion of this monk is not named, later in the text Ammon explains that Melitian and Marcionite groups recruited him to join them.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 125. Elms explains in her monograph that ‘Christian’ was the only true philosophy for educated Christians. Choosing an ideal Christian life was synonymous with choosing a philosophical life.

<sup>145</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>146</sup> Letter of Ammon, 2.

<sup>147</sup> Letter of Ammon, 12 (Goehrig, 132.12-15); Goehrig, “Melitian Monastic Organization: A Challenge to Pachomian Originality,” *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993): 388-95. Reprinted in *Ascetics, Society, and Desert*, 187-195.

Susanna Elms points out that the leaders of the Homoiousian party – Eustathius of Sebaste, Macedonius, and Basil of Ancyra – introduced the monastic movement into Asia Minor. While Eustathius is difficult to pin down in terms of his theological allegiance, he was not embraced by the Catholics as one of them. Much of the controversy surrounding Eustathius is directly due to the fanatical form of monasticism that he supported.

Sozomen himself recognizes that Eustathius founded a monastery “and became the author of a monastic philosophy.”<sup>148</sup> At the synod of Gangra, he and his followers were condemned due to some extreme beliefs that they held about both ascetic and monastic practices. According to the canons accepted at the synod, Eustathius’ followers rejected ecclesiastical property ownership, traditional marriage, sexual distinctions, clerical marriage, and the distinction between masters and slaves.<sup>149</sup>

Basil of Ancyra wrote a treatise on virginity, in which he provided guidelines for regulating the communal life of male and female ascetics.<sup>150</sup> *De virginitate* confirms the existence of ascetic communities in Ancyra from the 330s onward. Like-minded communities also existed in provinces as diverse as Thrace, Bithynia, Galatica, and Pontus. Unlike Eustathius, Basil does not argue that virginity is required for all believers. Although marriage is a form of death on earth, God created it, and married persons should remain united.<sup>151</sup> In eschatological anticipation, virgins are the spouse of the heavenly bridegroom Jesus, with whom she will be united in a mystical wedding. This

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<sup>148</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 3.14.31 (SC 418, 132).

<sup>149</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 110-111. These distinctions were considered fundamental to an orderly society.

<sup>150</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 130.

<sup>151</sup> *De virginitate* (*De virg.*) 50 (*PG* 30.768). Cf. Elm, *Virgins of God*, 117-118.

(re)union will restore the paradise created for Adam and Eve, who did not participate in sexual intercourse before the fall.<sup>152</sup> Just as humanity followed the example of Adam out of paradise and into marriage, virgins follow the example of Christ back into paradise.

For Basil, to live in chastity a virgin must control her sense of taste. Both eating and intercourse are sensual activities that he links together. The pleasures of eating lead physiologically to the need for the pleasure of sexual intercourse.<sup>153</sup> Basil has in mind here the charioteer in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Basil's charioteer places the bit of rationality in the mouth of her sense of taste. The bit guides her eating to protect her chaste body and soul.<sup>154</sup> One example that Basil provides for virgins as a means of controlling the sense of taste is the use of salt on bread. According to the bishop, salt inclines the body towards the pursuit of sexual pleasures.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, virgins are forewarned to avoid the application of salt on their food. By practicing moderation in food, and abstinence in sexual contact, virgins are training in virtue to pursue their goal of becoming the incorruptible bride of Christ.

It would seem that homoousian and homoiousian desert ascetics both held similar beliefs and practices regarding the monastic philosophy. Why, then, does Sozomen ignore the existence of such homoiousians in his history? While the existence of such

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<sup>152</sup> *De virg.* 54 (PG 30.777B-C). Cf. Teresa Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 185.

<sup>153</sup> Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh*, 82-86. Basil was trained as a physician.

<sup>154</sup> *Phaedrus* 246a-b; 253c-254e; *De virg.* 5 (PG 30.680A-B); Cf. Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh*, 86.

<sup>155</sup> *De virg.* 9 (PG 30.685D-688B); Cf. Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh*, 88. Shaw points out that the prohibition against salt is unusual, as even Basil recognizes that most Egyptian monks apply the condiment to their food. However, the assertion that salt has aphrodisiac powers is not wholly unknown in Late Antiquity. Both Plutarch and Pliny declare that salt stimulates the appetite. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 5, 352; Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 31.39, 73-31.45, 105.

communities is known, not much is known about them. For example, the homoiousian community founded by Basil of Ancyra remains shrouded in mystery. In the treatise *On Virginité* he offers instructions to a bishop for the supervision of those who seek to become ‘virgins of God.’ However, Elms notes that this text is the only intellectual testimony of a Homoiousian approach to ascetic practice.<sup>156</sup> In all likelihood, the reason why Sozomen can make the claim that the “entire multitude” of monks became pro-Nicene after Serdica is that this shift had occurred by the time he wrote his *Historia Ecclesiastica* in the 440s.

#### *Pro-Nicene Monasticism*

In Sozomen’s narrative, the monastic communities defended Nicene orthodoxy, and their faith was confirmed through their virtuous conduct and ability to perform signs and miracles. We have already seen how important virtue is to the monastic philosophy. Sozomen makes the explicit connection between the monastic pursuit of virtue and the defense of Nicaea: for those monastics who rejected ‘Arianism,’ the truth was in them because they demonstrated their virtue by their deeds.<sup>157</sup> The virtuous conduct of the monks demonstrates that they walk in truth. This statement is found in the immediate context of the persecution of the Egyptian monks by Lucius, who sought their support. Sozomen opines that the ‘Arians’ could never establish hegemony in the Church without the support of the monastic communities.<sup>158</sup> Earlier we are informed that the

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<sup>156</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 130.

<sup>157</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.20.2 (SC 495, 336). παρ’ ἐκείνοις δὲ πειθόμενον εἶναι τὴν ἀλήθειαν, οἱ τοῖς ἔργοις τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐπεδείκνυντο.

<sup>158</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.20.4 (SC 495, 336).

Alexandrians adopted the opinions of the monks because of their testimony (*martyria*) to the truth, and their practice of the monastic philosophy.<sup>159</sup>

The witness of the desert Christians to the truth of Nicene orthodoxy is also confirmed through their abilities to perform signs and miracles. The life of Martin of Tours is reduced to a summary statement that he embraced the philosophical life and defended Nicaea against ‘Arian’ bishops before his banishment by Auxentius of Milan. That observation is followed by the claim that Martin raised a man back from the dead, and performed signs (σημεῖα) equal to those performed by the apostles.<sup>160</sup> The implication is that one who lives according to the monastic philosophy while espousing Nicene theology has the same powers as the apostles.

In his account of Lucius’ persecution, Sozomen asserts that the monks were willing to face martyrdom rather than diverge from Nicene doctrine.<sup>161</sup> At the same time that a company of soldiers came to arrest Macarius the Egyptian and his disciples, a crippled man appeared to them, possibly seeking their healing powers. The monks prayed and anointed him with oil, speaking to him in the name of Christ. The man was healed, which Sozomen notes as a testimony that the monks possessed the truth about the divine nature.<sup>162</sup> God demonstrated the orthodox nature of Nicene doctrines through the healing power of Macarius and his disciples.

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<sup>159</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 4.10.12 (SC 418, 232).

<sup>160</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 3.14.40 (SC 418, 138); Cf. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, 154.

<sup>161</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.20.5 (SC 495, 336).

<sup>162</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.20.6 (SC 495, 336).

Perhaps the most notorious example of the monastic defense of Nicaea came in the form of Isaac the monk. According to Sozomen's narrative, Isaac somehow found an audience with Valens in the days leading up to the battle of Adrianople (378).<sup>163</sup> The monk warned the emperor that unless he adopted Nicene theology, he would not return from an upcoming campaign against the Gothic army. Valens was also promised that if he returned 'Arian' churches to their rightful pro-Nicene bishops, then God would bless him with victory. The Romans were defeated at Adrianople, and Valens himself was killed. Isaac's 'prophecy' was vindicated.

Sozomen's claim that the "entire multitude" of the monastic community in the fourth century adopted pro-Nicene dogma was not an assertion unique to him. He was mimicking the allegation that was made by numerous pro-Nicenes who went before him. We have already seen that Athanasius placed anti-Arian sentiments in the mouth of St. Antony. Richard Vaggione observes that Nicene ascetics, e.g. Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, made Aetius and Eunomius the "anti-monks" of the fourth century, precisely because of their opposition to Nicene doctrine.<sup>164</sup> Epiphanius complained that the *anhomian* duo held no concern for holiness or fasting or walking in obedience to God's commandments. They only cared about the "unbegottenness" of God. In other words, they did not hold holiness or the pursuit of virtue in high esteem, like they did with doctrine. However, Vaggione notes that Eunomius did not deny the need for asceticism; only his was of the moderate variety, a kind of domestic asceticism that

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<sup>163</sup> Noel Lenski, "Valens and the Monks: Cudgeling and Conscription as a Means of Social Control," *Dumbarton Oaks* 58 (2004): 93-117. Lenski argues that Isaac was conscripted into the Roman army, which helps explain how he might have been able to speak with the emperor.

<sup>164</sup> Richard Paul Vaggione, "Of Monks and Lounge Lizards: 'Arians', Polemics and Asceticism in the Roman East" in *Arianism After Arius*, 181-214.

would be appropriate for urban Christians.<sup>165</sup> The picture painted by pro-Nicene bishops and historians was that the ‘Arians’ opposed the desert Christians, and indeed opposed asceticism altogether. But if we are to trust Philostorgius, it appears that Eunomius only denied the practice of extreme asceticism, such as the kind made popular in the remote Egyptian wilderness. This latter practice of desert Christianity was affirmed by Sozomen through his numerous examples of the holy men who made a city out of the desert.

### *The Holy Men of Sozomen*

Patricia Cox claims that the purpose of ancient biographies was to reveal the “interior geography” of the hero’s life.<sup>166</sup> It was a form which sought to reveal the soul of a character. Biographers “saw God at work in their heroes’ lives.”<sup>167</sup> They “emphasized the achievement and personalities of the various philosophical masters” and placed their lives “not only as models to be used for the perpetuation of particular philosophical schools but also as polemics to be employed in furthering one tradition at the expense of others.”<sup>168</sup> By the time of Sozomen, such biographies assumed the character of hagiographies. The biographies in the imperial period often focused on the divine philosopher, whether he was pagan or Christian. One of the common features of these biographies was to demonstrate “the extent of the man’s assimilation to God, or how he was godlike.”<sup>169</sup> One of the ways in which the godlike status of the philosopher was

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<sup>165</sup> Vaggione, “Of Monks and Lounge Lizards,” 213.

<sup>166</sup> Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), xi.

<sup>167</sup> Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, xii.

<sup>168</sup> Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, xii.

<sup>169</sup> Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, 21.



demonstrated was through the gift of wisdom. Cox points to Origen, who was depicted by Eusebius as a boy who understood “the profundities of allegorical exegesis” while still a boy.<sup>170</sup> Another indication of the philosopher’s wisdom is seen in his desire to teach. Eusebius noted that Origen’s students frequented him from morning until evening. The quantity of his disciples was an important measure of a philosopher’s stature.<sup>171</sup> Another trait that was indicative of the holy philosopher’s character was his devotion to the ascetic lifestyle.<sup>172</sup> “The genuine philosopher is united to God by his abstinence; it is on the basis of this union that his other virtues are nourished.”<sup>173</sup>

In Sozomen’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, there are two separate catalogues containing biographies of holy men. The majority of these ascetics were residents of the Egyptian desert. This first compilation of famous holy men can be found in Book III: 14-16; these were the monks who lived during the reign of Constantius (337-361). Some of the ascetics who were profiled include the two Macarius’s, Pachomius, Didymus the Blind, Martin of Tours, and Ephraim the Syrian. A second catalogue of desert ascetics can be found in Book VI: 28-34. A survey of these monastic biographies demonstrates that Sozomen, like other Christian writers in Late Antiquity, revered the desert ascetics, not simply because of their monastic philosophy, but also due to their ability to produce miracles and withstand the demons. John of Lycopolis was able to expel diseases and devils through his prayers.<sup>174</sup> Theonas practiced silence for thirty years, yet somehow

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<sup>170</sup> Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, 22.

<sup>171</sup> Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, 24.

<sup>172</sup> Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, 25.

<sup>173</sup> Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, 30.

<sup>174</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.28.1 (SC 495, 386).

possessed the gifts of prophecy and foreknowledge.<sup>175</sup> Piammon received a divine vision of an angel standing at the communion table and writing down the names of the present monks in a book, while erasing the names of those monks who were absent.<sup>176</sup> The power of the monks to perform miraculous acts demonstrated to Sozomen that God did not cease to work in the world after the death of the apostles. The same spirit that animated the prophets and apostles continued in the works of the desert Christians.

Sozomen borrows many of his hagiographies from Palladius' *Lausiac History* and from the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto (HM)*. Harmless asserts that Palladius perceived of his role of the storyteller as a physician of the soul. Gazing on "portraits" of the holy offers images of health and pathology. "His portraits of holy people are, at once, windows and mirrors, windows to gaze out onto the holy, mirrors to see one's true face."<sup>177</sup> He also notes that miracles and marvels take center stage in the *HM*. Ancient historians were not interested in miracles in the sense of nature, or the overturning of natural laws. Rather, they focused on power and its meaning. The deeds achieved by the monks pointed not to their own strength, but to God. The deeds were signs of divine presence and the power of the Spirit.<sup>178</sup>

The miracles performed by the holy men of the desert confirmed that the power given to the prophets and apostles in the biblical texts was present in them also. "The signs and wonders of the biblical era are alive and well and at work in the lives of the monks. While God once used prophets and apostles, he now uses monks as his chosen

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<sup>175</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.28.3 (SC 495, 388).

<sup>176</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 6.29.7 (SC 495, 396 ).

<sup>177</sup> Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 290.

<sup>178</sup> Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 292.

instruments.”<sup>179</sup> Harmless places the miracles of the *HM* in five categories: nature miracles, angelic visitations, gifts of prophecy and clairvoyance; miracles of judgment; and miraculous healings.

1. Nature miracles demonstrate a redeemed cosmos. The harmony of humanity and wild animals is a sign of paradise regained.

2. Angelic visitations validate the assertion that the monks lived like the angels. Therefore, they communicated with them.

3. Prophecy and Clairvoyance were gifts granted to a select few monks, such as John of Lycopolis, for devoting their lives to the monastic philosophy.

4. Judgment Miracles were stories of discernment against paganism and Christ’s victory over the demonic. Holy men, e.g. Macarius the Egyptian, came to serve a crucial political function; as a mediator, one who stood above the fray, above the tangled and contentious world of vested interests, and could ensure that justice would win out.<sup>180</sup> In a world of contentious supernatural powers, Christianity proves its truth by deeds of power.

5. Miraculous healings demonstrated that the monks were healers, and even immune to diseases.

The author of the *HM* maintains the fundamental theological conviction that “even in these times the Savior performs through them what he performed through the prophets and apostles. For the same Lord now and always works all things in all men.”<sup>181</sup> Part of the reason why they received the power to perform miracles was due to

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<sup>179</sup> Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 292ff.

<sup>180</sup> Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 296.

<sup>181</sup> *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, prol. 12 (SH 53:8, trans. Russell, CS 34:51); Cf. Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 298.

their strict forms of obedience to God. Obedience for the desert Christian was a kind of crucifixion, a death to self which could produce abundant fruit. Because of their way of life, others believed that these holy men had immediate access to God; they were mediators with God. At times, holy men even seemed to become substitutes for Christ.<sup>182</sup>

### *Monasticism in Theodoret's Historia Ecclesiastica*

Theodoret offers a unique perspective about the function of monasticism in the early church. He entered into a monastery before becoming bishop of Cyrus, and penned the *Religious History*, which is a compilation of biographies about thirty holy men in Syria. This text was written prior to the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and is referenced on several occasions. Because this text is helpful in determining Theodoret's ascetic theology, I will begin with a survey of it, and occasionally will make reference to it where it helps to clarify Theodoret's theological position on the monks, especially those from Syria.

### *Religious History*

The *Religious History* was written between the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon.<sup>183</sup> It can be dated to either 440 or 444.<sup>184</sup> Theodoret entered the monastery at Nicerte, but was later made bishop against his will. Due to the frequency of such stories, we have to take Theodoret's statement with a grain of salt, because it was such a

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<sup>182</sup> Introduction to Paphnutius, *Historia Monachorum*, 36.

<sup>183</sup> Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, 23.

<sup>184</sup> *Historia religiosa*, xiv.

common *topos* of the time. He grew up speaking Syriac, and was highly educated, writing in erudite Greek.<sup>185</sup> He was from a wealthy, and pious family. His mother was a client of Syrian holy men.<sup>186</sup>

Theodoret uses many of the same tropes that we have seen in earlier biographies of holy men, despite the fact that he is writing in the Syrian context, and not with the desert fathers of Egypt in mind.<sup>187</sup> He applies the descriptor of “athletes of virtue” to several of the Syrian holy men. He describes asceticism as a “philosophy.” And due to their excellence in imitating Christ, they perform miracles to demonstrate the divine power that comes from *imitatio Christi*. His goal in writing the *Religious History (RH)* was, in part, to demonstrate that the Syrian ascetics were the equal of their Egyptian counterparts. All of the above tropes that we find in the *RH* are present in the *Lausiac History* and *HM*. If we recall Caner’s study of early Syrian asceticism, then we must reconsider the standard textbook treatment of monasticism, which is a chronological line from Antony to the development of monasticism in Syria. Taking into account the early Syriacs and Theodoret’s *RH*, then it becomes evident that the paradigm is misleading and distortive.<sup>188</sup>

One aspect of Theodoret’s *RH* that is worth noting concerns the relationship of monks to the Church. Reminiscent of how Athanasius wrote the *Vita Antonii* with this same relationship in mind, Theodoret incorporates these holy men into his ecclesiastical

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<sup>185</sup> For more on this subject, see Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, 18-19. Photius lauded Theodoret’s “pure” Greek writing style.

<sup>186</sup> *Historia religiosa*, xi.

<sup>187</sup> See Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, 53, for more about his use of the genre of biography.

<sup>188</sup> *Historia religiosa*, xxiii.

hierarchy.<sup>189</sup> Urbainczyk, in her examination of the relationship between the monks of Syria and the clergy, attests to the symbiotic balance that they forged. Authority resided in the office of the bishop, who were the “men of action.” By contrast, the ascetics were “men of prayer” who deferred to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and even considered themselves unworthy of joining it. The Church benefited from the pietistic exemplars, who served as living examples of how to live a holy life.<sup>190</sup> “Ascetics are presented as founts of holiness to be tapped into, channeled, used, and directed by those with the necessary knowledge and authority. Or, to use another analogy, they are the footsoldiers who fight the bishops’ battles.”<sup>191</sup>

#### *Julianus the Monk*

Perhaps it is not surprising, considering geographical proximity and the subject of the *RH*, that Theodoret focuses his attention on the saints of Syria in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. One such example comes in the person of Julianus. On the day that the Emperor Julian (sometimes called ‘the Apostate’) was killed, Julianus informed his monastery that the “enemy” of the Lord had died. According to this account, Julianus had supernatural knowledge of this event. The news led them to leap with joy and sing songs of thanksgiving to God. Later, they found out that Julianus had ignited the celebrations at the very hour of Julian’s death.<sup>192</sup> He is mentioned again in Book IV of the *HE*. In this account, he becomes the Syrian doppelganger of Antony. The ‘Arians’

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<sup>189</sup> Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, 121.

<sup>190</sup> Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, 129.

<sup>191</sup> Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, 147.

<sup>192</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 3.24.4 (SC 530, 170); *HE* 3.19 (NPNF 2:3, 105).

were claiming to the Antiochene Christians that Julianus was one of them. In response, the Nicene Christian Acacius (an “athlete of virtue”) exhorted Julianus to come and dispel the rumors.<sup>193</sup> The *Religious History* lists some of the miracles performed by Julianus in his journey to Antioch. Theodoret even goes to the step of comparing Julianus to Antony, claiming that they both visited the nearest metropolitan city to proclaim the ‘Arians’ as “enemies of the truth.”<sup>194</sup> In many ways, Julianus is the ideal monk for Theodoret. He is unified with God to the extent that he can perform miracles in service of creation. But he also is a voice in affirmation of Nicaea, and against the ‘Arian’ heresy.

#### *Valens’ Persecution*

Earlier we observed that Socrates and Sozomen offer two slightly variant perspectives on the role of monasticism during the fourth century. For Socrates, the monastic institution is a footnote in his history of the conflict between ‘Orthodox’ and ‘Arians.’ Meanwhile, Sozomen announces his intention to chronicle the history and theology of the monastic philosophy throughout the project. But ultimately, they both agree that monasticism is the highest form of Christian discipleship, and that the monastics as a whole embraced pro-Nicene dogma. Theodoret’s approach to the monastic institution’s inclusion in the *HE* is comparable to that of Socrates. Having already dedicated a work to the holy men of Syria, he does not re-duplicate that work in his ecclesiastical history. But like Socrates, he offers a number of insights into the influence of the monastic community on the theological conflicts that erupted during the

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<sup>193</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.27.2 (SC 530, 304-306); *HE* 4.24 (NPNF 2:3, 128).

<sup>194</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.27.4 (SC 530, 306); *HE* 4.24 (NPNF 2:3, 128).

reign of Valens. Similar to his historian counterparts, Theodoret casts the conflict as a war between the pro-Nicene party and ‘Arian’ parties.

Following the death of Athanasius, the city of Alexandria was divided between supporters of Peter, who supported the pro-Nicene cause, and Lucius, who was loyal to the Homoians. When Peter withdrew, Lucius took charge of the episcopal see.

Theodoret reports that when Lucius entered the city for the first time as bishop, no monks preceded him by chanting psalms, as was the custom of that time. Legal action that was enacted against the pro-Nicenes is described by Theodoret as an attempt to compel Christians to give up “the faith of their fathers which had been handed down from the apostles through the fathers.”<sup>195</sup> By the end of the fourth century it had become customary to refer to the bishops who met at Nicaea as the “fathers,” since they had confirmed the teaching of the apostles. Theodoret goes on to describe the ‘Arians’ at Alexandria as “fatherless men.” These “fatherless men” became so by falling away from the fathers at Nicaea who had anathematized the “false doctrine of Arius.”<sup>196</sup>

Magnus, Lucius’ lieutenant who imposed the new laws, announced that those who obeyed would receive wealth and honor. Theodoret calls those who did obey the new laws as defectors from “true religion.”<sup>197</sup> Meanwhile, those who refused were promised punishment by torture, and deprivation of property and possessions.<sup>198</sup> As far as Theodoret was concerned, such torture amounted to “ascetic” training in virtue for

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<sup>195</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.22.18 (SC 530, 278); *HE* 4.19 (NPNF 2:3, 123).

<sup>196</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.22.18 (SC 530, 278); *HE* 4.19 (NPNF 2:3, 123).

<sup>197</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.22.30 (SC 530, 286); *HE* 4.19 (NPNF 2:3, 125).

<sup>198</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.22.20 (SC 530, 280); *HE* 4.19 (NPNF 2:3, 124).



Christ's athletes. Through such torture the monastics vanquished the judges, and triumphed over Arianism.<sup>199</sup>

Theodoret contributes to this conversation in one more way. Among modern historians, it is fashionable to say that monasticism became popular in the fourth century to combat the increasing meddling of the state in the affairs of the church. Among the three Greek historians of the mid-fifth century, Theodoret distinguishes himself by explicitly making such a claim. He argues that the desert fathers, e.g. Antony the Great, fled from the "disquiet of the state" to live in solitude in the wilderness. The desert became a training place of virtue for such hermits.<sup>200</sup>

The revolt against Valens was not the only means by which Theodoret demonstrates the apostolicity of the desert Christians. Like Sozomen, Theodoret's iteration also includes an account of Moses the monk, who was promoted as priest to the Saracenes, led by Mavia. He was said to have led them by his "apostolic teaching and miracles."<sup>201</sup> His apostolic credentials were determined by contrast to Lucius, the 'Arian' bishop of Alexandria.

Another anecdote is that of Barses, who was famous not only in his home of Edessa, but in Phoenicia, Egypt, and the Thebaid. His virtuous reputation preceded him. After being exiled to the island of Aradus, multitudes of people came to visit him because of his "apostolic grace," and ability to heal sickness. His exile was then moved to Oxyrynchus, and then to a remote castle in the region of the Barbarians. But the story

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<sup>199</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.22.35 (SC 530, 288); *HE* 4.19 (NPNF 2:3, 125).

<sup>200</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.21.1 (SC 530, 262); *HE* 4.18 (NPNF 2:3, 120).

<sup>201</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.23.5 (SC 530, 292); *HE* 4.20 (NPNF 2:3, 126).

continues, because Theodoret tells his readers that his bed has been preserved, so that pilgrims can lie on it and be healed “to this day.”<sup>202</sup>

### *Conclusion*

While the origins of monasticism may remain somewhat enigmatic, the reason for its link to the apostles is clear: the monks were called “apostolic” primarily because their ascetic disciplines hearkened back to the earliest disciples. Just as Jesus’ disciples had “sold everything,” in contrast to the rich young ruler who walked away, the desert ascetics went and did likewise. Their appropriation of poverty stood in stark contrast to the new wealth of the imperially sponsored church.

The two common denominators among Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret in regards to the practice of monasticism in the fourth century are 1) its usefulness as a means of cultivating virtues in the souls of ascetic practitioners, and 2) their approval of Nicene dogma. All three historians recount the story of Lucius’ struggle to become the anti-Nicene bishop in Alexandria during the 370s. This historical narrative became the lens through which Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret examine the institution of monasticism. The persecution of defenseless monks by an imperially sponsored heretic proved to be a sympathetic means towards the praise of these holy men and women of the desert.

A handful of fourth-century writers, notably Chrysostom and Cassian, called the desert fathers “apostolic” due to their devotion in imitating Christ. Athanasius initiated this development with his biography of the anchoritic hermit Antony. In the writing of this *vita*, Athanasius managed to create an icon of a man who portrayed a human being

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<sup>202</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.16.1 (SC 530, 240); *HE* 4.14 (NPNF 2:3, 117).

perfectly renewed in the image and likeness of God. Antony exemplified *ascesis*, the sports metaphor for training of the soul that was adopted by the monastic community. He exemplified the biblical virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Moreover, he spoke out against the so-called Arians, whom he denounced as the last heresy and the forerunner of the Anti-Christ.<sup>203</sup> Antony even warned his disciples three times against fellowship with the opponents of Nicaea.<sup>204</sup> It is no accident that Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret all give deference to Antony as the standard by which all monastics are judged. As narrated by Athanasius, Antony is the ideal Christian; he is both Christ-like and pro-Nicene. And if that was not enough, consider the lengths to which Antony's fame spread only a generation after his death. In the mid-380s the catechumen Augustine of Hippo heard his story, and wondered how it had come to be that "uneducated" people were rising up and taking heaven by storm. And just as Antony responded immediately to the gospel reading to sell all he had and follow Christ, so Augustine took up and read Paul, and also chose to put on the Lord Jesus.<sup>205</sup> For Athanasius, the endorsement of Antony was self-referential. Athanasius' Antony ends his life by willing his cloak to Athanasius. This "last will and testament," as William Harmless names it, clearly echoed Elijah passing on his prophetic mantle to Elisha. By accepting such a mantle himself, Athanasius was accepting the monastic "stamp of approval" upon his ecclesiastical authority.

The fifth-century church historians follow suit by doing likewise. They place their "stamp of approval" on the desert fathers, who became apostolic authorities through

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<sup>203</sup> *Vita Antonii* 69 (SC 400:316, Robert C. Gregg, trans., Classics of Western Spirituality, 82).

<sup>204</sup> *Vita Antonii* 68, 89, 91.

<sup>205</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* 8.12.29.

their virtuous conduct and their advocacy of Nicaea. While the historians do not attempt a direct link at connecting Antony back to the apostles, as Eusebius had done in tracing the episcopal succession of the bishops of Rome and Alexandria to their apostolic origins, they do claim a conceptual link to the biblical figures of Abraham, Elijah, and John the Baptist. Such a link qualifies the historians to bestow the appellation of “apostolic” to the monastic institution.

For all three of the Greek historians, the reign of Valens demonstrated the apostolic and divine characters of the desert Christians. For Socrates and Sozomen, the Egyptian holy men were tested and found virtuous, while Theodoret found the same emphases in the Syrian ascetics. Valens proved the depravity of the ‘Arian’ theological mindset, according to the historians, by reigning terror on these ascetics, to the point of sending them to mining camps and possibly even drafting them into the army. Others were exiled, and even tortured for their faith. While we have evidence that some of the earliest desert ascetics were non-Nicene, by the time of Valens the vast majority of monks appear to have been *homoousians*.

Why would Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret want to claim this connection between the monastics and the biblical heroes of the faith? Urban Christians already revered these saints as living martyrs who take up their cross daily and follow Christ through ascetic disciplines. The historians were eager to link these revered holy men to Nicaea, as yet another brick in its establishment as the ecumenical standard of orthodoxy. Thus has the tradition of the apostles continued to be preserved, through Scripture and the Church. By the middle of the fifth century, Greek historians claimed that the apostolic

tradition now rallied around Nicaea, and the monastics witnessed to the veracity of this statement of orthodoxy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Apostolic Vocation of the Christian Emperor

In this chapter it will be demonstrated that Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret conceive of pro-Nicene Christian emperors as ‘apostolic.’ While the historians agree on this broad assertion, they bring unique aspects of the apostolic definition to the fourth-century narrative. For Socrates, the ‘apostolic’ vocation connotes the emperor’s role as guardian of the peace who unites the empire in Christ. In Sozomen’s ecclesiastical history the emperors are models of piety who are prospered by God for reforming cultic practices. In Theodoret the emperors are divine agents who support catholic bishops in their efforts to preserve the apostolic tradition. Despite these idiosyncrasies, they hold in common the affirmation that the ‘good’ emperors, like the ‘good’ kings of Judah in the Hebrew Scriptures, are faithful servants of the one true God. Faithfulness here is defined according to the standard of Nicaea.

This argument, as presented by the ancient historians, appears to have caused more hermeneutical difficulties than the above historical models of apostolicity. Nicaea had been held up as the standard of orthodoxy for more than a generation by the 440s, and as we noted in chapter four, the desert fathers were already lauded by some as apostolic witnesses to Christ. Christian emperors, even those as highly regarded as Constantine and Theodosius I, were not flawless men, even in the eyes of pro-Nicene biographers. We will observe that the historians qualify the imperial defenders of Nicaea by linking them to similarly flawed rulers in the Hebrew Scriptures – most notably King

David –; and in some cases, they are described in quasi-monastic terms to emphasize their virtue and piety.

The three historians are influenced by Eusebius of Caesarea, who established precedent for the portrayal of emperors in both the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Vita Constantinii*. Eusebius' successors followed in his footsteps through their praise of those Augustii who modeled themselves after Constantine. They lauded the first Christian emperor for his commitment to a religious revolution, by which imperial laws that favored the Church were introduced into the public and secular domains.

In the present chapter we will begin with Eusebius' presentation of Constantine as the vicar of Christ in imperial robes. We will then turn to each of the historians, as they analyze various aspects of the apostolic role of Christian emperors.

### *Eusebius of Caesarea*

Eusebius' own attitude towards the imperial sovereign transformed during the course of his life. As a young man who witnessed the 'Great Persecution,' he could have never conceived that the day would arrive when Rome would be led by a man who professed the faith of Christ.<sup>1</sup> But in his later writings, Constantine's triumph encouraged Eusebius to argue that a 'good' emperor was one who not only tolerated Christianity, but prohibited paganism.<sup>2</sup> As Chestnut so astutely observes, Eusebius' thought had evolved to the point that for him "Christ came to save human beings from the idolatry of polytheism and bring them to the true monotheistic worship of the one true Church in the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Raymond van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Chesnut, *The First Christian Emperors*, 80; For more on Constantine's anti-pagan legislation, see Timothy David Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion, and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 107-111; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 2.44-46 (GCS 7, 61).

same way that Augustus had come to save human beings from the strife of polyarchy and bring them to the true monarchical government of the universal human State.”<sup>3</sup>

According to Eusebius, it was not coincidental that Christ appeared simultaneously in history with Augustus.<sup>4</sup> He cites Melito of Sardis as an early claimant that the timing of Jesus’ birth with Augustus’ accession demonstrated the blessing of God’s providential plan.<sup>5</sup> In his own remarks spoken at the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the historian argued that

“two great powers – the Roman Empire, which became a monarchy at that time, and the teaching of Christ – proceeding as if from a single starting point, at once tamed and reconciled all to friendship. ... For while the power of Our Savior destroyed the polyarchy and polytheism of the demons and heralded the one kingdom of God to Greeks and barbarians and all men to the farthest extent of the earth, the Roman Empire, now that the causes of the manifold governments had been abolished, subdued the visible governments, in order to merge the entire race into one unity and concord. ... Moreover, as one God and one knowledge of this God was heralded to all, one empire waxed strong among men, and the entire race of mankind was redirected into peace and friendship.”<sup>6</sup>

Eusebius’ *Chronicle* provides us with insight into his theology of history. In the period before Christ, the various nations of the world – Assyria, Egypt, Israel, Greece – comprise numerous columns. For the period after Christ, only two columns remain – one for Rome, and the other for the Christian Church.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Chesnut, *The First Christian Emperors*, 77.

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.4.2-4 (Sources Chrétiennes 206).

<sup>5</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 4.26.7-8 (SC 31, 207); cf. van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Eusebius, *Laudes Constantini* 16.5-7. H.A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius’ Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 120.

<sup>7</sup> Chesnut, *The First Christian Historians*, 76.



In his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius preserved chronological succession lists of bishops from a number of the major metropolitan sees, including Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome.<sup>8</sup> He also provided a chronological list of the successive Roman emperors, beginning with Augustus. Furthermore, he often dated the commencement of an episcopate with the corresponding year of the emperor's reign.<sup>9</sup> This form can be seen in the elevation of Primus to the Alexandrian bishopric: "In the twelfth year of Trajan's reign the bishop of Alexandria departed this life, and Primus, the fourth from the apostles, was chosen to hold office there."<sup>10</sup> The historical narrative of the Christian Church was inseparably intertwined with the Roman Empire.

When Eusebius amended his church history with Book 10, Constantine was already a revered figure. A decade later when he sat down to write an imperial biography, the emperor had been elevated to a messenger of God. The *Vita Constantini* is a conflation of literary genres – at times it is either panegyric, hagiography, apology or ecclesiastical history.<sup>11</sup> Eusebius portrayed Constantine as a man specially blessed by the providence of God. He was marked by sublime godliness, virtue and piety (1.4.1; 1.9.1). A beneficent ruler, Constantine was the model of Christian monarchy who cleansed

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<sup>8</sup> For further reading on the succession lists of these churches, see Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian*, 48-57.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 130.

<sup>10</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 4.1 (SC 31, 160).

<sup>11</sup> For further discussion of recent debates on the genre of the *Vita Constantini*, see Averil Cameron, "Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the Construction of Constantine," in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, edited by M.J. Edwards and Simon Swain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997): 145-174. Cameron argues that the *Vita Constantini* is a prototype for the later lives of the saints, with Constantine presented as the holy man favored by God. His most immediate interlocutor is Barnes, who dismisses the *Vita Constantini* as a biography, arguing instead that Eusebius changed genres in the middle of his project from a documentary history to panegyric. Barnes, "Panegyric, History and Hagiography in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, edited by Rowan Williams (Cambridge: 94-123): 94-123.

humanity of godless paganism (1.5.2). He was given a mission from God to spread the gospel to those who had not yet entered Christian fellowship (1.8.4). History has never seen an emperor like Constantine (1.10.2).

One method employed by Eusebius to reinforce his thesis on Constantine was the use of *mimesis*, a rhetorical device found in Greek and Latin literature.<sup>12</sup> Similarly to writers within the classical tradition, Eusebius modeled Constantine and the Roman Empire on Israel's monarchy. Such an imitation demonstrates that the divine monarchy has become manifested on earth by the ideal monarch. Eusebius's most common device for this ideological message was the patterning of Constantine on Moses. The whole of Constantine's life was read in terms of the figure of the Hebrew lawgiver. God raised up Moses as a prophet from the midst of a tyrannical peoples, and raised up Constantine as a servant who delivered the Christians from tyranny.<sup>13</sup> Pharaoh's army was cast into the Red Sea, and in the same way Maxentius and his armed men sank to the bottom of the Tiber.<sup>14</sup> Moses ordered the construction of a tabernacle in the Hebrews' camp. Likewise, Constantine pitched his tent for the offering of prayers to God.<sup>15</sup> The words of the hymn in Exodus 15: "Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously glorified; horse and rider he threw into the sea" are fulfilled in Constantine.<sup>16</sup> The figure of Moses was

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<sup>12</sup> Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, "Introduction" in *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999): 35.

<sup>13</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.12 (GCS 7, 13).

<sup>14</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.38.2 (GCS 7, 25).

<sup>15</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 2.12.1 (GCS 7, 47).

<sup>16</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.38.2 (GCS 7, 25).

important for Eusebius. The Mosaic law laid the groundwork necessary for the Christian dispensation, which had now found its culmination in Constantine.<sup>17</sup>

Eusebius suggested that Constantine defined the parameters of “God’s people” to be larger than merely the Church. He reported that at one dinner party, while entertaining bishops, the emperor stated to his guest: “You are bishops of those within the Church, but I am perhaps a bishop appointed by God over those outside.”<sup>18</sup> Eusebius repeated this statement with approval, noting various laws passed by this new Christian ruler: the prohibition of sacrifices to idols, divination, secret rites, and gladiatorial combat, among other things.<sup>19</sup>

Constantine’s statement about himself as a bishop “appointed by God over those outside,” when placed in the context of his final resting place among the twelve apostles, leads us to believe that he thought of himself as one who was commissioned with his own apostolic charge. Like Paul, who had received a dramatic vision on the road to Damascus which had called him to be an apostolic missionary for the Lord, Constantine had received a divine revelation on the road to Rome which had ordained him to be an imperial agent of Christ. As Paul was an Apostle called to evangelize the Gentiles, Constantine was an heir of the Apostles called to convert the Empire.<sup>20</sup> Eusebius reinforced this measure of piety by reporting that the Emperor observed private hours of

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 271.

<sup>18</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 4.24 (GCS 7, 127)

<sup>19</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.25.1 (GCS 7, 127). Eusebius’ assertions here have been the source of much controversy in recent years. Barnes has recently argued that Eusebius can be trusted, based on Kevin Wilkinson’s dating of the Egyptian poet Palladas’ epigrams to the reign of Constantine. If correct, Palladas appears to lament Constantine’s religious revolution. Barnes, *Constantine*, 13-16.

<sup>20</sup> Odahl, *Constantine and Christian Empire*, 271.

prayer in the royal palace, where he would pray with God and kneel in suppliant petition.<sup>21</sup> Sundays were not just newly created holy days for the subjects of the empire, but a regular day of prayer for Constantine himself.<sup>22</sup> Eusebius portrayed a Christian ruler who exercised a bishop's supervision over all his subjects, and encouraged them all to lead a godly life.

Constantine's description of himself as a bishop appointed by God over those outside the church is remarkable when one considered that he was unbaptized, unlearned in the Scriptures, claimed no ecclesiastical office, and embodied those secular powers which had for centuries caused Christians great suffering. Eusebius depicted him as a man who experienced a divine calling to rescue the Empire from tyranny, and to unite them in the knowledge of God. His army fought under the sign of the *chi-rho*. He prayed that God would bring healing to the eastern Empire, which had suffered greatly in the early decades of the fourth century. These instances -- Constantine's characterization as a new Moses, his piety, his status as the 'bishop to the gentiles' -- support Barnes' argument that Eusebius used panegyric to narrate the story of the first Christian emperor.

### *Socrates of Constantinople*

#### *Constantine*

In the preface to his own church history, Socrates critiques both the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *Vita Constantini* of Eusebius. The *HE* omitted any mention of the 'Arian controversy' while the *VC* lacked sufficient facts, but not encomium.<sup>23</sup> To correct

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<sup>21</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.14.2 (GCS 7, 123).

<sup>22</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.18.1 (GCS 7, 124).

<sup>23</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.1.1-2 (SC 477, 44).

the deficiencies in Eusebius' historical pursuits, Socrates announces his intention to write a continuation of Eusebius, beginning with an accurate assessment of Constantine's rise to imperial power. But whether by accident or ignorance, Socrates does not reveal one important item about his relationship to Eusebius – his fifth-century assessment of Constantine will itself praise the emperor for enforcing Christianity and rejecting paganism. Furthermore, Socrates will also speak of Constantine as an apostolic servant – but not for the same reason as Eusebius. In addition to abolishing paganism in favor of Christianity, Constantine is a messenger of God in Socrates' church history for his faithfulness in convening the Council of Nicaea.

Immediately in his narration of Constantine's accession, Socrates demonstrates some linguistic borrowing from Eusebius. Just as the former had used the language of 'tyrant' to describe Maxentius, and further demonstrate Constantine as the 'new Moses,' Socrates likewise applies the same grammar to the enemy who sparked the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. However, this may be the first clue that Socrates distances himself from Eusebius' encomium. Eusebius was overt in his comparison of Constantine to the Hebrew lawgiver, while Socrates makes only one slight allusion.<sup>24</sup> Socrates is satisfied to depict the first emperor as the servant of Christ, and he is careful not to cross the boundary of equating the two figures as equals.<sup>25</sup>

Socrates' insistence that he will avoid the encomiastic pitfalls of Eusebius does not dissuade him from using the *VC* as a source in writing his own historical account of Constantine's triumph. Book I of the *VC* is his primary resource for describing

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<sup>24</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.18.12.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 253-254.

Constantine's vision and subsequent victory over Maxentius. Following Eusebius, Socrates records that Constantine, leading the army on a march, looked up toward the sky at the middle of the day and viewed a sign in the form of a cross, inscribed with the phrase 'By this conquer.' The next night Christ appeared to him in a dream, instructing Constantine to mark its weapons with the 'Chi-Rho' – the first letters in the name of Christ. Having been divinely authorized, Constantine led his army to victory over Maxentius, who drowned in defeat. Socrates relied on Eusebius' account, which the latter historian claimed was said to him personally, albeit many years later.<sup>26</sup> Lactantius wrote an account of Constantine's vision which conflicts on some of the details. He does not record a Christ theophany, nor does he mention a daytime vision.<sup>27</sup> Some scholars have dismissed Eusebius' account as fictional panegyric. However, Peter Weiss has recently written a paper that has persuaded many historians that Constantine witnessed a solar halo, giving credence to the emperor's conviction that he was supported by divine sanction.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Weiss has argued persuasively that a statement by Lactantius that Constantine was directed in a dream to mark the *caeleste signum dei* on the shields of the soldiers should not be translated "the heavenly sign of God," as it is usually translated, but "the sign of God (seen) in the sky." Such a translation would then

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<sup>26</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.28.1 (GCS 7, 21). Barnes conjectures that Constantine told Eusebius about his vision during the Council of Nicaea in 325. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 266.

<sup>27</sup> Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 44.5-6. Cf. Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 71.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Weiss, "Die Vision Constantins" in *Colloquium aus Anlass des 80. Geburtstages von Alfred Heuss*, ed. J. Bleicken (Kallmünz: 1993): 143-169. For monographs that defend Weiss, see Noel Lenski, "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, edited by Lenski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 1-13; H. Drake, "Solar Power in Late Antiquity," in *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, eds. Andrew Cain and Noel Lenski (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2009): 215-226; Paul Stephenson, *Constantine: Unconquered Emperor, Christian Victor* (New York: Overlook Press, 2009).

eliminate any perceived contradiction between Lactantius and Eusebius, since both accounts would acknowledge a daytime vision.<sup>29</sup> According to Eusebius, Constantine was convinced that God had delivered the victory at the Milvian bridge, which Socrates found to be a compelling account.

*Constantine and Nicaea.* The religious responsibilities of Roman emperors date back much earlier than the era of Christian augusti. Constantine assumed the title of *Pontifex maximus* in 307 when he was promoted from Caesar to Augustus.<sup>30</sup> Public officials of the empire, including the emperor, were invested with religious duties.<sup>31</sup> Constantine, like Roman rulers before him, believed he was responsible for maintaining the *pax deorum*.<sup>32</sup>

In Socrates' church history, we see the convergence of the Roman religious belief that the emperor is responsible for maintaining peace and unity in the empire, with Eusebius' conviction that the apostolic successions of the orthodox Church prevailed against heresy and schism.<sup>33</sup> Failure to observe correct ritual observance could result in divine wrath, and Constantine did not need a long history lesson to be reminded of specific incidents where this occurred. Likewise, Eusebius depicts the 'Great Persecution'

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Barnes, *Constantine*, 74-80.

<sup>30</sup> Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 245.

<sup>31</sup> Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 16-17.

<sup>32</sup> Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 283.

<sup>33</sup> Drake, *In Praise of Constantine*, 7.

as a punishment of the Church by God for such abuses of prosperity as arrogance and sloth.<sup>34</sup>

Not long after he narrates Constantine's conversion, Socrates turns to the emperor's role in the Alexandrian controversy. Ossius of Cordova had been sent to Alexandria with a letter that urged an end to the conflagration, and a restoration of unity. Constantine underscores his request with a sense of divine mission to complete this unitive task. His letter to Alexander and Arius (324 A.D.) urges the two combatants to find common ground in light of God's blessings and mercies. That he believes himself responsible under God to unify the dispute is made clear in his statement:

Ὁ μέγας ἡμῶν Θεὸς ὁ σωτὴρ πάντων κοινὸν ἅπασι τὸ φῶς  
ἐξέτεινεν· ὅφ' οὗ τῇ προνοίᾳ ταύτην ἐμοὶ τῷ θεραπευτῇ τοῦ  
κρείττονος τὴν σπουδὴν εἰς τέλος ἐνεγκεῖν συγχωρήσατε, ὅπως  
ὕμᾱς τοὺς ἐκείνου δῆμους ἐμῇ προσφωνήσῃ καὶ ὑπηρεσία καὶ  
νουθεσίας ἐνστάσῃ πρὸς τὴν τῆς συνόδου κοινωνίαν  
ἐπαναγάγοιμι.

Our great God and Savior of us all extended common light to everyone. Under his providence, grant to me, the servant of the Almighty, to bring this zealotry to termination; in order that I may lead you, his people, to unity of communion through my service and resolute admonition.<sup>35</sup>

While Constantine's efforts to resolve the crisis by letter were unsuccessful, note that the disputants themselves did not object to his interference. Like his predecessor in historical writing, Socrates believes that the imperial government is modeled on a celestial paragon. Monotheism is parallel with monotheism. Constantine's is God's servant. In the Council of Nicaea the resolution is produced that Socrates argues could unify not only the church in Alexandria, but the Church universal.

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<sup>34</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 8.1.7ff. (SC 55, 5).

<sup>35</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.7.11 (SC 477, 84).



Once again, Socrates relies extensively on Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* when he narrates the Council of Nicaea. As we observed in chapter three, no minutes were preserved from the 325 council. Reliance on the *VC* naturally turns Socrates' focus towards the emperor, who plays the role of the primary actor in this chapter of the story. He convenes the council, and then addresses its members during the opening session with an exhortation to embrace harmony and unity. Constantine directed bishops to lay aside their grievances against one another so that both the doctrinal controversy and Easter question could find resolution. Here we see hinted Constantine taking serious his duties as *Pontifex maximus*. Constantine's role at Nicaea was the promotion of unity and concord among the religious leaders of the newly favored Christian churches.

The stature of Constantine in Socrates' history is elevated even farther by his repetition of Eusebius' claim that the emperor himself introduced the watchword *homoousios* into the creedal language.<sup>36</sup> It is somewhat surprising for Socrates to repeat this claim when we consider that he is quick to rely on Athanasius as a primary source for the post-Nicaea developments. Athanasius, a likely attendee of the council, does not credit Constantine with the introduction of *homoousios* to the conversation. In his *Historia Arianorum*, the future Alexandrian bishop credits Ossius of Cordova for presenting the Nicene creed to the council.<sup>37</sup> A fuller account, however, is found in *De decretis*. In that work Athanasius claims that the Eusebians whispered and winked to each other because they could deceitfully manipulate the language of 'like' and 'power' and

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<sup>36</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.8.41-43 (SC 477, 106-108); Opitz, *Urk.* 22. In the letter, Eusebius also credits Constantine as one sophisticated enough to explain that *homoousios* does not imply material corporality on the part of the Son. The likeness of essence is in divine terms only.

<sup>37</sup> Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 42 (PG 25:741D).

‘in Him’ to signify that the Son’s likeness to the Father could be interpreted in coordination with his originate nature.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, Athanasius concludes that *homoousios* was necessary to express that the Son is ‘one in essence’ with the Father. Philostorgius, the ‘Arian’ historian, finds common ground with Athanasius by attributing *homoousios* to Ossius and Alexander of Alexandria, claiming that they colluded beforehand to introduce the catchword into the Nicene proceedings.<sup>39</sup> The suggestion that Ossius proposed *homoousios* by drawing from the Western tradition of Tertullian has been rejected, most recently by de Clercq,<sup>40</sup> Stead,<sup>41</sup> and Hanson.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, Eusebius’ claim has found support from Pier Franco Beatrice, who proposed the intriguing thesis that Constantine was not as naïve of a neophyte as scholars have depicted him to be from his letters. On the contrary, Beatrice argues that there are strong parallels in Constantine’s thought between his *Speech to the Assembly of the Saints* and the tradition found in the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the Egyptian theological oracles of the Theosophia.<sup>43</sup> While this theory does rely on supposition (Was Constantine exposed to Hermeticism through Lactantius?), due to a dearth of extant materials, the argument does potentially fill in some gaps in the lacunae of knowledge on the introduction of *homoousios* to the Nicene proceedings. For our purposes, this may help explain why Socrates follows Eusebius’

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<sup>38</sup> Athanasius, *De decretis* 20 (PG 25: 449D).

<sup>39</sup> Philostorgius, *HE* 1.7-9 (GCS 21, 8-10).

<sup>40</sup> Victor C. de Clercq, *Ossius of Cordova: A Contribution to the History of the Constantinian Period*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 13 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 250-66.

<sup>41</sup> George Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977): 190-266.

<sup>42</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 201.

<sup>43</sup> Pier Franco Beatrice, “The Word ‘Homoousios’ from Hellenism to Christianity” *Church History* 71.2 (June 2002): 243-272.

account rather than that of Athanasius. Eusebius' motivation in narrating this story to his church is clear: he needed to defend his subscription to a creed that stood in direct opposition with his own theological convictions.

*The Apostolic Emperor.* Following his account of the Council of Nicaea, Socrates penned a mini-panegyric to Constantine in praise of his devotion to the Christian faith. With the benefit of hindsight, the historian reminisces of a time when churches had not yet been devastated by the coming division into various 'Nicene' and 'Arian' parties. This state of confusion within the Church caused Socrates to chronicle for later generations that the apostolic faith had become scattered.

Ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὴν ἀποστολικὴν τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ πίστιν ἢ  
διαλεκτικὴ καὶ κενὴ ἀπάτη συνέχεεν ἐν ταύτῳ καὶ διέσπειρεν,  
ῥήθην δεῖν γραφῇ ταῦτα παραδοῦναι, ὅπως ἂν μὴ ἀφανῇ  
γένηται τὰ κατὰ τὰς ἐκκλησίας γεγόμενα·

But since the dialectic and vain deceit confounded and at the same time scattered the apostolic faith of Christianity, I thought to hand over the writings, in order that what had happened may not become invisible in the churches.<sup>44</sup>

Socrates credits Constantine with the preservation – albeit temporary – of the unity of the apostolic faith. The first Christian emperor is laudable for many reasons – he was himself a devoted believer,<sup>45</sup> he passed legislation in favor of the churches, and he abolished pagan practices.<sup>46</sup> For Socrates, however, it is Constantine's efforts to unify the state and the churches under one faith – expressed in the Nicene creed – that defines the apostolic charge of the imperial office. According to divine providence, God established an

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<sup>44</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.18.15 (SC 477, 188).

<sup>45</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.18.12 (SC 477, 186).

<sup>46</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.18.1 (SC 477, 182).

emperor to mirror the kingdom of heaven on earth, who was charged with the task of overseeing the first ecumenical council of bishops. The divine unity expressed in the doctrine of *homoousios* found its parallel in the ecclesial unity of Christian churches. By adopting the doctrines of the apostles, the Nicene council demonstrated adherence to divine truth and submission to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup>

In the preface to Book I, Socrates reprimanded Eusebius for straying from historical narrative into the territory of panegyric. We can clearly see the differences in methodological approach in their respective assessments of Constantine's funeral. In the *VC*, Eusebius notes that the emperor was laid in state inside the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople, which he himself dedicated to Jesus' disciples. In the shrine Constantine's own sarcophagus was surrounded by twelve cenotaphs, representing the twelve apostles.<sup>48</sup> Eusebius suggests that even after death the emperor continues to rule the empire from heaven, at the side of God.<sup>49</sup> In the preface to the *VC*, Eusebius pictured Constantine standing with God in a robe of light, directing the imperial government through his sons and successors.<sup>50</sup>

Socrates mitigates this hyperbolic praise of Constantine in his summary of Constantine's death and funeral. The fifth-century historian, looking backwards across a century of capricious Roman rule, simply notes the emperor's sickness, baptism, and

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<sup>47</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.9.28 (SC 477, 124).

<sup>48</sup> Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 309.

<sup>49</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.71.2 (GCS 7, 147).

<sup>50</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.1.1-2 (GCS 7, 7).

death with little personal commentary.<sup>51</sup> He does, however, observe that Constantine's body – laid in state at the Church of the Holy Apostles – ensured that it would receive some veneration. Such respect would, however, be inferior to that paid to the apostles themselves. By the fifth century Constantine would be given the title 'isoapostolos' – equal to the apostles.<sup>52</sup> Socrates' own presentation of Constantine, while downplaying Eusebius' encomiastic depiction, still manages to contribute to his portrayal as the thirteenth apostle.<sup>53</sup> We find in Socrates' account that the first Christian emperor is apostolic – not an *alter Christus* – because he points the Church to Christ by guarding the deposit of faith at Nicaea. In preserving and commending the doctrine of *homoousios*, the ecclesial unity that mirrors the rule of God is entrusted to the office of the Christian emperor, who inherits the responsibility of passing on the tradition to a new generation of Christian disciples.

### *Theodosius I*

Book 5 of Socrates' *HE* – which spans the reign of Theodosius I as Roman emperor – begins with an apologetic preface for his inclusion of imperial rulers in an ecclesiastical history. He argues that it is necessary to include the affairs of the state because they inescapably impede upon the theological and political developments within the Church. Some affairs of the empire, i.e. the wars of Constantine, can be excluded

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<sup>51</sup> Socrates follows Eusebius in reporting that Constantine was baptized in Nicomedia. Socrates, *HE* 1.39.2 (SC 477, 260).

<sup>52</sup> 'Isoapostolos' is a term that originated in fifth-century Byzantium, often reserved for the first missionaries to a country. The ancient historians do not label Constantine 'isoapostolos'; however, the respect they show to him demonstrates a trajectory that later leads to such a titular designation. Stephenson, *Constantine*, 288; Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, 93.

<sup>53</sup> Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, 185.

because they do not impact ecclesiastical proceedings.<sup>54</sup> Once Christian emperors began convening ecclesiastical councils, then the Church even came to depend on her relationship to the state.<sup>55</sup>

On this matter Socrates remains in continuity with Eusebius. While the latter did not need to narrate such a close relationship between Church and state, even he had organized his ecclesiastical history according to imperial reigns.<sup>56</sup> Socrates reminds his audience of this historiographical detail in the same book in which he will laud Theodosius I as the theological heir to Constantine.

Theodosius was elevated to Augustus during a time of crisis. Valens had fallen at the battle of Adrianople (378), an event Socrates believes was destined because of the emperor's 'Arian' position. Meanwhile, Constantinople was under attack from Goths. An accomplished military commander from Spain, Theodosius came to the aid of Gratian to defend Roman territories against her enemies.<sup>57</sup>

While the military victories might be a significant focus of a secular history, Socrates – having reminded the readers of his ecclesial focus – minimizes the political aspect of Theodosius' rise to power, and instead highlights his Nicene pedigree. Theodosius was a *homoousian*, and his support carried over into his administration of the empire. Socrates accentuates the apostolic character of Theodosius' Nicene faith:

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<sup>54</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.1 (SC 505, 150-152).

<sup>55</sup> Socrates himself writes that the emperor's 'convened' councils. See *HE* 1.8.4 (SC 477, 90), where it is said that Constantine convened (συνεκεκρότει) the Nicene synod.

<sup>56</sup> Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 140.

<sup>57</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.2 (SC 505, 152-154); Cf. Stephen Williams and Gerard Friell, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 20-35.

μένουσι φυλάσσοντες ἀσάλευτον τὴν ἄνωθεν μὲν καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς  
ἐκ τῶν ἀποστόλων παραδοθεῖσαν πίστιν, ἐν δὲ τῇ κατὰ Νίκαιαν  
συνόδῳ βεβαιωθεῖσαν

they continued to preserve unshaken that faith which from the beginning  
was delivered by the apostles, and had been confirmed in the Nicene  
Synod.<sup>58</sup>

N.Q. King, wanting to articulate the seriousness of Theodosius' faith, wrote that the emperor "clearly believes that he has received his power from heaven. There is one true form of religion which has come down from the Apostles and it is upheld by the Bishops of Rome and Alexandria, and by Scripture."<sup>59</sup>

Unlike his imperial predecessors, Theodosius received Christian baptism soon after his accession to the throne. So unusual was this occurrence – previous emperors had followed Constantine's example of receiving baptism near death – that Socrates describes the circumstances leading up to this act. While journeying to Constantinople, the emperor became dangerously ill. He stopped in Thessalonica, where the Nicene bishop Ascholius baptized him. According to this narrative, Theodosius was near death, but insisted in receiving baptism from a bishop with compatible doctrinal views. He attributed his recovery to the divine grace of baptism.<sup>60</sup>

As a Christian emperor, Socrates characterizes Theodosius as the true successor to Constantine. A supporter of Nicaea, Theodosius arrived in Constantinople intent on unifying the Church under one faith. He inquired about the doctrinal position of Demophilus, the bishop of the city. Upon learning that Demophilus was an 'Arian,' the

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<sup>58</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.6.5 (SC 505, 160-162).

<sup>59</sup> N.Q. King, *The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1960), 29.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Williams and Friell, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay*, 31.

emperor dismissed him from his position as overseer, and replaced him with Gregory of Nazianzus. Theodosius reportedly said to Demophilus that he rejected “peace and harmony.” Peace, harmony, and unity are the catchwords for Socrates of the Nicene faith – the apostolic deposit that must be guarded by the Christian emperor.

When the Council of Constantinople was convened in 381, Socrates makes no pretense about its true purpose: Theodosius summoned together bishops to confirm (κρατύναι) the Nicene creed.<sup>61</sup> He did not call all bishops; only those of his own faith (αὐτοῦ πίστεως), i.e. pro-Nicenes, were invited to attend the proceedings, with the exception of the ‘Macedonians,’ who he hoped to persuade to become pro-Nicene.<sup>62</sup> Despite Theodosius’ best efforts, the ‘Macedonians’ departed without subscribing to a *homoousian* creed. As we observed in Chapter Three, the council of 381 appears to have published a *homoousian* creed that they believed was a confirmation of Nicaea, not an innovation.

Socrates concludes Book 5 by narrating the death of Theodosius I.<sup>63</sup> He was laid to rest in the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople on November 8, 395. He imitated Constantine through calls for ecclesial unity, which was effected by confirming Constantine’s Nicene creed. Once again we find the unity of the Father and Son in heaven mirrored in the ecclesial harmony that derives from affirmation of Nicene orthodoxy.

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<sup>61</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.8.1 (SC 505, 166).

<sup>62</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.8.1 (SC 505, 166).

<sup>63</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.26 (SC 505, 250-252).



## Summary

In her monograph *Socrates of Constantinople*, Theresa Urbainczyk argues that Socrates categorizes the Christian rulers into “good emperors” and “bad emperors.”<sup>64</sup> Good emperors emphasized the need for peace and unity, since the welfare of the Church depended on the well-being of the state.<sup>65</sup> In addition to Constantine and Theodosius, Socrates approves of Valentinian and Jovian, because they are *homoousians*. Urbainczyk targets the virtue of ‘tolerance’ as the link that binds together the good emperors.<sup>66</sup> Theodosius I is recognized as the prime example, based on the evidence that he did not persecute the ‘Arians.’ Furthermore, Socrates neglects to mention the *cunctos populos* edict, which legally sanctioned Nicene orthodoxy. Urbainczyk maintains that Socrates’ omission of this edict and his eighteen constitutions against heretics indicates his emphasis on tolerance as a cardinal virtue of good emperors.<sup>67</sup>

Urbainczyk’s reductive argument is not without some merit. Socrates’ Theodosius is moderate in his actions towards non-Nicenes – a depiction absent from the narratives of Sozomen and Theodoret. It must not go unnoticed, however, that moderation goes hand-in-hand with Nicene orthodoxy in Socrates’ ecclesiastical history. It is the ‘Arian’ emperors, viz. the “bad” emperors who persecute their opponents. Those

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<sup>64</sup> Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 139-166. She notes that Socrates does in fact record the phrase ἀγαθὸς βασιλεύς: Socrates, *HE* 3.26.4, in reference to Jovian.

<sup>65</sup> Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 143.

<sup>66</sup> The use of ‘toleration’ by Urbainczyk is anachronistic. The category of religious tolerance is modern, and problematic when discussing the Greco-Roman religious world. For further reading, see Maijastina Kahlos, *Forbearance and Compulsion: The Rhetoric of Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Late Antiquity* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2009): 6-8. Cf. Hervé Savon, *Ambroise de Milan (340-397)* (Paris, Desclée, 1997): 179.

<sup>67</sup> Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 150; *Codex Theodosianus* 16.

who side with the true religion – Nicene orthodoxy – rely on God’s providence to preserve apostolic Christianity. Opponents of true religion must maintain their heresy through intimidation and persecution, as did pagan emperors before Constantine. Apostolic Christianity is the faith of the martyrs; guarded by providence during imperial persecutions, and even growing despite the bloodshed. The apostolic faith thrives in its suffering; it is not itself the source of persecution and suffering against others.

### *Sozomen of Constantinople*

As we observed in the previous section, Socrates expressed embarrassment at his predecessor’s excessive panegyric tone in the *Vita Constantini*. His successor, however, was skilled in imperial encomium. Sozomen’s dedication of his ecclesiastical history to Theodosius II is surprising in its facile and lavish treatment of the emperor’s faithfulness to both God and country. He is lauded for excellence in ἀρετή – with the aid of God – and surpasses everyone in εὐσέβεια, φιλανθρωπία, and the cardinal virtues of the ancient philosophers.<sup>68</sup> Despite his greatness in practicing virtue, Sozomen reports that Theodosius II is also gentle and full of humility, so that he does not suffer from indiscretions that result from pride. The source of this godlike humility is his ascetic conduct, having conquered the passions. In this way Theodosius II’s wisdom exceeds even that of the biblical paragon Solomon, who eschewed ascetic practices and thus

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<sup>68</sup> Sozomen, *HE* pref. 3 (SC 306, 92); pref. 15 (SC 306, 100).

became a slave to his own passions.<sup>69</sup> Because he imitated the heavenly βασιλεύς, God has patronized Theodosius II and the empire under his rule with innumerable blessings.<sup>70</sup>

### *Constantine and Biblical Typology*

In his *Vita Constantini*, Eusebius viewed the first Christian emperor as a type of Moses. Like the lawgiver, Constantine had overthrown a tyrant in the sea and emerged to deliver God's people into a new era of freedom. Socrates largely eschewed such figural exegesis in his chronicle of Constantine's imperial rule, perhaps out of a concern that it contributed to excessive panegyric of the emperor. By contrast to Socrates, Sozomen returns to the use of typology, although he is more subtle than Eusebius in his application. Examination of Sozomen's exercise of typology reveals his unique interpretation of Constantine's apostolic function to the Church. Under his rule, the Church increased in numbers, and its prosperity was mirrored in the prosperity of the empire. The removal of pagan idols and the simultaneous affirmation of Christianity by Constantine functioned as certain echoes of Old Testament kings whose own reigns were judged by their faithfulness – or lack thereof – to God. In the *labarum*, a type of the cross, the power of Christ over the world had now become the standard of victory for the Roman Empire.

Sozomen chronicles the administration of Constantine as a time of prosperity for both the Church and the Roman Empire. The churches were increasing in number daily (perhaps an allusion to Acts 16:5) as a result of Constantine's benevolent rule, which

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<sup>69</sup> Sozomen, *HE* pref. 11 (SC 306, 96-98).

<sup>70</sup> Sozomen, *HE* pref. 9 (SC 306, 96).

brought an end to persecution in that region of the world.<sup>71</sup> As the empire prospered, so the Church did likewise. Christians now found places of service in government. Churches that had been damaged during the ‘Great Persecution’ were under repair and restoration. Soldiers who sought to worship God found accommodation for their practice. Sunday was recognized as a Sabbath day, and judicial business was outlawed on that one day every week.<sup>72</sup>

Earlier we noted that Eusebius blamed the ‘Great Persecution’ on divine judgment against the Christians for their sloth and abuse of freedoms.<sup>73</sup> In his ecclesiastical history, Sozomen credits divine Providence as the agent behind the prosperity of the empire and Church; furthermore, Providence extended special protection to Constantine during the war with Licinius. Unlike the Israelite kings of the Old Testament who “did evil in the sight of the LORD” by permitting the worship of false gods, Constantine extended gratitude to Christ for his victory, and then exhorted his subjects to abandon paganism in favor of the Christian religion.<sup>74</sup>

As Eusebius had chronicled in his ecclesiastical history, Sozomen places Constantine in the divine economy of salvation. The scriptural pattern found in the Deuteronomistic histories is integrated by Sozomen into the narrative of Constantine’s reign (Deut 8; 10; 17:14-20). Sozomen also follows Eusebius in applying the scriptural texts as the means to interpret all of world history, whether it be that of the Romans or the

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<sup>71</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.6.1 (SC 306, 132). Αἱ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχομένην ὑπὸ Κωνσταντίνου ἐκκλησίαι καταθυμῶς ἔπραττον καὶ ὁσημέραι ἐπεδίδουν εὖνου καὶ ὁμόφρονος βασιλέως εὐεργεσιῶν ἀξιούμεναι·

<sup>72</sup> These examples are located in Sozomen, *HE* 1.8.

<sup>73</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 8.1.7 (SC 55, 5).

<sup>74</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.8.9 (SC 306, 144-146).

Church.<sup>75</sup> The use of biblical typology to chronicle the ‘marriage’ of Constantine and the Church refers back to the apostolic witness about Jesus. Constantine’s prosperity points to Christ, who is the Lord of history and source of the emperor’s fortune.

As found in the Deuteronomistic histories, those kings “who did right in the sight of the LORD,” e.g. Hezekiah and Josiah, held in common a reformation of Israelite religious cultic practices. Through legislative channels the government administration renewed the Torah traditions. Temple worship was identified as the central marker in the covenant between YHWH and Israel. Any religious practice that included foreign gods was removed by the “good” kings. Hezekiah destroyed the high places that were dedicated to the worship of Baal (2 Kings 18:4). Josiah’s list of actions against foreign religious practices is too long to list here (2 Kings 23). In addition to removing the worship of foreign gods from Judah, Josiah called for a re-affirmation of the covenant based on the Book of the Law, and reinstated the Passover festival. For their faithfulness to YHWH in abolishing alien deities, the Deuteronomistic historian approves of the “good” kings as servants of God; furthermore, their kingdoms prospered and the people received divine blessings.

In Sozomen’s narrative, Constantine fulfills the type of the “good” king by legally sanctioning Christian religious practices and abolishing pagan customs. Confessors who had been exiled during the ‘Great Persecution’ returned to their former stations in life.<sup>76</sup> Christians were no longer barred from high ranking appointments in the army.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.1.12 (SC 306, 114).

<sup>76</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.8.3 (SC 306, 140).

<sup>77</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.8.4 (SC 306, 140).

Confiscated property was restored to its previous proprietor. Posts in Roman government were now open to Christian occupants.<sup>78</sup> Clergy were exempted from taxation, and bishops were commissioned with judicial responsibilities.<sup>79</sup> Like the good kings of Israel, Constantine balanced the legal prescriptions for the religious practices of God with countermeasures against “false” customs. Divination, pagan festivals, and the dedication of pagan architecture were curtailed under Constantine’s reign.<sup>80</sup> Temples were allowed to fall into disrepair, so that people came to despise the former traditions of their ancestors as errors.<sup>81</sup> The Roman people responded by imitating their emperor. They entered the churches in great numbers, and even destroyed temples and statues of the pagan deities.<sup>82</sup> So great was the reach of Constantine’s decision that even barbarian tribes were converted.

Thus far we have seen Sozomen depict Constantine as a type of the good kings as chronicled by the Deuteronomistic historian. In the case of the *labarum*, however, he becomes the type of the Christian convert, i.e. the Roman centurion who witnessed the crucifixion and exclaimed: “Truly this is the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). Borrowing from Eusebius’ *VC*, Sozomen observes that Constantine receives a vision of the cross. He then adds to Eusebius’ account by chronicling an expanded narrative of the emperor’s call to

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<sup>78</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.8.5 (SC 306, 142).

<sup>79</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.9.5 (SC 306, 152).

<sup>80</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.8.5 (SC 306, 142). In the *Vita Constantini*, Eusebius includes a letter from Constantine that allows Romans to retain possession of their temples and holy places. Barnes argues that his silence in regards to their cult practices implicitly implies their prohibition. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 2.48-60 (GCS 7, 61); Barnes, *Constantine*, 109-111.

<sup>81</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 2.5.6 (SC 306, 252).

<sup>82</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 2.5.9 (SC 306, 254).

Christian priests for an explanation of the symbolism he had witnessed.<sup>83</sup> Once the priests open the Scriptures and explain to him the economy of God's salvation – and the importance of the cross in that divine plan – Constantine responds by remodeling the Roman *labarum* into the cruciform shape. “It was apparent to the emperor what he needed to think about God.”<sup>84</sup> Like the centurion who perceived the true power of the cross, Constantine grasped the powerful symbolism behind the form of Jesus' execution. Here in the early chapters of his ecclesiastical history, Sozomen summarizes the divine economy – the cross is a symbol of victory over hell, Christ died on it only to be resurrected three days later, and a general resurrection of the dead will follow.<sup>85</sup> The plan of salvation is even punctuated by the reminder that only those who are initiated into the church will receive immortality of the soul.

In the skillful writing of Sozomen, the *labarum* never loses its religious significance, even after it becomes the military standard of the Roman army. Constantine kept it in his sights as a reminder of the divine victory over death and hell, and by it soldiers were persuaded to worship the Christian God. Finally, Sozomen punctuates the supernatural power of the cross by reporting the remarkable anecdote that no soldier who

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<sup>83</sup> Eusebius, *HE* 1.28-32. Cf. Stephenson, *Constantine*, 182-187; Lenski, “The Reign of Constantine,” 71; Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 201-204. Both Stephenson and Lenski note that there is no extant evidence outside of Eusebius to indicate that the *labarum* became an imperial standard before the 320s. On the other hand, Drake finds that a coin issued in 315 includes the symbol on Constantine's helmet, which indicates that the emperor himself did wear it.

<sup>84</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.3.4 (SC 306, 124): ἀλλὰ περιφανῶς ἐδείχθη τῷ βασιλεῖ, ἥ χορὴ περὶ θεοῦ νομίζειν. Eusebius had emphasized that the symbol was in the shape of the chi-rho; Sozomen, on the other hand, emphasizes its cruciform aspect.

<sup>85</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.3.4-5 (SC 306, 124).

wore the standard in battle became a casualty of war.<sup>86</sup> All of these signs point to God's providential care for Constantine and his reformed empire.

In Sozomen's ecclesiastical history, the Council of Nicaea – convened by Constantine – faithfully preserved the faith that had been delivered to them from the beginning.<sup>87</sup> On this episode Sozomen parallels Socrates' priority on Constantine's call for unity, peace, and harmony. Sozomen's unique contribution to the council is the account of the 'defeat' of the pagan philosophers by Christian confessors. Constantine is not left silent here; he authorizes Alexander of Byzantium (anachronistically labeled 'Constantinople') to dispute with the philosophers, as they had complained to the emperor about his abandonment of pagan traditions. While Sozomen recognizes Alexander with the miracle of silencing the philosophers, the story does identify Constantine with the authority to command the bishop to debate them on behalf of the gospel. Constantine is not the "bishop to the Gentiles" in Sozomen's history as he is depicted by Eusebius. The emperor has his own apostolic role that is similar, but unequal to, those of episcopal successors. His function is that of ruling the empire, and indeed prospering it, through personal piety, legislative acts in alignment with church doctrines, and the abolishment of pagan traditions.

#### *Theodosius: The Pious Emperor*

Having established the model Christian emperor in Constantine, Sozomen finds another apostolic ruler in Theodosius I. While he closely follows Socrates' chronology in narrating this era, Sozomen does offer a number of unique contributions that reveal his

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<sup>86</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.4.4 (SC 306, 128).

<sup>87</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 1.17.6 (SC 306, 196).



own particular interpretation of Theodosius' reign. In this historical iteration, both Constantine and Theodosius direct their subjects to the truth of the gospel by exhorting Nicene orthodoxy; their actions are validated by God through supernatural witness.

In February 380 Theodosius issued the *cunctos populos* edict, a legislative order that defined and enforced the Nicene faith.<sup>88</sup> Citing the edict, Sozomen applauds the emperor's desire to lead his subjects to the faith of the Apostle Peter, the chief of the apostles. In other words, Sozomen credits Theodosius with the intention of 'handing over' (παρέδωκε, the aorist form of παραδίδωμι) the faith, just as the apostles passed it on to their successors.<sup>89</sup> The same faith can be witnessed in the contemporary professions of Damasus of Rome and Peter of Alexandria. Moreover, the title of the 'catholic' church is to be reserved for those who acknowledge *homoousian* dogma, viz. the Father, Son, and Spirit are three persons of the Trinity in equal majesty.<sup>90</sup>

Earlier we documented Socrates' moderate narrative of the Theodosian era.<sup>91</sup> The *cunctos populos* is suspiciously absent in his history, and perhaps with good reason. If the primary goal of Socrates' account was the promotion of a milder emperor, then the edict might be difficult to explain. We can construe from this evidence that the historian wanted to promote the moderate aspect of Theodosius from his own Novatian proclivity – inclusivity is desirable for everyone who stands inside the Nicene tent. Sozomen does not completely exclude this suggestion from his own account; he mitigates the impact of

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<sup>88</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 7.4.6 (SC 516, 84). Cf. Williams and Friell, *Theodosius*, 53.

<sup>89</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 7.4.6 (SC 516, 84).

<sup>90</sup> *Codex Theodosianus* 16, 1-2.

<sup>91</sup> Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople*, 151.

the edict interpreting Theodosius' aim as a desire for uniformity rather than persecution.<sup>92</sup> Sozomen, however, prioritizes Theodosius' responsibility to care for the souls of his subjects. Legalized enforcement of the true worship of the Most High God, as represented in the Nicene formula, is interpreted as a benevolent form of imperial rule.

On the question of the imperial ruler as a 'type' of the biblical king in Sozomen's ecclesiastical history, Theodosius parallels Constantine as the model Christian emperor. Theodosius was born to Nicene parents, baptized by a Nicene bishop, and convened a council (Constantinople 381) that confirmed Nicene orthodoxy.<sup>93</sup> He sought to unify the empire under one religion, and to unify the churches under one creed. He limited the growth of paganism while providing additional opportunities for Christians.<sup>94</sup> Like Constantine, Theodosius favored persuasion over persecution. On the other hand, if we take into account personal piety, Theodosius actually supersedes Constantine as the model Christian emperor. The latter remained unbaptized until his deathbed; he was never accountable to a bishop for his personal transgressions. Theodosius, however, was baptized early in his reign, and Sozomen records an account of Ambrose requiring personal confession and penance from the emperor on threat of excommunication.<sup>95</sup> The bishop rebuked Theodosius for ordering the slaughter of innocent citizens, and forbid him from entering the church at Milan. In a remarkable gesture of submission, the imperial

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<sup>92</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 7.12.12 (SC 516, 118-120).

<sup>93</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 7.4 (SC 516, 80-84).

<sup>94</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 7.15. In February 391 Theodosius extended the anti-pagan laws, including a reiteration of the ban on sacrifices and forbidding access to temples and shrines. Cf. Williams and Friell, *Theodosius*, 119ff.; King, *Emperor Theodosius*, 77-86.

<sup>95</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 7.25 (SC 516, 198-204).

ruler submitted himself to an ecclesiastical prelate. Sozomen notes his approval of Theodosius' humility and piety:

δημοσία δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐπὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὡμολόγησεν καὶ πάντα τὸν ὀρισθέντα αὐτῷ χρόνον εἰς μετάνοιαν, οἷά γε πενθῶν, βασιλικῷ κόσμῳ οὐκ ἐχρήσατο.<sup>96</sup>

Theodosius publicly confessed his sin in the church, and during the time set apart for penance, refrained from wearing his imperial ornaments, according to the usage of mourners.

The imperial ruler of Sozomen's history is invested with the apostolic responsibility to support Nicene Christianity through legislative action and the occasional convocation of ecclesiastical councils. They do not fall outside of the divine economy of salvation; emperors need the grace of God as does any other Christian disciple. Those rulers who can humbly submit to episcopal authority will find their piety approved by Sozomen.

### *Summary*

In Socrates' recounting of Theodosius' order to Demophilus – the 'Arians' were required to leave Constantinople – the tenor of the passage directs the reader to the emperor's priority in unifying the churches. Demophilus must leave the city because he rejects peace and harmony. Sozomen repeats the same tale – Demophilus must conform to Nicaea or vacate the city – but he offers some additional details to the story. Before the 'Arians' relinquished the churches of Constantinople, the Nicenes worshipped in the Church of Anastasia, a name that remembers the resurrection. Gregory of Nazianzus preached his theological orations there, which quickened the people because of the life-giving gospel that is Nicene orthodoxy. A pregnant woman fell to her death, and the

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<sup>96</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 7.25.7 (SC 516, 200). Other ancient versions of this event are found in Rufinus, *HE* 11.18; Paulinus, *Vita Ambrose* 24; Theodoret, *HE* 5.17. Theodoret's version recounts the event from Ambrose's perspective.

prayers of the people revived her; so powerful were the Nicene doctrines. Sozomen then turns to the churches that Demophilus vacated; Theodosius entered in and offered up a prayer. Sozomen concludes the section by remembering that the *homoousians* have possessed the houses of prayer in Constantinople ever since.<sup>97</sup>

Theodosius – the model apostolic Christian emperor in Sozomen’s history – incarnationally participates in his ecclesiastical drama. Sozomen’s Theodosius receives baptism, prayers, convenes an ecumenical council, and practices penance for the health of his own soul. Like Constantine, he is a type of the biblical rulers, whose personal devotion to God rained down blessings upon the kingdom. The prosperity of the empire is a mirror of the ruler’s spiritual health. Nicene emperors exercise personal piety, and God in turn blesses their subjects, often through supernatural demonstrations of his power.

### *Theodoret of Cyrus*

#### *Constantine: Divine Agent*

In the first book of his ecclesiastical history, Theodoret identifies Constantine as one whose calling – like that of the apostles – is from God.<sup>98</sup> He lists many of the same items as his predecessors in affirming the divine providence over the first Christian emperor: legislative action prohibited sacrifices to idols, temples were closed, churches were built (or in some cases rebuilt), and Christians were appointed to government positions. In Book I, the reign of Constantine, Theodoret names the Nicene bishops as the orthodox successors of the apostles. As prelate himself, we could predict that Theodoret

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<sup>97</sup> Sozomen, *HE* 7.5.7 (SC 516, 88).

<sup>98</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.2.2 (SC 501, 144); *HE* 1.1 (NPNF 2:3, 33).

might place himself in direct continuity with the apostles and the ‘fathers’ at Nicaea.

However, when we compare him to Socrates and Sozomen – who implicitly give the first Christian emperor an apostolic vocation – Theodoret explicitly names him as one whose calling is like the apostles, and who devoted himself to matters worthy of the apostles.

In his narration of the Council of Nicaea, Theodoret depicts Constantine as a “profoundly wise” agent who directs the attention of the reader to the apostolic character of the assembled bishops.<sup>99</sup> He arranges the council to provide the conditions by which the prelates could find unanimity among themselves. The various clergymen, like the apostle Paul, had suffered much, but also supernaturally performed many wonders. This “army of martyrs” was endowed with apostolic gifts. The divine character of Nicene orthodoxy mirrored the framers of its creed. In the opening session, Theodoret notes the emperor’s modesty in allowing the bishops to enter the palace hall first, while Constantine only seated himself after the assembled clergy sat themselves. He spoke as a son to a father. He kissed the wounds of the confessors, believing that he would receive a divine blessing from such intimate personal contact with a holy man.<sup>100</sup> Constantine acts like an icon, directing the reader’s attention to the holiness of the apostolic successors. The bishops were unified in faith through their adherence to the teachings of the apostles.<sup>101</sup> Constantine’s recognition for his intermediate role at Nicaea is subtle.

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<sup>99</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.1 (SC 501, 200); *HE* 1.6 (NPNF 2:3, 43). Trompf links Constantine’s “profound wisdom” in facilitating the Nicene council with his opposition to Eusebius of Nicomedia and even to his exile of Athanasius. Garry Trompf, “The Golden Chain of Byzantinism: The Tripartite Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret” *Phronema* 9 (1994): 26.

<sup>100</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.11.1 (SC 501, 234); *HE* 1.10 (NPNF 2:3, 48). Because the confessors remained faithful to Christ during persecution, Theodoret suggests that the doctrinal formulations arrived at by them at Nicaea carried greater authority. Kelhoffer, “The Search for Confessors at the Council of Nicaea,” 593.

<sup>101</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.8.14 (SC 501, 216); *HE* 1.7 (NPNF 2:3, 45).

Despite his status as imperial ruler, he submits himself to the authority of the council. There is no suggestion here that Constantine interjected the term *homoousios* into the proceedings. The bishops themselves come together in concord; Constantine provides the conditions for unanimity, he does not force it upon them.<sup>102</sup> Eustathius of Antioch lays a wreath on the emperor's head, a demonstration that Theodoret recognizes the imperial authority of the emperor to guard the apostolic authority of the episcopal successors.

Theodoret records no less than seven letters written by Constantine on various subjects, including the celebration of Easter, bishops who defied the council of Nicaea, and an invocation to Sapor II, king of Persia, requesting cessation of persecution against Christians in that empire. In these epistles, we find once again that Constantine prioritized his responsibility to unify the churches in matters of both ecclesial practice and doctrine. In his encyclical letter following Nicaea, he commends the agreement of the churches to practice the Paschal feast on the same day every year.<sup>103</sup> In his letter to the Nicomedians, he disapproves of Eusebius' schismatic attitude, not because the latter deplored the doctrine of *homoousios*; he disrupts the unity that is otherwise consummated among the bishops.<sup>104</sup> While Theodoret writes approvingly of Constantine in his pithy comments surrounding these epistles, it is his exhortation to Sapor II of Persia that inspires his most laudatory expositions.<sup>105</sup> The historian notes that Constantine watches

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<sup>102</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.7.13 (SC 501, 206); *HE* 1.6 (NPNF 2:3, 44).

<sup>103</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.10 (SC 501, 226-234); *HE* 1.9 (NPNF 2:3, 47-48).

<sup>104</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.20 (SC 501, 276-280); *HE* 1.19 (NPNF 2:3, 56-57).

<sup>105</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.25 (SC 501, 298-306); *HE* 1.24 (NPNF 2:3, 59-60). Trompf asserts that this is the "high point" of Constantine's virtue and piety in Book 1; he contrasts the emperor's "worthy death" with the violent death of the Christian persecutor Valerian in Persia. For Theodoret, this serves as an example of God's divine plan to destroy iniquity and prosper the empire. Trompf, "The Golden Chain of Byzantinism," 26.

over Christians, not only in his own realm, but even defends Christian subjects in foreign jurisdictions. For his faithfulness, the emperor is specially protected by God, and finds the Romans to be obedient subjects. Theodoret observes that other writers find Constantine to be worthy of proclamation. He devotes his mind to matters worthy of the apostles, even in the face of enemies who seek to destroy the Church.<sup>106</sup>

The motif of Christian emperors in the role of the “good kings” of the Hebrew Scriptures is repeated by Theodoret. In his ecclesiastical history, the bishop-historian links Constantine to David, albeit in a surprising manner.<sup>107</sup> Having lauded the emperor for his role in supporting the bishops at Nicaea, Theodoret was faced with the need to explain why Constantine acted duplicitously at the end of his reign by exiling Athanasius and restoring the exiled anti-Nicene bishops Eusebius and Theognis to their respective sees in Nicomedia and Nicaea. In an effort to preserve Constantine’s reputation, Theodoret reminds his readers that David once succumbed to deception by Ziba, the former servant of Saul, who duped the Hebrew king into giving him land by spreading lies against Mephibosheth, Saul’s grandson.<sup>108</sup> Just as David fell victim to the work of a “rogue” (μαστιγίας), so also did Constantine become the prey of anti-Nicene predators.<sup>109</sup> Theodoret concludes his apology of the first Christian emperor by

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<sup>106</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.25.14 (SC 501, 306); *HE* 1.24 (NPNF 2:3, 60). Ὁ μὲν οὖν πανεύφημος βασιλεὺς τὰς ἀποστολικὰς φροντίδας ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ περιέφερον, οἱ δὲ τῆς ἰερωσύνης ἡξιωμένοι οὐ μόνον οἰκοδομεῖν οὐκ ἐβούλοντο, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀνορύττειν ἐπεχείρουν θεμέλια.

<sup>107</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.33.1-3 (SC 501, 326); *HE* 1.31 (NPNF 2:3, 64).

<sup>108</sup> 2 Samuel 16:1-4; 2 Samuel 19:24-30. Rapp inexplicably argues that Theodoret only mentioned the Old Testament twice in his *HE*, both times to negatively castigate non-Christian or heretical emperors. Rapp, “Old Testament Models for Emperors,” in *The Old Testament in Byzantium* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010): 184-185.

<sup>109</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.33.2 (SC 501, 326); *HE* 1.31 (NPNF 2:3, 64).

expressing the hope that the latter's reputation will not be tarnished by the weakness of his human nature. Despite his failures late in life, Constantine was depicted as one of God's faithful servants.<sup>110</sup>

*Character of Emperors.* Having described Constantine as a man of wisdom and faith, Theodoret established a model for the ideal emperor. Pro-Nicene rulers, such as Jovian and Valentinian, were also depicted as men of outstanding character and virtue, while the 'Arian' emperor Valens was portrayed as one who was weak of character. The historian introduces Jovian as a man whose struggle against impiety was as courageous as the martyrs.<sup>111</sup> He brought an end to Julian's pagan revival, and recalled the bishops from exile. His outreach to Athanasius is met with praise by Theodoret, who copies the former's epistle, approving of the bishop's exhortation that Jovian maintain the faith defined at Nicaea, which is in accord with apostolic doctrine.<sup>112</sup> Jovian's successor, Valentinian, was found by Theodoret to be an emperor who excelled in all of the cardinal virtues – courage, prudence, temperance, and justice.<sup>113</sup> The historian provides examples of Valentinian's imperial wisdom through his support of Ambrose as the newly

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<sup>110</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 1.34.2 (SC 501, 328); *HE* 1.32 (NPNF 2:3, 64). Book I ends with a quotation from 1 Samuel 2:30: "Those who glorify me I will glorify, and those who despise me I will despise." Parvis notes that Theodoret's history highlights the virtuous need for piety in the emperor; Constantine is the model of the devout ruler. Parvis, "Theodoret's Bias," 24.

<sup>111</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.1.2 (SC 530, 182). Παρρησία γὰρ κατὰ τῆς ἀσεβείας χρησάμενος τοῦ τυράννου τὴν δυναστείαν οὐκ ἔδεισεν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν προθυμίαν τοῖς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν μάρτυσι συνετέταχτο. Theodoret's enthusiasm for Jovian's reign, including his treaty with Persia, is striking when one compares how humiliating his truce was for the Romans. Theodoret prioritizes that the soldiers came home safely from war, while neglecting to mention that the Romans retreated geographically while giving up claims to significant landmarks.

<sup>112</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.2.5 (SC 530, 186). Ὁ δὲ τοὺς λογιωτέρος τῶν ἐπισχόπων ἀγείρας ἀντέργαψε τὴν ἐν Νικαίᾳ ἐκτεθεῖσαν πίστιν φθλάττειν παρακαλῶν ὡς τοῖς ἀποστολικοῖς συμβαίνουσιν δόγμασιν.

<sup>113</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.6.1 (SC 530, 198); *HE* 4.5 (NPNF 2:3, 110).



acclaimed bishop of Milan, and his backing of the Council of Illyricum, which ratified the Nicene creed.<sup>114</sup> Valens, meanwhile, serves as the antithesis who proves the rule. Theodoret insists that he was orthodox in his early years, but betrayed apostolic truth because of moral weakness (τῆς ψυχῆς μαλακίαν).<sup>115</sup> Theodoret narratively links his weakness of character with that of Adam; they held in common wives who snared them into abandonment of truth.<sup>116</sup> Valens' fall from innocence echoes Constantine's indiscretions late in life – they both fell victim to the deceptions of others, in continuity with infamous biblical figures. Human nature is easily susceptible to the wiles of the devil, even those with the greatest responsibilities, i.e., Christian emperors.

#### *Theodosius I: Piety Through Submission*

Theodosius I was a ruler whose accomplishments on the battlefield had few rivals in the fourth century. Theodoret, however, extols the emperor as much for his virtues as a pious pro-Nicene patron as he does for his abilities as a warrior. The narration of Theodosius by Theodoret is reminiscent of Constantine, of whom it was written that he devoted himself to matters worthy of the apostles. The similarities between the two rulers are numerous. Constantine hosted Nicaea, while Theodoret convened the Council of Constantinople 381, which affirmed the Nicene creed. Constantine honored the bishops at Nicaea through submissive acts, i.e., kissing the confessors, while Theodosius prostrated himself before God according to the stipulations put before him by Ambrose.

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<sup>114</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.6-9 (SC 530, 198-218); *HE* 4.5-8 (NPNF 2:3, 110-113).

<sup>115</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.12.2 (SC 530, 228); *HE* 1.11 (NPNF 2:3, 115).

<sup>116</sup> Theodoret is alone among the ancient historians in chronicling Valens' supposed decline into heresy. Socrates writes that Valens was baptized by the Homoian bishop Eudoxius of Constantinople prior to ascending to the imperial college. Sozomen added that Valens was a zealous 'Arian.' Socrates, *HE* 4.1.6 (SC 505, 24); Sozomen, *HE* 6.6.10 (SC 495, 276).

Both emperors were men of piety and courage who were favored by God in their respective military campaigns. Because they served the Roman Empire as pious and orthodox rulers, Theodoret established Constantine and Theodosius as model emperors.

The account of Theodosius I in this iteration of the *HE* begins with an assessment of his excellence as a military commander. Under his leadership the Romans overwhelmed the barbarians who had crossed the Danube river. The report of this victory reached emperor Gratian soon after Valens' defeat at Adrianople. In need of a colleague who could help protect the empire from foreign enemies, Gratian elevated Theodosius to the imperial college. A common theme also emerges: orthodox emperors are blessed by God with victories on the battlefield, while heretical rulers receive no such divine favor. Theodoret's faithfulness resulted in the defeat of the barbarians, and the preservation of true piety during his reign.<sup>117</sup> By contrast, Valens had fought "against God," which culminated in the transference of divine support to the barbarians.<sup>118</sup>

Having confirmed his military prowess, Theodoret shifts the narrative to Theodosius' religious activities. Absent from this narrative is any mention of the emperor's illness and subsequent baptism in Thessalonica.<sup>119</sup> Instead, Theodoret chronicles a mysterious anecdote about the emperor and Meletius of Antioch, who was

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<sup>117</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.7.2 (SC 530, 354); *HE* 5.6 (NPNF 2:3, 135): βασιλεὺς ἀκραιφνή διεφύλαξε τὴν εὐσέβειαν.

<sup>118</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 4.34.2 (SC 530, 318); *HE* 4.30 (NPNF 2:3, 130). Cf. Trompf, "The Golden Chain of Byzantium, Part II," 25. This is the message of general Trajan to Valens, after Valens charged him with cowardice for retreating from the barbarians: ἀλλὰ σὺ προῖτη τὴν νίκην, κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ παρὰ ταττόμενος καὶ τὴν ἐκείνου ῥοπὴν προξενῶν τοῖς βαρβάροις.

<sup>119</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5.6 (SC 505, 160-162); Sozomen, *HE* 7.4 (SC 516, 80-84).

the first president of the Council of Constantinople in 381.<sup>120</sup> He reports that Theodosius was given a dream from God of Meletius investing him with the royal robe and crown. Upon arriving at the council, Theodosius excitedly approached the bishop, whom he recognized from the dream. They embraced, as the emperor showered Meletius with hugs and kisses. Having never seen the bishop before, Theodosius interpreted the dream as confirmation that the council's agenda to cure the Christian churches of the 'Arian' infection was divinely mandated. Theodoret soon thereafter affirms that the council did in fact ratify the Nicene creed.

Meletius would not be the only bishop honored by Theodosius. In the summer of 390 a riot in Thessalonica resulted in the deaths of several magistrates and one of Theodosius's senior officers. In his anger, the emperor ordered the massacre of 7,000 citizens.<sup>121</sup> At the time, he was staying in Milan, where Ambrose confronted him about the calamity. The bishop refused Theodosius' wish to enter the cathedral; public penance was required for readmission. Theodoret reports that Ambrose viewed the emperor as a tyrant who had violated divine justice, so that the bishop's judgment was justified.<sup>122</sup> He refused to bow to imperial persuasion, willing to risk the anger of a proud ruler. To Theodosius' credit, he accepted the punishment and performed the penance, prostrating

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<sup>120</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.8.1-3 (SC 530, 356-358); *HE* 5.6 (NPNF 2:3, 135). Meletius died soon after the council convened. Gregory of Nazianzus, named as bishop of Constantinople during one of the early sessions, took over as the new council president. Cf. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 703-704.

<sup>121</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.17.5 (SC 530, 402); *HE* 5.17 (NPNF 2:3, 143). Theodosius ordered the people of Thessalonica to attend the circus. During the show, soldiers mowed them down "like wheat at harvest time." Robert Louis Wilken, "A Constantinian Bishop: St. Ambrose of Milan," in *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*, eds. L. Gregory Jones, Reinhard Hütter, and C. Rosalee Vallosio Ewell (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005): 85.

<sup>122</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.18.8, 11 (SC 530, 408); *HE* 5.17 (NPNF 2:3, 143-144). Private absolution was not an option in the early church. Penitential discipline was a public matter. During this time, penitents were forbidden from receiving the Eucharist. Wilken, "A Constantinian Bishop," 86.

himself in the church while quoting a psalm of David: “My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to your word” (Psalm 119:25). He was not above the church.<sup>123</sup> His copious tears demonstrated to Ambrose the emperor’s submission to the ecclesiastical hierarchy – as well as his virtuous (ἀρετῇ)<sup>124</sup> character, filled with faithfulness (ὁ πιστότατος βασιλεὺς)<sup>125</sup> and piety (εὐσεβείας).<sup>126</sup> Following his act of repentance, Theodosius acts as the pious emperor. His wife Flacilla lauds his guidance of the empire, and his devotion to worship of God.<sup>127</sup> He orders the destruction of the pagan idols, bringing an end to the work begun by Constantine, who had first shut the temples.<sup>128</sup> Finally, he was responsible for the peace in the churches at Antioch and Rome, which had experienced controversy over ecclesiastical appointments.<sup>129</sup>

### *Summary*

In many ways, Theodoret’s definition of the apostolic vocation held by Christian emperors is redundant of the narratives already seen in the histories of Socrates and Sozomen. All three historians present Constantine as the model emperor for his actions in protecting Christian legislation, closing the pagan temples, and hosting the Council of

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<sup>123</sup> Ambrose of Milan, *Letter* 11, extra collectionem [51].14. CSEL 82.

<sup>124</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.18.23 (SC 530, 412); *HE* 5.17 (NPNF 2:3, 144).

<sup>125</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.18.19 (SC 530, 410); *HE* 5.17 (NPNF 2:3, 144).

<sup>126</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.18.24 (SC 530, 412); *HE* 5.17.145.

<sup>127</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.18 (NPNF 2:3, 145).

<sup>128</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.20 (NPNF 2:3, 146). Trompf observes a continuity in Theodosius’ presentation of imperial rulers. Constantine was the first emperor to shut the pagan temples, Julian re-opened them, Jovian put an interdict on idol-worshipping, Valens allowed everyone to worship as they liked, and Theodosius ordered the idols to be destroyed. Trompf, “The Golden Chain of Byzantium,” 31.

<sup>129</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 5.23 (NPNF 2:3, 148-149).

Nicaea. Theodosius I was found to be a worthy successor to Constantine for convening the Council of Constantinople in 381, where the Nicene creed was confirmed. Theodoret contributes to the definition by portraying Constantine and Theodosius as men who honored the bishops. We find episodes for both of them that demonstrate their piety, faithfulness, and service to the church. Just as the good kings of Israel listened to the wisdom of the Hebrew priests, the good emperors of Rome recognized the episcopal authority of the apostolic successors. For their work in preserving the tradition through the authority of the Nicene creed, the emperors are likewise proclaimed as apostolic servants of God.

### *Conclusion*

Among the ancient ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius of Caesarea established a precedent in his depiction of the Roman emperor Constantine. The first Christian ruler – the “bishop” to those outside the Church – was revered as one commissioned by God to defend ecclesial interests through pro-Christian legislation. His efforts to rescue the Church from persecution earned Constantine lofty praise from Eusebius. The victory over Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge reminded the historian of Moses leading the Hebrews across the Red Sea, where God overwhelmed the forces in the Red Sea. Examples such as this led Eusebius to declare that the Christian God was Constantine’s patron. Polytheism and polyarchy were replaced by monotheism and monarchy. Furthermore, the emperor was a pious servant of God who supported public charity and the construction of churches. The *Vita Constantini* concludes by announcing that Constantine inaugurated a new age of peace and prosperity in the Christian Roman Empire.

In writing his own assessment of Constantine, Socrates emphasizes the religious responsibility of the emperor to unify the empire. He quotes the letter written by the emperor to Alexander and Arius, which urges them to settle their dispute in a peaceful manner. When a resolution cannot be found, he intervenes into ecclesial affairs by hosting the Council of Nicaea. In Socrates' account, Constantine's role is to promote unity and concord among the gathered bishops. The Nicene creed – with its emphasis upon the essential unity of the Father and Son – becomes the basis for ecclesial unity. Those who reject Constantine's council separate themselves from the catholic churches by divorcing themselves from orthodox dogma. We see this theme repeated in the account of Theodosius I, who was baptized by a *homoousian* bishop before summoning the Council of Constantinople 381, which he hoped would unify the churches.

Sozomen's interpretation of the emperor's apostolic vocation begins with his dedication to Theodosius II, who is extolled for his excellence in virtue, piety, and humility. These are desirable qualities in a ruler, especially since the historian finds parallels between the "good" kings of Hebrew Scripture and the "good" emperors of the Christian empire. The prosperity of the emperors is mirrored in that of the empire. The narrative that began with Hezekiah and Josiah – kings who renewed the religious traditions that honored Yahweh and destroyed the 'pagan' idols – continues with Constantine and Theodosius, who preserved the apostolic tradition through ecclesiastical councils and anti-pagan legislation.

Theodoret incorporates many of these same motifs into his presentation of the Christian emperors. They are expected to be virtuous and pious men, who take seriously the responsibility of unifying the empire in accordance with Nicaea. This iteration of the

*HE* distinguished itself through its presentation of Christian rulers as men who honored the ecclesial bishops, showing a measure of deference to them that culminated with Ambrose's confrontation against Theodosius I. Furthermore, Constantine and Theodosius both stumbled in their respective spiritual journeys, which resulted in Theodoret's lamentations that evoked the psalms of David to demonstrate the fallibility that comes so easily to men who wield such awesome power.

Our examination of the apostolic vocation dedicated to Christian rulers began with Eusebius' assertion that Constantine perceived himself as a bishop to those outside the Church, and concluded with Theodoret's depiction of Constantine and Theodosius humbly honoring the prelates with kisses and tears. The shared message of the ancient historians is that God blesses the empire that is ruled by the emperor who submits himself to God. As it was in the historical chronicles of the Hebrews, so it continues in contemporary times. Because the Christians worshipped the same God as the ancient Hebrews, they could expect a continuity in the respective narratives. The pattern of the good king in the Old Testament was available to the fourth-century rulers; it was their responsibility to live up to high standard that required of them faithfulness and piety in the face of 'pagan' temptations. The key to faithfulness and unity was Nicaea; its' creed served as the epitome of the apostolic tradition. Defense of the Nicene creed was essential to the continuance of orthodoxy. In the minds of the ancient historians, no higher calling could be expected for Christian emperors than the preservation of the apostolic tradition.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

The transposition of the Nicene creed, the monastics, and Christian emperors into the apostolic tradition as an essential element – as interpreted by the ecclesiastical historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret – has been a neglected subject among modern scholars of late antiquity. This dissertation has surveyed the writings of the ancient historians to examine how they interpreted the evolution of the tradition in the century after Nicaea. I have argued that they found the Nicene creed to be the epitome of the apostolic tradition; the pro-Nicene monks were found to be the perfect exemplars of apostolic conduct; and Christian emperors were expected to defend Nicene orthodoxy through legislative and conciliar channels.

The fifth-century historians received their interpretations of the apostolic tradition from early Christian exegetes, e.g. Irenaeus, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea. In Chapter Two we sought to demonstrate the essential foundation of the tradition in the New Testament texts. Paul interpreted *παράδοσις* as the testimony of the apostles, preserved in the *kerygma*. Irenaeus, in his reasoning with the gnostics, argued that tradition had been passed on from the apostles to the churches through Scripture; moreover, the apostles provided a means (*ὑπόθεσις*) to rightly read the biblical texts by means of the *κανών* of truth, viz. the rule of faith. Both the Scriptures and the *κανών* were preserved by the bishop-presbyters of churches everywhere the gospel was preached, including Rome, Lyons, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. Tertullian and



Origen added that the *καὶνὼν* ensured the unified apostolic *kerygma* – which mirrors the harmony of God’s intra-Trinitarian being – has been preserved in the co-inherence of Scripture and Tradition. Eusebius of Caesarea – the “Father of church history” – inserted this notion of the apostolic tradition in his ecclesiastical history by recording the lists of episcopal successors in the apostolic sees and chronicling the Scriptures as the locus of the divine revelation of Jesus Christ in the witness of the Church.

The ‘Arian controversy’ in the fourth century altered the way that Christian churches interpreted the apostolic tradition. Alexander and Arius both appealed to Scripture and Tradition as authorities in defense of their respective positions. The Council of Nicaea, believed by Constantine to have quelled the controversy, instead became the lightning rod for ecclesial division that lasted decades, and in some locations, centuries. Socrates and Sozomen, who created their narrative from the polemical writings of Athanasius, asserted that the Nicene creed perfectly summarized apostolic dogma on the essential nature of God; the ‘Eusebians’ – later to be called ‘Arians’ – could no longer be associated with the catholic churches due to their schismatic opposition against Nicaea. The Constantinopolitan historians were so invested in Athanasius’ narrative that they failed to see the evolution of Nicene orthodoxy in response to conciliar and political events of the time. For example, the ontological distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* was unknown to the Nicene bishops. Yet the Council of Alexandria (362) later clarified that *ousia* implied Triune unity, while *hypostasis* implied distinction – and the council members who made this theological ‘adjustment’ were accepted as pro-‘Nicaenes.’ Meanwhile, Theodoret chronicled a narrative that recognized the evolving emergence of a Nicene party in the 350s. Because

of his association with the ‘Antiochene school,’ coupled with his conflict against Cyril of Alexandria, the bishop of Cyrus could interpret the events after Nicaea in a different light. The Nicene creed, and its watchword *homoousios* – did not immediately become the orthodox standard. It was not until the 350s that the controversy escalated to a point that Athanasius and others committed to the Nicene creed as the apposite theological response to the ‘Arian’ position. The Nicene party embraced the argument that the Son is begotten from the Father in essence, while their opponents countered that the Son was begotten according to the Father’s will.

When it became apparent to Christian leaders of the time that the received apostolic tradition could not settle the controversy, they turned to conciliarly approved creedal statements as instruments to meticulously define orthodox doctrine. Opponents of Nicaea saw the rise of Nicene orthodoxy as a means to exclude other voices and silence those who refused to embrace a grammar (*homoousios*) not found in Scripture. Proponents of Nicaea, on the other hand, perceived themselves as protectors of the apostolic deposit of faith – entrusted by the original witnesses to preserve divine revelation for succeeding generations. The fifth-century historians approved of *homoousios* – despite its’ lack of explicit scriptural testament – because it captured the essence of the Father-Son relationship, as outlined in the biblical texts. The ‘unanimity’ and harmony of the fathers at Nicaea, coupled with the endorsement of the monastic communities and Constantine, further enhanced its validity as the ecumenical standard.

In the histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, Nicaea became the primary lens for interpreting the apostolic tradition. We find numerous citations of various derivations for ‘apostolic.’ Socrates and Sozomen name the churches in Alexandria and

Antioch ἀποστολικῇ, in recognition as their status as being founded by the apostles.<sup>1</sup>

Socrates credits the younger Apollinaris as one who taught the gospels and the apostolic doctrines.<sup>2</sup> Theodoret similarly names Flavianus and Diodorus – future bishops whose respective ministries both initiated in Antioch – as champions of the apostolic doctrines.<sup>3</sup>

These passages serve as examples that the historians perceived of apostolicity as the fulfillment of a divine promise to preserve the gospel against heretical enemies, i.e., ‘Arians.’ The preservation of the apostolic *kerygma* requires faithful adherents, whether they be bishops, monks, emperors, etc. The episcopal succession that Eusebius of Caesarea appealed to as a guarantor of the apostolic tradition was replaced with a spiritual succession in the histories of his continuators. This dissertation has focused on two such witnesses: monks and emperors. They are promoted as exemplars of apostolic succession for their piety and virtue in defending Nicaea as the epitome of the gospel. The catholic Church of the fifth century stands in continuity with the apostolic sees of the first century because the Nicene creed preserves the same Tradition that is found in the writings of Paul, Irenaeus, and Origen. The apostolic appellation does not need to be limited to the monks and emperors, as the above examples may demonstrate. However, these two witnesses are peculiar in their influence and power in persuading the Church to adhere to the truth of Nicene orthodoxy.

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<sup>1</sup> Socrates, *HE* 1.9.8 (SC 477, 116); Sozomen, *HE* 1.17.2 (SC 306, 194).

<sup>2</sup> Socrates, *HE* 3.16.5 (SC 493, 310). The apostolic doctrines likely refer to the writings of the apostles as preserved in the New Testament.

<sup>3</sup> Theodoret, *HE* 2.24.5 (SC 501, 448); *HE* 2.19 (NPNF 2:3, 85). In *HE* 4.25 (SC)/*HE* 4.22 (NPNF), Theodoret makes it clear that the ‘apostolic’ qualities of Flavianus and Diodorus are in opposition to the blasphemy of the ‘Arians.’

In Chapter Four we surveyed the narratives of the monks and desert fathers in Egypt and Palestine in the ecclesiastical histories. These holy men and women were lionized for their faithfulness in practicing ascetic disciplines and fidelity to Nicene orthodoxy. Athanasius magnified St. Antony as the ideal Christian and monk; fifth-century historians linked him to biblical figures of the past. This living martyr exemplified in himself rigorous ascetic practices and opposition to ‘Arian’ theology. The hagiographical anecdotes of the desert fathers are no more apparent than in the chronicling of their defense of Nicaea, demonstrated through their resistance to Valens, who sought to suppress support of Nicene orthodoxy.

The historians also found their own unique voices in promoting the monastic vocation. Socrates lauded Theodosius II as the ideal monarch due to his quasi-monastic conduct. Sozomen depicted the monastic way of life as a *philosophia*. Like secular philosophers, the monks pursued virtue for the purification of the soul; however, their pursuit is perfected by the worship of the Triune God, “in spirit and in truth.” Theodoret was the only one of these three historians to have practiced in a monastic community. His *Historia Religiosa* focused on Syriac monks, as did his ecclesiastical history. His biographical anecdotes demonstrated that the monks fled to the solitude of the desert to escape the increasing secularization of the church that had come to be unduly influenced by the state.

In Chapter Five we addressed the second witness to the apostolicity of Nicaea: Christian emperors. The ancient historians approved of the pro-Nicene rulers as akin to the “good” kings of Hebrew history, while the anti-Nicene emperors disturbed the peace and harmony of a unified church by introducing schism. Eusebius of Caesarea

established the precedent in his biography of Constantine. While his successors, most notably Socrates, criticized Eusebius for his encomiastic praise of the first Christian emperor, they followed his lead in recognizing Constantine as an apostolic witness to the lordship of Christ. The ruler's conversion account demonstrated to the historians God's supernatural providence over the whole of creation. Constantine was entrusted with preserving the peace of the empire – a task that required him to seek harmony and unity in the Church now that he proclaimed himself in the kingdom of God. His letters, quoted verbatim by the historians, record that Constantine sought resolution to theological disputes in order to maintain wholeness and tranquility among the churches. His efforts to unify the churches in one accord at Nicaea were received with approval from later historians. The divine unity expressed in the doctrine of *homoousios* was parallel with the ecclesial unity of Christian churches. Socrates argued that the Nicene council adopted the doctrines of the apostles by submitting to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The tumultuous affairs of the Church in the subsequent decades caused the historians to interpret the ascendancy of Nicene orthodoxy and Nicene emperors as acts of divine providence. They reasoned that both the Church and the empire entered into periods of crisis due to the rejection of Nicene theology by Constantius and Valens. According to divine providence, Theodosius I was elevated to Caesar upon the death of Valens, and received baptism from a Nicene bishop. His support of the Council of Constantinople in 381, and the ratification of Nicaea, cemented his status as the true successor to Constantine. Consequently, the ancient historians asserted that Christian emperors were entrusted by God with an apostolic vocation to protect Nicene orthodoxy as the purest form of Catholicism.

The ecclesiastical histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret are three of the most cited texts of Late Antiquity in modern scholarship; however, they are often mined for their various primary source documents rather than analyzed for their theological expositions. This dissertation has demonstrated that examination of the theological agendas of the ancient historians aids us in better understanding the transposition of Nicaea, the monastics, and Christian emperors as necessary components into the apostolic tradition. Tradition, for these historians, is not a static device for excluding unwanted elements from ecclesial practice. Rather, the authority of Tradition is a handmaiden to the Church for preserving the original witness of the apostles from generation to generation. Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret identified Nicene orthodoxy as the new grammar for communicating ancient dogma to a Church in cultural and political upheaval.

## APPENDIX

### THE CREED OF NICAEA (325)

We believe in one God, the Father, almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;  
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten,  
that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God  
from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through  
Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who  
because of us men and because of our salvation came down and became incarnate,  
becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens,  
will come to judge the living and the dead;

And in the Holy Spirit.

But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and Before being born He was  
not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of  
God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is subject to alteration or change  
– these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.

### THE CREED OF CONSTANTINOPLE (381)

We believe in one God, the Father, almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things  
visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father  
before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of  
one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into existence, Who  
because of us men and because of our salvation came down from heaven, and was  
incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and was  
crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again  
on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended to heaven, and sits on  
the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge living and  
dead, of Whose kingdom there will be no end;

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with  
the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified, Who spoke  
through the prophets; and in one holy Catholic and apostolic Church. We confess  
one baptism to the remission of sins; we look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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