# Has the Sweeping Revisionism of the Arian Controversy Gone Too Far in Sidelining the Real Theological and Political Dispute that Shaped Christian Doctrine?

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## Short Abstract

The last three decades have produced a number of publications devoted to the revision of Athanasius of Alexandria's "Arian Controversy". The fruits of this re-evaluation highlight the complexities of post-Nicene theology long ignored in the shadow of Athanasius' crude "Arian" versus "orthodox" binary. It is now widely accepted in patristic studies that "Arian" was not a self-designation nor was the presbyter who lent his name to the heresy all that crucial a figure.

A handful of scholars have moved beyond these helpful developments to revise the "Arian Controversy" out of existence. For some, "Arianism" was a rhetorical construct of a power hungry and abusive bishop who indiscriminately branded his personal opponents. Likewise, this revisionist thesis dismisses the activity of any "Eusebians", opting for the complete rejection of conflicting "parties". What remains is not alternate theologies and a genuine dispute, but a phantasmal "Athanasian Arianism". This dissertation analyzes this re-shaping of the post-Nicene years and offers a modest remonstrance to the most extreme aspects of the "Arian Controversy" revision. The study does not want to return to a place of Athanasian hagiography, but rather argue that "Arian" served as a useful polemical heuristic to identify a distinct theology that the bishop (and others) found unacceptable. After outlining the erosion of the "Arian Controversy", the thesis marshals evidence supporting a substantive theological dispute over which divergent networks clashed. In this vein, the work wants to recapture a genuine *historical theology* in that not everything is reducible to politics. The thesis argues that there is a responsible way of reading Athanasius' charged polemic.

## Long Abstract

For over fifteen hundred years, students of church history spoke unquestioningly of the fourth century as dominated by an "Arian Controversy", congruent with the writings of the powerful bishop, Athanasius of Alexandria. As new insights materialized, scholars sidelined the once axiomatic "Arian" versus "orthodox" binary in favour of a more complicated picture of the times. That those Athanasius called "Arians" did not deliberately advocate on behalf of the presbyter is now generally accepted. Given Arius' diminished role in the conflicts following the initial outbreak, Athanasius' branding such a variety of opponents "Arians" long after the presbyter's death is infelicitous at least, if not caustic. It is now widely acknowledged that Athanasius' pigeonholing so many theologians into his own dichotomy ignores more nuanced thinkers like Marcellus of Ancyra, with whom Athanasius had many differences, and Eusebius of Caesarea, who might be a better example of Eastern theological consensus than Alexandria's embattled patriarch.

While each of these conclusions are well documented and helpful in understanding the post-Nicene years, there are some revisionists who go too far in eliminating an "Arian Controversy" altogether. This thread of fourth century scholarship comes close to reducing Athanasius' "Arianism" and his "Eusebians" to nothing more than linguistic constructs. "Arianism" reveals more about the bishop's precarious situation than it does about an identifiable theological and political movement. The revisionists advance the position that it was only after the exposure of Athanasius' ruthless behaviour that he "created Arianism" to solidify his power hold. In arguing that

"Arianism" is largely illusory, the revisionist trend has disparaged Athanasius to a point of contempt.

This dissertation wants to challenge this extreme form of revisionism and argue back that "Arianism" and an "Arian Controversy" as advanced by "Eusebians" can be useful categories in understanding this period of history. The goal is not to return to Athanasian devotion by adopting a crude "Arian" against "orthodoxy" binary, but rather to understand that distinct theological positions existed and Arius was the first, or at least the most successful expositor of the discourse Athanasius disliked. While Athanasius' writings certainly exhibit polemical flare, there is a responsible way of reading his texts that reveals serious tensions in how church leaders spoke about God. "Arianism" and the "Eusebians" can be understood as pejorative heuristics used to categorize defined ecclesio-political positions and networks. Thinking in terms of an "Arian Controversy" need not silence the more nuanced theologies of a Marcellus or an Asterius in the same way that there can be disagreements among colleagues without involving every individual member of the wider group. In arguing for an "Arian Controversy" rubric of comprehension, the dissertation goes some way in defending Athanasius' veracity. While the paper's aim is not to bolster Athanasius for his own sake, for he certainly had flaws, any attempt to defend the utility of an "Arian Controversy" inevitably goes some way in rehabilitating him. This dissertation wants to offer a modest riposte to the revision by analyzing a range of primary and secondary sources in order to marshal evidence for preserving, though in a modified way, the concept of an "Arian Controversy". In the larger picture, the aim is to recapture the possibility of a *historical theology*, where the study of history is found to be a legitimate medium to determine

theological issues. If "Arianism", of all things, can be reduced to Athanasius' political ambitions, *historical theology* is nearly lost.

The work begins with a survey of "Arian" scholarship. In order to push against the revisionism of the "Arian Controversy", it is important to make the case that such a re-evaluation has, in fact, occurred and that its advocates are identifiable. Some of the thinkers invoked in this chapter consciously reshaped "Arianism" and self-identify as "revisionists" while others seem to embrace this general trajectory in more subtle ways. In tracing the most influential works that moved the pendulum of fourth century scholarship, it becomes easier to see the slide into the more extreme version of interpretation. Having documented the shift to the elimination of the "Arian Controversy", the first chapter also flags several thinkers more resistant to this revision, lest this dissertation be treated suspiciously as a rarefied outlier.

The second chapter challenges three positions that reappear in the more extreme revisionism of the "Arian Controversy". That Athanasius "constructs" his opponents, that he is maliciously "rhetorical", and that he falsely categorizes his foes all need to be addressed. When these three areas are taken too far, they produce a host of unintended consequences. The chapter offers correctives on both the methodology and the conclusions of this kind of reconstruction. In a broader spectrum, it makes the case as to why this thesis needed to be written.

The third chapter analyzes primary texts to argue that the crucial elements of "Arianism" were in place before Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria. It was Alexander of Alexandria, not Athanasius, who was the first opponent of "Arianism". Once this is established, the work argues that Nicaea was not a loose compromise, but

rather a decisive victory for Alexandria's bishop. In addition to Alexander's influence, there is also evidence to show that Eustathius of Antioch was a rather fervent and prolific opponent of "Arianism". If much of "Arianism" was in place prior to Athanasius' becoming bishop, then this ought to moderate an "Athanasian Arianism". As for defining "Arianism", too few scholars recognize the consistency of Athanasius' polemic when the position he disliked can be typified by calling the Son a "creature". Athanasius' presentation of "Arianism" remained so steady across his career that scholars from Newman to Stead identified striking similarities between a pre-Nicene encyclical and the bishop's polemic in the 340's and 350's. This chapter really asks which part of Athanasius' "Arianism" does not find echoes in Alexander, Nicaea, or Eustathius.

Chapter four scrutinizes the other important prong of Athanasius' polemic, the activity of the "Eusebians". While Athanasius' use of "Arian" speaks more about a different theology, his use of the term "Eusebian" is more of an ecclesio-political claim. Some revisionists make the mistake of annulling the existence of the "Eusebians" because either, the few that Athanasius named disagreed on minor points of theology, or because the index of beliefs that might signify an "Arian" to the modern scholar cannot be found in the surviving sources. This exhibits the major error in thinking that there could be no connection between individuals if there was not ideological unanimity. This chapter argues for seeing the "Eusebians" as a *network* that experienced many forms of attachment and acted against the Alexandrian patriarchate for a variety of reasons.

The fifth chapter provides a test case for the revisionist claim that Athanasius placed all of his enemies in the "Arian" and "Eusebian" boxes. In studying the nuances of the relationship between Athanasius of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea, it

becomes clear that this was not true. This Eusebius defended Arius' freedom to teach his theology before Nicaea, yet the Caesarean intriguingly avoids Athanasius' harshest polemic and does not seem to have been a key member of the "Eusebians", named after the one from Nicomedia. Athanasius recognized the considerable overlap between Eusebius of Caesarea's theology and his own. That Athanasius spared Eusebius of Caesarea this branding shows he was more discriminating in labeling "Arians" and "Eusebians" than the revisionists claim.

Chapter six appraises the most recent scholarship on Constantine to argue that he was an informed and astute leader. Given his vast responsibilities, it is surprising that Constantine was so involved in the affairs over Arius. This leads to two conclusions. Primarily, for Constantine to be so concerned about this matter and to vacillate so explosively, there must have been some active movement of agitators. His response to the Alexandrian fissure holds striking parallels to how he handled the earlier Donatist schism, thus showing the seriousness of the threat. Secondly, Constantine's correspondence conveys the ideas of "Arians" and "Eusebians" thus implicating him in the development of these concepts. Again, the emperor's contribution ought to soften an "Athanasian Arianism".

The penultimate chapter challenges the revisionist thesis that there was nothing antithetical to Nicaea at the Council of Antioch in 341. All of Athanasius' alleged opponents were present at this gathering so, if the revisionists are convincing in arguing that Antioch 341 was not "Arian", Athanasius' attack on the council appears more haphazard. This chapter performs a detailed textual analysis to show why Antioch 341 harboured a theology that opened the way for precisely that which Nicaea wanted to

eliminate. Given the theological discrepancies between Nicaea and Antioch 341 and the influence of Asterius the Sophist upon the latter, this goes some way in explaining Athanasius' animus towards this man. All to say, Athanasius' suspicion of this council can be sensibly justified on theological grounds.

The final and most experimental chapter introduces collective memory theory to think about how Athanasius' listeners understood his polemic. When Athanasius warned of "Arians" and "Eusebians" in his texts, this had to have meant something to his audience. It is clear that Athanasius' followers came to define themselves as anti-"Arians" and this could not have been haphazardly manufactured for the bishop's own preservation. For Athanasius' polemic to function the way he wanted it to, it required that his audience have some pre-existent, non-Athanasian dependent recollection that "Arianism" was to be avoided. Collective memory theory shows the implausibility of an "Athanasian Arianism" as it considers the restraints placed upon Athanasius by his audience.

The hope is that this dissertation makes a modest, though detailed contribution to this much studied area of patristic scholarship. Yes, some revisionism clarifies the period, but expunging the "Arian Controversy" takes the matter too far. There is a responsible way of reading Athanasius' harsh polemic that understands "Arian" and "Eusebian" as heuristics used to identify distinct movements. Far from adoring Athanasius as the flawless preserver of Christendom against "ariomaniacs", the dissertation only wants to show that his polemic can be read in a way that sees substance behind his groupings of "Arians" and "Eusebians" not least because a number of others contributed to these identities. Preserving the concept of an "Arian Controversy" does

not come at the cost of ignoring more subtle theologies, but it does help explain the clash of two incompatible theologies on the long quest for a cogent doctrine of God. Seeing this, once again, as a theological dispute carried-on by political machinations reinforces the practice of *historical theology.*

## Abbreviations:

CSEL= Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum

DCB= *A Dictionary of Christian Biography*, edited by H. Wace and W. Piercey (London: John Murray, 1911).

EH= Ecclesiastical History

GCS= Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte

JECS= *Journal of Early Christian Studies*

JEH= *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*

JTS= *Journal of Theological Studies*

NPNF= Philip Schaff and Henry Wace eds., *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (Michigan: W.M. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1980).

PG= J. –P Migne, Patrologia Graeca (Paris, 1857-1886)

PL= J. –P Migne, Patrologia Latina (Paris, 1844-1864)

SP= *Studia Patristica*

VC= *Vigiliae Christianae*

ZAC= *Zeitschrift fur Antikes Christentum*

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## Introduction

The concept of an "Arian Controversy" long dominated the landscape of fourth century patristic studies. Anyone who studied the history of the church learned that the evil presbyter Arius challenged a well-established orthodoxy and persuaded others to join him in an "Arian" party. Thankfully, the *right* side eventually won because of the indefatigable efforts of Alexandria's embattled bishop, Athanasius. In the late 19th century, even the most highly regarded patristic scholars, such as John Henry Newman and Adolf von Harnack, saw Arius as markedly un-Christian, bordering on pagan. For many, the wicked triumvirate of church heretics remains Judas Iscariot, Simon Magus, and the presbyter from Baucalis whose name is behind "Arianism".

It was the philologist Eduard Schwartz who began to challenge this version of events in the early 20th century. Schwartz examined Athanasius' motives and his methods, ultimately concluding that the bishop was a dishonest and power-hungry autocrat. While Schwartz's thesis was taken up by other German scholars, his perspective was more widely shared by a range of Anglophonic thinkers. From the 1960's onward, there has been a precipitous erosion of the alleged "Arian Controversy". Serious patristic scholars now dismiss the main tenets that held the "Arian Controversy" together. It is now widely accepted that Arius was not all that important to the theological debates in the years after Nicaea. The presbyter did not establish a party and he did not have any committed disciples consciously propping up his legacy. Far from being a radical break from a pre-existent orthodoxy, much of what is within "Arianism" was, in fact, a natural and even conservative outworking from his theological

environment. That we only have a handful of the names of those whom Athanasius brands "Eusebians" and that their theologies are disparate means that envisioning them as the mobilized gang described in the polemic is irresponsible. Athanasius' invidious diatribes cloud the real consensus of fourth century Eastern theologians. This substantial and identifiable swing in the study of the fourth century permits one to confidently speak of a revision of the "Arian Controversy".

While some of the points raised by the revisionist thesis have been beneficial to a better understanding of the fourth century, this dissertation contends that the increasingly extreme nature of this re-shaping has gone too far in its elimination of the "Arian Controversy" altogether. Some have gone so far as to dismiss "Arianism" as nothing more than a construction of Alexandria's bishop for the purposes of his holding power. From this perspective, it is more appropriate to speak of an "Athanasian Arianism" because this best captures his efforts towards linguistically erecting an otherwise non-existent opposition. Like "Arian", "Eusebian", too, is declared to be an erroneous and unhelpful category. It is not uncommon for revisionists to use language of Athanasius' "creating", "inventing", or "fabricating" these groups and the "Arian Controversy" at large. What was once thought a substantive theological debate has been reduced to the chimera of a firebrand.

This dissertation wants to argue against this extreme revisionism by marshaling evidence in favour of a competing theological system that operated against the Alexandrian patriarchate with the aid of a mobilized network. I will focus on the years between 325 and 341 to show that a theology like the one expressed by Arius was a serious point of contention. Even though Athanasius wrote polemically and depicted his

opponents in the worst possible light, this is not a reason to dismiss "Arianism" altogether as a lamentable and unjustified category. While it is certainly possible to object to the accuracy of labels, say calling someone a "colonialist" or "fascist", there must also be an understanding that without categorization of any kind we would lose the ability to talk about most things. I argue that there is a responsible way to read Athanasius' highly charged prose that retains terms such as "Arian", "Arian Controversy" and "Eusebians" when they are understood as pejorative heuristics used by the bishop to identify his opponents who expressed classifiable ideas through perceptible networks.

Behind this thesis is the broader motive of rescuing a genuinely *historical theology*. The revisionist thesis routinely reduces Athanasius' animus to purely political activities. The conflict over his ordination, his ongoing trouble with the Melitians, the legitimacy of the Council of Tyre, his apparent abusiveness and combativeness, and the imperial fiats of the emperors are treated as more plausible causes for Athanasius' disgruntlement than any theological differences. The question, then, is that if modern scholarship cannot speak of "Arianism" as an indisputably *theological* conflict (of course with an inseparable ecclesio-political dimension), then is history any longer a vehicle to discuss matters of theology? Is it possible to examine the texts and events of the past to discern if two different discourses about God was a source of serious tension? If "Arianism" of all things is reducible to non-theological phenomena, then what place does a truly *historical theology* hold? The revising of the "Arian Controversy" out of existence is not just about the loss of historical categories, but rather about the loss of theology as a motivating force in the patristic period. That is to say, the problem is that censoring "Arianism" has moved from distancing Arius from the label to actually

undermining the set of theological ideas that "Arianism" came to represent. When reading the revisionists, it seems that Athanasius could not possibly have been sincerely agitated by a different *theological* expression. Here, as an analogy, the reader can recall the controversial preface to the first edition of Barth's *Römerbrief* where he pushes back against the pure historicism of his time. While my aim is in no way to equate this dissertation with Barth's famous work, there is a similar sentiment in its resistance to losing theology in the study of history. It is the hope that the forthcoming pages, which encompass the first full-length critique of these revisionists, make a modest contribution to restoring the concept of an "Arian Controversy" thereby showing that there is still a place for *historical theology*, that is, the study of history with the aim of discerning theological developments.

In order to make this argument, the dissertation takes some time to trace the erosion of the "Arian Controversy". From there, the work initiates three debates about recurring ideas among the revisionists; Athanasius' "construction" of his opponents, his use of rhetoric, and the place of categorization in theological study. The work then argues that what Athanasius describes as "Arianism" was already in place from the writings of Alexander and Eustathius, thus dampening the language of Athanasian construction and heightening the severity of the theological differences. The next chapter looks at the "Eusebians" and argues that while the idea of a unified "party" propping up Arius is inaccurate, they can be viewed responsibly as a network of individuals connected through various means with an interest in advancing the kind of theology Arius expressed. The following chapter examines the relationship between Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea. Despite ecclesio-political differences, the church historian escapes

Athanasius' harshest polemic. The Alexandrian bishop, interestingly, distances this Eusebius from his "Arians" and his "Eusebians", named after the Nicomedian. What this means is that Athanasius could have differences with someone and not consider them "Arian". The following chapter evaluates Constantine's interaction in church affairs between Nicaea and his death. I draw on recent biographies to argue that Constantine was an able leader whose vacillations after the council are best explained if "Arianism" was a serious issue. I also make the claim that Constantine did much to amplify the concepts of "Arianism" and the authority of Nicaea, again dulling the notion of Athanasian construction. The penultimate chapter takes on the revisionist claim that Athanasius had no theological reason to dislike the Council of Antioch 341. Those who have remolded these years see Antioch 341 as "pro-Nicene" meaning that Athanasius' calling this council "Arian" further proves his devious nature. This chapter argues that these revisionists have unfairly attenuated the differences between the councils. Finally, with the aid of memory studies, the last chapter wants to explore the question of how Athanasius' audiences understood "Arians" and "Eusebians". Now, the study begins with the degeneration of the "Arian Controversy".

## Chapter 1: The Erosion of the "Arian Controversy"

"We have seldom an opportunity of observing, either in active or speculative life, what effect may be produced, or what obstacles may be surmounted, by the force of a single mind, when it is inflexibly applied to the pursuit of a single object. The immortal name of Athanasius will never be separated from the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, to whose defense he consecrated every moment and every faculty of his being".[1] So wrote Edward Gibbon, one of Christianity's chief antagonists. Gibbon's view was that inherited by centuries of students who affirmed that Athanasius fought against the heretic Arius for the sake of orthodoxy. We can now say with King David, "how the mighty have fallen".[2] In the scholarly revision of the "Arian Controversy", "Athanasius loses his gold medal".[3]

While Athanasius has not been separated from the doctrine of the Trinity, just as Gibbon predicted, the historian's favourable opinion of him has certainly not been shared so widely. Through the application of critical methods and the availability of new sources, scholarship has determined that the traditional view of the fourth century theological discussions has been inaccurately portrayed as a result of a one-sided focus. Athanasius' noble struggle for orthodoxy against a savage "Arianism" is a false binary

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[1] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* ed. D. Womersley (London: Penguin Press, 1994), 796. L.W. Barnard's "Edward Gibbon on Athanasius" in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments* ed. R.C. Gregg (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1985), 361-370 does make the point the Gibbon undermines his high estimation of Athanasius in a footnote. T.D. Barnes in "The Career of Athanasius" in *SP* Vol. 21 (1989), 390-401 says this perspective on Athanasius is the one thing Gibbon got wrong.

[2] 2 Samuel 1.27, *English Standard Version*

[3] L.R. Wickham review of Christopher Beeley, *The Unity of Christ* in *JTS* Vol. 64 No. 2 (2013), 718.

derived from an uncritical reading of Athanasius' texts.[4] This conclusion led some, even two decades ago, to note a "veritable floodtide" of studies on the "Arian Controversy".[5] The works aimed at deconstruction have particularly flourished. Almost all appreciate that a blind following of Athanasius' account leads to sincere distortions and costly misunderstandings.

The purpose of this dissertation is to argue that what began as a helpful reappraisal of the post-Nicene years has spilled over into a sweeping revisionism of the "Arian Controversy" that mistakenly calls for its erasure from the patristic lexicon. While it has been widely accepted that Athanasius' history is an amplified retelling of the actual circumstances, this does not entail that his opponents were purely of his own construction.[6] Moreover, Athanasius' polemic, though at times unfair, should not cloud the sincere theological and political disagreement that precipitated regular councils and embittered rivalries. That is to say, the radical revision of the "Arian Controversy" has dissolved ancient categories and so altered the state of fourth century patristic studies that the current student has lost sight of the undeniable events and factions that shaped Christian doctrine.

Since this dissertation wants to engage in a dialogue with a group of revisionist thinkers, it is important to define the term. I will use the words "revisionist" and "revisionism" to describe those who have directly refuted or called for the elimination of "Arianism", "Arian", "Eusebian", and an "Arian Controversy" as helpful categories.

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[4] The author is well aware of the significant discussions on how to use the words "Arianism" and "Arian Controversy". This dissertation is partly about how to use this nomenclature. I will use inverted commas for both these terms as consistent with current scholarship.

[5] Christopher Haas, "The Arians of Alexandria", *VC,* (1993), 234.

[6] As, for example, J. Warren Smith insinuates in "The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, eds. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) that "after his condemnation at the Council of Nicaea (325) Arius and his theology ceased to be influential, except as a polemical label that supporters of Nicaea liberally attached to their enemies", 109.

There are, of course, other inclinations that could define one as a revisionist, say, re-dating documents or re-evaluating important relationships between bishops, but the chief interlocutors of this essay will be those who see "Arianism" as an Athanasian device for personal gain. It is with this in mind that the work makes note of several cautions in that not all those who have contributed to the revision of the "Arian Controversy" share the same conclusions. In fact, some who have done much to re-shape the "Arian" conflict in one area remain traditionalists in other areas.[7] When it comes to this topic, there are scholars who are historically skeptical *and* theologically conservative. In other words, there are those who see "Arianism" as an inaccurate and even dangerous label while also maintaining a view of sincere *theological* disagreements in the years after Nicaea. Likewise, there are some who have reread the "Arian Controversy" who probably see much conceptual distance between themselves and less nuanced revisionists. So, not all of those labeled revisionists in this thesis collaborated to advance the same arguments. The degree to which the revisionists are indebted to one another is sometimes difficult to say and this thesis does not intend to blindly lump everyone with revisionist tendencies together, lest the argument betray the very thing recent scholarship has tried to eradicate; namely, the uncritical appraisal of texts. There are subtleties and disagreements across the revisionists and it is not the purpose of this dissertation to fuse any unrelated ideas together in a homogenous bunch. It does seem to be the case, however, that many of the historiographers labeled revisionists in this thesis do welcome the term as a self-designation. For all these considerations, the label "revisionist" is not meant to be a

[7] T.D. Barnes is one such scholar who has revisionist tendencies, especially a distrust of Athanasius, while simultaneously holding time-honored distinctions, such as a conglomerate of "Eusebians" working against Athanasius. R.P.C. Hanson raised many vital concerns about "Arianism" but retained a notion of the "Eusebians".

pejorative term because re-examining history based on new information is a responsible thing to do. There is much to be owed to the amended views of the fourth century. The forthcoming arguments do not want to dismiss revisionary scholarship with the same forcefulness with which some have dismissed the traditional perspective of Athanasius and the "Arians". It is the aim, however, to challenge the more extreme views of the evolution of the debate to show that there is a responsible way of reading an "Arian Controversy" that includes substance beyond an "Athanasian Arianism".

The task in this introductory chapter is threefold. Firstly, the thesis must prove that there has been a revision of the "Arian Controversy". Therefore, it will trace the development of thought, particularly over the last century and a half, to see just how drastically the thinking on Athanasius and "Arianism" has changed. There is a particular danger in this part of the thesis because the scholarship on the "Arian Controversy" is incredibly prolific. Any evaluation must be selective.[8] The works elected for appraisal cannot be completely arbitrary but must be the ones that come up repeatedly in the major works on the "Arian Controversy". At the completion of the journey through this development, the reader ought to have few works that ought to have been included and even fewer that ought not to have been included. Just as there is a danger in arbitrarily selecting which works contributed most to the revision, so also there is the peril of caricaturizing the studies without penetrating analysis. While I do not intend to offer an overly impressionistic summary of detailed scholarly works, I do want to identify the influential texts that have questioned "Arianism" most trenchantly. Again, the work aims

[8] Johan Leemans' "Thirteen Years of Athanasius Research (1985-1998). A Survey and Bibliography", *Sacris Erudiri,* No. 39 (2000), 105-217 is over a hundred pages and only covers a bit over a decade. Christel Butterweck's ed., *Athanasius von Alexandrien: Bibliographie* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995) lists about 200 pages worth of secondary literature and this was over twenty years ago.

to marshal evidence to prove there has been a re-evaluation of the "Arian Controversy" and its proponents can be identified. Secondly, the chapter will recognize several scholars whose work, either consciously or latently, has pushed back against the more extreme conclusions of this revisionism. While, to my knowledge, no full-length work has been devoted solely to analyzing the revision of the "Arian Controversy", such an undertaking can be positioned among, and supported by, others who are hesitant to embrace its most farfetched tenets. Thirdly, this introductory chapter will briefly articulate the main accomplishments of the revision of these post-Nicene years.

## 1.1 Has there been a Revision of the "Arian Controversy"?

John Henry Newman is often invoked as a demarcation in the historical study of "Arianism".[9] This is not merely because "Arianism" interested him, but also because Newman's effort in writing a history of doctrine explored new frontiers.[10] Newman can be credited with being the first to suggest a development of Christian doctrine after Nicaea. Prior to Newman, it was commonplace to see Nicaea as presenting an orthodox theology easily recognizable to any second or third century church father. As Williams notes, Newman began to "lay down a 'grammar' of authentic historical continuity" to connect pre and post-Nicene theology.[11] In Newman, Anglophonic scholarship of "Arianism" turned a new page. Furthermore, in the generations prior to Newman's scholarly career, "Arianism" was not a distant heresy of the past to be studied, but a

[9] There are works like Louis Sebastien Le Nain de Tillemont's *The History of the Arians and the Council of Nice* trans. Thomas Deacon, (London: George James, 1721) which does treat "Arianism" as a historical phenomenon but adheres to Athanasius' account quite closely. For other pre-Newman works that touch on "Arianism" see Michael Slusser's "Traditional Views of Late Arianism", in *Arianism after Arius,* eds. Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 3-30.
[10] Rowan Williams, "Newman's *Arians* and the Question of Method in Doctrinal History", in *Newman After a Hundred Years,* eds. Ker and Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 263-285.
[11] Williams, "Newman's *Arians*", 283-284.

living version of Christian discourse that needed to be avoided. For example, William Whiston was deposed in 1710 as the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge for refusing to renounce his "Arianism".[12] Less than two decades later, Professor John Simson of the University of Glasgow was suspected of "Arianism" and denigrated.[13] In other words, as late as the 18th century, identifying as a practicing "Arian" could cost a person his or her livelihood. It was not until the late 18th century that "Arianism" experienced its "third and final death".[14] The study of "Arianism" as a purely historical phenomenon began in the 19th century and, at least in Anglophonic scholarship, Newman looms large. Newman was not only fascinated by the theology of "Arianism", but also saw his own biography against the backdrop of the fourth century, feeling a kind of kinship with Athanasius.[15] Despite Newman's pioneering efforts, his 1833 composition *The Arians of the Fourth Century* closely adopts Athanasius' narrative. While original in its time for defending Alexandrian scholarship and placing Arius in an Antiochene context, the work espouses the Athanasian view of the controversy, as Newman had no reservation about wanting "to give some account of the heretical doctrine, which was first promulgated within the Church by Arius".[16] Here are the key elements of the traditional view; a well-defined heresy that embodied specific and aberrant doctrines advanced by one individual whose name the heresy bears. More importantly, Newman critiqued "Arianism" on account of its alleged heathen roots. "The Arian heresy was produced…

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[12] M.F. Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
[13] John Cunningham, *The Church History of Scotland,* Volume II, Second Edition (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1882), 265f.
[14] Wiles, *Archetypal,* 164.
[15] Benjamin King's "In Whose Name I Wrote: Newman's two translations of Athanasius", *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte,* Vol. 15 No. 1 (2008) 32-55 is a fascinating study on how Newman read his own theological perspectives into Athanasius' writings. It is also probable that Newman's own "exile" from Oxford caused a deep identification with Athanasius because of his regular exiles from Alexandria.
[16] There are many editions of the original 1833 work but this quote is from John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* 3rd Edition (London: E. Lumley, 1871) 207.

with the undue influence of pagan philosophy and a sophist, syllogistic mode of reasoning".[17] For Newman, Athanasius' opponents supported a system disproportionately dependent on un-Christian ideas.

The Cambridge theologian H.M. Gwatkin's late 19th century works *Studies of Arianism* and *The Arian Controversy* continued the reception of the traditional narrative.[18] The former was hailed about twenty years ago as "the most influential book on Arianism ever published in English".[19] Gwatkin treats Newman's work with contempt, citing major problems caused by the Oxford Movement, but he still swallowed the fundamental binary of "Arianism" against orthodoxy.[20] Like Newman, Gwatkin saw "Arianism" as pagan.[21] Gwatkin memorably concluded his *Studies of Arianism* remarking "on the one side their doctrine was a mass of presumptuous theorizing, supported by alternate scraps of obsolete traditionalism and un-critical text-mongering, on the other it was a lifeless system of unspiritual pride and hard unlovingness. And therefore Arianism perished".[22] Elsewhere, Gwatkin's malice for "Arianism" cannot be missed. "The system is heathen to the core. The Arian Christ is nothing but a heathen idol invented to maintain a heathenish Supreme in heathen isolation from the world".[23] Arianism is typified by its "puny logic" and "shallowness".[24] Throughout the works,

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[17] Thomas Ferguson, "The Enthralling Power: History and Heresy in John Henry Newman", *Anglican Theological Review,* 85 (2003), 646.
[18] H.M. Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co, 1882) and *The Arian Controversy* 2nd Edition (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1891).
[19] Joseph T. Lienhard, "Did Athanasius Reject Marcellus?" in *Arianism after Arius,* eds. Michel Barnes and Daniel Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 65.
[20] Gwatkin, *Studies,* xiii-xiv is a bibliography with Newman mentioned at the end. His works "have always been scrupulously examined; so if they have not often been accepted, it is only because there is usually good reason for rejecting them", xix.
[21] T. Ferguson, "Enthralling", 660-661.
[22] Gwatkin, *Studies,* 266.
[23] Gwatkin, *Arian,* 7.
[24] Gwatkin, *Arian,* 8, 12.

Gwatkin adhered closely to Athanaisius' version of the events demeaning a practically void and intellectually petty opponent.

Nineteenth century "Arian" scholarship was not limited to English speaking scholars as Adolph von Harnack, the towering German intellectual and contemporary of H.M. Gwatkin, evaluated the "Arian Controversy" in his *History of Dogma* where he certainly embraced the traditional narrative presented by Athanasius.[25] While von Harnack yielded some ground to Arius by placing him as a product of an Antiochene context, this work still engendered what Rowan Williams later called the "Arianism-as-Other" course.[26] Harnack declared, "Athanasius exposed the inner difficulties and contradictions, and in almost every case we may allow that he has right on his side".[27] Harnack even thought Athanasius the preserver of Christendom.[28] He continued to say that had "Arianism" triumphed, it would have "completely ruined Christianity".[29]

There are common denominators across the "Arian" scholarship of Newman, Gwatkin, and von Harnack. Firstly, they all accepted the dominance of "The Eusebians" in the years following Nicaea. Having apprehended this terminology from Athanasius, these scholars uncritically advanced the reality of a unified party surrounding the Nicomedian bishop who opposed orthodoxy. They rather passively accepted that Athanasius' "Eusebians" were both propping up "Arianism" and, as a result, themselves "Arian". Newman sees the "Eusebians" colluding with secular authorities, "possessing the favor of the Imperial Court" and guilty of "incessant wranglings" in their patronage

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[25] Adolph von Harnack, *History of Dogma* trans. E.B. Speirs and James Millar (London: Williams & Norgate, 1898).
[26] Rowan Williams, *Arius* 2nd Edition (London: SCM Press, 2001) 22.
[27] Harnack, *History,* 41.
[28] Harnack, *History*, 45.
[29] Harnack, *History,* 43.

and argumentation.[30] Even von Harnack adopted the conspiratorial theme advanced by Athanasius that said the "Eusebians" deliberately plotted to marginalize the Nicene Creed. Against this "Eusebian" sedition Athanasius "stood like a rock in the sea".[31] Secondly, the 19th century luminaries embraced the dichotomy of Athanasius' orthodoxy against Arius' heresy. There seems to be no hesitation about seeing Athanasius' opponents as expositors of a doctrine originally promulgated by Arius the presbyter. Thirdly, and concomitantly, they did not entertain the now widely accepted truths that neither those who opposed the Nicene Creed nor those who upheld it were homogenous groups. There is little interest in the diversity within these positions and no room for the possibility of thinkers who did not care about the Creed one way or another. Fourthly, Arius the presbyter was pronouncedly un-Christian. These tenets represent the traditional view of the "Arian Controversy" by interpreting the fourth century through the lens of an Athanasius versus Arius conflict. This 19th century presentation of the "Arian Controversy" was derived almost exclusively from the bishop's polemic and it is this version that is described in introductory patristic studies to be reiterated by those with even a casual familiarity with early church history.

It was in the early twentieth century that German scholars questioned the Athanasian view of the "Arian Controversy". The classical philologist Eduard Schwartz is generally credited as the key figure in founding a "new era" in Nicene study.[32] A

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[30] Newman, *Arians,* 282.
[31] Harnack, *History,* 62-64.
[32] F.L. Cross, *The Study of Athanasius* (Oxford, 1945), 10. More recently, John Behr in his *Formation of Christian Theology: The Nicene Faith* Part I (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 165 says "this critical turn really begins with Schwartz and his seven studies on 'the history of Athanasius' published at the beginning of the twentieth century". Cf. Leemans, "Thirteen", 108-109 as identifying this time as the crucial shift. Vincent Twomey's "St Athanasius: De Synodis and the Sense of Scripture" in *Scriptural Interpretation in the Fathers: Letter and Spirit* eds. Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey

series of papers published between 1904 and 1911 under the title *Zur Geschichte des Athanasius* concludes that the patriarch of Alexandria was a forceful opportunist.[33] Instead of blindly following Athanasius' version of the events, Schwartz vilified the Alexandrian bishop. Some have observed Schwartz's tendency to depict Athanasius as a "power-hungry politician".[34] Schwartz managed to cast a wide distrust towards Athanasius so that students began to question the motives behind the Alexandrian's texts. He rightly exploited the gap between Athanasius' presentation and contrary evidence. Schwartz's pupil Hans-Georg Opitz largely adopted his views. Every student of the fourth century church is indebted to Opitz because of his efforts in compiling Athanasius' works and the documents associated with the "Arian Controversy". Though left incomplete because of the editor's premature death in World War II, Opitz's contribution remains invaluable. This being said, he propelled Schwartz's view of Athanasius citing his political ambitions and the duplicity in his character.[35]

As suspicion of Athanasius swelled, so did intrigue and sympathy towards Arius. Rowan Williams thinks that an essay from Walter Elliger in 1931 moved the pendulum substantially, though few other revisionist works have this essay in their bibliographies.[36] Nevertheless, in his essay "Bemerkungen zur Theologie des Arius", Elliger argued, accurately for sure, that Arius was theretofore misunderstood because he was always read

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(Portland, Oregon: Four Courts Press, 1995) 114n149 speaks of a "basic distrust" of Athanasius coming from the "shadow cast by Schwartz".

[33] Eduard Schwartz, *Zur Geschichte des Athanasius, Gesammelte Schriften Band III* ed. Walter Eltester (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1959) reproduces most of the papers in one volume. It does not contain the fourth paper because Schwartz thought his later work on Constantine replaced it. This codex also withholds parts of the seventh paper because of a dispute with von Harnack on the authenticity of the Syriac acta from Antioch 324/325. Cf. W. Telfer, Review of the above in JTS, (1960), 168-171.

[34] T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press,1993) 3.

[35] Hans-Georg Opitz, *Athanasius Werke* (Berlin: De Guyter, 1934).

[36] Walter Elliger, "Bemerkungen zur Theologie des Arius", *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 244-251; Cf. Williams, *Arius* 12-13.

from the perspective of his opponents. Elliger makes a case that Arius' theology is primarily gathered from those who despised him. The information about Arius gathered from Athanasius' polemical texts must be tempered by a realization that it is biased. Elliger's thesis became axiomatic for studies of Arius; that what we know about him is slanted. As Kannengiesser affirmed many years later, "we reach the essential Arius through Athanasius, and in no other way".[37] Put bluntly, so much of what scholarship gathers on the historical Arius comes by means of the pen of the man who hated him bitterly. No one ought to be evaluated solely through the medium of an enemy. So, from the early 20th century German scholarship there emerged two prongs of revisionism advancing in tandem, the vilification of Athanasius and the restoration of Arius. In the mean time, reputable historians still treated Athanasius with the highest encomium.[38]

Maurice F. Wiles, Oxford's Regius Professor of Divinity for over two decades, bears much responsibility for propelling the revision of the "Arian Controversy" among English speakers. The title of his 1962 article, "In Defence of Arius", conveys Wiles' aims to rehabilitate the so-called heresiarch.[39] In Wiles' essay, the reader learns of Arius' genuine concern for the chief tenets of Christianity. Though confined to a philosophical system, Arius did achieve consistency in articulating his theology. More noticeably, this thesis challenged Gwatkin's conclusions that Arius' theology depended on cold rationalism and that he was uninterested in salvation. Wiles' astute conclusion was that "the difference between the two sides is not as absolute or as clear-cut as has traditionally

[37] Charles Kannengiesser, "Arius and the Arians" in *Theological Studies* No. 44 (1983), 460.
[38] G.L. Prestige's *Fathers and Heretics* (London: SPCK, 1940) contains his Bampton Lectures from 1940. His lecture on the famous Alexandrian ends with "Athanasius did not merely save the Nicene creed. He saved Christianity", 91.
[39] Maurice F. Wiles, "In Defence of Arius", *JTS,* 13 No. 2 (1962) 339-347.

been assumed".[40] In other words, the "orthodox" versus "Arian" divide needed more nuance because Arius was a sincere Christian. Arius' religious earnestness found additional support even among those with openly "orthodox" convictions as evidenced in works like Manlio Simonetti's substantial *La Crisi Ariana del IV secolo* in which the heresiarch's views are not only depicted as soteriological, but also as a natural outworking of Origen's thinking.[41] While Simonetti ought not be considered a committed revisionist, his highly regarded work on the fourth century controversy shows how more sympathetic readings towards Arius became normative. Few, if any, now think of Arius as non-Christian or that he somehow smuggled in something foreign to the Christian faith.

Christopher Stead bolstered Wiles' conclusions. His 1976 article "Rhetorical Method in Athanasius" articulates how the Alexandrian cleric abused classical rhetorical techniques.[42] He violated reasonable argumentation because he "incessantly confronts the Arians with a crude alternative, either a Son fully equal to the Father, or a creature just like any other creature".[43] What is noteworthy is Athanasius' "misuse" of these devices and, in certain contexts, the true "imbecility of his arguments".[44] Stead concedes that Athanasius has the better content but his "method is indefensible".[45] This article is important because it presses the discussion about the rightful manner of using a bishop's polemic to establish historical fact.

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[40] Wiles, "Defence", 347.
[41] Manlio Simonetti, *La Crisi Ariana del IV secolo* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1975). Simonetti sees the crisis as primarily theological while downplaying political reasons for acting.
[42] Christopher Stead, "Rhetorical Method in Athanasius", *VC,* Vol.30 No. 2 (1976), 121-137.
[43] Stead, "Rhetorical" 129. It should be noted that this crude alternative appears as a theme in Alexander's *He Philarchos*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 14, years before Athanasius became bishop.
[44] Stead, "Rhetorical", 130-131.
[45] Stead, "Rhetorical", 135.

The 1981 publication of Gregg and Groh's *Early Arianism- A View of Salvation* marked another milestone in the development of the understanding of "Arianism".[46] Gregg and Groh believed that the creatureliness of the "Arian" Christ acted as the linchpin of its soteriology. The "Arian" Son, being like us in humanity, progressed through obedience to high status and was therefore a model for Christian belief. For the "Arians", Jesus' "divine sonship differs in degree but not in kind".[47] The "Arian" Son's work was efficacious not because he was of an essence distinct from other humans, but because he modeled the way as a perfect, mutable creature. Despite the widespread rejection of its principal thesis, *Early Arianism* played an important role in the enlargement of fourth century studies because it made a sustained argument for Arius' interest in redemption.[48] Arius was not driven by philosophical abstractions, but by a theology that could save human beings.[49]

The works of T.D. Barnes warrant engagement if for no other reason than that he has devoted much energy to the dating and study of Athanasius' life. Barnes' 1981 effort *Constantine and Eusebius* contains a memorable section on Athanasius. It is in this work that Barnes brands Athanasius a "gangster" who behaved thuggishly.[50] Convinced of this appellation for Athanasius, Barnes reiterated it eight years later in his article "The Career

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[46] Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh, *Early Arianism- A View of Salvation* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1981).
[47] Gregg, *Arianism,* 30.
[48] Since its publication, a number of scholars have refuted Gregg and Groh's claims. The most formidable objection is that the few surviving documents from Arius' own hand say explicitly that the Son was *unlike* other creatures. In other words, Arius' soteriology could not have depended on the Son being like humanity and thereby providing a model.
[49] Both Joseph Lienhard in "Recent Studies in Arianism", *Religious Studies Review,* Vol. 8 No. 4 (1982), 330-337 and Kannengiesser "Arius and the Arians", 456f. offer brief reviews of nine works on "Arianism" published between 1971 and 1982. Simonetti's work and Gregg and Groh's work count as two of the nine. Some of these deal with a later period of the controversy and what is now branded "neo-Arianism".
[50] T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

of Athanasius".[51] Commenting on Athanasius' entanglement with the Melitians, the bishop "employed violence and intimidation to secure his political power within Alexandria".[52] So again, Athanasius "wielded political power by means very reminiscent of a modern American gangster or big city boss".[53] Barnes offered a fuller exposition of Athanasius in his 1993 text *Athanasius and Constantius* that is still esteemed for its sustained engagement with key dates in the life of Alexandria's famous leader. Most tellingly, however, Barnes admitted "this study starts from the presumption that Athanasius consistently misrepresented central facts about his ecclesiastical career".[54] What differentiates Barnes from Schwartz is that though Athanasius is a liar, he is "a subtler and more skillful liar" than the German philologist recognized.[55] What is most interesting about Barnes is that while he forlornly portrays Athanasius, he still betrays some affinity for Athanasius' version of events in the aftermath of Nicaea. For example, Barnes retains the bedrock of the Athanasian presentation that "Eusebius of Nicomedia…guided his party within the church for many years".[56] Moreover, "Eusebius of Nicomedia…had orchestrated the campaign against Athanasius and his allies".[57] In his more recent treatment of Constantine, Barnes claims, "the so-called 'Arian Controversy' has a close structural resemblance to modern party politics. Two cohesive

[51] Barnes, "Career", 397.
[52] Barnes, "Career", 391.
[53] Barnes, "Career", 397. Athanasius probably did behave violently but it is most likely that fourth century Alexandria was a violent place. In other words, the most common defense to the charges of violence are that Athanasius behaved no differently from other bishops of his time. Cf. Behr, *The Nicene Faith Part I,* 167; Roger Bagnall, "Official and Private Violence in Roman Egypt", *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists,* Vol. 23 No. 3-4 (1989), 201-216.
[54] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 2.
[55] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 3.
[56] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 58.
[57] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 68.

groups of Eastern bishops and theologians were pitted against each other".[58] So Barnes' role in the history of "Arian Controversy" studies is one of give-and-take. Athanasius behaved ignobly but his picture of the dispute can be largely retained.

The next notable strand in this revisionism comes from two works in the late 1980's that challenged the nomenclature of the "Arian Controversy". Firstly, Rowan Williams' 1987 masterpiece *Arius* amounts to an encomium to the once branded "heretic" as he is shown to be a conservative exemplar of his Alexandrian heritage. While Arius had long been classified as a radical who challenged the prevailing teachings of Alexandria and rebelled against the authority of the bishop, Williams contends that Arius "is not wrong or self-deceived in depicting himself a traditionalist".[59] Williams states definitively that "'Arianism' as a coherent system, founded by a single great figure and sustained by his disciples, is a fantasy- more exactly, a fantasy based on the polemic of Nicene writers, above all Athanasius".[60] Williams convincingly demonstrated that what was called "Arianism" has little to do with the historical person of Arius. What Arius promulgated was a theology that had wide circulation around Alexandria and the eastern empire at large *before* he expounded it. While Williams was not the first to explore the genesis of Arius' theology, the monograph devoted to the presbyter is the first sustained discussion on Arius' conservatism. Williams is particularly insightful in illuminating Arius in an intellectual context rather than as the societal misfit and desperate pest of Athanasius' writings.

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[58] T.D. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 141.
[59] Williams, *Arius,* 156. This work also provides a most insightful discussion in the dating of documents. Williams challenged the Schwartz-Opitz dating of the "Arian" material by inverting the order of Alexander's epistles (placing the *Henos Somatos* after the *He Philarchos*) and by condensing the timeline of the conflict's eruption, arguing 321 a more accurate date.
[60] Williams, *Arius,* 82.

R.P.C. Hanson's 1988 publication *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* "is about what is conventionally known as 'The Arian Controversy', but neither the word 'Arian' nor the word 'controversy' appears in the main title. The reason for this is that the author is convinced that the expression 'the Arian Controversy' is a serious misnomer".[61] Plainly, Hanson set out to qualify the categories. Hanson's work emphasizes the more germane truth that Nicaea was not about a rediscovery of a lost Trinitarian orthodoxy, but rather was, in itself, part of a *search* for appropriate understanding. Whereas Athanasius' propaganda shows him as a defender of a pre-existing deposit of truth, the tensions in the fourth century show how a range of clergymen worked out acceptable language. It was in his 1992 review of Hanson's book that Williams declared "the time has probably come to relegate the term 'Arianism' at least to inverted commas, and preferably to oblivion".[62] Students of the fourth century are indebted to Hanson and Williams for dismantling the simple binary of "Arianism" against orthodoxy by showing the complexities of theological debate in the years following Nicaea.

The reassessment of the fourth century has since progressed from Williams and Hanson. One pronounced example is the compendium of articles edited by Michel Barnes and Daniel Williams under the title *Arianism after Arius*.[63] Rebecca Lyman's article rightfully calls attention to the much-needed separation of polemic and history, but does so by minimizing Athanasius' veracity.[64] She emphasizes the bishop's artificial

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[61] R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), xvii.
[62] Rowan Williams, review of Hanson's *The Search*, *Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 45 No. 1, (1992), 102.
[63] Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams, eds., *Arianism after Arius* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1993).
[64] Rebecca Lyman, "A Topography of Heresy: Mapping the Rhetorical Creation of Arianism" in *Arianism after Arius* eds. Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1993), 45-62.

construction of a genealogy of heresy and his applying to "Arians" things they did not say.[65] Athanasius' "rhetorical labeling therefore was doctrinally incoherent, but polemically effective by associating Arians with acknowledged heretics".[66] This quote captures the movement away from understanding the fourth century in terms of substantive theological differences in favour of reading it as Athanasius' verbal legerdemain. The same volume contains an essay from Wiles where he emphasizes "Arian…as a designation for anyone other than the immediate associates of Arius himself who were excluded from the church of Egypt by Alexander, is a title given by Athanasius to his opponents for a specific polemical purpose of defamation by association".[67] In 1996, Wiles, who, as aforementioned, provided some impulse for Anglophonic revisionism three decades earlier, published his *Archetypal Heresy*, reinforcing the revisionist theses. In the opening pages of this monograph Wiles states that Athanasius is "responsible for creating the concept of Arianism".[68] Instead of an organized and deliberate theological system around Arius, "Arianism" is here mentioned as an Athanasian construct. More importantly, Wiles carefully reveals the biblicism behind Arius' position. Far from Gwatkin's Arius who was guilty of "uncritical text-mongering", Wiles' Arius was a meditative exegete. In the second edition of *Arius* in 2001, Rowan Williams' first appendix gives a nice summary of what was accomplished in this area of scholarship throughout the 1990's. The consensus is that the term "Arianism" is inaccurate and unhelpful in gathering the true history of the fourth century church because no one was consciously propping up the presbyter.

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[65] Lyman, "Topography" 53, 58.
[66] Lyman, "Topography", 58.
[67] Maurice Wiles, "Attitudes towards Arius in the Arian Controversy" in *Arianism after Arius,* eds. Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1993), 42.
[68] Wiles, *Archetypal*, 6.

Lewis Ayres' *Nicaea and its Legacy* made an indelible contribution to fourth century learning. Ayres' work belongs in the reformatting strand of thinking for on several occasions he flatly acknowledges his debt to "revisionary scholarship".[69] Ayres agrees with the movement's sentiment that "the controversy is mistakenly called Arian".[70] The contribution of the work is that "while modern scholars are often very sophisticated in their understanding of the difficulties involved in speaking of 'Arians' as a unified group, far fewer display the same sophistication when speaking of 'Nicenes'. Much of this book constitutes an exploration of the complexity of the label 'Nicene'".[71] Thus, Ayres' greatest accomplishment is showing the intricacy of theological thinking in the decades before and after the Nicene Council. He adumbrates four theological "trajectories" present in the Eastern Mediterranean in the years prior to Nicaea that inevitably collided. From here, Ayres illustrates the polyvalence of "Nicene" theologies that emerged after the council as different thinkers could support Nicaea in different ways and hold different understandings of what the council said. Given this intricacy, "speaking of theological groups or parties is a descriptive move fraught with difficulty when we fail to recognize the particular patterns of mutual interconnection and cohesiveness pertaining among members of any such party".[72] One particularly pertinent chapter from Ayres is entitled "The Creation of 'Arianism': AD 340-350".[73] As this title suggests, Ayres wants to note Athanasius' skillful heresiological writing that falsely crafted the conspiracy. One of Athanasius' shortcomings is that he "uses the picture [of the Arians] to attack contemporary opponents whose theologies were distinct from

[69] Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2, 11-12, 31.
[70] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 13.
[71] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 98.
[72] Ayres *Nicaea*, 14.
[73] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 105f.

Arius".[74] That is, Athanasius deliberately categorized people who do not have much in common. In the *Orations against the Arians,* his main work of deception, "the wide-ranging controversy and tension between existing theological strategies is sold to his readers as a conspiracy by a group of 'Arians' seeking to perpetuate the novel theology of a condemned heretic".[75] The more striking feature in Ayres' work is how little attention it gives to Athanasius' theology in general. While Alexandria's bishop created "Arianism", there is an obvious, and presumably deliberate, lacuna when it comes to an engagement with Athanasius' thoughts, thus creating distance between "Nicaea" and the person most responsible for its legacy.

Even though Ayres wants to recalibrate the traditional lines of thinking, he still acknowledges the existence and activity of the "Eusebians" who rally around a theology shared by Arius.[76] Ironically, Ayres says that it is "inescapable that many Eusebians would have jumped at the chance to intrigue against Athanasius, a close confidant of Alexander who was present at Nicaea and later the focus of resistance to the readmittance of Arius."[77] Perhaps more than Wiles, Ayres is treading a fine line. On the one hand, categories are limiting and unhelpful, on the other hand, to doubt Athanasius' "Eusebians" is tantamount to denying an obvious tenet of rudimentary patristics. Ayres' work does caution the modern scholar against defining categories, imposing them back on antiquity, then accusing early church fathers for not conforming to them.

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[74] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 107.
[75] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 117.
[76] Ayres is another example of someone who pushes the revision of the "Arian Controversy" in some areas, like "Arian" as an Athanasian construct, but adopts traditional terminology elsewhere, such as the existence of "Eusebians".
[77] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 106.

In 2001, Rowan Williams said "the full history of the invention of 'Arianism' and its vagaries in modern scholarly discussion remains to be written".[78] David Gwynn's 2007 monograph, *The 'Eusebians'*, could be said to solve this deficiency.[79] Gwynn's dissertation turned monograph synthesizes decades of scholarship and attempts to dismantle nearly every tenet of the classical "Arian Controversy". Gwynn argues more forcefully than previous thinkers that what has been transmitted as "Arianism" is in fact, "Athanasian Arianism".[80] Athanasius invented "Arianism" by linguistically erecting his opponents, the "Eusebians". He distorted the actual situation by forging a group of antagonists in order to galvanize his own position as bishop. When it comes to the bishop's enemies, "Athanasius dismisses or reinterprets their own statements in order to force his opponents to fit the polarized model of an 'Arian party' and an 'Arian Controversy' that he constructs".[81] Gwynn shows much erudition in highlighting the differences between the theologies of Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Asterius before arguing that these divergences discredit any unified "Eusebians" or "Arians". Unlike Barnes, Ayres, and even Williams who see Athanasius' presentation of conflicting parties as a somewhat truthful reflection, Gwynn moves a bit further saying, "to describe one's opponents as a 'party', as Athanasius does in his construction of the 'Eusebians', is one more element within his whole presentation".[82] In other words, Gwynn seems to go beyond the widely accepted critique that Athanasius squeezed a range of theologies into the false binary into a realm that casts doubt on the very existence of conflicting groups. In reading Gwynn, it is easy to get the impression that he finds "Arianism", the

[78] Williams, *Arius,* 251.
[79] David Gwynn, *The Eusebians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[80] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 169.
[81] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 176.
[82] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 167.

"Eusebians", and even antagonistic factions to be illusory. His conclusions are often comprehensive because he makes statements like "every element within this Athanasian condemnation of his opponents is a rhetorical *topos*".[83]

This style of revisionism intrudes right up to the present. Henryk Pietras' 2016 book, *Council of Nicaea (325)*, adds yet another dimension to the extreme makeover of the "Arian Controversy". Pietras, mostly by means of conjecture, arguments from silence, and the dismissal of prevailing timelines, thinks "that Arianism had nothing to do with the convocation of a general council first to Ancyra, then to Nicaea".[84] While Easter's date was probably the initial impulse behind the summons to the council, Pietras goes too far when he judges the association between Nicaea and "Arianism" as completely fabled. His conclusion is that:

> "the First Ecumenical Council- as a great action undertaken by the Church in the defence of the divinity of Christ appears to be, therefore, a mythical event, like, for instance, the Deluge or the crossing of the Red Sea. It is one of the founding myths of the Church, very much like those preserved by other communities. A venerable one, more ancient than King Arthur or the Battle of Grunwald, but likewise, based upon an actual historical event".[85]

While it is a well-known fact that Athanasius did not positively defend the council until the 350's, and that the "defence of the divinity of Christ" is far too simple a summation of its purpose, Pietras goes further than others in denouncing Athanasius by saying that

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[83] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 247. Gwynn is at times so forceful that he occasionally feels the need to rein in his thesis with remarks such as "it is evident that there are considerable elements of truth in Athanasius' construction of 'Arianism'" 195. Or elsewhere, "this is not to suggest that Athanasius' construction of his foes is necessarily entirely false. Certain elements of his description of *hoi peri Eusebion* are indeed manifestly true" as at his "The Construction of a 'heretical party' in the *Apologia Contra Arianos* of Athanasius of Alexandria" in *Prudentia* Vol. 35 No. 2 (2003), 175. Furthermore, Gwynn's 2012 monograph *Athanasius of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9 retracts much of the thesis of his 2007 monograph stating "it would be a serious error, however, to dismiss Athanasius' condemnation of his foes as 'Arian' as merely a device of polemical rhetoric". One cannot miss Athanasius' "true greatness" 131.

[84] Henryk Pietras, *Council of Nicaea (325): Religious and Political Context, Documents, Commentaries* (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2016), 145.

[85] Pietras, *Council*, 229.

Nicaea's intent had *nothing* to do with "Arianism". He dismisses Constantine's post-synodal letters dealing with "Arianism" on the dodgy criterion that Athanasius ought to have cited them but he did not.[86] Despite no extended commentary on the theology of Nicaea's Creed (and its clear engagement with Arius' slogans), Pietras still aims to distance Nicaea from Arius, thus making Athanasius appear more outlandish. The thesis of the work is straightforward; to think that the Council of Nicaea actually tackled any theological ideas associated with Arius is best understood as fairytale.

There are other recent works that do not address the "Arian Controversy" exclusively but still harbor central tenets of its revision. Christopher Beeley's *The Unity of Christ* features an extended section on Athanasius that repeats the bishop's "invention" of Arianism.[87] He "adopted the strategy of blaming most of his troubles on an Arian conspiracy directed by Eusebius of Nicomedia with the support of Eusebius of Caesarea".[88] Again, the emphasis leans away from substantive controversy towards Athanasius' personal struggle for power. Moreover, Beeley's personal dislike for Athanasius is hard to miss. Athanasius is guilty of "war-mongering" because he was unparalleled in his "extreme, ad hominem rhetoric".[89] The bishop "takes on the Arians with an acerbity that is pungent even by ancient standards".[90] Even his now famous double treatise is "psychologically and culturally pugnacious".[91] Later in his career, the

[86] Pietras, *Council,* 221. Pietras also says rather controversial things like Nicaea's Formula was desired by no one but Constantine (202), that Constantine's post-Nicaea writings are late fourth century forgeries (203-229), and that, against Barnes and Odahl, Ossius could not have moved around fast enough to have made Arius a primary issue at Nicaea (130).
[87] Christopher Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 158, 168.
[88] Beeley, *Unity,* 125. The claim that Athanasius attacked Eusebius of Caesarea like he did Eusebius of Nicomedia will be challenged in a later chapter.
[89] Beeley, *Unity,* 125.
[90] Beeley, *Unity,* 145.
[91] Beeley, *Unity,* 138.

best that can be said of Athanasius is that he was a "bitter old man".[92] Beeley's work shows how the revisionist theses regarding Athanasius and the "Arian Controversy" permeate a work on Christology.

Christopher Stephens' excellent dissertation turned monograph assimilates the revisionist arguments specifically to the Council of Antioch.[93] For Stephens, the Council of Antioch was not anti-Nicene but only anti-Athanasian. Athanasius' dislike of Antioch's Council had less to do with theology and more to do with his control over the meeting.[94] Therefore, Athanasius invidiously attacked the Council of Antioch as "Arian" when it did *not* teach a different theology. In following Gwynn and Wiles, Stephens argues that it was Athanasius' hesitancy over "image" language that caused his reservation about Antioch, but this cannot be called "Arian". Stephens carefully marshals evidence in favour of a close relationship between Nicaea and Antioch (a thesis that will be challenged in chapter seven). Like Beeley's, Stephens' argument shows how strands of the more extreme revisionism reach into every aspect of Athanasius' thought and life.

Having surveyed the Anglophonic revisionary scholarship, the question arises as to whether non-English speaking thinkers have embraced the elimination of the "Arian Controversy" with the same alacrity. There is certainly continued interest in matters of "Arianism" on the continent, but attitudes towards the more extreme aspects of these reappraisals are mixed. Many of the more sustained discussions are engrossed with reconsidering the dating of events and documents. For example, this preoccupation with

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[92] Beeley, *Unity,* 164.
[93] Christopher Stephens "Too Good and Holy", DPhil. diss. (Oxford, 2006). The title of Stephens' dissertation comes from Louis-Sebastien Tillemont's 1721 work as he thought the canons associated with Antioch were "too good and holy" to come from the Arians who met in 341, so they must be separated from the council, 108. The published monograph is *Canon Law and Episcopal Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[94] Stephens, "Too Good", 160.

chronology is seen in the two-part work of Winrich Löhr fittingly granted the revisionist title, "Arius Reconsidered".[95] Löhr challenges Williams' dating of the letters attributed to Alexander, preferring Opitz's original order.[96] He also sides against Williams on the chronology of the pre-Nicene Bithynian and Palestinian councils.[97] Interestingly, while Löhr is interested in the (re)dating of the events, he is resistant to other revisionist themes. For example, when Arius wrote Eusebius of Nicomedia he "is quite confident that he writes to someone who has already leant support to his, Arius', party".[98] In this sense, there is some kind of conglomerate around Arius receiving support from the powerful Nicomedian. Löhr even thinks that "there is a real continuity of debate between Arius and later 'neoarian' theologians like Aetius and Eunomius" on the unknowability of the Father, thus lending more substance to Athanasius' polemic.[99] In addition to Löhr's work, a compilation of essays and edited documents under the title *Von Arius zum Athanasianum: Studien zur Edition der "Athanasius Werke"* continued Opitz's unfinished work while reevaluating documents of the "Arian Controversy" and the chronology of Arius' life.[100] Their re-dating is not as obvious to all those who have devoted energies to the task.[101] The state of German scholarship on "Arianism" may be best demonstrated in the *Athanasius Handbuch* edited by Peter Gemienhardt.[102] Not only does this provide a survey of critical editions of Athanasius' writings, but it also contains useful articles

[95] Winrich Löhr, "Arius Reconsidered (Part 1)" in *ZAC* Vol. 9 (2005), 524-560 and "Arius Reconsidered (Part 2)" in *ZAC* Vol. 10 No. 1 (2006), 121-157
[96] Löhr, "Reconsidered (Part I)", 548f.
[97] Löhr, "Reconsidered (Part I)", 559.
[98] Löhr, "Reconsidered (Part I)", 552.
[99] Löhr, "Reconsidered (Part II), 151.
[100] Annette von Stockhausen and Hanns Christof Brennecke, eds., *Von Arius zum Athanasianum : Studien zur Edition der "Athanasius Werke"* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010).
[101] T.D. Barnes' "The Exile and Recalls of Arius", *JTS,* Vol. 60, No. 1 (2009), 109-129 aims "to demolish this revised chronology", 111.
[102] Peter Gemeinhardt (ed.) *Athanasius Handbuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

addressing a wide range of pertinent topics related to the Alexandrian bishop. The ambivalent reception of the more extreme form of the revision comes from at least two authors. Markus Vinzent concedes that Athanasius' polemical terms are far too cookie-cutter for the complexities surrounding Nicaea, but he disagrees with Gwynn that they are mere chimera.[103] Adolf Martin Ritter engages in a helpful dialogue with Gwynn's thesis but, like Vinzent, holds some reservations in reducing the terms "Arian" and "Eusebian" to verbal constructs.[104] If the *Athanasius Handbuch* serves as a litmus test, German scholarship advances a healthy suspicion of how Athanasius' used the terms "Arianism" and "Eusebian" while stopping short of the more extreme version of the revisionism that thinks of these as ungrounded polemical categories.[105] Hanns-Christof Brennecke, who ranks among the most important German Athanasius scholars and was the chief editor of the new edition of Athanasius' texts, provides a nice overview of his attitudes towards "Arianism" in a recent introduction.[106] While offering the well-founded cautions about how "Arianism" is used, Brennecke gives credence to Athanasius' documentation.[107] Where Brennecke's position overlaps with strands of the Anglophonic revision is in his understanding of the "Eusebians". For him, "this term evokes the image of a tightly knit and homogenous faction or party – an effect that was probably intended by their critics- that does not correspond to the reality of the situation which was characterized by a great

[103] Markus Vinzent, "Athanasius und 'die um Eusebius'" in *Athanasius Handbuch* ed. Peter Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 128-129.
[104] Adolf Martin Ritter "Der dreieinige Gott" in *Athanasius Handbuch* ed. Peter Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 292. Cf. 299.
[105] Sara Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy 325-345* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3 says "German scholarship, so often ineluctably Hegelian, has tended to see the 'Arian controversy' in terms of two opposing forces".
[106] Hanns-Christof Brennecke, "Introduction: Framing the Historical and Theological Problems" in Guido Berndt and Roland Steinacher (eds.) *Arianism: Roman Heresy and Barbarian Creed* (Farnhum, England: Ashgate, 2014), 1-19.
[107] Brennecke, "Introduction", 6.

theological diversity in the ranks of these so-called 'Eusebians'".[108] He is suspicious of adopting Athanasius' "Arian Controversy" but stops short of an "Athanasian Arianism".[109]

Though brief and unavoidably impressionistic, this survey reveals that for over a century, and especially in the last 35 years, scholars have been re-evaluating what was called the "Arian Controversy".[110] It is hard to argue against the fact that there has been a migration from the views of Newman, Gwatkin, von Harnack, and, even later, Prestige, to one that dismisses the category of "Arianism" as a construct. I can only conclude the survey echoing Louth, "much recent scholarship has been devoted to deconstructing the Athanasian account".[111] Following the lead of the Germans Schwartz and Opitz, there is a steady, though not uniform, erosion that can be traced through Wiles, Stead, T.D. Barnes, Williams, Hanson, M. Barnes, Lyman, Ayres, Gwynn and up to the recent monographs authored by Beeley and Stephens. To speak of the revising of the "Arian Controversy" is no mere straw man because the steady movement away from Athanasius' theological understanding is well documented. If this re-appraisal of the "Arian Controversy" has taken place as I have argued, have others noticed it and, if so, do they see its shortcomings?

## 1.2 Resistance to "Athanasian Arianism"

Having outlined the revision of the "Arian Controversy" and its destination at more extreme conclusions, it is important to draw attention to the contingency of scholars

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[108] Brennecke, "Introduction", 14.
[109] Brennecke, "Introduction", 13.
[110] Brennecke, "Introduction", 13 says the revision began in the last half of the 20th century.
[111] Andrew Louth, "The Fourth-century Alexandrians: Athanasius and Didymus" in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* eds. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 278.

generally resistant to the more extreme conclusions delineated above. So as to avoid the impression that every scholar who has recently addressed "Arianism" advances the revisionist thesis, or that no revision has taken place, this work is to be positioned among those thinkers whose inclinations are to retain elements of the "Arian Controversy". While no work has explicitly set out to defend Athanasius or retain the need for the "Arian Controversy" as a framework, there are some who contribute to this direction. The focus will be on those works that have appeared in the last two and half decades.

Duane Arnold's *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius* from 1991 defended many details of the "Arian Controversy" that were theretofore attacked by revisionist trends.[112] For example, Arnold develops an "Arian"-Melitian alliance in accordance with Athanasius' testimony. For Arnold, there is no reason to doubt the bishop when he says that the "Arians" propped up the Melitians to make his life more difficult. Granted this political alliance, Arnold also argues, "that Athanasius's supposed misdeeds had been greatly embellished by his enemies in a relatively short period of time there can be little doubt" and they continue to be inflated by modern scholars.[113] Perhaps more significantly, though against Athanasius in viewing the Council of Tyre in 335 as Melitian and not "Arian" driven, Arnold agrees with the Athanasian position that secular authorities dominated its procedures. So when Athanasius contested Tyre's legitimacy on grounds of impropriety, Arnold deems the bishop justified. The value of Arnold's work is its detailed analysis of the years following Nicaea that largely, but certainly not

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[112] Duane Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

[113] Arnold, *Early,* 77. His "Sir Harold Idris Bell and Athanasius: A Reconsideration of the *London Papyrus 1914*", *SP,* Vol. 21 (1989) 377-383 exposes the assumptions in Bell's anti-Athanasian interpretation of the papyrus often cited as irrefutable evidence of Athanasius' violence. Arnold argues that Bell filled in the badly mutilated papyrus with a tangential reading.

exclusively, defends Athanasius' narrative. In addition to Arnold's efforts, Khaled Anatolios' works are noticeably resistant to the trends of fading the "Arian Controversy" out of existence. His *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* tries to shift the attention to Athanasius' doctrinal system as a whole.[114] For Anatolios, Athanasius' polemical writings are not motivated by the bishop's quest for power, but betray the natural outworking of his entire theological vision. The modern reader does a disservice by focusing on individual aspects of Athanasius' texts when they are detached from the whole. Anatolios consistently contends that Athanasius' arguments are more cogent than those of the "Arians". For example, it is the "Arians" who offer the crude dichotomy in asserting that the Son is in position by will and therefore, not by essence. Athanasius perceptively says it can be both.[115] The bishop's coherence becomes most apparent in his absolute insistence on the distinction between Creator and creation, which clashes irreparably with the created "Arian" Son. If Anatolios is correct about the centrality of this division to Athanasius' theology, it goes a long way in explaining how the bishop understood "Arianism", a topic discussed in chapter three. Anatolios' other works carefully argue the substantive disagreements between Athanasian and "Arian" theology.[116] Anatolios is by no means fanatical on this question as he recognizes that "a personal allegiance to Arius was not at all a persevering feature of anti-Nicene theology", conceding that "Arian" functioned as an "interpretive strategy" developed by the presbyter's enemies.[117] In this sense, however, "Arian" does designate a theological position.

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[114] Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998).
[115] Athanasius, *Oration* 3.66.
[116] Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011).
[117] Anatolios, *Retrieving,* 28.

Charles Kannengiesser's academic career features many works on Athanasius that are, on the whole, favourable to the bishop. Though some of his arguments were revisionist in nature, such as the doubts he once promulgated on the authorship of the *Third Oration,* the preponderance of Kannengiesser's writings tend to defend Athanasius and the notion of a concrete "Arian Controversy".[118] Kannengiesser does not doubt that, upon his expulsion from Alexandria, Arius "assembled a coalition of bishops hostile to his own bishop and supportive of his thesis".[119] Elsewhere, Kannengiesser wants Athanasius' readers to see his exposition of Scripture as emerging from the bishop's personal situation and context.[120] Like Anatolios, Kannengiesser also views at least some of Athanasius' polemical works as more interested in sincere theological disputes than in calling his opponents names. For even the *Orations against the Arians* are "frustratingly vague about the Arian heresy. On the other hand, it is filled with the multiplied and passionate argumentation by which the author shows deep concern about the biblical awareness of his readers in outlining the correct interpretation of scriptural verses as he understands them against Arian claims".[121] Again, Kannengiesser reads Athanasius' most overt anti-"Arian" polemic and can claim that it "shows no eagerness to enter into any direct fight with the so called 'Arian mad-men'".[122] What this means is that the debate involves substantive disagreements rather than verbal insults aimed at

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[118] Charles Kannengiesser, "The Dating of Athanasius' Double Apology and Three Treatises Against the Arians" in *ZAC* Vol. 10 No. 1 (2006), 31 explains that the textual work of Abramowski and Vinzent convinced him of Athanasian provenance of the *Third Oration* that he originally doubted as advanced in *Athanase d'Alexandrie eveque et ecrivain* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne,1983).
[119] Charles Kannengiesser, *Holy Scripture and Hellenistic Hermeneutics in Alexandrian Christology: The Arian Crisis* (Berkley CA: The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1982), 2.
[120] Charles Kannengiesser, "The Athanasian Understanding of Scripture" in *The Early Church in its Context* eds. Abraham J. Malherbe, Frederick Norris, James Thompson, and Everett Ferguson (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 221-229.
[121] Kannengiesser, "Athanasian Understanding", 226.
[122] Kannengiesser, "Athanasian Understanding", 226.

polarization. So, while each of Kannengiesser's many works need not be evaluated here, it is important to see that he engaged with revisionist writers but generally maintained a clear theological and exegetical demarcation between Athanasius and his opponents.

Sara Parvis' work deserves to be included among those resistant to an "Athanasian Arianism". This is most evident in her monograph devoted to Marcellus of Ancyra. Parvis removes all doubt when she says, "it is one of the claims of this book that the events of the years 325-345 are best made sense of as a struggle between two ongoing, though continually modified alliances. Since this is a view which is largely against the consensus of current English speaking scholarship, the ground needs to be carefully set if that claim is to be made good".[123] Parvis' book makes a number of well-documented points that are now indispensible for studies on Athanasius and the period following Nicaea. One of the greatest values of Parvis' book is her careful presentation of the onomastic evidence.[124] In judiciously documenting the names of bishops, Parvis can show the activity of those with theologies different from those of Athanasius.[125] She also shows the names of about one third of the bishops at Tyre in 335 to argue that they were hand selected and some provinces were deliberately excluded.[126] Through the prosopographic work, Parvis lends credibility to Athanasius' claim that Tyre was biased against him. Parvis employs the same methodology for the Council of Antioch in 341. As a whole, her work defends Athanasius' version of a conglomerated opposition

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[123] Parvis, *Marcellus,* 38.
[124] The eight tables included in the Appendix are particularly helpful as she lists the names of the bishops who attended the councils from Antioch 324 to Serdica 343.
[125] Parvis, *Marcellus,* 41-47 discusses Antonias of Tarsus, Athanasius of Anazarbus, and Narcissus of Neronias who seem to be steadily anti-Nicene.
[126] Parvis, *Marcellus,* 124f. Cf. Sara Parvis, "The Strange Disappearance of the Moderate Originists: The Arian Controversy, 326-341", *SP,* Vol. 39 (2006), 97-102 that largely defends a two-party feud prior to the death of Eusebius of Nicomedia.

working against him.[127] To this it could be added that Sophie Cartwright, whose excellent new monograph on Eustathius was initially developed as a doctorate under Sara Parvis' supervision, also shows resistance to the more sweeping revision.[128]

While other names might be appended among those resistant to the revisionism of the "Arian Controversy", the work of John Behr will complete this section.[129] Behr's inclination to defend Athanasius is explicit with remarks such as "Nicene Christianity exists by virtue of his constancy and vision".[130] Even though Athanasius could be aggressive, he was not "lastingly vindictive".[131] Behr defines Athanasius' theology by the time-honored explanation as being driven by a God versus creation divide where the "Arian" Son falls on the side of the latter.[132] While aware of how liberally Athanasius came to use the title "Arian", Behr overlaps with Anatolios in defending the consistency and cogency of Athanasius theology.[133] Behr's chapter devoted to Athanasius outlines the sincere theological disagreements between Athanasius and his opponents.[134] So, the point of these last few paragraphs is to show that there is a group of scholars cognizant of, and somewhat resistant to, those who want to dampen or even eliminate Athanasius'

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[127] Parvis at *Marcellus,* 180 does sound like the revisionists when she says Marcellus and Athanasius "together created the full-blown myth of Arianism" in Rome around 340.
[128] Sophie Cartwright's, *The Theological Anthropology of Eustathius of Antioch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4-9 presumes there is an "Arian" Christology against which Eustathius wrote. She is aware of the "reconstructions" but insists on maintaining the language of "Arian" in quotations.
[129] George Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria* (Rollinsford NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2005), 194-97 and John McGuckin, "Arius, Arianism", in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, Vol. 2, edited by Christine Helmer, et. al., (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 10.1515 lean towards the traditional narrative but do not engage with the revisionist claims.
[130] John Behr *Formation of Christian Theology, Volume 2: The Nicene Faith, Part I* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 167.
[131] Behr, *Formation,* Vol. 2 Pt.1, 167.
[132] Behr, *Formation Vol 2 Pt 1*, 191, drawing on Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 11. Behr says the "Arian" Son is neither human nor God, 145.
[133] Behr, *Formation* Vol. 2 Pt. 1, 25 for views on the "Arian" title. Also says at 9, despite his inclinations to defend Athanasius, "it is no longer possible to refer to the debates that resulted in the settlement of "Nicene Orthodoxy" as the 'Arian controversy'".
[134] Behr, *Formation,* Vol. 2, Pt. 1, Ch 5 is devoted to Athanasius.

theological reasons for speaking in terms of an "Arian Controversy". Overall, they tend to see lucidity in Athanasius' theology and lean towards this, rather than dictatorial politics, as the motivation behind his writings. This dissertation is positioned among these voices that offer some remonstrance to the most sweeping conclusions of the "Arian Controversy" revision.

### 1.3 The Benefits of Revisionism

While this dissertation is critical of the wide-ranging revisionism of the "Arian Controversy", it is crucial to note that not all the developments in the reappraisals are to be dismissed. This work does not want to shelve every aspect of the re-evaluation of the "Arian Controversy" as unhelpful. The aim is *not* to revert to Athanasian hagiography with the bishop *contra mundum*, blindly affirming every sentence in his works and heaping abuse on the "Ariomaniacs". It is beyond doubt that Athanasius' polemic cast his opponents in the worst possible light and that he aimed to vilify them as much as possible. In this sense, it is vital to note that there are significant points in these recent scholarly works that enlighten an understanding of fourth century theological thought and advise appropriate caution in reading Athanasius.

Foremost among the breakthroughs of the revisionists is the recognition of the polyvalence in theological expression in the years leading up to, and after Nicaea. The polemical division of the "Arians" against the "orthodox" that governed patristics for centuries is far from adequate. Lyman called for caution about "the proper use of theological polemic as a historical source".[135] Polemic often tells more about its practitioner than about its object. This strict dichotomy based on an uncritical reading of

[135] Lyman, "Topography", 45.

Athanasius blinkered students from the subtleties of other theological discourses. As a result, studies of Marcellus of Ancyra, Asterius the Sophist, George of Laodicea, and Theodore of Heraclea offer much fruit.[136] Marcellus of Ancyra and Eustathius of Antioch have always been thought "Nicenes", but recent scholarship reveals little textual evidence showing their enthusiasm for the council's conclusions and catchwords. Like his archenemy Marcellus, Eusebius of Caesarea proves another interesting test case. This Eusebius' theology does not fit into the "Arian" category, though some classic interpretations placed him there.[137] By pigeonholing the historian into one of Athanasius' two categories, an appreciation for his own thinking is lost. By eliminating the "Arian" versus "orthodox" binary, every student of patristics is indebted to the hard work of the revisionists for enriching the understanding of these theological positions.

It was the great effort of Ayres to show the diversity among "Nicenes" and to re-evaluate what it means to label someone "Nicene". Why should Athanasius have the authority to define "Nicene"? Athanasius' writings have caused centuries of interpreters to see him as inseparable from the council. The revisionist thesis has correctly identified the illegitimacy of this default position by highlighting others who were better qualified to say what Nicaea meant. Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, had more qualification to impose Nicaea as a standard than Athanasius who attended only as a unenfranchised deacon. One can call this Eusebius more authentically "Nicene" in good conscience

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[136] In addition to Parvis' aforementioned work, Mark DelCogliano's "Asterius in Athanasius' Catalogues of Arian Views", *JTS,* Vol 66. No. 2 (2015), 625-650 wants to liberate the Sophist from Athanasius' polemic, as does his "George of Laodicea: A Historical Reassessment", *JEH*, Vol. 62 No. 4 (2011), 667-692; Matthew Crawford's "On the Diversity and Influence of the Eusebian Alliance: The Case of Theodore of Heraclea", *JEH,* Vol. 64 No. 2 (2013), 227-257.

[137] Holger Strutwolf's *Die Trinitätstheologie und Christologie des Euseb von Caesarea* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999) makes the case for viewing the church historian's theology in its own right. Strutwolf shows why classifying this Eusebius an "Arian" is a mistake. This was also C. Luibheid's conclusion in *Eusebius of Caesarea and the Arian Crisis* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981).

because he actually voted as a bishop at the Council and participated in its proceedings. So perhaps Eusebius of Caesarea is a better exemplar of mainstream fourth century theological thought in the East. Arguing on similar lines to Ayres, Stephens correctly attests, "to be non-Nicene was not to be anti-Nicene" so some theological utterances could be "non-Nicene" but also "pro-Nicene".[138] That is to say, a bishop could have been indifferent but not necessarily antagonistic to the council's Formula. Given the uncertain status of Nicaea's Formula in the two decades after the council, it is quite possible that a bishop could have inadvertently supported or violated one of Nicaea's tenets without being overtly pro or anti-Nicene. What pre-critical scholarship had was an inaccurate conflation of non-Nicene (not even anti-Nicene) and anti-Athanasian sentiment. Athanasius' early binary permitted no other distinctions. The emergence of the complexities among those historically confined to the "Arian" or "orthodox" camps opens-up the possibility of seeing the development of fourth century theology from a non-Athanasian perspective. That is to say, the traditional lens gives far too much credit to Athanasius for single-handedly defending, or even crafting, "orthodoxy". Michel Barnes and Christopher Beeley are particularly compelling in wanting to see fourth century theology as extending beyond Athanasius' insight.

The earlier strands of the "Arian Controversy" revisionists helped portray Arius as a serious theologian and a committed Christian. Athanasius' polemic depicts the presbyter as the worst of all villains, hopelessly hostile to Christianity. It was this perspective on Arius that earned him the designation of a "radical". Alternatively, it was the writings of Gregg and Groh, Wiles, and Williams that showed Arius to have been a biblical exegete working within a Christian tradition. The presbyter believed the Son was

[138] Stephens, "Too Good", 125, 156.

divine, that the New Testament held authority, and that the second person of the Trinity was indispensible for the salvation of humanity. Arius' writings drew on what had been written previously by esteemed church office-holders.[139] It is now widely accepted that, in the words of one thinker, "Arius' theology was retrograde".[140] There is no reason to doubt Arius' claim that he learned his theology over the course of many years in Alexandria. "The origins of the dispute do not lie simply in the beliefs of one thinker".[141] Rather than spontaneously conjuring-up a deviation from a pre-existent "orthodoxy", Arius is a valued thinker in the search for Trinitarian doctrine. The revisionism of the fourth century helps students to know that "theology continues to need its Ariuses".[142] Given that many of those whom I have identified as revisionists hold a place among the most gifted patristic scholars, it would be a mistake to give the impression that their writings are not valued. The helpful aspects of these new developments are not being challenged nor denied.

## 1.4 Concluding Analysis

This introductory chapter tried to make three deliberate claims. Firstly, I wanted to argue that there has indeed been a revision of the "Arian Controversy" and that

[139] The revisionists can overstate Arius' continuity with previous thinkers. For example, Arius was a radical in asserting that the Son was "from nothing". Tertullian's *Against Hermogenes* says something can either be "from God", "from matter", or "from nothing". So, on Tertullian's reasoning, Arius' assertion that the Son was "from nothing" (which has no precedent) was a denial of his being "from God". It should also be noted that Arius' "before the Son was begotten he was not" is in tension with what Origen thought. Cf. Edwards, *Religions,* 276. It also conflicts with a statement from Irenaeus (strangely attributed to Jeremiah) at the *Demonstration on Apostolic Preaching* 43 on the blessedness of the Son before he came into being. Lactantius says something similar at the *Divine Institutes* 4.8. If this is taken to mean that the Son existed before the incarnation then it probably caused little conflict. If the statement is rendered "blessed is he who is before he was begotten", then Arius did seem to break with accepted theologies of the past. *The Gospel of Philip* 64 does say "blessed is the one who is before he was begotten", so Arius, because he was explicitly anti "Gnostic", may have said "before he was begotten he was not" in an effort to refute what he thought to be a "Gnostic" slogan.

[140] Beeley, *Unity,* 113.

[141] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 233.

[142] Rowan Williams, "The Logic of Arianism", *JTS,* Vol. 34 No. 1 (1983), 81.

individual texts can be identified as transposing the debate. While the historiographical survey is non-exhaustive, its purpose was to highlight the most influential works and how they inverted the traditional view centered on theology as presented by Athanasius. While what I have called extreme revision is by no means monolithic, the major claims can be distilled to a handful of central premises:

i.) The labels "Arian" and "Eusebian" are best understood as Athanasian constructs, inventions, or creations embellished by rhetorical topoi. The things these groups did were equally fabricated. The problem with these labels is twofold: a.) Athanasius applied beliefs to his interlocutors that they did not hold and/or b.) He accurately captured his opponents' theology but used the labels "Arian" and "Eusebian" to attach otherwise unconnected individuals who thought themselves catholic.

ii.) "Arianism" is a misnomer because the group as Athanasius presented them had no intention of propping-up the presbyter.[143] No clergyman was consciously "Arian".

iii.) Athanasius indiscriminately placed people in the categories "Arian" and "Eusebian". Anyone (or any gathering) with whom Athanasius had any kind of disagreement was to be tarnished with the "Arian" or "Eusebian" brush. So, "Arian" really means anti-Athanasian.

iv.) Athanasius' depiction of these "Arians" was motivated primarily by the lust for power and position. In a Foucaultian sense, Schwartz,

[143] Captured nicely by Ayres who denies an "overt conspiracy to perpetuate the theology of Arius" at *Nicaea,* 106.

T.D. Barnes, Lyman, Beeley, Stephens, and others envisage the Alexandrian bishop's writings as governed by his desire to hold ecclesiastical control.

v.) The Alexandrian's crude binary distorted the rich complexity of theological views and, more importantly, hijacked what it meant to be "Nicene" when others would have had just as strong a claim.

When taken together, these conclusions obscure the seriousness of a theological dispute. The dismissal of these categories is not just the expunging of imprecise labels, but rather the attrition of historical theology itself. Political machinations have displaced contentious theological discourse as the driving factor in the narrative. In making most things about ecclesiastical power jockeying, the revisionist thesis has forced the conscientious student to question whether history can be a way of detecting theology. Secondly, having documented the move to these more sweeping conclusions, the chapter went on to identify a number of patristic thinkers aware of, and somewhat resistant to, this development. In this vein, this dissertation operates within a strand of respected current scholarship. Lastly, this chapter articulated the major accomplishments of the revision of the "Arian Controversy" in order to protect against the perception that the thesis wants to return to labeling Athanasius' enemies "Ariomaniacs" and reclaim his binary that eclipses all analysis of more subtle theologies. Those whom I have labeled revisionists are not to be sacked, but rather to be engaged and questioned.

The remainder of this thesis will offer a modest yet deliberate remonstrance to the five premises outlined above and those who want to eliminate the "Arian Controversy". Through a series of arguments, I will defend the concept of "Arianism" as a useful

heuristic for identifying those who thought like Arius thought and mobilized against Athanasius to advance this theology. The first order of business will be a critique of three ideas that routinely appear in the revisionist works.

# Chapter 2: "Construction", "Rhetoric", and "Categorization": Three Debates with the Revisionists

Having documented the erosion of the "Arian Controversy" and identified its central arguments, this chapter wants to address three ideas that routinely appear in the works of the revisionists. Of the five key aspects of the elimination of the "Arian Controversy" outlined at the end of the last chapter, several of them depend on "Arianism" being an Athanasian construct, that Athanasius' use of rhetoric clouds the existence of real opponents, and that the categorization of his foes is reckless. This chapter will look at each of these three positions in turn to see if the revisionists overstate their case.

## 2.1 Is "Arianism" an Athanasian Construct?

Are there consequences for eliminating "Arianism" and the "Eusebians" from the patristic lexicon on the grounds that these concepts are Athanasian constructs? Of primary importance is to understand that those who push an "Arianism" constructed by Athanasius inadvertently show Athanasius to be not just the defender of what came to be known as "Nicene orthodoxy", but also the architect of an attractive alternative. The revisionists want to stress "Arianism" as a "polemical construction" of Athanasius.[1] The severest conclusion emphasizes that Athanasius "created 'Arian' as the heretical label to apply to any one who opposed him as bishop of Alexandria or the doctrine of Nicaea".[2] Or again, Arianism became "a polemical label that supporters of Nicaea liberally attached

[1] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 87.
[2] Rebecca Lyman, "Arius and the Arians" in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies,* eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 247.

to their enemies".[3] These types of remarks are indicative of the revisionist trend to show "Arianism" as more about Athanasius' circumstances than about substantive theological differences. The problem is that the more forcefully a scholar asserts the ingenuity of Athanasius in constructing the "Arians", the more Athanasius emerges as contriving another cogent system of Christian theology. On the one hand is the self-evident and now axiomatic assertion that "we reach the essential Arius through Athanasius, and in no other way".[4] On the other hand, readers sympathize with Rowan Williams' essay that documents the "logic of Arianism" because of its inner cohesion.[5] Wiles simultaneously claimed that Arius had better scriptural support for his position and a tighter theology while choosing the language of Athanasius *creating* "Arianism".[6] Here lies the problem. To what extent should Arius' logical theological system be ascribed to Athanasian provenance? In reading some of the far-reaching revisionism, "Arianism" is such a product of Athanasius' exigencies that he should be given credit for its merits. The revisionists who see Athanasian construction as more than a misappropriation of a label must account for why the bishop's opponents appear formidable.

*Dissoi Logoi,* or the practice of contrasting arguments, has long been a coveted skill among dialecticians as an orator was encouraged to adopt the side of his opponent in order to better understand his own perspective. With the revisionists' idea of an "Athanasian Arianism", Athanasius becomes the expositor of an impressive theology at odds with his own view. For example, in the three authentic *Orations against the Arians,* Athanasius specified the verses of Scripture that were supposedly contentious. The

[3] Smith, "The Trinity", 109.
[4] Kannengiesser, "Arius and the Arians", 460.
[5] Williams, "Logic", 56-81.
[6] Wiles, *Archetypal,* Ch. 1.

verses that he claims were disputed are precisely the ones that ought to have been disputed.[7] Proverbs 8.22, described as "the most difficult text for Athanasius' argument", explicitly states that Wisdom was created; therefore casting a challenge to what Athanasius wanted to say.[8] The bishop's solution to relegate Proverbs 8.22 to the Son's incarnation as concerning God's economy whilst allowing Proverbs 8.25 to reference the Son's eternity is grasping at straws.[9] Similarly, the *Third Oration* discusses passages that show the finitude of the second person of the Trinity. This, too, is a logical argument from the "Arians". How can someone who is divine *by essence* have such limitations? Abramowski saw the potential irony here and argued in favour of there being real opponents; otherwise Athanasius would have provided his enemies with good arguments.[10] To strengthen this point, some of Athanasius' refutations of "Arianism" are not particularly convincing. For example, he accuses the "Arians" of over-emphasizing the Father as ἀγεννητος (because this is what the Son could not be) on the grounds that the word is unscriptural, yet he was well aware that the language of Nicaea was also unscriptural. Throughout Athanasius' polemic, there are plenty of examples where he struggled to offer a cogent riposte to "Arian" points.[11] The "Arian" system that materializes from Athanasius' polemical writings is as logically sound as it is biblically grounded. What finds its genesis in extreme suspicion of Athanasius can be read as a

[7] Donald Fairbairn's "Context, Context, Context: Athanasius' Biblical Interpretation in *Contra Arianos*", *Perichoresis,* Vol. 12 No. 2 (2014), 119-135 favours the idea that the biblical texts introduced by Athanasius were sincerely advanced by Arius (120). This also provides a nice catalogue of disputed passages on 122.

[8] Fairbairn, "Context", 124. As regarding Proverbs 8.22, "it is here, perhaps, that Athanasius is most vulnerable to the charge of simply reading his own theology into the passage", 133.

[9] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.56.

[10] Louise Abramowski, "Die dritte Arianerrede des Athanasius: Eusebianer und Arianer und das westliche Serdicense"*, Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte,* 102 (1991), 389-413.

[11] A great example from later in Athanasius' career comes in *On the Opinions of Dionysius* in which the reader sees Athanasius struggling to interpret the third century Patriarch's slogans to his liking. Cf. T.E. Pollard's "The Exegesis of John X.30 in the Early Triniatrian Controversies", *New Testament Studies,* Vol. 3 (1956/1957), 334-349 for the polyvalent interpretation of this verse and its potential dangers.

high form of flattery so long as what has always been defined as "Arianism" is considered coherent. It should be no surprise that what Athanasius presented as "Arianism" would have attracted intelligent followers. On this point, the argument of the revisionists is reduced to an insistence that what materializes as "Arianism" in Athanasius just needs another name. This is not to diminish the importance of nomenclature because all of these theologians saw themselves as catholic.

Concomitantly, "Arianism" as an Athanasian embellishment stifles exploration into what is termed "the origins of Arianism". The presbyter did not pluck what theological encyclopedias describe as "Arianism" from thin air. Arius, like every other theologian, stood in a continuum. The debate on "Arianism's" origins is as divided as it is voluminous. Newman's *Arians* wanted to shift the blame for the presbyter's theology from Alexandria's "eclectic" philosophy to an Antiochene influence. About a hundred years later, Gustave Bardy's *Recherches sur S. Lucien d'Antioche et son école* of 1936 explored Arius' *Sitz-im-Leben.*[12] Bardy, with Newman, argued for Arius' Antiochene background.[13] Christopher Stead disagreed and saw Arius mediating a Middle Platonism especially through Origen's enemy Methodius.[14] Wiles and L.W. Barnard swung the pendulum back and saw Arius' thinking as largely a *phénomène Alexandrin*, against Bardy and Pollard.[15] Kannengiesser thought that it was not so much Platonism as "Plotinism" that stirred Arius.[16] Most common of all is the widely accepted assertion that Arius derived his theology from an interpretation of Origen. After all, in discussing these

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[12] Gustave Bardy, *Recherches sur S Lucien d'Antioche et so ecole* (Paris, 1936)
[13] With Bardy, Pollard's "The Origins of Arianism", *JTS,* Vol. 9 No. 1 (1958) 103-111 sees Arius as representing Antiochene theology.
[14] Christopher Stead, "The Platonism of Arius", *JTS,* Vol. 15 No. 1 (1964), 16-37.
[15] Wiles' "Defence" and L.W. Barnard, "The Antecedents of Arius", *VC,* Vol. 24 No. 3 (1970) 172-188.
[16] Kannengiesser, *Holy Scripture,* 34f.

post-Nicene years, "no-one is wholly untouched by the thought of Origen".[17] It is possible to draw connections between the theology Arius expressed and a host of these antecedents. Therefore, the concept of a malleable "Arianism" used only as a polemical instrument significantly distorts the fact that "Arianism" was a natural outworking of particular strands of pre-existent thought. "The origins of the dispute do not lie simply in the beliefs of one thinker", be that thinker Athanasius or Arius.[18]

An autonomous Athanasius crafting an "Arian" party inevitably leaves his contemporaries looking overly credulous, even obtuse. If Athanasius was so obviously infelicitous with his use of the term "Arian", why were so many eager to adopt it? It is understandable to accuse the fifth century historians of blindly compiling Athanasius' works, for Socrates said he did so explicitly, but it is far less plausible that so many of Athanasius' contemporaries would have been so gullible. Perhaps there is no better example than Julius of Rome who, on the extreme revisionist thesis, appears, at best, foolishly imprudent or, at worst, among the ranks of the power-hungry who ignore all semblance of truth. For those arguing against a substantive "Arian" movement, Julius adopted Athanasius' version as a means of extending his influence into Eastern ecclesiastical affairs. He rather uncritically swallowed the "Arian Controversy" so he could be in solidarity with Alexandria. The problem is that it would be just as plausible to see Julius confirming the castigation of Athanasius to harmonize with the gathering at Antioch. Why did Julius think it advantageous to insult those meeting at Antioch in hopes of gaining some authority in a divided Alexandria? As the following years would unfold, siding with Marcellus and Athanasius solely for political gain looks like a gross

[17] Mark Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy* (Surrey UK: Ashgate, 2009), 105.
[18] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 20.

miscalculation, the former repeatedly condemned and the latter not restored for another six years. Either way, the more natural reading is to think Julius of Rome had to have recognized something substantive in Athanasius' narrative of a "Eusebian" and "Arian" persecution in order to become so involved. Even operating on the thesis that Julius sided with Athanasius partly for political reasons, he still must have been convinced that branding "Eusebians" was a diplomatically expedient move, thus implying that such a group was, at the very least, identifiable.

The close ally of Athanasius' construction of "Arianism" is the allegation that he arbitrarily shelved any and every opponent into the "Arian" box. It appears that this, too, is in need of more careful evaluation (a more extended test case is the subject of chapter five). For instance, Athanasius says that the Melitians benefitted from the assistance of the "Arians".[19] Few stop to question why the Melitians remain "the Melitians" in Athanasius' writings. Athanasius presents the Melitians in collusion with the "Arians" and the "Eusebians", but never could the Melitians be assimilated entirely into the "Arian" category. Athanasius despised the Melitians, but their error was distinct. So, Lyman's accusation that Athanasius tarnished "anyone who opposed him as bishop of Alexandria" with the "Arian" and "Eusebian" brush cannot be maintained.[20] In a similar vein, there are a handful of scholars who have scrutinized the relationship between Athanasius and Marcellus of Ancyra. Due to their commiseration before Julius in Rome around 340, it is common to superimpose the two bishops. The problem, however, is that there is little textual evidence that they approved of each other's theology.[21] Marcellus

[19] Athanasius, *Apology* 59, 71.
[20] Lyman, "Topography", 247.
[21] Lienhard's "Did Athanasius" 65-80 provides an overview of the perspectives and shows how little textual evidence indicates solidarity between these two figures. Parvis, *Marcellus,* 250-251 thinks

never mentions Athanasius in his extant texts. Outside of citations, Athanasius only mentions Marcellus two times in all his writings and this to briefly declare him a victim of the "Arians".[22] In fact, there are some who see Athanasius' theology as implicitly, though stridently, anti-Marcellan.[23] Even the effortlessly repeated suggestion that Marcellus taught Athanasius to interpret Proverbs 8.22 in light of the incarnation finds an earlier and clearer parallel in Eustathius.[24] If it is correct that Athanasius distanced himself from Marcellus' theology (and this topic appears again briefly in chapter four), it must be noted that Marcellus never could have been described as an "Arian" in Athanasius' polemic. His theology erred in a different direction.[25] Later in Athanasius' career, another Ancyran bishop, Basil, migrated from the "Arian" category on account of his theological distinctiveness. These examples show that the Alexandrian was capable of withholding the "Arian" brand from those with whom he disagreed, thus showing some discriminatory boundaries for inclusion beyond personal friction. This is to say, Athanasian "construction" creates a series of problems.

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Marcellus deliberately distanced himself from Athanasius. Parvis also suggests that Marcellus did not sign the Nicene Creed as some lists of the signatories have a "Pancharius of Ancyra" listed, 91. (against J. Robertson, *Christ as Mediator: A Study of the Theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Athanasius of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7-8). If Marcellus was displeased with Nicaea, this is all the more reason to posit a gap between Athanasius and the Ancyran.

[22] Lienhard, "Did Athanasius", 66-67.

[23] Robertson, *Christ,* 221.

[24] Cartwright, *Eustathius,* 70.

[25] There is intriguing circumstantial evidence in favour of Athanasius' protecting Marcellus. Basil of Caesarea's *Letter* 69 in Basil of Caesarea, *Letters Vol. II* ed. and trans. Roy Deferrari and Martin Mcguire (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 39-47 asks Athanasius to distance himself from Marcellus. Then his *Letter* 89 (in the same volume), 118-121 Basil complains to Meletius, Bishop of Antioch, that Athanasius does not listen to his letters. Then there is the intriguing story told by Epiphanius at *Panarion* 72 (436 in Williams' translation) in which an aged Athanasius just smiled when asked about Marcellus.

## 2.2 What does it mean to say Athanasius was "rhetorical"?

In evaluating the texts that address Athanasius' polemic, the reader should not overlook how the words "rhetoric" and "polemic" operate in the revisionist thesis. In the ancient world, rhetoric was not in competition with truth. For those wanting to eliminate the "Arian Controversy", the charge is often that Athanasius' "Arians" are "merely polemical" or crudely "rhetorical" as if to say that what is "rhetorical" is disingenuous.[26] The subtitle of Lyman's article, for example, is "mapping the *rhetorical* creation of Arianism".[27] Gwynn claims the "Eusebians" were "a *rhetorical* construct, a product of Athanasius' polemic and of his desire to justify himself against his condemnation and subsequent exile in 335".[28] Since classicists write prolifically on rhetoric in the ancient world, this discussion will be concise, but direct. It is beyond doubt that Athanasius' polemic, even in his so-called history books, does not give his opponents the benefit of the doubt. His works deliberately try to disparage his enemies by portraying them in the worst possible light. The problem arises when current revisionists hold Athanasius to a standard of accuracy in his rhetoric that was not only unreasonable during his lifetime, but also illogical given his situation. Cicero thought history was a "rhetorical activity".[29] Woodman contests that ancient historiography was unlike modern historiography in the latter's quest for exactness.[30] As Cameron makes clear, the ancients viewed history as a

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[26] Beeley, *Unity,* 125-126 Athanasius "employed such extreme, ad hominem rhetoric" and brought "into service an acid tongue and vitriolic rhetoric".
[27] Lyman, "Topography", 45. (Italics mine)
[28] Gwynn, "The Construction", 165. (Italics mine)
[29] A.J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 198; Cf. 70-116.
[30] Woodman, *Rhetoric,* 10. Interestingly, Woodman discusses Cicero's *Letter to Lucceius* in which he tells his friend to "elaborate [*ornes*] my activities even against your better judgment, and in the process disregard the laws of historiography", 71. This means that not elaborating was the normal practice of historiographers. We need to "rid ourselves of the mistaken notion that the ancients' view of historical

kind of literature.[31] Writing that proposed to convey history actually demanded that the author have a "capacity to persuade the reader of his hypothesis".[32] In this vein, Athanasius' *Encyclical* "is not history, and it would be perverse to complain that Athanasius' account of his replacement as bishop of Alexandria lacks both precision and objectivity".[33] The point is that those wanting to reshape the "Arian Controversy" conflate "rhetoric" with the accruing of evidence for Athanasius' obfuscation of the facts, such as the cloaking of his summons to Caesarea in 334 or his heaping abuse on "Arians", without acknowledging that some of these variations, omissions, and smokescreens were not any more dishonest than the contents of other ancient historiographers. Rhetoric can be defined simply as "aiming to convince by speech".[34] Within the genre of rhetoric, polemic holds a place. Like other rhetorical devices, polemic was a "vehicle for Christian self-identity".[35] It is a worthwhile endeavor to discover where and how Athanasius deviated for purposes of his cause, as no one is advocating an uncritical reading of his texts, but to castigate him as more of a villain than his contemporaries for writing rhetorically, or polemically, is misguided. Athanasius had opponents whom he despised, so he was expectedly *rhetorical*. He ought not be blamed for rehearsing ideas the same way others did at his time and for failing to demonstrate a

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truth was the same as ours", 73. Many modern historians read Cicero's *De Oratore* as describing history in in the same manner that they would; not telling lies and saying as much truth as possible, 81.

[31] Averil Cameron, "Introduction: The Writing of History" in her *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History* (London: Duckworth, 1989), 1-10.

[32] M.J. Wheeldon, "'True Stories': The Reception of Historiography in Antiquity" in *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History* ed. Averil Cameron (London: Duckworth, 1989), 34. The entire article is helpful in discussing the role of ancient history writing.

[33] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 49.

[34] Mary Cunningham and Pauline Allen, "Introduction" in *Preacher and Audience,* eds. Cunningham and Allen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 7.

[35] Cunningham and Allen, "Introduction", 9.

liberal, post-Enlightenment detachment from his own bias. Athanasius' rhetorical style does not automatically mean that what he says is false.

Perhaps the bigger problem when it comes to the revisionists' dismissal of Athanasian rhetoric is the failure to understand that the polemical tactics they condemn in the bishop appear earlier in Arius' writings. If "Athanasian Arianism" stands for the bishop's unfair rhetorical construction of his enemies, then the same methodology could force a conclusion of an "Arian Alexandrianism". Wiles, Stead, Lyman, and Gwynn are quick to censor Athanasius' willful inaccuracies in his anti-"Arian" writings. That is, Athanasius applied positions to his interlocutors that they did not hold. Arius' *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*, however, contains these same kinds of rhetorical strategies. Arius accused his opponents, chiefly the bishop Alexander, with τὸν υἱὸν λεγόντων οἱ μὲν ἐρυγήν, οἱ δὲ προβολήν, οἱ δὲ συναγέννητον, "some are saying the Son is a belching, others an emanation, and still others, alike-unbegotten".[36] Employing the revisionists' critical apparatus would force the reader to jettison Arius' hyperbolic writing to question which church father called the Son a "belching"? Can we identify even one thinker from this period whose theological position held that "the Son is a belching"? Since the answer is no, the conclusion cannot be that Arius wrote infelicitously and his opponents are illusory. More importantly, Alexander explicitly denied that the Son was an "emanation".[37] Likewise, Arius' opponents did *not* believe in two unbegotten beings as he alleged. Alexander could not be clearer that he believes in "one unbegotten Father"

[36] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia;* Opitz, *Urkunde,* 1. An English translation is in William G. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 29 though his translation of συναγέννητον as "alike-ingenerate" is not preferable. The difference between "generated" and "begotten" becomes an important distinction.
[37] Alexander, *Letter to Alexander* 46; Opitz, *Urkunde* 14.

and his "only-begotten" Son.[38] Moving forward in the letter, Arius referred to the bishops "Philogonius, Hallenicus, and Macarius" as *heretical* and obtuse men. Arius was just as capable as Athanasius of heaping terms of abuse, such as "unlearned" in this case, on his opponents. So, in his brief *Letter to Eusebius,* Arius unloaded rudely inaccurate attributions upon his challengers. On the same grounds that the revisionists accuse Athanasius of fabrication and illegitimate classifications they would also have to accuse Arius. The heresiarch recklessly compounded a disparity of views and attributed them to his opponents, even when they unambiguously denied it. Instead of dismissing Arius' letter as a list of "rhetorical" inaccuracies, it is more responsible to comprehend the sincerity of this dispute and the role of impassioned polemic in a contentious theological feud. The charge of heterodoxy was going *both* ways and there are enough of Arius' writings to see the same degree of polemical distortion.

Given the fact that the charges of heresy were multidirectional, I must, however briefly, take-up the category for discussion. When Athanasius describes Arius' position as "heretical", is this to be dismissed as rhetorical pomposity? Given the complexity of fourth century theology and the fact that few think of a fixed, pre-Nicene "orthodoxy", the classification of heresy should be used with caution. Walter Bauer's famous study *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* warned against so simple a division.[39] This being said, the early church relegated certain beliefs to this classification in an official manner; namely, through church councils. Some of the revisionist literature seems to hold it against Athanasius that he labels his opponents heretics. Gwynn, for example, throughout his work, uses inverted commas when he speaks of the "Arian"

[38] Alexander, *Letter to Alexander,* 46; Opitz, *Urkunde* 14.
[39] Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* ed. R.A. Kraft and G. Krodel, trans. Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins (London: SCM Press, 1972).

"heresy".[40] He would probably argue that Nicaea did not condemn Arius by name and that the "Arianism" that the council outlawed was an Athanasian product. The response would be that Nicaea, while not condemning Arius by name, did institute anathemas with the specific aim of excluding the presbyter and those who held his views.[41] That Nicaea targeted Arius' teachings is made stronger by the Council of Antioch 324/325's explicit warning against the presbyter. Groups of bishops at these meetings did intend to forbid slogans from what was acceptable theology and what they proscribed looks like the most controversial positions in Arius' extant writings. More importantly, Nicaea did this while Athanasius was still an unenfranchised deacon. While it is inappropriate for a modern scholar to call certain theologies "heretical" simply because they fell outside some perceived "orthodoxy" as declared by Athanasius, it is necessary to see that the early church had an apparatus for consigning theological tenets as heresy. It could be argued that, on these grounds, Athanasius too could reasonably be called a heretic because church councils condemned him. While that may be a fair approach, the point of this discussion is to show that when Athanasius calls Arius a heretic, he could be using the word in this more technical manner. There is a potential inexactitude in failing to see that Arius' theology was anathematized and that his restoration at subsequent synods is questionable.[42] It is an altogether different question to ask whether those whom Athanasius called heretics held the views that Arius did, but to think of Athanasius' charge of heresy is *merely rhetorical* fails to capture what the fathers thought they were

[40] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 113-114, 169.
[41] Athanasius in *Apology against the Arians* 59, 85 routinely returns to Nicaea as the ecumenical meeting that proscribed Arius. The anathemas at Nicaea target the slogans preserved in Arius' letters.
[42] H. Chadwick, "The Origin of the Title 'Oecumenical' Council", *JTS*, (1972), 132-135 on whether Nicaea's standing as "world-wide" added to its authority. That there were so many more bishops at Nicaea than at Jerusalem in 336 must have made some difference. Arius is certainly anathematized at Constantinople in 381.

doing in the anathemas. Athanasius certainly had a better case for calling Arius a heretic than Arius had in calling Macarius of Jerusalem one. So, despite Athanasius' heated vocabulary, there is a conscientious way of reading his labeling "Arianism" a heresy as referring to those sets of ideas derived from Arius' writings that were barred at the ecumenical meeting at Nicaea.

## 2.3 Is it possible to speak about theology without categories?

This brings the discussion to the practical but monumental concern over nomenclature and categories in secondary literature. As a reminder, the revisionist thesis holds that "Arian…as a designation for anyone other than the immediate associates of Arius himself who were excluded from the church of Egypt by Alexander, is a title given by Athanasius to his opponents for a specific polemical purpose of defamation by association".[43] So, Rowan Williams memorably called for "Arianism" to be "cast into oblivion". In the introduction to a compendium of revisionist articles, the authors astutely pinpoint "the problem of language due in large part to the new ways in which scholarship is increasingly recognizing the different dialectics that formed the various theologies and parties of the period".[44] So, the expunging of old categories is greeted with a sense of triumphalism as "the removal of the polemical labels like 'Arian' or 'Nicene'…is already opening up new opportunities for the reinterpretation of the doctrinal controversies of these years in modern scholarship".[45] The appropriateness of the titles "Arian", "Arianism", and "Arian Controversy" occupy some attention in nearly every work that pertains to this thesis. The trend in the revisionism traced in chapter one

[43] Wiles, "Attitudes", 42.
[44] Barnes and Williams, *Arianism*, xvi.
[45] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 249.

signals a deep skepticism towards the continued use of these terms. This suspicion abides for a number of reasons. It is clear that those whom Athanasius designated "Arians" did not think of themselves as such, as made lucid in the letter from the Dedication Council at Antioch.[46] There was no actual group who consciously formed their own theology in conformity to the Alexandrian presbyter. That is to say, there was not a contingent of clergymen acting solely to prop up Arius. Given this severance of the historical Arius from Athanasius' "Arianism", the labels themselves do demand attention. If "Arianism" is a "misnomer", what terminology should scholarship use? Since it is no longer beneficial to see the fourth century as a contest between the "Arians" and the "Nicenes" (or "orthodox"), how does the student speak of the different perspectives? Was the fourth century so polyvalent in its theological expression that any labels are hopelessly confining? No one states this dilemma more clearly than Rowan Williams in that "the problem for students of this period is, in part, the lack of a convenient designation for a theology which takes for granted some sort of hierarchical pluralism in its talk of God".[47] Hanson and Williams think that it is best to use inverted commas (as I have done in this dissertation). By placing "Arianism" in quotations the student escapes the misunderstanding that there might have been a party that existed solely to prop up Arius. For the revisionist, the inverted commas connote construction. Wiles, however, finds that placing "Arianism" in brackets is "tedious".[48] More problematic than fatigue is the fact that "Arian" has the same semiotic function as Arian in delineating Athanasius' opponents. Barnes sidesteps the question of inverted commas by noting that the fresh insight "does not justify the continued use of the term [Arianism] by a modern historian

[46] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 22.
[47] Williams, *Arius,* 167.
[48] Wiles, *Archetypal,* 5n6.

who strives for objectivity".[49] In rejecting "Arian", however, Barnes has to go for "the allies of Arius" to speak about what he means.[50] The problem remains.

Alternative designations have been floated for many years, but none with any traction. One such suggestion came from those who saw Arius as a thoroughly Antiochene product. In this scenario, the "controversy" was really one between an Alexandrian persuasion and an Antiochene persuasion. Few scholars now see Arius as an Antiochene because any meaningful connection to the enigmatic Lucian is impossible to develop. So, calling Arius an "Antiochene" is unsatisfactory. In his 1987 article "The 'Arian' Controversy", J.T. Lienhard suggests "calling the two conflicting theological systems 'miahypostatic' and 'dyohypostatic' theology, the theology of one *hypostasis* and of two *hypostaseis* respectively".[51] The inadequacy of these designations is immediately apparent.[52] Firstly, the number of hypostases in the Godhead does not seem to be the issue at stake according to Arius or Athanasius. The debate is centered on the unbegotten monad of the Father and how the Son relates to the Father. Moreover, at least one relatively recent evaluation of Athanasius' theology refutes the notion that the bishop's theology was "miahypostatic".[53] If this were the case, Athanasius and Arius would be on the same side of Lienhard's division. Secondly, and equally troubling, is the fact that Lienhard's designation would force the placement of Alexander of Alexandria on the wrong side of things. In his *Letter to Alexander of Byzantium,* also called the *he philarchos,* Alexander can speak of ἡ τοῦ μονογενοῦς θεοῦ ἀνεκδιήγητος ὑπόστασις or

[49] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 15.
[50] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 17.
[51] J.T. Lienhard, "The 'Arian' Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered" in *Theological Studies* 48 No. 3, 422.
[52] Robertson, *Christ,* 221 sees this distinction as unhelpful.
[53] Xavier Morales, *La theologie trinitaire d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Institut d'Etude Augustiniennes, 2006), Part I.

"the indescribable hypostasis of the only-begotten of God".[54] This language attests to Alexander's belief in the Son's independent hypostasis. Following Lienhard's distinction, Alexander of Alexandria would be theologically aligned with Arius. If this language did lie at the center of the debate, one would certainly expect Athanasius to have been more enthusiastic about Serdica's miahypostatic formula that he patently rejected.

In a 1998 article "The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon", Michel Barnes sees the difference between the theologies as being between those who see "sameness" in the Trinity and those who see "difference" in the Trinity. Lewis Ayres develops this semantic field with more thoroughness in his *Nicaea and its Legacy* when he speaks of divergent "trajectories" of thought around the council.[55] Anatolios detected a problem in this and questions how someone like Asterius would be classified.[56] Asterius saw much "sameness" between the Father and Son but was certainly an opponent of Athanasius. Additionally, this vocabulary breaks down concerning groups like the "Anomoians" who had no problem saying the Son was *like* the Father so long as his essence was *unlike* the Father's essence. As a result of these strains, Anatolios proposes his own classifications of the parties as those who see the Trinity as a unity of *being* and those who see the Trinity as a unity of *will.*[57] Like the other classifications, Anatolios' binary does not solve the problem. Firstly, Athanasius would probably have said that the unity between the Father and Son is one of *both* essence and will. For example, in *Oration* 2.2 and *Oration* 3.62 he says that God's will is a consequence of his nature. So, it is not that the

[54] Theodoret, *EH* 1.4.
[55] Ayres, *Nicaea,* ; Ayres even calls Athanasius a "Unitarian", which has many problems not least of which is this label's association with the modern movement that denies the triune nature of God.
[56] Anatolios, *Retrieving,* 27-30.
[57] Anatolios, *Retrieving,* 30.

Father does not will the Son to be, but rather the Son's generation is one of nature *and* will, for in Athanasius' theology the Son himself is the will of God. Secondly, this terminology falls prey to the same objection to Lienhard's binary in that the Father's will does not seem to be at the heart of what is at stake. Arius probably did see the divine characteristics of the Son as resulting from the Father's will, but this was a corollary of his central proposition that the Son was not correlative to the Father.

It is sometimes thought that "subordinationism" provides more traction for understanding Arius' position. As Edwards writes, "'Subordinationism' is almost a synonym for 'Arianism'".[58] Does this label better suit the theology Athanasius disliked? This approach, like the others, is riddled with problems and qualifications. Firstly, if what is meant by "subordinationism" is that the Son is somehow under the authority of the Father, then nearly every Eastern bishop could fit this category. In fact, the New Testament, the Nicene Creed, and Athanasius' theology can reasonably be described as subordinationist in this sense. As for the New Testament, it is obvious that John 14.28 was a point of contention between Athanasius and his opponents as Jesus confessed, "the Father is greater than I am". This is precisely the kind of passage that protects the ingenerate Father at some expense to the Son. It would be expected, therefore, that Athanasius recklessly interpret this passage to equate the Father and the Son. Instead of making the Father and Son equal, however, Athanasius explains that the Father is in fact "greater" than the Son, but one can only be greater than something of its own kind. He writes:

> διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς οὐκ εἴρηκεν· ‹ὁ πατήρ μου κρείττων μού ἐστιν›, ἵνα μὴ ξένον τις τῆς ἐκείνου φύσεως αὐτὸν ὑπολάβοι· ἀλλὰ «μείζων» εἶπεν, οὐ μεγέθει τινὶ οὐδὲ

[58] Edwards, *Catholicity,* 113.

> χρόνῳ, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς γέννησιν· πλὴν ὅτι καὶ ἐν τῷ εἰπεῖν «μείζων ἐστὶν» ἔδειξε πάλιν τῆς οὐσίας τὴν ἰδιότητα
>
> Therefore, the Son does not say "my Father is better than I am", lest he be thought something foreign to his nature, but he says "greater", not in greatness nor in time, but because he is begotten *from* the Father himself, that, again, in saying "he is greater", he shows he is proper to the essence.[59]

The point is that, even for Athanasius, the primacy of the Father is "the natural exegesis of Christ's own confession".[60] Likewise, the so-called "high priestly prayer" of John 17 contains Jesus' declaration to the Father, "this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God". It is impossible to construe this verse without some sense of the Son's economic inferiority. Like John 14.28, Athanasius acknowledges this and retains the basic meaning of the verses.[61]

In the same way the New Testament conveys a subordination of the Son, so also does the Nicene Formula itself. Preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Letter to His See* after the Council, the Formula reads,

> Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα θεόν, πατέρα, παντοκράτορα, πάντων ὁρατῶν τε καὶ ἀοράτων ποιητήν, καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ τουτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί
>
> We believe in one God, Father, Almighty, maker of all things both visible and invisible, and in one lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten *from* the Father, only-begotten, that is, *from* the essence of the Father, God *from*

[59] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.58. Cf. Athanasius, *Oration* 1.55 for the distinction between "better" and "greater" as it relates to Hebrews 1.4.
[60] Edwards, *Catholicity,* 114.
[61] Prestige, *Fathers,* 83 says Tertullian treats the Father as supreme and sees no problem with it. The pre-Nicene fathers who are widely accepted as "orthodox" held "subordinationist" views.

> God, light *from* light, true God *from* true God, begotten not made, of the same essence of the Father.

The Formula is replete with language of derivation. The bishops at Nicaea said that it is the Son who is offspring of the Father. Likewise, the upholders of Nicaea never claim that the Father is ὁμοούσιον τῳ υιῳ or "of the same essence as the Son", but always in the order that grants the Father priority.[62] Likewise, in the x from x language, it is clear that the former applies to the Son and the latter to the Father. The original intent of the Nicene Formula is far from clear, but anyone could reasonably detect the inferiority and derivation of the Son from the Father.

Most problematically, "subordinationist" cannot be a substitute for Athanasius' "Arian" opponents because the bishop himself could convincingly be described as one.[63] For example, in the *First Oration,* Athanasius says:

> εἰ δέ, ἀίδιον λέγοντες ὁμολογοῦμεν αὐτὸν υἱὸν ἐκ πατρός, πῶς ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἀδελφὸς τοῦ γεννήσαντος δύναται νομίζεσθαι;
>
> οὐ γὰρ ἔκ τινος ἀρχῆς προϋπαρχούσης ὁ πατὴρ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ἐγεννήθησαν, ἵνα καὶ ἀδελφοὶ νομισθῶσιν· ἀλλ' ὁ πατὴρ ἀρχὴ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ γεννητής ἐστι καὶ ὁ πατὴρ πατήρ ἐστι καὶ οὐχ υἱός τινος γέγονε· καὶ ὁ υἱὸς δὲ υἱός ἐστι καὶ οὐκ ἀδελφός.
>
> "But if we say he is eternal, we confess him to be Son from the Father, how is it possible to think the one begotten brother to the one who begot?...
>
> For the Father and Son were not begotten from some pre-existent beginning, that they may be thought brothers, but the Father is the origin of the Son and begot him, and the

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[62] Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 260; Behr, *Formation* Vol. 2 Pt 1, 244.

[63] Kelly McCarthy Spoerl, "Athanasius and the Anti-Marcellan Controversy", *ZAC,* (2006), 35, 38; Ilaria Ramelli's "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism and its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line", *VC*, Vol. 65 No. 1 (2011), 21-49 not only exposits Origen's anti-subordination passages but also sees Athanasius rather than Arius as the true inheritor of Origen's theology.

> Father is Father and not the Son of someone, but the Son is Son and not brother".[64]

Athanasius is here refuting the "Arian" claim that if the Son is eternal, then he is unbegotten and is like a brother to the Father, implying two gods. Athanasius responds in a subordinationist fashion saying that it is precisely the Father's originating of the Son that protects against two co-equal "brothers". The language of the Son's derivation from the Father is common across Athanasius' writings. So, he can say,

> ἀνάγκη λέγειν τὸ «ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς» ἴδιον αὐτοῦ σύμπαν εἶναι τὸν υἱόν· τὸ γὰρ ὅλως μετέχεσθαι τὸν θεὸν ἴσον ἐστὶ λέγειν ὅτι καὶ γεννᾷ· τὸ δὲ γεννᾷ τί σημαίνει ἢ υἱόν;
>
> It is necessary to say that what is "from the essence of the Father" is proper to him and is the Son. For to say God entirely participates and begets, but what does this begetting signify but a Son?[65]

Athanasius is adamant that the Father is unbegotten and the Son is begotten of the Father. It is this generative act that fits the very names "Father" and "Son". This can reasonably be labeled subordinationism. In the *Second Oration* Athanasius wants to challenge any notion that the Son could merely be called "Son", arguing,

> εἰ γάρ, ὡς αὐτοὶ νομίζουσιν, οὐ διὰ τὴν ἐκ πατρὸς γέννησιν καὶ τὸ ἀίδιον τῆς οὐσίας υἱός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰ λογικὰ λόγος καὶ διὰ τὰ σοφιζόμενα σοφία καὶ διὰ τὰ δυναμούμενα δύναμις λέγεται, πάντως που καὶ διὰ τοὺς υἱοποιουμένους υἱὸς ἐκλήθη· καὶ τάχα διὰ τὰ ὄντα ἔχει καὶ τὸ εἶναι κατ' ἐπίνοιαν. τί οὖν ἄρα λοιπόν ἐστιν αὐτός;
>
> For if, as they think, he is Son not because he is begotten *from* the Father and proper to his essence, but is called reason because of reasonable things, and is called wisdom because there are wise things and is called power because there are powerful things, and is called son because there

[64] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.14.
[65] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.16.

> are those made to be sons, and because there are things existing he too exists, in the mind. So what is he?[66]

It is the Son's derivation from the Father that protects against the mere ascription of attributes. Athanasius' language of the Son as an offspring from the Father is not an unfortunate consequence of his theology, but an offensive instrument to confront his opponents' attempts to contrast the Father and Son. When one reads Athanasius in this manner, it is evident that describing him as anti-subordinationist is entirely unhelpful. Arius did not deny the divinity of the Son nor did Athanasius absolutely equate the Father and the Son in the patropassionist sense. Furthermore, if "subordinationism" is thought to be what was *wrong* with Arius' theology, then it must be remembered that it "was not a recognized category of error" in the early church.[67] Moreover, "in all likelihood it never occurred to most of those theologians that they were 'subordinationists'- if that phrase is to denote a person who is particularly interested in the degradation of the son".[68] In all the insults Athanasius hurled at his opponents, "subordinationist" was not one of them. So, somehow thinking of Arius as more "subordinationist" than Athanasius is unproductive. This is why scholars who want to use this term seek superlatives like a "radically subordinationist 'Arian' theology" or a "strongly subordinationist theology".[69] The reality is that subordinationism "is a permanent risk, if not an inescapable datum, of a Father-centered theology".[70] Probably aware of the problems with the term

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[66] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.38; Cf. *Oration* 2.42 for Athanasius accusing his opponents as being those who deny that which is *from* the Father.
[67] Edwards, *Catholicity,* 113.
[68] Johannes Zachhuber "Basil and the Three-Hypostasis Tradition: Reconsidering the Origins of Cappadocian Theology", *ZAC,* Vol. 5 (2001), 68.
[69] Crawford, "Theodore", and Cartwright, *Eustathius,* 60. Cf. Matthew Crawford, "The Triumph of Pro-Nicene Theology over Anti-Monarchian Exegesis: Cyril of Alexandria and Theodroe of Heraclea on John 14.10-11", *JECS*, Vol. 21 No. 4, (2013), 549 for language of an "outright subordinationist".
[70] Colm Luibheid, "Eusebius of Caesarea and the Nicene Creed", *The Irish Theological Quarterly,* Vol. 39 No. 3 (1972), 305.

"subordinationism", it is important to recall Williams' language when he longs for a label that accommodates "some sort of hierarchical pluralism in its talk of God".[71] To describe one side as more "subordinationist" than the other only complicates the matter.

All of these attempts at re-labeling the "Arian Controversy" do not escape the fundamental problem of oversimplifying Christian theology into binaries. More importantly, they substitute an actual label from the fourth century with modern categories. Once these categories are imposed on the early church, scholars then irrationally note how fourth century theologians do not fit neatly into them. It is against this background that this dissertation asks whether or not there is a responsible way of reading Athanasius' polemic that retains "Arianism" as a heuristic for his opponents. Can an informed, fair-minded person responsibly attach labels to groups of people?

The utility of labeling groups may be best illustrated through a present day analogy. A Labour party politician today could accuse a member of UKIP and a Tory of being "Thatcherites". The conservative parliamentarians may object that they do not think of themselves as "Thatcherites" nor did they ever know Thatcher the person. They may also point out that they have appreciably different attitudes on privatization and immigration. Moreover, the Tory could be affronted that he would ever be placed under the same heading as a self-identifying member of UKIP, and vice versa. In the flow of this analogy, based on such objections, patristic scholars would conclude that "Thatcherism" is a meaningless and unhelpful category that must be replaced. While "Thatcherism" in this case is a polemical heuristic employed by a hostile opponent, the Labour politician, it does not mean that it loses all value. Does "Thatcherite" only have meaning if it is a welcomed designation by a unanimous group? In order to be a

[71] Williams, *Arius,* 167.

"Thatcherite" would one have to have had personal contact with her? If so, to what extent would that influence need to be documented? If the criteria for group titles demands open reception and uniformity on all issues, then all pejorative labels (and probably labels in general) would be nonsense. This simply is not the case. To brand someone who champions small government and free markets a "Thatcherite" does hold meaning precisely because such a person is voicing the opinions that Margaret Thatcher promulgated. Furthermore, speaking of "Thatcherites" as opposing progressives need not necessitate that these are the only two groups on the political scene. In even a short amount of time a person can think of a range of other examples. Did anyone in the 1550's think himself a "counter-reformationist"? So, accusations that Athanasius' "Arians" did not agree on every theological utterance, that they had no personal interaction with the presbyter, or that they all would not welcome the designation with equal alacrity do not, in themselves, make "Arianism" a useless category. The better argument is that some people on the opposite side of a genuine disagreement saw continuities between active personalities of the present and personalities of the past. Whether or not a title is a welcomed self-designation does not, in itself, expunge its utility.

So why did Athanasius choose the title "Arianism" for his opponents? Throughout his polemical works, Athanasius frequently drew on the, by then, long-standing theological tradition of branding a conflicting theology as something other than Christian. This tactic finds some biblical pedigree from 1 Corinthians 1 where Paul spoke negatively of Christians following another human (Apollos or Cephas) as opposed to Christ. Again, the bishop's *First Oration* shows that he constructed his heresiology on

this pattern because for his opponents, "it is Arius instead of Christ".[72] Lyman knows that "classifications and labels therefore, were an essential part of the rhetorical strategy in ancient theological conflict".[73] Athanasius rather carefully positioned Arius' theology between those of Marcion, Valentinus, Simon Magus, and the Manichees.[74] It is also fair to suggest that Irenaeus influenced Athanasius in labeling divergent theologies.[75] Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* employed this theme as made clear in his reference to Simon Magus whose followers, "have a name derived from Simon, the author of these most impious doctrines".[76] The fact that it was common practice in Christian heresiology to tarnish opponents by calling them after a man instead of a Christian after Christ ought to temper the view of Athanasius as a particularly vindictive writer. This still leaves open the question of the fairness of the labels because there seems to have been a patristic equivalent to *Stigler's Law,* that is, that the names attached to heresies do not relate to the person who first expounded them. Nevertheless, Athanasius' strategy was well-worn ground by the early fourth century.[77] He cannot be faulted for this any more than any other father can be blamed for vilifying the other groups listed in *Oration* 1.3.

It is surprising that suspicion of "Arianism" has not spilled over to the questioning of other pejorative labels. For example, the most prominent works discussing the years after Nicaea invoke the label Sabellianism without qualification as a sobriquet for a wide array of modalist theologies. Marcellus of Ancyra is often accused of holding something akin to what Sabellius taught. Herein lies the same confusion because modernity knows

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[72] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.2-3.
[73] Lyman, "Topography", 47.
[74] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.3.
[75] Khaled Anatolios, "The Influence of Irenaeus on Athanasius", *SP,* Vol. 36 (2001) 463-476.
[76] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.23 in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library Vol. 5*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869) 89.
[77] *Stigler's Law of Eponymy* states that names associated with mathematical and scientific discoveries are *never* those who were the first to develop them.

much less about the historical Sabellius than about the historical Arius. Marcellus was far more removed from Sabellius (who taught in the early third century) than Athanasius' opponents were to Arius. The fourth century presbyter's slogans were condemned in the first ecumenical council, arguably the most famous ecclesiastical meeting of all time, whilst no council condemned Sabellius during his lifetime. If "Arianism" is a misnomer, how is "Sabellianism" not all the more so? The same methodology ought to be applied to the label "Samosatane" for those who held psilanthropic views. On the methodology used to strike "Arian", almost any classifications for patristic theological positions can be deconstructed. Instead of eradicating these labels, however, this thesis sees it as more reasonable to retain them with an understanding of their original pejorative intent. Sabellianism does have meaning irrelevant of our near complete ignorance of the historical Sabellius. In the years after Nicaea, some fathers found "Sabellianism" a useful designation to communicate that a theology teaching a changing monad had been problematic in the past.

Given these considerations about nomenclature, it is possible to read Athanasius' polemic in such a way that permits a responsible retention of the label "Arian". Athanasius applied the term "Arian" to someone not because they consciously joined a party trying to elevate the presbyter, but rather because that individual held or taught a theology similar to the one Arius taught. Athanasius was forthright on this matter, especially at the beginning of his *First Oration.* He wrote, ἀμέλει τελευτήσαντος Ἀρείου πολλῶν τε τῶν ἰδίων αὐτὸν διαδεξαμένων ὅμως οἱ τὰ ἐκείνου φρονοῦντες ἐξ Ἀρείου γνωριζόμενοι Ἀρειανοὶ καλοῦνται or "though Arius is dead, many of his own have

succeeded him, *but those who think with him*, known from Arius, are called Arians".[78] Athanasius acknowledged that he was creating a lineage to a deceased person. He did make allegations of what comes into English as a "party", but insisted that someone was an "Arian" because their theological thought patterns resembled Arius'. An "Arian" need not have been an associate of Arius, but one who, consciously or unconsciously, taught what he taught. It was the *theology* of Arius that Athanasius loathed. The "Arians" strived to expound a Trinitarian discourse like the one that Arius delivered because they, too, identified with it on certain levels, though not always uniformly. They sympathized with Arius not because they were determined to perpetuate the legacy of the fallen heresiarch, but because they thought him correct and saw any condemnation of his theology as an indictment of their own.

## 2.4 Concluding Analysis

This chapter attempted to articulate responses to three themes of the revisionists; that "Arianism" is an Athanasian construct, that the bishop's rhetoric is dishonest, and that his categorizing his opponents is inattentive and unreasonable. This dissertation argued that the more a scholar leans towards Athanasian construction, the more he or she has to account for the emergence of a compelling theological system that challenges what the Alexandrian bishop wanted to advance. So long as what is called "Arianism" is viewed as a logical theological system, the extent to which Athanasius forged it needs to be treated more delicately. More compellingly, the continued mischief of the Melitians pushes against the kind of undifferentiated construction posited by some revisionists. The repeated critique against Athanasius' rhetoric ought to be tempered by an

[78] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.3.

understanding of how ideas were rehearsed in the fourth century Roman world. It is unfair to hold Athanasius to a standard that did not exist during his time. This is not to say that he could not be dishonest, but rather that charges of his heated rhetoric should be balanced. Included in this section is the test case of the word "heresy" and how Athanasius could be given the benefit of the doubt in this being understood both rhetorically, to move an audience, but also precisely. Finally, several scholars see Athanasius' labeling his opponents as a problem. As a response, however, they have to find some other categories to represent theological positions of antiquity. These attempts to rename the "Arians" expand in bizarre directions like conceptualizing the "miahypostatics" on the defense at Tyre or the "unity of wills" party gathering at Antioch. It is within this context that the label "Arian" might be retained, so long as the student understands its original intent as an "interpretive strategy" deployed by Athanasius in a heated debate.[79] Using "Arian" as a heuristic to classify clerics who taught what Arius the presbyter taught, or sympathized with its general direction, as stated in the *First Oration,* demonstrates a responsible way of reading Athanasius' charged polemic. Unlike the alternative proposals that only lead to re-classification, the label "Arian" was an integral part of the parlance after Nicaea and actually belongs to the archive of fourth century church history. All other ways of speaking about this period will die a death of a thousand qualifications. The case for retaining "Arianism" cannot be built solely on the lack of alternatives, so the next chapter will discuss the content of "Arianism" and explore how its key features were pre-Athanasian.

[79] Anatolios at *Retrieving,* 28 calls it this in passing, but it is a useful way of thinking about "Arianism".

## Chapter 3: "Arianism" Before Athanasius

This thesis has demonstrated that a strand of thinkers reappraised "Arianism" and that its more extreme claims invite a number of challenges. The work will now advance a more technical argument showing that the key elements of Athanasius' anti-"Arian" polemic can be found in the writings of earlier bishops, especially Alexander of Alexandria and, to a lesser but still significant degree, Eustathius of Antioch. Showing that many of the seeds of "Arianism" were in place prior to Athanasius' anti-"Arian" polemic dampens the notion of an "Athanaisan Arianism" based on political expediency. Not only was "Arianism" well established by the time Athanasius assumed the bishopric, but even what is described as the *rhetorical topoi* of his polemic had earlier exponents. The revisionist contention that Athanasius, in good Orwellian fashion, fabricated an "entirely artificial polarization" between his viewpoint and the "Arians", must take account of how this was *already* in place by 328.[1]

The revisionist thesis emphasizes the puzzling question of why Athanasius waited nearly a decade to launch his anti-"Arian" polemic. Having assumed the bishopric in 328, the first appearance of an overtly anti-"Arian" agenda comes with the *Encyclical* of 338.[2] While Athanasius' later writings construe the first decade of his career through the lens of an "Arian" struggle, there are no writings from that time describing "Arianism" as a problem. The revisionist interpretation seizes this silence to aver that Athanasius'

[1] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 229.
[2] Athanasius' *Encyclical* (or sometimes called the *Circular Letter*) of 338/39 makes reference to "the Eusebians" and an "Arian" conspiracy. It is also likely that Athanasius began the *Orations* and the *Apology against the Arians* around this time. There is however, a letter from the Egyptian bishops at Tyre in 335 that uses these categories.

political problems became so severe that he conjured-up an "Arian Controversy" to associate his opponents with a condemned heresy. For some, the Council of Tyre in 335 catalyzed Athanasius' growing need to vilify his enemies.[3] In the *Apology against the Arians*, began in the late 330's, Athanasius projected a problem with "Arians" back onto the earlier events.[4] The Mareotis Commission of late 335 only became "Arian" several years after its investigation.[5] It was only much later in his career when he says the "Arians" joined the Melitians in the early 330's. Therefore, "no contemporary in the fourth century church was aware that an 'Arian' controversy was engulfing the church".[6]

In order to respond to this aspect of the revisionist thesis, this chapter looks at the antecedents of "Arianism". What appears in the record is a deposit of "Arian" beliefs prepared for Athanasius' use. In order to sustain this argument, this chapter will marshal evidence for five moves. Firstly, the paper asks what set of theological beliefs constituted an "Arian". While the revisionist thesis states that it is difficult to discover a consistent "Arianism", it is actually the case that almost everyone who writes about the topic knows what is meant by "Arianism". More significantly, confusion over what constituted an "Arian" in Athanasius' writings dissipates when it is simply defined by a theologian's willingness to call the second person of the Trinity a "creature". Secondly, I will show that this set of beliefs that designates an "Arian" finds its origin in Alexander of Alexandria, thus dampening an "Athanasian Arianism" in favour of a more substantive

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[3] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 69, 87; Also, M. Barnes in "The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon" in *Christian Origins,* eds. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (London: Routledge, 1998), 55 says, "The result of Tyre was…to radicalize Athanasius' theology".

[4] The dating of this *Apology* is difficult as it cites no fewer than 36 texts across a number of years. What is now the second half seems to be earlier than the first half. It is accepted that some of it dates to the late 330's.

[5] If the letters from the Egyptian bishops at Tyre preserved by Athanasius are accepted as authentic, which they generally are, then they provide evidence of an "Arian" problem prior to 338.

[6] Thomas Ferguson, *The Past is Prologue* (Boston: Brill, 2005), 2.

dispute wrapped up with the legacy of the powerful patriarchate. Athanasius' definition of an "Arian" is largely congruent with that of his influential predecessor and, from what is known about Alexandria, theological continuity was prized. Thirdly, against the view that Nicaea was a compromise that left everyone disgruntled, I argue that the council was a decisive victory for Alexander that forever stigmatized Arius' theology. In this vein, Athanasius' penchant for claiming it appears less arbitrary. Fourthly, attention turns to Eustathius of Antioch, another powerful figure in the years around Nicaea who left, at least to his contemporaries, a substantial body of anti-"Arian" writings and ideas. Lastly, the chapter demonstrates that Athanasius' famous double treatise *Against the Nations-On the Incarnation* is anti-"Arian" in its theology. Since the work does not mention the "Arians" by name, it shows the core of Athanasius' theology and proves that he did not modify his views for the sake of his polemic. By illustrating these points, a consistent "Arianism" proves to extend across multiple thinkers and several decades. This ought to cast some doubt on Athanasius' liberty to fashion a controversy.

## 3.1 What is an "Arian"?

Having stated in the previous pages that there is a responsible way to retain "Arian" to designate Athanasius' opponents, defining the specifics of "Arianism" is an essential task. Those who want to eradicate "Arianism" from the patristic dictionary tend to uphold the view that "modern scholarly opinion has never reached a universally or even broadly agreed upon definition of the term 'Arian'".[7] The question hinges on how many theological positions someone needed to hold in order to be included in the "Arian" category. The revisionist thesis exploits this potential elasticity to argue that an "Arian"

[7] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 183.

theology is elusive. If Athanasius used "Arianism" as a means of achieving his hold on the bishopric across his career, the student could expect little consistency on the technical theological beliefs of an "Arian". Since "Arian…is a title given by Athanasius to his opponents for a specific polemical purpose of defamation by association" then it would come as no surprise if rigidity in its definition was not a top priority.[8] This conclusion is incorrect, however, because there is a remarkable consensus across fourth century historiographers in what "Arianism" entailed, even among those with revisionist tendencies.

Recent encyclopedias and dictionaries of the early church serve as a starting point for evidence on this matter. Rowan Williams' "Arianism" entry in the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* serves as an example. He begins by noting the "seriously misleading" nature of using "Arianism" to define a "single coherent 'opposition party'".[9] While cautioning readers not to use "Arianism" as an exclusive catchall term, Williams goes on to define Arius' doctrine calling it "a skillful and original blend of the biblical concern with a freely creating personal God and the philosophical concern with the preservation of the pure singularity of the primal monad".[10] While Williams dismisses the appropriateness of "Arianism", he certainly has no reservations about why it is a dictionary entry. Here again is the tension. Arius' teachings were "skillful" and are describable under the lexical entry "Arianism", but this term is to be shunned. Likewise, Lyman's entry "Arius and the Arians" in a newer handbook deconstructs the utility of the term "Arian" but also has no trouble extracting the central theological points of

[8] Wiles, "Attitudes", 42.
[9] Rowan Williams, "Arianism" in *The Encyclopedia of Early Christianity, 2nd Edition,* ed. Everett Ferguson (London" Garland Publishing Inc., 1999), 107-111.
[10] Williams, "Arianism", 107.

"Arianism".[11] She, too, has little trouble condensing Arius' letters into a handful of tenets. For her,

> "Arius insisted that the Son was not 'unbegotten' (*agennētos*) nor a part of unbegotten being, but by will and counsel before time came into being 'only-begotten' and unchangeable. Before he was begotten, the Son did not exist. Therefore they are being persecuted because they teach that the Son has a beginning (*archē*), but God does not; he is made from nothing (*ek ouk ontōn*) rather than a part of God or pre-existing material".[12]

Those with Arius "affirm one God as the only unbegotten, and his begetting of his only begotten Son by his will, unchangeable, a perfect creature, but not as other creatures".[13] Moving from handbooks to monographs, other revisionists include outlines of "Arianism". Hanson, who I counted among the influential revisionists, details nine tenets of "Arianism". Drawing on the work of Lorenz, Hanson delineates the premises held by those who Athanasius targeted as "Arians".[14] For Hanson, an "Arian" professed:

i.) God was not always Father, He was once in a situation in which He was simply God and not Father;

ii.) The Logos or Son is creature. God made Him ex ouk onton;

iii.) There are two Logoi and two Wisdoms (Sophiae), and several powers (dunameis) of God;

iv.) The Son is variable by nature, but remains stable by the gift of God;

v.) The Logos is alien from the divine being and distinct; he is not true God because He has come into existence

vi.) The Son's knowledge of God is imperfect;

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[11] Lyman, "Arius and the Arians", 239-240.
[12] Lyman, "Arius and the Arians", 239 but she is certainly inaccurate in attributing language of the Son being "made" to Arius as he does not say this in his letters. Athanasius at *On the Synods* 17 does quote Eusebius of Nicomedia as asserting the Son as "made".
[13] Lyman, "Arius and the Arians", 240.
[14] Rudolf Lorenz, *Arius judaizans?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979).

vii.) The Son's knowledge of Himself is limited;

viii.) Anthropocentric Cosmology: the Son has been created for our sakes, as an instrument for creating us;

ix.) A Trinity of different hypostases exists.[15]

Turning from Hanson to another important revisionist, Maurice Wiles' definition of "Arianism" serves to further bolster the point. Against Hanson's nine, he outlined seven tenets of "Arianism". For Wiles, the central features are:

"(1) God, more specifically God the Father, is uniquely transcendent.

(2) The Son is the product of God's will.

(3) The Son is 'from what is not', because the only conceivable alternatives (that there are two ultimates; that he is a part of the Father; that he is from some lower essence) are all unacceptable.

(4) He is a creature but unlike any other creature since he is God's agent in the creation of all other creatures.

(5) His existence is pre-temporal, but he is not without beginning, as the Father is.

(6) He is unchangeable.

(7) He is God (θεός)"[16]

What is interesting about the lists of Hanson and Wiles is that the former derived his outline from Athanasius' writings while the latter drew on the letters of Arius. The parallels are striking. Hanson's (i) (ii) (iv) and (viii) have considerable overlap with Wiles' (5) (4 and 3) (6) and (4). Hanson places more emphasis on the unknowability of the Father in his (vi) and (vii) whereas Wiles does not position this at the core of his

[15] Hanson, *Search,* 19-23.
[16] Maurice Wiles "The Philosophy in Christianity: Arius and Athanasius" in *The Philosophy in Christianity* ed. G. Vesey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

"Arianism". That the unknowability of the Father is stressed in the *Thalia* rather than in the more straightforward writings of Arius probably accounts for its omission from Wiles' list.[17] With this one exception, the lists are quite close. What Wiles extracted from Arius' letters as the thrust of his teaching overlaps with what Hanson derived from Athanasius' invective. While loosely making a claim for Athanasius' proper reading of Arius, the next question is whether the core of Athanasius' "Arianism" as distilled by Hanson is attested in Arius' writings.

For Hanson's criterion (i.), Arius certainly denied the eternal coexistence of the Son with the Father. In his *Letter to Alexander,* he "was not before he was begotten…and not everlasting". In his *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia* he says "before he was begotten or created or defined or established, he was not".[18] Whether or not this implies a temporal gap, which I will explore shortly, does not dampen Arius' clear refusal to speak of the Son as eternal.

Criterion (ii.) also finds its foundations in Arius' letters. That the Son is a "perfect creature of God" shows the second person of the Trinity could be described as a

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[17] Determining the extent that the *Thalia* can be used to identify Arius' theology raises a number of complications. Athanasius tells his readers that Arius authored the *Thalia* as a jocular lyric to be sung around Alexandria. He claimed to have preserved extracts from it in *Oration* 1.5-6 and *On the Synods*, 15. The practice of extracting fragments from polemical texts is notoriously difficult. What determines an authentic fragment can often seem subjective. The *Thalia* is interesting because it was allegedly written in Sotadean style, a reference often thought to imply measured verse. Paul Maas' "Die Metrik der Thaleia das Areios", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift,* 18, (1909), 511-515 argued that reference to "Sotadean" was not about metre but about a vulgarity in content. Scholars have tried to extract measured verse from Athanasius' polemic but have reached different results. The eminent classicist Martin West's "The Metre of Arius' *Thalia*", *JTS,* 33 (1982), 98-105 argued somewhat against Christopher Stead's "The *Thalia* of Arius and the Testimony of Athanasius", *JTS,* No. 29 (1978), 20-52 in detecting a metre of the *Thalia.* Stead at "Arius", 27 later admitted, "Arius' text has been preserved without substantial change". Williams at *Arius,* 105 also thinks that the forty lines preserved by Athanasius are a direct quotation from the *Thalia.* So Stead and Williams are willing to see the *Thalia* as a genuine composition of Arius. Parvis at *Marcellus,* 69-70 thinks the *Henos Somatos* betrays knowledge of the *Thalia,* which, if true, strengthens the claim of authenticity. The revisionist thesis tends to dampen the *Thalia*'s authenticity because it is Arius at his most extreme. If the *Thalia* is admitted as evidence, the Son's ignorance of the Father is its central theme. Secondary themes are the Son's mutability and his appointment as Word and Wisdom.

[18] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia,* Opitz, *Urkunde* 1.

"creature". Furthermore, the slogan "before he was begotten or created" suggests the embattled presbyter saw the terms as synonyms. That the Son was "from nothing" is widely accepted as Arius' own dictum.[19]

Criterion (iii.), that the Godhead had two wisdoms, emerges from the extracts of the *Thalia*. Arius' teaching this flows logically from his insistence on multiple hypostases in the Godhead. Like most Christian thinkers in the fourth century, Arius was prepared to treat *sophia* as an instantiation of the pre-incarnate Christ.[20] Insisting that Christ was created as a distinct hypostasis must mean that the Father did not lose his Wisdom. Hence Arius says "for the Father, having given to him the inheritance of all, did not deprive himself of those things which he has in himself without generation".[21] In other words, that Arius held multiple wisdoms in the Godhead is, at this point in the development of doctrine, a consistent position given his denial of the Son's eternity.

Criterion (iv.) raises the important question of mutability. Arius did teach that the Son was immutable as he makes clear before Alexander.[22] The question is whether or not the Son held changelessness essentially or if the Father bestowed it. This particular point is what opens up charges of psilanthropism and allegiance to Paul of Samosata, that the "Arian" Son was a mere man. The ambiguous line comes when Arius tells Alexander that the Father "submitted him [the Son] to his own will, an immutable and unchangeable perfect creature of God". This opens up Arius to the charge that he taught that the Father

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[19] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia,* Opitiz, *Urkunde* 1, 6., R.P.C. Hanson "Who Taught ΕΞ ΟΥΚ ΟΝΤΩΝ?" in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments* ed. Gregg (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983) 79-83.

[20] Marcellus of Ancyra notoriously denied the identification of "wisdom" with the pre-incarnate Christ relegating it only to the incarnate Son in an effort to protect the Monad of God.

[21] Arius, *Letter to Alexander,* 4; Opitz, *Urkunde* 6.

[22] Alexander's *He Philarchos* gives much attention to Arius' teaching of a mutable Son.

made the Son immutable rather than the Son being unchanging by nature.[23] Closely related to this is the remark that the Son "was created by the will of God before times and ages, and he received life, being and glories from the Father as the Father has shared them with him".[24]

Tenet (v.) is justified in Arius' *Letter to Alexander* when he states the Son is not everlasting "nor does he have being with the Father".[25]

Points (vi.) and (vii.) in Hanson's outline of "Arianism" are the central themes of the *Thalia.* Williams is correct stating that the unknowability of the Father is the dominant thesis of the work.[26] Arius' point is that because the Son is a creature, he cannot fully know the Father.

The penultimate principle, (viii.), that is here entitled "anthropocentric cosmology" refers to Arius' teaching that the Son was created for the purpose of creating humanity. This, like the following criterion, does not seem to be a major theme in Arius' writings nor in Athanasius' objections in his polemical works. That the "Arian" Son was involved in creation probably did not cause a disturbance.

Finally, for teaching (ix.), Arius lucidly states "there are three hypostases".[27] This, as aforementioned, does not seem to be an initial point of contention with the

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[23] The question of the Son's mutability deserves much more attention. When Athanasius pushed against Arius' point that the Son was made immutable by the Father's will, he in turn was accused of saying the Father did *not will* the Son. This is a tension in Athanasius' works. He thinks that saying the Son is a product of the Father's will is tantamount to saying "there was a *time* when the Son was not". He then collapses into the problem of making the Son a necessary property of the Father. Cf. Carlos Galvao-Sobrinho's *Doctrine and Power* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 39 that sees the Son's mutability as central to what upset Alexander.

[24] Arius, *Letter to Alexander,* 4; Opitz, *Urkunde* 6.

[25] Arius, *Letter to Alexander,* 4; Opitz, *Urkunde* 6.

[26] Williams, *Arius,* 105.

[27] Arius, *Letter to Alexander,* 4; Opitz, *Urkunde* 6.

Alexandrian patriarchate. Alexander's *Letter to Alexander*, speaks directly of "the Word's distinctive hypostasis".[28] Nevertheless, Arius clearly taught this.

If the central message of the *Thalia* is welcomed, Hanson's list of "Arian" attributes extracted from Athanasius' polemic is corroborated from the heresiarch's texts. So, Hanson, Wiles, Lyman, and Williams are able to summarize "Arianism" in a rather concise manner and their definitions present similar emphases; protecting the unbegotten God, the Son is best thought a creature but not as one of the creatures, and that the Son was unchangeable and divine by the will of God. The importance of these observations may be best expressed in two questions: When the revisionists list "Arian" tenets, are any of the teachings obviously absent from the writings of Arius? What tenet of "Arianism" put forth by Athanasius fails to find some explanation from the writings of Arius? For all the talk of the nebulous nature of "Arianism", there is considerable overlap among these thinkers.

This still leaves the more important question of just how many of these teachings someone needed to hold in order to be labeled an "Arian". Those who want to deconstruct the term "Arianism" lean towards a maximal approach demanding that anyone called an "Arian" had to hold most, if not all, of the above criteria. On this rubric, there are few "Arians". That is to say, if seven to nine, or perhaps many more measures are required to designate an "Arian", then Athanasius' label must be deemed spontaneous because in the surviving material no two theologians bear witness to all of these tenets. Moreover, there is always the ambiguity of what might be excluded when a theologian expresses a doctrine. For example, if a bishop said that the Son came about "by the will of the Father", does this necessarily exclude a belief in the Son's natural or

[28] Alexander, *Letter to Alexander;* Opitz, *Urkunde* 14.

essential relationship with the Father? A human father could be said to have both willed a son and relate to him in an essential way. Alternatively, there is a minimalist approach that can select just one criterion for "Arianism". If the Son's being "from nothing" is the sign of "Arianism", then the presbyter is the only member of the group because no other theologian seems to embrace this.

There is, however, an angle that proves Athanasius to be consistent. The one doctrinal tenet that guaranteed the "Arian" label in Athanasius' polemic was a theologian's willingness to label the Son a "creature". Even David Gwynn acknowledges the bishop's steadiness on this front saying "for Athanasius, and so in turn for later generations, the reduction of the Son to a *ktisma* would become the essential characteristic of the 'Arian heresy'".[29] If an "Arian" was someone who called the Son a "creature" or a "created thing", this serves as the common denominator across Athanasius' opponents. Arius, obviously, designated the Son a "creature".[30] The caveat "not like other creatures" does not nullify the presbyter's interest in calling the Son a created thing. Likewise, Eusebius of Nicomedia promulgated a "created" Son.[31] Asterius the Sophist, despite more "linguistic flexibility", understands the Son as "created".[32] This can be combined with Maurice Wiles' suggestion that Athanasius inserted an anathema against a "created" Son into the Nicene Creed.[33] The complexity of who was and was not an "Arian" largely dissipates if a creaturely Son was the definitive mark. The follow-up question then, is whether or not the Son as "creature" demanded

[29] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 233.
[30] Arius, *Letter to Alexander*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 6.
[31] Eusebius of Nicomedia, *Letter to Paulinus;* Opitz *Urkunde* 8.
[32] Wolfram Kinzig, *In Search of Asterius: Studies on the Authorship of the Homilies on the Psalms* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 129-130.
[33] M. Wiles, "A Textual Variant in the Creed of the Council of Nicaea", *SP,* (1993), 428-433; Cf. T.E. Pollard's "The Creeds of A.D. 325: Antioch, Caesarea, Nicaea", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 13 No. 3 (1960), 282 shows that describing the Son as a "creature" is the first tenet anathematized at Antioch 325.

such a harsh and drastic response from Athanasius. This turns the focus again to the centrality of theology to the crisis. As ably demonstrated by Anatolios and others inclined to defend Athanasius, declaring the Son a "creature" threatened the entirety of the bishop's theological framework.[34] In Athanasius' mind, the chasm between God, the Creator, and his creation was the crucial distinction of how God and humanity interacted. Christian theology demanded that God, and not a posterior, created, or derivative God, became incarnate to save human beings. For Athanasius, the Son had to be on God's side of the divide rather than the "created" side. Given Athanasius' entire theological outlook, Arius', Eusebius of Nicomedia's, and Asterius' applying this characteristic to the Son so freely and emphatically demanded strident opposition. The revisionist thesis does not tackle the question as to why this in itself cannot be a sufficient reason for the bishop's attack. Once a student appreciates that an "Arian" was one who held a *created* Son, much of the supposed inconsistency in Athanasius' labeling vanishes.

### 3.2 "Arianism" in Alexander

Having shown how scholars can identify the core of "Arian" theology and that designating the Son a "creature" entailed "Arianism" in Athanasius' mind, this chapter will now demonstrate how this picture of "Arianism" appears in the writings of Athanasius' predecessor. The study begins with Alexander's *Encyclical Letter*, the so-called *Henos Somatos* that pre-dates Nicaea.[35] Christopher Stead rather convincingly

[34] Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence,* 85-163; Thomas F. Torrance *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), Ch. 7; Cf. Charles Lowry, "Did Origen Style the Son a ΚΤΙΣΜΑ?", *JTS,* Vol. 39 (1938), 39-42 on the possibility that Origen modified his view on this matter moving towards the position that the Son ought not be called a "creature". Cf. Against Lyman "Topography", 58 who thinks "Arian" is "doctrinally incoherent".

[35] The ἑνὸς σώματος is preserved in Socrates *EH* 1.6. The dating of this document has been the source of some debate. Opitz placed it in 319 before Alexander's letter to his namesake (dated to 324). Rowan Williams inverted the order of Alexander's letters to mixed reviews. Parvis, in *Marcellus,* 69, thinks the

confirmed the earlier predilection of John Henry Newman that the *Henos Somatos* was an Athanasian composition.[36] For Stead, Athanasian authorship was "demonstrably certain".[37] Those who follow Stead and attribute the *Henos Somatos* to Athanasius do so partly by drawing literary parallels to Athanasius' known works, especially the first two *Orations against the Arians*. If Stead is correct, it presents a small argument against the revisionists. Identifying Athanasius' hand on the pre-Nicene *Henos Somatos* inadvertently highlights the consistency of the bishop's polemic over the span of decades.[38] That is to say, if the authorship of the *Henos Somatos* can be gathered from the vocabulary and style of compositions from the 340's onwards, then a word must be said for Athanasius' steadfastness. Recall that, on the revisionist thesis, Athanasius developed "Arianism" after his problems at the Council of Tyre in 335. If this were true, then it is surprising that so little changed in the content of Athanasius' presentation of "Arianism".

It is perhaps because of this consequence that Gwynn, while admitting "obvious similarities" between the *Henos Somatos* and Athanasius' later works, is hesitant to embrace Stead's thesis.[39] Gwynn wants to show the *Henos Somatos* to be an outlier and a kind of primitive attack on "Arianism" so he can argue against the bishop's consistency. There can be no semblance of "Eusebians" in the pre-Nicene Athanasian perspective. For this reason, Gwynn suggests a difference between the targeting of

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letters could have been issued simultaneously. The phrase from Alexander that "I felt imperatively called to be silent no longer" indicates that the *Henos* was the first in his wider correspondence. For that, Opitz's order seems more plausible. The Greek text is *Urkunde* 4b in Opitz.

[36] Christopher Stead, "Athanasius' Earliest Written Work", *JTS,* Vol. 39 No. 1 (1988) 76-91.

[37] Stead, "Earliest", 76.

[38] It is also worth recalling Kannengeisser's remark of Stead's turning Athanasius into a "theological Mozart", having written such a piece of theology as such a young man. Cf. Stead "Arius in Modern Research" in *JTS* Vol. 45 No. 1 (1991), 27.

[39] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 68, 66.

Eusebius of Nicomedia the individual for collusion with "Arians" in the *Henos Somatos* and Athanasius' later branding a "party" of "Eusebians". The *Henos Somatos* accused Eusebius of Nicomedia saying, προίσταται καὶ τούτων ἀποστατῶν καὶ γράφειν ἐπεχείρησεν πανταχοῦ συνιστῶν αὐτούς or "he has set himself up as first of these apostates and dares to write recommendations everywhere on behalf of them".[40] It is not immediately clear how Eusebius of Nicomedia's leadership as "the first of these apostates" differs from "the Eusebians" of the later polemic in any way other than grammatical construction. Given Alexander's commissioning of this letter, I disagree with Gwynn when he says "Athanasius' construction of the 'Eusebians' cannot be understood simply as the continuation of the polemic of his predecessor".[41] Something akin to the "Eusebians" was in place before Nicaea.

Athanasian provenance of the *Henos Somatos* presents further challenges to revisionist advances. Gwynn, who presses an "Athanasian Arianism", accuses the bishop by saying the things he attributed to the "Eusebians" in the 340's are fabricated rhetorical *topoi*. Athanasius' "Eusebians" are falsely accused for "the writing of letters; the manipulation of episcopal office; dependence upon secular power; violence and persecution, and above all the promotion of the Arian heresy".[42] For Gwynn, these are the linguistic developments of Athanasius' later political turmoil. The problem is that the reader sees at least three of the so-called rhetorical *topoi* in the *Henos Somatos*; namely, beseeching church leaders by letter, manipulating church offices, and doing so for the "Arians". If these were foisted upon the "Eusebians", it happened pre-Nicaea, not post-Tyre. Furthermore, the two *topoi* from Gwynn's list absent from the *Henos Somatos*;

[40] Socrates *EH* 1.6; Opitz, *Urkunde*, 4b.
[41] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 69.
[42] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 125.

namely, dependence upon secular power and perpetuating violence, are exactly those that should not be expected in a pre-Nicene letter. Athanasius' accusation of "Eusebian" complicity with imperial authorities never involved activity *prior* to Nicaea when the prospects of a Christian emperor involved in church affairs was greeted with optimism. The charge of nefarious imperial collusion expanded with Constantius' ascendancy. If Athanasius haphazardly heaped rhetorical *topoi* on the "Eusebians", he remarkably managed to exclude those circumstantially unlikely in the pre-Nicene years. In sum, Athanasian authorship of the *Henos Somatos* presents at least three problems for the revisionist thesis. It was Athanasius' consistency that provides any evidence for its support, it bears witness to "Eusebians" supporting "Arians", and it attributes activities to these "Eusebians" that some dismiss as verbal flourishes of later decades. If a person wants to argue that the "Eusebians" and "Arians" became malleable constructs only in the late 330's, something must be done with the pre-Nicene prototype for these groups.

From the *Henos Somatos* we turn to Alexander's *Epistle to Alexander,* also called the *He Philarchos.*[43] Of first importance is to recognize that this letter is largely summarized in another document typically called Alexander's *Tome*.[44] This document survived in Syriac and is addressed not to Alexander of Byzantium, but to a certain Melitius. What this means is that, like the *Henos Somatos,* the *He Philarchos* was intended for distribution and found its way to a wider audience. Despite this letter's prolixity in comparison to the *Henos Somatos,* it is important to ask whether the picture of "Arianism" is consistent across them. On Opitz's dating, the letters were written over five years apart. On Williams' tighter dating, though the order is inverted, the letters

[43] Alexander, *Letter to Alexander*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 14.
[44] Alexander's fragment to all the bishops; Opitz, *Urkunde*, 15.

were separated by over three years. Unlike the *Henos Somatos,* the *He Philarchos* does not offer a clear compendium of "Arian" teachings. Much like perusing a Pauline epistle, the reader is left making honest guesses of what the other side was saying, assuming the author inveighed against something he at least *thinks* his opponents could espouse. The left column below follows the order of sayings clearly attributed to the "Arians" in the *Henos Somatos* (though even these are difficult to extract). In the right column are the sayings attributed to Arius from the *He Philarchos.* The "Arians" teach:

| *Henos Somatos* | *He Philarchos* |
|---|---|
| God was not always Father | |
| The Word was not from eternity | |
| The Word was "made out of nothing" | The Son of God is from nothing |
| God made him who did not previously exist | "He who before was not, later came into existence" (2) |
| There was a *time* when the Son did not exist | "There was once when the Son was not" (1) |
| | "he was not" |
| The Son is a creature and a work | "they deny [the Son's] divinity and declare him to be on a level of all mankind" |
| He is not like the Father in essence | "no one is by nature Son of God" (3) |
| He is not the Father's Word or Wisdom | "once the Wisdom of God was not" (4) |
| The Son is mutable | The Son is mutable |
| The Word does not fully know the Father | |

Even where the *He Philarchos* does not directly attribute slogans to "Arians", it is apparent that the bishop is fulminating against specific mantras. For example, Alexander

asserts, "the Son always is from the Father", presumably doubling-down on the phrase that initially disturbed Arius.[45] Likewise, Alexander felt compelled to assert "the Father is always Father". So while Alexander did not directly attribute the slogans "God was not always Father" and "the Word is not from eternity" to "Arians", he certainly sees a denial of these positions to be pivotal. If this is granted, of the ten major tenets of "Arianism" listed in the *Henos Somatos,* eight find close matches in the *He Philarchos.* The one prominent difference in the *He Philarchos* is the absence of any invective against the Son being a "creature" and a "made thing". He did accuse the "Arians" of denying the Son's divinity (which Arius did not) and claiming the Son came "from nothing…with the creation of all rational and irrational creatures". Alexander, on this occasion, did not protest specifically against the "Arians" labeling the Son a κτὶσμα, as the reader might expect, but the accusation that they relegated the Son to "the level of all mankind" seems to make a similar charge. The point is that the collection of what "Arians" teach remains rather stable across the two pre-Nicene circulars coming from the Alexandrian patriarch.

The *He Philarchos* does not mention Eusebius of Nicomedia by name, which was one of the reasons for Williams' dating the document earlier than the *Henos Somatos*, but the letter does envision a concerted opposition. It is important to recall the list of activities that Gwynn dismisses as Athanasian rhetorical *topoi* honed in the late 330's; "the writing of letters; the manipulation of episcopal office; dependence upon secular power; violence and persecution, and above all the promotion of the Arian heresy".[46] Just as some of these devices appeared in the *Henos Somatos*, they also feature in the *He*

[45] In his *Letter to Alexander,* Arius says Alexander's teaching of "always Father, always Son" is precisely the problem.
[46] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 125.

*Philarchos.* The letter opens with the charge that the opponents are "plotting to gain possession of the dioceses that seem greatest". Moreover, "Arius and Achillas lately made a conspiracy". They propagate their conspiracy

> "by running to fellow ministers of one mind with us, they attempted to turn them against us. They dissembled a reputation under the show of peace and unity, but in truth they were eager to carry certain of the ministers away into their disease by fair words….they do not confess to them those things which they wickedly taught and effected, on account of which they were expelled by us, but they either hand them on in silence or deceive, obscuring them with fabricated words and writings".

Alexander's opponents are secretly seditious, concealing their true theology when convenient. In addition to their impious doctrine, Arius and his "band of evildoers" gain influence through secret machinations towards other leaders and "they have bishops to agree and be of one mind with them". To reiterate the opposition's use of encyclicals, *He Philarchos'* recipients are not to "support their statements or writings". Alexander's enemies even take advantage of women, deceiving the older ones and soliciting the support of indecent younger ones.

In evaluating the two letters attributed to Alexander of Alexandria prior to Nicaea, the picture of the opponents remains rather consistent. The compact index of "Arian" views in the *Henos Somatos* finds parallels in the more diffuse *He Philarchos.* More interestingly, the activities associated with the "Eusebians" in Athanasius' more developed polemic find antecedents in these texts. In this sense, "Alexander's response to Arius' teaching set the terms for later stages of the theological controversy".[47] This does not escape the further question of how accurately Alexander's administration depicted the opposition. Christopher Beeley regularly insists that Alexander misrepresented Arius' theology. The bishop "makes his case by depicting Arius' position

[47] Stephen Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2004), 48.

in a rather distorting way" therefore offering only a "caricature".[48] This alleged unfair treatment of "Arian" theology is a persistent theme among revisionist historians. The chapter will now examine the two most pronounced instances of this accusation to see if Alexander's representation of Arius was unfairly slanted.

For Beeley, the best evidence for this disfigured picture comes from Alexander's insistence that Arius taught a temporal gap between the Father and the Son. For Beeley, possibly drawing on another work of Stead, when Arius told Alexander that the Son "was not before he was begotten", he was not referring to a *time* when the Son did not exist.[49] Conversely, Beeley thinks that Arius only denied the view that the Son could somehow be latently in the Father. So, Alexander's insistence in the *He Philarchos* that Arius taught a "time when the Son was not" (a version enthusiastically adopted later by Athanasius but captured in the *Henos Somatos* and at Nicaea with the word ποτὲ, "once", rather than "time") is an example of how the patriarch manipulated Arius' authentic teachings. The problem with Beeley's view is that if Arius' statement "before he was begotten he was not" was actually a prohibition against thinking that the Son was never in a state of not being begotten (that there was no instance in the Son's history when he was not being begotten), then this phrase becomes tantamount to either affirming eternal generation, a teaching that Arius certainly did not hold, or clearly indicating an instance when the Son started being begotten. Furthermore, does not the reference to (πρὶν), a "before" in the Son's existence, imply temporality?[50] Nicaea's censoring of this slogan

[48] Beeley, *Unity,* 117.
[49] Christopher Stead, "The Word 'From Nothing'" in *JTS* Vol. 49 No. 2 (1998), 671-684.
[50] E.P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis or Antithesis?* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 85.

includes the word "once" which also connotes a temporal understanding.[51] Other scholars are not so convinced of Alexander's impropriety on this matter. Meijering equivocates saying that it is uncertain whether Arius believed in an interval of time between the Father and the Son.[52] Nevertheless, where Meijering disagrees against Stead and Beeley is in the conviction that Arius' opponents genuinely thought him to be postulating a temporal gap between the Father and the Son. Beeley's understanding is hard to reconcile with Arius' other teachings such as the Son being a "creature" and being "from nothing".

This question of temporality may be best answered with a close reading of Arius' *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia.* Arius tells the bishop that *he disagrees* with Alexander's teaching that οὔτε ἐπινοίᾳ οὔτε ἀτόμῳ τινὶ προάγει ὁ θεὸς τοῦ υἱοῦ "neither in thought nor in some indivisible moment [of time?] does God precede the Son". That is to say, Alexander was teaching that there was not even an infinitesimally short moment in time (if ἀτόμῳ is a temporal reference) when God did not have a Son.[53] While χρόνος does not appear, the meaning of ἀτόμῳ is most naturally temporal. The fact that Arius took issue with Alexander's denial of this "indivisible moment" between Father and Son supports the fact that his more famous slogan did imply time, while perhaps strategically omitting the word.

The question over the Son's origin gathers some more answers from an evaluation of the word ἀεὶ or, always, as exchanged between Arius and Alexander. Ambiguity is

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[51] Nicaea inserted ποτέ to censor a temporal gap between Father and Son. Cf. Peter Widdicombe in *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 153-154 does not think Athanasius routinely altered Arius' sayings to help his case.

[52] E.P. Meijering, "Ην ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν ὁYιος: A Discussion on Time and Eternity", *VC,* Vol. 28 No. 3 (1974) 162.

[53] H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 271 for the meaning of ἀτόμῳ as certainly temporal.

further removed by Arius' clear denial of the teaching, "always God, always Son".[54] Alexander thinks that God "is Father of the always present Son, on account of whom he is called Father; and with the Son always present with him".[55] When Arius declared that the Son was "not always", he wanted to protect the Father from having to have a Son by necessity. In other words, for Arius, "always Father, always Son" was the semantic equivalent to saying that the Son was a property of the Father and therefore not begotten from the Father's will. The problem is that in his quest to protect the Father against having a Son by necessity, he denied the eternity of the latter. Arius' refusal to accept the Son as "always" supports a temporal gap between Father and Son.

The cumulative force of Arius' beliefs that "before he was begotten he was not", that the Son was not "always" with the Father, that there being no moment, ἀτόμῳ, between the Father and the Son was to be refuted, and that "the Son has a beginning" does, at a minimum, verify the conclusion that Arius did not uphold the Son's eternal co-existence with the Father. It is hard to consider Alexander's portrayal of Arius's teaching on the temporality of the Father-Son relationship as a highly embroidered exaggeration. Beeley's best evidence for an Alexandrian distortion is to claim infelicity in the bishop's equating "before he was begotten he was not" to "there was a time when he was not", something hardly constituting a charge of gross embellishment especially when evaluated in the context of Arius' other sayings.

In addition to the question over temporality, a second remonstrance to Alexander's accuracy rises over the vilification of Arius' teaching that the Son is ἐξ οὐκ ὀντων. For Stead, Arius' teaching that the Son is "from nothing" may only be an

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[54] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia,* Opitz, *Urkunde* 1.
[55] Alexander, *Letter to Alexander,* 26; Opitz, *Urkunde* 14.

assertion that the Son was made *by God* out of nothing because God made everything out of nothing. In other words, Stead reads the Son's being "from nothing" as a supplement to him being "from God" rather than an alternative to it.[56] On this reading, the Son's being "from nothing" is just another way of stating that he is a creature because God made all creatures from nothing. Arius was quite comfortable in saying the Son is "from God", so long as it excluded materialistic connotations.[57] "From nothing" was Arius' way of sidestepping physical severance in the Godhead. Despite Stead's efforts to ameliorate the implications of this phrase, there are some considerations before this can be declared innocuous. It was Tertullian in his *Against Hermogenes* who taught that everything was either from God, from matter, or from nothing.[58] So while Stead thinks "from nothing" and "from God" could be compatible, at least one prominent church father saw them as competing alternatives. Hanson thinks that Arius' "from nothing" clause was a "startling, not to say shocking, one, and was too handy a stick for anti-Arians to use".[59] That "from nothing" lacks support from other theologians probably indicates the perceived deviance of its message.[60] Eusebius of Caesarea casually accepted the phrase before Nicaea as an obvious point only to abandon it as the controversy continued.[61] What emerges from the record, then, is that "from nothing" can be thought the purest of all "Arian" phrases as it seems to have had so little support elsewhere. It makes sense that Arius would tell Eusebius of Nicomedia that he was

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[56] Stead, "The Word", 674, 679.
[57] Arius, *Letter to Alexander,* 5; Opitz, *Urkunde* 6.
[58] Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes,* 2.
[59] Hanson "Who Taught", 79-83.
[60] The often-unreliable *Ecclesiastical History* of Philostorgius places "ἐξ οὐκ ὀντων" on the lips of Athanasius of Anazarbus in an approving way, 1.8.
[61] For Example, in Eusebius' *Letter to Euphration;* Opitz, *Urkunde* 7, he does not think anyone could deny ὸ ὤν τὸν μὴ ὀντα ἐγέννησε or "the one who is begot him from non-being". This view then seems to be abandoned by the time he wrote his *Ecclesiastical Theology* as he is clear that the Son is "from the Father", 1.8.2-3.

persecuted for saying the Son is "from nothing". When this is combined with Arius' phrase in his *Letter to Alexander* that the "Son does not have being with the Father", it is once again reasonable to see why Alexander took issue with Arius on this point.

Alexander's role in defining and legitimizing "Arianism" ought not be overestimated, but it is important to see how much of Athanasius' polemic was there for the taking. The *Henos Somatos*, while probably authored by Athanasius, garnered authority because the Alexandrian bishop commissioned it. The contents of "Arianism" in the *Henos Somatos* find parallels in the *He Philarchos.* The two letters not only detail the doctrinal errors of the opponents, but also convey their conspiratorial nature, including letter writing. What is communicated under the dictionary entry "Arianism" in patristic handbooks, even those authored by revisionists, can be found in the two pre-Nicene letters from Alexander. Those who allege that Alexander caricatured Arius' views should also be checked. Each of the "Arian" teachings in the *Henos Somatos* is easily identified in Arius writings, presuming the *Thalia* is permitted as the drift of scholarship has dictated. Moreover, having examined two features that were test cases for Alexander's gross exaggeration; namely, understanding Arius' "before he was begotten he was not" in temporal terms and the bishop's taking issue with the Son being "from nothing", such an accusation looks overstated. There can be no doubt that Alexander portrayed his opponents poorly, for how else should someone be expected to treat opponents, but to conclude that the polemic cloaks what Arius genuinely taught is not the best evaluation. Alexander's exposition of these ideas cannot be described as unfair hyperbole. Further evidence of a pre-Athanasian "Arianism" comes from the proceedings of Nicaea that will now be examined.

### 3.3 Did Nicaea's proceedings bear witness to "Arians" and "Eusebians"?

Oscar Skarsaune published an insightful article in 1987 on the origin of the Nicene Creed.[62] Instead of starting with the homoousios as the indication of authorship, Skarsaune began with *monogenes*, or "only-begotten". He noticed how the positioning of *monogenes* in the Nicene Creed amplified Alexander's theology. While *monogenes* was common in Eastern creeds, Nicaea's syntax was altered in order to communicate the point that the Son was from the Father's ousia.[63] Whereas in other Eastern creeds *monogenes* was placed in conjunction with "the firstborn of all creation", this biblical phrase was dropped at the meeting in Bithynia. In the *He Philarchos,* the Alexandrian bishop expounded his thoughts on the natural relationship between the Father and the Son and used *monogenes* to carry the arguments. Skarsaune also went on to examine the anathemas at the end of the creed. What he noticed was "the selection of Arian *dicta* which Alexander has made the target of his polemics, corresponds exactly to the selection of Arian slogans in the anathemas of N".[64] In other words, the structure of Nicaea's creed matched the Alexandrian bishop's pre-Nicene polemic.[65] To see Nicaea as a collaborative effort that forged a compromise blurs the evidence of Alexander's hand.

While Skarsaune targeted "only-begotten" as the starting point for the Creed's origins, thinking through the development of the word ὁμοούσιος in the lead-up to the Nicene Council remains a worthwhile task. While the modern reader wants more information about how it was introduced into the discourse of the Council, there are only

[62] Oscar Skarsaune, "A Neglected Detail in the Creed of Nicaea 325", *VC,* Vol. 41 (1987), 34-54.
[63] Pollard, "The Creeds", 278-300.
[64] Skarsaune, "Neglected", 47.
[65] It comes as no surprise that Loofs' argument for Western provenance for the Creed is rarely defended.

glimpses of its origins. Evidently it was used by reputable authors prior to 325.[66] Eusebius of Caesarea's *Letter to his See* makes it clear that Constantine insisted on its inclusion.[67] Fascinatingly, the Caesarean leader then goes on to explain that "they" interpreted the term. This has long perplexed readers: the Latin-speaking Constantine calling for a technical and loaded Greek term only for an anonymous group to seize the moment to secure its placement in the final draft. Is this all that can be said?

The most persuasive explanation for the appearance of *homoousios* in Nicaea's Creed is that Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia supplied it. Before Nicaea, the heresiarch declared to his bishop that "Manes propounded that the offspring of the Father is *part of the same substance*" that is, μέρος ὁμοούσιον τοῦ πατρὸς.[68] Arius expressed his dislike for the Nicene watchword by attributing it to heretical discourse. In addition to this, Arius also told the patriarch οὐδὲ ἅμα τῷ πατρὶ τὸ εἶναι ἔχει, "nor does he [the Son] have being along with that of the Father".[69] Language of ousia is not invoked here, but clearly *homoousios* would combat such an expression. If the *Thalia* is admitted as reliable evidence, Arius again censors the word. Here the presbyter protested that the Son is not equal, οὐδ ὁμοούσιος αὐτῷ, "nor of one essence with him".[70] While modern scholarship grapples with the pre-Nicene usage of the word *homoousios*, the one theologian who undisputedly used the word was Arius. This consideration might be combined with an additional detail about Eusebius of Nicomedia's actions at the Council. Most significant

[66] Eusebius' *Letter to His See* says "we knew that there were certain learned ones of the ancients, famous bishops and writers, who employed the term *homoousios* in reference to their teaching about the Father and Son" in Rusch, *Trinitarian*, 59-60.
[67] Eusebius, *The Letter to His See*; Opitz, *Urkunde,* 22.
[68] Arius, *Letter to Alexander;* Opitz, *Urkunde,* 6.
[69] Arius, *Letter to Alexander;* Opitz, *Urkunde,* 6.
[70] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 15; West, "Metre", 103.

for this study is a passage from Ambrose's *On Faith* that records Eusebius of Nicomedia's reading of a document during the Council of Nicaea. Ambrose writes:

> "what other reason can there be for their unwillingness to have the Son spoken of as ὁμοούσιος, of the same substance, with the Father, but that they are unwilling to confess Him the true Son of God? This is betrayed in the letter of Eusebius of Nicomedia. 'If,' writes he, 'we say that the Son is true God and uncreated, then we are in the way to confess Him to be of one substance (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father.' When this letter had been read before the Council assembled at Nicaea, the Fathers put this word in their exposition of the Faith, because they saw that it daunted their adversaries".[71]

Ambrose thought that Eusebius of Nicomedia delivered the ὁμοούσιος for his opponents.[72] That is, they adopted it with the precise aim of thwarting the Nicomedian. Ambrose's testimony, like the evidence from Arius' letters, lines up well with Athanasius' version of the events in *On the Decrees* from the early 350's where he related that the delegates at Nicaea sought a term that could exclude the views of their opponents.[73] Instead of searching for precedents of positive usage, it makes more sense to see Nicaea's *homoousios* as a direct assault on the theologies of Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia. If this is true, then Athanasius is hardly inconsistent when he would later combine a wholehearted defense of homoousios and a passionate dismissal of Arius and the Nicomedian.

If *homoousios* aimed to antagonize both Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia, what can be said about the other weighted phrase of the Creed; namely, that the Son was ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός, "from the ousia/essence of the Father"? Eusebius of Nicomedia's *Letter to Paulinus of Tyre* outlined the tenets of his theology when he tried to recruit

[71] Ambrose of Milan, *On Faith* 3.15.
[72] Mark Edwards, "Alexander of Alexandria and the Homoousion", *VC,* 66 (2012), 482-502.
[73] Athanasius, *On the Decrees* 19-20.

Paulinus to be more active in advancing his views.[74] This letter exhibits two features that are critical for this present study. Firstly, the letter explicitly proscribed the Son being ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας. As was the case with the homoousion, the exact vocabulary that the Nicomedian prelate bowdlerized is what appeared in Nicaea's Formula. This means that the second most controversial phrase in the Nicene Creed also rebuffed Eusebius of Nicomedia. Secondly, the bishop of Nicomedia's letter implores Paulinus to write to "Alexander" with the goal of "bringing him over to your opinion".[75] There is certainly a chance that the subject of this clause is the Alexandrian metropolitan. In other words, Eusebius of Nicomedia understood his struggle to be against Alexander to some degree. Regarding the whole of the *Letter to Paulinus*, it is reasonable to agree with Edwards that it is "tolerably certain that the whole of this oblique polemic is aimed at his Alexandrian counterpart".[76] Eusebius of Nicomedia portrays a kind of polarization with Paulinus as a friend and Alexander as a yet-to-be-converted foe. What materializes from the documents around Nicaea, then, is that Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arius were deliberately targeted because the very slogans they dismissed are those that the bishops were asked to sign. How involved was Alexander in this process?

In addition to the aforementioned arguments from Skarsaune, Philostorgius' *Ecclesiastical History*, which is rightfully held in low esteem for its inaccuracies, does

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[74] This is preserved in Theodoret's *EH,* 1.5; Opitz, *Urkunde* 8. There is some evidence as to why Eusebius of Nicomedia thought Paulinus of Tyre might be sympathetic to his theology. When recalling a pre-Nicene interaction, Eusebius of Caesarea's *Against Marcellus* 1.4.46 recorded an exchange between Marcellus of Ancyra and Paulinus. In refutation of Paulinus, Marcellus was "μηδέ δύο οὐσίας τε και πράγματα τε καὶ δυνάμεις τε καὶ θεοὺς λέγοντας" or "saying there are not two essences or things or powers of gods", thus implying Paulinus taught multiple ousiai. Furthermore, Paulinus "κτίσμα εἶναι τὸν Χριστὸν ἐφασκεν" or "said the Son was a creature", *Against Marcellus* 1.4.49. We see some similarities here to the theology that antagonized Alexander and was identified as "Arian" at the Council of Antioch in 324/25.

[75] Eusebius of Nicomedia, *Letter to Paulinus*; Opitz, *Urkunde,* 8.

[76] Edwards, "Alexander", 492.

bear witness to Alexander's activity prior to Nicaea.[77] One passage reads "even before the Council of Nicaea…Alexander of Alexandria went to Nicomedia, met there with Hosius of Cordova and the bishops with him, and arranged that the Son should be acknowledged as consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) to the Father by conciliar decree and that Arius should be excommunicated".[78] This combined with Ambrose's report and an anonymous *Life of Constantine* convinced Edwards that "we have no good reason to disbelieve those witnesses who inform us that Alexander took up the term *homoousios* at the Nicene Council in order to disarm his chief antagonist, Eusebius of Nicomedia".[79] That is to say, the cumulative evidence from Nicaea points to Alexander's orchestration of the *homoousion* theology.[80] If Edwards is correct, then Nicaea featured Alexander's drawing a line with the insertion of *homoousios* daring neutral bishops to choose between him on the one hand and Eusebius of Nicomedia *and* Arius on the other.

Any evaluation of Nicaea ought not neglect the twenty canons that are associated with it. Here I agree with Williams that the canons ought to be read through the lens of the "Arian Controversy".[81] What is seldom observed is how the canons build the case for Alexander's triumph at Nicaea. Canon six, for example, reads "let the ancient customs prevail, those in Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis, as the bishop in Alexandria has authority over all these places".[82] This canon is tantamount to accusing Arius of insubordination. As a presbyter in Baucalis, he was to submit to Alexander. This canon goes a step further to say, "if someone becomes bishop without the wishes of the metropolitan, the great

[77] One such inaccuracy in Philostorgius is his naming of 22 Arians at Nicaea in which some on the list were already dead.
[78] Philostorgius, *Church History* trans. P. Amidon (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007) 1.7
[79] Edwards, "Alexander", 482-502.
[80] Edwards, "Alexander", 483.
[81] Williams, *Arius,* 61.
[82] *The Canons of Nicaea* in Rusch, *Trinitarian,* 51.

synod determines that such a person ought not to be a bishop".[83] This further empowered the metropolitan giving him veto power over clerical appointments. What this meant was that if Alexander did not approve of Secundus of Ptolomeias and Theonas of Marmarica, the intractable supporters of Arius, as bishops, they were in violation of the ecclesiastical legislation. Any Melitian, Novationist, or "Arian" had to gather his approval for high-ranking clerical service. Davis is correct to claim that at the time of Nicaea, "Alexander was eager to reassert his institutional authority as patriarch over against the competing academic claims of semi-autonomous local presbyters".[84] Further speculation leads to the likelihood that Constantine would have wanted Alexander to "win" at Nicaea because this displayed the proper deference to hierarchical leadership, a vested interest of any emperor. To have a presbyter upset a bishop could be analogous to a lesser official toppling the imperium.

There can be no doubt that Nicaea caused mixed reviews. Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea objected to its anathemata and endured exile. Eustathius of Antioch probably thought its judgments too lenient. There is nothing in Marcellus of Ancyra's extant fragments to cause modern readers to think he drafted any of Nicaea's key phrases. That Marcellus could reasonably read in Sabellian sounding interpretations to the creed not only led to his many depositions but also caused others to suspect the Formula's efficacy. Despite these dissatisfactions, the evidence of disgruntlement should

[83] *The Canons of Nicaea,* in Rusch, *Trinitarian,* 51.
[84] Davis, *Early,* 52; Galvao-Sobrinho at *Doctrine*, 40-41 makes an interesting argument connecting Alexander's position against Arius as a reflection of the church polity he favoured. The bishop's insistence on the contrast between the Godhead, on the one hand, and fallen humanity on the other, reinforces the ordering of the bishop over unruly presbyters. He sees Arius' theology as nullifying the "central role of the priesthood" in favour of decentralization, 41. While I do not think this is so obvious, I agree with Galvao-Sobrinho in developing the long standing hypothesis that political jockeying between bishop and presbyter do lie close at hand in the years before Nicaea.

not obfuscate a decisive Alexandrian victory.[85] Whereas the revisionists want to show Nicaea as a rather messy and almost accidental hodgepodge of theological trajectories, the evidence suggests that the creed and the canons have Alexander's hand all over them. The most plausible conclusion is that Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia supplied both the *homoousios* and ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός when they vociferously objected to them. If it is true that Nicaea was a decisive victory for Alexandria, the fact that Athanasius would later invoke its authority so earnestly is no more surprising or underhanded than a person drawing on past legal decisions to strengthen their position in a court case. When Nicaea is viewed as a victory of the Alexandrian patriarchate, then Athanasius' later commentary on the meeting is less manipulative. Athanasius' energetic defense of Nicaea was more a protection of Alexander's legacy and the theological heritage of the see than an attempt to haphazardly gloss over the council's real meaning for his own gain. The arguments of this section show the council as a non-Athanasian dependent source for a theological dispute against Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arius, and those who supported them. From Nicaea, the study turns to another pre-Athanasian source of anti-"Arianism" in the powerful figure of Eustathius of Antioch.

## 3.4 Eustathius of Antioch on the "Arians" and "Eusebians"

Eustathius held the influential bishopric of Antioch at the time of the Nicene Council and although only one of his writings has survived in full, he was obviously prolific.[86] Eustathius' career attracts much commentary because the termination of his

[85] Skarsaune, "Neglected", 37.
[86] The fragments of Eustathius' writings were edited and translated in French by Michel Spanneut in *Recherches sur les écrits d'Eustathe d'Antioche : avec une édition nouvelle des fragments dogmatiques et exégétiques* (Lille : Facultés catholiques, 1948). A more recent edition is Jose Declerck's *Eustathii Antiocheni, patris Nicaeni, Opera quae supersunt Omnia* (Leuven : University Press, 2002). Sophie Cartwright's excellent monograph, *Eustathius*, 33f. does a nice job evaluating these works.

tenure is shrouded in confusion. While every year between 326 and 331 has been proposed for Eustathius' deposition, Burgess' article argues persuasively for a date of 328.[87] The absence of definitive evidence is particularly tantalizing because the fate of Eustathius of Antioch would serve as an important justification (or nullification) of an "Arian Controversy". More specifically, if Eusebius of Nicomedia and his supporters targeted the astute Antiochene bishop upon their return from exile, this would be strong evidence in favour of Athanasius' claims of a post-Nicene purge. Conversely, if Eustathius was deposed solely for sexual immorality or some form of lewdness, then Athanasius appears disingenuous.[88] This, too, is a crude alternative as it is possible that, holding a divergent theology, Eusebius of Nicomedia seized on Eustathius' improprieties to remove him. The concern here is any evidence of Eustathius' involvement with "Arians" and "Eusebians". I will begin with the most cited of his surviving passages.

In a short paragraph preserved in Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History,* the modern student gathers a fleeting glimpse of the Nicene Council from the Antiochene bishop's perspective evidently from his work on the Proverbs. Eusthatius wrote:

> "ὡς δὲ ἐζητεῖτο τῆς πίστεως ὁ τρόπος, ἐναργὴς μὲν ἔλεγχος τὸ γράμμα τῆς Εὐσεβίου προὐβάλλετο βλασφημίας. ἐπὶ πάντων δὲ ἀναγνωσθέν, αὐτίκα συμφορὰν μὲν ἀστάθμητον τῆς ἐκτροπῆς ἕνεκα τοῖς αὐτηκόοις προὐξένει, αἰσχύνην δ' ἀνήκεστον τῷ γράψαντι παρεῖχεν. ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὸ ἐργαστήριον τῶν ἀμφὶ τὸν Εὐσέβιον σαφῶς ἑάλω, τοῦ παρανόμου γράμματος διαρραγέντος ὑπ' ὄψει πάντων".
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> "When they examined the manner of the faith, Eusebius' writing was brought forward as proof of blasphemy. As it was read before everyone, it brought an unsteadiness to those who heard it, and it brought inexorable

[87] Richard Burgess, "The Date of the Deposition of Eustathius of Antioch" in *JTS* (2000), 150-160; Henry Chadwick, "The Fall of Eustathius of Antioch" in *JTS* (1948), 27-35.

[88] Schwartz, Simonetti, Chadwick, and Barnes think that Eustathius was deposed before Eusebius of Nicomedia's return from exile. Hanson and Burgess think Eusebius of Nicomedia had already returned. For a discussion see Parvis, *Marcellus,* 97f. She makes an interesting point in that the hiddenness of Eustathius' deposition may have been deliberate in order to protect the image of the church.

> shame upon its author. Since the craftsmanship of *those around Eusebius* was clearly condemned, the lawless writing was torn up before all".[89]

It is hard to know when Eustathius authored this comment on Nicaea, but nothing in the passage indicates he had been deposed. It fits most naturally in the immediate aftermath of the council whilst he was still in his position. The identity of this "Eusebius" has been the subject of debate, but it most obviously refers to the Nicomedian. Eusebius of Caesarea informs the readers of his *Letter to His See* that he presented a formula at Nicaea that was welcomed but reworked. If Eustathius was speaking about the same event, then one of the bishops was entirely disingenuous.[90] Since Eustathius despised the Caesarean, even engaging in a pamphlet war, it could be suspected that the Antiochene bishop would not have missed the chance to make his identity more clear. If this identification is correct, then Eustathius' criticism of the machinations of τῶν ἀμφὶ τὸν Εὐσέβιον or "those around Eusebius" holds consequences for the revisonist thesis that sees the "Eusebians" as a later ploy by Athanasius to impugn his political enemies.[91] It is true that the earliest instances of Athanasius using "those around Eusebius", or some variation, come in his eleventh *Festal Letter* and his *Encyclical,* both from around 338/339.[92] This is why the "Eusebians" are "a rhetorical construct, a product of Athanasius' polemic and of his desire to justify himself against his condemnation and subsequent exile in 335".[93] The problem is that this thesis must grapple with Eustathius' identification of this group collaborating at Nicaea. Gwynn is

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[89] Preserved in Theodoret's *EH* 1.7. Greek text in GCS 44, eds., L. Parmentier and F. Scheidweiler, (Berlin: Academie Verlag, 1954). The quote continues to condemn the "Ariomaniacs".
[90] Hanson, *Search,* Ch. 8; Christopher Stead, "Eusebius' and the Council of Nicaea" in *JTS* Vol. 24 (1973), 98-99; and Edwards, "Homoousion", 493 all think this must be a reference to Eusebius of Nicomedia.
[91] That Athanasius' preferred designation was τῶν περι τόν Εὐσέβιον whereas Eustathius used the prepositoon, ἀμφὶ should not be exaggerated to distance the two slogans.
[92] For a discussion on dating Athanasius' *Festal Letters* and the *Index* see Alden Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus and the Origins of the Christian Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[93] Gwynn, "Construction", 165.

aware of the reference to the "Eusebians" in Eustathius' fragment, but relegates it to a footnote. If the Eusebius from the Eustathian fragment is a reference to the Nicomedian and "those around Eusebius" have him as the referent, which it most naturally does, then there is a pre-Athanasian stigma against this figure and his associates. That Eustathius could speak of such a conglomerate acting at the council must dampen the language of Athanasius imposing the notion of a movement upon a disparate group of people years later.

In addition to his reference against the "Eusebians", it is important to recognize the large deposit of anti-"Arian" writings attributed to Eustathius. Though they only exist in fragments, a recent work on Eustathius posits no fewer than four anti-"Arian" works from the Antiochene.[94] The heading of one fragment reads "Eustathius, bishop of Antioch and confessor, against the Arians".[95] Another passage makes reference to the bishop's "sixth book against the Arians" while another speaks of an eighth book (presumably against the "Arians"), thus showing how vast his contribution.[96] Moreover, a number of Eustathian anti-"Arian" passages tackle the exegesis of Proverbs 8.22, causing those who have collected his fragments to believe he wrote an entire anti-"Arian" tract, *In Proverbia* 8.22.[97] Eustathius' editors often label yet another work *Ariomanitas* because this designation is given to the opponents.[98] Cartwright, following Parvis, translates this word as "those stirring up war around Arius".[99] While Cartwright sees this designation and its associated polemic as different from that against "Arians", it does

[94] Cartwright, *Eustathius,* 34.
[95] Declerck, *Frag.* 89.
[96] Declerck, *Frags.* 99, 102.
[97] Cartwright, *Eustathius,* 41; Cf. Theodoret, *EH,* 1.7.
[98] Dated by Declerck and Cartwright to 325-327. "Ariomanitas" is used four times in the Eustathian fragments, Declerck, *Fragments,* 1, 19, 50, 55.
[99] Cartwright, *Eustathius,* 57.

"contain many of the elements of Athanasius' narrative against 'Arianism'".[100] Cartwright goes so far as to say that in Eustathius' presentation across these anti-"Arian" fragments "we have a unified, self-aware, calculating, and duplicitous ecclesial–political faction promoting subordinationism and trying to lure the wider church away from 'orthodoxy'".[101]

Eustathius' engagement with this group of "Ariomanitas" does not stop with his labels. It continued with his theological argumentation. Though dealing with fragments, Grillmeier argued for a fundamental shift in Eustathian exegesis as a result of the uprising with Arius.[102] In light of new evidence, one of Cartwright's central arguments highlights how Eustathius' pre-Nicene Christology became a formidable weapon to combat the "pro-Arians". While Eustathius' Christology is often depicted as proto-Nestorian, there are obvious parallels to Athanasius' Christology. Eustathius, like Athanasius, faced an "Arian" exegesis that exploited the Son's inferiority to create distance between him and the Father. To confront this, Eustathius explained that the Son's limitations are such because of his becoming human. So, one passage reads:

> If indeed 'the fullness of divinity' dwells in Christ, it is one thing that dwells, and in truth another that is dwelt in. If they truly differ in nature from each other, neither passion of death nor desire for food nor desire for drinks, not sleep, not sorrow, not tiredness, not crying of tears, [and] no other change, however much, is allowed to coexist with fullness of divinity, since it is immutable in nature, but these are fit to be applied appropriately to the human being, who consists of a soul and a body. It is suited indeed to demonstrate from the human affairs and innocuous motions themselves, that not imaginarily and putatively, but actually, God has been clothed in a complete human being, assuming it perfectly.[103]

Reading the Gospels presents a problem for someone wanting to hold the Son's full

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[100] Cartwright, *Eustathius,* 66.
[101] Cartwright, *Eustathius,* 66 citing Declerck, *Frag,* 19.
[102] Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition* Vol. 1 (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 296f.
[103] Eustathius, *Frag.* 91 in Declerck, with the translation from Cartwright, *Eustathius,* 43.

divinity alongside his carnal neediness that included his hunger, fatigue, and ignorance. For those wanting to protect the unbegotten monad of the Father by distancing the Son, such verses made for good material evidence. In his anti-"Arian" works, Eustathius resolves this problem by saying these constraints on the Son could be "applied appropriately to the human being". Whereas Eustathius' Christology is often judged by his affirmation of Christ's human soul, as he lucidly does here, few see just how close this is to Athanasius' solution to "Arian" exegesis. The Alexandrian bishop's *Third Oration* provides a sustained engagement in this type of tussling. About the Son's limitations he writes:

> Of old time he was inclined to come to the Saints individually, and to sanctify those who received him; but neither, when they were begotten was it said that he had become man, nor, when they suffered, was it said that he himself suffered. But when he came among us from Mary once at the end of the ages for the abolition of sin (for so it was pleasing to the Father, to send his own Son 'made of a woman, made under the Law'), then it is said, that he took flesh and became man, and in that flesh he suffered for us (as Peter says, 'Christ therefore having suffered for us in the flesh,') that it might be shown, and that all might believe, that whereas he was ever God, and sanctified those to whom he came, and ordered all things according to the Father's will, afterwards for our sakes he became man, and 'bodily' as the Apostle says, the Godhead dwelt in the flesh; as much as to say, 'Being God, he had his own body, and using this as an instrument, he became man for our sakes.' And on account of this, the properties of the flesh are said to be his, since he was in it, such as to hunger, to thirst, to suffer, to weary, and the like, of which the flesh is capable; while on the other hand the works proper to the Word himself, such as to raise the dead, to restore sight to the blind, and to cure the woman with an issue of blood, he did through his own body.[104]

Like Eustathius, Athanasius' opponents are raising questions about the Son's hunger, thirst, weariness, and suffering. If he is divine in the same sense as the Father, how can this be explained? Athanasius says these common limitations are "properties of the flesh" that the Son took-on. It is also worth noting how both passages cite Colossians 2.9

[104] Athanasius, *Oration* 3.31.

in support of what might now be called a "two-nature" hermeneutic to combat the "Arians". Athanasius adopts a strikingly similar apologetic saying the Son's restrictions are a result of the humanity he assumed.[105]

Eustathius did not return to his see in 337 when Constantius welcomed back the other exiled bishops. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that Eustathius was active at the Council of Serdica in 343 as he escaped any invective from the Eastern delegation.[106] Eustathius either died before Constantine did or became so remote from the subsequent debates that modern scholarship cannot uniformly affirm his living past the early 330's. This means that all of these Eustathian fragments pre-date Athanasius' overt polemic. So, what can be discerned from Eustathius' writings? He probably identified Eusebius of Nicomedia as a problem at Nicaea. His derogatory slogan for the party led by this Eusebius was "those around Eusebius" (or the "Eusebians"). He wrote no fewer than four works (probably a few more) against the "Arians", one composed of at least eight books and another having the title "Ariomanitas", a pejorative word used by him at least four times in surviving fragments meaning "those stirring up war around Arius". It is beyond doubt in the most recent scholarly evaluation of Eustathius that he understood "Ariomanitas" to be an organized group battling theologically and ecclesiastically. Eustathius' opponents wanted to show the limitations of the Son and in order to address this he used a Christological approach to show that the Son performed divine acts insofar as he was divine and faced limitations insofar as the human being he assumed. This "two-nature" exegesis looks a lot like Athanasius', especially in the *Third*

[105] The same apologetic appears in other works like *Oration* 1.41-42, *On the Incarnation* 18, *Letter to Epictetus* 6. At *Oration* 3.32 Athanasius says that the Son assumed all of what it means to be a man.
[106] Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Ursacius and Valens* 1.2 in *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-century Church* trans. Lionel Wickham (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1997), 20-41.

*Oration.* Eustathius' career provides further evidence of a pre-Athanasian confrontation with "Arians" and "Eusebians".

### 3.5 How Silent was Athanasius between 325 and 339?

The smoking gun for the revisionist thesis is why, ostensibly, Athanasius had no problem with "Arians" or "Eusebians" until his exiles in the late 330's. In other words, if there was a post-Nicene purge and "Arian" collusion immediately after Nicaea, why did the bishop wait to unveil his attacks? The revisionist answer is to use this silence to advance the view of Athanasian construction for political purposes. As a remonstrance to this argument, Athanasius' greatest gift to the church, *On the Incarnation,* may offer some insight.[107] The date and occasion for this two-part apologetic has long fascinated the best patristic minds and lies at the center of its purpose.[108] That references to "Arianism" are absent from the text led Montfaucon centuries ago to conclude that the work must have been composed prior to the controversy.[109] This, problematically, would mean that this rich work of theology came from the mind of a twenty to twenty-five year old.[110] Even if the *Henos Somatos* was an Athanasian composition, the theology of the double treatise is much more impressive. In the history of Christendom, there are few works that can be granted this distinction of being authored at such a young age whilst having such enduring value. Regardless of the absence of "Arians", this method of dating too often ends up in a circular argument: since Athanasius did not speak of the

[107] While well known now, *On the Incarnation* seemed to get little attention in the fourth century. Louth's "The Fourth-century Alexandrians", 277 does note the 6th century Syriac version of *On the Incarnation* that attests to some early circulation.
[108] Leemans' "Thirteen", 129 says the date of this work is "one of the notorious cruces of the research on Athanasius".
[109] This date and reasoning still had adherents well into the 20th century such as Johannes Quasten's *Patrology* (Westminster MD: Christian Classics Inc., 1994).
[110] While this would be impressive, it would not be entirely without parallels. Catullus probably died when he was 30, Calvin completed the first edition of the *Institutes* at 26, and Keats died at 25.

"Arians" before 338 and *On the Incarnation* does not mention the "Arians", it must not have been authored before 338. The assumed premise is used to buttress the conclusion. Better arguments seek more substantive evidence. It was Tillemont in 1702 who thought the disclaimer in *Against the Nations*, the first part of the double treatise, of Athanasius being "without his books" pointed to an exilic composition.[111] The debate did not stop in the early modern era but came into recent times. Some reason that the "heretics" in these treatises look like Gnostics and not "Arians" because they envisage a demiurge; something Arius never did, thus favouring a date of 318.[112] At the other end of the spectrum, at least one thinker seized Athanasius' knowledge of the recent apotheosis of the emperor in *Against the Nations* to conclude that this could only have been the action of Julian in the early 360's, thus dating the treatises much later.[113] Despite proponents of both extremes, it is possible to speak of a scholarly consensus that the works were written in the 330's. Charles Kannengiesser approximated a date by comparing these treatises to Athanasius' *Festal Letters.* Crucial for Kannengiesser was the connection between "those who tear Christ's tunic" in the *Festal Letters* from the early to mid 330's and the remark in *On the Incarnation* 24 about those who "divide the church".[114] Kannengiesser noticed Athanasius' sudden willingness to name his opponents in the *Festal Letters* written after Constantine's death in 337. Kannengiesser combined the language of Christ's torn garment as a circumlocution for the "Arians" with the bishop's reluctance to

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[111] Athanasius, *Against the Nations*, 1.
[112] J.C.M. van Winden "On the Date of Athanasius' Apologetical Treatises" in *VC* 29 No. 4 (1975), 291-95. Also here is Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius*, 108-113. Barnes in *Athanasius and Constantius,* 12-13 proposes 325 or perhaps between 325 and 328.
[113] H. Nordberg, "A Reconsideration of the Date of St Athanasius' Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione" in *SP* Vol. 3 (1961) 262-266. The fact that Athanasius seems somewhat perplexed by the apotheosis of the Emperor by the Roman Senate at *Against the Nations* 9 suggests to some that the treatise must pre-date Athanasius' journey to Rome in 339.
[114] Charles Kannengiesser, "La date de l'Apologie d' Athanase Contra les Pains et sur l'Incarnation du Verbe" in *Recherches de science religieuse* 58 No. 3 (1970), 383-428.

speak of "Arians" prior to Constantine's death to show the proximity of the two works, ultimately justifying the years 335-337 as the best date for the double treatise. Alvyn Pettersen thought the earlier 330's more likely because those who "split Christ's tunic" seem more like the schismatic Melitians who were causing Athanasius many troubles at that time.[115] Slusser corroborated this earlier time frame by noting Athanasius' complete ignorance of Western geography at the time of composition, something that would not be the case had he already experienced exile in Gaul as he did in 335.[116] While the exact *Sitz im Leben* of the treatises may be beyond reach, it is now rare to think that they were authored before the outbreak of the conflict, pre 318 (or 321). They fit most comfortably between 328 and 339.

The debates about the dating and purpose of *On the Incarnation* ought not cloud its theological content. It has been noted by more than a handful of these scholars that, upon evaluating *On the Incarnation,* the reader notices many of the hallmarks of Athanasius' other anti-"Arian" works. So, Slusser concedes that "although the Arians are never named in *gent.* and *inc.,* and the slogans which Athanasius later ascribes to them are not mentioned, the double treatise would steer any reader well clear of Arianism".[117] Kannengiesser, noticing this same theological emphasis, questions "could it be that in the mid 330's he actually wrote what was precisely the most damaging for the Arian claim in the pastoral context of the church"?[118] Athanasius' focus on the self-abasement of the Son as the very thing that authenticates his divinity is the kind of argument developed in

[115] Alvyn Pettersen, "A Reconsideration of the Date of the Contra Gentes-De Incarnatione of Athanasius of Alexandria" in *SP* Vol. 17 No. 3 (1982), 1030-1040. One problem with this view is that Alexander's *He Philarchos* 5 says it is the "Arians" who "tear apart the seamless garment of Christ".
[116] Michael Slusser, "Athanasius, Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione: Place and date of Composition" in *JTS* 37 No. 1 (1986), 114-117. To this list we could also add H.G. Opitz and Schneemelcher in favoring dates of 335-337 and 336 respectively. Cf. Kannengiesser, "The Dating", 19f.
[117] Slusser, "Athanasius", 116.
[118] Kannengiesser, "The Dating", 25.

his later polemical works. Reading *On the Incarnation* through the lens of Athanasius' polemic highlights their similarities.

The clearest comparisons can be drawn to the *Orations against the Arians.*[119] That the dating of the *Orations* has moved incrementally earlier is important for our discussion. In the nineteenth century, it was commonplace to date the *Orations* to Athanasius' third exile, after 356.[120] This date would theoretically cater to the more extreme revisionist claims that stress Athanasius' writing his most important anti-"Arian" works thirty years after Nicaea and twenty years after the heresiarch's death. It is now common, however, to date the three authentic *Orations* to early in Athanasius' second exile, perhaps while staying in Rome.[121] This means that at the start of Athanasius' writing both Eusebius of Nicomedia and Asterius were probably still alive and Arius himself was in recent memory. If the likes of Loofs, Quasten, Kannengiesser, and Louth are correct in dating the *Orations* to the late 330's, and a mid 330's date for *On the Incarnation* is most plausible, the works are chronologically close. More important than temporal proximity, however, is that these works have a pronounced thematic overlap. Even a scholar like Meijering, who thinks the double treatise was written prior to the outbreak of the feud and that it features a somewhat different theology from the *Orations*,

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[119] Charles Kannengiesser formerly argued that the *Third Oration* was pseudepigraphic but this view did not gain traction. He now sees the *Third Oration* as a compilation of three shorter works. Cf. Kannengiesser, "The Dating", 31.

[120] Quasten, *Patrology,* Vol. III, likes a post 356 date. This was Montfaucon's dating and the "traditional" view that prevailed for centuries.

[121] F. Loofs "Athanasius" in Herzog, Hauck, & Plitt (eds.) *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* 3rd Edition, Vol. 2 (Leipzig : J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1913), 220f. dated the *Orations* to 338/339. For the consensus on a composition of the *Orations* between 338 and 346 see Kannengiesser, "The Dating", 19-33; William Rusch, "Some Comments on Athanasius' Contra Arianos, Book I, 3" in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments* ed. R.C. Gregg (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation Ltd, 1985), 223-232; Louth, "Fourth-century", 277 who goes for 340.

still sees parallels between Athanasius' later works and *Against the Nations*.[122] He notes such similarities as the pre-existence of the Son and the Son's participation in the Godhead.[123] More examples might be drawn to support the point. In his *Second Oration,* Athanasius writes "for man had not been deified if joined to a creature or if the Son was not very God; nor had man been brought into the Father's presence, unless he had been his natural and true Word who had put on the body".[124] The bishop continued to write "so also the man had not been deified unless the Word who became flesh had been by nature from the Father and true and proper to him".[125] From just these few lines from the *Second Oration,* the reader of Athanasius' works identifies the, at times almost syntactical, parallels with the double treatise. In *On the Incarnation,* Athanasius routinely speaks of the "Word's assumption of the body" as the linchpin to salvation.[126] The fully divine Word's taking-on flesh drives the soteriology across these works. Some may correctly object that language of sonship is more important in Athanasius' later works whereas the Word is the acting subject in the double treatise. This is true, but the bishop's positive use of "Word" to describe the second person of the Trinity is never abandoned in the *Orations* and sonship appears regularly in the double treatise.[127] Furthermore, the language of deification appears in both this passage from the *Orations* and, memorably, in *On the Incarnation.*[128] Deification was part of the anti-"Arian" arsenal because Athanasius taught that a creature could never render divinity to another

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[122] Meijering, *Orthodoxy,* 38. Cf. Athanasius, *Against the Nations* 46 and *Oration* 2.21. At 113 he stresses the differences.
[123] Meijering, *Orthodoxy,* 39. Thomas Weinandy's *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) argues that the Son's divinity lies at the heart of *On the Incarnation* because this is central to the bishop's soteriology.
[124] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.70.
[125] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.70.
[126] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation,* 44, 45.
[127] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation,* 32 states the correlativity of Father and Son.
[128] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation,* 54 says "God became man that man might become God".

creature. The bishop's use of the word "proper" in *On the Incarnation* shadows its use in the overtly anti-"Arian" works like the one cited above.[129] The bishop's consistency in using the word "proper" to signal the correlativity of the Father and Son gave it some permanence in theological discourse.[130] It has also been suggested that Athanasius' describing the Son as "proper" to the Father captures a similar theology to the one he wanted to harness with the homoousion.[131] Given all these parallels, even Gwynn could say that Athanasius' "interpretation of the Nicene Creed in the *De Decretis* remained true to the principles he had laid down long before on the *Contra-Gentes- De Incarnatione*".[132] In other words, the theology of the double treatise looks a lot like the theology Athanasius deploys against the "Arians". The absence of the word "Arians" from the double treatise need not mean that there was no such group because, as Tetz recognized long ago, it was uncommon to name one's opponents in ancient polemic. After all, speaking against specific opponents could fall prey to the law of unintended consequences by actually making them more prominent.[133] The genre of the double treatise could be responsible for the silence. If the text targeted non-Christians, then naming "Arians" would only show internal division. If, on the other hand, the double apology served as a kind of catechetical tract for young Christians, then the work comes across as a kind of preemptive move to insulate new Christians from "Arian" theology.

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[129] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.36. In *On the Decrees* 7 and 11, God uses his "proper Word as a hand" and the Son is the Father's "proper Word".
[130] Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius.* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995).
[131] Gwynn, *Athanasius,* 87.
[132] Gwynn, *Athanasius,* 12.
[133] What little is known about Paul of Samosata comes from people who disagreed with him in the fourth century. The same can be said of Sabellius. Eusebius of Caesarea's *Contra Marcellum* provides a large portion of what we know about his arch opponent Marcellus of Ancyra. In sum, the "heretics" are kept alive by their foes.

To summarize this section of the chapter, the anti-"Arian" elements of the double treatise show that Athanasius was capable of authoring a work that stridently opposed his enemies while remaining nonplussed. The anti-"Arianism" of the double treatise causes us to question revisionist statements like, Athanasius wrote "with complete lack of scruple- to say nothing of Christian charity".[134] The Alexandrian employed multiple genres to oppose the "Arians", confronting them in different ways. The kind of theology he did not permit in *On the Incarnation* is that which he does not permit in say, *The Apology against the Arians* or the *Orations.* The most important conclusion here is that, regardless of when the double treatise was authored, Athanasius did *not* modify his theology to suit shifting exigencies. That is to say, if the double treatise is the heart of Athanasius' theology, then he did not prevaricate when targeting "Arians". This ought to modify the revisionist tendency to see the attacking of "Arianism" as a move of desperation for Athanasius.[135] It is more responsible to see Athanasius' irritation with "Arianism" as a consequence of its violation of his larger theological metanarrative. The double treatise makes the case that it was Athanasius' entire theology that was at odds with anyone who relaxed the divinity of the Son.

## 3.6 Concluding Analysis

The central argument of this chapter was that there was a pre-Athanasian onslaught against "Arianism" and the "Eusebians". While much emphasis is placed on Athanasius' ingenuity in these areas, he really lies in a continuum of other writers. I began by showing that the revisionists, while claiming "Arianism" is a misnomer, do assemble strikingly similar lists when it comes to "Arian" doctrines. R.P.C. Hanson's

[134] Stead, "The Word", 684.
[135] This is precisely Gwynn's thesis in *Eusebians,* 69 for example.

extraction of the core of "Arianism" from Athanasius' polemical works matches well with the outlines provided by Wiles, Williams, and Lyman. From here, I argued that the central elements of this "Arianism" find antecedents in Alexander's writings. The conclusion is one that even a committed revisionist concedes: "Alexander's construction of 'Arianism' directly foreshadows the polemic of Athanasius in both content and rhetorical style".[136] Additionally, when Alexander's description of the "Arians" passes through the matrix of Arius' extant works, it is not immediately discernible how the thrust of his presentation could be described as an unfair caricature, though he is clearly polemicizing his opponents. The chapter went on to show why the Council of Nicaea specifically targeted Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia and from start to finish was an Alexandrian *tour de force,* inserting the slogans most offensive to Alexander's opponents, drawing a clear line of demarcation between sides, and elevating the supremacy of the Metropolitan bishop by enhancing its judicial power. Nicaea enshrined "Arianism-as-other" and made Alexander victorious. In this light, Athanasius' eventual insistence on Nicaea's authority was not so much a distortion or a hijacking of its *real* meaning as a move to preserve theological continuity in the Alexandrian patriarchate. The anti-"Arianism" of Alexander and Nicaea found a prolific friend in Eustathius of Antioch whose extant fragments are replete with elements resembling Athanasius' later presentation. Finally, I marshaled the evidence in favour of Athanasius' double treatise serving an anti-"Arian" purpose. This shows that he was capable of composing a sustained argument against "Arian" theology without the hostile vocabulary. The absence of an open attack on "Arians" in the double treatise reveals that Athanasius did not shift his basic theological beliefs when he did address them by name.

[136] Gwynn, *Athanasius,* 62.

The findings of this chapter have attempted to confront the two separate arguments of those who see "Arianism" as an unjustified term as delineated in tenet (i.) at the end of chapter one. Firstly, there are those, such as Beeley and Lyman, who think that Alexander and Athanasius deliberately misrepresented their opponents. That is, they attributed things to their interlocutors that they did not hold. This chapter pushed back against this accusation by identifying what modern scholars see as "Arian" doctrines and then pinpointing their appearance in Arius' writings. This can be combined with the point made in chapter two that "Arianism" emerges from Athanasius' polemic as a logical system. The second indictment is more difficult to tackle. These are the scholars, such as Ayres and Williams, who think that Athanasius was mostly accurate in depicting the theologies of his opponents but that he was incorrect to link them together as "Arians". This quickly leads into the quagmire of discerning just how many doctrines a theologian needed to positively assert in order to be called an "Arian". In other words, did someone need to hold the entire catalogue of beliefs in the *Henos Somatos* or just any one of them? If someone decides that it takes a plurality of doctrinal positions to be "Arian", then the extant sources mean no two theologians could be put into this category. If, on the other hand, "Arianism" is defined by holding any one of the positions listed in the *Henos Somatos,* perhaps with the exception of the Son's being "from nothing", it becomes easier to link individuals. In this sense, it is important to see that Athanasius' three main opponents, Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Asterius, all held a "created" Son. If Anatolios and others are correct in seeing the Creator-creature divide as fundamental to Athanasius' entire theological system, his grouping such theologians together based on this doctrine is consistent. In order to show that Athanasius was not

arbitrary in what an "Arian" taught, this chapter placed him as a kind of "second generation" anti-"Arian" behind insistent forebears. When the student sees a history of anti-"Arianism" prior to Athanasius, at the very least the responsibility for any misapplication must be broadened. So, if the charge is that theologians should not be linked as "Arians", then the fight is more with Alexander, Nicaea, and Eustathius than with Athanasius. Having focused on "Arianism" in this chapter, the next looks at the activity of the "Eusebians".

## Chapter 4: Networks and Forms of Attachment

So far this dissertation has outlined the erasure of the "Arian Controversy" and described a number of problems when it is conceived as largely an Athanasian construction. It then argued that much of the anti-"Arian" narrative was articulated before Athanasius became bishop, thus providing evidence in favour of a theologically substantive "Arianism". While a pre-existing "Arianism" does not preclude it from being a political tool for Athanasius, it ought to temper just how flexible he was when applying the label. It is now time to give attention to the "Eusebians", the other major pejorative category in Athanasius' writings. Classically understood as the group of agitators around Eusebius of Nicomedia who moved against the Alexandrian bishop, the revisionist thesis has come to see the "Eusebians", too, as an Athanasian construct. There are, indeed, a number of reasons to question Athanasius' use of the "Eusebian" designation, not the least of which is that the Alexandrian only supplies a handful of names of people in this group. Also, when ὁι περὶ is used in ancient polemic before a personal name to describe a group, it is often unclear if the "group" includes anyone besides the individual.[1] Athanasius continued to attack "the Eusebians" years after the Nicomedian died. In this vein, it is important to remember, "it is by no means unusual for the late antique polemic to deal with traditional enemies rather than actual ones".[2] Some go further to say that

[1] Barnes, "The Exile", 120 says "in the educated Greek of cultivated writers like Philostratus and in the polished Greek in which the imperial secretaries of Constantine rendered into written Greek the substance of the letters which the Emperor had doubtless dictated in Latin, the plural of the definite article plus the preposition περὶ followed by a proper name in the accusative is normally a mere periphrasis for the single individual named". He goes on to say, however, that he thinks Athanasius uses this construal to mean the man and his "associates".
[2] Louth, "The Fourth-century", 278.

Athanasius writes with "a complete lack of scruple in all that these Eusebians said and did". [3] Moreover, scholars question the sometimes-foggy relationship between Athanasius' "Arians" and his "Eusebians", a question to which I will return. All these warnings are underpinned by the newfound appreciation for the diversity of theological expressions in the early fourth century. A fresh understanding of the theological distance between Asterius and Arius, Marcellus and Nicaea, or Eustathius and Nicaea displaces Athanasius' simple "Eusebian" brand. This complexity emerges from almost every theologian from whom enough information survives. A recent article on Theodore of Heraclea, for example, argues that his theology does not fit in Athanasius' binary.[4] While an opponent of Athanasius, Theodore's thinking departed from Arius' on certain points. While these cautions ought to be heeded, the revisionist thesis goes too far here when, by eliminating the classic Athanasian version of a two party duel, it casts suspicion on antagonistic alliances altogether. Gwynn, again as the best representative of this more extreme revisionist thinking, states boldly, "at the council no such distinct blocs existed".[5] In the years after the council "to describe one's opponents as a 'party', as Athanasius does in his construction of the 'Eusebians', is one more element within his whole presentation".[6] Gwynn's suspicion about the "Eusebians" leads him to disregard the very existence of groups moving in consort. For him, Athanasius' description of aligned factions is largely illusory.

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[3] Colm Luibheid, "The Arianism of Eusebius of Nicomedia", *The Irish Theological Quarterly,* Vol. 43 No. 1 (1976), 21.
[4] Crawford, "Theodore", 227-257. Cf. Crawford's "The Triumph", 537-567 that does place Theodore firmly within the "Eusebians".
[5] Gwynn, *Athanasius,* 88.
[6] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 167.

## 4.1 The Methodological Problem

Schneemelcher recognized long ago the danger in separating Athanasius' theology from his church politics.[7] To divide the bishop's life into these two realms is a cardinal error. Acceptance of this caution may be merely platitudinous because as late as 1999 Kannengiesser could regret a "one-sided focus on the political dimension of Athanasius' career during the past hundred years".[8] At least one recent monograph on the "Arian Controversy" is devoted to recapturing a connection between theological discourse and the developing church polity.[9] A more balanced view understands "as the Arian controversy escalated, first in Alexandria, then elsewhere, at stake was not only the orthodox definition of God, but also the authority of churchmen".[10] In other words, how the bishops spoke about God was inextricably intertwined with establishing their ecclesiastical position. Therefore, just as politics alone welcomes a blinkered approach, so also a problem occurs when a bishop's theology becomes the *only* determining factor in how he might have behaved. This error appears when revisionists identify a lack of unanimity in theological slogans to dismiss the possibility of a connection. For example, in Luibheid's article on the question, Eusebius of Nicomedia must be distanced from Arius because he did not believe the Son was "from nothing".[11] Likewise, Gwynn's evidence against the existence of "Eusebians" relies heavily on noting the differences

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[7] Wilhelm Schneemelcher, "Athanasius von Alexandrien als Theologe und als Kirchenpolitiker", *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche,* Vol. 43 No. 3 (1950), 242-256. Against Hermann Josef Sieben's "Werden und Eigenart der Konzilsidee des Athanasius von Alexandrien (373)" in *Die Konzilsidee der alten Kirche* (Schöningh: Paderborn 1979), 25-67 which, following Schwartz, sees Athanasius' invocation of Nicaea as driven almost entirely by politics. More recently, B. Jones' "The Arian Controversy: A Purely Theological Dispute or a Political Controversy?", *Phronema,* (1997), 55-68 argues that dividing theology from politics is a false binary.

[8] Charles Kannengiesser, "Lady Wisdom's Final Call: The Patristic Recovery of Proverbs 8" in Douglas Kries and Catherine Brown Tkacz (eds.) *Nova Doctrine Vetusque* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 69.

[9] Galvao-Sobrinho, *Doctrine.*

[10] Galvao-Sobrinho, *Doctrine,* 5.

[11] Luibheid, "Arianism", 3-23.

between the theological propositions of Asterius the Sophist, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Arius the presbyter.[12] In studying their extant fragments, which are not only few in number but often embedded in other texts, Gwynn concludes "no one in the fourth century actually taught all the doctrines that Athanasius condemns".[13] The standard for group cohesion is complete unanimity on theological doctrines. Since Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Asterius did not positively assert the exact same theological slogans, they must not have acted jointly. Gwynn is not the only one to employ this methodology. DelCogliano's intriguing work written as a challenge to Markus Vinzent's efforts in extracting Asterius' fragments from Athanasius' polemic reaches similar conclusions. For DelCogliano, "Athanasius makes little distinction between the views of Arius and Asterius, and the Arianism he polemically constructs".[14] DelCogliano's grandest charge is that Athanasius inferred certain teachings from Asterius, such as his belief of two words in the Godhead, then approximated these teachings to Arius.[15] These add up to "mere stalks in the straw-man that Athanasius constructs only to knock down in his writings".[16] Crawford's already-mentioned essay on Theodore of Heraclea develops a strikingly similar approach.[17] While it is certainly helpful to learn of the differences between Arius and Asterius and Arius and Theodore, using this lack of unanimity between their theologies as evidence against their connection fails to consider other forms of attachment that human beings might have. In other words, acknowledging that Arius and Asterius may have disagreed on the number of words, powers, or wisdoms in the

[12] Gwynn, *Athanasius,* 76f.
[13] Gwynn, *Athanasius,* 78.
[14] DelCogliano, "Asterius", 638.
[15] DelCogliano, "Asterius", 640.
[16] DelCogliano, "Asterius", 650.
[17] Crawford, "On the Diversity", 254. The claim here is that Theodore was not as "radically subordinationist" as Arius.

Godhead does not, in itself, disprove their acting in collusion against Athanasius' co-eternal Son. Likewise, that no extant fragment from Theodore declares the son to be "from nothing" does not necessitate his isolation from anyone who did say this. If this methodology is applied uniformly, then no two bishops could ever be considered to be acting in consort.

The reductionist view that potentially eliminates alliances altogether is not without its problems. As was the case with "Arianism", nomenclature lies at the heart of the issue. The call for the removal of post-Nicene "parties" begins with a particular definition of the term "party". If "party" is defined to mean that its members made a conscious effort to promote the legacy of a revered founder, in our case Arius or Eusebius, then yes, language of "parties" is unhelpful and erroneous. Williams was correct to say "'Arianism' as a coherent system, founded by a single great figure and sustained by disciples, is a fantasy".[18] The notion that there were committed followers whose only intention was to promote the ideology of the founder is an inaccurate conclusion. However, not even Athanasius thought of the "Eusebians" in this sense. He seems to describe the "Eusebians" as a movement interested in protecting the kind of theology Arius expressed. It is the definition ascribed to "party" by the revisionists rather than the Athanasian usage that is dismantled. Scholarship searches for a word with different connotations. Crawford's essay, for instance, triumphantly espouses Gwynn's dismissal of "parties" but then proceeds to speak of a "Eusebian alliance" without qualification.[19] Crawford and DelCogliano somehow feel more comfortable substituting

[18] Williams, *Arius,* 82.
[19] Crawford, "On the Diversity", 227-257; Mark DelCogliano's "Eusebius of Caesarea on Asterius of Cappadocia in the Anti-Marcellan Writings" in *Eusebius of Caesarea Tradition and Innovations* eds. Aaron

"alliance" for "party", supposedly eliminating any notion that those in the alliance acted solely to exalt the Nicomedian. Likewise, Ayres, while more conceptually open to "parties" than other revisionists, prefers the nomenclature of theological "trajectories" to which people belonged. So, the revisionist thesis defines "party" in the modern political mold, something Athanasius did not mean, then dismisses the term in an effort to expose the bishop's recklessness before ultimately retaining the concept under a different heading. The dismissal of "parties" is by no means universally accepted among Athanasian scholars. Barnes, while suspicious of Athanasius the person, may be the harshest critic against the elimination of parties in the post-Nicene years and is correct when he, citing Sara Parvis' work, states:

> "recent investigations have established that from the very start the so-called 'Arian controversy' has a close structural resemblance to modern party politics. Two cohesive groups of eastern bishops were pitted against each other and, although not all members of either group by any means shared identical theological views or perspectives, they nevertheless cooperated with other members of their group in acting together in ecclesiastical politics in opposition to the other group".[20]

Barnes is correct to see antagonistic groups in the post-Nicene years whose allegiances were not determined solely by identical theologies but could nevertheless act in the interest of a preferred theological discourse. Barnes uses "party" to mean an active coalition, a perspective that fits well with Athanasius' presentation. The "Eusebians" could have supported elements of a certain theology in different ways and with different degrees of intensity.

This interconnectedness of theological propositions *and* political positioning looks a lot like what Athanasius presented with his interplay between the "Arians" and

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Johnson and Jeremy Schott (Cambridge MA: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2013), repeatedly uses "Eusebian alliance".

[20] Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty,* 141.

the "Eusebians". The "Eusebians" covertly propped up "Arians" but could also be labeled "Arians". They conspired against Athanasius ecclesiastically but were also guilty of the heresy.[21] Instead of reading this interaction as a sign of deception, a more responsible reading of Athanasius understands him to use the label "Arianism" to designate the *theological* position that protected the Father alone as un-begotten by denying the Son's eternity and declaring him a creature, while seeing the "Eusebians" as a mobilizing faction whose inclination was to defend such a theology because they thought it more cogent *and* because they disliked the Alexandrian patriarch. Athanasius was as furious with "Arianism" as he was with the machinations of "those who support the tenets of Arius".[22] The "Eusebians" were the political arm that aimed to establish the doctrines of "Arianism" strategically and practically.[23] In this way they were guilty of "the heresy".

This suggested understanding between these two terms and what they represented is by no means new. In the late 17th century, Edward Stillingfleet authored a rather sophisticated discussion on how the "Eusebians" organized after the "Arians" were allegedly defeated at Nicaea.[24] For Stillingfleet, there was a complicated interplay between the "Arian Faction" defeated at Nicaea and the intrigue of the group led by

[21] Athanasius, *Encyclical 2* says Gregory "was sent by the Eusebians to the Arian party" and "The Eusebians have always been the supporters and associates of the impious heresy of the Ario-maniacs". Then at *Encyclical* 7 "the Eusebians…are engaged in the same heresy". Athanasius' *Oration* 1.37 says Eusebius and Arius wrote letters together. Athanasius' *Apology* 2 claims "the Eusebians had conspired against me on account of their own unbelief". All these feature the intersection of the political and theological claims. Cf. Behr, *The Nicene Faith Part I,* 25.
[22] Athanasius, *History of the Arians,* 3.
[23] Athanasius, *On the Decrees,* 3 portrays the "Eusebian" maneuvering at Nicaea.
[24] Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Britannicae, or, The Antiquities of the British Churches* (London: M. Flesher printed for Henry Mortlock, 1685), 147f. Stillingfleet, after all, was no stranger to episcopal strains and had first-hand knowledge of these types of disputes, especially with non-conformists.

Eusebius of Nicomedia after the council.[25] "Arian" theology met its dismissal at the Council but there existed those who wanted "to set up Arianism speedily".[26] For Stillingfleet, "Eusebian" activity could be attributed "partly to their love of Arianism and partly to their hatred of Athanasius".[27] In other words, some bishops may have acted out of theological affinity while others could have assisted the political advancement of a theology like Arius' because it was the best way to oppose the abuses of Athanasius or establish their own prominence. In this vein, Asterius may have had some sympathies with Arius' theology alongside an utter revulsion at Athanasius' methods. Athanasius' labeling both Arius and Asterius "Eusebians" could capture the fact that they acted together for a similar end. It is surely wrong to wholeheartedly embrace Stillingfleet's view of the "Arian Controversy" because it is inherited from Athanasius, but it is important to understand the overlapping-but-not-always-identical relationship between a theology and a movement advancing that theology for various reasons. A bishop could be a "Eusebian" in the Alexandrian's system because he thought Nicaea treated Arius unfairly, or because he hated Athanasius, or because his anti-Marcellan theology was misread as deliberately distancing the Son from the Father, or because he held a theology similar to Eusebius of Nicomedia, or because he was a friend of Eusebius of Nicomedia, or because this Eusebius was the ranking Metropolitan and he commanded service of subordinates. All of these would have been logical and natural reasons for alignment that coincided with a theological discourse. If this was true, Athanasius' seeing them as a conglomerate is not irresponsible. That people with different motivations would join in

[25] Stillingfleet, *Origines,* 150-151.
[26] Stillingfleet, *Origines,* 152.
[27] Stillingfleet, *Origines,* 154.

the same activities to achieve a similar goal is not only a natural thing to do, but also a wise thing to do.

The burden of this chapter is to argue that what has been classically called the anti-Athanasian "Eusebian party" or more recently, the "Eusebian alliance", can better be described as a *network* of individuals attached to one another by more than theological homogeneity. While I have insisted that theology was central to the feud, the "Eusebians" apparently had a variety of reasons for supporting such a theology and did so for a range of motivations. People naturally amalgamate for a host of reasons, so even when theology is central, few ascent just on the basis of shared dogmatic slogans. If a network is defined as a group of individuals acting in consort towards a shared purpose or because of overlapping motivations, then references to these types of affiliations in the fourth century should not be thought artificial. In order to substantiate this claim, this chapter will outline three definable but contingent cultural conditions displaying that attachment was determined by more than identical theological catchphrases; namely, the development of these social networks, the practice of patronage, and the newly developed influence of the fourth century bishop.

## 4.2 Social Networks

The relational and ideological implications on how people acted have generated influential pieces of scholarship. The mid-twentieth century saw a shift in thinking about how and why people acted together. Lewis Namier's *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* caused some shakeup when it challenged readers to think about what it meant to belong to a party.[28] Argued with great precision and supported with

[28] Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London: MacMillan, 1929).

data, Namier alleged that people did not behave simply on the basis of a distant two-party ideology. Namier thought those involved in late 18th century politics did not act based on governmental dogmas, but rather on local interests and personal connections. To understand a "party" as abstract mental assent to a set of slogans crudely reduces human activity to automation. I, with Namier, want to dismiss the same conception of "party" as it relates to Athanasius' "Eusebians" in favour of one that envisions multiple layers of attachment. A decade after Namier's work, Ronald Syme's *The Roman Revolution* applied a similar methodology to the end of the Roman Republic.[29] Syme's research yielded that party dynasts built consensus through personal attachments and strategic friendships. Their interests were not limited to serving a party philosophy, but rather in acting to secure their own interests and property. For Syme, Augustus prevailed as a result of a well-orchestrated web of connections. Namier and Syme illustrated that there are multiple forms of attachments and interests that motivate people to perform in concord. While theology can be a binding impulse, an organized movement is required to advance its contents. To suppose that philosophy, or theology, is the *only* social glue dehumanizes those involved. If these complexities are applied to the so-called "Arian Controversy", the "Eusebians" ought not be thought of as a unified group agreeing to a party slogan like "there was when the Son was not", but rather as a diverse group who had a variety of reasons for supporting a theology like the one Arius expressed.

In an influential article on the formation of religious sects, sociologists Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge argued that the combination of "the ideology of a group and the depravations of those who join" along with "interpersonal bonds between

[29] Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).

members and potential recruits" best explain group formation.[30] That is to say, ideology, friendships, and needs can all play a role in how people align. Stark and Bainbridge ascertained a connection between a person's "social network" and their "religious affiliation".[31] That is to say, a person will gravitate to an ideological affiliation if their network takes them there. Group formation depends on an interplay between interpersonal bonds and dogma. Again, if this is applied to the topic at hand, it is entirely reasonable to think that those whom Athanasius called "Eusebians" were affiliated with that conglomerate in more complex ways than the unanimity of theological slogans. A person's sympathy to a particular theology may involve new ways of expressing it.

While there are appropriate doubts about projecting modern sociological experiments on late antiquity, applying this methodology to patristics is not entirely unknown. Elizabeth Clark's *The Origenist Controversy* argues persuasively in the direction of what could be labeled network theory.[32] In studying the church controversy surrounding Origen, Clark discovered that "many arguments between pro- and anti-Origenist forces centered not on theology at all, but on personal alliances, hatreds and jealousies that were carried on across three continents".[33] While I do not want to adopt Clark's dismissal of theology as a central factor for this subject (falling once again into the politics-only error), her reminding her readers that many of the participants in these disagreements knew each other over the course of many years is a helpful perspective. She discovered that the "factions lined up precisely on the basis of old friendship and

[30] Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge. "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects", *The Journal of American Sociology,* Vol. 85 No. 6 (1980), 1376.
[31] Stark and Bainbridge, "Networks", 1390.
[32] Elizabeth Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[33] Clark, *Origenist,* 6.

association".[34] While I have already demonstrated that the controversy with Athanasius did involve different theologies, Clark's approach helps the reader to see that distinct theologies were not the sole indicator of collaborative action.

There is enough textual evidence to insist that forms of attachment other than similar beliefs held people together in the mid fourth century. Clark signals a number of empirical factors for discerning a social network. In addition to similar theologies, an analysis must take into consideration dynamics such as "marriage/kinship, religious mentorship, hospitality, traveling companionship, financial patronage/money/gifts, literature written to, for or against members of the network, carriers of letters and information".[35] Athanasius attributes these types of activities to his "Eusebians" so an analysis is available despite the limited prosopographic evidence.

The geopolitical clusters of Alexander and Athanasius' opponents are a good place to begin for understanding a "Eusebian" network. In his *Letter to Alexander,* Arius included fourteen names of clergymen in addition to his own. This included five presbyters, six deacons, and three bishops. Two of the three bishops are mentioned along with their jurisdictions; namely Secundus of Pentapolis and Theonas of Libya.[36] The Pentapolis, as its name indicates, refers to five cities on the Libyan coast. Over a hundred years ago Seeck claimed that these two Libyans voted with Arius because of personal friendship.[37] The fifth century historian Philostorgius included a list of "Arians" in which

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[34] Clark, *Origenist,* 16.
[35] Clark, *Origenist,* 39. It should be noted for our purposes that studies of kinship are limited seeing that most fourth century clergy did not marry nor have children.
[36] The third bishop mentioned by Arius is Pistis, though he does not have a geographical assignment. It is tempting to think of this person as the Pistis who was to replace Athanasius in 335 but was later sidelined by the placement of Gregory the Cappadocian.
[37] Otto Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt,* Vol. III (Berlin: Franz Siemenroth, 1909), 414 says the two bishops were "alten Genossen".

the first four names are from Libya.[38] As Williams notes, there is no evidence that any Libyan bishop opposed Arius.[39] Even into the 330's, Constantine could quote a letter from Arius where the presbyter claims all of Libya sides with him.[40] What this means is that Arius' initial followers were concentrated in a defined area and probably knew one another personally.[41]

Moving North, the contiguous provinces of Palestine, Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia functioned as "Arian" strongholds.[42] Most agree that Arius fled to Caesarea after his trouble in Alexandria. On the one hand, this could have been because its bishop, Eusebius of Caesarea, was targeted as a sympathizer because of his latitudinarian theology. On the other hand, it is possible to speculate that Arius recalled the exile of Origen from Alexandria nearly a century earlier and saw himself in the mold of trying to rework that historical connection. If this latter hypothesis is true, Arius' fleeing to Caesarea had historical motivations as well as practical ones. Beyond Caesarea's welcoming Arius, Patrophilus of Scythopolis in Palestine is regularly mentioned as Athanasius' opponent.[43] Eusebius of Nicomedia thought Paulinus of Tyre was aware of

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[38] Williams, *Arius,* 29. Cf. Philostorgius, *EH,* 1.8-9. As previously noted, this list has a number of problems, especially because he includes names of "Arians" at Nicaea who were already dead by 325.
[39] Williams, *Arius,* 29; Henry Chadwick, "Faith and Order at the Council of Nicea: A Note on the Background of the Sixth Canon" in *Harvard Theological Review* Vol. 53 No. 3 (1960), 177-79 on why Arius held Libya.
[40] Constantine, *Letter to Arius*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 34.
[41] Of the fifteen names included by Arius in his *Letter to Alexander*, Alexander in his *Letter to Alexander* repeats only twelve. The names of the three bishops, Secundus, Theonas and Pistus, do not appear. Did Alexander leave the names of the bishops off the catalogue of "Arians" because he was partly responsible for their ordination or placement? If so, this highlights the interconnectedness of church polity and theology.
[42] The Roman provinces were actually Palestina, Phoenice, Syria Coele, and Cilicia. Cf. Richard Talbert, *Atlas of Classical History* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 177.
[43] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 77, 78. Here he is included in a coalition with Eusebius of Nicomedia, Maris of Chalcedon, and Theognis of Nicaea.

the debate and had no reason to withhold his voice to the cause.[44] In his *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*, Arius laments that he has not yet garnered the support of three bishops, namely, Philogonius, Hellenicus and Macarius. While the presbyter does not mention their sees, it seems obvious that these were the three occupants of the Syro-Palestinian cities of Antioch, Tripoli, and Jerusalem respectively. Theodotus of Laodicea in Syria was a committed opponent of Alexander and later, Athanasius.[45] He seems to have formed a particularly close friendship with Eusebius of Caesarea. The great church historian dedicated both his *Preparation of the Gospel* and his *Proof of the Gospel* to this Theodotus.[46] Moving north again, Narcissus of Neronias in Cilicia was sympathic to Arius' position. Along with Eusebius of Caesarea and Theodotus, he was one of the three condemned by the Council of Antioch in 324/325.[47] With Narcissus, Athanasius of Anazarbus became an early and entrenched devotee of Arius.[48] His writing comes down to modern times in a few disputed fragments.[49] The least disputed and most pertinent fragment is a section of a letter preserved by Athanasius of Alexandria.[50] The text shows

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[44] Eusebius of Nicomedia, *Letter to Paulinus*; Opitz, *Urkunde,* 8. It should also be mentioned that Eusebius of Caesarea dedicated both the tenth book of his *Ecclesiastical History* and his dedicatory speech contained therein to Paulinus of Tyre. This makes Athanasius' withholding of the church historian from the "Eusebians" more surprising but this will be discussed at length in the next chapter. Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *EH,* 10.1-4.

[45] Athanasius counts him a "Eusebian" in *On the Synods,* 17.

[46] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel,* 1.1.

[47] Abramowski, "The Synod of Antioch 324/25 and its Creed" in *Formula and Context: Studies in Early Christain Thought* ed. L. Abramowski (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1992), 1-12. An English translation is in Rusch, *Trinitarian,* 45-48.

[48] Philostorgius says another Cilician, Antonias of Tarsus, was an "Arian", but Theodore of Tarsus, not Antonias, signed the Nicene Creed. The tradition that this Athanasius taught Aetius depends on Philostorgius, *EH,* 3.15.

[49] The few fragments attributed to this Athanasius are restored in Latin translations in Donatien De Bruyne, "Deux lettres inconnues de Théognius l'évêque arien de Nićee", *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft,* Vol. 27 (1928), 106-110.

[50] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 17; Opitz, *Urkunde* 11. καὶ Ἀθανάσιος δὲ ὁ ἀπὸ Ναζαρβῶν ἔτι γυμνότερον ἀπεκάλυπτε τὴν αἵρεσιν ἕνα τῶν ἑκατὸν προβάτων λέγων εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ. γράφων γὰρ πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀπετόλμησεν οὕτως εἰπεῖν· «τί μέμφῃ τοῖς περὶ Ἄρειον, εἰ λέγουσιν· ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων κτίσμα πεποίηται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἓν τῶν πάντων ἐστίν; ἐν ἑκατὸν γὰρ προβάτοις παραβαλλομένων πάντων τῶν πεποιημένων εἷς ἐστι καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ἐξ αὐτῶν. εἰ μὲν οὖν τὰ ἑκατὸν οὐκ ἔστι

support for some of Arius' more debated phrases including the Son's being "from nothing". The point is that Cilicia, too, held a concentration of church leaders at odds with Athanasius.

Arius' following in Libya and the Syro-Phoenician corridor was replicated in the formidable province of Bithynia, around the imperial capital of Nicomedia. Like Libya, this region, too, became a place of concentrated "Arian" supporters. Obviously Arius knew he had support in Eusebius of Nicomedia as his letter presumes.[51] In Athanasius' writings, Theognis of Nicaea and Maris of Chalcedon are never distant and, in fact, almost inseparable from Eusebius of Nicomedia.[52] So regular is the association between Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea that the latter comes off as a kind of lackey trailing the Metropolitan. Additionally, Theodore of Heraclea, whose home city stood on the shores of Thrace close to the imperial capital, appears in the sources as a committed opponent of Athanasius typically affiliated with these other Bithynians.[53] According to the fifth century historians, some of these Bithynians joined the Libyans in ultimately refusing to sign Nicaea's Formula.[54] So the first point regarding the plausibility of a "Eusebian" network surrounds the fact that Athanasius' opponents are

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κτίσματα καὶ γενητὰ ἢ ἕνι πλέον τι τῶν ἑκατόν, δηλονότι μηδὲ ὁ υἱὸς ἔστω κτίσμα καὶ εἷς τῶν πάντων. εἰ δὲ τὰ ἑκατὸν πάντα γενητὰ καὶ οὐδέν ἐστιν ἐκτὸς τῶν ἑκατὸν πλὴν μόνου τοῦ θεοῦ, τί ἄτοπον λέγουσιν οἱ περὶ Ἄρειον, εἰ ἓν ἐν τοῖς ἑκατὸν περιλαβόντες καὶ ἀριθμοῦντες τὸν Χριστὸν ἕνα τῶν πάντων αὐτὸν εἰρήκασι.

[51] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia;* Opitz, *Urkunde* 1. W.R. Telfer's "Arius Takes Refuge at Nicomedia" in *JTS* Vol. 37 No 1 (1936) 60-63 questions the interaction prior to Nicaea.

[52] Both Maris and Theognis are part of the Mareotis commission to investigate Athanasius in 335. Cf Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 75. Maris becomes less important over time as the Westerners do not condemn him at Serdica in 343 CE, but remarkably, he was still in power in 359 CE at Seleucia. cf. Socrates, *EH* 2.40-41, Sozomen *EH* 4.23-24. We see in these sections that Patrophilus of Scythopolis also had a long career.

[53] Crawford, "The Triumph", 542f. details all the times Theodore's name comes up in opposition to Athanasius.

[54] Socrates, *EH* 1.8

not from randomly scattered sees, but from adjacent ones. This must be more than a coincidence.

Clark's list includes the exchange of letters as indication of a social network. Did those whom Athanasius brand "Eusebians" write to one another and defend one another through texts? Several examples are among the most famous letters for the study of this period, namely, Arius' *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia* and Eusebius of Nicomedia's *Letter to Paulinus.* Since these have already been discussed, there are further examples that strengthen the case for this kind of writing. Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea were jointly exiled to the same location in the aftermath of Nicaea. They co-authored their letter of recantation to Constantine from their place of displacement.[55] As Luibheid alleged, this letter presumes that a group of antagonistic bishops was responsible for their exile.[56] The connection between these two bishops was certainly theological, but their apparent collaboration on this letter illustrates a wider connection.

The question of how Asterius the Sophist can fairly be called a "Eusebian" deserves some attention. As aforementioned, along with Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia, Asterius occupies a substantial place in Athanasius' polemic.[57] It is important to recall DelCogliano's article that argues that Athanasius was unfair in approximating Asterius to Arius.[58] The question of Asterius' involvement depends both on his theology and on his relationship to the "Eusebian" network. Asterius' writings are

[55] *Letter of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea;* Opitz, *Urkunde* 31.
[56] Colm Luibheid, "The Alleged Second Session of the Council of Nicaea" in *JEH* Vol. 34 No. 2 (1983), 165-174.
[57] Ayres' *Nicaea,* 110-11 identifies Asterius as the chief target of the *Orations.*
[58] DelCogliano, "Asterius", 638.

difficult to extract from the record.[59] Access depends on navigating several layers of selective editing. For example, Eusebius of Caesarea's *Against Marcellus* targets a piece of the Ancyran's writing that looks like an *Against Asterius.* That is to say, to gain access to Asterius' writings they must be extracted from Eusebius of Caesarea's preservation of a polemical attack. Despite this difficulty, several scholars have identified Asterius' efforts as an attempt to defend Eusebius of Nicomedia.[60] If this estimation from Parvis and Ayres is correct, then it seems like there is this kind of literary connection between the two figures that would fit Clark's criteria for a network.[61]

Instances of "traveling companionship" among Athanasius' "Eusebians" can be determined from the primary sources. For example, if the fifth century historians are correct to identify Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea as those who were exiled for refusing to sign the council's anathemas just three months after its meeting and those who wrote the document of recantation mentioned above some years later, then it seems they were displaced together for an extended period of time. Socrates says Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea were dispatched from Bithynia to Antioch just before the Council of Tyre.[62] The so-called Mareotis Commission of late 335 trekked from Tyre to Alexandria and back on an investigation into the claims of the Melitians. The Mareotis Commission included some of Athanasius' worst enemies, such

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[59] Kinzig's *In Search of Asterius* argued persuasively that the *Homilies* were not written by Asterius the Sophist. This solves some confusion as to why Athanasius opposed him even though the *Homilies* look unobjectionable.

[60] Parvis, *Marcellus*, 97, 113 solicits Asterius' *Fragments* 2, 9, and 18 to argue that it looks like a kind of "In Defence of Eusebius". She goes further to say that this could have been a defence of Eusebius' *Letter to Paulinus;* Cf. S. Parvis "'Τὰ τίνων ἄρα ῥήματα θεολογεῖ?': The Exegetical Relationship between Athanasius' *Orationes contra Arianos I-III* and Marcellus of Ancyra's *Contra Asterium*" in *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity* eds. Lorenzo DiTommaso and Lucian Turcescu (Boston: Brill, 2008), 341-342; Ayres, *Nicaea,* 101; Kinzig, *In Search of Asterius,* 18.

[61] There is more to be said about Asterius' theology and this will come in chapter 7 in the discussion of his role at Antioch 341.

[62] Socrates, *EH,* 1.27.

as Theognis of Nicaea, Theodore of Heraclea, Maris of Chalcedon, Macedonius of Mopsuestia, Ursacius, and Valens.[63] Presuming they hugged the coast, this journey was about 400 miles.[64] Even if they had imperial escort, the journey was at least eight days one way.[65] Another group of travelling companions left Jerusalem in 336 to meet Constantine in the capital after Athanasius had fled. This group included Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicaea, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, "the other Eusebius", Ursacius, and Valens.[66] This journey could have taken months. If Parvis is correct in matching some of these names to the sees represented at Constantinople, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicaea, Maris of Chalcedon, and Theodore of Heraclea were together again.[67] A few years later, Julius of Rome's letter from 340/341 back to Antioch presumes that those to whom he is writing were gathered in the city for an extended period of time. He specifically addresses "Danius, Flacillus, Narcissus, Eusebius, Maris, Macedonius, Theodore, and their friends".[68] This being a full five years after their previously documented joint travels further highlights the nature of these friendships. Later yet, a group of Eastern bishops made their way to Serdica where they lodged together in the imperial palace before retreating to Philippopolis. The conclusion is undeniable in that Athanasius' most aggressive opponents spent many weeks together over the course of many years, thus connecting them in a more personal way.

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[63] Athanasius, *Apology* 75; he also described the Mareotis Commission as ὁι περὶ Θεογνιον or "those around Theognis".
[64] Talbert, *Barrington Atlas,* maps 69, 70 and 74.
[65] Lionel Casson's *Travel in the Ancient World* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) suggests one could travel 50 miles a day with an imperial escort or 25-35 miles a day without one.
[66] Athanasius, *Apology,* 87.
[67] Parvis, *Marcellus,* Appendix, Table 5, 259.
[68] Athanasius, *Apology,* 20. The letter follows from 21-36. The language of the letter is interesting in that it sounds as if its contents were the consensus of the fifty assembled bishops. Cf. L.W. Barnard, "Pope Julius, Marcellus of Ancyra, and the Council of Sardica- A Reconsideration" in his *Studies in Church History and Patristics* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1978), 344.

No evaluation of a possible network would be complete without mentioning Arius' goading Eusebius of Nicomedia as a συλλουκιανιστὰ, or "fellow-Lucian", which has welcomed all kinds of conjecture in the long history of studying this document.[69] Without communicating what has been said so many times before, it is a mistake to understand this term *only* in terms of a mutually agreed upon theological ancestry. To identify the exact theological slogans that made one a "Lucianist" has proved a most tenuous task because it depends on this one word.[70] Instead of speculating in this direction, it is possible to adopt a minimalist approach that affirms some kind of network around Lucian of Antioch with which Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arius were affiliated. Arius welcomed "Lucianist" as a self-designation and as a title that a Christian could positively call another Christian. Rowan Williams devotes some attention to the person of Lucian agreeing "the group described as hoi peri Eusebion is roughly the same as the group identified as pupils of Lucian of Antioch".[71] This recalls Clark's assessment of group activity as based on "old friendship and association".[72] At the very least, "fellow-Lucianist" must refer to some kind of loose alliance for it to have made any sense at all. If the referent was Lucian of Antioch, the gifted but mysterious mentor of influential pupils, this coalition was fairly durable since Lucian was martyred in 312. There is a long-standing tradition that Asterius the Sophist was a pupil of Lucian. This could be combined with Marcellus of Ancyra's allegation that Paulinus of Tyre, to whom Eusebius of Nicomedia made an appeal, was a theological father to Asterius.[73]

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[69] Cf. Newman, *Arians*; Bardy, *Recherches,* 217f. for example, speculates about how Lucian's exegetical tendencies may have influenced Arius. This one word led to the attempts of trying to define Arius' theology as Antiochene. Was there a "Lucianist" manner of reading Scripture?
[70] Williams, *Arius,* 30.
[71] Williams, *Arius,* 63.
[72] Clark, *Origenist,* 16.
[73] Kinzig, *In Search of Asterius,* 17.

To emphasize this notion of networks it is important to see that such a concept existed not just for the "Eusebians" but also for the anti-"Eusebians". Just as geographical proximity, letter writing, travelling companionship, and mentoring played a part in aligning the "Eusebians", so also can such factors help define the anti-"Eusebians". A good place to start for the anti-"Eusebians" is with the unusual succession of the Alexandrian bishop. Epiphanius tells his readers that when Alexandria needed a new bishop it happened with some immediacy in order to avoid disruption.[74] Telfer, commenting on Alexandrian ordination practices, says what is known "implies that surrounding the Alexandrine pope are agents capable upon his demise, of giving him a successor before the *plebs* are aware of the need".[75] Telfer's article argues that the succession of the Alexandrian bishopric was performed in such a way as to ensure a certain continuity of theological teaching. Instead of a democratic process that welcomed a range of candidates, Alexandrian leadership seems to have been conferred. This explains why Athanasius' confirmation as bishop in 328 was delayed and rather messy.[76] If Epiphanius is correct about these irregularities, as Telfer's view supports, then there was a concerted effort in Alexandria to protect a theological inheritance. If this kind of unusual but deliberate succession was the practice in Alexandria, it helps explain why Athanasius was interested in preserving Alexander's theology.

Despite the comparatively large corpus of texts left by Athanasius, the modern historian knows almost nothing of his childhood or even his personal life. Despite this

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[74] Epiphanius, *Panarion,* 69.11.
[75] W. Telfer, "Episcopal Succession in Egypt", *JEH,* Vol. 3, No. 1 (1952), 5; E.W. Kemp, "Bishops and Presbyters at Alexandria", *JEH,* Vol. 6 No. 2 (1955), 125-142.
[76] L.W. Barnard, "Two Notes on Athanasius", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica,* No. 41 (1975), 344-356 reprinted in Barnard's *Studies in Church History and Patristics* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1978), 329-340.

lacuna, there is every indication that Alexander mentored Athanasius from a young age. Athanasian authorship of the *Henos Somatos* indicates some kinship while the young presbyter was in his mid 20's. Later histories tell interesting stories about the two men. In the tenth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Rufinus relates this anecdote:

> "When Bishop Alexander was celebrating the day of Peter Martyr in Alexandria, he was waiting in a place near the sea after the ceremonies were over for his clergy to gather for a banquet. There he saw from a distance some boys on the seashore playing a game in which, as they often do, they were mimicking a bishop and the things customarily done in church. Now when he had gazed intently for a while at the boys, he saw that they were also performing some of the more secret and sacramental things. He was disturbed and immediately ordered the clergy to be called to him and showed them what he was watching from a distance. Then he commanded them to go and get all the boys and bring them to him. When they arrived, he asked them what game they were playing and what they had done and how. At first they were afraid, as is usual at that age, and refused, but then they disclosed in due order what they had done, admitting that some catechumens had been baptized by them at the hands of Athanasius, who played the part of the bishop in their childish game".[77]

This can be combined with a story about Athanasius from a Coptic tradition codified in the *History of the Patriarchs*:

> "He was the son of a principal woman, a worshipper of idols, who was very rich; and he was an orphan on the father's side. So when he grew up she wished to marry him to a wife, but he did not desire that. Then she intrigued against him, that he might fall with a woman who was a sinner, that she might involve him in the mire of matrimony; but he would not do it, for the Lord was keeping him for great things. And she used to take beautiful girls, and adorn them and perfume them, and make them enter to him into his chamber, and sleep near him and solicit him; but when he awoke he beat them, and drove them away… Finally on the advice of an Alexandrian magician, his mother accepted that her son was a Christian…She arose, and took him with her, and went with him to Alexander, and related to him the circumstances of Athanasius her son, and all his history. Then she was baptized and her son also".[78]

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[77] Rufinus, *EH,* 10.15. This citation also insinuates that adult baptism was normal in Alexandria.
[78] *History of the Patriarchs* PO 1.407-8 in B. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria.* (Paris, 1907-1915).

These probably apocryphal stories are difficult to reconcile to one another let alone stand as historical fact. What is important, however, is to see how the reception of Athanasius and Alexander's relationship bordered on the familial. On Clark's list of what forms a network, "kinship" and "religious mentorship" were crucial. The relationship between Athanasius and Alexander certainly featured the latter if not elements of the former. Alexander's influence on Athanasius along with the specified practices of Alexandrian episcopal succession show the richness of the continuity in their theologies and in their attitude towards opponents.

The relationship between Athanasius and Marcellus of Ancyra serves as an additional example of this anti-"Eusebian" alliance. As briefly mentioned in chapter two, Marcellus and Athanasius did not share identical theologies. In fact, it is entirely possible that they wrote subtly against one another. Marcellus of Ancyra was exiled at the Council of Constantinople in 336 for entirely theological reasons. Athanasius, on the other hand, was exiled from Tyre in 335 for abusing the Melitians and then re-exiled, this time by Constantius in 339 for flagrant abuse of his position. Had the bishops expressed identical theologies, Athanasius would have been tried on these grounds. The more one looks for theological differences between the two bishops the more one finds. One obvious example that can be added to those listed in chapter two is the discrepancy on the appropriateness of applying the word εἰκών, image, to the Son. Marcellus was insistent that the pre-incarnate Son (if he maintained a pre-existent Son at all) could *not* be called image because this would imply too vast a chasm between Father and Son. For Marcellus, labeling the pre-Incarnate Son an "image" was tantamount to asserting two

gods.[79] Of course, Athanasius did freely employ language of image to the pre-incarnate Son in the works written aorund the time he met Marcellus.[80] It is probably worth mentioning that there is little evidence in Marcellus' extant fragments to conclude that he was fond of *ousia* language, whereas Athanasius' *Orations* are replete with cognates of this concept so central to his theology. No Marcellan fragment leads to the conclusion that he was a staunch supporter of Nicaea or its Formula. This is why in his evaluation of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Against Marcellus* Sansbury can say "none of his arguments against Marcellus could have been used against Athanasius".[81] Despite this list of theological discrepancies between Athanasius and Marcellus, few would deny their joint anti-"Eusebian" interest. While the theological differences between them can be adumbrated, it is also possible to see why they would have found Arius' discourse particularly troubling. A mutual theological rival assimilated with other factors in their relationship. For example, it is possible that Marcellus and Athanasius had some connection prior to Rome, especially if they both attended Nicaea.[82] They were together in Rome after their exiles and many scholars argue that Marcellus shared his exegetical methods with Athanasius. The Alexandrian bishop and Marcellus formed a coalition in 339 not *only* on account of common theological foes, but also on the basis of similar pressures. Marcellus' enemies as preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea are the same

[79] Fragments 113-114 in *Markell von Ankyra Die Fragmente; Der Brief an Julius von Rom* ed. and trans. Markus Vinzent (New York: Brill, 1997) show Marcellus' aversion to "image".
[80] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.9, 1.13.
[81] Christopher Sansbury, "Athanasius, Marcellus, and Eusebius of Caesarea: Some Thoughts on their Resemblances and Disagreements" in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments* ed. R.C. Gregg (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985), 281.
[82] It is possible that Athanasius met Marcellus on his journey back from Gaul in 337, but this must remain conjecture.

individuals with whom Athanasius struggled.[83] Athanasius made no attempt at a systematic defense of Marcellus' theology but could honestly claim him a victim of the "Eusebians".[84] This is why the Easterners who refused to meet in Serdica in 343 saw Athanasius and Marcellus as a cohort.

Paul of Constantinople invites a more interesting, but also more speculative test case for a network theory approach. Paul's career is clouded by uncertainty and the most interesting evidence relies on the fifth century historian Socrates.[85] There is reason to believe that Paul opposed Athanasius at the Council of Tyre in 335, signing-off on his removal from Alexandria.[86] While siding with Athanasius' opponents on this occasion, Paul was certainly no member of Athanasius' "Eusebians". In fact, Athanasius' *History of the Arians* places Paul of Constantinople as a victim of the "Eusebians".[87] It was, after all, none other than Eusebius of Nicomedia who was awarded Paul's bishopric in 338. When Eusebius of Constantinople (Nicomedia) died in 341, turmoil ensued with the "Arians" jockeying to resist Paul's return. The imperial prefect Hermogenes was lynched and Constantius intervened. The emperor then exiled Paul to Trier where he joined with Athanasius to solicit Constans' help. Three years later when Constantius refused to reinstate Paul after Serdica, the former Constantinopolitan bishop met Athanasius at

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[83] J.T Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-century Theology* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

[84] Athanasius, *History of the Arians,* 6; Kelly McCarthy Spoerl's "Two Early Nicenes: Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra" in *In the Shadow of the Incarnation* ed. Peter W. Martens (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 121-148 shows the similarities and differences in the theologies of these two bishops. Despite these differences, Athanasius at *History of the Arians,* 4 could claim Eustathius, too, fell because he "hated the Arian heresy". Despite the differences between the theologies of Athanasius and Eustathius, the latter could never be described as an "Arian". The affiliation may have been more about a common enemy.

[85] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* Appendix 8, 212-216.

[86] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 213; Barnes, "The Exile", 124.

[87] Athanasius, *History of the Arians,* 7. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 127-128 thinks the section on Paul seems to have been added later. Cf. Athanasius, *Apology for His Flight,* 3.

Constans' court.[88] While this moves beyond the years of this work's central focus, it is clear that this would fit Clark's idea of "travelling together". The revisionist thesis probably argues that Athanasius' claiming Paul as a victim of "Arians" and "Eusebians" provides evidence of his caricaturizing the events since almost nothing is known of Paul's theology. That Paul opposed Athanasius but could still be the victim of "Eusebians" shows either the Alexandrian's rashness or his ability to persuade. Telfer's article from 1950 depicts Paul as a kind of lone wolf who went "behind the backs" of influential Eastern bishops.[89] Alienated by both sides, Paul's early years were marked by independence. Given these interesting circumstances, I am arguing that Athanasius' ongoing relationship with Paul, which included traveling together and residing in Trier together, eventually grafted the latter into the anti-"Eusebian" network. In this case, it was entirely possible for two exiled bishops who were one-time enemies to later join forces against an opposing network.[90] The Athanasius-Paul of Constantinople nexus opens-up the consideration that their time spent together in exile forged an alliance.

The group that Athanasius labeled "Eusebians" lived in geographical clusters, travelled together, wrote together, and defended each other in writing. In the post-Nicene years, these bishops were attached to one another in alliances based on theological interests but these extended well beyond theological unanimity. The fact that Asterius and Arius did not agree on every matter of doctrine does not necessitate Athanasian subterfuge in calling them both "Eusebians". Since the extant evidence makes it difficult to compare the theologies of Theodore of Heraclea and, say, Theognis of Nicaea, their

[88] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 214.
[89] W.R. Telfer, "Paul of Constantinople", *The Harvard Theological Review,* Vol. 43 No. 1 (1950), 76.
[90] The letter from the Eastern bishops at Serdica preserved in Hilary's *Against Ursacius and Valens* connects Paul with Asclepus of Gaza, another victim of "Arians" in Athanasius' polemic.

relationship might be better understood by logging all the miles they travelled together. Likewise, Athanasius' anti-"Eusebian" allies had connections and interests beyond unanimous ideologies. The question then becomes whether or not these networks cohered by granting certain favours to those in their alliance?

## 4.3 Patronage and the Council of Tyre 335

Having shown reasons as to why the group that Athanasius called "Eusebians" functioned more like a network than a political party, it is now time to consider the practice of patronage among this coalition. This is one of Clark's criteria for a network and Athanasius routinely accused his opponents of προστάσιας, or propping one another up.[91] Again, it is Gwynn who takes issue most forcefully with Athanasius' accusation that his opponents acted as patrons.[92] This charade is one more strike against the bishop's authenticity. The accusation of patronage not only involved inter-"Eusebian" favours, but also the complicity of civil authorities in ecclesiastical affairs. Given the evidence of the previous section, it is entirely conceivable that those connected to one another would act in each other's ecclesiastical interests. What materializes is that Athanasius' disingenuousness came not in his indicting his opponents for προστάσιας but in his insistance that he himself did not engage in such activity.[93] Athanasius' opponents practiced patronage, but the Alexandrian proved to be a more gifted and aggressive participant, thus leading to his ultimate success. In fairness, Athanasius seemed to take

[91] Athanasius, *Encyclical,* 2, 5 where we get two accusations of προστάσιας followed by an accusation of προστάτας; *Oration* 1.10; *Oration* 2.43; *History of the Arians* 32; Cf. Liddle and Scott, *Lexicon,* 1526. *Patrocinium* is the Latin equivalent.
[92] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 77,113 and a central focus of chapter 6.
[93] L.W. Barnard's "Athanasius and the Roman State" in his *Studies in Church History and Patristics* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1978), 312-328 makes a case for how and why Athanasius approached the Roman imperium.

issue less with the practice of patronage than the "Eusebians", Melitians, and "Arians" who were practicing it against him.

Patronage was common in the late antique period. G.E.M. De Ste. Croix's article on the topic defends its prevalence.[94] Strategic patronage was instrumental to the way Roman society worked and it was "accepted as part of the natural order of things even by the most upright of administrators".[95] De Ste. Croix explains that patronage worked by reciprocity between a patron and his *clientela.* Assent in Roman public life depended on the harvesting of these influential connections. He speaks specifically of an unusual kind of patronage that emerged in mid fourth century Egypt in which whole villages could enter this kind of reciprocal relationship with the local governor, the *dux.*[96] Groups or individuals could pledge loyalty to a powerful figure in return for protection, extra goods, tax breaks, or a variety of other things. This relationship did not depend on the fact that the villagers and the *dux* assented to the same slogans, but rather because of their positions in society. For De Ste. Croix, these relationships were formidable well into the fourth century and certainly influenced the church.[97]

The church adopted the practice of patronage when the bishop became a powerful force in these patron-client relationships.[98] So,

> "with the widening of the conception of the juristic person in the legal thought of late antiquity, we see such Christian institutions (and their

[94] G.E.M. De Ste. Croix, "Suffragium: From Vote to Patronage", *The British Journal of Sociology,* No. 1 (1954), 33-48. He notes the evolution of the word "suffragium" from "ballot/vote" to, by the fifth century, "bribe".
[95] De Ste. Croix, "Suffragium", 43
[96] De Ste. Croix, "suffragium", 45.
[97] The Theodosian Code cites a law of 394 in which those who agreed to pay for influence were required to follow through on their promise. This reversed an earlier law that attempted to limit such patronizing relationships. For De Ste. Croix at "Suffragium", 39, so powerful was the institution of patronage in the late fourth century that its practice was often imperial capitulation to the "social forces".
[98] Charles Bobertz's "Patronage Networks and the Study of Ancient Christianity" in *SP* Vol. 24 (1993), 20-27 explores the alliances around Cyprian of Carthage.

> individual representatives) standing in patronage relations on both sides of the equation, and in various areas of life. In the enriched environment that was late antique Egypt, the nexus of personal obligations so characteristic of Mediterranean life and the empirical ways in which the profession of Christianity affected these relations became increasingly congruent".[99]

Just as the imperial *dux* could offer goods to the citizens in return for support, so also could the bishop hold a *clientela*. Over time, the bishop could redistribute wealth to the laity and make clerical appointments, all along offering spiritual "goods" such as forgiveness. In return, a client pledged loyalty. That Arius, just like Origen, sought refuge in Caesarea was a quest for protection from another bishop.[100] That Arius asked Eusebius of Nicomedia for security bears witness to the practice. So pronounced were these kinds of exchanges around Nicaea's Council that at least one scholar could view the shifting sympathies in Alexandria as governed by "patronage, not theology".[101] That Athanasius invokes the category ought not be dismissed as a far-reaching accusation.

The bishop's accusation of patronage was not merely about his opponents helping one another. When Athanasius charged the "Eusebians" of patronage, it often was about collusion with imperial authorities and their intrusion into ecclesiastical affairs. So, Athanasius' opponents abuse the title of bishop with the "patronage and strong arm of heathen magistrates".[102] Capitulating to the "traffic and patronage" of secular authorities made clerical appointments suspect.[103] The question is whether or not there is evidence for the "Eusebian" network's soliciting of imperial authorities in the 330's. This question is best tested with an evaluation of the Council of Tyre in 335. Gwynn holds that it was

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[99] Leslie S.B. MacCoull, "Patronage and Social Order in Coptic Egypt" in *Egitto E Storia Antica Dall'ellenismo All'eta Araba* eds. Lucia Criscuolo e Giovanni Geraci (Bologna: Editrice, 1989), 497-498.
[100] Morwenna Ludlow, *The Early Church* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 113.
[101] Haas, "The Arians", 240.
[102] Athanasius, *Encyclical,* 2.
[103] Athanasius, *Encyclical,* 2.

Athanasius' trouble at Tyre that instigated his anti-"Arian" campaign.[104] There are two fundamentally different interpretations of this meeting that deposed Athanasius. From the standpoint of the revisionist thesis, Tyre was convened in accordance with the ecclesiastical canons and Athanasius was deposed fairly by his peers.[105] Athanasius, on the other hand, contested that Tyre was the result of "Eusebian" collusion and that it was stacked against him. The origin and development of this meeting will go a long way in determining Athanasius' veracity.

Sara Parvis marshals evidence in defense of Athanasius and notes that the fourth book of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Life of Constantine* gives every indication that the emperor acted under some instruction in the calling of Tyre.[106] Constantine informed the recipients that he did all that was "directed by your letters" and he called for "those bishops whose presence you desired".[107] In other words, those who orchestrated Tyre contacted the emperor with a specific guest list, an act resembling the soliciting of patronage. That Constantine called Tyre is unsurprising in itself because there was precedent for doing so with Arles and Nicaea. The surprise comes with so open an admission of patronage in a text preserved by the Caesarean biographer. Furthermore, Socrates says that Constantine's nephew, the censor Dalmatius, was appointed to gather evidence prior to Tyre.[108] The council itself was chaired not by a bishop, but rather by the imperial *dux,* the count Dionysius.[109] David Woods has written compellingly on

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[104] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 69.
[105] Suspicion over Athanasius' version of Tyre goes back a long way as featured in Norman Baynes, "Athanasiana" in *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* Vol. 11 No. 1/2 (1925), 62-63 where he draws on the work of Seeck who saw Athanasius' version of Tyre as the best evidence of the bishop's forgery.
[106] Parvis, "The Strange Disappearance", 98.
[107] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life,* 4.42. Antioch's 11th canon forbade a bishop from going directly to court. Cf. Stephens, *Canon,* 243.
[108] Socrates, *EH* 1.27.
[109] Arnold, *Early,* 143.

Constantine's turning away from ordained advisors towards lay officials at about this time.[110]

If the documents surrounding Tyre cited in Athanasius' *Apology* are authentic, several are pertinent to this discussion. If unedited, the epistle from the Egyptian church leaders independently corroborates the biased nature of Tyre against Athanasius.[111] Another document from the Egyptian church leaders in the Mareotis sensed collusion between the imperial prefect and those Athanasius called "Eusebians". The Mareotis Commission, the team of Athanasius' worst enemies, was commissioned in Tyre and dispatched to find evidence of his abrasiveness. Oddly, this team worked in conjunction with the Prefect Philagrius. The group of presbyters from Alexandria said the commission gathered evidence against Athanasius by compelling the secular authorities to intimidate people into testimonies.[112]

Constantine's behavior following the meeting bolsters the claim of secular involvement. Having been deposed, Athanasius fled to Constantinople. Initially, the emperor refused to speak with Athanasius as recorded in his letter preserved in the bishop's *Apology*. Constantine's early refusal to even speak with Athanasius has caused some to think that the emperor was in communication with those at Tyre, a further sign of imperial conspiracy.[113] Eventually the emperor "rendered null and void the condemnation which the Council of Tyre had pronounced against Athanasius".[114] According to Barnes, Constantine did this because Tyre had "not acted in accordance

[110] David Woods, "Eusebius on some Constantinian Officials", *Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 67 No. 3 (2002), 195-223.
[111] Athanasius, *Apology,* 74. This letter does address a "holy council of blessed bishops".
[112] Athanasius, *Apology,* 75.
[113] H. A. Drake, "Athanasius' First Exile" in *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* Vol. 27 No. 2 (1986), 200 who follows Peeters in thinking of correspondence between Constantine and Tyre's orchestrators.
[114] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 24.

with the normal canons of fairness and impartiality".[115] Every indication is that Constantine knew Athanasius' opponents premeditated his demise. Even though Eusebius of Caesarea was an eyewitness to the events at Tyre, he did not give any indication of Athanasius' deposition in his retelling of its purposes.[116] While Athanasius' subsequent exile to Trier can be interpreted as Constantine's actually enforcing the decisions of Tyre, this cannot be disconnected from the seriousness of the new charge brought by the team from Tyre; namely, that Athanasius was hoarding the grain supply in Alexandria. Incidentally, that a bishop could be charged with such a thing shows just how immersed he was in patron-client relationships. Unlike Athanasius' deposition under Constantius in 338 when Gregory replaced him as Alexandria's bishop, the see was never re-filled in 335, thus indicating the provisional character of Athanasius' expulsion, at least from the emperor's perspective. Constantine's decision to banish Athanasius was not a permanent exile of a bishop in accordance with a just council, but a politically expedient resolution to eliminate the most influential person who would not compromise with the "Arians" who were restored at Jerusalem.[117] It should also be noted that these handpicked bishops at Tyre went south to Jerusalem to commemorate the opening of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, a proud achievement of the Roman imperium. A similar event was the impulse for the Council of Antioch 341 in which the famous "Golden" church was dedicated. That Athanasius' "Eusebians" met at least two times in conjunction with imperial consecrations could bolster his case for patronage. It seems that the emperors were fond of associating celebratory events with church councils, a

[115] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 25.
[116] Of course the importance of this cannot be exaggerated as in Book III of *The Life* he related the events of Nicaea without specifically mentioning the censoring of Arius.
[117] Drake, "Athanasius' First", 202-203.

move that would have pressured clerical attendees to conform to the will of their secular benefactors. As was the case at Nicaea, people did what the emperor wanted when he promised a lavish party. I admit complexity on the Council of Tyre, but every indication is that the meeting featured bishops who solicited the support of imperial officials. Tyre's proceedings bear witness to much secular intrusion, an activity that had to co-exist with increasingly powerful bishops.

## 4.4 The Expanding Influence of the Bishop

Classicists and theologians alike understand that the Roman Emperor's becoming a Christian in the early fourth century had a tremendous impact on the Christian clergy.[118] Though there was a softening towards the Christians over a decade earlier, it was when Constantine defeated Licinius in 324 that there was an unhindered openness to Christianity, at least from the highest ranks of the imperium.[119] The ascendancy of the patriarchate in the fourth century played a role in shifting social dynamics. The bishop became responsible for the redistribution of large amounts of wealth.[120] He "was the guardian of the community chest and, as administrative officer, he managed those funds in order to support his own clergy and distribute the offerings of charity".[121] The emperor granted clergy access to the *cursus publicus,* as Constantine did for the councils

[118] G.W. Bowersock, "From Emperor to Bishop: The Self-Conscious Transformation of Political Power in the Fourth-Century AD", *Classical Philology,* Vol. 81 No. 4 (1986), 298-307; Galvao-Sobrinho, *Doctrine,* 1-9.
[119] Henry Chadwick. "Bishops and Monks", *SP,* Vol. 24 (1993), 51. One of the aims of Claudia Rapp's *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) is to dampen the pre versus post-Constantinian significance for the role of the bishop.
[120] In the 7th century, the bishop of Alexandria, Peter the Almsgiver, remarked that the Alexandrian church's funds were incalculable.
[121] Rita Lizzi Testa. "The Late Antique Bishop: Image and Reality" in *A Companion to Late Antiquity* ed. Philip Rousseau (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012), 527.

of Arles and Nicaea.[122] Bishops now held judicial rights delivering rulings in ecclesiastical courts.[123] More influential bishops may have functioned as quasi-ambassadors for the emperor, like Eusebius of Nicomedia's acting on behalf of Licinius.[124] All this indicates "bishops, standing outside the imperial hierarchy but strongly dependent on privileges granted by the emperor, could lose therefore, both their autonomy and their social identity, if they lost imperial favor".[125] The rapid ascendancy of the bishop in the fourth century led to, as Norman Baynes remarked, Alexandrian bishops becoming "the uncrowned kings of Roman Egypt".[126] It is not at all surprising that Athanasius could be entangled in matters of interrupting the imperial grain supply to the new capital. In fact, this could have been the type of maneuver designed to build allegiances. So, the bishopric at the time of Athanasius and Eusebius of Nicomedia is to be understood, then, not as "an isolated social or political phenomenon, but as a complex construct of secular and religious elements that come to bear in ever-shifting constellations".[127] Individuals in these positions had to engage in all kinds of different relationships for different reasons, thereby wielding substantial authority.

Few, if any, secondary sources speculate as to why Eusebius of Nicomedia was involved in Alexandrian church politics at all. At one level, he appears a strange target for Athanasius' polemic. Unlike Arius who was condemned at Nicaea (and in subsequent church councils), Eusebius of Nicomedia was never formally anathematized. This means

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[122] Optatus, *Against the Donatists,* 3; Eusebius, *Life,* 3.6.
[123] Lizzi Testa, "Late", 528.
[124] Chadwick, in "Bishops", 51 explains an 11th century manuscript extracting sections of Philostorgius that alleges Eusebius of Nicomedia acted as a diplomat for Licinius in 324.
[125] Lizzi Testa, "Late", 530.
[126] Norman Baynes, "Alexandria and Constantinople: A Study in Ecclesiastical Diplomacy", *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology,* Vol. 12 No. 3/4 (1926), 145.
[127] Rapp, *Holy,* 15. Also discussed in Giovanni Filoramo. "An Introduction" in *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority in Late-Antique Monasticism* eds. A. Camplani and G. Filoramo (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2007), 1-10.

Athanasius' "Eusebians" are not based on a heresiological genealogy like "Arian". He somehow avoided condemnation at Antioch in 324/325, perhaps indicating that it was the events at Nicaea that galvanized his position. Alternatively, there is some evidence that this Eusebius was related to the Roman official Julius Julianus, which might explain why he was insulated from attacks up until the co-regent's death.[128] Even some revisionists admit that Eusebius of Nicomedia occupies a place in church history as "a consummate politician and organizer with links to the imperial household".[129] There is at least one text that, if authentic, would confirm much of Athanasius' narrative about this Eusebius. Unfortunately preserved by Athanasius (and reproduced by Theodoret), the bishop claims to have appended a letter from Constantine to the Nicomedians in the years after Nicaea.[130] In this text, Constantine unleashes an attack on Eusebius of Nicomedia in the most unpleasant terms. This Eusebius not only advanced the teachings of Arius, but also behaved inappropriately. Perhaps the most important section of the letter for this thesis comes when Constantine says Eusebius of Nicomedia:

> "secretly sent different messengers to solicit me, and he asked for my support in some degree, because he was afraid that if he was detected in such a great a sin, he would be expelled from his honorable office. God, may he continue his goodness to me and to you, is my witness of this, since Eusebius perverted my judgment and got round me in an underhanded way, as you also will come to know. At that time, everything was done as he wanted, and he concealed all his evil intentions in his own mind".[131]

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[128] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius,* 70; Jill Harries, "Introduction: The Background to the Code" in *The Theodosian Code: Studies in the Imperial Law of Late Antiquity* eds. Jill Harries & Ian Wood (London: Duckworth, 1993), 12; Cf. H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops* (Baltimore: The John's Hopkins University Press, 2000), 236 for Constantine's suggesting that Licinius used Eusebius of Nicomedia to spy.
[129] Rowan Williams, "Athanasius and the Arian Crisis" in *The First Christian Theologians* ed. G.R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 160. Older works mark his "pertinacity and even ferocity" against others, *DCB,* 336. That Constantius, an enemy of Athanasius, appointed Eusebius of Nicomedia to the bishopric of Constantinople shows the emperor looked upon him positively.
[130] Athanasius, *On the Decrees,* 41; Opitz, *Urkunde,* 27.
[131] *Constantine to the Nicomedians*, 14; Opitz, *Urkunde* 27.

While it would be unusual for an emperor to admit such weakness, the witness to Eusebius of Nicomedia's controlling behaviour is exactly the picture presented in the context of Athanasius' "Eusebians". No doubt the revisionist thesis must dismiss this document as an Athanasian forgery. If this is an authentically Constantinian document, then Eusebius of Nicomedia does emerge as a great political mover. Whether or not this text is genuine, it is hard not to read other parts of Eusebius of Nicomedia's biography through this lens. Eusebius of Caesarea suggests that many made use of Eusebius of Nicomedia's services.[132] His transitions from Berytus to Nicomedia to Constantinople come off as ambitious ascents. His affiliation with Licinius, his ability to ingratiate himself to Constantine even after his closeness to his nemesis, and his baptizing of the first Christian emperor give the modern student adequate reason to see his proximity to imperial power. Most perceptibly, the Nicomedian prelate was an early contact for Arius as soon as trouble arose. Far too little attention is given to the fact that Eusebius of Nicomedia was obviously unprincipled in his signing of Nicaea's Formula, as evidenced by its inclusion of phrases that he explicitly denied previously. So, when Athanasius accuses him of saying the right things for convenience, there is at least one factual instance of such a thing happening.

For all the attention given to the dark side of Athanasius' personality, his ability to garner support throughout his career must remain an admirable quality. Athanasius knew how to use his position as bishop to forge the right relationships to oppose his enemies. This is no better documented than in Athanasius' solicitation of the ascetics to

[132] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Against Marcellus* 1.4.

establish theological dominance, a thesis nearly as old as the bishop himself.[133] The thrust of one monograph asserts, "the primary thesis of this book [is] …Athanasius' embrace of ascetic Christians and their values strengthened his political position and helped him to build an Egyptian Church more dependent on the Alexandrian episcopate".[134] This thesis is often accompanied by the cringing cynicism that depicts Athanasius as a power-hungry manipulator. Alternatively, his bringing the monks into an anti-"Eusebian" position could just as easily highlight his strategy in building a theologically sympathetic network. As early as 330, when Athanasius was a bishop less than two years, the *Festal Index* records his travelling around Egypt visiting the ascetics.[135] As the years went on, Athanasius maintained these relationships. Close analysis of his first *Letter to the Monks*, for example, reveals an ongoing relationship with the ascetic community.[136] Athanasius writes to them "in compliance with your affectionate request", thus conveying an exchange.[137] He did not miss his opportunity to deride the "Arians". If the first *Letter to the Monks* dates from before his second exile, it means that at about the same time the famous ascetic Antony visited Alexandria for an anti-"Arian" campaign.[138] Antony was famous as an ascetic precisely because he did *not* publicly canvass. His anti-"Arianism" finds some support among his seven extant letters collected in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. These letters, dated to around 340, have slowly

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[133] Gregory of Nazianzus' panegyric of Athanasius in his *Oration 21* speaks of Athanasius' gathering support from the monastic communities.
[134] David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 13.
[135] *Festal Index,* in Annik Martin and Micheline Albert, eds., *Histoire 'Acephale' et Index Syriaque des Lettres Festales d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Editiones du Cerf, 1985), 229.
[136] In Athanasius' *On the Death of Arius,* he references what he "already wrote to the Monks" perhaps indicating the *Letter to the Monks*. Athanasius tells the reader that he wrote about Arius' death because people were asking about it. The most logical time for this kind of inquiry was in 336 when Arius died. Though once dated to Athanasius' third exile, some now prefer a late 330's date.
[137] Athanasius, *Letter to the Monks.*
[138] It is interesting that the *Letter to the Monks* does not mention the "Eusebians". If they were the political arm dealing primarily with church office, it makes sense why Athanasius would inveigh against "Arianism".

gained acceptance among the scholarly community.[139] Though the letters are characteristically silent on church hierarchy and doctrinal disputes, one of the seven does make a reference to the destructiveness of Arius.[140] How Antony came to view "Arianism" so negatively can most obviously be attributed to Athanasius' cultivating of that relationship, but some have doubted the closeness of these two figures.[141] In either case, Athanasius seemed glad to accommodate the renowned ascetic for his theological alliance.

Athanasius' early involvement in the ascetic communities of Egypt broadened into a more elaborate system of influence.[142] Much of his extant writings, the polemical ones included, were directed to the monastic communities. Kannengiesser states that the bishop's "literary legacy is, almost in its entirety, directed to audiences in the bishop's local church, and preferably to the Egyptian monks".[143] It is against the backdrop of Athanasius' support from monastics that the later charges of his opponents violently abusing them must be read. Those antagonistic to the Alexandrian bishop engaged in a "clear strategy aimed at those who were Athanasius' primary supporters".[144] That Athanasius' opponents targeted the ascetics was an attempt to undermine their connection to the bishop. Athanasius' enemies, too, tried to win over the ascetics.[145] What becomes clear when this part of his career is studied is that "the basis of Athanasius' influence in

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[139] Samuel Rubenson's "Argument and Authority in Early Monastic Correspondence" in *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority in Late-Antique Monasticism* eds. A. Camplani and G. Filoramo (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2007), 75-87 insists on authenticity.
[140] Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St Antony* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1990), 77.
[141] Susanna Elm, *The Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 363-364. Elm, *Virgins*, 365, is willing to concede that Antony's visit to Alexandria probably helped Athanasius' cause. Sozomen, *EH* 2.31 says Antony wrote to Constantine on behalf of Athanasius.
[142] Elm, *Virgins,* 331-372 for Athanasius' involvement with virgins around Alexandria.
[143] Charles Kannengiesser, *Arius and Athanasius: Two Alexandrian Theologians* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991), x.
[144] Elm, *Virgins,* 362.
[145] An important theme in Elm's *Virgins,* 331-372.

Alexandria itself, and thus one of the main guarantors of his ecclesiastical survival, were the ascetics".[146] He carefully negotiated the relationship between rural and urban ascetics to solidify his version of theology.

Athanasius' network thickened when he selectively elevated individuals to the bishoprics in his jurisdiction. In her treatment of the relationships between monks and bishops (though in Cappadocia), Andrea Sterk's preface material says that by "admiring the monks' way of life and recognizing their potential usefulness to the church, Athanasius placed as many pro-Nicene monks as possible at the head of dioceses and in other ways put them into the service of the church."[147] At least one of Athanasius' extant letters proves this to be the case.[148] Moreover, Athanasius proved somewhat able in his ability to win over some Melitians. In order to make his defense against the charges of the Melitians in the early 330's, Athanasius sent two presbyters to Constantine, one of whom was a certain Macarius.[149] Barnard made the suggestion that this could have been the same Macarius mentioned in the so-called *Breviarium Melitii*, meaning that Athanasius dispatched "a converted schismatic to refute an attack on the Meletians- a clever move in line with his later action at the Council of Tyre".[150] The reference to the "later action" at Tyre is when Athanasius informs his readers that of his supporters at the Council in 335, 17 of them were former Melitians. Athanasius utilized his position as bishop to ordain clergy whom he saw as theological allies. This is neither nepotism nor fear mongering, but rather a smart use of one's position as an important churchman. It is

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[146] Elm, *Virgins,* 370.
[147] Andrea Sterk, *Renouncing the World yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004), 17; E.R. Hardy, "National Elements in the Career of St. Athanasius" in *Church History* Vol. 2 No. 4 (1933), 187-196.
[148] Athanasius' *Letter to Dracontius* speaks of seven monastics he has appointed to the bishopric. This is usually dated to 354.
[149] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 60.
[150] Barnard, "Athanasius and the Roman State", 316.

in this sense that the Emperor Julian could complain of Athanasius' "many pupils" in the early 360's.[151] As the bishop became more influential, so also did the ability (and the responsibility) to appoint, harness, or remove other clergy to ensure theological purity as they saw it. Representing Nicomedia and Alexandria respectively, Eusebius and Athanasius developed alliances and networks that jockeyed for theological predominance.

## 4.5 Concluding Analysis

The actors in the events around the Council of Nicaea did indeed congregate for theological purposes, but to use a uniformity of beliefs as determined by the frequency of identical slogans ought not be the lone test for whether bishops acted together. People act in harmony for a wide range of reasons and this can often occur when ideologies are held with varying intensities and for different motivations. With the models of Namier and Syme, this chapter has made use of Elizabeth Clark's criteria for networks to show that such formations did exist around the "Arian Controversy". Athanasius' initial opponents lived in close proximity to one another. They wrote to one another and on behalf of one another. Some travelled together, presumably meaning that they lodged together. Sometimes the "Eusebians" articulated views close to those of Arius and at other times they were simply open to protecting a theologian's right to say such things with immunity. In either case, Athanasius seeing them as antagonists is not unreasonable. After all, if Athanasius was as unlikeable as the revisionist thesis states, then it ought not be surprising that such a network organized to oppose him and what he taught.

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[151] Julian, *Letter 47 To the Alexandrians*, in Loeb Classical Library, *Julian* III W.C. Wright (trans.) (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), 142-151. It is interesting that in Julian's *Letter 40 To Hecebolius* (126-128) he condemns οἱ δὲ τῆς Ἀρειανικῆς ἐκκλησίας or "those of the Arian church". Julian would not have been one to swallow Athanasius' polemic uncritically.

Just as Athanasius' opponents maintained these attachments, he too cultivated them with great pragmatism. The manner in which ordination occurred in Alexandria suggests a concerted effort to preserve a theological legacy. That the city's Christian population was growing only enhanced an already influential bishopric. Patronage did exist in fourth century Alexandria and the bishop was someone who could grant favours in exchange for support. That Constantine admits to both the selectivity of Tyre and Eusebius of Nicomedia's controlling behavior should admonish some caution before dismissing Athanasius' charge of patronage as extravagant. Athanasius made the most of his position by nurturing relationships with sub-cultures of Alexandrian society, taking full advantage of his privileges as patriarch.

Overall, this chapter's interpretations hope to elucidate what Athanasius meant by employing the "Eusebian" label. I concede the revisionist claim that Athanasius misapplied this term if he was simply lumping people together who held diverging views and otherwise had no connection outside a common dislike for the bishop. I have argued, however, that Athanasius' "Eusebians" can be responsibly understood as a mobilizing network with varying forms of attachment. The "Eusebians" are called "Arians" in his polemic because they held a certain theology *and* because they patronized, propped up, and harboured those whom Athanasius saw as heretics. Over time, this polarization spilled into what can only be called mutual hatred. By the time of the Councils of Rome and Antioch around 340 and 341, Athanasius did loathe his opponents, as Clark suggests was the case for the Origenist Controversy, but this need not erase theological disparities. While modern readers look back and want Athanasius to have been more high-minded, we can hardly blame him for writing against those who wanted to expel him from

Alexandria. So, like "Arian", "Eusebian" functioned as a pejorative heuristic deployed for the ecclesio-political alliance against Athanasius that sought to position those with "Arian" tendencies. We find with the "Eusebians" what we find today; the company we keep can come to define us. From here, the dissertation will look at the relationship between Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea as a test case for much of what has been laid down in these opening four chapters. This relationship displays whether or not the Alexandrian bishop mindlessly branded all his opponents with the same vigour.

## Chapter 5: Eusebius of Caesarea and the "Arian Controversy"

Having seen that much of what Athanasius called "Arianism" was in place before he became bishop and that his enemies, the "Eusebians", operated like a network rather than a political party, it is now time to see how discriminating the bishop was in applying these categories. Did Athanasius blindly ascribe these terms to whoever opposed him? This question may be partially determined by analyzing the relationship between Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea.[1] Appreciating Eusebius of Caesarea as a theologian in his own right is one of the great accomplishments of the revisionism of the fourth century. When the years around Nicaea were viewed in an Athanasius versus Arius binary, it forced an inaccurate pigeonholing of distinct theologians like the important Caesarean onto one side or the other. It is also wrong to see Athanasius as the only true expositor of Nicaea since Eusebius of Caesarea was more purely Nicene in the sense that he actually attended the council as a bishop who signed the Formula. Now that Eusebius of Caesarea's theology commands more attention, his relationship with Athanasius ought to be scrutinized more deeply. Those who have thought about the relationship between Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius almost universally envision deep animosity between them. Christopher Beeley says it was Athanasius' own "heresiological barrier" that led to misunderstandings of Eusebius of Caesarea, having

[1] There is not much discussion of their relationship in Ayres, *Nicaea*, 52-61 or Gwynn's *Eusebians.* Also, Aaron Johnson's recent *Eusebius* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), which does not touch on the "Arian Controversy", has little to say on the relationship between these two figures. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Jörg Ulrich's eds. *Three Greek Apologists Drei griechische Apologeten* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007) compiles the papers from a two-day seminar that featured a comparison of apologetic methods across Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Athanasius. The seminar concluded that there was a connection in their apologetic approaches, but the "Arian Controversy" was largely avoided.

placed him on the opposite side of the divide.[2] Averil Cameron thinks that Eusebius of Caesarea was "inclined towards the side of Arius", thus alienating Athanasius.[3] Equally as important, the revisionists claim that Eusebius of Caesarea sided unwaveringly with Eusebius of Nicomedia and was among Athanasius' "Eusebians". Ayres, for example, presents the Caesarean in solidarity with the "Eusebian trajectory".[4] Beeley likewise claims an association between Eusebius of Caesarea and the "Eusebians".[5] DelCogliano boldly describes Eusebius of Caesarea as the chief architect of Eusebian theology.[6] So, while there has been a concerted effort to liberate Eusebius of Caesarea from Athanasius' binary, much of modern scholarship places the Caesarean leader in fierce opposition with the Alexandrian patriarch by approximating him to the "Arians" or "Eusebians".

The problem with the thesis of extreme bitterness between Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius is that the extant textual evidence reveals a far more intriguing and nuanced relationship. In reading Athanasius' works, he does *not* include Eusebius of Caesarea among his opponents the "Eusebians" with the same forcefulness as others. In fact, he spares this Eusebius from his harshest polemic. Athanasius' frequent diatribes against the "Eusebians" envision the Nicomedian as their progenitor. Athanasius' invective against Eusebius of Caesarea, however, is limited to about six short references across all of his texts, some of which criticize the Caesarean for reasons other than "Arian" theology.[7] For example, in his *Apology against the Arians,* Athanasius asks

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[2] Beeley, *Unity*, 55.
[3] Cameron and Hall, *Life,* 258.
[4] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 52-61.
[5] Christopher Beeley, "Eusebius *Contra Marcellum*: Anti-Modalist Doctrine and Orthodox Christology" in *ZAC* 12 No. 3 (2008), 433 although footnote 5 does acknowledge that Athanasius rarely mentions Eusebius of Caesarea negatively.
[6] DelCogliano, "Eusebius of Caesarea on Asterius", 265.
[7] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 8, 47, 77, 87, *On the Decrees* 2.3 (which is positive) and *On the Synods* 13 (which is on the whole positive), 17; Cf. Averil Cameron, "Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the

rhetorically "did not the attack of the Eusebians upon us proceed from their zeal for the Arian madness? Did they not urge on the others of their party? Have we not always written against them as professing the doctrines of Arius? Was not Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine accused by our confessors of sacrificing to idols?"[8] Athanasius' displeasure with Eusebius of Caesarea for collusion with the other "Eusebians" is clear, but his malice on this occasion was not for his propping up "Arianism" as was the charge against the others in this contingent, or even for holding specifically "Arian" tenets, but rather for idolatry. There are other interesting features within this relationship such as Athanasius' recording of a letter in the *Apology* that alleges Eusebius of Caesarea became his opponent only "last year", which seems to be a reference to Athanasius' summons to Palestine in 334.[9] This would mean Athanasius' discontentment with Eusebius of Caesarea came a full decade after the latter's *Letter to Euphration* that permitted parts of Arius' theology and denied the Son as "true God". More enlightening for this thesis is Athanasius' account of Nicaea in *On the Decrees* which speaks of the "Eusebians" but then goes on to speak distinctly of "Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine". Even here, there is space between the church historian and Athanasius' main opponents. In this section, which will be discussed in more detail later, Athanasius actually uses Eusebius of Caesarea as a good example because he "went on to attack the Arians".[10] There are really only two passages in the entirety of Athanasius' works that come close to calling Eusebius of Caesarea a "Eusebian". Perhaps the most negative critique of Eusebius of Caesarea comes in a passage from *On the Synods*. Athanasius writes:

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Construction of Constantine" in *Portraits* eds. M.J. Edwards and Simon Swain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 167n107.

[8] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians*, 8.

[9] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 77.

[10] Athanasius, *On the Decrees,* 2.3-4.

> "And before the Nicene Council took place similar statements were made by the Eusebians, Narcissus, Patrophilus, Maris, Paulinus, Theodotus and Athanasius of Anazarba. And Eusebius of Nicomedia wrote over and above to Arius with this effect 'Since your sentiments are good, pray that all may adopt them for it is plain to everyone that what has been made was not before its generation, but what came to be has a beginning of being'. And Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine, in a letter to Euphration the bishop did not struggle to say plainly that Christ was not true God".[11]

Clearly the mentioning of Eusebius of Caesarea with Eusebius of Nicomedia and the list of "Arians" shows some irritation on the part of Athanasius. At the same time, the Caesarean is neither directly called an "Arian" or "Eusebian" nor catalogued among them. This creates some conceptual space between the church historian and the proper "Eusebians" say, Patrophilus of Scythopolis and Maris of Chalcedon. Eusebius of Caesarea's denial of the Son being "true God" stopped short of the full system expressed by the others. The second passage comes at the very end of the *Apology* where "the other Eusebius" is mentioned as going to Constantinople with the "Eusebians".[12] On the methodology used in the previous chapter, this traveling companionship would constitute some connection, but the absence of more clear condemnations forces the reader to hesitate. Athanasius was glad to include Eusebius' see in his works on the Nicene Council and on the synods, so why did he withhold it here? So, in reading Athanasius' works, it is clear that, despite serious disagreements, the Alexandrian bishop refrained from tarring Eusebius of Caesarea with the "Arian" and "Eusebian" brush to the same degree as others. Caesarea's bishop was an enemy, but not in the same category as his namesake from Nicomedia. Why was this the case? While it probably was the case that they were suspicious of each other, there is a distance between the famous church historian and the conglomerate of Athanasius' more fervent enemies.

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[11] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 17.
[12] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 87.

This chapter is devoted to unpacking the question of why Athanasius' polemic separates Eusebius of Caesarea from his opponents the "Arians" and the "Eusebians" with the aim of shedding some light towards a more accurate reading of Athanasius' position. In judging this situation, it becomes clearer that Athanasius did not blindly apply the term "Arian" or "Eusebian" to all of his opponents. The argument progresses like this. If, as the revisionists claim, Athanasius' fabricated group the "Eusebians" was a catchall for his rivals, then Eusebius of Caesarea, one of Athanasius' chief political foes, at least at some points of his career, ought to be unremittingly tarnished with the "Arian" and "Eusebian" labels. To the contrary, the Athanasian corpus is surprisingly lenient on the bishop of Caesarea. He stands in subtle distinction from the "Eusebians" and the "Arians". This means that despite occasional differences, Athanasius restrained himself from calling this opponent a "Eusebian". This, in turn, indicates that there were rather defined parameters for Athanasius' branding a "Eusebian". The answer to why Athanasius desists from classifying the great church historian a "Eusebian" raises serious questions against the revisionist thesis that the Alexandrian father indiscriminately grouped all his challengers together and that these categories are a figment of Athanasius' rhetoric.

This chapter advances in three stages. Firstly, there needs to be an understanding of why Eusebius of Caesarea routinely riled Athanasius and probably made him uncomfortable. Secondly, a doctrinal comparison will show that the theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea and Eusebius of Nicomedia differed substantially. Thirdly, it will be demonstrated that there is a significant overlap in the theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius of Alexandria. Taken together, these studies will show

Athanasius to be a more thoughtful and precise polemicist than is sometimes granted and that theology played a more important role in the midst of ecclesiastical differences.

## 5.1 Why Eusebius of Caesarea was a menace to Athanasius

Constantine's flattering comment to Eusebius on "the desire which all feel to claim you as their own" has proven true even today.[13] Eusebius of Caesarea's inclination to defend Arius at one point in his career has cast considerable interest over the bishop's legacy. Older historiography grappled with how the most learned bishop of the era could collude with the archetypal heresy. Based on this overwhelming evidence, Hanson concluded that Eusebius of Caesarea "was certainly an early supporter of Arius".[14] It ought not be forgotten that this Eusebius was anathematized for complicity with Arius before the Nicomedian was. Much of Eusebius of Caesarea's early perspective on Arius' teachings can be explained by understanding the difference between defending a clergyman's right to articulate his own theology as one expression in a spectrum versus actually endorsing, or personally holding, that theology.[15] There is a range of evidence to show that Eusebius of Caesarea came to Arius' defense before Nicaea, but whether he actually agreed with him theologically, as Hanson thought, is less clear. The evidence will now be analyzed.

For the connection between Eusebius of Caesarea and Arius, there is no better place to start than Eusebius' two letters written prior to the Council of Nicaea, namely, the *Letter to Euphration* and the *Letter to Alexander*.[16] Fortunately preserved in the *Acta*

[13] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine,* 3.61.
[14] Hanson, *Search*, 46.
[15] Strutwolf, *Die Trinitätstheologie*, 24-26.
[16] Eusebius of Caesarea's, *Letter to Euphration* and *Letter to* Alexander; Opitz, *Urkunden* 3 and 7 respectively.

of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, these texts show Eusebius' trouble with two unbegottens. In the *Letter to Euphration,* Eusebius of Caesarea adamantly defends one unbegotten who is alone true and alone eternal, positions common to Arius (though Alexander, and later Athanasius, also affirmed one unbegotten). Simultaneously however, Eusebius carefully avoided the typical "Arian" slogans of "before he was begotten he was not" and that the Son was "from nothing".[17] Parts of Eusebius of Caesarea's theology in the *Letter to Euphration* can be just as easily approximated to Alexander of Alexandria's as to Arius'. It is the *Letter to Alexander* that, while sharing some overlap with the *Letter to Euphration,* elicits several qualities demanding more inquiry. Here, there is a concerted effort on the part of the Caesarean bishop to intervene for the judged presbyter. He writes to Alexander, "your letters have misrepresented *them* as though *they* were saying that since the Son has come into being from nothing he must therefore be just like the rest of creation".[18] The purpose of this epistle was not so much identification with the heresiarch's theology as it was a claim that Arius and his associates were misrepresented. Eusebius of Caesarea neither confirmed nor denied that the Son was "from nothing" (but at one point does say the Son is "from him", meaning the Father), but only said this need not mean the Son is like other creatures. Furthermore, as the italics in the above quotations depict, the demonstratives show the "Arians" (or those holding such views) as a separate and definable company. Eusebius came to the defense of *them.* In contradistinction from Eusebius of Nicomedia's *Letter to Paulinus* where "we" signifies a mutual theology with Arius, Eusebius of Caesarea here delineates

[17] Williams' hypothesis in *Arius* that the *Letter to Euphration* was a response to the *He Philarchos* is interesting insofar as it could have been a catalyst for Arius to push his theology further, perhaps to the disappointment of Eusebius of Caesarea. Parvis at *Marcellus,* 54 thinks Eusebius of Caesarea did affirm the Son as "from nothing".
[18] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Letter to Euphration*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 7.

Arian-as-other, though there is some sense of shared theology. The Caesarean glosses "their" theology in such a way that he observes no differences between "them" and Alexander because "these opinions are surely held by you also".[19]

Eusebius of Caesarea knew when to withhold from positively asserting his own theology of the Godhead. He clearly rejected the notion of two unbegottens, like just about every theologian at this time but, at this point in his career, stopped short of pledging an eternal Son or that the second person of the Trinity was "true God". What emerges from these letters is Eusebius of Caesarea's liberal approach that favoured reticence on difficult subjects. It is a recurrent theme in Eusebius of Caesarea's writings that the reader often knows more about what he opposed than what he himself upheld.[20] This explains his fondness for citing Isaiah 53.8, a passage that communicated, at least to the fathers, the incalculable generation of the Son. Though tantalizing for students of the early church, Eusebius of Caesarea's discretion proves an intelligent strategy in controversy. By refraining from rigid demarcations, Eusebius was more latitudinarian than his peers. It was Eusebius' broadmindedness represented in these pre-Nicene letters that probably created trouble in Athanasius' less tolerant mind. Denying some theological affinity between Eusebius of Caesarea and Arius at this point in the history would be irresponsible, as the church historian did not seem to have a problem with declaring the Son a creature, but the accommodating tone of this letter is what is noteworthy. Eusebius of Caesarea did not advance Arius' theology around 320 as much as he sympathized with the need to be more open in positively defining Christian doctrine. Eusebius of Caesarea interpreted Arius' position in such a way before Nicaea

[19] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Letter to* Euphration; Opitz, *Urkunde,* 7.
[20] Ayres at *Nicaea,* 91 notes "a conscious *lack* of positive definition" when Eusebius interprets the Nicene Creed. This practice, much to Eusebius' credit, would benefit many theologians and save much discord.

that he found nothing in it heretical and, as a result, he need not be exiled from the church. The emphasis in these letters shows a man wanting to limit inter-ecclesia conflict rather than foist a particular handful of doctrines on others. This came to cost him at Antioch in 324/325.

Having looked at the early records from Eusebius of Caesarea's own hand, it is now important to move chronologically through the other sources that document his connection with Arius. The earliest one, even before Eusebius' *Letter to Euphration* is Arius' *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia.* He tells the bishop, "Eusebius…[his] brother in Caesarea…says that God pre-exists the Son".[21] Given that Eusebius of Caesarea says such in the previously discussed epistles, Arius could claim him with a clear conscience. It is hardly surprising that the scrutinized presbyter would want to claim cohesion with one of the most famous churchmen of his time. A similar remark comes in Eusebius of Nicomedia's *Letter to Paulinus* where he claimed Eusebius of Caesarea represented his brand of theology.[22] The bishop from Nicomedia attempted to motivate Paulinus by contrasting his laxity with the Caesarean bishop's enthusiasm. While the historian exhibits "zeal" for the cause, Paulinus has remained "silent". Eusebius of Caesarea's outspokenness has been the occasion for "rejoicing" while they have "grieved" over Paulinus.[23] The testimony from Eusebius of Nicomedia's own hand verifies some connection between the two Eusebii. This relationship was rather one-sided, however, because nothing from Eusebius of Caesarea's pen shows such affinity for his namesake. In fact, Eusebius of Nicomedia is never mentioned in the *Ecclesiastical History* nor is defending the Nicomedian a priority in his *Against Marcellus* or *Ecclesiastical*

[21] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 1.
[22] This letter is preserved in Theodoret's *EH* 1.5; Opitz, *Urkunde* 8.
[23] Eusebius of Nicomedia, *Letter to* Paulinus; Opitz *Urkunde* 8.

*Theology*.[24] The *Letter to Paulinus* is more likely a matter of Eusebius of Nicomedia wanting to claim a powerful supporter.

Schwartz's discovery of the record to the Council of Antioch in 324/325 shows that the great church historian was once condemned.[25] The Syriac manuscript explains that Eusebius of Caesarea, along with Theodotus of Laodicea and Narcissus of Neronias, were disciplined for their theological views.[26] While the text is discreet on the specific tenets that earned them these reprimands, the record says they were expelled because they "proved to be of the same opinion as those with Arius".[27] While Eusebius of Caesarea is not included in "those with Arius", his sympathy with their theological discourse led to his probation. It is hard not to see his pre-Nicene letters and their arguments for leniency towards Arius' views as the source of castigation. What is most interesting for the purposes of this chapter is how Athanasius never mentions this council let alone any insinuation of Eusebius of Caesarea's condemnation despite the meeting's aggressively anti-"Arian" tenor.

Perhaps the most surprising revelation from the record of Antioch is that Eusebius of Caesarea was on the defensive at Nicaea. Prior to Schwartz's publication of this document, historians suspected that Eusebius of Caesarea was one of the prime movers at Nicaea, as the *Letter to his See* insinuates.[28] His censuring just a few months prior to

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[24] Lienhard, *Contra,* 100, 106 says Eusebius of Caesarea attacked Marcellus but did not defend Asterius (in agreement with Schwartz) or Eusebius of Nicomedia. Eusebius of Caesarea also chose to preserve at least three instances of Asterius' describing Eusebius of Nicomedia's letter as "badly written"; Cf. Lienhard, *Contra,* 82-83.

[25] Henry Chadwick, "Ossius of Cordova and the Presidency of the Council of Antioch" in *JTS* 9 (1958), 292-304. If Ossius presided over this meeting and accused Eusebius of "forgetting the Holy Scriptures and apostolic teaching", this must have inflicted a marked blemish.

[26] Abramowski, "The Synod of Antioch 324/25", 1-12; Cf. Alistair Logan, "Marcellus of Ancyra and the Councils of 325: Antioch, Ancyra and Nicaea" in *JTS* Vol. 43 No. 2 (1992), 428-446.

[27] Rusch, *Trinitarian*, 48.

[28] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Letter to His* See; Opitz, *Urkunde* 22.

Nicaea depicts a different narrative with Eusebius now exonerating himself from potential deposition, a task he evidently accomplished. Eusebius of Caesarea's interpretation of the Nicene Creed in the just-mentioned *Letter to his See* has undergone relentless evaluation and has resulted in a wide range of conclusions.[29] Harsh readings tend to view the Caesarean bishop as untruthful when he implied that the Nicene Creed only augmented his local Caesarean creed. Frances Young conveys this disparity between the creeds stating, "it takes a fair stretch of the critical imagination to see the Nicene Creed as a revised version of the Caesarean creed quoted by Eusebius".[30] S.G Hall correctly affirms "the minor differences in wording between the two creeds are so many even in the non-controversial points, that one must assume the drafting committee started afresh".[31] When the reader focuses on Eusebius' embellishments, there is a tendency to suspect dishonesty. This can be combined with the fact that Eusebius of Caesarea's name appears in fifth place among Palestinian signatories at Nicaea despite being the ranking Metropolitan.[32] This could have been because he was reeling from Antioch's rulings, or because he had serious reservations about the Creed. Alternatively, his late signing could have been a result of what Socrates called a "mature consideration", thus indicating some level of serious inquiry.[33] It is to the advantage of the revisionists to see Eusebius of Caesarea's record of Nicaea as dishonest and his sluggish signing as an indication of his frustration because it portrays him walking away as one of its disgruntled losers, forced by Alexandrian cronies into signing something he

[29] Preserved at the end of Athanasius' *On the Decrees*; Cf. Theodoret, *EH* 1.12; Socrates *EH* 1.8. An English translation is in Rusch, *Trinitarian,* 57-60.
[30] Frances Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon,* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983), 20.
[31] S.G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the early Church* (London: SPCK, 1991) 130.
[32] H. Gelzer, Heinrich Hilgenfeld, and Otto Cuntz (eds.) *Patrum Nicaenorum Nomina* (Lipsiae, 1898), 62.
[33] Socrates, *EH* 1.8.

did not believe.[34] There is reason, however, to favour a more sympathetic version of the events because there are no records from Eusebius of Caesarea's contemporaries alleging that he lied or retracted his support.[35]

The more sensitive reading of this letter interprets Eusebius' glosses on the controversial phrases of the creed as sincere attempts to reconcile his own theology with its language. Instead of thinking a hardline faction coerced Eusebius of Caesarea into signing dishonestly, thereby leaving him to hoodwink his parishioners back in Palestine, it is probable that the bishop actually offered legitimate expositions of ambiguous phrases. When Eusebius says that he understands "from the Father's essence" to mean that the Son is "from the Father", he is not covering-up his "Arianism", nor capitulating to others, but simply capitalizing on the latitude of Nicaea that his own personality treasured. The evidence for Eusebius of Caesarea's sincerity at the council comes most persuasively in the fact that he, unlike the Nicomedian, never rescinded his own assent to its Formula. More convincingly, even the most vociferous pro-Nicenes, as we will see, do not make this accusation against him.[36] In addition to these considerations, despite his historical prowess, Eusebius of Caesarea never recorded the suppression of the word homoousios at the Council of Antioch in 268, a move that would have justified any reservations about Nicaea. So, the revisionists invoke the all-important *Letter to His See* to argue Eusebius of Caesarea left Nicaea disgruntled and bullied, but the textual

[34] Richard Burgess and Witold Witakowski in *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999), 69-70 say the historian "lost" at Nicaea and needed to cover-up the truth.
[35] Mark Edwards, *Religions of the Constantinian Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 283.
[36] An exception is noted from Sozomen's *EH* 2.8 that records an exchange between Eusebius of Caesarea and Eustathius of Antioch in which the latter accuses the former of dishonestly "altering the doctrines" of the creed.

evidence just as convincingly has him emerging from Nicaea as a compatibilist whom, as will be examined shortly, even Athanasius could tolerate.

An important point for this thesis surrounds the role Eusebius of Caesarea played in the decade or so following the Nicene Council. T.D. Barnes captures what many historians feel when he says, "the detailed course of events within the Church between 325 and 337 is very difficult to unravel."[37] This remains among the most nebulous periods of the fourth century, but even in the limited information there can be certainties. That Arius fled Alexandria for Caesarea after his initial deposition is generally accepted. The fifth century historians have Eusebius of Caesarea participating in or presiding over several clerical depositions in the aftermath of Nicaea. Some of these councils over which he supposedly ruled condemned Athanasius.

If the fifth century historians are to be believed, the drama escalated immediately after the Council of Nicaea when Eusebius of Caesarea and Eustathius of Antioch engaged in a pamphlet war. Eustathius accused Eusebius of subverting the Nicene Creed and Eusebius accused Eustathius of Sabellianism.[38] They "wrote as if contending against adversaries".[39] This feud was felt most acutely in Antioch as it led to Eustathius' deposition. So cloudy are the events surrounding Eustathius' removal that nearly every year between 326 and 331 has been proposed as a possible date for its occurrence.[40] Eusebius' own account of this battle is far from complete, but the evidence suggests that

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[37] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 225.

[38] The charge of Sabellianism was frequent in fourth-century discussions and regularly attached to Marcellus of Ancyra. This designation can be perplexing because so little is known about the historical Sabellius. It came to mean what would later be termed modalism, a position said to deny three distinct realities in the Godhead. God was an indivisible monad who extended himself in three ways (or modes).

[39] Socrates, *EH* 1.23.

[40] Burgess, "The Date", 150-160 proposes a date of 328. Chadwick, "The Fall", 27-35 argued for 326. R.P.C. Hanson's "The Fate of Eustathius of Antioch" in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* Vol. 95 (1984), 171-179 upholds an older position saying it occurred in 330-331.

following Eustathius' removal, the people asked him to be bishop.[41] The records of this period are so vacant that it is entirely uncertain if there was one formal council in Antioch, two successive councils in Antioch, or no formal council at all.[42] Barnes asserts "about two years after the Council of Nicaea, a council of bishops met at Antioch and conducted a purge in the Arian interest. Eusebius of Caesarea presided."[43] He then has to posit a second council in rapid succession when "the council chose Eusebius as the new bishop".[44] While Barnes says this with confidence, he has to draw on the fifth century historians and the supposition that Eusebius of Caesarea could not have presided over Eustathius' removal and been named new bishop of that see at the same time.[45] Ayres, too, is confident that Eusebius of Caesarea presided over a council that removed Eustathius, but withholds any discussion about the nature of this council or if there was another one in sequence.[46] The fact remains that only Theodoret has Eusebius of Caesarea at Eustathius' deposition.[47] From Eusebius' *Life* it looks as if Eustathius' deposition was informal, then verified by an ad hoc council. In Socrates' *History*, conversely, there was a single formal synod in Antioch that deposed Eustathius and raised Eusebius' name, but he did not preside. Tension emerged because "the populace was divided into two factions, one that vehemently contended for the translation of Eusebius Pamphilus from Caesarea in Palestine to Antioch, the other equally insistent on

[41] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine,* 3.59-62.
[42] Stephens, *Canon,* 29 reveals the challenge in matching up the Syriac lists of bishops with the councils in Antioch. Eusebius of Caesarea heads some of these lists but it is uncertain which Antiochene councils did what and in which years.
[43] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius,* 227.
[44] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius,* 228.
[45] This comes directly after Barnes says at *Constantine and Eusebius* 225 that the fifth century historians "can provide no basis for a genuine understanding".
[46] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 101.
[47] Stephens, *Canon,* 32.

the reinstatement of Eustathius."[48] The point is that opinions on the role that Eusebius of Caesarea played in Eustathius' removal seem to be as diverse as its commentators. Many documents have Eusebius of Caesarea close to the action, but to say he was the architect of the Antiochene bishop's removal is unsubstantiated. The most important point is that Athanasius later claimed that Eustathius' removal was the work of "Eusebians" but in his account of the deposition he makes no mention of the great church historian.[49] From Athanasius perspective, Eusebius of Caesarea was not responsible for Eustathius' removal.

A preponderance of fragmented evidence suggests that Constantine called a group of bishops to meet in Caesarea in 334. The reason so little is known about this affair is because Athanasius never elaborated upon it. The discovery of *London Papyrus* 1913 and *London Papyrus* 1914 shed some light on this matter.[50] The former is an account from a certain Aurelius Pageus who wrote to his monastery explaining his summons to Caesarea. The latter testifies to the violence perpetrated by Athanasius on the schismatic Melitians.[51] All indication is that the meeting in Caesarea was an ecclesiastical hearing for Athanasius on these charges from the Melitians. This can be combined with a small detail from the *Index* to Athanasius' sixth *Festal Letter*, that is the sixth year of his bishopric or 334, which says that Athanasius' absence was due to the biased nature of the Caesarean Council.[52] Given the location of the council, it is natural to presume Eusebius of Caesarea, the Metropolitan, would preside, but this remains speculation. The only

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[48] Socrates, *EH* 1.24.
[49] Athanasius, *History of the Arians* 4. The passage does name other opponents.
[50] H.I. Bell, ed. *Jews and Christians in Egypt* (Oxford: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1924).
[51] Arnold's "Sir Harold Idris Bell and Athanasius", 377-383 questions the degree to which the Papyrus 1914 actually indicts Athanasius, concluding it is not as condemning as Bell and others have said.
[52] *Festal Index VI,* in Martin and Albert eds., *Histoire*, 231-232.

light shed on what may have happened with Caesarea comes a year later in Tyre when a letter from the Alexandrian bishops who supported Athanasius went to the wider clergy stating, "those around Eusebius…are our enemies, and you are aware why Eusebius of Caesarea became such last year."[53] This language is interesting because it once again distinguishes the initial conglomerate of the "Eusebians" from Eusebius of Caesarea. Even in 334 the Caesarean became an "enemy" more than a "Eusebian". Once again, questions abound. Was Eusebius of Caesarea holding a grudge against Athanasius for refusing to come to Caesarea in 334? Alternatively, was Athanasius embittered because Eusebius of Caesarea was siding with the Melitians and preparing to depose him? As is often the case, the fifth century historians offer a more embellished version. In Theodoret's judgment Athanasius refused to attend because he had "an apprehension of Caesarea on account of its bishop".[54] It is safe to say that some tension existed between Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea in 334, but Athanasius never said the problem at Caesarea 334 was "Arianism", as he easily could have done. The revisionists often accuse Athanasius of covering-up Caesarea 334 on account of his embarrassment. At the same time, if Athanasius was always inclined to call anything that irritated him "Arian", then why did he refrain from treating Caesarea 334 with the same animosity as Tyre 335? If, as Barnes claims, one of the charges that resurfaced at Tyre in 335 was Athanasius' refusal to attend Caesarea, then why was this meeting not equally "Arian"?[55] Whatever happened at Caesarea in 334 did not merit polemical attack from Athanasius.

As for the course of Tyre, this chaotic council was interrupted when the defendant, Athanasius, withdrew to Constantinople for an appeal. Around the time

[53] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 77.
[54] Theodoret, *EH* 1.26.
[55] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 22f.

Athanasius departed, the council moved to Jerusalem to dedicate the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. While Constantine sent another lay official to preside, it was Eusebius of Caesarea who was the ranking Metropolitan. Eusebius made a speech at this gathering that is preserved in his *Life of Constantine.* Three times in *The Life* Eusebius tells his audience that he is going to append a speech that he crafted for dedicating the church. As it turns out, it is somewhat challenging to disentangle the speech delivered at Jerusalem in 335 from the larger text known as the *Praise of Constantine.*[56] That Eusebius of Caesarea delivered a speech at Jerusalem in 335 is important because this same group decided to readmit Arius. From there, Athanasius also has "the other Eusebius" retreating to Constantinople with the "Eusebians" to discuss Tyre's conclusions with the emperor.[57] That the Caesarean held highly visible roles in these assemblies must have infuriated Athanasius.

From Eusebius' prominent role at Tyre and Jerusalem in 335, what is left to discuss is his role in the removal of Marcellus of Ancyra at the Council of Constantinople in 336. Eusebius of Caesarea's animus towards the Ancyran bishop is clear in both his *Against Marcellus* and his *Ecclesiastical Theology.* The harsh repudiation shows convincingly that the church historian saw Marcellus, not Athanasius, as the more significant problem in the 330's. Eusebius of Caesarea's loathing of Marcellus' theology combined with the fact that a few years later Athanasius partnered with Ancyra's bishop in Rome lead some to the conclusion that serious tension existed between the Caesarean and the Alexandrian. However, the degree to which Eusebius' role in removing the

[56] Like other texts, this is sometimes known by its Latin title, the *Laus Constantini.* Cf. T.D. Barnes, "Two Speeches by Eusebius" in *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* Vol 18 No. 4 (1977), 341-345. Here Barnes concludes that Eusebius did give a speech in Jerusalem in 335 but it is not the one appended to the *Life* as it seems to have been given in Constantinople.

[57] Athanasius' *Apology against the Arians,* 87 infers that "the other Eusebius" is the Caesarean.

Ancyran bishop would have irritated Athanasius is not obvious because, as has already been mentioned a few times, recent scholarship has demonstrated the theological differences between Marcellus and the Alexandrian leader. Their relationship was more convoluted than older historiographies admitted, so Eusebius' attack on Marcellus cannot be so easily extrapolated to a refutation of Athanasius' theology. As was the case with Eustathius, Athanasius came to see Marcellus' removal at Constantinople 336 as an act of the "Arians" and "Eusebians". Notably, Athanasius does not mention Eusebius of Caesarea when recalling Marcellus' removal.[58]

Having examined the relevant primary source material, a rather complicated picture of the relationship between Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius emerges.[59] On occasion, the Caesarean practiced the precise activities that most enflamed Athanasius; defending aspects of Arius' theology, complicity at some level in the depositions of Eustathius and Marcellus, colluding intermittently with Eusebius of Nicomedia, and most pronouncedly, attending councils that attacked him while restoring Arius. At other times, Eusebius of Caesarea's decisions are altogether different from Athanasius' other opponents, such as favouring latitude to active advancement. Most importantly, he signed the Nicene Creed and never retracted it. Given Eusebius of Caesarea's anti-Athanasian flirtations, Athanasius' insulating the historian from the "Eusebian" and "Arian" conglomerates is striking. From one perspective, if anyone should have been an "Arian", Eusebius of Caesarea should have been that man. Could it be that Athanasius saw enough difference in Eusebius of Caesarea's theology to spare him from his severest

[58] Athanasius, *History of the Arians,* 6.
[59] Colm Luibheid, *The Council of Nicaea* (Galway: Galway University Press, 1982), 52-66 is a nice discussion on the Eusebii and Arius.

polemic? To explore this theme further the chapter will question whether or not Eusebius of Caesarea held doctrinal commonalities with Athanasius' more obvious opponents.

## 5.2 Differences between Eusebius of Caesarea and Eusebius of Nicomedia

Given that Eusebius of Caesarea occasionally acted against Athanasius, it is now important to examine the finer points of his theology. Eusebius of Caesarea permitted more leeway in what he found acceptable discourse, but did he have more in common with Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arius or with Alexander and Athanasius? In his 1973 article "'Eusebius' and the Council of Nicaea", Christopher Stead attempted to show similarities between the two Eusebii.[60] Stead claims to have discovered "less disparity between the views of these two theologians than the traditional view requires".[61] The article actually provides little proof for this claim. In fact, about halfway through the essay Stead surmises, "the evidence so far produced might still suggest a certain difference in manner between the two Eusebii".[62] From this point he only proceeds to analyze the passage from Eustathius preserved in Theodoret's *History*. In 2007, Gwynn shared Stead's sentiment stating, "to a remarkable extent the theological arguments of Asterius and Eusebius of Nicomedia parallel closely the better known doctrinal teachings of Eusebius of Caesarea".[63] The revisionists want to draw considerable overlap between the Eusebii. If Eusebius of Caesarea has more in common with Eusebius of Nicomedia, it would portray Athanasius as more of an outlier, thereby substantiating the claim that he invented "Arianism" and indiscriminately linked people to this group. The problem is

[60] Stead, "Eusebius'", 85-100.
[61] Stead, "Eusebius'", 98.
[62] Stead, "Eusebius'", 91
[63] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 218. Also a key component to his "Constantine and the Other Eusebius", *Prudentia,* Vol. 31 No. 2 (1999), 94-124.

that analysis of Eusebius of Caesarea's theology shows he did not agree with Eusebius of Nicomedia or Arius on the most significant matters. Against Stead, Ayres, Gwynn, and others stands a group of thinkers more inclined to see differences between Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius' named opponents.

Eusebius of Nicomedia's theology can be most responsibly gathered from his *Letter to Paulinus.* Stead is correct in that the central thrust of this document seems to be that the Son cannot possibly be ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τῆς πατρικῆς, or "from the essence of the Father". Stead confirms that the short letter forbids this thought five times.[64] As mentioned in chapter three, Eusebius of Nicomedia's emphatic rejection of ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας is probably why it found its way into the Nicene Creed. *The Letter to Paulinus* does, however, apply *ousia* language to the Godhead, but not in a way that could connote derivation. For, "κτιστὸν εἶναι καὶ θεμελιωτὸν καὶ γεννητὸν τῇ οὐσίᾳ καὶ τῇ ἀναλλοιώτῳ καὶ ἀρρήτῳ φύσει καὶτῇ ὁμοιότητι τῇ πρὸς τὸν πεποιηκότα μεμαθήκαμενκαὶ". That is, "we have learned that he is created, established, and begotten with an unalterable essence and inexpressible nature *like* that of its Maker". What is clear then is that the preposition "ek" in relation to ousia, as indicating some material reduction, is what Eusebius of Nicomedia found unconscionable. The Son could be begotten "with" an essence "like" the Father's but not "from the Father's essence". Was Eusebius of Caesarea as sensitive about ousia and its accompanying prepositions as Eusebius of Nicomedia?

What the reader discovers is that Eusebius of Caesarea did not strictly forbid the Son's being from the Father's essence. While Eusebius of Caesarea is keen to express real distinctions in the Godhead, his major theological works do not censor "from the ousia". Interestingly, on at least one occasion Eusebius of Caesarea says that the Son is

[64] Stead, "Eusebius'", 86.

ἐκ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ἀγενήτου φύσεως καὶ τῆς ἀνεκφράστου οὐσίας or "from the unoriginate nature and the ineffable essence of the Father".[65] Here Eusebius is quite comfortable with the "ek" ousia language to convey a natural relationship of the Father and Son. The language in this particular phrase is closer to that of Athanasius than Eusebius of Nicomedia. Eusebius of Caesarea could also express a heightened view of the Father-Son relationship without using the word ousia. For example, he says the Son οὐκ ὁμοίως μὲν τοῖς λοιποῖς γεννητοῖς ὑποστὰντα οὐδὲ ζωὴν ἐμφερῆ τοῖς δι᾽αὐτοῦ γεγεννημένοις ζῶντα, μόνον δὲ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀποτεχθέντα. That is, the Son "exists not like the rest of the originated things nor does his life resemble that of the living things which came to be through him, but he alone was engendered from his Father".[66] The strength of this passage comes not only from Eusebius of Caesarea's stress on the closeness of the Son to the Father, but on their organic relationship and how this distinguishes him from other created beings. Here again, Eusebius of Caesarea's language on the relationship of the Godhead is just as easily approximated to Alexander and Athanasius as to Eusebius of Nicomedia or Arius.[67] This is why Rebecca Lyman argued that Eusebius of Caesarea upheld a rather independent view when it came to the Father-Son relationship.[68] He was not as fond of *ousia* language as Athanasius to describe the Father- Son relationship, but he utilized other words to express the natural relationship between the two. This distanced him sufficiently from his namesake and Arius.

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[65] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 5.1.18.
[66] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical Theology,* 1.8.2-3.
[67] Kelly McCarthy Spoerl, "Anti Arian Polemic in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*" in *SP* Vol. 32 (1997), 35 notes the similarities between the fifth book of the *Demonstration* and the first book of the *Ecclesiastical Theology.*
[68] Rebecca Lyman, "Substance Language in Origen and Eusebius" in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments,* edited by R.C. Gregg (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1985), 257-266.

In addition to the discussion of *ousia* language, cognates of the word κτίσμα played a crucial role in theological division. As put forward in chapter three, Athanasius was remarkably consistent in his aversion to saying the Son is a creature. It is important to remember that, "for Athanasius, and so in turn for later generations, the reduction of the Son to a *ktisma* would become the essential characteristic of the 'Arian heresy'".[69] Where did the Eusebii stand on this divisive question of the Son's creaturehood? In the *Letter to Paulinus,* Eusebius of Nicomedia says that ἀπὸ τὴς ἀγίας γραφῆς μεμαθηκότες λέγομεν κτιστόν εἶναι or that "having learned from the holy Scripture, we say he is a creature".[70] He goes on to cite Proverbs 8.22 to reinforce his point.[71] Just as Eusebius of Nicomedia used ousia language five times to say what the Son is *not*, he uses cognates of κτιστὸν five times to say what the Son *is*. The Son's created status is the other buttress of Eusebius of Nicomedia's theology.

Now the argument returns to Eusebius of Caesarea's works to see what he thought of the word κτιστὸν as it applied to the Son. One debated passage comes in the *Ecclesiastical Theology* where Eusebius questions, ὁθεν εἰκότως ἄν τις μεμψαιτο τοῖς κτίσμα αὐτὸν φάναι τετελμηκόσιν, ἐξ οὐκ ὀντων ὁμοίος τοῖς λοιποῖς κτίσμασιν γενόμενον. Καὶ πῶς γὰρ ἐτι ἐσται υἱός;" or "One might reasonably censure those who speak of him as one of the creatures coming to be from nothing like the other creatures. For how is he still the Son?"[72] This statement definitely casts doubt on Arius' slogan that the Son could have come to be from nothing. For some scholars, this section conveys

[69] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 233.
[70] Eusbeius of Nicomedia, *Letter to* Paulinus; Opitz, *Urkunde,* 8.
[71] Eusebius of Nicomeida, *Letter to* Paulinus; Opitiz, *Urkunde,* 8.
[72] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical Theology* 1.9.1

Eusebius of Caesarea's reluctance to call the Son a creature.[73] Another reading could take this to mean that Eusebius of Caesarea was only denying that the Son is a creature *like other creatures.* In other words, does this leave open the possibility for the word *ktiston* to be applied to the Son so long as he is *not like* anything else? This interpretation would fit well with his much earlier *Letter to Alexander,* albeit a much softer version and one much more reluctant to defend Arius' position.[74] What speaks loudly in Eusebius of Caesarea's works, however, is the fact that he does *not* positively apply the term "creature" to the second person of the Trinity. In his work devoted to Eusebius of Caesarea, Aaron Johnson demonstrates that the Caesarean bishop did not like applying the word "creature" to the second person of the Trinity.[75] Spoerl is even more accurate when she communicates for Eusebius of Caesarea, "the categories of creaturehood and sonship are mutually exclusive."[76] Grillmeier interpreted Eusebius' reticence to mean that "he does not want to accept that the Son is 'created'".[77] Or again, "the distinction between the Son's begetting from the Father and God's creation of all creatures other than the Son remains firm and consistent in his [Eusebius'] mature works".[78] There is little evidence to support Hanson's assertion that Eusebius of Caesarea "certainly believes the Son is a creature".[79] He may have thought this permissible prior to Nicaea, but his later theological works do not resemble those of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arius on the Son's creaturehood. This difference would not have been lost on Athanasius.

As seen in the *Letter to Paulinus,* Eusebius of Nicomedia invoked the hotly

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[73] DelCogliano, "Eusebius of Caesarea on Asterius", 272.
[74] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Letter to* Euphration; Opitz, *Urkunde* 7.
[75] Johnson, *Eusebius,* 135; Cf. Linehard, *Contra,* 108.
[76] Spoerl, "Anti-Arian Polemic", 36; Lyman, "Substance Language", 263.
[77] Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 174.
[78] Johnson, "Eusebius *Contra*", 448.
[79] Hanson, *Search,* 59.

debated passage of Proverbs 8.22 to justify his position that the Son can be described as a *ktiston*. Eusebius of Caesarea addresses this verse in several places in his *Ecclesiastical Theology*. On one occasion, the reader learns that the bishop does not interpret the verse to stress that the Son was created, but rather that the Son was "appointed to rule".[80] Shortly after Proverbs 8.22 is deliberated, Eusebius of Caesarea cites Colossians 1.15, a verse of particularly high Christology. Chris Sansbury argues that when it comes to the interpretation of this important verse, Eusebius of Caesarea shares more common ground with Athanasius than he does with Eusebius of Nicomedia. In other words, for the bishop of Caesarea, Proverbs 8 is not making temporal claims about the generation of the Son, but rather a Christological point about the Son's authority. In fact, Eusebius of Caesarea's understanding of these verses parallels Athanasius exegesis in the second of his *Orations against the Arians.*[81] Even when Eusebius of Caesarea returns to Proverbs 8.22 in the third section of the *Ecclesiastical Theology* he argues that creation in this instance is biblically synonymous with "generation".[82] The historian's interpretation of Proverbs 8 does not lend itself to Arius' theological emphasis of the Son being a "creature".

Moving beyond these significant theological differences, the two Eusebii held different views on canonical authority. Eusebius of Nicomedia took advantage of ecclesiastical transfers. In the years prior to Nicaea, Eusebius was bishop of Berytus but was called by Licinius to fulfill the see of Nicomedia. At this time, Nicomedia housed

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[80] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical Theology,* 1.10.2; Cf. Grillmeier, *Christ,* 174n29.
[81] Sansbury, "Athanasius, Marcellus, and Eusebius of Caesarea", 281. There are also the similarities between Athanasius' *Oration* 2.82 and Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical Theology* 3.3.57 on the exegesis of Proverbs 8.30; Cf. Mark DelCogliano "Eusebian Theologies of the Son as the Image of God before 341", *JECS,* Vol. 14 No. 4 (2006), 483.
[82] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical Theology,* 3.3.44; Cf. Edwards "The Arian Heresy and the Oration to the Saints" in *VC* Vol 49 No. 4 (1995), 382.

the imperial court. This relocation probably precipitated the fifteenth canon of Nicaea that reads "neither bishops nor presbyters nor deacons shall transfer from city to city".[83] Not only is it possible that this canon was introduced because of Eusebius of Nicomedia, but he clearly violated it upon the death of Constantine in 337 when he welcomed an appointment from Constantius to the new imperial capital of Constantinople. It is not surprising that the revisionists downplay the role of Eusebius of Nicomedia as a "court bishop" in an effort to dampen any selfish ambition.[84] Attempts to diminish Eusebius of Nicomedia's interest in ecclesiastical politics cannot expurgate the fact that he was *the* bishop of these strategic imperial cities. By definition, Eusebius of Nicomedia *was* the court's bishop. In the same way, pastoring a church two blocks from Congress in Washington DC would not automatically make one the politicians' cleric, but it would certainly make such a figure more likely than anyone else to be such. Eusebius of Nicomedia hovered around the imperial capitals and thereby found himself in the environs of political affairs.

In contrast to Eusebius of Nicomedia's tendency for upward mobility, Eusebius of Caesarea declined the opportunity to receive the bishopric of Antioch within a few years of Nicaea's Council. He demurred out of deference to Nicaea's canon.[85] Even though Antioch was in the midst of catastrophe when Eusebius had the opportunity to transfer, the move to a more powerful bishopric would have enticed most men.[86] Eusebius of Caesarea was interested in ecclesiastical politics for sure, so his refusal to transfer to a

[83] Norman P. Tanner, ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* Vol. 1 (Washington DC: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 13.
[84] David Gwynn, "Eusebius of Nicomedia: A 'Court Bishop' for Constantine?" in *SP* Vol. 46 (2010), 289-294.
[85] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 3.61 on Constantine's commending him for obeying the canons in refusing the bishopric.
[86] Canon 6 at Nicaea preserved the prerogatives of Antioch while Canon 7 granted Jerusalem a special status, creating complications for the Caesarean metropolitan. Cf. Tanner, *Decrees,* 9.

more important city is all the more striking. Athanasius was probably aware of this noble gesture and could have interpreted it as a sign of respect for Nicaea's proceedings. While Eusebius of Nicomedia twice welcomed translations to more powerful cities, Eusebius of Caesarea declined such promotion. Does this speak to different temperaments between the Eusebii? Did the Caesarean Eusebius honour Nicaea's canon while the Nicomedian mocked it? If the answer to the last question is yes, this is yet another reason why Athanasius may have pardoned him for other grievances.

Treatments of Eusebius of Caesarea's theology that blindly lump him with the "Eusebians" or even count him among their "most famous" members are tendentious.[87] It is difficult to agree with Hanson that Eusebius of Caesarea "gradually moved towards a theological stance which would be called modified Arianism".[88] It is equally stretching to identify with Wallace-Hadrill's picture that Eusebius "leant sufficiently strongly towards Arianism".[89] If anything, the opposite could be argued as he moved away from Arius' slogans. In examining the evidence, it is more truthful to agree with Aaron Johnson who declares, "Eusebius was neither 'Arian' nor a 'modified Arian'".[90] Eusebius of Caesarea diverges from his namesake from Nicomedia on the most crucial theological points.[91] More perplexing is how the revisionists of the "Arian Controversy" who write on Eusebius of Caesarea tend to violate the principle they are trying to

[87] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 57-61.
[88] Hanson, *Search,* 59.
[89] D.S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Eusebius of Caesarea,* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co Ltd, 1960), 23.
[90] Johnson, *Eusebius,* 114.
[91] There is much more to be discussed on how Eusebius of Caesarea distanced himself from other "Arians" such as Paulinus of Tyre, Narcissus of Neronias, and to a lesser extent, Asterius the Sophist. In his mature works *Against Marcellus* and *Ecclesiastical Theology,* Eusebius of Caesarea does little to defend them by name, though he defends Asterius' most well known line at *Against Marcellus* 1.4. An analysis of these works shows more distance between Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius' "Eusebians".

establish by approximating his theology to that of Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia. This is the tension observed by Edwards when he says that:

> "it is unfortunate that scholars, having ascertained enough to temper, dissipate or excuse the heresies once alleged against [Eusebius], have been content to say that he represents a less innovative faction within the catholic church, and have not asked what contribution he may have made to that fructification of the homoousian faith which theologians label 'orthodox' and historians 'neo-Nicene'".[92]

In other words, even though it can be demonstrated that Eusebius of Caesarea's theology was *not* like that of the "Eusebians", he is still plotted in relation to them as opposed to a theologian in his own right. It could be that Athanasius recognized the historian's distinct contributions in his own time.

The argument will now turn to the question of the theological relationship between Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea. The section will *not* aim to show that Eusebius of Caesarea was an Athanasian thinker, but rather that there was sufficient agreement in their theologies to justify Athanasius' reservation in attacking him.

## 5.3 The Relationship between Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea

So far this chapter has made three moves. Firstly, I claimed that prominent scholars incorrectly see Eusebius of Caesarea as a leader among Athanasius' "Eusebians". Secondly, it was demonstrated that Eusebius of Caesarea disagreed with Athanasius on crucial points throughout his career. They diverged because Eusebius of Caesarea granted more latitude in his theological spectrum against Athanasius' inflexibility. Eusebius of Caesarea regularly defended Athanasius' opponents not so much because he wanted to assert a specific theological discourse, but because he accommodated more diversity. Thirdly, the chapter contested that Eusebius of

[92] Edwards, *Catholicity*, 117.

Caesarea's theology differed from Eusebius of Nicomedia's and Arius' on the most controversial matters. Given these factors, it is now time to examine in more depth how Athanasius viewed Eusebius of Caesarea.

To restate the starting point for this chapter, the Athanasian corpus seldom attacks Eusebius of Caesarea personally or as a "Eusebian". For example, in the *Encyclical Epistle* of 339 that is regularly cited as Athanasius' first clear attack on the "Arians" and the "Eusebians", Eusebius of Caesarea is unmentioned.[93] In the *Orations*, Eusebius of Caesarea is a non-entity. In *The Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya,* written at least 17 years later, Eusebius of Caesarea is once again omitted from the plots of the "Arians" and "those around Eusebius".[94] In his most aggressive anti-"Eusebian" works, Athanasius distanced Eusebius of Caesarea from the plots of his enemies. The best explanation for this is that Athanasius recognized enough of his own theology in Eusebius of Caesarea's writings to withhold his fiery attacks.

Athanasius' greatest gift to the church is his two-part work *Against the Nations* and *On the Incarnation.* It has been argued for at least a century that these works are partially indebted to Eusebius of Caesarea's *Theophany.*[95] "As early as 1913 T. Kehrhahn demonstrated that Eusebius' *Theophaneia* was the source for Athanasius' two apologies".[96] The literary dependence between these two figures received brief attention

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[93] Gwynn, *Eusebians*, 51f.
[94] Athanasius, *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya.*
[95] Hanson, *Search,* 418. The question was taken up more recently by Uta Heil in "Athanasius und Eusebius: Zum Rückgriff des Athanasius auf Euseb von Caesarea" in *Three Greek Apologists, Drei griechische Apologeten* eds. David, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 190-214; Cf. Strutwolf, *Die Trinitätstheologie,* 391f.
[96] Grillmeier, *Christ,* 186; T. Kehrhahn. *De Sancti Athanasii Quae Fertur Contra Gentes Oratione* (Berlin, 1913). For lucid and recent discussions on Eusebius' *Theophany* see Michael Bland Simmons, *Universal Salvation in Late Antiquity: Porphyry of Tyre and the Pagan Christian Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 92-104 and Aryeh Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 276-311.

in F.L. Cross' inaugural lecture as Oxford's Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity.[97] In this address, Cross raised several difficulties despite an obvious literary relationship. It seems entirely unlikely that Eusebius of Caesarea, the old, scholarly bishop, would have drawn theological ideas from the young, and controversial, Alexandrian. For Cross, the dependence must have been the other way around. He suggested that a teenaged Athanasius encountered the famous Caesarean in 311 while the latter was on a trip through Egypt. Then, having absorbed Eusebius of Caesarea's theology as a lad, it incubated in Athanasius' brain for decades before the authoring of the joint apologies. In his review of Cross' lecture, Telfer saw the unlikelihood of this proposal and posited a common source.[98] Telfer suggested that the Alexandrian *didaskelion* could have been the breeding ground of any parallel teaching. More specifically, that Achilles, the third-century leader of the school, championed a τὸ πρέπον apologetic that is common to both the *Theophany* and *On the Incarnation.* While Telfer offers no sustained discussion on this rhetorical device, it centers on the *fittingness* of Jesus' death on a cross. The problem with Telfer's suggestion is that almost nothing survives of Achilles' teaching. The main butress for his suggestion is the tangential point that both Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius speak positively of Achilles.[99] Cross' objection to a third party source is well taken in that despite the continuity of thought, the authors' individual identities come through, thus casting doubt on any obvious use of a common text.[100]

The most plausible explanation for the literary connection between Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius of Alexandria is that the young Alexandrian cleric actually

[97] Cross, *The Study of St. Athanasius*.
[98] W. Telfer's review of F.L. Cross' "The Study of St. Athanasius" in *JTS* Vol. 47 No. 1 (1946), 88-90.
[99] Telfer, "Review", 90.
[100] Cross, *The Study of St Athanasius*, 15.

appreciated the theological thinking of Eusebius of Caesarea and deliberately employed his teaching in his apologetics of the late 330's.[101] Cross dismisses this possibility because of the tensions between Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius of Alexandria in the 330's, but this perspective assumes the precise position this chapter is trying to diminish. Cross, on this matter, holds Athanasius in low estimation assuming the bishop allowed personal differences to blinker a sound theology. From reading Athanasius, it is clear that he did not hold such a hatred for Eusebius of Caesarea. It seems entirely possible that Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius agreed on the purpose of the incarnation.[102] The more the reader compares the theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius the more the parallels emerge. As previously discussed, Athanasius' exegesis of Proverbs 8.22-25 shares many common points with Eusebius' understanding. Both bishops were equally dismissive of Paul of Samosata and articulate his heresy in similar language.[103]

The literary association between these two prominent fourth century thinkers becomes explicit in Athanasius' *On the Decrees of Nicaea*. The best account of the Council of Nicaea is Eusebius of Caesarea's *Letter to His See,* preserved as an appendix to Athanasius' *On the Decrees.* Lewis Ayres' article "Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Word Homoousios: Rereading the De Decretis" draws attention to Athanasius' strategic

[101] I have already discussed the complications with the dating of the double-treatise in Chapter 3 but there is a general consensus for authorship in the 330's.

[102] The literary connection between Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius would be strengthened if the fragments entitled the *Expositions on the Psalms* attributed to Athanasius were authentic. Scholars such as Grillmeier note that the *Expositions* betray "a systematic, sometimes literal use" of Eusebius' *Commentary on Psalms*. While Migne in his *PG* 27 thought the *Expositions* an authentic work of Athanasius, they are now regarded as Pseudo-Athanasian. A nice summary is offered in Christopher Stead's "St. Athanasius on the Psalms" in *VC* 39, (1985), 65-78 where he conducts an analysis between the *Expositions* and the undoubtedly genuine *Letter to Marcellinus.* Stead once accepted the authenticity of the *Expositions* but later rejected that thesis.

[103] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical Theology* 1.18-20 (albeit his condemnation of Paul is part of his polemic against Marcellus) and Athanasius, *Oration* 1.25, 38; 2.13.

use of the prolific historian from Caesarea.[104] *On the Decrees* was written around 351, long after Eusebius of Caesarea died, but Athanasius invokes the Caesarean bishop to his purposes.[105] *On the Decrees* not only preserves Eusebius' explanation of the Nicene Creed, but Athanasius proudly displays this separate composition to make his case. There are several features of this reference that demand attention. Early in the work, Athanasius explains the "paradox" of Eusebius of Caesarea's signing of the Nicene Creed.[106] It probably falls into the category of "paradox" because this Eusebius was in error at the start of the council but later admitted his mistakes and came to the correct conclusions. The record from Antioch's Council and Eusebius of Caesarea's *Letter to his See* bear witness to this *volte face.* Athanasius then says, "accordingly I have subjoined at the end the letter of Eusebius, that you may know from it the disrespect towards their own doctors shown by Christ's enemies, and singularly by Acacius himself".[107] What does Athanasius mean when he comments on Acacius and his affiliates' "disrespect towards their own doctors"? Some, like Ayres, have interpreted this to mean that Acacius, an "Arian" in Athanasius' mind, even disrespected his own "Arian" ancestor, Eusebius of Caesarea. This reading means that Athanasius was drawing attention to Eusebius of Caesarea's "Arianism" when he appended the *Letter*. This interpretation holds that Athanasius was accusing Acacius of ignoring his "Arian" forebears because "Arians", who are "Christ's enemies", regularly ignore their forebears. Why would Athanasius chastise Acacius for not listening to the "Arians" who went before him? This

[104] Lewis Ayres, "Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Term homoousios: Rereading the De Decretis" *JECS*, Vol 12, No. 3, (2004), 337-359.
[105] Theodoret *EH* 1.12 and Socrates *EH* 1.8 cite parts of this letter and claim Eusebius of Caesarea as a pro-homoousion witness.
[106] Interestingly, his name appears in fifth place under the Palestinian province heading even as the ranking Metropolitan. Socrates' suggestion at *EH* 1.8 that the church historian was slow to sign the Creed might be the best explanation.
[107] Athanasius, *On the Decrees,* 3.

is an inferior reading. It is more likely to presume that Athanasius was accusing Acacius of subverting the theology of his predecessor in the Caesarean see. In other words, Athanasius was not accusing Acacius of disregarding his own "Arian" heritage, but rather drawing attention to the incongruity between their own "Arian" thinking and that of their influential predecessor whom they are falsely claiming as a witness. There is also the secondary accusation that the "Arians" trample the theological understandings of the luminous fathers because this is what the "Eusebians" do. On this reading, Athanasius was drawing attention to Eusebius of Caesarea as an orthodox foil to Acacius. Eusebius of Caesarea was to be trusted against the impertinent "Arian" Acacius. While Eusebius was at one time in the wrong, he paradoxically self-corrected and accurately interpreted the creed, unlike Acacius. In sum, Athanasius did not append Eusebius' letter to show that he was a turncoat or that he blindly submitted to Alexandrian leadership, but rather that he was a Caesarean "doctor" who got it right after all but who is now being ignored by Acacius. Where Ayres is more correct is in stating, "Athanasius paid close attention to Eusebius' letter as he formulated his own defense of Nicaea's terms".[108] Athanasius did not qualify Eusebius of Caesarea's glosses on the Nicene watchwords, thus allowing the testimony of the historian to stand on its own. In other words, Athanasius tacitly affirmed Eusebius of Caesarea's account of the Nicene Council and the meaning of the Formula. Like the theological consequences of the incarnation, Athanasius basically agreed with Eusebius of Caesarea on Nicaea.

## 5.4 Concluding Analysis

[108] Ayres, "Athanasius' Initial Defense", 353.

Given the church historian's early defense of Arius, Luibheid was probably correct when he stated that Athanasius "distrusted" Eusebius of Caesarea.[109] That these two prominent figures had their differences is beyond doubt. Despite these sincere disagreements, Athanasius had few negative things to say about the Caesarean leader. The textual evidence actually yields a nuanced relationship where Eusebius of Caesarea is treated differently from, say, Asterius. Athanasius' polemic distanced Eusebius of Caesarea from his more strident opponents within the "Eusebians" and the "Arians". Despite the fact Eusebius of Caesarea probably infuriated Athanasius on occasion, like his speech in Jerusalem in 335 when Arius was pardoned, any harsh polemic against the famous Caesarean bishop is elusive.

Given Eusebius of Caesarea's clear identification with Arius in his *Letter to Euphration* and *Letter to Alexander*, we have to ask why Athanasius was rather lenient on him. The most obvious answer is that the Caesarean bishop signed the Nicene Creed and never openly regretted doing so. In Athanasius' later polemics he is adamant that Nicaea's Formula was his standard for acceptance. Eusebius' signing saved him from the "Eusebians" who could not agree to it wholeheartedly. It is true that Eusebius of Nicomedia signed Nicaea's Formula, but every indication is that he was disgruntled with the anathemas and altogether unsettled with its conclusions. He later recanted. This would mean that Nicaea became an important benchmark for Athanasius well before the 350's when he began his explicit defense of the creed. Moreover, if Eusebius' *Theophany* was "a catechetical manual on the basic teachings of post-Nicene Christianity", as one recent work calls it, and the argument that it motivated Athanasius' double apology is found convincing, this could go some way in explaining this more

[109] Luibheid, "Eusebius of Caesarea", 299.

amiable treatment.[110] This again points to the importance of theology in Athanasius' polemic. If politics was what governed "Arianism", then Eusebius of Caesarea ought to have been verbally crushed. Alternatively, Athanasius recognized what modern scholarship has now made clear, namely, that Eusebius of Caesarea was an independent, non-"Arian" theologian. From here, there is the more tangential proposal of their shared appreciation for Origen. Athanasius was more favorable to Origen's legacy than some assume. Athanasius' most obvious gesture towards Origen comes in *On the Decrees* where he is treated graciously as "labour-loving".[111] More importantly, Athanasius invokes Origen against the "Arians". Given Eusebius of Caesarea's reverence for Origen, it is possible that this was a point of mutual respect that garnered an unspoken truce.[112] It may also have been the case that Athanasius simply treated Eusebius of Caesarea kindly because of his eminence and age. Eusebius of Caesarea was nearly 40 years older than Athanasius and probably close to 75 years old at Tyre's proceedings. While age in itself would not account for clemency, for Eusebius of Nicomedia was also much older than Athanasius and that did not spare him from rhetorical venom, when it is combined with a career of responsible writing, piety, scholarship, and deference, it could account for less hostility. There could be a more sinister reason for Athanasius' moderation, such as his fear that alienating the great Eusebius of Caesarea would have been too high a political price to pay. In other words, Athanasius may have withheld judgment on Eusebius of Caesarea for the same reasons that he withheld judgment of

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[110] Simmons, *Universal Salvation,* 94 where he also states that 70% of the *Theophany* reflects passages in Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospel* and *Demonstration of the Gospel*, thus strengthening the theological tie across a wider range of texts.
[111] Athanasius, *On the Decrees,* 27.
[112] Eusebius, *EH,* Bk. 6 is dominated by Origen where the church historian presents him as, among other virtues, indefatigable, thus corresponding to Athanasius' depiction.

Constantine, though the emperor certainly made decisions against the Alexandrian's will. Whatever the reason was, Athanasius did not tarnish everyone with whom he disagreed with the "Eusebian" and "Arian" brush.

This reality confronts a major tenet (iii. at the end of chapter one) of the extreme revision of the "Arian controversy". Athanasius' refusal to impugn Eusebius of Caesarea shows that he was a man of more restraint, for whatever reason, than the revisionists acknowledge. If "Arianism" and "those around Eusebius" were rhetorical constructs for anyone at odds with Athanasius, the reader would expect Eusebius of Caesarea comprehensively placed in these categories, perhaps with the same regularity as Asterius and Arius. Athanasius, at least with respect to the famous church historian, had specific, theological parameters for what made a "Eusebian".

## Chapter 6: Constantine and the "Arians"

In the same way that the "Arian Controversy" revisionists overlook the relationship between Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea, there is also a striking omission in that they give little attention to the witness of Constantine's correspondence as it pertains to "Arianism".[1] For patristic scholarship, the dominant feature in Constantinian studies is the effort to discern the authenticity of the emperor's religious convictions. How sincere was Constantine's Christianity? Few have recognized the disproportionate preoccupation with Constantine's religious persuasions at the expense of discerning his role in the wider context.[2] Barnes is most certainly correct when he avers that scholarship has for too long been engrossed in the question of Constantine's Christianity without appraising the primary sources to understand his decisions within the rich matrix of the empire.[3]

Writing a chapter about Constantine in a theological dissertation presents at least three problems. Firstly, Constantine arrests the scholarly imagination and still provokes many monographs. The number of monographs authored in just the last few years makes

[1] For example, Wiles seems uninterested in Constantine's bearing on "Arianism". Both Ayres' *Nicaea* and Gwynn's *Eusebians* withhold sustained discussions on Constantine's role in these disputes.
[2] T.D. Barnes concludes his "Emperor and Bishops, A.D. 324-344: Some Problems" in *The American Journal of Ancient History* No. 3 (1978), 53-75 with a call for a more tedious appraisal of Constantine's life. In many ways he met his own challenge with *Constantine and Eusebius*. David Potter in his *Constantine the Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3-4 does a nice job of articulating this one-sided fascination.
[3] It is unfortunate that so much of Constantine's life is known from the Christian commentators Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesarea. It is easy to reach the false conclusion that Constantine did nothing in his rule except think about the Christian faith. It is most regrettable that the pagan Praxagoras of Athens' panegyric is lost. The antagonistic historians, like Zosmius, lived long after Constantine.

the case.[4] To synthesize these works proves difficult because the approaches and conclusions of these monographs are often, and appropriately, in tension with one another. Secondly, the years of particular interest for this study are the ones most nebulous in the records of Constantine's career. One recent work refers to Constantine's life between 324 and 337 as the "truly dark period, in which the course of events is often obscure" to the point that a coherent narrative is "impossible".[5] Even so, what can be gathered with certainty demands attention. Thirdly, the best Constantinian scholars are not theologians, but classicists. Constantine is best understood as the leading politician of the vast Roman Emperor, not as a Christian theologian. In other words, most theologians hold a skewed perception of seeing Constantine simply as the emperor who became a Christian and the one who called the Nicene Council. This perspective fails to see the emperor as a much larger figure tugged in many directions. It is only in the context of his administrative responsibilities across the empire that his bearing on church history can be fully appreciated.

The question that preoccupies this chapter is not whether or not Constantine was a sincere Christian, but rather what his words and actions reveal about the alleged "Arian" alliance. Everyone knows Constantine was implicated in ecclesiastical politics, but given what is known about Constantine the man, do his actions support the concept of "Arianism" as Athanasius later presented it? If the "Arians" and the "Eusebians" are merely Athanasian constructs as the revisionists contest, is Constantine's behavior

[4] K.M. Girardet, *Der Kaiser und sein Gott: das Christentum im Denken und in der Religionspolitik Konstantins des Grossen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010); P. Stephenson, *Constantine: Roman Emperor. Christian Victor* (London, 2010); C.M. Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* 2nd Edition (London: Routledge, 2010); R. Van Dam, *Remembering Constantine at the Milvian Bridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty*; John Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Potter, *Constantine* and even a re-issuing of Ramsay MacMullen's 1969 monograph *Constantine* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014).
[5] Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty*, 1.

intelligible at all? Positing the "Eusebians" and the "Arians" as rhetorical *topoi* has unintended consequences for Constantinian scholarship. This chapter will argue that the interpretation of the post-Nicene years that wants to eliminate the "Arian Controversy" is largely incongruous with the prevailing consensus on Constantine the emperor. In exploring the intersection of the revisionism of the "Arian Controversy" and the personality of Constantine, the more far-fetched conclusions of the revisionists leave Constantine looking gullible, fickle, and confused. Despite the many monographs on the emperor, one commonality among the more recent ones is that Constantine emerges as an informed leader, an adept statesman, or, at the very least, a "highly skillful politician".[6]

Constantine's importance for this question intensifies because he remains one of the few voices on the "Arian" question between the Council of Nicaea in 325 and his death in 337. A glimpse at the thirty-four documents collected by H.G. Opitz reveals that no fewer than ten come from Constantine, making him the most prolific single author. Since Athanasius developed his polemic no earlier than 338, the evidence of the emperor's letters bears directly on this matter. What the emperor says about these groups; namely the "Arians" and the "Eusebians" are non-Athanasian dependent and integral to his larger political program. This chapter raises a number of questions. Did Athanasius somehow influence the emperor in the mid 320's before he was bishop? Did Constantine think there was a group resembling Athanasius' "Eusebians"? If "Arianism" was a loose rhetorical construct, then how is the imperial reaction interpreted? To begin answering these questions I will try to outline the trajectory of recent Constantinian scholarship to understand his leadership style.

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[6] Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty,* 2.

## 6.1 Constantine's Personality and Leadership

Interestingly, the same enigma that fosters so many works on Constantine's religious convictions is that which opens up so many questions about the threat of "Arianism"; namely, Constantine's apparent erraticism. As a quick overview, the facts seem to be that Constantine, having defeated Licinius in September 324, chose Ancyra for a large meeting of clergymen to establish the unity of the church. For what appears to be trivial reasons, he reneged his initial decision and convoked the bishops to Nicaea where they expelled Arius and two supporters.[7] Within months, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea were exiled because of a refusal to sign the anathemas. Constantine penned a most vicious attack against Eusebius of Nicomedia and disseminated it to his parishioners.[8] He also threatened other bishops lest they form an allegiance to Eusebius of Nicomedia.[9] Sometime around 327 or 328, the emperor invited Arius to court and eventually restored him, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Theognis of Nicaea to their positions.[10] In 331, at a meeting in Psamathia outside Nicomedia, Constantine exonerated Athanasius from the alleged charges of the Melitians.[11] In 333, Constantine unleashed a rancorous letter against Arius, undoing what he did five years previously.[12] In 334 and 335, Constantine sanctioned councils to try Athanasius for

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[7] Opitz, *Urkunde* 20 is the letter from Constantine that survives only in Syriac describing the change of venue from Ancyra to Nicaea. One of the reasons for the change is that Nicaea is said to have a more temperate climate. He also detailed how Nicaea was an easier location for the Italians, though the signatures reveal few Italians (and few westerners in general) attended the council. The more provocative hypothesis, though unsubstantiated, is that Eusebius of Nicomedia somehow convinced Constantine to move the council to his metropolitan district, Bithynia, and away from the auspices of Marcellus of Ancyra.
[8] Opitz, *Urkunde* 27.
[9] Opitz, *Urkunde* 28.
[10] Optiz, *Urkunde* 29 is Constantine's letter to Arius inviting him to court. *Urkunde* 32 is a letter to Alexander of Alexandria commanding the bishop to readmit Arius.
[11] That Athanasius was exonerated is recorded in *Festal Letter* 4 from 332. Cf. *Festal Letters* trans. Henry Burgess, *The Festal Epistles of S. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1854).
[12] Opitz, *Urkunde* 34.

largely the same charges from which he was exonerated in 331. He then commissioned the re-admission of Arius at Jerusalem in 335 and deposed Athanasius in Constantinople, expelling him to Gaul by imperial fiat.[13] In sum, Constantine's attitude towards Eusebius of Nicomedia went from bitter hatred to restoration then to ingratiation. Regarding Arius, he expelled him, then recalled him, then censored and expelled him again, then recalled him again. With Athanasius, he exonerated him and then expelled him. Why did Constantine vacillate in his attitude towards these personalities?

The student not only needs to explain these positional shifts, but also what A.H.M. Jones called Constantine's "extraordinary outbursts".[14] Or, as Alföldi affirmed, Constantine was a man who "often fell into fury and then his passions knew no control".[15] It is one thing to explain the emperor's deviation in sympathies, but another to interpret why the most senior official in the empire acted with such verbal violence regarding inter-Christian conflicts. What becomes most surprising in a study of Constantine, then, is not his change in perspective, but the manner in which he delivered his thoughts. Historiographers and theologians have explained Constantine's fluctuations differently. One common explanation for Constantine's shifts essentially blames it on his incompetence both as a leader and in theological matters. So Bright, for example, articulates this classic position:

> "the caprice and fickleness which were among his most obvious weaknesses made him often contradict, in effect, his apparently fixed resolutions in favour of the Church; and, as if by a strange irony of fate,

[13] There is an interesting debate as to whether the Council of Tyre or Constantine expelled Athanasius to Gaul. It is clear that Athanasius wants his readers to believe that a legitimate church council never deposed him. The fact that no bishop replaced Athanasius in Alexandria from 335-337 is strong evidence that Constantine played an integral part in these decisions.
[14] A.H.M. Jones. *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1948), 191.
[15] Andrew Alföldi. *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* trans. Harold Mattingly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 29.

> the autocrat who, immediately after the triumph of Catholicism and Nicaea, had been ready to persecute Arians, had subjected heretics and schismatics…to burdensome civil obligations, and had afterwards proscribed heretical worship, even in private houses, by a law which produced, we are told, much insincere conformity,- this Constantine fell so absolutely under the influence of advisors bent on undermining Catholicism, as to become their instrument in schemes which he could not penetrate, and to receive baptism at the hands of a prelate whom the Nicene Council had been hardly able *not* to condemn".[16]

For Bright, Constantine's deviations indicate that others pushed him around and used him as a tool for whatever they wanted to do. When it came to church matters, Constantine was boxing above his weight, or, in the words of a recent study, he "did not know his right from his left".[17] The problem is that this interpretation does not square with the conclusions of many Constantinian scholars.

A short survey of the authorities on Constantine's reign will prove beneficial for processing his vacillations. Jacob Burckhardt's *Die Zeit Constantins des Grossen*, remains a fruitful place to start. Burckhardt memorably addressed Constantine's actions in the early fourth century and came to the conclusion that the emperor was a Machiavellian despot who used Christianity for his political gains.[18] Burckhardt reasoned that the only explanation for why Constantine continued to permit pagan practices after his Milvian Bridge experience was because he recognized Christianity's utility and could feign fidelity to harness its popularity. Constantine's cold calculation explained any inconsistencies. Parts of Burckhardt's work are now viewed as anachronistic for placing Constantine in the mold of later political ideologies, but he casts

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[16] William Bright, *The Age of the Fathers, being Chapters in the History of the Church During the Fourth and Fifth Centuries,* Vol. 1 (London: Logmans, Green and Co.,1903), 162.
[17] Edwards, *Religions,* 180.
[18] Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Zeit Constantins des Grossen* trans. Moses Hadas *The Age of Constantine the Great* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1956).

a long shadow as even modern biographies share striking similarities to this well-known work.[19] Burckhardt's thesis was a cogent explanation of Constantine's seeming unpredictability. He was a man of expediency rather than principle. Scholars such as Averil Cameron have dampened this view demonstrating, among other things, that pragmatics played a role in Constantine's changes, especially his continued openness to paganism. How much control did the emperor actually have over legislation? Even absolute power is tempered by constraints. It must be incorrect to see Constantine making decisions in a vacuum as if there were no other hindrances. Moreover, would it have been judicious to act in such a reactionary way when the empire remained overwhelmingly pagan?[20] Burckhardt's thesis also blurred Constantine's clear attraction to Christianity and how he undisputedly helped the church.

Several eminent Constantinian scholars offered a different interpretation from Burckhardt's dark depiction. Even a more hostile scholar like Otto Seeck saw more sincerity then Burckhardt.[21] Norman Baynes challenged these more skeptical thinkers and devoted his Raleigh Lecture of 1929 to marshaling evidence in favour of Constantine's earnestness when it came to a Christian conversion.[22] Hermann Dörries also salvaged Constantine from this gloomier rendering by portraying him as a forerunner to twentieth century conceptions of tolerance.[23] Dörries hypothesized that Constantine

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[19] Both Bardill's *Constantine* of 2012 and Potter's *Constantine* of 2013 want to revive parts of Burckhardt's thesis.

[20] Averil Cameron in "The Reign of Constantine, A.D. 306-337" in *The Cambridge Ancient History* Vol. 12 eds. Alan Bowman, Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 107-108. As for pagan images on coins, it should be noted that coins are inherently conservative and slow to change. Some images are a poor reflection of a leader's convictions as the goddess Britannia's appearance on British currency does not entail that David Cameron worships her.

[21] Otto Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt,* Band I (Berlin: Siemenroth & Troschel, 1897)

[22] Norman Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1929).

[23] Hermann Dörries, *Constantine and Religious Liberty* trans. Roland Bainton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).

saw paganism as a declining system but one that could be assimilated into his conception of Christianity. Constantine's continued charity towards the pagans marks not duplicity, but an openhandedness that typified his disposition. Therefore, Constantine can be appreciated for his "political sagacity" without concluding that he was a complete manipulator.[24]

In more recent times, H.A. Drake contended persuasively that Burckhardt's thesis only makes sense if we see Constantine as a rigid Christian.[25] The question is not whether or not Constantine was a Christian, but rather what kind of Christian he became. For Drake, Constantine was a latitudinarian whose behavior can be explained by his variety of Christianity. Like Dörries, Drake illustrates that Constantine reserved his animus not for those holding certain religious doctrines, but for vociferous non-conformists. Concerning political agitators, Constantine had little patience. To see Constantine's leniency towards pagans after the Milvian Bridge episode as *un-Christian* is to impose an unnecessarily inelastic type of Christianity as the litmus test. That Constantine permitted pagan worship after he became a Christian should not call into question his authenticity, but rather show his graciousness. After all, he saw the impotency of iconoclastic decrees when Diocletian and Galerius implemented the Great Persecution to Christianity's prosperity.[26] In this vein, it is possible to understand Constantine's agitation with Arius and Athanasius as determined by the clergymen's inflexible attitudes.

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[24] Dörries, *Constantine,* 32.
[25] Drake, *Constantine and the* Bishops; Cf. Drake's "Constantine and Consensus" in *Church History* Vol. 64 No. 1 (1995), 1-15.
[26] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.48-60 contains Constantine's letters to the provincials following his defeat of Licinius. He speaks of Diocletian's persecution.

Holding the view that Constantine had a "large tent", profuse understanding of the Christian faith still fails to explain his occasional impudence. Against the "tolerant" Constantine, Averil Cameron argues back "that the man who expressed himself in the violent language used in the letters preserved in the Appendix to Optatus' *De Schismate Donastistarum,* the lengthy harangues recorded by Eusebius or the virulent language attributed to him by Athanasius was really a devotee of religious toleration is hard to believe".[27] The emperor's violent effrontery looks anything but accommodating.

Thus, among all these recent studies, there exists some tension in the evaluations as they pertain to Constantine's outbursts. He upheld tolerance, but only so far. There are parts of Constantine's life where he looks like a 21st century, high-minded liberal who wanted to accommodate as many views as possible. This must be balanced with the evidence that shows his crushing of obstinate disturbers. There was room for a diversity of beliefs under allegiance to the One God, but there were exceptions that must be abrasively cast off. Constantine's tolerance must be understood in conjunction with his calculated shifts in policy, including his deliberate distortions, which were designed to enlarge his solitary leadership.[28] In these polyvalent interpretations of Constantine's political approach, what is certain is that few see him as a "thoroughly incompetent judge".[29] Alternatively, the Constantine of the sources is "an intelligent man who read his own tongue with great fluency".[30] Potter's biography holds these two poles of Constantinian scholarship together and captures well its consensus. Constantine's "aim

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[27] Cameron, "The Reign", 108.
[28] Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty,* 2f.
[29] The phrase is from T.G. Elliott's "Constantine's Preparations for the Council of Nicaea", *The Journal of Religious History,* Vol. 17 No. 2 (1992), 131 in which the question is asked whether the disputants thought Constantine mentally deficient.
[30] Edwards' *Religions,* 199 concludes his chapter on Constantine's integrity with a remark on his ability.

was first and foremost to wield more power than anyone else in the world and the exercise of that power was his paramount concern" but he "would welcome fellow worshippers with open arms, help others see things his way, but he would not compel them".[31] He was a man who thought one "must always respect the values of the ruled and act accordingly".[32] What becomes clear is that these studies of Constantine's life are as hard to square with the incompetency conclusion exemplified by Bright as they are with the revisionist thesis of a rhetorical "Arianism".

If the prevailing consensus of Constantinian scholarship is that the emperor was politically savvy and, for the most part, inclined to act with latitude, what are the consequences for thinking "Arianism" a construct? The remainder of this chapter will argue that Constantine's outbursts make most sense if Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia acted as moving targets who advanced their cause with considerable disturbance. Constantine grew agitated with those threatening his inclusive tendencies. The apparent inconsistencies in Constantine's policy can be interpreted as natural responses to active campaigns in a nasty, large-scale dispute. The more the revisionists portray Athanasius' "Arians" and "Eusebians" as artificial constructs, the more impulsive and irrational Constantine appears. The conclusions of Barnes, Potter, Drake, Edwards and others do not permit the view that Constantine wrote violently against a non-entity, thereby creating unnecessary disturbances where none otherwise existed. The more extreme revisionist thesis requires an incompetent Constantine. It is now time to turn to the primary sources to appraise Constantine's involvement in ecclesiastical politics.

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[31] Potter, *Constantine,* 3, 299.
[32] Potter, *Constantine,* 299.

## 6.2 Constantine and the Donatists

Constantine's involvement with the Donatist schism serves as an analogy to his dealings in the "Arian Controversy". In the years after his ascension as Augustus, Constantine encountered a schismatic group of rigorists refusing the re-admission of those who capitulated in the Diocletianic and Galerian persecutions.[33] Though the question of leniency is often placed at the center of the rift, ordination decorum was equally concerning. Who had the right to appoint clergy? Interestingly, it was those whom the emperor would later brand "schismatics" who contacted him first.[34] Constantine notified the Roman bishop Miltiades and asked him to judge the affair. In his letter to the bishop, Constantine admitted "I feel it to be a very serious matter that in those provinces which divine providence has freely entrusted to my dedicatedness, and where the population is very large, the general public should be found persisting in the wrong course as if it were splitting in two, and the bishops divided among themselves".[35] Miltiades did hold the council and ruled in favour of the Donatists' opponent, Caecilian of Carthage. Again, the Donatists appealed. This time, Constantine convoked the Council of Arles in 314, which he attended as a layman. Like the small gathering in Rome the previous year, the Council of Arles ruled against the Donatists and this precipitated yet another appeal. The reader concludes with confidence from a survey of Constantine's correspondence on the Donatists, like the letter to Miltiades cited above for

[33] The beginning of the Donatist conflict is debated. The various perspectives are evaluated nicely in two articles from the 1970's. Cf. T.D. Barnes "The Beginnings of Donatism", *JTS,* Vol. 26 No. 1 (1975), 13-22 and W.H.C. Frend and K. Clancy "When Did the Donatist Schism Begin?", *JTS,* Vol. 28 No. 1 (1977), 104-109.

[34] Canon VI of Constantinople 381 echoes Antioch XI in delivering a stern warning to appealing to the emperor in ecclesiastical disputes. According to MacMullen at *Constantine,* 105, it was during the early years of the Donatists when Constantine began to differentiate between the "catholics" and "heretics", making him an early witness to this division.

[35] *Constnatine to Miltiades* in Eusebius, *EH,* 10.5.

example, that it was a weighty and personal matter for the emperor.[36] Even David Potter who refreshingly wants to look away from the religious-centered picture of Constantine can say "there was no aspect of governing during these years that tried his [Constantine's] patience so unremittingly".[37] Instead of ending the conflict, the Donatist schismatics would remain an identifiable movement for decades to come.[38] So pervasive was the growth of the Donatists during Constantine's reign that just before his death they held a council of around 270 bishops, one of the largest in North African Christian history.[39]

Too often Constantine's involvement with the Donatists is partitioned from his engrossment in the "Arian" affair. What did Constantine learn from the Donatist meetings of 313 and 314? After all, from the vantage point of the modern historian, it is hard to see Constantine's involvement with the Donatists as anything but a complete failure.[40] Did he conclude that the meeting in Rome under Miltiades was a wasted step? Did he think that his own approach was too lenient? Should he have played a more assertive role at Arles? These questions and others would certainly have crossed Constantine's mind as a new inter-Christian fracture emerged in Alexandria. The

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[36] Mark Edwards, ed. and trans., *Optatus: Against the Donatists* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), Appendices 3, 5-7, 9-10 feature the letters from Constantine on the Donatists along with those preserved in book ten of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History.*

[37] Potter, *Constantine,* 193.

[38] The same criteria used to revise the Arian controversy ought to be used to revise the Donatist conflict. Those who were rigorists did not identify themselves as "Donatists". There is, however, one reference in a letter from supposed "members" to Constantine containing a positive reference to a "Donatus party" (ex parte Donatii). Cf. Edwards, *Optatus*, 23. We do not have a library from early fourth-century writers propping-up "Donatism" or the man Donatus. Those labeled "Donatists" by their opponents probably had some areas of disagreement among themselves. On these grounds, to use the word "Donatist" or to speak of a "Donatist schism" is a misnomer. As in the opening chapter of this thesis, we see why this line of argumentation in eliminating historical categories is not particularly helpful in understanding the fourth-century church. The word "Donatist", while a misleading label, does have some utility in identifying a movement.

[39] W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 167.

[40] Edwards, *Optatus,* Appendix 9 is an encyclical to the "bishops throughout Africa and the people of the catholic church" admonishing readers against Donatism, thus indicating their growth.

Constantine of the "Arian" struggle was well acquainted with the difficulty of large-scale ecclesiastical disputes and, based on his own experience, had time to calculate his own objectives and involvement. What is interesting then, is how similarly he responded to the two clashes.

The parallel between the Donatist annoyance and Constantine's initial perception of the matters with Arius are confidently drawn because the emperor implicitly does so in his *Letter to Arius and Alexander.*[41] Constantine compares the situations saying,

> "indeed, when an intolerable madness had seized the whole of Africa because of those who had dared with ill-considered frivolity to split the worship of the population into various factions, and when I personally desired to put right this disease, the only cure sufficient for the affair that I could think of was that, after I had destroyed the common enemy of the whole world, who had set his own unlawful will against your synods, I might send some of you to help towards the reconciliation of those at variance with each other… but what a deadly wound my ears suffered, or rather my very heart, for the information that the division originating among you was much graver than those I had left behind there, so that your regions, from which I had hoped medicine would be supplied to others, were now in greater need of healing".[42]

While it is theoretically possible that the existing problem in "the whole of Africa" was something other than the Donatists, it is hard to imagine what other errors Constantine needed to remedy.[43] Moreover, the emperor took it for granted that the Alexandrians knew the other problem he had confronted openly. This association of the Donatists with the Alexandrians was clearly designed to quell the distress in the Egyptian city, but in fact, this rhetorical move orchestrated to minimalize the problems between Arius and Alexander actually elevated the trouble to the same horizon as the seriously entrenched

[41] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.64-72.
[42] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.66-68; Opitz, *Urkunde,* 17. The English translation is found in Cameron and Hall's *Eusebius: Life*, 116-117.
[43] Cameron and Hall's commentary at *Eusebius: Life,* 250-251 take this as a reference to the Donatist schism.

disturbance. By drawing this parallel, the emperor dignified the seriousness of the debate in Alexandria.

This connection is further reinforced by the literary comparisons between the letters Constantine wrote regarding the Donatists and the one written to Alexandria. The more one examines Constantine's language to the Donatists the more it parallels his language towards the "Arians". For example, in Constantine's anti-Donatist *Letter to the Catholics* that is dated to about 321, the emperor's themes are strikingly similar to the *Letter to Alexander and Arius*.[44] Firstly, both letters feature the emperor as the one seeking "concord". Ramsay MacMullen has noted Constantine's penchant for the word "concord" or *homonoia* across the Donatist controversy and in his letters to the East.[45] So, in 321 with the Donatists agitating the emperor, peace must be "maintained with the upmost concord". In 324 with the Alexandrians erupting in faction, it is no fewer than four times that the emperor calls for "harmony" of sentiment. Both ecclesiastical disputes endangered what Constantine wanted most, a unity and peace. Secondly, the emperor's harshness features prominently. That is to say, the Donatists betrayed an "ingrained wickedness" and the Alexandrians were in a "wicked spirit of contention".[46] The letters show the emperor's lack of patience for these disturbances and his tendency to dismiss them with highly punitive terms. Thirdly, on both occasions Constantine tried to rhetorically minimize the problems. The Donatist "business concerns but a few" and preoccupies "a few minds" while the entire feud in Alexandria revolves about petty

[44] Edwards, *Optatus,* 196n.
[45] MacMullen, *Constantine*, 114, 165. This theme pervades the letters from Constantine to Africa preserved in Eusebius, *EH,* 10.5.
[46] Edwards, *Optatus,* Appendix 9, 196-197. Cf Opitz, *Urkunde* 17.15.

doctrinal differences.[47] Herein lies a paradox in Constantine's treatment of divisive church movements; he admits their seriousness but then tries to dampen their fervour by minimizing their importance. From Constantine's perspective, the rift in Alexandria was to be treated similarly to the schism in Roman Africa.

This point should not be pressed for more than it is worth, but it is vital to remember that when things erupted in Alexandria, Constantine had been down the road before. Since it is hard to underestimate just how inconvenient the Donatist problem was for Constantine, his treating the "Arian" problem so similarly implies its potential, at least in the emperor's mind, to cause a serious disturbance. If Constantine's words are to be taken at face value, he saw the problem over Arius as potentially more harmful than the schismatics of North Africa. If the connection is taken in its plainest sense, it reinforces the two-sided, belligerent nature of the dispute as communicated by Athanasius. Constantine's elevating the "Arian" problem to the level of the Donatists gave the initial disagreement an inadvertent legitimacy. Now, before turning to Constantine's letters, I will make a brief diversion to study the enigmatic *Oration to the Saints* to see what, if anything, it illuminates about the "Arian" conflict.

## 6.3 Does the *Oration to the Saints* embrace "Arianism"?

In his panegyric *The Life of Constantine,* Eusebius of Caesarea promised to append a speech delivered by the emperor which Constantine himself entitled "To the Assembly of the Saints".[48] It survived in certain manuscripts under the title the *Oration to the Saints*. In the early part of the last century, the authenticity of the *Oration* was

[47] Constantine's *Letter to Alexander and Arius* repeats no fewer than twelve times how the nature of their dispute does not matter. Cf. Elliott, "Constantine's Preparations", 127.
[48] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 4.32.

fiercely questioned with doubts being cast by the likes of the brilliant historian N.H. Baynes who thought the text corrupted.[49] Subsequent scholarship has shifted considerably to accepting the validity of the *Oration.*[50] Robin Lane Fox defended the truthfulness of the speech on a number of grounds. Eusebius identifies the content of a typical Constantinian speech and these features find close parallels in the *Oration.*[51] Lane Fox also saw the allusions in the *Oration* to be grounded in Constantine's own experiences.[52] To these, Mark Edwards added a number of arguments favouring Constantinian authorship mainly by casting doubt on Eusebian provenance.[53] Likewise, T.D. Barnes and H.A. Drake receive the *Oration* as an actual speech of Constantine.[54] For Anglophonic scholarship, the authenticity of the *Oration* is now rarely questioned.

When it comes to its date and place of delivery, the details are more nebulous. Some aver that the speech fits comfortably as a Good Friday sermon as the opening line declares, "the day of the Passion is arrived". Even this creates problems because the church did not celebrate such an occasion in these years and the speech appears to address a congregation of clergymen, thus requiring the unlikelihood of their absence from their sees during Easter. This can be avoided by confining the audience to local

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[49] Baynes, *Constantine the* Great, 56. To my knowledge, few give credence to a full-fledged forgery as argued by R.P.C. Hanson in "The *Oratio ad Sanctos* Attributed to the Emperor Constantine and the Oracle at Daphne" in *JTS* Vol. 23 No. 2 (1973), 505-511.

[50] Hermann Dörries, *Das Selbstzeugnis Kaiser Konstantins* (Gottingham, 1954) shifted the burden of proof on to those who wanted to falsify the documents in Eusebius' *Life*; Potter, *Constantine,* 221-224; Edwards, *Religions,* 184f. Edwards says R.P.C. Hanson, who died in 1988, was the last serious scholar to doubt Constantinian provenance.

[51] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 628-629.

[52] Lane Fox, *Pagans,* 631.

[53] M. Edwards, *Constantine and Christendom* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), xviiif. For example, why does the *Oration* permit pagan sacrifice when Eusebius says Constantine forbade it? Cf. Edwards, *Religions,* 185.

[54] T.D. Barnes "Constantine's *Speech to the Assembly of the Saints* Place and Date of Delivery" in *JTS* (2001), 26-36; H. Drake "Suggestions of Date in Constantine's Oration to the Saints" in *The American Journal of Philology* Vol. 106 No. 3 (1985), 335-349; Edwards *Constantine,* ix, xviiif; Edwards "The Arian Heresy", 379-387.

church leaders in a large city. As for its year of delivery, at least one Constantinian scholar concedes the question of chronology as beyond reach.[55] That T.D. Barnes has argued forcefully for more than one date across his career reveals the complexity of the question.[56] The one piece of internal evidence that bears on the date is Constantine's reference to a recent defeat of a persecuting emperor. Even if this is granted, the speech could still have at least three settings. It could reference the downfall of Maxentius in 312, Licinius' vanquishing of Maximinus in 313, or the conquest of Licinius in 324. Lane Fox noted that the added details of this persecuting emperor taking over Diocletian's army and losing successive battles could only apply to Licinius.[57] Edwards is less certain that Licinius could be described as taking over Diocletian's army.[58] As a result, respected scholars marshal the evidence to different conclusions. Edwards argues for an earlier date for the *Oration* and thinks a 315 delivery in Rome to best fit the text. K.M. Girardet has also defended the pre-Nicene date of around this time.[59] Lane Fox places the speech on Good Friday of 325, which finds some corroboration from Barnes, though they disagree on the location.[60]

While the dating of the *Oration* may be out of reach until more evidence materializes, two points can be added to these intricate studies. Firstly, if the *Oration* is a "tract in favour of theocratic monarchy", it would make most sense that the speech was

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[55] Drake, "Suggestions", 349.
[56] T.D. Barnes, "The Emperor Constantine's Good Friday Sermon" in *JTS* Vol. 27 No. 2 (1976), 414-423 that declares 317 for its delivery against Barnes, "Constantine's *Speech"*; Cf. Mark Edwards "Notes on the Date and Venue of the *Oration to the Saints* (*CPG* 3497)" in *Byzantion* Tome 77 (2007), 149-150.
[57] Lane Fox, *Pagans,* 632.
[58] Edwards, *Constantine,* xxvii.
[59] Girardet, *Der Kaiser,* 108-123.
[60] Lane Fox, at *Pagans* 643 thinks "the great city" must be Antioch. The reference to "Daphne" is an allusion to a local suburb and a patroness of the city. He goes as far as to place the speech at the conclusion of the Council of Antioch in 324. Barnes "Constantine's *Speech*" 28-30 says Nicomedia is more likely because it could be described as "recently liberated". It was also the only major city that was the home of a persecuting emperor. Edwards thinks Rome is more plausible because of the tension expressed between the speaker and the place of delivery.

from a time when Constantine was a true monarch.[61] That is to say, if the *Oration* is about one emperor reflecting one God who, in turn, has bearing on one empire, Constantine was probably the one ruler of Rome, something that only happened after 324. Since this theology of singularity was so important to Eusebius, it would make sense that he appended a speech truly reflecting that situation. Secondly, there is Eusebius of Caesarea's presentation of the speech. Of the fifteen letters from Constantine preserved in the *Life,* they all date after Constantine vanquished Licinius the second time in 324.[62] The emphasis in the *Life* is what happens after the mid 320's. This being said, if the documented evidence in the main body of the *Life* all comes after late 324, a similar date for the *Oration* makes sense. The point is that the flow of the entire work favours the appendage of a speech deriding Licinius, rather than an earlier figure barely mentioned in the *Life*, like Maxentius, or one never mentioned in the *Life,* like Maximinus. More important than the date of the *Oration,* it is its theology that demands evaluation.

Does the *Oration* betray sympathy with Arius? In 1986, Lane Fox could only say that Constantine was "dangerously close to Arius's heresy" when he spoke of the Son's natural birth in contrast to an eternal one.[63] In 1991, P. Davies saw a pervasive "Arianism" in the *Oration* and thought it could only be explained by "Eusebian" insertions.[64] Davies said the *Oration* not only confirmed multiple *ousiai* in the Godhead, but also established the temporal pre-existence of the Father to the Son. For Davies,

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[61] Edwards, *Constantine,* xxii.
[62] While the letters preserved by Eusebius date until after 324, B.H. Warmington's "Eusebius of Caesarea's Versions of Constantine's Laws in the Codes" in *SP* Vol. 24 (1993), 205 shows that much of the legislation quoted by Eusebius comes form before 324. Eusebius treated Constantine's epistles differently than the legislation he passed in terms of what he was doing in the *Life.*
[63] Lane Fox, *Pagans,* 646.
[64] P.S. Davies "Constantine's Editor" in *JTS* Vol. 42 No. 2 (1991), 610-618. Davies argument depends on the thesis that Eusebius of Caesarea was an active Arian, a claim questioned in the last chapter.

Constantine was an anti-"Arian" who was made more "Arian" by his biographer. T.D. Barnes dismissed Davies' thesis as conjectural but did assert that Constantine's calling the Son a "second god" is surely "Arian" and would be an impossible occurrence after Nicaea.[65] The Constantinian biographers who discuss the *Oration* follow this trend and often find it "Arian".[66] Does the theology in the *Oration* actually look at all like the theology of Arius as presented in his letters?

It is correctly noted by just about everyone that the *Oration* does not employ any of the hallmarks of the Nicene Formula. If the speech addressed a mass of bishops after the Council, it would almost have to express some semblance to the ecumenical conclusion. It is inconceivable that the *Oration* was delivered shortly after the Council of Nicaea while failing to capture even one echo of the meeting, especially given the likelihood that Eusebius of Caesarea did not falsify Constantine's participation at Nicaea. Against Lane Fox and Davies, Edwards correctly maintains that the *Oration* does not feature an obvious "Arianism".[67] For Edwards, Constantine's mentioning of a "second god" in chapter ten of the *Oration* comes in the context of the emperor's discussion of Plato.[68] Even if the emperor referred to the Son being "second", which is actually unclear, he was only expressing the Son's derivation from the Father, a position that became commonplace in the East even among thinkers like Athanasius.[69] As discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, any Christian theology that engages the New

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[65] Barnes, "Constantine's *Speech*", 34-35. Again, Edwards' argument that the *Oration* does not look like a composition of Eusebius of Caesarea rules out Davies' thesis.
[66] Potter, *Constantine,* 222n.3.
[67] Edwards, "The Arian Heresy".
[68] Edwards, *Religions,* 188-191.
[69] M. Edwards in "Nicene Theology and the Second God" in *SP* Vol. 40 (2006), 191-195 shows that calling the Son "second" is something non-"Arian" theologians did. Moreover, there is no indication in Arius' letters or in Athanasius' polemic that the issue was calling the Son "second". It is also worth noting that multiple ousiai in the Godhead neither features prominently in the *Oration* nor is it Alexander's main accusation against Arius.

Testament is in some sense "subordinationist" because even the Son says the "Father is greater".[70] Moreover, Constantine does not positively assert multiple *ousiai* in the Godhead preferring rather that the Son be called *Logos.* Constantine's *Oration* could just as easily be approximated to Marcellus of Ancyra's theology as to Arius' in its insistence on the divine monarchy.[71] As for Arius' salient points in his letters, not one of them appears in the *Oration.*[72]

It is interesting that the same scholars who place the *Oration* at Easter 325 are the ones who see an "Arianism" in the speech. This would mean that Constantine endorsed the theology fomenting strife in a major city in his empire. Lane Fox's conclusion that the *Oration* was delivered at the close of the Council of Antioch in 325 is particularly open to this criticism as how could Constantine be so thick as to deliver a speech advancing the precise views that the council condemned? Could the emperor have been so daft as to give an "Arian" speech within days of the Council of Antioch's sidelining the eminent Eusebius of Caesarea for sharing sympathies with Arius? It is equally difficult to conclude that Constantine openly defied the resolutions of the Council in Antioch because only a few months later he would endorse the *homoousios* to Arius' demise. Similarly, at one time Barnes identified the anonymous person behind the encomium in the *Oration* as Eusebius of Nicomedia, thus meaning that Constantine could make the mistake of praising the man who would be censored within months. For those scholars who favour this later date for the *Oration* and see "Arian" catchphrases,

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[70] John 14.28

[71] There is a long-standing thesis starting with Erik Peterson's *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935) that thought Constantine preferred "Arianism" for its more hierarchical Godhead. The problem is that Constantine could have supported the Alexandrian bishop for the same reason.

[72] The fact that the *Oration* can in no way be called "Arian" dovetails nicely with Edwards' argument for an earlier date for the *Oration* before Arius promulgated his thoughts.

Constantine appears obtuse, a position that, again, contradicts the conclusions of the emperor's recent biographers.

If this *Oration* was in fact delivered between the Council of Antioch and the Council of Nicaea, as seems possible, then Constantine had some idea of what was causing trouble in Alexandria. The fact that he could give the *Oration,* a discourse that would have lasted two hours, without definitively communicating any of the hallmarks of Arius' theology or Alexander's theology is a testament to his perceptiveness. Drake is correct in seeing Constantine's efforts in "controlling the message" to establish the right kind of church.[73] In other words, the *Oration* exemplifies Constantine's ambitions to preserve the unity of the church. His refusal to endorse either Arius' or Alexander's theological slogans shows a *via media* between these two theological discourses.[74] If the *Oration* was delivered in the midst of the upheaval with Arius, could Constantine have been so "lucky" as to not endorse either position? It seems more likely that his neutrality was a wise calculation for accommodating both positions. This is a Christian theology not lifted from others, but communicated freshly from Constantine's own mind. The mediating capacity of the *Oration* depends much on its date of delivery, yes, but if it dates after the final defeat of Licinius, it reads as an effort to dampen the fervour on both sides of the conflict and this fits well with the tone of his *Letter to Alexander and Arius.* This conclusion regarding the *Oration* reveals an eminently cognizant emperor who unpacked an organic speech designed to smooth-out theological differences. We have "an apologist whose breadth of view and fertile innovations make it possible to rank him with

[73] Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops,* 284.
[74] David Potter at *Constantine,* 222-223 comes close to this conclusion but then insists that Constantine's theology placed him in "deep water" and that Barnes was correct to detect "Arianism".

the more eminent theologians of his age".[75] This refreshing theology of the *Oration* correlates well with the one conclusion that seems to stretch across all the recent monographs on Constantine; namely, that he was shrewd leader. The content of the *Oration*, at the very least, does show that he was interested in doctrine.[76] On this reading of the *Oration,* it becomes evidence of Constantine's negotiating tendencies in a real struggle. There are other texts from Constantine's hand that have direct bearing on "Arianism" and these can now be evaluated.

## 6.4 Are the documents attributed to Constantine reliable?

The letters attributed to Constantine are preserved in a handful of places; Lactantius' *On the Deaths of the Persecutors,* Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History* and *Life of Constantine*, and Athanasius' *Apology against the Arians*. Additionally, Augustine and Optatus each preserved a few letters that the emperor wrote against the Donatists.[77] In all, about fifty-six letters can be attributed to Constantine.[78] Since Lactantius died at about the time the "Arian Controversy" broke-out and Augustine and Optatus preserve documents from the earlier rift, the key sources for this study are Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius of Alexandria. The fact that these two individuals preserved the pertinent documents casts much doubt on their authenticity. The reader of Eusebius' *Life* immediately identifies the highfalutin and embellished style of the work. Eusebius' exaggerations, aimed at exalting the emperor and offering a Christian

[75] Mark Edwards, "The Constantinian Circle and the *Oration to the Saints*" in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* eds. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 275.
[76] T.G. Elliott, "Constantine's Preparations", 132.
[77] As aforementioned, the appendices in Edwards, *Optatus* feature a handful of them.
[78] They are catalogued in Dörries, *Das Selbstzeugnis Kaiser Konstantins.* This work also collects Constantine's legislation.

apologetic, can lend the impression that he emendated, or even invented, his material. [79] Furthermore, a handful of the letters preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea place a cringing obsequiousness on the lips of the emperor praising the Caesarean bishop for his turning down the bishopric of Antioch, his literary accomplishments, and his intelligence.[80] Moreover, B.H. Warmington has noted Eusebius of Caesarea's looseness when it came to recording Constantine's legislation.[81] It was Eusebius' inclination for hyperbole that caused Burckhardt to sully the bishop as "the first thoroughly dishonest historian of antiquity". All these features force a modern reader to question the letters' authenticity.

A.H.M. Jones, at the suggestion of a colleague, discovered that the text of London Papyrus 878 matched one of Constantine's letters preserved in the *Life.*[82] This particular papyrus matched the letter issued by the emperor following the defeat of Licinius recorded in book two of the *Life*.[83] Jones concluded, "the papyrus proves beyond all reasonable doubt the authenticity of one of the Constantinian documents cited by Eusebius in the *Life,* and implies that of the rest."[84] By "the rest", Jones probably inferred the fourteen additional letters attributed to Constantine in the *Life* authored between 324 and 337. Furthermore, for Jones, this discovery supported Eusebian authorship of the *Life* in that it is hard to imagine that someone writing pseudepigraphically would gather primary documents and cite them at length. To this it might be added that forging documents, attributing them to the emperor and then distributing them would have been a hazardous practice. The imperial records could

[79] T.G. Elliott, "Eusebian Frauds in the 'Vita Constantini'" in *Phoenix* Vol. 45 No. 2 (1991) 162-171.
[80] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 3.60-61, 4.35.
[81] Warmington, "Eusebius of Caesarea's Versions", 201-207.
[82] A.H.M. Jones, "Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius's Life of Constantine" in *JEH* Vol. 5 No. 2 (1954), 196-200.
[83] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.24-42.
[84] Jones, "Notes", 199.

easily dismantle the claim. Despite the movement in the early twentieth century to question the veracity of documents, an elite scholar like Jones came down firmly in accepting the authenticity of most documents attributed to Constantine.[85] He is not alone. Cameron and Hall draw attention to the "Latinisms" behind the documents in book two of the *Life,* thus bolstering claims to authenticity.[86] Robin Lane Fox attests that it is reasonable to conclude, "Eusebius quoted his written evidence fairly".[87]

As for the letters preserved in Athanasius' *Apology against the Arians,* they too endured suspicion. Athanasius' polemical style and his burning passion to prove his innocence emit deception. Intriguingly, suggestions of Athanasian manipulation of Constantine's letters have been used in opposite directions. Heinz Kraft, for example, argued that Athanasius must have corrupted Constantine's vituperative letter against Arius.[88] By crafting such a letter to show Constantine's displeasure with Arius, Athanasius could claim imperial support for his position.[89] Alternatively, T.G. Elliott, who is at pains to show Constantine as consistently orthodox, also accused Athanasius of subterfuge when it came to his treatment of the emperor. For Elliott, Constantine was a sincere Christian unwaveringly committed to an anti-"Arian" sentiment but was falsely depicted as an "Arian" because of Athanasius' legerdemain.[90] In Elliott's estimation, Athanasius conjured up the notion that Eusebius of Nicomedia controlled the emperor. The fact that scholars speculate Athanasian corruption to opposite conclusions probably

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[85] Jones, *Constantine,* xiii-xiv.
[86] Cameron and Hall, *Life,* 16-17.
[87] Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians,* 627.
[88] Heinz Kraft, *Kaiser Konstantins religiöse Entwicklung* (Heidelberg: Habilitationsschrift, 1955); Cf. Dörries, *Constantine and Religious Liberty*, 120.
[89] Opitz, *Urkunde,* 34.
[90] T.G. Elliott. "Constantine and 'the Arian Reaction after Nicaea'" in *JEH* Vol. 43 No. 2 (1992), 169-194, p. 184.

indicates that signs of drastic interpolation are not all that obvious. In short, it is not at all evident if Athanasius made Constantine more, or less "Arian".

The central problem with arguing that Athanasius invented much of what he attributes to Constantine is that the bishop includes far too much unflattering information. For example, Athanasius preserves a letter from Constantine detailing how the emperor did not recognize him and refused to "grant him an interview".[91] Following the citation of this letter, Athanasius then places his own gloss on the uncomplimentary material. The bishop appears cognizant of the letter's harsh content, thus making a modest defense of its truthfulness. Moreover, if Athanasius corrupted a letter pretending to show Constantine's dislike for Arius, then why include the information on the heresiarch's rehabilitation in 335 at Jerusalem? For instance, Athanasius includes a letter from the Council at Jerusalem in which the bishops say it was the "God-beloved emperor" who instructed that the bishops "should with simple and peaceable minds receive Arius and his fellows".[92] Moreover, the Council at Jerusalem in 335 featured a celebration of the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, thus strengthening the ties between Constantine and Arius' readmission. Athanasius could not be clearer that the emperor "threatened" him by personal "letters".[93] So, when the historiographer claims Athanasius' manipulation of Constantine's letters to bolster his own position, there must be a question of how to treat Athanasius' presentation of Constantine when it does not favour his cause. This leads to the second problem of arbitrary selectiveness. For example, because Elliott wants to defend Constantine against any "Arian" endorsement, he accuses Athanasius of exaggeration when the bishop claims Eusebius of Nicomedia

[91] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 86.
[92] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 84.
[93] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 85.

pressured Constantine while simultaneously accepting the authenticity of Constantine's anti-"Arian" letters. The difficulty lies precisely in holding the extremes in Constantine together and these extremes come from Athanasius' writings. Until there is reason to doubt the dependability of letters preserved from the patristic period, "virtually all the documents quoted by writers of the fourth and fifth centuries deserve to be accepted as authentic".[94] It is now rare to read arguments against the authenticity of Constantine's letters, including the pertinent ones preserved by H.G. Opitz.

## 6.5 Constantine's Pre-Nicene *Letter to Alexander and Arius*

Constantine's *Letter to Alexander and Arius* is a document from the emperor's hand that gathers much attention.[95] Immediately after noting the defeat of Licinius, Eusebius of Caesarea says Constantine turned his attention to a doctrinal problem. He proceeds to cite a letter with a heading to Alexander and Arius. Unfortunately, the letter is typically invoked to support a thesis of Constantine's neutrality, diplomacy, or theological ignorance. While the authenticity of the letter is not generally doubted, a handful of scholars have raised questions about its audience.

It was S.G. Hall who argued that this letter initially targeted the Council of Antioch in 325, not a group in Alexandria.[96] For Hall, the letter's frequent supplication to "you all" indicates a wider audience than Alexander and Arius as Eusebius of Caesarea's version dictates. Hall thinks Eusebius deliberately suppressed the Council of Antioch in 325 because that gathering condemned him. Paul Parvis advanced Hall's

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[94] Barnes, "Emperor and Bishops", 53; Against Pietras, *Council of Nicaea (325),* 101-127, 203-225 who wants to discredit several of Constantine's letters.
[95] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.64-72; Opitz, *Urkunde* 17. This is the fourth of fifteen Constantinian letters preserved in the *Life.*
[96] S.G. Hall, "Some Constantinian Documents in the *Vita Constantini*" in *Constantine: History, Historiography and Legend* eds. Samuel Lieu and Dominic Montserrat (London: Routledge, 1998), 87.

argument noting grammatical subtleties that point towards a gathering of bishops probably outside Alexandria.[97] For Parvis, again echoing Hall, the fact that cognates of the word "synod" appear no fewer than six times insinuates a wider audience. To these arguments might be added the phrase in the *Letter* that reconciliation would open Constantine's path to the "East".[98] While this is obviously a reference to Antioch for Hall, Robin Lane Fox thought this could aptly describe Egypt. The point is that a few scholars see Constantine's *Letter to Alexander and Arius* as a forgery, or at least a much-emended version in its surviving form, but there are reasons why this is unconvincing.

Of primary importance in Constantine's *Letter to Alexander and Arius* is how the emperor wanted these two individuals to behave in their respected positions. In other words, the theme of ecclesiastical propriety runs deeper than the inclusion or expulsion of two names. The text betrays a clear command for the lesser clergyman, Arius, to obey the more authoritative bishop. It should come as no surprise that Constantine wanted Alexander the bishop to be obeyed precisely because he was the senior figure. This was the proper working of the hierarchical machinery at which Constantine stood at the top. While some find neutrality in the emperor's treatment of the two figures, Constantine actually inveighs against Arius for not submitting to the authority of Alexander. This fits better if the letter was written to the two individuals rather than an Antiochene synod. Secondly, suggesting that Eusebius of Caesarea inserted the names of Alexander and Arius not only in the heading of this letter but also in the body means the church historian is at least partially implicated in the alleged creation of the "Arian" conflict that

[97] Paul Parvis, "Constantine's Letter to Arius and Alexander" in *SP* Vol. 39 (2006), 89-95.
[98] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.72.

revisionists impose on Athanasius.[99] That is to say, if the *Life* was composed shortly after Constantine's death in 337, this means that Eusebius posited, or at least reasserted, a feud between the deceased persons of Alexander and Arius. More importantly, Eusebius granted the narrative force by attributing such concern to the emperor. The close reader of Eusebius sees that his typical practice was to include names only with reluctance. Later in the *Life*, when discussing the turmoil at Antioch in the years following Nicaea, he states that he is withholding documents and names lest he falsely incriminate them.[100] The last chapter of this work argued that at this point in the controversy Eusebius of Caesarea was inclined to insulate Arius from condemnation rather than expose him. Succinctly stated, if the so-called *Letter to Alexander and Arius* was a manipulation on the part of Eusebius of Caesarea in which the historian inserted the names of the two individuals, then his complicity in the creation of a conflict with the presbyter at the center cannot be denied. More subjectively, the student also has to wonder how Eusebius of Caesarea could have tampered with a letter to a synod with such immunity. If the main text of the *Letter to Alexander and Arius* was actually circulated to a wide range of bishops, could Eusebius have redirected the letter so freely without someone recognizing its familiarity? As mentioned in previous chapters, one should think that in a public letter, making an emperor say something he did not would have been risky. Finally, the presence of the word "synod" in the *Letter to Alexander and Arius* need not point to Antioch's meeting in 324/325. Alexander's (or more likely Athanasius') *Henos Somatos* says the Alexandrians "assembled with almost one hundred bishops" to judge Arius.[101]

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[99] The names appear again at Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.69.
[100] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 3.55-66; It is also worth noting that Eusebius at *Life* 4.44 withholds the name of the praiseworthy person who called for the meeting in Jerusalem in 336.
[101] *Henos Somatos*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 4b.

Surely the repeated references to σύνοδος can just as easily apply to this large-scale meeting in Alexandria. So while it is agreed that some of the references in this letter are "more appropriate to a large assembly than to two individuals", this need not necessitate Antioch. The evidence for manipulation is far from convincing and would require maneuvering on the part of Eusebius of Caesarea for no apparent reason.

It is now time to analyze the *Letter to Alexander and Arius* to see why it contains a number of features that conflict with the revisionist thesis. Firstly, with the parallel to the Donatist problem fresh in mind, it is important to question what kinds of conflicts demanded imperial attention. The emperor was bombarded with requests, letters, financial stresses, and foreign policy pressures. Some of Constantine's personal decisions in 326 regarding his son Crispus and his wife Fausta show that his personal life was far from tranquil in the years around Nicaea.[102] As aforementioned, because the Christian perspectives of Lactantius and Eusebius dominate our lens for Constantine's life, it is easy to think the emperor did nothing but ecclesiastical interventions.[103] This makes the question of what prompted Constantine to interject into an inter-Christian debate in a city as far away as Alexandria all the more pressing. A geo-political leader with Constantine's jurisdiction could spend his life intervening in the conflicts of subordinates. In taking a holistic view of Constantine's leadership, he must have seen the problem in Alexandria as a serious rift. Secondly, every indication is that the problem that erupted in Alexandria caused Constantine considerable consternation. Whereas Hanson, Williams, Ayres, and Gwynn want to dampen the contentious and dichotomous atmosphere by portraying a loose confederation of theological trajectories, Constantine's

[102] Cameron, "The Reign", 96.
[103] In the important preface to the *Life,* Eusebius admits that he is focusing on Constantine's religious decisions.

*Letter to Alexander and Arius* bears witness to a harsh dispute. The emperor speaks of the church being "severely wounded" because of those who "split the worship of the population into various fractions".[104] Even though Constantine mitigates the reasons for this tension, he asserts that "the division originating among you" was more serious than previously thought.[105] Constantine speaks directly to the two named individuals saying that the dispute has "arisen between you, fellowship was repudiated, and the most holy people were divided in two and forsook the concord of the common body".[106] These lines sound rather Athanasian in signaling an acute eruption with two sides.

There is one other passage in this letter that demands analysis. Constantine remarks near the letter's conclusion, "to let you appreciate how much this distressed me, when I recently set foot in the city of Nicomedia, my intention was to press on Eastward straight away; I was already intent on visiting you and a large part of me was already with you, when the news of this business put a stop to my plans".[107] This line can be translated in at least two ways with the consequence being the place of Constantine's learning of the trouble.[108] The alternate translation than the one given here has Constantine leaving Nicomedia and learning of the conflict once departed. The current scholarship tends to side with A.H.M. Jones, Cameron, and Hall in conveying the idea that Constantine both learned of this dispute and wrote this letter from Nicomedia. If this is the case, it bears witness to an early Alexandrian-Nicomedian nexus regarding the problem with Arius. While this does not prove Eusebius of Nicomedia's involvement, it reinforces a pre-Nicene intrusion of the matter into Bithynian jurisdiction. That is to say,

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[104] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.65,66.
[105] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.68.
[106] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.69.
[107] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 2.72.
[108] Barnes, "Emperor and Bishops", 54.

news of the rift in Alexandria circulated not only to Antioch, but also to the Bithynian capital prior to the Nicene Council.

In sum, Constantine's pre-Nicene *Letter to Alexander and Arius* unleashes several arguments that the revisionists count as Athanasian rhetorical *topoi.* The emperor saw the figure of Arius as central to the conflict. He envisaged at least two sides coalescing against one another in a way that posed a serious threat to the peace. That Arius was reprimanded for not following the conventions of ecclesiastical hierarchy finds its origins with Constantine. While the letter is not a full-scale polemic against "Arianism", it certainly contained some seeds of what Athanasius would later exploit.

## 6.6 Constantine's Post-Nicene Correspondence

As mentioned at the opening of this chapter, Constantine's post-Nicene correspondence falls into the small category of emanating from a non-Athanasian dependent source and coming from someone who attended the Nicene Council and played a vital role in its debates. In studying these letters, there are three ideas that hold bearing on this dissertation's argument that will be evaluated in turn. The first of these themes is what might be labeled the inviolability of Nicaea. It is often argued that Nicaea was rather marginal until Athanasius enlisted it for his polemic in the early 350's. It is certainly the case that Nicaea's *Formula* did not hold a normative authority in the 330's and 340's. Few think its creed was a test of true faith to be affirmed by every bishop in the East. The revisionist thesis tends to conflate the creed's lack of far-reaching authority with the council's lack of authority as a gathering. It is important to understand that it was Constantine who granted the meeting stature in these so called "lost years". Immediately following the assembly in 325, Constantine dispatched letters describing its

accomplishments. The first letter to discuss is the emperor's epistle *To the Christian Congregations* that is preserved in book three of Eusebius' *Life.*[109] The most surprising feature of the letter comes in the form of the omission of both Arius' name and the precise nature of the doctrinal debate.[110] These omissions could have been designed to control any further upheaval and save Arius from unnecessary humiliation on top of what had transpired at the council. Despite this silence, Constantine positively declared the meeting at Nicaea to be both special and authoritative. For the challenges discussed, Constantine "perceived that this could only be established firmly and permanently when all of the bishops, or at least the greatest part, were convened in the same place for a council where they could discuss every point of our most holy religion".[111] In what was no doubt a rhetorical device, everything was "minutely investigated" and resolved in "unified agreement".[112] Like any good leader would do, Constantine communicated consensus and wanted to implant in the minds of the Christian congregations that any disgruntlement over agitated presbyters was now settled.

There is also the contemporaneous *Letter to the Church of Alexandria.* Also issued at the conclusion of the Council, its earliest attestation comes from Socrates.[113] Foremost, Constantine is again adamant about his own calling of the council and its authority. In order to solve the problems in the church, "at God's summoning I assembled a large number of bishops at the city of Nicaea, and I joined them in investigating the truth, though I am only one of you, who rejoices exceedingly in being

[109] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 3.17-20; Opitz, *Urkunde* 26.
[110] This fits well with Eusebius of Caesarea's aims as he discusses the pageantry and seating arrangements more than any of the arguments.
[111] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 3.17.
[112] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 3.17.
[113] Constantine, *Letter to Alexandria*; Opitz, *Urkunde,* 25; Socrates, *EH* 1.9.

your fellow-servant".[114] Moreover, "this ruling, made by the collective judgment of three hundred bishops, cannot be other than the doctrine of God, especially where the Holy Spirit has illuminated the divine will by placing it upon the minds of so many dignified persons".[115] Once again, the issues demanded "accurate examination". This pro-Nicaea language not only distinguished Constantine from his anti-conciliatory predecessor Licinius, but it is consistent with the former's pro-council legislation that represented his view that "the decisions of councils of bishops were divinely inspired".[116] Unlike the *Letter to the Christian Congregations* that focuses overwhelmingly on the question of Easter's date, the emperor's *Letter to the Alexandrians* directs serious animus against Arius who is mentioned by name and singularly held responsible for the disturbances leading to the council. Some would be tempted to say that Athanasius inserted the name "Arius" into Constantine's *Letter to the Alexandrians,* but the intended audience goes some way in explaining the differences in emphasis in these post-Nicene letters. If it were the churches in Asia Minor that were celebrating Easter with the Jews, it would make sense that Constantine's encyclical to those outside Alexandria emphasized this aspect of the council. His silence on Arius' name was only to preserve the spreading of a censored name. In a similar vein, Constantine identified Arius as the problem before the Alexandrian audience in order to return the city to proper order. Despite their differences, Constantine's first two letters after the council establish the unassailability of Nicaea.[117] More interestingly, Constantine disseminated a letter branding Arius as an

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[114] Opitz, *Urkunde,* 25.
[115] Opitz, *Urkunde,* 25.
[116] Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty,* 133.
[117] David Hunt, "Christianizing the Roman Empire: The Evidence of the Code" in *The Theodosian Code: Studies in the Imperial Law of Late Antiquity* eds. Jill Harries & Ian Wood (London: Duckworth, 1993), 153.

agent of the devil. So, when Athanasius later retrieved Nicaea as a kind of cypher for orthodoxy, he drew on two previously established motifs with seeds in imperial encyclicals, Nicaea's authority and the emperor's anger at Arius.

Having appeased Constantine with a basic formula of faith, Arius was readmitted to church fellowship, at least by those who would welcome him.[118] Between Arius' initial re-admittance in the late 320's and 333, the presbyter managed to infuriate Constantine. Somewhere around 333, the emperor issued a vituperative edict to the bishops.[119] It is in this text that we find two additional ideas demanding attention. In good polemical fashion, Constantine compared Arius to Porphyry, who "possesses the indisputable crown of being the greatest anti-Christian writer of antiquity". [120] Constantine went further to say that "those of like mind with Arius should now be called Porphyrians".[121] So formidable were Porphyry's anti-Christian works that they required regular refutation until well into the fifth century.[122] Around 324, Constantine himself "made it a capital crime to possess a copy of Porphyry's *Against the Christians*".[123] That Porphyry's teachings still posed a significant threat in the early fourth century seems clear from those works authored to refute him.[124] Seeing that Arius could never be described as anti-Christian in the way Porphyry was, the association lies firmly in the

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[118] Opitz, *Urkunde* 27 is often called "Arius' Creed" and is thought to be the document that gained him readmission.
[119] Opitz, *Urkunde* 33. Barnes and A. Martin date this document to 325 against Opitz.
[120] Simmons, *Universal Salvation,* 3.
[121] Opitz, *Urkunde* 33.
[122] Brian Croke, "The Era of Porphyry's Anti-Christian Polemic", *The Journal of Religious History,* Vol. 13 No. 1 (1984), 1. Croke supports a 271/72 dating of Porphyry's *Against the Christians* but the work has been dated as late as the Diocletianic persecution. The views are explained by T.D. Barnes in his "Porphyry *Against the Christians:* Date and the Attribution of Fragments", *JTS,* Vol. 24 No. 2 (1973), 433-437. Cf. Kofsky *Eusebius of Caesarea*, 17-36, 71-73, 253-275. Some think that Diocletian commissioned Porphyry to write against the Christians; Cf. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes,* 5.2.
[123] Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty,* 110.
[124] Simmons sees Eusebius' *Theophany* as authored in 338/339 and thoroughly anti-Porphyrian. We also know the famous church historian wrote a now lost (and un-datable) *Against Porphyry* as attested by Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men,* 81; Cf. Socrates, *EH* 3.23.

realm of exaggerated polemic. Like any polemic, however, there was probably some connection in Constantine's mind. As Edwards argued, it could have been the similarities between their logos doctrines.[125] Alternatively, it could have been a more general denunciation in that, like Porphyry, Arius was accused of denying Christ's divinity (though he in fact did not).[126] Athanasius took advantage of these words from Constantine.[127]

The final idea demanding discussion concerns Constantine's censorship of Arius' writings. In the same edict, Constantine declared, "if any writing composed by Arius is found it should be handed over to the flames so that the evil of his teaching will be demolished and nothing will be left to remind people of him".[128] The implications of this charge are too rarely discussed. Book burning was a powerful ideological weapon in the ancient world and was particularly useful because it "was deemed irreparable; it had a purifying effect, which removed any polluting or blasphemous aspects; it fulfilled a magical role, in that it symbolized the destruction of the author; and it provided a public expression of civic condemnation".[129] Put more succinctly, the calling for the conflagration of books was a "forceful statement of power".[130] "The circumstances in which books and other writings were burned were generally similar to the circumstances in which individuals or groups were punished for subscribing to beliefs and practices

[125] Mark Edwards, "Why Did Constantine Label Arius a Porphyrian?" in *L'Antiquité Classique* No. 82 (2013), 239-247.
[126] *The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions* trans. and ed. Clyde Pharr (New York: Greenwood Press, 1952), at 16.5.66 from the year 435 states "But just as the Arians, by a law of Constantine of sainted memory, are called Porphyrians, from Porphyry, on account of the similarity of their impiety", 463.
[127] Athanasius, *History of the Arians,* 51.
[128] Opitz, *Urkunde* 33.
[129] Judith Herrin, "Book Burning as Purification" in *Transformations of Late Antiquity* eds. Philip Rousseau and Manolis Papoutsakis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 207.
[130] Daniel Sarefield, "Bookburning in the Christian Roman Empire: Transforming a Pagan Rite of Purification" in *Violence in Late Antiquity* ed. H.A. Drake (Hampshire UK: Ashgate, 2006), 288.

regarded as dangerous to society and posing a threat of spiritual contamination".[131] In other words, the calling for the burning of a man's writings had the specific aims of purging a dangerous idea and establishing political authority.[132] Since we have so few testimonies to Arius as an author, it is possible that Constantine's edict was more of a rhetorical gesture than a sincere calling for the collection and destruction of writings. It would be a mistake to take this edict to mean that Arius wrote voluminously. Even so, the call for book burning held "symbolic and propagandistic utility".[133] Constantine issued "a spectacle that transmits forceful social and religious messages to victims, witnesses and participants alike".[134] Even if Arius' writings were rare, Constantine's leveling of this order communicated a politically grave matter.

Despite the bravado displayed by this act, it could have delivered an unintended consequence. The first century historian Tacitus makes several remarks about book-burning in his *Annals*. In referencing the censorship of Cremutius Cordus, Tacitus says:

> "the Fathers ordered his books to be burned…but some copies survived, hidden at the time, but afterwards published. Laughable, indeed, are the delusions of those who fancy that by the exercise of their ephemeral power, posterity can be defrauded of information. On the contrary, through persecution the reputation of the persecuted talents grows stronger. Foreign despots and all those who have used the same barbarous

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[131] Sarefield, "Bookburning", 287; Cf. Arthur Stanley Pease "Notes on Book-burning" in *Munera Studiosa* eds. Massey Hamilton Shepherd and Samuel Elbridge Johnson (Cambridge MA: The Episcopal Theological School, 1946), 145-160. The New Testament sanctions this idea of book burning in Acts 19.18-19 when the Ephesians discard their magic books in response to Paul's preaching.

[132] Simon Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs: Imperial Pronouncements and Government AD 284-324* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 81 discusses Diocletian's burning of the Manichean texts and that they should be burned along with them. Cf. *Theodosian Code* 9.34.3, 10.1.3 for the burning of libelli containing false charges.

[133] Sarefield, "Bookburning", 288.

[134] Daniel Sarefield, "The Symbolics of Book Burning: The Establishment of a Christian Ritual of Persecution" in *The Early Christian Book* eds. William Kilngshirn and Linda Safran (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 159.

> methods have only succeeded in bringing disgrace upon themselves and glory to their victims".[135]

In another passage on book burning, the famous historian remarked, "so long as they [books] were only to be procured at a risk, they were sought out and repeatedly read, but when it later became permissible to own them they fell into oblivion."[136] Even though these observations came centuries before Constantine, Lactantius expressed a similar sentiment. In a criticism of the practice, he writes:

> "that was done foolishly indeed, for to what advantage were the books burned when this very action, namely, that they were burned because they were derogatory to religion, was memorialized? There was no one in the senate at the time who was not very foolish, however; because the books could be destroyed, yet the affair itself could not be erased from memory".[137]

Like Tacitus, Lactantius conveyed a kind of forbidden fruit complex in which people became more interested in books precisely because an authority condemned them. A call for the burning of books made the very thing it aims to destroy memorable. So while Constantine wanted to ascertain political authority over Arius and those who thought with him, his edict could also have had the inverse effect of creating a curiosity among the bishops. The point here is that Constantine's actions against Arius after Nicaea treat him as a significant political foe dispelling dangerous ideas. The calling for the burning of Arius' writings functioned as a political and ideological weapon. It is difficult to see why Constantine would have unleashed this weapon had he not deemed it civically expedient and meaningful to do so.

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[135] From Tacitus, *Annals* 35 as cited in Frederick Cramer, "Bookburning and Censorship in Ancient Rome" in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 6 No. 2 (1945), 196. One problem with Tacitus' remark is that few have even heard of Cremutius Cordus today.
[136] Cited in Pease, "Notes", 159.
[137] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes,* 1.22.5f.

## 6.7 Concluding Analysis

This chapter began by pointing out that the Emperor Constantine is actually one of the most fruitful authors from the rather barren post-Nicene years, but his voice is often sidelined in favour of bishops. When thinking about those who attended the Council of Nicaea, held an important position during its meetings, and wrote about its implications afterwards, Constantine is the most prolific in this category, far eclipsing Eusebius of Caesarea and the small fragment from Eustathius of Antioch. Moreover, I argued that Constantine's vacillations on the persons of Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia following Nicaea ought to be evaluated in conjunction with the scholarly consensus about what kind of leader he was. If "Arianism" were simply a trajectory of thought rather than a formidable movement, then Constantine's leadership appears weak, unnecessarily reactionary, and uniformed. Almost all the recent works by Constantinian scholars contend that the emperor was an able and savvy autocrat. Therefore, Constantine's entanglement with Arius and his followers is best explained if they actively mobilized against others, posing a threat to ecclesiastical stability. His *Oration,* irrespective of its date, but especially if it is from 324 or 325, attests to his acumen. Finally, in his correspondence around Nicaea, the reader discovers the salient themes that the revisionist thesis relegates to Athanasian rhetorical *topoi.* The emperor was the first and the most powerful man to establish the inviolability of Nicaea's proceedings. Immediately after Nicaea, he circulated a letter indicting "Eusebians" for mischief. Even as late as 333 he disseminated an edict comparing Arius to the still influential anti-Christian author Porphyry, and quite possibly elevated "Arian" intrigue by calling for the immolation of the presbyter's books. While Constantine's writings cannot *prove* an "Arian

Controversy", many of his moves suggest a formidable rift between the early 320's and his death in 337. The bishop whom the revisionists say created "Arianism" would have found many of his themes were those voiced by Constantine. After Constantine died, Athanasius' opponents held a kind of continuous council in Antioch, and this occupies the next chapter.

## Chapter 7: How "Arian" was the Dedication Council?

The so-called Dedication Council hosted in Antioch in 341 presents the ideal test case for determining Athanasius' consistency regarding his "Arian" opponents.[1] Relatively late in his episcopal career, Athanasius composed his *On the Synods,* typically dated no earlier than 359/360 because the work features knowledge of the conciliar activity of those years. In this text, Athanasius described the collusion of the "Eusebians" at a council in Antioch convened nearly 20 years earlier. Athanasius alleged that the same people who welcomed Arius back into the church at the meeting in Jerusalem in late 335 went on to hold additional "councils".[2] Athanasius insisted that the participants at Antioch were his enemies and that the meeting was stacked against him. Importantly, Athanasius included four theological statements emanating from these meetings. The Alexandrian bishop contested that these creeds were indicative of the "heresy". The fifth century historians adopted the theme of Athanasius' narrative so, for most of the church's history, the Dedication Council remained pronouncedly "Arian". This pre-revisionist Athanasian version is captured in iconic studies such as J.F. Bethune-Baker's when he stated that the Dedication meeting "was 'Arianizing' not only in its avoidance of any expression which Arians could not have accepted, but also in its explanation of only-begotten and in its marked attribution of the work of the Incarnate Son to the good pleasure and purpose of the Father".[3] William Bright, too, followed Athanasius'

[1] Schwartz dated the Dedication Council to 341. This date is adopted by most scholars, such as Hanson at *Search,* 284f.
[2] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 22-26.
[3] J.F. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine* 5th ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1933), 172.

narrative in describing Antioch as the place where "the Eusebians resolved to take advantage, once again, of a great church solemnity, for the holding of a council in their own interests".[4] Above all, the Easterners were "inexperienced in theological questions, and could not look at Church matters from the Athanasian point of view".[5] Despite this, Bright was somewhat complimentary of the theology of the Dedication describing it, "for the most part Catholic".[6]

The meetings in Antioch are almost universally understood as opposing Athanasius politically.[7] The question arises as to whether the Alexandrian bishop had reason to dislike its theology. In the revision of the "Arian Controversy", several thinkers questioned what exactly made Antioch 341 a meeting of the "Eusebians" with an "Arian" result. Is it the case that Athanasius branded the meeting "Arian" only because they challenged his abusive and lawless administration? If this were a meeting of the "heretics", one would expect the creedal definitions to both resemble those of Arius and be blatantly anti-Athanasian in their theology. If all of Athanasius' adversaries authored creeds that did not look like Arius' theology, then the bishop's insistence on their "Arianism" proves defamatory. If Antioch proved to be decidedly anti-"Arian" and even pro-Nicene, there exists an unbridgeable chasm between Athanasius' polemic and theological expression. The matter is pinpointed by Gwynn who says "there is one important text that does represent a theological statement that all the diverse men whom

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[4] Bright, *The Age of the Fathers,* 172.
[5] Bright, *The Age of the Fathers,* 173.
[6] Bright, *The Age of the Fathers,* 175. Bright's introductory essay in his edition of *The Orations of St Athanasius against the Arians* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1873), xliii also presents the general ambivalence of Antioch's theology describing the 97 bishops as "many of whom were neither positively Arian nor strongly attached to Nicene rulings". Gwatkin, too, at *Arian,* 68 found the Dedication Creed "more to the Nicene than to the Arian side".
[7] This is gathered mainly from the canons coming from Antioch. Canon IV looks especially anti-Athanasian in its forbidding a bishop deposed by a council from practicing his function under threat of ever being restored. They certainly had Tyre 335 in mind. Cf. Stephens, *Canon,* 242.

Athanasius denounced as 'Arian' could apparently uphold: The Second Creed of the 'Dedication' Council of Antioch in 341".[8] In other words, if this creedal formula from Antioch does not accommodate the theological persuasions of Arius, then Athanasius' use of "Arian" must be deemed invidious.

Generally speaking, the revisionist movement understands the Dedication Council's formulations as distinct from those presented by Arius and in accordance with the aims of Nicaea. This perspective corrects the mistaken view stemming from Athanasius' polemic that opposing the Alexandrian bishop automatically equated to an attack on Nicaea.[9] To the credit of recent scholarship, it has exposed these older historiographies for holding no conceptual space for an anti-Athanasian but pro-Nicene position. It is only Athanasius' skewed interpretation that forbids someone to be simultaneously anti-Athanasian, anti-Arian, and pro-Nicene.

The questioning of Antioch's "Arianism" runs throughout several contemporary revisionists. Gwynn declares that the second of the Antiochene formulas "cannot be described as 'Arian'".[10] Likewise, Ayres confidently states that the creed "does not push the theological emphases of Arius".[11] J.N.D. Kelly, in his enlightening book on creeds, says that, having cited the formulas from Antioch, Athanasius "inserted the ungenerous innuendo that they were proof of the 'Arians' passion for novelty and their general indecision."[12] Dünzl claims "Arian" is fundamentally "misleading" for the activity in

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[8] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 220.
[9] This now dismissed view is expressed at Bright, *Age,* 173 when he says that "it would thus be easy for the astute Eusebian leaders, with their plan of attacking the Nicene Council indirectly by a direct attack on the position of Athanasius, to represent his conduct in an unfavourable light, to prejudice their brethren against him, and so to lead them to acquiesce in dogmatic language which *seemed* orthodox, but which ignored the creed of 325".
[10] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 223.
[11] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 120.
[12] J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longman Greens, 1950), 265.

Antioch in 341.[13] Recently, Crawford found that Antioch 341 was "more perceptively treated as pro-Nicene".[14] One of the main arguments of Stephens' current monograph on Antioch's conciliar activity is that its theology closely resembled that of Nicaea.[15] It is now quite commonplace to dismiss Athanasius' claim of "Eusebian" collusion in favour of the view that what it "taught or implied was a faithful replica of the average theology of the Eastern Church".[16] Hanson concurred saying that what came out of Antioch were the "views of the ordinary educated Eastern bishop".[17] This interpretation summons Hilary of Poitiers as an ancient witness as he understood the Dedication Creed as anti-Marcellan and orthodox.[18] This conclusion supports the thesis of an "Athanasian Arianism" in which the title "Arian" was arbitrarily attributed to any movements personally at odds with Athanasius. In other words, the bishops gathered at Antioch in 341 opposed Athanasius because he indecently dealt with the Melitians, therefore they became "Arian" in the bishop's polemic though their theology was Nicene. Athanasius unloaded "Arian" as a term of abuse on those who were, in reality, distant from Arius. In this manner, Athanasius hijacked what it meant to be "Nicene".

This chapter will closely analyze the theology of the Dedication creeds to show that there actually were significant differences between its theology and the one expressed at Nicaea 16 years earlier. Despite the sweeping conclusions of the revisionists that "statements can be found within the Antiochene creeds that can be interpreted as

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[13] Franz Dünzl, *Kleine Geschichte des trinitarischen Dogmas in der Alten Kirche* (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 2006), 77.
[14] Crawford, "On the Diversity and Influence", 234.
[15] Stephens' "Too Good and Holy", 128, 131 and its monograph version *Canon Law and Episcopal Authority* Ch. 3 show this emphasis.
[16] Kelly, *Creeds,* 274.
[17] Hanson, *Search*, 290 where he also sees the Dedication Creed as inconsistent with Nicaea.
[18] Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Synods,* 28-33. Hilary's judgment must certainly be tempered by the fact that he admitted in the same work (91) to being ignorant of Nicaea's Creed and eastern theological discourse until 356.

matching almost every Nicene affirmation, if not always word-for-word, then always very nearly so", the evidence demands a more nuanced conclusion in which the student may understand why Athanasius had good reason to see Antioch 341 as a different theology from Nicaea.[19] It is not that Antioch 341 determinedly advanced Arius' theological tenets, but rather that it permitted his theology and opened the precise doors that Nicaea closed.

## 7.1 The Structure of Antioch 341

The Dedication Council ought to be evaluated against a background of complicated ecclesiastical movement. The sources bear witness to consistent conciliar activity in Antioch from the time of Nicaea onward. The fifth canon of Nicaea directed that "in every province, synods should be held twice a year".[20] This means that there could have been as many as 30 Antiochene synods between Nicaea and the Dedication, and every indication is that bishops met regularly between 325-341. This is why some have talked in terms of "permanent council" in Antioch.[21] That is to say, the Dedication Council is best understood as a "collective noun" for the series of meetings in the late 330's and early 340's.[22] This point is no better illustrated than by the debate surrounding the canons traditionally assigned to the Dedication meetings in 341. Problematically, Athanasius stated specifically that 97 bishops attended the Dedication Council while the manuscripts of the signatories of the canons contain about 30 names. The Ballerini brothers famously argued on these grounds that the canons could not have come from

[19] Stephens, "Too Good and Holy", 131.
[20] Canon 5 in Rusch, *Trinitarian,* 52.
[21] Stephens, "Too Good and Holy", 172; Stephens, *Canon Law,* 48, 88-89. There is at least one example in church history for this kind of "permanent council" in the Council of Trent 1545-1563.
[22] Stephens, *Canon Law,* 48.

341.[23] Schwartz went so far as to place the canons in the late 320's at the same Antiochene Council that deposed Eustathius. Stephens, on the other hand, argues for placing the canons in 338. What can be certain is that between Constantine's death in 337 and the Council of Serdica in 343, a gathering of bishops met regularly in Antioch with a particular interest in sidelining Athanasius. One of these regular meetings in Antioch, probably in late 338, deposed Athanasius whilst Constantius superintended.[24] That these meetings were anti-Athanasian is rarely contested, but the revisionist thesis relegates this agenda exclusively to matters of episcopal maleficence without noting theological differences.

Given that the revisionist thesis sees these bishops at Antioch as mainstream eastern theologians, a brief evaluation of the attendance demands attention. Was Antioch 341 really a consensus of eastern theology? Sara Parvis' work approaches this question through onomastic evidence. Though a longer citation, it must be quoted in full. Parvis says:

> At a minimum, the incumbents of 268 sees (including country-bishops) from the provinces which Constantius ruled in 341 signed the acts of at least one synod between Nicaea and Serdica. 185 of these signed the creed at Nicaea, of whom sixteen (besides Alexander) were bishops from the Egyptian and Libyan provinces. 80 bishops from these provinces, of whom therefore at least 64 must represent sees not included in the Nicene total, signed the letter of the synod in Alexandria of 338. A further nineteen of those who signed the 'Eastern' letter of Serdica (excluding the Egyptian bishops, since they may have doubles among the 80 supporters of Athanasius, and Ursacius and Valens, whose sees were outside Constantius' territory) represented sees not listed among the signatories at Nicaea. At the best possible showing, therefore, the ninety-seven bishops of the Dedication synod represent just over a third (36 per cent, to be exact) of the politically active sees of Constantius' regions over the years 325-343".[25]

[23] For a recent analysis of these complications see Stephens' *Canon Law.*
[24] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* 45; Cf. Athanasius, *Encyclical,* 2.
[25] Parvis, *Marcellus,* 163.

The percentage diminishes further if Socrates' number of attendees, ninety, is more accurate than Athanasius', Hilary's, and Sozomen's ninety-seven.[26] The prosopography goes some distance in defending Athanasius' depiction of Antioch as a one-sided affair. At the very least it ought to cast doubt on Kelly and Hanson's view that Antioch 341 captured Eastern consensus. Furthermore, only a fraction of the names of the 97 bishops can be gathered from the sources and almost all were bitter opponents of Athanasius well before 341. Of the fifteen named attendees at the Dedication, the list includes Eusebius of Constantinople (formerly Nicomedia), Patrophilus of Scythopolis, Gregory of Alexandria (Athanasius' replacement), Narcissus of Neronias, Maris of Chalcedon, and Theodore of Heraclea.[27] These personalities, except perhaps Gregory, can be associated with Arius from relatively early in the dispute.[28] Not only are the names associated with the Council connected to Arius, but the geographical areas represented are those where the presbyter originally found allies, namely, the Syro-Phoenicia-Palestine corridor and Bithynia. If Parvis' numbers are extrapolated to the canons, the thirty names associated with the Antiochene laws represent only 11% of active Eastern bishops. Given the prosopographic evidence, it seems incorrect to see Antioch as *the* Eastern theology.

Since Antioch 341 was a meeting of a fraction of the Eastern bishops, who was responsible for gathering them? Was this, in fact, a selective invitation? We know that

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[26] Socrates, *EH* 2.8; Cf. J.R. Nyman, "The Synod at Antioch (324-325) and the Council of Nicaea", *SP,* Vol. 4 (1961), 484 cites F.L. Cross' "The Council of Antioch in 325 A.D.", *The Church Quarterly Review,* Vol. 128 (1939), 62 to say that "49 names from the Antioch (325) list of 56 recur at Nicaea; only 17 occur at Antioch (341)". It would be helpful if either author identified how he gathered the 17 names from Antioch 341. The point can be made that not many from Nicaea attended Antioch 341.

[27] Sozomen, *EH* 3.5; Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians,* 21; Cf. Parvis, *Marcellus,* Appendix, Table 6.

[28] Eusebius of Nicomedia, *Letter to Paulinus*; Opitz, Urkunde 8; Athanasius, *On the Synods* 17 has Patrophilus and Maris as pre-Nicene associates. Philostorgius, *EH* 2.14 says "Maris" was a disciple of Lucian. Narcissus of Neronias is approximated to Arius at Antioch 324/325; Opitz, Urkunde 18. It would be interesting if the "Gregory" claimed by Arius in his *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia* was the same one appointed at Alexandria; Cf. Crawford, "On the Diversity", 227-257 and his "Triumph", 537-567 for an overview of Theodore's career.

Constantine called the Council of Arles in 314 and Nicaea in 325.[29] Thanks to Eusebius of Caesarea's preservation of a letter from the Council of Tyre, it is obvious that Constantine invited people at the request of others.[30] The dissertation has already stated how Constantine explicitly admitted discriminatory bidding to the meeting in 335. Later in the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus could facetiously joke that imperial invitations to church councils were clogging up the post.[31] Combining this with the fact that Constantius was in attendance at the Council of Antioch 341 because it was an occasion for a church dedication, Athanasius does not seem unreasonable complaining about imperial influence at church meetings.[32]

## 7.2 The Theology of Antioch 341

While the canons are notoriously difficult to place, the creeds associated with the meeting in Antioch in 341 fit most comfortably as a response to Pope Julius' acquittal of Marcellus and Athanasius at a council in Rome around 340. Upon clearing the two easterners, Julius penned a letter back East to those meeting in Antioch, probably provoking the easterners to clarify their positions.[33] It is common to say that "four creeds" came from Antioch in 341 based on an order of statements preserved in

[29] Eusebius of Caesarea, *EH* 10.5 for Arles and his *Life* 3.4-9 for Nicaea.
[30] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life* 4.40-45.
[31] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History,* 21.16.18.
[32] The role of the emperor at the ecclesiastical synods in the decades after Christianity became legally permissible seems to be at the center of the most heated debates. When councils of bishops at Rome and Arles in 313 and 314 ruled against the Donatists, they appealed to Constantine. In the words of Frend at *The Donatist Church*, 149, "it is noticeable that neither they nor their Catholic opponents ever seem to have considered that a Papal judgement was binding." Athanasius consistently accused his opponents of collusion with secular officials but could also be called one of the chief violators of this maxim, meeting Constantine in Psamathia in 331, fleeing to Constantinople in 335 to plead before Constantine and soliciting Constans during his third exile. The Council of Antioch 338 seems to have re-deposed Athanasius on the grounds that his return was unlawful because bishops did not authorize it. Athanasius' response was that his deposition at Tyre was fixed.
[33] Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians* 21-35.

Athanasius' *On the Synods.*[34] There are two factors that cause some hesitation in claiming "four creeds". Firstly, two of the four "creeds" are not creeds in the strict sense. The first one that Athanasius' cites is an excerpt from a letter and the third is a confession by an accused bishop, Theophronius of Tyana. Of the remaining two statements, one, the fourth cited by Athanasius, was written by a smaller subset of bishops some months after the main gathering. This leaves one obviously creedal statement articulated by the bishops, the so-called Dedication Creed, the second listed by Athanasius. The second caution for thinking about "four creeds" concerns a question of representation. How accurately does any creed reflect the theology of the attendees? That is to say, creeds are authored to gain consensus. The purpose of these theological statements is not to capture every positive utterance of each attendee, but to draw-up a broad statement to which people can ascribe in good conscience. As Prestige put it in his well-known Bampton lecture, "the Christian creeds contain the minimum of doctrinal explanation and the maximum of factual assertion".[35] Creeds contain as little as possible, but what they do positively say must be certain. This minimalist understanding of what a creed was designed to do makes comparing any two of them, in this case Nicaea 325 and Antioch's, a challenging task. Before turning our attention to the Dedication Creed, it is important to evaluate the famous opening of the letter that ostensibly distances the bishops from Arius.

In turning his focus to "Eusebian" conciliar activity in Antioch, Athanasius cited the opening of a letter they authored as follows:

> Ἡμεῖς οὔτε ἀκόλουθοι Ἀρείου γεγόναμεν· πῶς γὰρ ἐπίσκοποι ὄντες ἀκολουθοῦμεν πρεσβυτέρῳ; οὔτε ἄλλην τινὰ πίστιν παρὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς

[34] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 22f.
[35] Prestige, *Fathers,* 79.

> παραδοθεῖσαν ἐδεξάμεθα. ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐξετασταὶ καὶ δοκιμασταὶ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ γενόμενοι μᾶλλον αὐτὸν προσηκάμεθα ἤπερ ἠκολουθήσαμεν γνώσεσθε δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν λεγομένων.
>
> We are not followers of Arius, for how can we, being bishops, follow a presbyter? We did not receive a different faith than the one handed down from the beginning, but having examined and verified his faith, we admitted him rather than followed him, as you will see from our sayings.[36]

Much has been made of the bishops' dissociation from Arius. Typically, it is only the first sentence that attracts commentary.[37] The revisionist offers this as proof that the congregants at Antioch were non-"Arian" and Athanasius' label was reckless. What the bishops actually say, however, is that they were not consciously determined to follow the presbyter Arius. This text does prove that "Arian" was not a self-designation, but, as aforementioned, Athanasius knew this to have been the case.[38] Alternatively, what the Antiochene bishops positively asserted was that they examined Arius' theology and found his views permissible.[39] This has major implications for Antioch's position in these debates. Firstly, if Nicaea did nothing else, it aimed to exclude the theological discourse of Arius. The only way Arius could have been welcomed by these bishops at Antioch is if Nicaea was irrelevant or contorted beyond recognition on this question. Stephens' claim that Antioch's theology can be found "matching almost every Nicene affirmation, if not always word-for-word, then always very nearly so", is almost

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[36] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 22.
[37] In Kelly's *Creeds,* 264-265, for example, he does not provide the Greek as he does for the other texts from Antioch and provides no commentary on the fact that the bishops "had only received Arius back into communion after rigorously testing his orthodoxy". Brennecke, "Introduction", 15 gives only a partial citation.
[38] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.3.
[39] Hanson, *Search,* 285 translates the letter's προσηκάμεθα as "we approached" to avoid connotations of the bishops co-mingling with Arius. This is clearly not the right translation of the verb built on προσιήμι that, according to Liddell and Scott is "to admit".

impossible to reconcile with Arius' re-admission upon detailed examination.[40] If Nicaea's fundamental accomplishment was the exclusion of Arius' theology, the group of Antiochene bishops cannot be said to be restating the same truths in different words. Clearly they found Nicaea inadequate and far too limiting. What Nicaea wanted to exclude, Antioch 341 wanted to permit. Secondly, if this letter was issued in conjunction with the creeds, which, as far as I can tell, has not been contested, the bishops based Arius' validity on "our sayings". If this interpretation is correct, the bishops at Antioch said quite plainly that they issued new "sayings" which accepted Arius. So the admission of Arius' thinking should be explained less by his abandoning his earlier theology and more on the council's new "sayings". Thirdly, it is also important to discuss why they sensed the need to separate from Arius. The individual who lends his name to the heresy was dead at least five years by the time Antioch convened. The fact that the bishops distanced themselves from Arius shows what a powerful symbol he had become. The very fact that they felt the need to make a judgement about his theology proves either the relevance of his thinking or the effectiveness of Athanasius' polemic. It is also worth noting that their grounds for not being "Arians" were based more on church office, or as Gwatkin said long ago, as "inconsistent with episcopal dignity", than on theological coherence.[41] There ought to be no confusion that "they accepted him rather than followed him".

From here the statement goes on to say:

> Μεμαθήκαμεν γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς ἕνα θεὸν τὸν τῶν ὅλων θεὸν πιστεύειν, τὸν πάντων νοητῶν τε καὶ αἰσθη τῶν δημιουργόν τε καὶ προνοητήν, καὶ εἰς ἕνα υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ μονογενῆ, πρὸ πάντων αἰώνων ὑπάρχοντα καὶ συνόντα τῷ γεγεννηκότι αὐτὸν πατρί, δι' οὗ καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο, τά τε

[40] Stephens, "Too Good and Holy", 131.
[41] Gwatkin, *Studies,* 116.

> ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, τὸν καὶ ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτων ἡμερῶν κατ᾽ εὐδοκίαν τοῦ πατρὸς κατελθόντα καὶ σάρκα ἐκ τῆς παρθένου ἀνειληφότα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν πατρικὴν αὐτοῦ βούλησιν συνεκπεπληρωκότα, πεπονθέναι καὶ ἐγηγέρθαι καὶ εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνεληλυθέναι καὶ ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ πατρὸς καθέζεσθαι καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, καὶ διαμένοντα βασιλέα καὶ θεὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. πιστεύομεν δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα· εἰ δὲ δεῖ προσθεῖναι πιστεύομεν καὶ περὶ σαρκὸς ἀναστάσεως καὶ ζωῆς αἰωνίου.
>
> We have been taught from the beginning to believe in one God, the God of everything, the creator and designer of all things intellectual and aesthetic, and in one son of God, the only begotten, existing before the ages and with the father who begot him, through whom all things were made, things visible and invisible, who, according to the pleasure of the Father, came down in the last days and has taken the flesh of the virgin and has fulfilled the entire will of the father, he suffered and rose again, ascended into the heavens and sits at the right hand of the father and will come again to judge the living and the dead, remaining king and God forever. And we believe in the Holy Spirit. And if it is necessary, we believe in the resurrection of the flesh and eternal life.[42]

Kelly is correct when he says that this statement "contains nothing particularly striking".[43] All that needs to be said about this theological statement for our purposes is that it contains nothing that Arius himself could not have signed in good conscience. Prominently featuring that the Son "ascended into the heavens and sits at the right hand of the father and will come again to judge the living and the dead, remaining king and God forever" targeted Marcellus, but as for proscribing any obvious "Arian" slogans, the statement is empty. This leads to the second statement, the Dedication Creed itself.

The second creed is the most substantial, but needs to be cited in full for analysis. It runs:

> Πιστεύομεν ἀκολούθως τῇ εὐαγγελικῇ καὶ ἀποστολικῇ παραδόσει εἰς ἕνα θεὸν πατέρα παντοκράτορα, τὸν τῶν ὅλων δημιουργόν τε καὶ ποιητὴν καὶ προνοητήν, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα· καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, τὸν μονογενῆ θεόν, δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα, τὸν γεννηθέντα πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐκ τοῦ πατρός, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, ὅλον ἐξ ὅλου, μόνον ἐκ μόνου,

[42] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 22.
[43] Kelly, *Creeds,* 265.

τέλειον ἐκ τελείου, βασιλέα ἐκ βασιλέως, κύριον ἀπὸ κυρίου, λόγον ζῶντα, σοφίαν ζῶσαν, φῶς ἀληθινόν, ὁδόν, ἀλήθειαν, ἀνάστασιν, ποιμένα, θύραν, ἄτρεπτόν τε καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον, τῆς θεότητος οὐσίας τε καὶ βουλῆς καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης τοῦ πατρὸς ἀπαράλλακτον εἰκόνα, τὸν πρωτότοκον πάσης κτίσεως, τὸν ὄντα ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, λόγον θεὸν κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ· καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο, καὶ ἐν ᾧ τὰ πάντα συνέστηκε, τὸν ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν κατελθόντα ἄνωθεν καὶ γεννηθέντα ἐκ παρθένου κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς καὶ ἄνθρωπον γενόμενον, μεσίτην θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων ἀπόστολόν τε τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν καὶ ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς, ὥς φησιν ὅτι καταβέβηκα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, οὐχ ἵνα ποιῶ τὸ θέλημα τὸ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με, τὸν παθόντα ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς οὐρανούς, καὶ καθεσθέντα ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης καὶ δυνάμεως κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς.

καὶ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ εἰς παράκλησιν καὶ ἁγιασμὸν καὶ τελείωσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσι διδόμενον, καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς διετάξατο τοῖς μαθηταῖς λέγων πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, δηλονότι πατρός, ἀληθῶς πατρὸς ὄντος, υἱοῦ δὲ ἀληθῶς υἱοῦ ὄντος, τοῦ δὲ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἀληθῶς ἁγίου πνεύματος ὄντος, τῶν ὀνομάτων οὐχ ἁπλῶς οὐδὲ ἀργῶς κειμένων, ἀλλὰ σημαινόντων ἀκριβῶς τὴν οἰκείαν ἑκάστου τῶν ὀνομαζομένων ὑπόστασίν τε καὶ τάξιν καὶ δόξαν, ὡς εἶναι τῇ μὲν ὑποστάσει τρία, τῇ δὲ συμφωνίᾳ ἕν.

ταύτην οὖν ἔχοντες τὴν πίστιν καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ μέχρι τέλους ἔχοντες ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πᾶσαν αἱρετικὴν κακοδοξίαν ἀναθεματίζομεν. καὶ εἴ τις παρὰ τὴν ὑγιῆ τῶν γραφῶν ὀρθὴν πίστιν διδάσκει λέγων ἢ χρόνον ἢ καιρὸν ἢ αἰῶνα ἢ εἶναι ἢ γεγονέναι πρὸ τοῦ γεννηθῆναι τὸν υἱόν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω. καὶ εἴ τις λέγει τὸν υἱὸν κτίσμα ὡς ἓν τῶν κτισμάτων ἢ γέννημα ὡς ἓν τῶν γεννημάτων ἢ ποίημα ὡς ἓν τῶν ποιημάτων καὶ μὴ ὡς αἱ θεῖαι γραφαὶ παραδέδωκαν τῶν προειρημένων ἕκαστον ἀφ᾽ ἑκάστου, ἢ εἴ τι ἄλλο διδάσκει ἢ εὐαγγελίζεται, παρ᾽ ὃ παρελάβομεν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω. ἡμεῖς γὰρ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐκ τῶν θείων γραφῶν παραδεδομένοις ὑπό τε προφητῶν καὶ ἀποστόλων ἀληθινῶς τε καὶ ἐμφόβως καὶ πιστεύομεν καὶ ἀκολουθοῦμεν.[44]

As Sherlock Holmes solved a crime based on the dog that did not bark, so also this creed makes an immediate impression through its omissions. As mentioned in the third chapter of this dissertation, the phrase "from the ousia of the Father" along with the homoousion

[44] The English text is in Ayres, *Nicaea,* 118-119; Kelly, *Creeds*, 268-270, or Hanson, *Search,* 286-287 and will not be reproduced here for the sake of space.

were inserted into the Nicene Formula precisely because these were the two clauses that Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arius could not sign. I argued that they were inserted because the two individuals prohibited them explicitly in their pre-Nicene correspondence. While it is probably the case that the words were excluded from the Dedication Creed because they could too easily lead to Sabellian interpretations, as Marcellus proved, it is also the case that the removal of the two slogans lifted two blocks originally designed to exclude Arius. To these obvious omissions, the creed also substituted "God from God" in place of Nicaea's "true God from true God". Textual evidence from the time of Nicaea's meeting shows that some theologians hesitated to call the Son "true God".[45] By eliminating the Son as "true God", the creed moved more in line with Arius' thinking that the Father is "alone true".[46] The burden of Athanasius' theology was to convey that the Son had everything the Father had with the exception of being unbegotten. Withholding the ascription of "true God" moved the pendulum away from the Alexandrian patriarch's discourse. To these we might also note the absence of "not made", but further analysis on this omission must be momentarily delayed.[47]

Even more striking are the omissions of the Nicene anathemas that ostracized Arius. There are three worth examining. Whereas Nicaea anathematized "once he was not" and "before he was begotten, he was not", Antioch eliminates this in favour of καὶ εἴ τις παρὰ τὴν ὑγιῆ τῶν γραφῶν ὀρθὴν πίστιν διδάσκει λέγων ἢ χρόνον ἢ καιρὸν ἢ αἰῶνα ἢ εἶναι ἢ γεγονέναι πρὸ τοῦ γεννηθῆναι τὸν υἱόν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω, or "if anyone teaches other than the right and orthodox faith saying time, or season, or age, either is or has been

[45] Eusebius of Caesarea's *Letter to Euphration;* Opitz, *Urkunde* 3 emphatically denies that the Son is true God; Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea's *Against Marcellus* 1.4.
[46] Arius, *Letter to Alexander*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 6.
[47] Athanasius accused Asterius of declaring the Son a "made thing", thus strengthening Asterian provenance. Arius himself did not prefer to call the Son a "made thing".

before the generation of the Son, let him be anathematized". Upon first glance, it looks like Antioch's more wordy anathema heightened Nicaea's. The problem is that Antioch's version actually permitted Arius' more ambiguous phrasing. Since Arius did not specify that a "time" or "season" or "age" was that which pre-dated the Son, anathematizing them did not necessarily exclude his catchphrase. All Arius stated was that "before he was begotten…he did not exist".[48] In fact, Arius said that the Son "subsists in will and intention before time and before the ages".[49] Hanson misleads his readers saying no true "Arian" could have agreed to an "occasion" when the Son did not exist, but this word is his gloss rather than what the Creed says.[50] Based on the textual evidence, Arius himself could have signed the anathema against there being "time", or "age", or "season" before the Son. This probably presented Athanasius with some unintended consequences of his polemic. In the bishop's insistence that Arius alleged a "time" before the Son's generation, it appears that the Antiochene synod was glad to anathematize Athanasius' polemical interpretations of Arius' theology without proscribing the presbyter's actual words. This probably added to Athanasius' frustration.

The more thought-provoking exclusion in the anathemas comes when Antioch fails to censor that the Son was "from nothing". The extant textual evidence yields Arius alone positively asserting that the Son was "from nothing".[51] It makes sense to follow Stead in seeing Arius' language of ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων as being the logical handmaiden to

[48] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 1.
[49] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 1.
[50] Hanson, *Search,* 287.
[51] Hanson, "Who Taught EX OYK ONTΩN?", 79-83 and Christopher Stead's "The Word", 671-684 explore Arius' intentions. Athanasius *On the Synods* 17 makes it seem plausible that Athanasius of Anazarbus also taught the Son was "from nothing".

calling the Son a creature.[52] If the Son was a creature, he came from nothing like everything else. Stead thinks that Arius' opponents attacked his "from nothing" theology far too harshly, but this does not displace the fact that only the condemned presbyter claimed it. Therefore, if Antioch was truly trying to re-capitulate Nicaea and those gathered there were pleased to distance themselves from Arius, one would certainly expect this anathema to be included. Since Arius was deceased, anathematizing "from nothing" would have been a relatively innocuous, but highly symbolic, inclusion in the creed. It would have communicated to Athanasius' faction some seriousness about the condemnation of Arius while actually yielding little territory. Some might argue that because Arius alone used the phrase that it became irrelevant or even forgotten by 341. The problem with this perspective is that the phrase reappears in the fourth creed that is traditionally viewed as a more conciliatory version.[53] In other words, an anathema against the Son's being "from nothing" was probably a part of the discussions surrounding the Dedication Creed, but the congregants provocatively decided against its inclusion, thereby signaling lenience against the purest of "Arian" phrases. Unlike the removal of "from the ousia of the Father" and "homoousios", the nonappearance of these anathemas cannot be excused as an anti-Marcellan gesture. If anything, anathematizing "before he was begotten, he was not" could have been interpreted as a prophylactic against Marcellus' doctrine of the Son's distention from the Father only at the incarnation. In other words, the removal of these slogans is best explained as a loosening of the anti-"Arian" sanctions.

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[52] Stead, "The Word", 679; L.G. Patterson, "Methodius, Origen, and the Arian Dispute", *SP,* Vol. 17/2 (1982), 912-923.
[53] Athanasius, *On the Synods* 25. An English and Greek version can be found at Kelly, *Creeds,* 272.

It is necessary to make one final observation about absences from the Antiochene documents. The revisionist thesis generally characterizes Antioch as an effort in steering a *via media* between Marcellan Sabellianism and Arian extremism.[54] Thus, Kelly insisted, "the creed was choosing the middle way preferred by most conservative churchmen".[55] This is false not only on the grounds of the aforementioned omissions, but also in a more obvious way; namely, the so-called third creed denounced Marcellus by name while the bishops did no such thing with Arius.[56] Since Nicaea did not deprecate Arius by name, it seems that personal denunciation was reserved for special instances. What is a bit surprising with Antioch is that, because Arius was long dead, a *damnatio memoriae* would have functioned as an emblematic move to bolster anti-"Arianism". If Antioch 341 was a middle way, there ought to be more similitude in personal condemnations.

Stephens and other revisionists dampen the significance of the omissions citing, among other things, Athanasius' own reluctance to insert the homoousion before the 350's. Stephens warns that:

> "attempts are often made to deduce from these creeds the great issues of the age, yet arguments from them which suggest that significant theological polemic was the main concern of the Dedication Council are primarily based around negative evidence, making deductions from that which is missed out of the Antiochene creeds. This is a dangerous approach. The absence of a certain theological point from a creed cannot be taken to imply anything about the group which created that creed unless the absence is proved to be deliberate and intentionally meaningful".[57]

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[54] This is very much Hanson's summation at *Search,* 290 in that the average author of the Dedication Creed "was no admirer of the extreme views of Arius but who had been shocked and disturbed by the apparent Sabellianism of N".
[55] Kelly, *Creeds,* 266.
[56] The confession of Theophronius of Tyana anathematizes Marcellus and πὰντες οἱ κοινωνοῦντες αὐτῳ, "all those who associate with him". The English and Greek of the confession can be found at Kelly, *Creeds,* 266-267.
[57] Stephens, *Canon Law,* 94-95.

It is difficult to speak authoritatively about anyone's intentions as Stephens demands, especially those of ancient thinkers, but the cumulative weight of Antioch's omitting the key phrases that most obviously barred Arius cannot be treated as a "dangerous approach". If creeds are minimalistic, as I have stated, then silence does play a role. If something does not appear in a creed it could either mean that the absent statement in question was not an issue for anyone, or that it lent itself to unwanted interpretations, or that it was so controversial that it was best avoided, or that its removal was to permit other views. The omissions delineated above probably fall into the latter three categories because the subsequent histories bear witness to this. The question here is to ask if any of the noteworthy omissions from Antioch moved its formula in a more anti-"Arian" direction. This must be answered negatively. The exclusions moved the formula unilaterally in a pro-"Arius" direction. Nevertheless, Stephen's remark does accurately caution readers about interpreting silence to make the entire case. The judgement on Athanasius' dislike for Antioch 341 cannot be made on absences alone. I will now focus on what the Dedication Council positively stated.

It is surprising that so many of the studies claiming the innocuousness of the Dedication's theology and its relationship to Nicaea fail to conduct a textual analysis. The remainder of the chapter will be devoted to this and I shall begin with the most famous line of the Dedication Creed of the Son being ἄτρεπτόν τε καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον, τῆς θεότητος οὐσίας τε καὶ βουλῆς καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης τοῦ πατρὸς ἀπαράλλακτον εἰκόνα, or "unalterable and unchangeable, the exact image of the Godhead, essence, and will, and power, and glory of the father". Part of the intrigue comes from the fact that a

large part of this is a nearly verbatim match of an Asterian fragment.[58] This combined with Philostorgius' criticism that Asterius compromised true "Arianism" by saying the Son is "image of the Father's essence" offers convincing proof that the Sophist was instrumental at Antioch.[59] Few would disagree with Markus Vinzent's conclusion that Asterius' involvement at this council is rarely doubted.[60] Along with Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arius, Asterius is one of the chief targets of Athanasius' polemic and one of the few "Arians" relentlessly attacked, regularly disparaged by the anecdote that he could not hold episcopal office because he lapsed during the Diocletianic persecution.[61] The question becomes whether this particular phrase caused any theological trouble for Athanasius. He does not state explicitly that this line is the source of his problem with the Dedication Council. Remarkably, over a century ago, William Bright, following Gwatkin, saw this language as "really equivalent to the Homoousion".[62] The revisionist interpretation exploits this conclusion seeing this line attributed to Asterius as anti-"Arian", Nicene orientated, and, theologically speaking, Athanasian friendly, especially in its inclusion of the ousia language.[63] Hanson confidently claimed no true "Arian" could sign this statement.[64] Those who see Antioch as pro-Nicene note that, on a preliminary glance, this particular phrasing looks like something Athanasius endorsed. The Alexandrian bishop did not have a problem calling the Son the "image of the

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[58] Asterius, *Frag.* 10; Hanson, *Search,* 288-289; Kinzig, *In Search of Asterius,* 19. Vinzent's collection of Asterius' fragments has come under some scrutiny as outlined DelCogliano's "Asterius", 625-650.
[59] Philostorgius, *EH* 2.15; Cf. Vinzent's *Asterius* for the idea that the Sophist authored the Dedication Creed.
[60] Markus Vinzent, "Gottes Wesen, Logos, Weisheit und Kraft bei Asterius von Kappadokien und Markell von Ankyra" in *VC* Vol. 47 No. 2 (1993), 173. Cf. Kinzig, *In Search of Asterius*, 14, 18.
[61] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.24, 2.28.
[62] Bright, *Age,* 175, although there is little analysis of the text.
[63] Stephens, in "Too Good and Holy" states that the use of ousia in the Dedication Creed is "Nicene" in motivation (119) but also that ousia language was unimportant at this time (133).
[64] Hanson, *Search,* 287.

Father".[65] Even more interesting is that Athanasius affirms the Son as the "very image of the father's essence", and other phrases close to the one attributed to Asterius.[66] When it comes to image language, it was Marcellus, not Athanasius, who resisted its application to the Son because this too easily lent itself to affirming a distinct hypostasis.[67] So, if the most famous line of the Dedication Creed is compatible with Nicaea and Athanasian theology, it appears that the bishop's polemic is more personal than substantive. The problem is that Stephens and Gwynn, to name two recent thinkers in this matter, misfire when they assume that Athanasius' insecurities came from the image Christology.[68] They argue that because the Dedication Creed and Athanasius' writings bear witness to image Christology, this could not have been a source of genuine tension. As the bishop made clear in his *Third Oration*, however, the Son being "exact image" was dependent on the Father and Son being of the same nature. If they are not of the same nature, the Son cannot be "exact image".[69]

Against the revisionists, I will argue that the wording of the text combined with Asterian authorship led Athanasius to read a "disidentification" between God's attributes and the Son.[70] It was not image Christology *per se* that antagonized Athanasius, but rather how the phrasing permitted a theology that asserted a distinction between, say, power or will as possessed by God and Christ as *the* power and *the* will. This being said,

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[65] The phrase is also found in Alexander of Alexandria's *Henos Somatos;* Cf. Athanasius, *Against the Nations,* 41 states that the Son is the "unchanging image of the Father".
[66] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.9, 1.26, 2.33.
[67] Parvis, *Marcellus,* 35 on why the bishop of Ancyra only used "image" for the incarnate Son.
[68] Stephens "Too Good and Holy", 127-149; Cf. Williams, *Arius,* 165 notes that "image" did not seem to play a major role in Arius' theology either.
[69] Athanasius, *Oration* 3.11. Cf. *Oration* 3.5 for the analogy of an emperor and his image in relation to the Father and Son.
[70] "Disidentification" comes form Khaled Anatolios' "'When Was God Without Wisdom?' Trinitarian Hermeneutics and Rhetorical Strategy in Athanasius" in *SP* Vol. 41 (2006), 117-123 by which he highlights the differences between the theologies of Athanasius and Asterius.

Athanasius could not see Godhead, essence, will, power, or glory as attributes of the Father granted to the Son, nor as titles, nor as possessed by the Son separately from the Father. For Athanasius these characteristics were inherent to the one, Father-Son relationship. Ernest captures nicely the point that was at stake: "Athanasius stipulates quite clearly that God has no word, or wisdom, or power apart from that which is in the Son; Christ is their name, as it were".[71] It is time to examine in more detail Athanasius' theology from his roughly contemporaneous *Orations* to see why it conflicted with Asterius' sentence from Antioch.[72]

Throughout the *Orations*, Athanasius inculpates Arius and Asterius for positing multiple wisdoms, powers, and wills in the Godhead.[73] The question is whether or not the Dedication Creed lends itself to this interpretation. The most natural reading of the Asterian phrase calls for emphasis of the Son as "image". Discussing what the Son as "image" meant in the years around Nicaea is a complicated enterprise. Complexity ensues because "image" language could be used to promote a lower or a higher Christology. Does the Son as "image" stress his dependence on or parity with the Father? For some of Athanasius' opponents, calling the Son the "image of God" asserted nothing beyond what is said about all human beings in 1 Corinthians 11.7 "man is the image and glory of God".[74] The Alexandrian bishop accused some of stating that "image"

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[71] James D. Ernest, "Patristic Exegesis and the Arithmetic of the Divine from the Apologists to Athanasius" in *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 146.
[72] It is difficult to determine the cause and effect between the activity in Antioch and Athanasius' *Orations*, but their proximity to one another and Athanasius' targeting of Asterius show they were a dialogue.
[73] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.37-40; Cf. Arius, *Thalia* in Athanasius, *Oration* 1.5; Athanasius, *On the Synods* 15 and Vinzent, *Asterius,* 303-305; Cf. DelCogliano's "Asterius", 638-640 where he thinks the accusation of multiple powers against Asterius was fair but that of multiple words and wisdoms was an Athanasian inference. Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea,* 53-54; Asterius, *Frag.* 64.
[74] Athanasius, *On the Decrees,* 20.

automatically implies it was created.[75] For Athanasius, the Son being "image" strengthened the claim for an ontological affinity. So, for the Alexandrian bishop, "one is the Word, that he only may be perfect, and because God is one, his image must also be one, which is the Son", thus signifying the Son's "generation from the Father".[76] The problem for Athanasius was that Asterius reasoned, "because the Word is image, he cannot be of the same substance as the Father".[77] Again, this is the exact opposite of what Athanasius contended in that in order to be image, the Son had to be the same substance.[78] Athanasius sensed that Asterius' use of "image" connoted distance between the Father and the Son. The Son as "image" lent itself to a continuum of understanding in which Athanasius and Asterius stood at opposite ends. More problematically for Athanasius, unlike the ontological equivalence of the Father and Son for which he fought, the Asterian phrase stressed the Son being an image of an *attribute* of the Father. It is with this distinction in mind that the rest of Asterius' statement will be examined.

The phrase communicated that the Son is "image of Godhead" (which could just as responsibly be translated "image of divinity"). θεότης was a technical word used deliberately by the central players of the time.[79] For Athanasius, positively calling the Son "image of the Godhead" created too much distance between the second person of the Trinity and the predicate, Godhead. As gathered from an Athanasian citation, the Sophist alleged, "his eternal power and Godhead is not the only begotten Son, but the Father who

[75] Athanasius at *Oration* 2.43 says "hearing from the Scriptures that his Godhead is represented in the Son as an image, they blaspheme saying it is a creature".
[76] Athanasius, *On the Decrees,* 17; Cf. Athanasius, *Oration* 1.21; *On the Decrees* 20.
[77] Mark Edwards, *Image, Word and God in Early Christian Centuries* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), 144; Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea's *Demonstration of the Gospel* book 5 for a discussion of why describing the Son as "image" elevates his personhood.
[78] Athanasius, *Oration* 3.11.
[79] Robertson, *Christ,* 3, 137f.

begot Him".[80] This is rather different from Athanasius' theologizing when he asserted, "if the Son be other as an offspring, he is the same as God; and he and the Father are one in propriety and uniqueness of nature, and in the identity of the one Godhead".[81] Even more concisely, "he who worships and honors the Son, in the Son worships and honors the Father, for there is one Godhead so there is one honour and one worship paid to the Father in and through the Son".[82] Most lucid of all, "the Son's Godhead *is* the Father's Godhead".[83] Since Asterius and Arius wanted to claim some primacy for the Father, it makes sense in their system that Father and Son possessed Godhead differently and separately. Athanasius, on the other hand, "located the 'oneness' demanded by monotheism in the Godhead (or θεότης) *within which* a plurality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit exists".[84] So, the Son as "image of the Godhead" is *not* the same thing as the Son being integral to the one Godhead.

This exact line of thinking can be assumed with the other attributes in the Asterian phrase. The Dedication Creed conveys that the Son is the "exact image of the Father's will", whereas Athanasius states, "the Word must surely be the living will of the Father".[85] The Creed leaves open the possibility of a plurality of divine wills, which is exactly what Athanasius wanted to oppose and what he found in the Sophist's writings. The Son being the will of God is not equivalent to him as the "image of the will of God". Following a plurality of wills, there is the line that the Son is "image of the Father's power". The word δὐναμις played a more critical role in these debates than is sometimes

[80] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.37.
[81] Athanasius, *Oration* 3.4.
[82] Athanasius, *Oration* 3.6.
[83] Athanasius, *Oration* 3.36.
[84] Robertson, *Christ,* 138.
[85] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.2 says the Son is ἡ τοῦ πατρός ζῶσα βουλή, or the "living will of the Father"; Cf. Athanasius, *Oration* 3.63.

recognized. It is interesting that Athanasius says in *On the Decrees* that the insertion of "homoousios" aimed to secure the idea that the Son was "true power".[86] In fact, when the Son as "power" was proposed at Nicaea, it was one of the words that allegedly caused the "Arians" to wink because it was "common to us and the Son".[87] The argument was that since regular human beings inherited God's power, ascribing this power to the Son did not equate him to the Father. One of the first accusations discovered in the *Orations* is that the "Arians" claim "there are many powers".[88] This allegation finds corroboration in the Sophist's *Syntagmation.*[89] Two decades later when Athanasius quoted the so-called blasphemies of Arius, one of his concerns was any hint of differentiation between the Son's power being a by-product of the Father's overflowing power.[90] Athanasius is, again, rigidly consistent across his texts, and across the years, that Christ *is* God's power. In *Against the Nations,* Christ "is the power of the Father".[91] Ernest is correct in noting the significance of the Son as αὐτοδύναμις ἰδία τοῦ Πατρός "the Father's own power".[92] In the *First Oration,*

> "what the power of God is, he teaches us elsewhere himself, 'Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God'. Surely in these words he does not designate the Father, as you often say to one another, affirming that the Father is his eternal power. This is not so for he does not say 'God himself is the power' but 'his is the power'. Very plain to all is that 'his' is not 'he', yet not something alien but rather proper to him…You will see that it is the Son who is signified".[93]

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[86] Athanasius, *On the Decrees*, 20.
[87] Athanasius, *On the Decrees,* 20.
[88] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.5. Athanasius suggests that his opponents evoked Joel 2.25 in which the caterpillar is depicted as a power of God.
[89] Again, even DelCogliano at "Asterius", 639 agrees the Sophist taught multiple powers.
[90] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 19.
[91] Athanasius, *Against the Nations,* 46. Also, "he is the Father's Power and Wisdom and Word, and not by participation nor as if these qualities were given to him from the outside".
[92] Athanasius, *Against the Nations,* 46. Cf. Ernest, "Patristic Exegesis", 142.
[93] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.4.11

Anatolios explains how Athanasius on three occasions connected 1 Corinthians 1.24, where Christ is the power of God, with Romans 1.20, where God's power is eternal.[94] The bishop was emphasizing that there is one eternal power in the Godhead; namely, the Son, and this power is proper to the Father. Michel Barnes, who is of revisionist tendencies, is correct in articulating the difference between Athanasius, on the one side, and Arius and Asterius on the other, in their theologies of power.[95] There is a distinction between the Son being *a* power and the Son being *the* power. The Dedication Creed permits the view that the Son could be a separate power from the unoriginate power of the Father. As far as the famous Asterian line, it is not hard to see why Athanasius saw this as permitting a theology at odds with his own.[96] The Son being Godhead, will, power, and glory is *not* the same thing as him being the image *of* them.

In order to understand how the language of the Dedication Creed might relate to Nicaea, it is helpful to consider Eusebius of Caesarea's *Letter to His See.* While it is impossible to affirm if Antioch wanted to forge a substitute for Nicaea, cross-examining the creeds does illuminate different emphases. This text permits the modern reader to evaluate some of the editing performed at the Nicene Council in 325. Eusebius of Caesarea presented a creed that was not wholeheartedly accepted. By examining the differences between Eusebius of Caesarea's formula and the Nicene Formula, the student notices potential areas of discord. The Caesarean bishop's suggested creed included language of the Son being "begotten…before all the ages" and the "firstborn of all

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[94] Khaled Anatolios, "Christ the Power and Wisdom of God: Biblical Exegesis and Polemical Intertextuality in Athanasius's Orations against the Arians" in *JECS* Vol. 21 No. 4 (2013), 505.
[95] M.R. Barnes, "One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic" In *SP* Vol. 29 (1997) 205-223.
[96] It is interesting to compare this position with Eusebius of Caesarea's pre-Nicene *Demonstration of the Gospel* 4.2.1 in which the Son is "Word itself" and "Wisdom itself".

creation".[97] Both statements can be responsibly supported from the New Testament where Christ is described as "before the foundation of the world" and explicitly as the "firstborn of all creation" in St. Paul's letter to the Colossians.[98] The question becomes why these phrases were dropped from Nicaea's Formula. I will examine both in turn.

Arius's *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia* and his *Letter to Alexander* confidently affirmed the Son's begetting "before the ages".[99] Parvis suggested that the Son's being "before the ages" could be interpreted as claiming the Son's eternal generation, but Arius certainly did not see things this way because he simultaneously denied the Son being "eternal" and "always".[100] It seems more likely that this was an innocuous way around using language of eternal generation. There is much debate on the coherence of Arius' theology on this point. The Son was somehow timelessly "begotten before the ages" but could not be said to be eternal. On the one hand, he could be making a subtle philosophical distinction about different types of time that had some currency via Atticus the philosopher.[101] That is to say, there may have been some thinkers who taught something could be both "before" and "timeless". Alternatively, even Stead noted the tension in Arius' denial of there being a "time" when the Son was not while using the aorist ὑπῆρξεν (he began) to describe the Son.[102] Whatever Arius' understanding of the terms, describing the Son as "begotten before the ages" caused no hesitation on his part. It was probably welcomed because it recalled Proverbs 8.22-30 in which Wisdom is described as "before the world". The Son as "before the ages" in conjunction with

[97] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Letter to His See*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 22.
[98] The Son being "before the foundation of the world" is most explicit in 1 Peter 1.20 but the phrase is used regularly (Ephesians 1.4-5, Revelation 13.8) to describe God's salvific plan. Cf. Colossians 1.15-17.
[99] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*; Opitz *Urkunde* 1 and in Arius, *Letter to Alexander;* Opitz *Urkunde* 6 he asserts "before the ages" on more than one occasion.
[100] Parvis, *Marcellus,* 175; Cf. Arius, *Letter to Alexander*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 6.
[101] Anatolios, "Christ the Power", 512.
[102] Stead, "The Platonism", 31.

Proverbs 8 supported Arius' theology of some kind of gap between the Father and Son. The potency of this exegesis explains why it demanded more attention from Athanasius than any other passage. Speaking of the Son as "before the ages" assisted Arius' theology of a non-eternal, even if timeless, Son. This might plausibly illuminate any nervousness about it at Nicaea.

Calling the Son the "firstborn of all creation" also lent itself nicely to Arius' theology that there was a situation when the Son was not.[103] The emphasis on the Son's birth rather than his begetting was particularly helpful. Since all men are born, positioning the Son as first in this category relegated him comfortably to the side of originated things. Most troubling for Athanasius was how this phrase from Colossians provided biblical support for labeling the Son a "creature". That this verse presented challenges for Athanasius is palpable from the attention he grants it, particularly in the second of the *Orations.* Athanasius responded to this "Arian" interpretation by deciding to make a distinction saying "the same one cannot be only-begotten and firstborn unless it pertains to different relations".[104] His solution was to argue that the Son is "only-begotten because of his begetting from the Father, as said, and firstborn because of his coming down to creation and making many his brothers".[105] Simply stated, Athanasius has to employ the rather dubious hermeneutic of making Colossians 1.15-17 about the incarnation, an interpretation against the context of St. Paul's cosmic Christ. In reading the *Orations,* it becomes evident that certain expositions of the Son as "firstborn" buttressed Arius' theological system of the second person of the Trinity being posterior to the first and that this required attention from the Alexandrian bishop.

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[103] Gwatkin, *Studies,* 41-55; Hall, *Doctrine,* 128-133 for analysis of these changes in the creeds.
[104] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.62.
[105] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.62.

The discussion of these two phrases is important to this chapter because both the Son's being "begotten before all the ages" and him being "the firstborn of every creature" reappear in the Dedication Creed.[106] Why did the bishops at Antioch assert two slogans that the Fathers at Nicaea deliberately dropped? It is most reasonable to understand this as an attempt by this minority group of clergymen to reestablish what was lost to them at Nicaea. By enshrining these two phrases, they granted the latitude to speak of the pre-incarnate Son as "born" and to entertain there being a situation, yes before the ages, but also before the Son came to be. These phrases were ways of circumventing the eternity of the Son. This can be combined with yet another interesting omission, specifically, the removal of Nicaea's "light from light" phrase, an image that catered to eternal generation.[107] By inserting these two lines into the Dedication Creed, the bishops endeared themselves to those more sympathetic to Arius' theology while clearly placing the burden of proof on Athanasius.

Antioch features irregularities around the use of the word Logos as it functions in these creeds. Like "firstborn of all creation", calling the Son the "word of God" has a fine biblical pedigree from John's Gospel. It also occupied a prominent position in the statement of faith coming from Antioch in 324/325 and in Eusebius of Caesarea's local creed.[108] Athanasius, in almost every one of his works, relishes calling the Son the

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[106] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 23.

[107] Origen explicitly states the "eternal generation" of the Son at his *Homily on Jeremiah* 9.4 and then employs a simile of light to explain it. Cf. Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah* ed. John Clark Smith (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 92-93. This, evidently, was taken up by Dionysius of Alexandria according to Athanasius at his *On the Sayings of Dionysius* 15. The Father and Son as "light from light" re-appears in the so-called fourth creed from Antioch, but its removal from the Dedication Creed is yet another indication of its muting the concept of an eternal Son. Cf. M.F. Wiles "Eternal Generation" in *JTS* Vol. 12 No. 2 (1961), 284-291.

[108] *Council of* Antioch in Opitz, *Urkunde* 18; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Letter to His See*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 22.

"Word of God".[109] Therefore, Nicaea's dropping of the Logos ascription demands some analysis. While there could not have been a dispute about calling the Son the Logos, there was a lively debate about what this meant. One explanation may lie in Wolfson's thesis that Arius revitalized Philo's theology of the Logos that featured its independent subsistence.[110] Williams has more recently revisited this proposal commenting on the tension that Philo's Logos theology could have created in Christian discourse.[111] Origen moved with caution on the Son as Logos because he thought it demanded a separate and dependent subsistence.[112] While few think that Arius attempted to be a good Philonic disciple, it is not unreasonable to see the great philosopher's thinking influencing these Alexandrians in more subtle ways. If Arius understood God's Logos to mean the Father's reason subsisted separately from him, it is easy to see why Alexander, and later, Athanasius, would have objected. While Logos does not feature prominently in Arius' letters, Athanasius' version of the *Thalia* has the presbyter saying precisely this; that the Father was once without his Logos.[113] Edwards pinpoints the tension saying that what the homoousion tried to capture "does not sit well, for example, with the appellation Logos since the properties of speech are not those of the speaker and the two cannot therefore share a common nature".[114] In other words, it is plausible that Logos was dropped at Nicaea because Arius' interpretation of it compromised the intended meaning of homoousios. Nicaea preferred to predicate things on the Son rather than on the Logos.

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[109] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 41-42 on why the Son is the Logos. Cf. Athanasius, *Oration* 1.7-9.
[110] H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* Vol. 1 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1956). Cristina Termini "Philo's Thought with the Context of Middle Judaism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 95-123 esp. 97-101 on Philo's logos.
[111] Williams, *Arius,* 117-123.
[112] Edwards, *Image, Word and* God, 140.
[113] Athanasius, *Oration* 1.5.
[114] Edwards, *Image, Word and God*, 138.

Much like "image", the Son as Logos could be glossed to support a higher or lower Christology. Provocatively, Arius and Euzoius were glad to include "God the Word" in the creed of readmission issued to Constantine in 327.[115] This is important because the Dedication Creed emphatically states that the Son is "God the Word, as it is written in the Gospel, 'and the Word was God'".[116] What makes this all the more surprising is that the Son as Logos was one of the few titles welcomed by Marcellus. The central tenet of the Ancyran bishop's theology was that the Word was the same as God.[117] This was the one permissible title for the pre-incarnate Son.[118] Marcellus seemed to like the title "Word" because it gave the impression of speech coming forth as an utterance, thus matching his idea of the expanding monad.[119] Given the anti-Marcellan tenor of the Dedication Council, why did the bishops ardently include the key ascription he employed? By itself, calling the second person of the Trinity the Logos is inoffensive but, considering it in the context of these developments, it is reasonable to see why its inclusion in the Dedication Creed could be a welcomed gesture to those sympathetic to Arius' theology. It could quite possibly have recalled a discussion at Nicaea that resulted in the expulsion of the Logos language. This would also explain Athanasius' regular modification of the Logos in the second *Oration* when he prefers the Son as "proper Word".[120] He wants to use Logos for the Son because of its biblical prominence, but he needed to spend much energy ensuring a particular understanding.

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[115] Arius, *Letter to Constantine*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 30.
[116] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 23.
[117] Marcellus, frag. 73.
[118] Parvis, *Marcellus,* 35.
[119] Marcellus, frag. 98.
[120] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.2, 2.22, 2.25, 2.27, 2.28, 2.34, 2.41, 2.67, (also 1.14, 3.65)

As is the case with other creeds from this time period, it is important to look at the positioning of the μονογενής, or only-begotten.[121] In Eusebius of Caesarea's rejected creed, "only-begotten" appeared just after the x from x language and before "firstborn of all creation" and "from the Father before all the ages". That is to say, the Son being "only-begotten" amplified him being the "firstborn" and "before the ages". The approved formula from Nicaea wanted "only-begotten" to stress not the Son being firstborn, but rather his being "from the essence of the Father". It then proceeds to the x from x language before stressing "begotten, not made". Returning to the Dedication Creed, the μονογενής finds yet another context. The creed states that the Son is "only-begotten God, by whom all things came to be, who was begotten before all the ages from God" before employing x from x language.[122] The Dedication Creed repositioned μονογενής to communicate something slightly different than Nicaea. Once again, its function more closely reembles that which was expunged at Nicaea. The Son's uniqueness intensifies his being "before the ages" rather than a natural relationship between the Father and Son. That he was now "only-begotten *God*" (as opposed to Nicaea's "only-begotten") dampens the language of sonship that was not only what was assumed by Nicaea's μονογενής, but also crucial to Athanasius' ontological parity. Interestingly, Arius' first documented use of the term comes when he stated that "the Son subsists in will and intention before the time and before the ages, God, the only-begotten".[123] In this case, Arius' "God, the only begotten" is closer to Antioch than Nicaea. More intriguingly, in his letter to Alexander, Arius says the Father "begot an

[121] Pollard, "The Creeds", 283f. for the strategic positioning of "only-begotten" in creedal formulae.
[122] μονογενὴς also appears in the other three writings coming from Antioch with some proximity to the Son's being "before the ages".
[123] Arius' *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 1.

only-begotten Son before time and ages through whom he made the ages and all made things".[124] It should not be missed that the Dedication Creed flanks μονογενής with the same two phrases that Arius did, specifically, that the Son was "before all ages" and the agent through whom things were made. While the use of only-begotten cannot be said to be "Arian", it is the case that those gathered at Antioch moved the word away from Nicaea's understanding towards Arius'.[125]

Having evaluated some of the most significant insertions to the Dedication Creed, the chapter now transitions to look at the anathemas. Again, the revisionist thesis wants to argue that the anathemas at Antioch echoed those from Nicaea and carried forward the exclusion of Arius. Kelly advances this view saying the Dedication was "putting a ban on several Arian doctrines in the concluding section of the anathemas".[126] The problem with this view is that Arius could have signed the anathemas with a clean conscience. The first of the Dedication's anathemas proscribes anyone who says that "time, or season, or age is or was before the Son".[127] It has already been argued as to why this did not

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[124] Arius, *Letter to Alexander*; Opitz, *Urkunde,* 6. Arius' creed for re-admission dropped "only-begotten" in favour of "begotten"; Cf. Opitz, *Urkunde* 30.

[125] An interesting word study could focus on the Dedication Creed's affirmation that the Son held a distinct τάξιν or "rank" from the Father. As the Creed reads, speaking of the Father, Son, and Spirit is not meaningless ἀλλὰ σημαινόντων ἀκριβῶς τὴν οἰκείαν ἑκάστου τῶν ὀνομαζομένων ὑπόστασίν τε καὶ τάξιν καὶ δόξαν "but accurately signifies the familiar hypostasis, *rank,* and glory of each one named". G.W. H. Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1372-1373 gives 14 meanings for the dictionary entry τάξις and under the 8th states that it can mean "rank, position" with a potentially "Arian view". Athanasius was not overly preoccupied with language of τάξιν or its cognates, but depending on one's translation, it could have precipitated additional reservations. At *Oration* 2.20 Athanasius said, ἤ τοίνυν ὁ λόγος ἐξῃρήσθω τῶν ποιημάτων καὶ ὡς κτίστης ἀποδιδόσθω τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ὁμολογείσθω φύσει υἱὸς ἤ, εἰ ὅλως κτίσμα ἐστί, τὴν αὐτὴν ὁμολογείσθω τάξιν ἔχειν, οἵαν ἔχει καὶ τὰ ἕτερα πρὸς ἄλληλα, λεγέσθω τε κἀκείνων ἕκαστον κτίσμα, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἓν τῶν κτισμάτων, γέννημα ἢ ποίημα, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἓν τῶν ποιημάτων ἢ γεννημάτων or "let the Word be excluded from the works and returned as Creator to the Father and be confessed to be Son by nature, but if he is a creature, let him be confessed to have such a *rank* (τάξιν) as each of the others has, let it be said to each of them 'creatures but not as one of the creatures, offspring or work, but not as one of the works or offspring'". This passage implies that Athanasius envisioned the Father and Son occupying the same rank. Only if creaturehood was ascribed to the Son should his rank be devalued.

[126] Kelly, *Creeds,* 270.

[127] Athanasius, *On the Synods,* 23.

prohibit Arius. Nowhere in the presbyter's extant texts did he assert a "time", "season" or "age" before the Son. While this injunction may have barred Athanasius' polemical version, it did nothing to outlaw Arius' theology. Moving to the second anathema, the revisionists see Antioch's proscription of the Son being κτίσμα ὡς ἓν τῶν κτισμάτων, or "creature as one of the creatures" as anti-"Arian". What is so confusing here is that Arius himself would have had no problem agreeing.[128] In fact, in his *Letter to Alexander,* Arius calls the Son the "perfect creature of God but not as one of the creatures".[129] The statement from Antioch's creed is nearly a verbatim match with the theology Arius authored. The Dedication Creed continued to anathematize another non-"Arian" line forbidding that the Son was ἢ γέννημα ὡς ἓν τῶν γεννημάτων or "an offspring as among the other offspring". The further anathema against saying the Son is ἢ ποίημα ὡς ἓν τῶν ποιημάτων proves more interesting with the creed's omission of Nicaea's "not made". Athanasius' perspective on these matters is that the Son "is not a work nor a creature".[130] That is to say, while the Dedication Creed left open the possibility for the Son to be labeled a κτίσμα or a ποίημα, Athanasius never thought these appellations applicable to the second person of the Trinity. This alteration is especially striking if a prohibition against calling the Son a κτίσμα was in the last draft of Nicaea's formula.[131]

## 7.3 The Antiochene Canons

There is one further matter that ought to be addressed before concluding our findings on Antioch 341. In the canons that have traditionally been associated with the

[128] Gwatkin, *Studies,* 118; Hanson, *Search,* 287; Kelly, *Creeds,* 270.
[129] Arius, *Letter to Alexander*; Opitz, *Urkunde* 6.
[130] Athanasius, *Oration* 2.21.
[131] Wiles, "A Textual Variant", 428-433.

council, the first deems Nicaea a "holy and great synod" that must not be violated.[132] The revisionist thesis argues "the Antiochene bishops are shown by the canons of Antioch to have been explicitly pro-Nicene".[133] There are four considerations that offer a caution against this conclusion. Firstly, that these canons are in fact to be associated with the Dedication Council is by no means a widely accepted view. While Stephens' recent monograph marshals evidence for a 338 date for the canons, the work admirably shows the serious scholars who have dated them to the mid 320's.[134] The confused nature of the subscription lists is well attested.[135] That Eusebius of Caesarea's name appears on several lists ought to distance the canons from 341. Whatever the date, we cannot escape the fact that only thirty names are associated with the canons. Secondly, if the canons were authored in 338, that leaves a time gap of three years before the Dedication Creed. That is, there is no need to equate a subset of thirty bishops mentioning the authority of Nicaea with a creedal formula from 97 bishops authored three years later. Thirdly, Athanasius' *Encyclical* was a response to the activity in Antioch that deposed him and appointed Gregory to Alexandria's bishopric. In this letter, Athanasius accused his opponents of allowing the "heathen" magistrates and secular authorities to intervene in this type of ordination. On these grounds, Athanasius' opponents violated the "ecclesiastical canons".[136] While it is hard to know which canon he referred to, it seems possible that Athanasius appealed to what is now known as Antioch IX and XI; that the metropolitan controls ordinations and a clergyman ought not appeal to secular authorities

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[132] Stephens, *Canon,* 241. The appendices of this work contain the Antiochene canons.
[133] Stephens, *Canon,* 118.
[134] Hamilton Hess, *The Early Development of Canon Law and the Council of Serdica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 53, 185-186 thinks the Antiochene canons belong to 328.
[135] Stephens, *Canon,* 249; Brennecke, "Introduction", 5.
[136] Athanasius, *Encyclical* 2.

respectively.[137] In other words, what Stephens sees as canons written directly against Athanasius are the ones that the beleaguered Alexandrian most plausibly appealed to in his first polemical letter. That Athanasius' could be referring to a canon authored only months previously by his enemies is highly unlikely (for he would not have considered them authoritative), thus insinuating an earlier date for the canons. If Athanasius thought these canons were written against him, then why did he appeal to their binding status before so vast an audience? In all of his harsh polemic, Athanasius never condemned the canons of Antioch. Perhaps the better question about the canons is why the group at Antioch raised so little commotion when Eusebius of Nicomedia directly violated Nicaea XV and Antioch III (if it was authored by 339) by assuming the see of Constantinople. Lastly, it ought to be noted that the first Antiochene canon provides a non-Athanasian appeal to Nicaea's inviolability. It is often assumed that Athanasius alone revived Nicaea and hijacked its meaning. The first canon from Antioch shows there were other groups of bishops who found Nicaea, not so much its formula as its significant gathering before Constantine, authoritative. If the canons are to be placed in 338 as Stephens says, then their deference to Nicaea is all the more remarkable given their own biannual councils and those of other major cities. This indicates a kind of tug-of-war over the real meaning of Nicaea. This is evidence that Nicaea's legacy was a consideration.

## 7.4 Concluding Analysis

Having evaluated the Dedication Council in some detail, the analysis finds more agreement with Sara Parvis' conclusions that Antioch was biased rather than with the aggressive revisionist thesis, exposited most fully and recently by Gwynn and Stephens,

[137] Stephens, *Canon,* 243.

that Antioch was trying to say the same thing as Nicaea with slightly different words. It is difficult to harmonize the findings of this chapter with Hanson's conclusion that the Dedication Creed "is not deliberately contrived to permit Arian doctrine; in fact at places it explicitly excludes such doctrine".[138] The bishops at Antioch stated directly that they "accepted" Arius as proved by their "sayings". Whether their motivation was to supplant Nicaea or not is hard to detect if, for no other reason, access to these inclinations lies beyond historical inquiry.[139] I see no textual evidence from Antioch's formulas to indicate that it was "staunchly pro-Nicene".[140] What is certain is that the bishops at Antioch re-opened the doors that the fathers at Nicaea (at least the fathers who prevailed) wanted to shut. Antioch broadened what was acceptable theological discourse in the direction of welcoming the kind of understanding held by Arius. I have outlined no fewer than a dozen discrepancies between the formulas each involving the most controversial slogans. Each one of the changes can be identified as moving the theology in a more pro-"Arian" direction. While some of the developments were certainly anti-Marcellan, none of the changes look more anti-"Arian". The Dedication Creed omitted "homoousios", "from the ousia of the Father", "not made", "true God from true God", "light from light", and an anathema on the Son being "from nothing". It spared Arius from explicit denunciation while Marcellus was not so fortunate to escape this stigma. That the Son was "exact image of the Father" would not have frustrated Athanasius if it was interpreted as describing parity between the two, but the fact that the Son could be called the image of an attribute or an image of the essence instead of embodying that

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[138] Hanson, *Search,* 287.
[139] Ayres, *Nicaea,* 119-120 says it is hard to know exactly if Antioch aimed to supplant Nicaea but that it seems likely that it was a corrective of some sort. Hanson, *Search,* 290 says it was intended to replace Nicaea.
[140] Stephens, "Too Good and Holy", 158.

attribute or essence created a "disidentification" between the Father and Son. The Dedication Creed re-inserted the Son being "begotten before the ages", "firstborn of all the ages", and preferred to predicate things on the Logos rather than on the Son. There is substantial evidence that Arius used all three statements from the time before Nicaea. Lastly, its anathemas prohibited nothing that Arius could not agree to with clean conscience. For all these reasons, the extreme revisionist thesis that argues Athanasius was unjustified in disliking this council on theological grounds cannot be maintained. This chapter says nothing about the authority of Nicaea's Formula in the 330's. It only wants to make the case that, when compared to Nicaea, the number and nature of the theological changes at Antioch explains why Athanasius inveighed against the meeting.

## Chapter 8: The Role of Memory in the "Arian Controversy"

In the summer of 1859, J.H. Newman found himself in the middle of a heated debate about the role of the laity in the church. He submitted an article to the *Rambler* in July of that year entitled *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine.*[1] In order to make his case for gathering the consensus of the people, Newman unleashed a most striking analogy; that it was the *consensus fidelium* rather than the rule of the bishops that carried the true faith against "Arianism" in the sixty years after Nicaea.[2] While I am not exploring the concept of a pre-Nicene orthodoxy, Newman's article raises questions about the often-neglected recipients of Athanasius' polemic. Newman appropriately reorients the thinking away from the handful of bishops whose writings survive towards the great mass of laity who heard (or maybe read) of the positions.

The focus of this chapter, then, is to see that Athanasius' biased retelling of history for the purposes of persuading an intended audience takes us into the realm of collective (or social) memory. Arius, for Athanasius' readers and listeners, existed only in their memories (rather than the texts that Arius authored).[3] The same can be said of the bishop's trenchant hostility against the "Eusebians" long after Eusebius of Nicomedia perished in 341. Most of Athanasius' polemic targeted events in previous decades. This chapter will explore collective memory studies to argue that Athanasius' audience, akin

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[1] J.H. Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* ed. John Coulson (London: Collins, 1986), 75 where in the fourth century, "the infallible Church was proclaimed and maintained far more by the faithful than by the Episcopate".
[2] Newman, *Consulting,* 77.
[3] In addition to Arius' two surviving letters (to Eusebius of Nicomedia and to Alexander of Alexandria) and the *Thalia,* Constantine ordered Arius' writings burned and claimed he was the recipient of his letters in Opitz, *Urkunden* 33 and 34 respectively.

to Newman's laity, must have had some pre-existent, non-Athanasian dependent conception of "Arianism". Put more pointedly, why did Athanasius reason it beneficial to establish his own position by relentlessly attacking "Arians"? Why was railing against the "Eusebians" advantageous? Clearly these linguistic seeds found fertile soil. The extreme revisionist thesis, on the other hand, portrays Athanasius as autonomously configuring his "Athanasian Arianism" whilst neglecting to comment on how his audience would have understood this polemic. When the thinking shifts away from Athanasius as an isolated conjurer towards the community for whom he wrote, we see that the polemic's recipients must have placed some constraints on the bishop's narrative.

Collective memory analysis drives the reader beyond Athanasius' words to thinking about how his audience heard and internalized his words. While there is latitude in thinking about how fairly Athanasius portrayed his opponents, there ought to be little hesitation in affirming that *he thought* the best way to solidify his position, theologically and ecclesiastically, was to attack what he called "Arians" as propped-up by "Eusebians". The question I want to ask is how much freedom Athanasius actually had in constructing these groups. Did Athanasius' audience know that "Arianism" was to be avoided? It cannot be denied that Athanasius' polemic, however genuine, resonated with the prevailing collective mindset of his community.

This chapter will make three moves. Firstly, there will be a discussion on how Athanasius' audience received his polemic. Secondly, I will introduce collective memory theory to show that the "Arian Controversy" revisionists embrace an "extreme constructivist" or "presentist" view of human memory.[4] Their language of Athanasius

[4] The language of "extreme constructivist" comes from cognitive psychologist David Rubin's "Introduction" in the work he edited *Remembering our Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

"creating" or "inventing" "Arianism" betrays this position.[5] In contradistinction, I will draw on a range of thinkers who adopt a "continuity" approach to memory whereby they stress the social dimension of memory and the *shared* retelling of a community's narrative. Thirdly, this chapter will examine the social theory of reputation and the role of reputational entrepreneurs as they relate to Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia. The chapter discovers that both of these individuals had a historical reputation that governed Athanasius' polemic. Focusing on these parameters that were fixed by Athanasius' audience softens how someone envisions the bishop's freely mapping the contours of a heresy.

## 8.1 Athanasius' Audience

The reason any given text survives from antiquity is obvious; a range of people found it worth copying. If a text was unpopular, scribes did not undertake the laborious task of reproducing it. Why a text survived is unsurprising, but in the ancient, pre-Gutenberg world, many questions do surround how texts were disseminated. Harry Gamble's work on this topic argues that early Christian literature went forth from the author to a trusted group of sympathetic people, then to various Christian communities.[6] This practice more or less stayed constant through the early fifth century. From individual communities, precise copying and transmission was impossible to control. From what we can tell, Athanasius' anti-"Arian" polemic advanced in texts copied in

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1996), 6 though it appears in the works of other memory theorists. Cf. Martin Conway, "Autobiographical Knowledge and Autobiographical Memories" in the same volume, 67-93.

[5] Ayres' *Nicaea* has a chapter entitled "The Creation of Arianism". Lyman's "Topography" 247 says Marcellus and Athanasius "created 'Arian' as the heretical label to apply to any one who opposed him as bishop of Alexandria or the doctrine of Nicaea". Wiles at *Archetypal* 6 thinks Athanasius "is responsible for creating Arianism". Beeley at *Unity* 168 goes for Athanasius' "inventing" the "Arian" heresy.

[6] Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale Univerity Press, 1995), Ch. 3.

various Christian communities. Given their polemical nature, it was probably Athanasius' aim to disseminate them as widely and quickly as possible. As Warmington contests, Athanasius' works "testify to a need to present his case immediately and forcefully to as wide a readership as possible".[7] By the late fourth century, Jerome could speak of Athanasius' prolificacy and his "very many" anti-Arian works in circulation.[8] The bishop's version of events found traction over the course of his lifetime, swelling in the late fourth century.

Given the circulation of Athanasius' texts, it is important to remember that ancient writing reached its recipients through the ear rather than the eye. One recent monograph reminds us that in the fourth century "there is barely a text, then, which is not, in some manner, meant to be 'heard'".[9] Given low literacy rates, "every Christian regularly heard reading".[10] "The most important thing to be said is that in the Greco-Roman world virtually all reading was reading aloud".[11] Initially, Athanasius' writings made their way into the hands of fellow clergymen and monastic settlements. From them, they could reach the broader Christian laity.[12]

Years before the spreading of Athanasius' more overtly polemical works, the bishop's early *Festal Letters* were widely dispersed. It was through these letters that the bishop promulgated the date of Easter to, as the introduction to the *Festal Index* claims,

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[7] B.H. Warmington, "Did Athanasius Write History?" in *The Inheritance of Historiography 350-900* eds. C.J. Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1986), 13.
[8] Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men,* 87.
[9] Carol Harrison, *The Art of Listening in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-2.
[10] Gamble, *Books,*141.
[11] Gamble, *Books,* 203.
[12] It is unfortunate that not one sermon from Athanasius survives. For the relationship between pastoral exhortation and its audience see Wendy Mayer, "Homiletics" in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 565-583. Cf. Cunningham and Allen, *Preacher and Audience*.

"all the provinces subject to him".[13] The clergymen who received the content of the letters would then transmit it to the laity. Athanasius issued *Festal Letter X* in 338, at about the same time that his anti-"Arian" polemic emerged.[14] The ministerial tone of this *Festal Letter* is palpable when Athanasius shepherded his faithful saying "loved ones, if we shall gain comfort from afflictions, if rest from labours, if health after sickness, if death from immortality, it is not right to be distressed by the temporal ills that lay hold of mankind".[15] The reader glimpses the pastoral Athanasius exhorting those under his watchfulness. What makes this letter pertinent to this study is that about three quarters of the way through, having noted "temporal ills", Athanasius spontaneously blamed "Ario-maniacs" for having incorrect views on the incarnation.[16] For the remainder of this short epistle, Athanasius does not mention Arius or "Arians", let alone explain their origins, methods, positions, or whereabouts. What he did make clear was that these "Ario-maniacs" were enemies who denied the Son's deity and would "gnash their teeth upon us".[17] While the *Festal Letters* are the most obvious example of texts reaching a range of people, a similar pattern emerges from the almost contemporaneous *Encyclical*, which, as the title communicates, went to a wide audience. Athanasius asked his subordinate ministers, to whom the letter was addressed, to condemn the impious "Arians", making

[13] Athanasius, *Festal Letters* in *The Festal Epistles of S. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria* trans. Henry Burgess (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1854), xv.
[14] The *Apology against the Arians* contains an anti-"Arian" letter from the Alexandrian bishops at Tyre, presumably datable to 335, but most see the late 330's as the earliest evidence for committed anti-"Arianism".
[15] Athanasius, *Festal Letter* 10.7; Cf. Gwynn at *Athanasius,* 131 says the *Festal Letters* show the pastoral Athanasius.
[16] Athanasius, *Festal Letter,* 10.9 says "now because they did not consider these matters, the Ario-maniacs, being opponents of Christ, and heretics, smite him who is their helper with their tongue, and blaspheme the one who set them free".
[17] Athanasius, *Festal Letter* 10.10.

sure the "ministers and people" of Alexandria understood they were to be avoided.[18] Again, it is because of this group that "the people and their ministers are separated from one another".[19]

These texts are the first instantiations of Athanasius' attack on the "Arians". Instead of focusing only on the words, this chapter wants to adopt the posture of an original recipient. It is hard to imagine the mentioning of "Ario-maniacs" in a *Festal Letter* making any sense without some context. Likewise, if a country bishop from Egypt followed through with Athanasius' request in the *Encyclical* to avoid "impious Arians", what would this have meant to him and the average listener? After all, neither document catalogued "Arian" beliefs. It makes most sense to think that Athanasius' polemic could only have been intelligible if there was some pre-existent knowledge of "Arianism" or, at the very least, some recognition of a cognate built on Arius' name, presuming his condemnation was widely known. Otherwise the hearers of the anti-"Arian" polemic would be completely lost asking questions like "what is an Arian?" or "who are the Ario-maniacs"? If Athanasius alleged that "Arians" could divide the church community and none of the recipients had even heard of an "Arian", the bishop would have been a buffoon. Otherwise, what is left is something as absurd as a 21st century Midwestern American preacher bringing down a thundering sermon upon the "Maoists" who posed an imminent threat to the unity of the church whilst circulating tracts to other local clergymen to the same end. Surely the congregants would dismiss this as senility detached from anything verifiable. Athanasius expects the original recipients of these

[18] Athanasius, *Encyclical,* 7; Cf. *Encyclical* 2 says "the people [of Alexandria] however assembled still more constantly in the churches for they very well knew that neither they themselves nor any bishop or presbyter, nor, in short, that anyone complained against me; and they saw that Arians only were on his side, and were also aware that he himself was an Arian and was sent by the Eusebians to the Arian party".
[19] Athanasius, *Encyclical,* 7.

texts to know something about the group he is condemning. If Athanasius' subordinate clergy had no previous comprehension of "Arians" and no sense that they *could be* a threat, then the polemic of *Festal Letter X* and the *Encyclical* lose intelligibility. It is difficult to imagine that Athanasius foisted these polemical categories on his audience after a twelve-year silence across the Greek speaking East.[20] The only point in this first section is to consider the rapid transmission of Athanasius' anti-"Arian" polemic and how this attack sounded in the ears of its hearers in relation to those who argue for an "Athanasian Arianism". It makes most sense to suppose that Athanasius' audiences had some shared memories of the "Arians" and did self-identify as those in a struggle against it. It is now important to turn to social memory studies to consider how much flexibility Athanasius had in constructing his opponents and if he could have imposed such a fabrication on his audience.

## 8.2 The "Arian Controversy" and Social Memory

Memory has long been the subject of philosophical speculation.[21] Its application as a method for historical inquiry expanded only in the last three decades and at least one historian can claim that memory has become "one of the central preoccupations of historical scholarship".[22] Though a relatively new field, historians as eminent as Peter Burke have noted that the study of human memory serves historical study well.[23] How people came to remember things *is* historical data. Athanasius' polemic is full of

[20] Gwynn at *Eusebians,* 87 implies this when he says Athanasius crafted this polemic when he was in trouble post-Tyre.
[21] Aristotle, "On Memory and Recollection" in G.P. Goold (ed.) and W.S. Hett (trans.) *The Loeb Classical Library* Aristotle Vol. VIII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 285-313.
[22] Geoffrey Cubitt, *Historical Approaches: History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 1.
[23] Peter Burke, "History as Social Memory" in *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind* ed. Thomas Butler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 97-113.

recollections, for example; that the "Arians" placed Gregory as bishop of Alexandria, the "Eusebians" orchestrated the Council of Tyre and that they, in the interest of the "Arians" ousted Eustathius, Eutropius, Asclepas, and Marcellus. Athanasius' interpretation of these past events and his willingness to distribute them widely places us firmly in the realm of social memory. While the study of memory now occupies much literary space and any overview of it is doomed to be impressionistic, the hope here is to apply its basic tenets as a method of gaining useful insights on Athanasius' "Arians".

"'Social memory' refers to the distribution throughout society of beliefs, knowledge, feelings and moral judgments about the past".[24] So, from the start, it must be understood that social or collective memory is not so much concerned with the computer-like retrieval of facts, but rather how a community came to remember the past. Practically no theorist embraces a "copy and save" approach to recalling the past.[25] Any discussion of social memory ought to begin with the work of Maurice Halbwachs who pioneered collective memory theory.[26] Halbwachs argued that human memory is essentially a selective reconstruction of past events to suite one's present purposes. The groundbreaking work of Halbwachs maintained that human memory is not an objective retrieval of raw data akin to pulling a document from a filing cabinet, but rather something that is socially prompted. Halbwachs affirmed that memory was a discriminatory practice in which a person refashions the past for current reasons. This

[24] Barry Schwartz, "Christian Origins: Historical Truth and Christian Memory" in *Memory, Tradition and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* eds. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 45.
[25] Richard Horsley's "Prominent Patterns in the Social Memory of Jesus and Friends" in *Memory, Tradition and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* eds. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 64.
[26] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* trans. Lewis Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Cf. Schwartz, "Christian Origins", 49 and Eric Eve, *Behind the Gospels: Understanding the Oral Tradition* (London: SPCK, 2013), 93.

"presentist" or, at its more extreme, "invention of tradition" approach, as it may also be called, suggests that memories are malleable and fabricated to engage with current power struggles.[27] From this "presentist" function of human memory, it is a short jump to what some label the "politics of memory" in that the events and persons of the past are often manipulated, framed, and shaped to support a present hegemonic dispute. Memory is the process of an "active restructuring" of the past.[28] In the process of memory retrieval, a person omits, softens, and expands a past event based on the contemporary atmosphere. From the psychological branch of the field, "an essential premise of cognitive psychology is that people selectively process the information available to them in their world".[29] That is to say, memory is as much about the subject's present as it is about his or her past. Far from functioning as an exact recall of "facts", humans retrieve that which the present exigencies demand. So, parts of Halbwachs' understanding of memory dovetail nicely with the revisionist thesis because any idea that Athanasius invented the "Arians" for his own situational needs fits quite comfortably in the "invention of tradition" camp. The language of the revisionists signals this more "presentist" understanding of memory. For some of them, Athanasius' "inventing" of the "Arian" heresy emphasized the bishop's present situation at the expense of genuine continuity with his past.[30] Athanasius "is responsible for creating the concept of Arianism".[31] The bishop's opponents can be distilled to a "polemical construct".[32] How he categorizes his foes is "entirely

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[27] Barbara Misztal's *Theories of Social Remembering* (Berkshire UK: Open University Press, 2003) provides an excellent overview of the different approaches.
[28] James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 40.
[29] John Robinson, "Perspective, Meaning and Remembering" in *Remembering our Past* ed. David Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 199.
[30] Beeley, *Unity,* 158. He was preoccupied with "inventing and maintaining the Arian heresy", 168.
[31] Wiles, *Archetypal,* 6.
[32] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 178.

artificial".[33] Athanasius interprets his present troubles through "polemical retrojection" thereby distorting the past.[34] Every violation pinned on the "Arians" informs the reader less about the group (as some doubt that there even was a group) and more about Athanasius' pressures. Athanasius' partiality in his recall of Arius drives his power-hungry ambitions. It is never a question of whether Athanasius has accurately described his opponents because he always reconstructs the past to his own purposes. Arius and the "Arians" remain "concealed by fabrication".[35] It is a wonder why some have not questioned the existence of the "historical Arius".[36]

The problem is that a range of thinkers, while still acknowledging some selectivity in memory recall, has pushed back on this "invention of tradition" interpretation of memory. How someone publicly recalls something is limited and scoped by communally imposed parameters. As Richard Bauckham claimed in his chapter devoted to this topic, "memories are not freely constructed. There are clearly constraints in the remembering process that account for the relative accuracy and the broad element of stability in memories recalled on different occasions".[37] Social memory is a negotiation between the past and the present that places limitations on how far the past could be forged. It is now time to consider these constraints in more detail.

The purely "constructivist" understanding of memory, in our case the revisionists' insistence on an "Athanasian Arianism", stifles an axiomatic tenet in memory studies,

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[33] Gwynn, *Eusebians,* 229.
[34] Gwynn, *Eusebians.* 146.
[35] This phrase is Schwartz's conclusion on the Jesus of Form Criticism at "Christian Origins", 48.
[36] Horsley at "Prominent Patterns" 62 reminds us how the Form Critics combed the New Testament for "good data", a method strikingly similar to some of the revisionists' approach to Athanasius.
[37] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Cambridge UK: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 327.

namely; that memory has a social nature.[38] Virtually every student of memory recognizes that "there is an irreducibly social dimension to our acts of remembering".[39] While memory retrieval does deviate based on current necessities, there must be some common deposit of information because the relating of memories is always shared. From Halbwachs forward, sociologists affirm, "every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time".[40] Barry Schwartz, who has devoted much energy to combating the presentist view of memory, amplifies the importance of this social dimension.[41] He argues that "authors and artists who preserve social memory do their work with an audience in mind, and since creators and audiences are members of the same social world, the former know what their work will mean to the latter".[42] Or again, when a memory is shared, "recipients' reactions are affected by common social experience".[43] On Schwartz's methodology, the idea that Athanasius could have had unmitigated freedom in erecting his "Arian Controversy" violates a basic principle in that such a chronicle had to reach its hearers as a meaningful category. In short, "culture producers…live under the same roof as their consumers".[44] The one advancing an "Arian" struggle is in dialogue with the ones who were being informed of the "Arian" struggle. Schwartz is not alone in thinking of memories in this way. Werner Kelber has also devoted much scholarly attention to memory studies. One particularly helpful insight from Kelber derives from his development of what he called a "biosphere", a

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[38] Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*; Daniel Schacter *Searching for Memory* (New York: BasicBooks, 1996), "Introduction".
[39] Eve, *Behind,* 86
[40] Coser's *Introduction* in Halbwachs, *Collective,* 22. Coser is certainly suspicious of Halbwachs' purely constructivist interpretation.
[41] Schwartz in his "Christian Origins", 43-56 articulates his reservation towards the mere constructive view of memory.
[42] Schwartz, "Christian Origins", 54.
[43] Schwartz, "Christian Origins", 55.
[44] Schwartz, "Christian Origins", 54.

concept he uses especially for late antiquity. He describes the biosphere as "a matrix that carries the oxygen to sustain human life".[45] What he means for the purposes of this discussion is that when a narrative was related in late antiquity, there was a "verbal-social context" in which that story occurred, thus communicating a meaning.[46] Kelber further explains this when he writes, "tradition in this broadest sense is largely an ascertainable and invisible nexus of references and identities from which people draw sustenance, in which they live, and in relation to which they make sense of their lives. This invisible biosphere is at once the most elusive and foundational feature of tradition".[47] This matrix is the "biosphere in which speaker and hearers live".[48] To put it more concretely, Athanasius' accusations of "Arian" mischief, with at times quite pointed charges, found an audience who processed it through their own web of experience. As Athanasius lamented the activity of the "Eusebians", his audience processed this in a *biosphere*, that is, a context of interconnected meanings. So, for Kelber, like Schwartz, when a memory is communicated verbally or in texts, in our case the malicious deeds of the "Arians" and "Eusebians", it finds constraints and value precisely in the speaker-hearer exchange. Ancient writers, as Eric Eve illustrates, wrote from "the stream of tradition in which they were immersed".[49] When a person relates a memory, it must resonate with its listeners because memories are "always rooted in other people".[50] Athanasius' narrative of an "Arian" takeover not only implicated a larger group, his readers and hearers, but also actually *required* their involvement for its transmission. If a narrative does not resonate

[45] Werner Kelber, *Imprints, Voiceprints, and Footprints of Memory* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 6.
[46] Kelber, *Imprints,* 6.
[47] Kelber, *Imprints,* 127.
[48] Kelber, *Imprints,* 127.
[49] Eric Eve, *Writing the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 2016), 123.
[50] Coser, in Halbwachs, *Collective,* 24.

with the hearers, it cannot be intelligible, let alone motivating or enduring. It certainly would not be worth repeating or copying. Athanasius' polemical freedom cannot come at the expense of a dehumanized audience.

This shared nature of memory leads to another tenet on which almost all theorists agree; namely, that social memory is closely linked to the creation and maintenance of community identity. To better understand this, we can think about individual memory. Self-identity is intertwined with how we come to remember things about our past. How a person recalls childhood vacations, instructive lessons, or painful experiences shapes who that individual is. We also recognize the faces of friends, teachers, and acquaintances through the use of our memories. So pervasive is the role of memory that when we think about daily activities, most of our actions are performed because of a functioning memory. Most people do not re-learn how to brush their teeth or eat their breakfast. Not only do we remember how to do these things but we also remember where the toothpaste and cereal are located. Part of what makes dementia so sad is that the person's loss of memory seems to strip them of who we know them to be. When someone thinks about how much of daily life depends on personal recollection, it is not hard to see how individual memory forms personal identity.

Just as personal memories play such an important role in shaping individual memory, so also do community memories shape collective identity. "Social memory defines a group giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future".[51] Communities survive by communicating their memories.[52] Those to whom Athanasius wrote, especially the Alexandrian Christians, went beyond "consuming" Athanasius'

[51] Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory,* 25.
[52] Alan Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory" in *Memory, Tradition and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* eds. Kirk and Tom Thatcher (Atlanta: The Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 3-4.

polemic to actually identifying themselves in those terms. Athanasius' readers and hearers came to understand themselves as non-"Arians", thus adopting a particular social memory to reinforce that understanding. When seen from this angle, it is easy to sympathise with the social memory experts who remain dismissive of an individual's ability to privately contrive such a collective memory that came to define a group. So, Connerton contends,

> all beginnings contain an element of recollection. This is particularly so when a social group makes a concerted effort to begin with a wholly new start. There is a measure of complete arbitrariness in the very nature of any attempted beginning….But the absolutely new is inconceivable… In all modes of experience we always base our particular experiences on a prior context in order to ensure that they are intelligible at all; prior to any single experience, our mind is already predisposed with a framework of outlines.[53]

Connerton's observations relate well to what Athanasius accomplished in garnering support from his contemporaries. In the bishop's attempt to establish a community of "Nicenes" against the "Arians", Athanasius had to draw on previous experiences. Connerton cautions against the degree to which we can think any attempt of this kind could be absolutely "new". Alternatively, it is much more likely that there was some kind of shared interpretation of the past that Athanasius seized, say, for example, that the "Arians" were sidelined at Nicaea but were still an active threat. So, what comes from the Alexandrian bishop's pen in the mid fourth century is not so much "Athanasian Arianism", but rather a "master commemorative narrative" for his community.[54] Athanasius wrote for a group who, at least partially, identified as those victimized by

[53] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6.
[54] Kirk "Social and Cultural Memory", 5.

"Arians" and "Eusebians". The bishop exploited the "organization of symbolic patterns on which people rely to make sense of their experience".[55]

Athanasius' ability to enhance the bonds within his community probably extended to his constant disparagement of Arius. Memory theorists have talked about how routinely attacking a scoundrel actually augments shared identity. "Moral outrage against a notorious villain can help build social solidarity as effectively as public celebration of a great hero".[56] Castigating an individual while refusing to admit any of his or her redeeming characteristics, fairly or unfairly, does enhance community cohesion.[57] Athanasius' polemic is replete with the vilification of Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Asterius the Sophist. This is distasteful to the modern student, but it does seem to be how ideas were rehearsed in the early church.[58] According to one expert, in the fourth century, "most people agreed that authority, fear, even the direct use of force might be mobilized to impose truth and banish error", though within the boundaries of civility.[59] Regardless of our present judgments on this pattern, identifying against an outcast can create group camaraderie only if the description is plausible. The bishop's harsh judgment of these figures successfully strengthened his community of listeners by reinforcing boundaries.

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[55] Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory", 20 citing Schwartz who cited Geertz.
[56] Eve, *Writing,* 99.
[57] Lori J. Ducharme and Gary Alan Fine, "The Construction of Nonpersonhood and Demonization: Commemorating the Traitorous Reputation of Benedict Arnold", *SF* 73 (1995), 1309–31.
[58] For the dangers in branding opponents see Johannes Zachhuber, "The Rhetoric of Evil and the Definition of Christian Identity", in *Rhetorik des Bösen: The Rhetoric of Evil* Studien des Bonner Zentrums für Religion und Gesellschaft eds. Paul Fiddes and Jochen Schmidt (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2013), 193-217.
[59] Peter Brown, "Christianization and Religious Conflict" in *The Cambridge Ancient History* Vol. 13 eds. Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 644. Brown's article begins by exploring the differences between the mindsets of the ancients and those in the present day. Violence was also normal for fourth century churchmen, 647-648. Cf. Ammianus Marcellinus, *History* 22.5.4 says "no wild beasts are such enemies to mankind as are most of the Christians in their deadly hatred of one another".

These observations are interwoven with a fascinating question about Athanasius that is rarely asked; namely, how the bishop maintained such support in Alexandria despite long periods of absence. It is strange to imagine what would happen now if a vicar of a local Oxford parish left for 24 months only to return for 18 months before leaving for almost seven years (presuming Barnes' chronology of Athanasius' exiles from 335-337 and from 339-346).[60] That Athanasius could maintain his relationships in Alexandria over these periods must be one of the greatest testaments to his ability and his relevance when speaking about his victimization at the hands of "Eusebians". Collective memory theory may go a long way in explaining this because the shared anti-"Arian" narrative aided group cohesion. Athanasius' audiences came to embrace a memory of an "Arian" struggle. The degree to which Athanasius' polarization of "Arians" against the "orthodox" was artificially crafted depends largely on the controlling capacity of his audiences. Whatever flexibility in manipulating the facts is attributed to Athanasius must also be attributed to the complicity of the community who received and passed on his cause. A collectively remembered "Arianism" is a more accurate description than an individually constructed one.

## 8.3 Arius' Reputation

The social dimension of Athanasius' recalling of the past was not the only constraint placed on what he could have attributed to the "Arians". Athanasius had to consider other memories of Arius and the Nicomedian prelate. Arius had a *reputation*

[60] Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius,* xi.

that Athanasius both engaged and amplified.[61] For memory theorists, a reputation might be defined as "a socially constructed and shared persona".[62]

> A person's reputation depends not simply on what they said and did, but on the social context in which they are remembered and on the efforts of reputational entrepreneurs, who are people with the means, motive and opportunity to promote someone's (good or evil) reputation. A reputational entrepreneur is someone who conceives it to be in their own interests to promote the reputation in question, who is well-placed institutionally or socially to be credible, and who has the ability to construct a narrative that resonates with a wider audience.[63]

In this sense, Athanasius emerges as the "reputational entrepreneur" who was well positioned, and motivated, to advance a certain reputation of Arius. Despite Athanasius' role as a "reputational entrepreneur", it was impossible to contrive reputations without a pre-existing framework.[64] Athanasius' denigration of his foes would not have worked unless the community of recipients found the branding of these individuals to be meaningful. Any presentation of a historical character "has to resonate with existing shared values, even while it makes selective use of the past".[65] In order to grasp this concept of historical reputation it may be helpful to consider the example of Richard III as developed by Eric Eve as an extended illustration.[66] For centuries, Richard III's reputation was governed by Shakespeare's depiction of the hunchback king ruthlessly pursuing power, even to the point of killing his young nephews. Richard III stands as one of Shakespeare's darkest literary villains whose alleged cold-bloodedness earned him a

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[61] Rafael Rodriguez, *Structuring Early Christian Memory: Jesus In Tradition, Performance and Text* (LNTS 407; ed. M. Goodacre London: T&T Clark, 2010), thinks the idea of reputation has been neglected.
[62] Eve, *Behind,* 125 citing Rodriguez.
[63] Eve, *Writing the Gospels,* 114.
[64] Gary Alan Fine, 'Reputational Entrepreneurs and the Memory of Incompetence: Melting Supporters, Partisan Warriors and Images of President Harding', *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (1996), 1159–1193 discusses how reputation must be partially objective and relate to reality even when used for political purposes.
[65] Eve, *Behind,* 125.
[66] Eve, *Writing the Gospels,* 103-124.

place among the cruelest monarchs. In response to this harsh interpretation, a society formed in effort to restore the reputation of the monarch, citing much exaggeration from the facts. For members of The Richard III Society, their website contends that the negative version of the king is "neither supported by sufficient evidence nor reasonably tenable". For them, Shakespeare's sources were tainted by Tudor control and the king held many virtues too nonchalantly suppressed. These two poles of understanding are partly responsible for the wide national interest that surfaced when Richard III's remains were discovered in recent years. Richard III has two drastically different reputations. For some, he was an evil, power-hungry ruler. For others, there is much to be admired. What is important is that despite these two very different interpretations, the unchanging facts not only confine Richard III's reputation but also are integral to *both* versions. Both sides agree that Richard III was the last ruler from the House of York. They both agree that he was, in fact, a ruling monarch from 1483-1485. His reign depended to some degree on his declaring his nephews illegitimate. He earned distinction among English kings by dying in battle at Bosworth in his early thirties. So, Richard III's reputation, either the cynical one or the more benign one, hinges on an interpretation of a rather confined biography. Under no circumstances could Richard III's reputation be that of a quiet clergyman or an irrelevant wool-trader. "The point remains that reputations are not purely arbitrary, even if the retrievable facts allow them to be constructed in more than one way".[67] The way in which a villain is presented to an audience still must incorporate, and make sense within, a widely regarded narrative core.

This kind of reasoning can be transferred back to both Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia. In terms of the former, there were, and still are, those who admire the

[67] Eve, *Writing the Gospels,* 117.

presbyter for his theological acumen. That he coherently and logically exposited some aspects of Origen's theology, perhaps with some influence from Neo-Platonism and Lucian of Antioch, is widely acknowledged. The overview of "Arian" scholarship in chapter one revealed that serious scholars interpret the presbyter as a conservative churchman. On the other hand, the majority of theologians for the last 1600 years identified Arius as a radical and the chief heresiarch joining the ranks of Judas and Simon Magus. Despite these vastly different conclusions, both sides appeal to a rather tight core of facts. They agree that Arius was a presbyter from Baucalis who engaged in a theological dispute with the bishop Alexander around the year 320. There is also agreement that Arius contacted powerful bishops and sought their protection. Arius attracted the attention of the first Christian emperor for more than a decade, even evoking a few epistles from his hand. Most importantly, the first ecumenical council gathered at Nicaea to sideline slogans attested in his extant epistles. The presbyter lived at a specific time, possessed certain skills, talked to historical personalities in specific places, and held a distinct theology. The positive and the negative interpretations of Arius must reckon with these undisputed facts. Arius' reputation as an influential logician or a threatening menace rises or falls on the interpretation of an undisputable core of data. So, Athanasius' attribution of so much negative influence to Arius was built on the above list of unshakeable facts. It is precisely because Arius attracted Constantine's attention and precipitated a discussion from two hundred and twenty bishops at Nicaea that enabled Athanasius to depict "Arianism" as a threat. The Alexandrian bishop engaged a well-established deposit in order to articulate the heresy.

Approaching Eusebius of Nicomedia the same way, it is important to conceptualize the interaction between Athanasius' *Encyclical* and his readers. He accused this Eusebius and his associates of endorsing Gregory as bishop of Alexandria. In the same letter he says that this group commissioned Pistus to advance their causes but that the "catholic" recipients of the epistle recently deposed Pistus.[68] These specific accusations depend on all kinds of assumptions. Was Eusebius of Nicomedia interested in Alexandrian church politics? Was this Nicomedian churchman in the position to, and in the habit of, appointing people to various positions? Did he, more than other bishops, have the credibility to do such a thing? Did he know Pistus? Did the recipients of Athanasius' *Encyclical* recently have a skirmish in which they denounced Pistus? In analyzing these questions, it is important to see how aspects of Eusebius of Nicomedia's biography confined Athanasius' polemic. That this Eusebius was the bishop of powerful sees (Nicomedia and Constantinople) and held some persuasion over emperors (acting as an ambassador for Licinius and baptizing his enemy Constantine over thirteen years later), and wrote and received letters (Arius' letter to him and his letter to Paulinus) shows that he was a serious player in these affairs. In other words, Athanasius' attribution of such calculated activity to Eusebius of Nicomedia depends on other aspects of his biography. If the recipients of the *Encyclical* knew that Eusebius of Nicomedia was a taciturn deadbeat who neither commissioned other clergy nor engaged in ecclesiastical politics, much of the circular letter would have been dismissed. In order for Athanasius' attack on Eusebius of Nicomedia to have worked, the audience had to have believed that this Eusebius had the position, skill-set, and record to have done such a thing. As a nice summary, Eve, following Rodriguez, argues "a reputation is unlikely to

[68] Athanasius, *Encyclical* 6.

take root unless it makes sense to and is acceptable to the group of people who are meant to give it credence".[69] An "Athanasian Arianism" fails to explain how the bishop drew on these reputations and advanced them in ways that were not only plausible but also meaningful to some of those who heard it. Athanasius did depict Arius and Eusebius in the most unfavorable light possible, but he had to do this in a way that accommodated their prevailing reputations.

## 8.4 Concluding Analysis

If the arguments of this chapter are accepted and Athanasius' audience holds some responsibility for branding "Arians", one further consequence involves the weight placed on the specifics of his surviving texts. In the same way the value of the Gospels may not depend on the degree to which Jesus actually uttered what is sometimes printed in red letters, so also the existence of an "Arian Controversy" does not live and die on whether Athanasius preserved the *ipsissima verba* of Arius. Wiles is absolutely correct to suggest that Athanasius probably attached the word κτίσμα to his version of the Nicene anathemas to reinforce his position, but it is more difficult to see how this one word omission agitated the fourth century hearer to believe in pernicious "Arians" that otherwise did not effect him.[70] Likewise, the Alexandrian bishop's inference, whether honest or not, that "there was a *time* when the Son was not" from Arius' "before he was begotten he was not" could not have clouded the judgment of an entire community that defined themselves as anti-"Arian". As Dunn and others have argued regarding the historical Jesus, the Galilean's significance depends more on the "impression" he made upon his followers than on the largely untestable question over the accurate transmission

[69] Eve, *Writing the Gospels,* 118.
[70] Wiles, "Textual", 428-433.

of uttered speech. The significance of Jesus does not so much depend on whether or not he actually said "blessed are the poor in spirit", but rather on the fact that a community was convinced that he did. Similarly, "Arianism" relies less on Athanasius' transmission of individual words actually uttered by Arius than on the community that saw "Arians" and the "Eusebians" as seriously troubling forces who advanced an unwanted theology. The section does not mean to be dismissive of the astute observations of textual discrepancies as willful obfuscations by Athanasius, but only wants to argue that identifying individual words to dismiss "Arians" as an Athanasian construct does little to explain why the polemic found traction.

This chapter attempted to incorporate some aspects of social memory theory as it applies to the revision of the "Arian Controversy". Those who have gradually refashioned the problem with the "Arians" have gone so far as to use the language of Athanasius' "creating" or "inventing" the group. It is quite fashionable to speak of the "Eusebians" as a "fabrication" or an "artificial construct". This chapter has made several moves to show that a conclusion that leans too far towards an isolated Athanasius forging a heretical divide creates a problem precisely because the bishop wrote to an audience with whom he was in dialogue. If Athanasius is to be viewed as a *producer* of the "Arian Controversy", we ought not forget the array of its consumers who became progenitors.

The revisionists adopt something akin to a "radical constructivist" view of human memory. For them, every aspect of Athanasius' "Arianism" has more to do with his present exigencies than with historical realities. While the "invention of tradition" camp does have its adherents, I invoked the contingent of memory theorists who offer a corrective to the merely "presentist" approach to recalling the past. Most importantly for

these memory theorists, recollection always contains a social dimension, making the entirely innovative impossible. No matter how selective a presentation of the past, and Athanasius' was certainly selective, the shared dimension imposed constraints on transmission.

By focusing on Athanasius' audience, the chapter examined how the words "Ario-maniac", "Arian" and "Eusebian" functioned in the initial polemic of the late 330's. In order for the polemic against "Arianism" and the "Eusebians" to do the ecclesio-political work that Athanasius needed it to do, it must have had a pre-existent stigma. Had Athanasius' readers not recognized "Arianism" as a negative thing with a real potential to harm, then establishing one's hold on the Alexandrian see by attacking such a category is hardly a potent method. To use a monetary metaphor, "Arianism" and the "Eusebians" had to have had some purchasing power in 338/339 in order for it to accomplish what Athanasius designed it to do. "Arianism" carried some connotations *prior* to Athanasius' polemic and could plausibly threaten the wellbeing of the church. This leads us away from a purely "Athanasian Arianism" to a more cumulative development of the pejorative term. As Athanasius targeted "Arianism" and the "Eusebians", this shared narrative held *meaning* for its recipients by which they, at least partially, defined themselves. In the same way that an individual is shaped by personal memories, so also did the Alexandrian church come to delineate itself against an "Arianism" whose past revolved around its persistent hassling of Alexandria's bishop. Athanasius' audience was as complicit in the creation of "Arianism" as the bishop. Just as Theodoret claimed that during the time of Leontius of Antioch, "among the clergy there numbered a majority tainted with heresy while the mass of the laity were champions of the faith", so also Newman may not have

been far off when he said that the people "were the ecclesiastical strength of Athanasius"[71]

[71] Theodoret, *EH,* 2.19; *DCB,* 658 says Leontius was bishop of Antioch from 348-357; Newman, *Consulting,* 76.

## Conclusion

The previous pages have examined the years 325-341 to make a sustained and focused case for resisting what I have defined as the revising of the "Arian Controversy" out of existence. There is a branch of patristic scholarship that thinks "Arians", "Arianism", and "Eusebians" are best understood as Athanasian constructs devised for the purposes of holding power in Alexandria. Their artificiality far outweighs any semblance to a substantive theological position and a mobilizing alliance behind it. On this thesis, the modern scholar is not justified in using such terms. I have argued against this position not so much out of a concern over the loss of time-honoured categories, but rather that by reducing "Arianism" to nothing more than political jockeying we come close to losing *historical theology* altogether. That is to say, the "Arian Controversy" has always been understood as a quintessentially *theological* debate. Athanasius and Arius disagreed on God-talk. The revisionist thesis, alternatively, does not permit Athanasius to have been genuinely upset by the kind of theology Arius expressed nor does it allow for Arius' theology to have been enthusiastically advanced. If "Arianism" of all the ideas in the immense volume of church annals is reduced to Athanasius' bigotry, then what in the history of the church can be said to be about God-talk?

At the end of chapter one I identified the major tenets of the revisionist perspective as follows:

i.) The labels "Arian" and "Eusebian" are best understood as Athanasian constructs, inventions, or creations embellished by rhetorical topoi. The things these groups did were equally fabricated. The problem

with these labels is twofold: a.) Athanasius applied beliefs to his interlocutors that they did not hold and/or b.) He accurately captured his opponents' theology but used the labels "Arian" and "Eusebian" to attach otherwise unconnected individuals who thought themselves catholic.

ii.) "Arianism" is a misnomer because the group as Athanasius presented them had no intention of propping up the presbyter. No clergyman was consciously "Arian".

iii.) Athanasius indiscriminately placed people in the categories "Arian" and "Eusebian". Anyone (or any gathering) with whom Athanasius had any kind of disagreement was to be tarnished with the "Arian" or "Eusebian" brush. So, "Arian" really means anti-Athanasian.

iv.) Athanasius' depiction of these "Arians" was motivated primarily by a lust for power and position. In a Foucaultian sense, Schwartz, T.D. Barnes, Lyman, Beeley, Stephens, and others envisage the Alexandrian bishop's writings as governed by his desire to hold ecclesiastical control.

v.) The Alexandrian's crude binary distorted a rich complexity of theological views and, more importantly, hijacked what it meant to be "Nicene" when others would have had just as strong a claim.

The subsequent chapters addressed each of these positions through a textual analysis of primary and secondary sources. The aim was not to dismantle these ideas but rather to offer a response that modulates the more extreme conclusions. In response to (i.), chapter

two engaged the notions of construction and categorization. Too much dependence on "Arianism" as a construct means that its logical system belongs to Athanasius and that talk of its origins become blurred. While no categorization is perfect, the call for new labels is less adequate than leaving the ones that actually belong to that period of history. Otherwise the modern scholar is forced to invent a label, impose it back on antiquity, then define theologians as to whether or not they violate the group's parameters. In this sense, "Arianism" can be retained in a modified sense so long as it is understood as a pejorative category used to define a theological position. An "Arian", for Athanasius, was a theologian who thought about God the way Arius did. Further work against the concept of Athanasian construction came in chapter three, which located Athanasius' description of "Arianism" in other thinkers, and chapter six's exploration into Constantine's understanding of "Arianism". The emperor's involvement shows both the threatening nature of the rift and the compelling theological positions of both sides. Conceptions of "Arianism's" construction were also tempered by chapter eight's use of memory theory to show that Athanasius' ideas were constrained by his audiences. The fairness of Athanasius' linking a diversity of theologians together can be better understood through their networking, a position advanced in chapter four. The "party" opposing Athanasius is not to be understood as something akin to a current political campaign (which the revisionist thesis rightly impugns), but rather as a movement exercising various forms of attachment, such as traveling together, mentorship, and letter writing. While it is true that none set out to advance Arius' name, theme (ii.) was addressed in chapter three by showing that what modern scholars understand as "Arianism" as extracted from the polemical sources matches up well with what Arius

said in his writings, thus not only showing claims of misrepresentation to be poorly placed but also arguing that Arius' position attracted other opponents. While this does not mean others thought of themselves as "Arian", it does mean that those who held his views were the subjects of widespread rejoinders. The chapter on Eusebius of Caesarea engaged position (iii.) most forcefully, as clearly Athanasius did have opponents who were not "Eusebian" in the fullest sense. This is also refuted by the continued existence of the "Melitians" in Athanasius' polemic and the bishop's relationship with Marcellus, whose theology erred in a different way than Arius'. Athanasius was more discriminating in his branding of "Arians" than is sometimes acknowledged. Chapter five, again, on Eusebius of Caesarea, and seven, on the Council of Antioch 341, gave the strongest pushback to point (iv.) because they showed that theology, rather than power, played the most important role in Athanasius' decision to call something "Arian" or "Eusebian". The similarities between his own theology and Eusebius of Caesarea's called for a relaxing of the "Arian" and "Eusebian" labels, as he escaped Athanasius' most scorching invectives, while the theological differences between Nicaea and Antioch justified them. Chapter seven argued that the revisionists deliberately attenuated the differences between Nicaea and Antioch to show Athanasius as dishonest. Once the distinctive theology of Antioch 341 is highlighted, the thesis that Asterius the Sophist was its architect takes on an expanded meaning. That is to say, if Asterius was the draftsman of a creed that permitted Arius' brand of discourse, Athanasius' judgement of the Sophist becomes more reasonable. The fact that Athanasius' own theological system centers on the Creator-creature divide and the appellation of "creature" to the Son was the sure sign of "Arianism" in his mind bears witness to the bishop's steadiness. His success

in establishing a "created" Son as the "Arian" shibboleth is a secondary concern to the claim that his position on this is unchanged across his writings. This is the case because it is important to see that Athanasius' problem with "Arian" theology was not about cosmetic niceties but about a deep-seated concern over doctrine. While Athanasius does speak in an "Arian" versus "orthodox" manner, revisionist position (v.) does not have to be the case. Athanasius' description of a two-sided duel leaves room for the diversity of theologians which modern scholarship has discovered. Identifying two incompatible theologies as a source of conflict does *not* entail that every bishop fell into one of the two categories introduced in Athanasius' polemic. It is quite possible that many of the bishops at Nicaea had no horse in the race. As for Athanasius being the only interpreter of what it means to be "Nicene", this must be understood in the context of Nicaea being a great victory for Alexander, a topic in chapter three, and the peculiar but logical emphasis in ancient Alexandria on ecclesiastical succession, theological continuity, and the legacy of the patriarchate. In this sense, Athanasius' insistence on Nicaea's prominence and authority has a foundation beyond his own maneuvers. Athanasius' appeal to Nicaea would not have been as potent had not Constantine lobbied for its inviolability, discussed in chapter six, equating the council's procedures to God's will and threatening the loss of heavenly rewards to those who eschewed it.

Anyone who writes on Athanasius and the "Arian Controversy" becomes aware of just how many things had to be left unsaid. Athanasius' long career along with the aptitude and prolificacy of those who have written about him means any dissertation of this length will have to leave many topics inchoate.[1] This being said, I want to highlight

[1] The most obvious omission from this thesis might be a lack of discussion on the so-called "post-Nicene purge". This is the classically understood thesis that Eusebius of Nicomedia returned from exile after the

a few avenues that could be further explored in response to the revisionist trend. Firstly, there is room for a more comprehensive analysis of the theologies of those whom Athanasius calls "Arians". The problem methodologically will be how many and what kind of agreements theologians need to hold in order to be seen as similar. Secondly, if the "Eusebians" are understood as a network as evidenced on criteria similar to those presented by Elizabeth Clark, then those kinds of relationships could be examined in more detail, especially in the years after 341. It would be interesting to look at all of the names that Athanasius presents as "Eusebians" and see their various forms of attachment. The fact that some of the "Eusebians" were active for a long time might explain why Athanasius attacks them as a network well into the 350's. Permitting the witness of the fifth century historians would make for a fruitful project. For example, Patrophilus of Scythopolis was among the first generation "Arians" but the fifth century historians have him tutoring Eusebius of Emesa, working alongside Acacius of Caesarea, and facing exile with a group of other bishops.[2] So while texts representing the views of these individuals do not come down to present time, they did experience other forms of connection. This notion of networking sheds some light as to how Athanasius could reasonably associate Acacius of Caesarea with Arius. A third project might involve a detailed theological study of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical Theology* and his *Against Marcellus.* This could then be compared to Athanasius' theology. Eusebius

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council to oust his opponents. Given the limited resources, I have found that much of this debate centers on whether or not someone thinks the removal of more than a dozen bishops is a lot or a few. Elliott's "Constantine and the Arian Reaction", 179 thinks this is few, but I tend to think the forceful expunging of even a single bishop would have greatly disturbed the peace that Constantine coveted. This dissertation did not spend much time on the dating of Athanasius' writings, the textual transmission of these writings, Athanasius' Christology, or even the events on his later career. While I realize full-length monographs have been written on each of these areas (and many other areas as well), the scope of this study was to see if the evidence from 325-341 really does sanction the elimination of an "Arian Controversy".

[2] Socrates, *EH* 2.9, 2.38, 2.39-40.

presents Marcellus' views as un-Nicene. Does Eusebius of Caesarea advance a theology in these works that could in any way be viewed as antagonistic to Nicaea? This combined with the fact that the evidence for any affinity between Athanasius and Marcellus past the early 340's is rather weak suggests that Athanasius aligned theologically with the church historian over Marcellus. The thesis comparing Eusebius' *Theophany* to Athanasius' *On the Incarnation* has been around for over a century, but a more thorough analysis of the theologies of these two thinkers would be a worthwhile project. Lastly, there is more room for memory theory to be applied to other anti-"Arian" communities. For example, why did Victorinus feel compelled to write *Against Arius* in the late 350's? Why did Apollinarius' *Detailed Confession of the Faith* refute "Arian" tenets? Why did it become fashionable to brand "Arians" in regions beyond Alexandria?

The growing appreciation for post-Nicene theologians other than Athanasius is commendable. The campaign to forge some distance between Athanasius' theology and "Nicene orthodoxy" is a welcomed insight because he should not have an imperialistic hold on interpreting the council. The correction of students' one-sided reading of Athanasius at the expense of other thinkers is a fruitful legacy of the revision of this period that ought not be discarded. I have argued, however, that this reshaping stops being beneficial when it eliminates an "Arian Controversy" altogether. This dissertation offered a case against the view that "Arianism" and "Eusebian" were grammatical constructs designed for Athanasius' own ambitions. There is a responsible way to read Athanasius' polemic that allows modern scholars to use these terms with a proper understanding that they are pejorative categories signifying a distinct theology and a

mobilizing network that had interest in advancing it. This best illuminates the genuinely *theological* disagreement in the years around Nicaea.

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