362 Constantine and the Christians

The privileges that have been granted in consideration of religion must benefit only the adherents of the Catholic faith (*lex*). It is Our will moreover, that heretics and schismatics shall not only be alien from these privileges but shall also be bound and subjected to various compulsory public services. 1 September, 326. (Pharr, *The Theodosian Code*, p. 450.)

279 Constantine and the Novatianists, 326

Cod. Theod. XVI.5.2

Emperor Constantine Augustus to Bassus (Prefect of the City).

We have not found that the Novatians were precondemned to such an extent that We should suppose that those things which they sought ought not to be granted to them. We direct therefore that they shall firmly possess, without disquietude, their own church buildings and places suitable for burial: that is those properties which they have held for a long time either through purchase or through acquisition in any manner whatsoever. Of course, due provision must be made that they shall not attempt to appropriate to themselves any of the property which manifestly belonged to the Church of perpetual sanctity before the schism. 25 September, 326. (Pharr, *The Theodosian Code*, p. 450.)

The Novatianists, whose orthodoxy was unimpeachable, and whose separation from the Catholics was on a matter of discipline, received more favourable treatment than others. Acesius, a bishop of this sect, was invited by Constantine to the Council of Nicaea (Socrates, HE, I.10, Sozomen, HE, I.22). The emperor inquired of him about the reasons for his separation, and on hearing of his rigorism towards sinners, replied 'Place a ladder, Acesius, and climb up alone into heaven' (Socrates, loc. cit.).

29 Outbreak of the Arian Controversy, c. 318

280 The Outbreak of the Arian Controversy, c. 318

Socrates, HE, I.5

1 Alexander (Bishop of Alexandria) attempted one day, in the presence of the presbyters and the rest of his clergy, too ambitious a discourse about the Holy Trinity, the subject being 'Unity in Trinity'.

- Arius, one of the presbyters under his jurisdiction, a man possessed of no inconsiderable logical acumen, thinking that the bishop was introducing the doctrine of Sabellius the Libyan, from love of controversy advanced another view diametrically opposed to the opinion of the Libyan, and, as it seemed, vehemently controverted the statements of the bishop. 'If,' said he, 'the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten has a beginning of existence; and from this it is evident, that there was when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows that he had his essence from the non-existent.' (NPNF, altered.)
 - 1. Alexander became bishop of Alexandria, c. 313.
 - 2. On Sabellius, cf. 126, 127, 225. That he is called *the Libyan* is probably a deduction from the prevalence of his heresy in the Pentapolis *c.* 250.

On Sabellianism, see J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, pp. 122-3.

281 Arius and his Heresy

Sozomen, *HE*, I.15.1–5

1 But even though religion was in a flourishing condition in this way and in all other respects, yet the churches were disturbed by certain sore contentions; for under the pretext of piety, and of seeking a complete discovery of God, certain questions were agitated which

had not until then been examined. Arius was the originator of these
2 disputations. He was a presbyter of Alexandria in Egypt. He appeared
at first a zealous supporter of truth, though he made common cause
with Melitius in his innovations. Eventually however he abandoned
Melitius, and was ordained deacon by Peter, Bishop of the
Alexandrians, who afterwards cast him out of the Church, because,
upon Peter's excommunication of Melitius and repudiation of his
baptism, Arius denounced what was done, and could not bear to keep
quiet. After the martyrdom of Peter, Arius asked forgiveness of Achillas,

3 After this Alexander also held him in high repute. A most expert logician (for he is said to have been not without proficiency even in such studies) he plunged headlong into absurd arguments, and had the audacity to preach in church what no one before him had ever suggested, namely, that the Son of God has come into existence 'out of the non-existent' and that 'there was when he was not', that as possessing free will he was capable of virtue or of vice, and that he was created and made, and he gave voice to many other similar

was allowed to be a deacon, and was elevated to the presbyterate.

4 assertions which one professing such views might utter. Some who heard these doctrines blamed Alexander because he ought not to put up with novelties at variance with the faith, but Alexander deemed it more advisable that each party should state its case in dealing with topics admitting of doubt, so that they might seem to cease their strife not by compulsion, but by persuasion. He sat as judge, with his clergy

5 round him, and brought both parties to a trial. But it happened on this occasion, as is generally the case in a strife of words, that either party aimed at complete victory. Arius defended his views, but the others asserted that the Son is consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father. As points of such importance had been raised, a second meeting was called, but no agreement was reached. While the arguments appeared still evenly balanced, Alexander seemed to incline, first to one party and then to the other. (NPNF, altered.)

Arius (b. c. 255) appears to have been a deacon under Peter of Alexandria (d. 311), then to have been excommunicated for his support of the Melitians, next to have been allowed by Achillas to resume his functions, and finally to have been ordained presbyter.

With the account given by Sozomen, cf. the account of Socrates (280). The latter represents Arius as opposing Alexander in order to set his bishop right. Achillas, Bishop of Alexandria, 311–12, cf. Eus. *HE*, VII.32.30.

1. in this way: i.e. in the ascetic life.

5. consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος): we need not assume from Sozomen's narrative

that this word was actually used, but cf. 284 for its use in early stages of the controversy.

282 The Arian Heresy: Encyclical Letter of Alexander of Alexandria and his Clergy, c. 319

Socrates, HE, I.6.4ff., Opitz, Athanasius Werke, III.1, Urkunde 4b., pp. 6-11

4 I wished indeed to consign this disorder to silence, that if possible the evil might be confined to its supporters alone, and not go forth into

other districts and contaminate the ears of some of the simple. But since Eusebius, now in Nicomedia, thinks that the affairs of the Church are under his control because he deserted his charge at Berytus and cast longing glances at the church at Nicomedia (and he did this with impunity) and has put himself at the head of these apostates also, daring even to send commendatory letters in all directions concerning them, if by any means he might inveigle some of the ignorant into this most base heresy which is hostile to Christ, I felt imperatively called on to be silent no longer, knowing what is written

6 in the law, but to inform you of all of these things, that you might understand both who the apostates are, and also the contemptible character of their heresy, and pay no attention to anything that

7 Eusebius should write to you. For now wishing to renew his former malevolence, which seemed to have been buried in oblivion by time, he affects to write on their behalf; while the fact itself plainly shows that he does this for the promotion of his own purposes.

These then are those that have become apostates: Arius, Achillas, Aïthales, Carpones, another Arius, Sarmates (formerly presbyters), Euzoïus, Lucius, Julian, Menas, Helladius and Gaius (formerly deacons); with these also must be reckoned Secundus and Theonas, who once were called bishops. What they assert in utter contrariety to

9 the Scriptures, and wholly of their own devising, is as follows: 'God was not always a father, but that there was when he was not a father; the Word of God was not from eternity, but was made out of nothing; for that the ever-existing God has made him who did not previously exist, out of the non-existent.' Wherefore 'there was when he was not', inasmuch as, according to their philosophy, 'the Son is a creature 10 and a work; he is neither like the Father in essence, nor is by nature either the Father's true Word or his true Wisdom, but indeed one

either the Father's true Word or his true Wisdom, but indeed one of his works and creatures, being by a misuse of language called Word and Wisdom since he came into being by God's own Word and

the Wisdom which is in God, whereby God both made all things and him also.' Wherefore, 'He is as to his nature mutable and susceptible

- of change, as all other rational things are: hence the Word is alien to, foreign to, and excluded from the essence of God; and the Father is invisible to the Son: for neither does the Son perfectly and accurately know the Father, neither can he perfectly behold him. The Son knows not even the nature of his own essence; for he has been made for us, in order that God might create us by him, as by an instrument; nor would he ever have existed, unless God had wished to create us.'
- 12 Some one accordingly asked them whether the Word of God could be changed, as the devil has been, and they feared not to say 'Yes: he certainly could; for being begotten and created, his nature is sus-
- 13 ceptible of change.' We then, with the bishops of Egypt and Libya, being assembled together to the number of nearly a hundred, anathematized Arius for his shameless avowal of these heresies, together with all such as have countenanced them. (NPNF, altered.)

[The rest of the letter is taken up with arguments from Scripture against the Arians and further warnings about Eusebius of Nicomedia. It concludes with the signatures of seventeen presbyters and twenty-four deacons (including two named Athanasius) from Alexandria, and of nineteen presbyters and twenty deacons from the Mareotis.]

Eusebius of Nicomedia: with the hint of Alexander that ambition prompted the move of Eusebius from Berytus to Nicomedia, cf. the severe language used by Constantine of Eusebius in 294 below.

The fragments of Arius collected by Bardy, Recherches sur Saint Lucien d'Antioche et son école, pp. 216–78 (L'héritage littéraire d'Arius) show identity of phrase with much of what this letter states about his teaching. Opitz has given some of the parallels in his notes: cf. also 286.

The list of signatories is not in Socrates, but is in other sources, Athanasius and Gelasius, that give this letter.

283 Letter of Arius to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, c. 320

In Theodoret, HE, I.5.1–4, Epiphanius, Haer. 69.6; Opitz, Urkunde 1, pp. 1–3

1 To his very dear lord, the faithful man of God, orthodox Eusebius, Arius, unjustly persecuted by Pope Alexander on account of that

all-conquering truth which you also defend as with a shield, sends greeting in the Lord.

As Ammonius, my father, was going to Nicomedia, I thought it right and my bounden duty to greet you by him, and also to make mention of that inborn love and kindly disposition which you bear towards the brethren for the sake of God and of his Christ; I want to tell you that the bishop makes great havoc of us and persecutes us severely, and is in full sail against us: he has driven us out of the city as atheists, because we do not concur in what he publicly preaches, namely, that 'God has always been, and the Son has always been: Father and Son exist together: the Son has his existence unbegotten along with God, ever being begotten, without having been begotten: God does not precede the Son by thought or by any interval however small: God has always been, the Son has always been; the Son is from God himself'.

2 Eusebius, your brother in Caesarea, Theodotus, Paulinus, Athanasius, Gregory, Aëtius, and all the bishops of the East, have been made anathema because they say that God has existence without beginning prior to his Son: except Philogonius, Hellanicus, and Macarius, who are heretical fellows, and uncatechized. One of them says that the Son is an effusion, another that he is an emission, another that he is also unbegotten.

These are impieties to which we could not listen, even though the heretics should threaten us with a thousand deaths. But as for us, what do we say, and believe, and what have we taught, and what do we teach? That the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; nor from some lower essence (i.e. from matter); but that by his own (i.e. the Father's) will and counsel he has subsisted before time, and before ages as God full (of grace and truth), only-begotten, unchangeable.

And that he was not, before he was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established. For he was not unbegotten. We are persecuted because we say, 'the Son had a beginning, but God is without beginning'. This is really the cause of our persecution; and, likewise, because we say that he is from nothing. And this we say, because he is neither part of God, nor of any lower essence. For this are we persecuted;

^{1.} Ps. 47.9

^{2.} John 1.14

the rest you know. Farewell in the Lord. As a fellow-disciple of Lucian, and as a truly pious man, as your name implies, remember our afflictions. (Based on NPNF.)

- 1. It is clear from what Arius writes that some time had elapsed from the events related in 280 and 281.
- 2. The sees of the bishops concerned are as follows; for further information about them, see the articles in *DCB*.

Theodotus, of Laodicaea in Syria, cf. 288. He was a friend of Eusebius of Caesarea who pays him a high tribute in *HE*, VII.32.23, and dedicated to him the *Praeparatio* and *Demonstratio Evangelica*.

Paulinus of Tyre, and later of Antioch, d. c. 330, or earlier (?), also a friend of Eusebius of Caesarea, cf. HE, X.4.1.

Athanasius of Anazarbus in Cilicia, a pupil of Lucian of Antioch according to Philostorgius, HE, III.15.

Gregory of Berytus, successor to Eusebius when the latter was translated to Nicomedia.

Aëtius of Lydda (Diospolis).

Philogonius of Antioch, d. 324.

Hellanicus of Tripoli.

Macarius of Jerusalem.

effusion: lit. something belched out (Ps. 44.2 LXX).

- 3. part of the unbegotten: cf. 4 below; part of God: cf. 291 (sect. 7).
- 4. a fellow disciple of Lucian: cf. Bardy, Recherches sur Saint Lucien d'Antioche et son école, p. 185. 'After the death of Lucian, his disciples remained faithful to his memory. They continued to make use of his name and formed a homogeneous group, perfectly united, which knew, in the face of a thousand difficulties, how to keep him in remembrance. This group comes to the front at the precise moment when the Arian controversy began. It sufficed, so it seems, for Arius to make use of the name of Lucian's school with Eusebius of Nicomedia for the East immediately to be set aflame, and for all the Lucianists to take the part of the priest of Baucalis.'

284 Letter of Arius to Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, c. 320

Athanasius, On the Synods of Ariminum and Seleuceia, 16; Epiphanius, Haer. 69.7; Opitz, Urkunde 6, pp. 12–13

To our blessed Pope and Bishop Alexander, the Presbyters and Deacons send greeting in the Lord.

Our faith from our forefathers, which we have learned also from thee, Blessed Pope, is this: We acknowledge One God, alone unbegotten, alone everlasting, alone unbegun, alone true, alone having immortality,3 alone wise, alone good, alone sovereign; judge, governor, and administrator of all, unalterable and unchangeable, just and good, God of Law and Prophets and New Testament; who begat an Only-begotten Son before eternal times, through whom he has made both the ages and the universe; and begat him not in semblance, but in truth: and that he made him subsist at his own will, unalterable and unchangeable; perfect creature of God, but not as one of the creatures; offspring, but not as one of things that have come into existence; nor as Valentinus pronounced that the offspring of the Father was an issue; nor as Manichaeus taught that the offspring was a portion of the Father, consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος); or as Sabellius, dividing the Monad, speaks of a Son-and-Father; nor as Hieracas, of one torch from another, or as a lamp divided into two; nor that he who was before, was afterwards generated or new-created into a Son, as thou too thyself, Blessed Pope, in the midst of the Church and in session hast often condemned; but, as we say, at the will of God, created before times and before ages, and gaining life and being and his glories from the Father, who gave real existence to those together with him. For the Father did not, in giving to him the inheritance of all things, deprive himself of what he has ingenerately in himself; for he is the Fountain of all things. Thus there are three Subsistences (ὑποστάσεις). And God, being the cause of all things, is unbegun and altogether sole but the Son being begotten apart from time by the Father, and being created and found before ages, was not before his generation; but, being begotten apart from time before all things, alone was made to subsist by the Father. For he is not eternal or co-eternal or co-unoriginate with the Father, nor has he his being together with the Father, as some speak of relations, introducing two ingenerate beginnings, but God is before all things as being Monad and Beginning of all.

Wherefore also he is before the Son, as we have learned also from thy preaching in the midst of the Church. Even as then from God he has being, and glories and life, and all things are delivered unto Him, in such sense is God his Origin. For he is above him, as being his God

^{3. 1} Tim. 6.16

and before him. But if the terms from him⁴ and from the womb⁵ and I came forth from the Father and I come⁶ be understood by some to mean as if a part of him, being consubstantial, or as an issue, then the Father is according to them compounded and divisible and alterable and material, and, as far as concerns them, undergoes what is appropriate to a body, who is the Incorporeal God. (NPNF, altered.)

The letter concludes with greetings from Arius and his supporters, in all six presbyters, six deacons and three bishops: the last named are Secundus and Theonas, who remained faithful to him at Nicaea, and Pistus. The inclusion of the latter is odd, as he did not become a bishop until he was obtruded into Alexandria in 337, cf. Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians*, 24. Anyhow the fact that the letter comes from Arius and his clerical supporters indicates that c. 320–21 he was still in Egypt. It is most unlikely that if he 'fled to Nicomedia' as is commonly supposed, he took all his supporters with him, cf. Telfer, *JTS* XXXVII (1936), pp. 60–3. The views of the heresiarch as to his bishop's teaching should be compared with what he (Arius) said in his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia (283).

The recurrence of the word ὁμοούσιος (of one essence) as a word to be avoided should be noted, cf. Ambrose De Fide, III.15 (Opitz, Urkunde 21, p. 42) where Eusebius of Nicomedia is said to have produced a letter to the Council of Nicaea in which he wrote, 'If we speak of a true and uncreated Son of God, we begin to confess him "consubstantial" with the Father.' Ambrose adds that the word ὁμοούσιος was included in the Creed because the Arians were scared of it! The fear that this word implied division of the divine essence was real both to Arius, and to Eusebius of Caesarea (291).

Hieracas: an Egyptian Christian of the early fourth century, whose manner of life was strongly ascetic. Epiphanius (Haer. 67.7) pronounces him as orthodox on the relation of the Father to the Son.

285 The Arian Strategy according to Alexander of Alexandria, c. 324

Letter of Alexander in Theodoret, HE, I.4; Opitz, Urkunde 14, pp. 19–28

This is a circular letter, as is shown by the use of the plural possessive ὑμέτερος (sect. 2), and I.4.62 where Theodoret states that Alexander wrote in the same

strain to Philogonius of Antioch, to Eustathius of Beroea (later of Antioch), and to the other supporters of his views. The heading of the chapter mentions Alexander 'of Constantinople' as the recipient, but it is more likely that Alexander of Thessalonica is meant; it is interesting to note that Constantine may first have heard of the controversy there. He was visited at Thessalonica by Eusebius of Nicomedia (294).

1 Impelled by avarice and ambition knaves are constantly plotting to gain possession of the dioceses that seem greatest. Under various pretexts they trample on the religion of the Church. For they are driven mad by the devil who works in them, and abandon all reverence

2 and despise the fear of God's judgement. As I suffer from them myself, I had to explain to your Reverence, that you be on your guard against such individuals, lest any of them dare enter your dioceses also, either in person (for the impostors are skilled deceivers), or by false and specious letters. By both means they can delude one who clings to faith, though it be a pure faith.

Arius then and Achillas lately made a conspiracy, in which they emulated the ambition of Colluthus—but they are far worse than he. Colluthus reprehended their conduct, and found a means of excusing his own knavish purpose. But they seeing his 'making traffic of Christ',8 could not still remain subject to the Church, but build for themselves dens of robbers,9 in which they constantly assemble and by 4 night and day indulge in slanders against Christ and us. They cry down all the pious apostolic doctrine and, just as the Jews do, have organized a gang to fight Christ. They deny his divinity, and declare him to be on a level with all mankind. They pick out every saying relative to his saving dispensation, and to his humiliation 10 for us, and try to compound from them the proclamation of their own impiety, by abandoning the words showing his divinity from the beginning 1 and his 5 ineffable glory with the Father. They make their own the impious view of Greeks and Jews about Christ, and endeavour, as far as they possibly can, to get praised among them. They busy themselves with

⁴ Rom. 11.36

^{5.} Ps. 110.3

^{6.} John 16.28

^{7.} Eph. 2.2

^{8.} Cf. Didache 12.5

^{9.} Matt. 21.13

^{10.} Cf. Phil. 2.8

^{11.} Cf. John 1.1

286 Extracts from the Thalia of Arius

Athanasius, On the Synods of Ariminum and Seleuceia, 15

- I.1 In accordance with the faith of the elect of God, God's sage servants, holy and orthodox, who had received God's holy Spirit, I learned these things from participants in wisdom, skilful, taught by God in every way and wise.
- 5 In their steps came I, stepping with the same opinions, the notorious, the one who suffered much for God's glory; having learned from God I myself know wisdom and knowledge.
- II.1 God then himself is in essence ineffable to all.
 He alone has neither equal nor like, none comparable in glory;
 We call him Unbegotten because of the one in nature begotten;
 We raise hymns to him as Unbegun because of him who has beginning.
 - 5 We adore him as eternal because of the one born in time.
 The Unbegun appointed the Son to be Beginning of things begotten, and bore him as his own Son, in this case giving birth.
 He has nothing proper to God in his essential property, for neither is he equal nor yet consubstantial with him.
- 10 Wise is God, since he himself is Wisdom's teacher. There is proof enough that God is invisible to all, and to those through the Son and to the Son himself the same (God) is invisible.

I will say exactly how the Invisible is seen by the Son: By the power by which (a) God can see, and in proper measures,

15 the Son sustains the vision of the Father as is right.

Or rather there is a Trinity with glories not alike; Their existences are unmixable with each other; One is more glorious than another by an infinity of glories.

The Father is essentially foreign to the Son because he exists unbegun.

20 Understand then that the Unity was, but the Duality was not, before he existed.

So straight away when there is no Son, the Father is God. Thus the Son who was not, but existed at the paternal will, is only-begotten God, and he is distinct from everything else. Wisdom existed as wisdom by the will of a wise God.

- 25 He is conceived by so many million concepts,
- 25a as spirit . . ., power, wisdom, glory of God, truth and image and word.
 Understand that he is conceived also as effulgence and light.
 One equal to the Son the Supreme is able to beget, but more excellent, superior or greater he cannot.
- 30 How old and how great the Son is by God's will—since when, and from what point, even since then he existed from God.

For being a mighty God he hymns the Supreme in part.

To sum up, God exists ineffable to the Son, for he is to himself what he is, that is, unutterable,

- 35 so that none of the things said . . . will the Son
- 35a know how to express comprehensively; for it is impossible for him
- 36 to explore the Father who exists by himself.

 For the Son himself does not know his own essence;
 for being Son he truly came to be at his Father's will.

 What logic then permits the one who is from a Father
- 40 to know by comprehension the one who begot him?

 For clearly for what has a beginning to encompass
 by thought or apprehension the one who is unbegun, is impossible.

The revised translation has been prepared and commented by the Rev. Professor Stuart Hall from text established by G. C. Stead (JTS (NS) 29 (1978), pp. 20–52).

Athanasius records (On the Synods, 15) that Arius composed this statement of faith in bad verse after being expelled from Alexandria by Alexander. The opening lines indicate that he had already suffered some form of persecution. The same lines also reveal Arius as belonging to the tradition which regards the true faith as entrusted to inspired teachers and not necessarily to the appointed officials of the Church.

It is notable that where Arius can be directly quoted, as in these verses, some of the statements regularly attributed to him by his opponents do not appear (e.g. 'There was when he was not'). He teaches that the Son enjoys the highest possible status, and is properly called 'God', but his being is derivative and his status inferior to that of the Father. He is the one who makes it possible for others to know and to glorify the Father to the fullest extent that their contingent being permits.

CREED OF NICAEA (325)

We believe in one God, the FATHER Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (ὁμοούσιον) with the Father; by whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth]; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the HOLY GHOST.

[But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]

NICENE-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED (NICENE CREED) (381)

We believe in one God, the FATHER Almighty, Maker of *heaven and earth*, *and of* all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord JESUS CHRIST, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds (æons), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from beaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the HOLY GHOST, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.