

The Formulation of Creeds in the Early Church

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[p.13]

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The whole age of the early church is often considered as a credal age. This is misleading if we think in terms of the definition of a creed as set out by J.N.D. Kelly—a fixed formula summarising the essential articles of their religion and enjoying the sanction of ecclesiastical authority.¹ Such statements appear only toward the end of the third century. But if we think of the church as beginning with simple confessions of Jesus and graduating to formalised credal statements, then the early church is of great interest. We can see a process of development at work, though it has to be said that we lack evidence for some of the key stages in that development.

The NT was axiomatic for the thinking of the early church. There were no other parallels for it to follow. It recognised that NT religion was decidedly confessional. This was intrinsic to the historical events which lay at the heart of the gospel message. Before his crucifixion Jesus bore testimony both before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate. He was the faithful and true witness. He witnessed the good confession.

At the same time Peter and the other disciples failed to confess their Lord in the hour of darkness, despite their assurances that they would stand by him. In Peter's case he even denied him three times. That was seen as a serious but not unforgivable fault. On the contrary, the same disciples as had failed their Lord were shortly to be emboldened by the Holy Spirit to bear witness in hostile surroundings to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus—the sign that God had designated him both Lord and Christ.

The NT Scriptures will not allow us to see these as special events connected with a unique set of circumstances. A pattern is set for the dynamics of Christian belief at all times. Thus, the apostle Paul can designate verbal confession alongside a genuine belief in the heart as marks of salvation. He says, 'If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.'² For Paul Christian faith can be no secret or private affair. A sincere believing heart will always be mirrored by lips that confess the truth about Jesus. Where persecution was soon to be a common experience for Christians, it was

[p.14]

¹ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longmans, 1960), p. 1.

² Rom. 10:9-10.

inevitable this element in the Christian religion should be highlighted.

It is Christ's own testimony to the truth that forms a paradigm for believers to follow, the only difference being that they do not bear testimony to themselves but to Jesus as Lord. This emerges from the fascinating passage in 1 Timothy where Paul reminds Timothy—'Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ...'³ There is some debate among scholars as to the context in which Timothy made his good confession. His baptism or his ordination are the most likely suggestions. I would prefer the suggestion of baptism, because the NT lacks a clear concept of ordination and because a reference to baptism would fit better the practice we know did emerge in the first centuries of the Christian church. If this view is correct, the implication would be that Timothy is being encouraged by Paul to remain faithful to the confession he made at baptism in potentially much more difficult circumstances. As we shall see, the emphasis on the baptismal confession was to be a very powerful idea in the church at least from the late third century, if not before.

This is not the only passage in the NT where it is indicated that baptism entailed some profession of faith on the part of the adult being baptised. We may have to be wary about the case of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, since Philip's terms ('if you believe with all your heart, you may be baptised') and the eunuch's response ('I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God') exist only in a western recension of the text, which Richard Hanson dates from c. 120 AD and which he believes reflects the emerging position in the western church.⁴ Nevertheless, this probably represents the early formalisation of a general practice.

We do find better evidence in the cases both of Lydia and of Paul himself. It is clear that Lydia had been interrogated by Paul as to the sincerity of her faith; for she could say—'Since you have judged me faithful to the Lord, come and stay in my house.'⁵ Paul in one of the accounts of his conversion reports that Ananias enjoined him, 'Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'⁶ Interestingly, it is left to the young convert to choose his own words in addressing Christ in prayer. Though no elaborate preliminaries were required at this stage, baptism was not administered indiscriminately. After all, Jesus' words which we call the Great Commission link baptism to discipleship and to instruction.

There was, however, no standard baptismal creed, no standard formula of interrogation. Ananias' words to Paul would even

[p.15]

suggest some initiative was left to the convert to address the Lord Jesus in appropriate terms. We are not at a stage of a standardised liturgy or of set baptismal vows.

³ 1 Tim. 6:12-13.

⁴ R.P.C. Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), pp. 27-52.

⁵ Acts 16:15—here the translation is my own.

⁶ Acts 22:16.

Baptismal Interrogations

Baptism was not the only, but was probably the most important context in which the distinctive beliefs of the Christian church in the early centuries would be highlighted. Though our evidence for baptismal practice is patchy, certain trends stand out. By the second century it had become customary to use a triple immersion in baptism (to correspond to each of the members of the Trinity); we do not know exactly why this was. It does, however, help to explain why from the fourth century, if not before, Trinitarian questions were keenly debated in the church. Around the same time the persons being baptised were required to assent publicly to appropriate questions about their faith. A typical procedure would follow the lines set out in the *Apostolic Tradition* ascribed to Hippolytus—'And when he who is to be baptised goes down into the water, let him who baptises lay his hand on him saying thus, "Dost thou believe in God the Father almighty?" And he who is being baptised shall say, "I believe". Let him forthwith baptise him once, having his hand laid upon his head. And after this let him say, "Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who was born by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary, Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and died, and rose again on the third day living from the dead, and ascended into the heavens, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?" And when he says, "I believe", let him baptise him a second time. And again let him say, "Dost thou believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church, and the resurrection of the flesh?" And he who is being baptised shall say, "I believe". And so let him baptise him the third time.'⁷

At this period the person being baptised is not expected to recite any creed. He is simply to assent to his belief in the Triune God, as outlined in Jesus' own words in Matthew 28. And yet the words of the officiant are already going well beyond those laid down by Christ. If we were to put together the content of his three questions, we would produce a mini-creed, along Trinitarian lines.

A further insight into attitudes to baptism from these early centuries is provided by Justin Martyr from his First Apology. In this work Justin did have a vested interest in emphasising that Christians were bound by a strict moral code. Nonetheless I think we can accept his comments that at baptisms the whole congregation, especially those being baptised, were reminded of the serious moral demands made of all who claimed to be Christ's disciples. 'All who are persuaded and believe that the things which are taught and affirmed by us are true, and who promise to be able to live accordingly, are taught to pray, and beg God with fasting, to grant them forgiveness of their former

[p.16]

sins, and we pray and fast with them.'⁸ It is notable that Justin has included in the preliminaries to baptism an undertaking that the candidate will conform his or her conduct to the ethic required by the gospel. This moral thrust reappears in the sequel to the baptism—'But after thus washing him who has professed and given his assent, we bring him to those who are called brethren, where they are assembled together, to offer prayers in common both for ourselves, and for the person who has received illumination, and all others everywhere, with al our hearts, that we might be permitted, now we have learnt the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, that we may

⁷ Chapter 21 as translated by Kelly, *op.cit.*, p. 46

⁸ Justin 1, *Apol.* 61:1-2.

obtain everlasting salvation.⁹ In those churches known to Justin the link between baptism and obedience to the commands of Christ was treated very seriously. At baptism this was not simply impressed on the new Christians; an opportunity was taken to remind Christians of longer standing of their duties in this respect and of the need to plead for God's help in leading a life worthy of the profession they had made. We should note that if anyone was to be baptised, that entailed a promise or a vow that was stressed frequently thereafter. While Justin highlights the moral implications of this vow, we may be sure that it also involved fidelity to basic Christian beliefs, not least at a time when Christians were liable to be martyred for the name of Christ. Faithfulness to baptismal vows was to remain a constant emphasis throughout our period; it was to take an unusually precise character with the emergence of distinct baptismal creeds.

The Baptismal Creed

From an early stage baptism was preceded by catechetical instruction. We may suppose that in time this developed along standard patterns. We cannot say exactly when a creed in the formal sense was first associated with such instruction.

By the latter half of the third century, however, a tendency emerged within the church which was to enhance the role of a formal creed in the actual baptismal ceremony and its immediate preliminaries. Baptizands who had at one point been required to assent to three simple questions were now required to affirm a creed as an integral part of the ceremony. We do not possess the evidence to say how and why this change took place. We can say that the new procedure was known as the 'rendering' of the creed (*redditio symboli*), the climax of the catechetical training which preceded baptism. At some advanced stage in their instruction the catechumens received the creed from the lips of the bishop himself (*traditio symboli*).¹⁰ It was then the task of the catechumens to memorise and eventually to reproduce the creed, normally in the course of the baptismal service. Perhaps we can describe this as a liturgical enactment of Paul's assertion—'It is with your heart you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess

[p.17]

and are saved.' This could be understood to imply a chronological order. First they heard and believed; at a later stage they declared their faith with their own lips.

Surprisingly perhaps, the candidates for baptism were discouraged from being too open with the creed they had received. There was a reluctance even among bishops to put this creed in written form, in case it should fall into unhallowed hands. Cyril of Jerusalem puts it this way to the baptizands—'Already you stand on the frontier of mystery. I adjure you to smuggle no word out; not because the things you are told are not worth the telling again, but because the audience is not fitted to take them in... When, by what you experience, you grasp the sublimity of the things that are being taught, then you will know for yourself that catechumens are not fitted to be told them.'¹¹ This reserve over the doctrine of the church was to be described in later centuries as the *disciplina arcani*.¹² It was at its height in the fourth

⁹ *Ibid.*, 65:1.

¹⁰ Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 32-34.

¹¹ *Procat.* 12. The translation from this and other passages of Cyril is that of William Telfer in the *Library of Christian Classics* vol. IV (London: SCM, 1955).

¹² This term was first used by the Protestant scholar Jean Daill in the 17th century—Kelly *op.cit.* p. 168.

and fifth centuries, but the practice lapsed thereafter when infant baptism had become the rule and correspondingly the catechuminate had lost much of its significance.

There are many factors which may have contributed to this development. Toward the beginning of the fourth century Christianity took a quantum leap forward in terms of its political status. This did not, however, imply ready acceptance of Christian beliefs in society as a whole. It did, however, ensure that the church would rouse much curiosity in Graeco-Roman society—a development that might have alarmed some Christians who were happier with the model of a martyr church that stood totally apart from wider society. One reaction would have been to insist on a more rigorous and at the same time a more formalised entry system. Otherwise people might enter the church for undesirable motives or with a seriously defective knowledge. From a different perspective, some sensitivity was understandably felt about the general unbelieving public handling those items of the Christian faith which were most precious to believers—notably the Lord's Prayer, the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist as well as the creed.¹³

Besides, this was a time when the concept of monarchical episcopacy reigned supreme. With increased numbers coming forward as catechumens, many bishops no longer had the time to cover the whole process of instruction personally. If they effectively controlled the content of the creed at the local level and the catechumens received this creed directly from them, that at least enabled the bishops to maintain some semblance of control over the instruction of young believers.

The creeds in question were deliberately kept brief. The creed, which we now call the Apostles' Creed and is sometimes despised because of its brevity, is simply a provincial variant or descendant of one of the baptismal creeds in common use at

[p.18]

Rome. The brevity of such creeds meant that believers with the poorest memories could grasp them. Memorisation was considered important for more important reasons than *the disciplina arcani*. After all, some who joined the church lacked the leisure or the ability to read the Scriptures, to say nothing of the fact that a grasp of the whole of Scripture would take time. What they required was a brief summary of key doctrine. Besides, for the faithful to commit the creed to writing would have been a disincentive to their learning it. It would not have been so written in their heart that they could turn to it in the ordinary circumstances of life. For this is exactly what they were encouraged to do. The creed was intended as a precious possession to last the believer throughout his life. It was a treasure store from which he was encouraged to draw comfort each day. This high view of the baptismal creed is eloquently put by Niceta of Remesiana, writing about 400—'Beloved, persevere in the tradition which you have learned. Be true to the pact you made with the Lord, to the profession of faith which you made in the presence of angels and of men. The words of the Creed are few—but all the mysteries are in them. Selected from the whole of Scripture and put together for the sake of brevity, they are like precious gems making a single crown. Thus, all the faithful have sufficient knowledge of salvation, even though many are unable, or too busy with their worldly affairs, to read the Scriptures. And so, beloved, whether you are walking, resting or at

¹³ Kelly, *op.cit.* pp. 168-71.

work, whether you are asleep or awake, let this salutary confession be ever in your hearts. Let your soul be ever in heaven...'¹⁴

The creed, then, was a badge of the Christian's identity as a child of God. He was to make it part of himself so that he could rejoice in his salvation. This was emphasised by the place it had in the pre-baptismal liturgy. The reciting of the creed followed immediately after the abjuration of Satan—normally a fourfold renunciation of Satan, his works, his pomp and his worship.¹⁵ Then the baptizands turned in the opposite direction and professed their faith. Clearly this was intended to provide the believer with a model of his transition from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Both the renunciation of Satan and the rendering of the creed implied a pledge—in the one case that there would be no return to the ways of darkness and in the other that he would hold fast to the faith. The latter was taken very seriously and in some places at least involved a written signature. Thus Basil of Caesarea can speak in these terms of his own baptismal profession.—Take the profession of faith we made when we first entered the Christian life when departing from idols we came to the living God ... Whoever does not keep to it in all circumstances and does not attach himself to it as a sure protection throughout his life, makes himself a stranger to God's promises, contradicting his own written profession which he put on record when he pledged his faith.'¹⁶ Basil was not unique in this respect. Cyril of Jerusalem has an unusual but revealing way of describing his action on imparting

[p.19]

the baptismal creed. He likens it to the entrusting of money to someone for safe keeping—'Preserve them with godly fear, lest the Enemy spoil any of you through your conceit, or some heretic misrepresent any of the things you have had delivered to you. Faith, you see, is life cash paid over the counter (which is what I have now done) but God requires you to account for what you have had: as the Apostle says, "I charge thee before God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession that ye keep without spot, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" this faith committed to you. A treasure of life has been committed to you, and at his coming the Master looks for the deposit.'¹⁷

I need hardly add that this implied that baptizands had to go through a course of instruction on the baptismal creed and its significance. They were not supposed to memorise these baptismal lectures as such, which would normally be delivered by the bishop.¹⁸ That only applied to the creed. But they were expected to attend carefully through the whole course of lectures. If I may again refer to Cyril of Jerusalem, he declared that while sermons were beneficial, they were not to be equated with the course of baptismal instruction. The odd sermon could be missed without much harm, but it was quite a different matter with the baptismal lectures.

¹⁴ Niceta *De Symbolo* pp. 13-14. The translation is that of Gerald G. Walsh in *the Fathers of the Church* series vol. 7 (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1949).

¹⁵ Kelly, *op.cit.* 33-35.

¹⁶ Basil, *De Spir Sanct.* 26.

¹⁷ Cyril, *Cat. Or.* 5:13.

¹⁸ Some catechetical orations survive by John Chrysostom from his days as a presbyter in Antioch. Not all such talks, therefore, need have been given by the bishop.

They were like the foundations of a building. If part of the foundation was neglected, then the whole edifice which was built upon it would be unsound.¹⁹

Cyril also regarded the creed and the accompanying lectures as equipping believers with weapons to fight against pagans, Jews and heretics.²⁰ Basil too, in the passage I have recently quoted, regarded the creed as a 'sure protection'. The world outside the church was regarded as a very dangerous place spiritually, and the creed was emphasised as one of the most valuable means of protecting believers, especially those young in the faith and those who had no access to the Scriptures for whatever reason. Of course, the creed could degenerate into a talisman—rather as some modern Muslims use words from the Qur'an without understanding them. But at this stage in the church's history this would be safeguarded by the extensive course of instruction the believer was expected to undergo.

The Rule of Faith

In the second and third centuries there was another area of church life where credal statements emerged in embryo quite independently of baptism. This concerns the Rule of Faith, a concept which first appears in Irenaeus.²¹ It is unlikely, however, to have originated with him, since many shared his underlying idea of a common faith possessed by the true church wherever it existed—including those areas outside the Roman Empire where believers might not possess the written Scriptures. When Irenaeus spells out what he considers is entailed by the Rule of Faith, he does not detail his sources. It

[p.20]

is most unlikely that these included a written creed, though they might have involved aspects of regular catechetical training. The same applies to the Rule of Faith in other writers. There may be a broad similarity from one writer to another; but at the same time there are individual variations, even idiosyncrasies. Thus Irenaeus included his recapitulation doctrine, while Tertullian affirmed that Jesus preached a 'new law' and Origen included both the authority to allegorise the Scriptures and his own perspective on the contentious issue of human free-will.²² Significantly, these men wrote at a time when political circumstances and geographical isolation restricted the opportunities for Christians from different parts of the world to check their understanding of the Christian faith against one another. They might well have been surprised to find that their own emphases were not echoed everywhere.

Moreover, the Rule of Faith did not necessarily fulfil the same function in each author. In Irenaeus it was used vaguely of the standard of truth against which all doctrine must be measured. In Tertullian, however, there are grounds for identifying a more precise usage. Gerald Bray has pointed out that in the second century Roman jurists had developed the term *regula* (rule) in the context of legal interpretation. Wherever a particular statute seemed unclear, a Roman judge could clarify its meaning by consulting the *regulae*. Of course, the law always remained supreme; but the *regulae* could fulfil a prescriptive as well as descriptive function. One jurist by the name of Paul described this role—'A *regula* is that which explains briefly what the matter is. The law must not be deduced from the *regula*, but

¹⁹ *Procat.* p. 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²¹ Gerald Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1984), p. 102.

²² For a brief summary and comparison of these writers and their Rules of Faith see the table in Frances M. Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (London: SCM, 1992), pp. 10-11.

the regula is determined by what the law is. By means of the regula therefore, a short summary of things is passed on...' With Tertullian we find a parallel role given to the *regula fidei*. It was a summary of the law (*i.e.* Scripture). Not only was it a key to the interpretation of Scripture; it was an authoritative summary of its teaching.²³

Other writers would not have thought of the Rule of Faith as a clarification exclusively of Scripture. It would have covered unwritten traditions as well. But virtually everyone would have agreed with Tertullian in describing it as 'una omnino est Bola immobilis et irreformabilis' ('absolutely one, alone incapable of alteration and reform').²⁴ Origen, a leading figure in the Greek theological tradition, who was keen to speculate in uncharted areas, affirmed his own version of the Rule of Faith, but in his most detailed account (at the start of his work *On First Principles*) he distinguished areas where no ecclesiastical consensus had been established and so there was room for pious speculation. For example, he asserted that it was part of the church's Rule of Faith to believe in the existence of the devil and other evil angels, but the church had never authoritatively spelt out what they are or how they exist.

At first sight we might think that with his use of the Rule of Faith Origen was groping towards the later distinction between

[p.21]

the essentials and the adiaphora of the faith. And perhaps he might profitably have advocated such a distinction. But in fact Origen related this distinction much more controversially to his view of different sorts of believers. God, he believed, had spoken in the plainest terms in parts of Scripture to the simplest of believers, but there were deeper truths which could be grasped only by more spiritual or advanced believers. The Rule of Faith embraced, therefore, the more basic truths. Anyone who wanted to make significant spiritual progress had to advance well beyond this, though never in contradiction to it.

The Rule of Faith was never a hard and fast formula. Those who referred to it did not feel bound to a particular form of words or even to the same complex of ideas. Irenaeus, for instance, cites it in several different forms, which use different shapes, different selections of detail, and different stereotyped phrases, but which cover broadly the same ground.²⁵

The Rule of Faith did help to pave the way for the more precise definitions we call creeds. It was natural that some of the traditional phrases which appear in the Rule of Faith should form the building blocks for creeds. It was also an obvious development that if appeal was made to the Rule of Faith to counter heresies, the church should in time look to more formal creeds to fulfil the same purpose. But combating heresy was not the primary function of the Rule of Faith. This would have existed even if the churches had not had to contend with heresy. Its major role was to assert the identity of the one church of God, scattered as it was throughout the world. It was a badge of identity for all believers—a summary of those items they needed to treasure as their spiritual inheritance. This again was intrinsic to formal creeds, especially to those creeds which were given to believers at baptism.

²³ Gerald Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1979), pp. 102-3. The quote from the jurist Paul occurs in *Ad Plautum* xvi.

²⁴ *De vir. vel.* 1.

²⁵ Young, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

The fourth century and the Arian crisis

The fourth century was a watershed in more ways than one for the church. Not only did it see the end of the age of outside persecution and the beginning of imperial patronage. But it also affected the relations of Christians to one another. One symptom of this is the development of creeds as tests of orthodoxy. In a sense this usage was not entirely new. As we have seen, this was implicit in the baptismal interrogation which preceded the use of declaratory creeds at baptism. Indeed, canon law decreed that if a man came to the catholic church from a heresy, he was to be asked what baptismal interrogation he had received.²⁶ If this was correct, there was no need to rebaptise the man. If, however, the questions were deemed inappropriate, his baptism was considered invalid. In short, the baptismal questions were meant to ensure the baptizand had the correct faith. Similarly, the later declaratory creed at baptism was intended to ensure that even the youngest or the simplest of Christians should be preserved in the true faith.

[p.22]

Where heresy troubled the church, it was natural for the leaders to look for a credal subscription to guarantee orthodoxy. As early as c. 180 some such procedure had been adopted by the presbyters of Asia in an interview with a patripassian heretic called Noetus.²⁷ Then in 268 in a more serious case six bishops who assembled at Antioch to deal with the adoptionist heretic Paul, Bishop of Samosata, constructed a joint letter including a statement of faith. This was not technically a creed, but a lengthy document emphasising those areas of faith where Paul was deemed to be suspect. It bore a resemblance to the Rule of Faith. The six bishops were confident that their doctrinal excursus represented the views of all Catholic churches and so they felt at liberty to condemn anyone who disagreed with it as 'outside the ecclesiastical rule'. They asked Paul to join in their subscription to the letter.²⁸

Perhaps it is only because of the paucity of evidence from before the fourth century that we do not have other evidence of the same phenomenon—the subscription of credal statements or letters as guarantees of someone's orthodoxy. We can view this as a simple extension of the Rule of Faith. Anyhow, these would have been confined to a fairly local level. The fourth century, however, saw the advent of imperial patronage for the Christian church. There was freedom, even encouragement, for Christian leaders from a wide area to meet from time to time. If this had not occurred, the Arian Controversy, which took centre stage for the most part of that century, might well have been restricted to Egypt and the surrounding provinces. It began after all as a dispute between Bishop Alexander of Alexandria and one of his presbyters, Arius.

For their part, the Emperors after Constantine (with the exception of the short reign of the pagan Emperor Julian) saw it as their business to do everything possible to maintain ecclesiastical unity. They would not deny the existence of heresy, but there was a tendency to minimise its impact. It was always assumed (in accordance, let it be said, with the church's own official teaching) that heretics were talented but perverse individuals who set themselves against the general tenor of the church's teaching. All that was necessary was to unmask the distance of the heretic from the mainstream of the ecclesiastical doctrine. Besides, in the early

²⁶ Cf. the 8th canon of the Council of Arles (314).

²⁷ Kelly, *op.cit.*, p. 206.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

days of imperial patronage at least, everything possible was done to ensure the reconciliation of the heretic. It was in part the Emperor Constantine's insistence on restoring Arius to fellowship just two years after the Council of Nicaea that meant that the so-called first ecumenical Council did not eradicate from the church the major problem it had been convened to solve.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that it was the Emperors who pioneered the new role for certain creeds as tests of orthodoxy. When Constantine became Emperor of the East in 324, he found the ecclesiastical scene in turmoil because of the dispute between Arius and Bishop Alexander. Already

[p.23]

ecclesiastical procedures were in force to cope with a serious doctrinal difference; quasi-credal statements were being issued to which others were supposed to agree on pain of excommunication. In the early weeks of 325, without any imperial directive, a council met in Antioch to elect a successor to the deceased occupant of this important see. They took the opportunity to set out an anti-Arian position in an extended credal statement.²⁹ They even excommunicated three bishops (including the famous church historian Eusebius of Caesarea) who refused to subscribe to this statement, though the way was left open for these men to change their minds at the forthcoming 'great and hieratic synod'.³⁰

As it turned out, when the great synod did convene at Nicaea, Eusebius was able to establish his own orthodoxy by setting forth the baptismal creed of the church at Caesarea. He introduced it in these words—'As we received from the bishops before us, both in our catechetical instruction and when we were baptised., so also we believe now and submit our belief to you.'³¹ It is true that Eusebius also included a brief explanation of each of its clauses, which he achieved without any controversy. According to Eusebius' own account the Emperor Constantine was the first to testify to the orthodoxy of his statement. In this undemanding way Eusebius had established his own orthodoxy. Perhaps this is not surprising given Eusebius' own prominence (he was probably the most learned bishop of his day) and given the Emperor's avowed concern for ecclesiastical harmony.

The same Council also had more tricky business—dealing with those whom Bishop Alexander had identified as heretics. This it endeavoured to do through the Nicene Creed.³² We know too little about the details of this Council to say how this creed was devised or where it originated. Perhaps it was a baptismal creed to which certain anti-Arian clauses and anathemas were added. We just do not know. There can, however, be no doubt that this creed was a distinctly anti-Arian statement.³³ This emerges from the following points—

(1) the clarification from the substance of the Father to explain what was entailed in the Son being begotten from the Father.

²⁹ For this council see R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), pp. 146-51. I will refer to this book as *SCDG*.

³⁰ Kelly, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

³¹ Recorded in Socrates *H.E.* 1:8.

³² I use the phrase 'Nicene Creed' here to refer to the original creed of Nicea, commonly designated N.

³³ For recent discussion of the creed see Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 234-54; Hanson, *SCDG*, 152-72; and Rowan Williams, *Arius—Heresy and Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1987), pp. 68-71.

- (2) the words *the true* God from *true* God.
- (3) the clause begotten not made—which ruled out the view of Christ as a creature.
- (4) the phrase of one substance with the Father.
- (5) the series of anathemas, most of which target statements which Arian writers had been known to make.

Given the tenor of the Nicene Creed, it may surprise us that only two of the bishops (Libyan supporters of Arius) refused to subscribe to it, and were exiled for their failure to co-operate.³⁴

[p.24]

That so many bishops did subscribe was due in part to the general atmosphere where it was clear that refusal carried the threat of imperial punishment, and in part due to the attitude of the Emperor Constantine, who in his desire for harmony ensured that explanations were given of the language of the Nicene Creed in order to remove most of the major misgivings about it. Eusebius of Caesarea even tells us that the Emperor in person offered an assurance as to what the key word *homoousios* did *not* mean. Significantly, he did not say what it did mean. Thus, some ambiguity remained on this key word.

But what was the status of the Nicene Creed? We have seen that it was not the only creed which was used at the Council. Eusebius of Caesarea offered the baptismal creed of his own church as a token of his own orthodoxy. It was accepted as such, but Eusebius had also to subscribe to the Nicene Creed. A similar procedure was to occur with the restoration of Arius about two years later. Arius offered his own creed, which Kopecek describes as obscure and evasive on all those points on which Nicaea had spoken clearly and decisively, but exactly the same might be said for all baptismal creeds at this point.³⁵ At the same time Arius was required to indicate his agreement with Nicaea. Perhaps we can conclude that the Nicene Creed was not meant to oust baptismal creeds; it was brought in to deal with troublesome new ideas which threatened the unity of the church. It was unclear at this stage whether the Nicene creed was intended to supersede, to complement or simply to clarify the standard baptismal creeds. For many it probably did not matter since they would have thought that the immediate crisis provoked by Arius would soon be over. The Emperor Constantine was one such person. In effect he took the view that it was possible to outlaw wrong doctrine and at the same time to rehabilitate those who had originally been responsible for canvassing that wrong doctrine. In the long term, however, this procedure proved naive though such was the prestige among Christians of the first Christian Emperor that no one was prepared to say as much.

So far I have mentioned nothing about Nicaea being the first ecumenical council. This omission is deliberate. It was only in retrospect that the idea of an ecumenical synod carried weight. Indeed, Constantius II, one of Constantine's sons and his major successor, was responsible for an ecumenical council of his own in 360 which outlawed some of the main

³⁴ Socrates, *H.E.*, 1:9.

³⁵ Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (MA, Cambridge: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), p. 57.

features of the Nicene Creed. In fact, it rejected all previous creeds, and forbade the formulation of new ones in the future.³⁶ A synod which assumed to itself such grandiose authority was suspect. Indeed, at this stage we can say that an ecumenical council had little intrinsic authority. Certainly, the idea of the ecumenicity of the church had long been influential, and so it was to remain throughout the period of the early church. The Catholic faith was that which was believed always, in all places and by everyone, according to the famous words of Vincent of Lerins. But, as was increasingly recognised, a large council did not of

[p.25]

itself guarantee the expression of the mind of the whole catholic church.

The Council of Nicaea certainly had an unusually large gathering of bishops, probably between 250 and 300 of them.³⁷ The weight of numbers, including a significant representation from the west of the Roman Empire, did accord it some influence. To this should be added the imperial authority of the Emperor Constantine. While he did not stifle debate, the conclusion was undoubtedly influenced by his desire for as broad a harmony as possible. It is significant that while Constantine was alive, no attempt was made to overthrow or replace the Nicene Creed, but not long after his death these attempts began in earnest. Initially at least, the prestige of the Nicene Creed was bound up with the personal influence of the Emperor who had convened the Council. If that had remained the case, we would have to say that reverence for the Nicene Creed was a clear instance of Caesaropapism. But the Creed was in fact subject to sustained attack over the period from 340 to 360, not because it was felt to have been forced on the church by the Emperor, but because it was believed in some quarters to have given countenance to the heresy of Sabellianism (or modalism).

The process of finding an alternative creed to affirm an acceptable position on the Trinity was long and tortuous. In the end it proved unsuccessful. Ironically, it was only through this trial and error process that the Council of Nicaea and its associated creed achieved their special status.

Assessing the creeds

It is worth considering in more detail why these alternative creeds were unsuccessful. At one level we can pinpoint political factors. The process of creed-making was hijacked by a group of court bishops who were prepared to ride roughshod over the views of large sections of their fellow bishops and invoke civil punishments on those who stood in their way. Moreover, they were at the very least sympathetic to men who were avowed Arians. Only one of their creeds specifically endorsed Arianism, but it raised such an outcry that its originators had quickly to backtrack.³⁸ They preferred to set forth creeds that were tolerant rather than prescriptive of the Arian position. For example, the position for which they secured imperial favour in the 'ecumenical council' of 360 simply said that 'the Son is like the Father, as the divine Scriptures say and teach.' Only the most radical and outspoken of Arians—and there were a few such—could have quarrelled with this anaemic statement. It soon became clear that this

³⁶ Kelly, *op.cit.*, p. 294.

³⁷ Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

³⁸ This creed was issued by a council in Sirmium in 357 and was soon called the Blasphemy of Sirmium by its opponents—for details see Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 285-86; Hanson, *SCDG* pp. 344-45.

formula was a *carte blanche* for Arian or Arianising statements to be made from the pulpit. This, combined with a general revival in overt Arianism in the period from 350, established the idea that Arianism was a heresy of sinister power and durability. Not all would have agreed with Athanasius and seen Arianism as the great

[p.26]

apostasy that was destined to befall the church before the end of the age.³⁹ But bitter experience did mean that Arianism was viewed as an unusual threat to the apostolic faith. And this inevitably heightened the status of the Nicene Creed as it was well known that the creed had been designed to combat Arianism.

I have argued that the Council of Nicaea and its creed attained special authority only after the passage of time. The same may be said of the second ecumenical council (that of Constantinople of 381) and the creed which is associated with it—the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.⁴⁰ For one thing this council had much less of a claim than the Council of Nicaea to be described as truly ecumenical. It had scarcely any western representation, and had only some 150 bishops who agreed with its conclusions.⁴¹ An even greater problem surrounds its creed. For the next seventy years few, if any, authors allude to it. In fact, when it was produced at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, its existence surprised many of the participants. Because of this the weight of scholarship was for some time opposed to its connection with the Council in 381; it was felt that this Council had endorsed the Nicene Creed without issuing a new creed. But now, through the work of J.N.D. Kelly, these doubts have been largely laid aside, as it is recognised that at this period creeds were described as Nicene if they contained the key elements of the Nicene Creed.⁴² They did not need to reproduce its *ipsissima verba*. They could even develop peculiarities of their own as local circumstances and particular challenges dictated.

What probably happened at Constantinople was this—the Council reaffirmed in the strongest terms the Nicene Creed and in some context issued the creed C as a sign of its agreement. It is quite possible that C was already a baptismal creed to which the Council made a few additions as it saw fit. The most notable of these additions would be the clauses describing the Holy Spirit. In the early Arian controversy the status of the Spirit had not been an issue, but the situation had greatly changed after 360 when those who were at one in their hostility to Arianism were divided on the Spirit.⁴³

It was only at the Council of Chalcedon (itself to be ranked as an ecumenical council) that the creed C was acknowledged separately from N and so acquired prestige in its own right. And yet the bishops assembled at Chalcedon who (as I have said) had been previously unfamiliar with C were somewhat grudging in the status they gave to it. They gave the impression that they would have preferred in an ideal world to be content with N; but faced with the existence of C, they had to accord it some honour. This is what they wrote—'We decree that the exposition of the right and blameless faith of the 318 holy and blessed fathers, assembled at

³⁹ Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* pp. 74, 77.

⁴⁰ Sometimes (mis)named 'The Nicene creed' and commonly designated 'C'.

⁴¹ Hanson, *SCDG*, pp. 806-7.

⁴² Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 296-331.

⁴³ Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 339-44; Hanson *SCDG*, pp. 734-90.

Nicaea in the time of the Emperor Constantine of pious memory, should be pre-eminent, while the decisions of the 150 holy fathers... should also hold good.'⁴⁴

[p.27]

The Council of Chalcedon also felt bound to say why the Council of Constantinople had gone beyond the original Nicene Creed. Clearly they thought that only very special circumstances would justify this. So they said that the Council 'has decreed primarily that the creed of the 318 holy fathers should remain inviolate; and on account of those who contend against the Holy Spirit, it ratifies the teaching subsequently set forth by the 150 holy fathers assembled in the royal city concerning the essence of the Spirit, not as adducing anything left lacking by their predecessors, but making distinct by Scriptural testimonies their conception concerning the Holy Spirit against those who were trying to set aside His sovereignty.'⁴⁵ They were very sensitive about doctrinal innovations to the apostolic faith. Clarifying some points in the creed was one thing; introducing new items was quite another. The bishops at Chalcedon had an immediate motive for their stance. They were resisting (successfully as it turned out) the call of the Emperor of the day to bring out a new creed to counter the current errors of Nestorius and Eutyches. Instead, they confined themselves to a Definition of the faith, which was designed to explain the correct sense of the Nicene Creed. That, incidentally, is why the Chalcedonian Definition, arguably the most important christological statement in the history of the church, has never been regarded as a creed.

The creed C may have had obscure beginnings. It was, however, destined to have a glorious future, its significance extending to the present day. Within a comparatively short time of the prominence first given to it in 451, it had become virtually the sole baptismal creed for all the eastern churches.⁴⁶ For a time it even became the baptismal creed for Rome and other churches in the West.⁴⁷ The development in the East is hardly surprising. There were moves toward uniformity in the baptismal creeds of the east. The creed C was well suited to this because of the general acceptance it met in both East and West. Besides, it was better suited than N for a baptismal creed. It had references to the church, to the remission of sins and to the resurrection of the dead which were found in earlier baptismal creeds, but not in N. The one significant feature of N which is omitted in C, the anathemas, had become out of place. Indeed, if they had been given prominence, they might have publicised Arian notions which were now long dead.

The liturgical use of C was not confined to baptisms. In a revolutionary development it was introduced into the eucharist, first in the east and somewhat later in the west. Here it did not displace an earlier creed, but marked an innovation. Ironically, the introduction of this practice can be attributed to the Monophysites in 476, who were opposed to the Chalcedonian Definition and were attempting to show themselves more orthodox than the official Orthodox. Despite these inauspicious beginnings the practice persisted.⁴⁸ Indeed, in many churches it persists to this day. In the Orthodox Church, for example, C is

[p.28]

⁴⁴ Kelly, *op.cit.*, p. 330.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 344-46.

⁴⁷ Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 346-48.

⁴⁸ Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ*, p. 117.

read or sung at every celebration of the Eucharist and also daily at Nocturns and at Compline.⁴⁹

It is not difficult to say why this development proved popular. The old practice must have appeared strange whereby believers should hear the faith at baptisms, which generally meant once a year. This will have suggested that the creed was appropriate for the beginnings of the Christian life and not thereafter. Clearly this was unfortunate; the creed C was well-fitted to edify the mature as well as the young believer. Besides, creeds need not be confined to instruction; they have their place in the celebration of the church. At the same time we should observe that the place given uniformly to C in the eucharist is evidence of a widespread feeling that the age of doctrinal development was over. This was particularly true of the East. The church had escaped the lure of the worst heresies and could rest secure in the product of the saints of the fourth century. This may be regarded either as an assured faith or an arrogant complacency.

Before we leave C, I should add that it has reasonably been described as the one truly ecumenical creed. I suppose many would assume that this title should go to the Apostles' Creed; but that is a mistake. The Orthodox churches do not attach a special status to it, because it was not recognised by any ecumenical synod and because it was essentially a western baptismal creed.⁵⁰ C does in Eastern Orthodox circles represent the product of a general council. It also has authority in the west, but here at some point a small but significant addition was made. I refer to the filioque clause. Whereas C has the Spirit proceeding only from the Father, the western version has a double procession.⁵¹ This was to be a major reason why attempts to heal a growing breach between the western and eastern churches in the Middle Ages failed. Incidentally the Reformers liked C (in its western form) and gave the creed a new lease of life by translating it into the vernacular.⁵² In Anglican churches too it has been highly regarded; it was, at least until recently, the creed used at every celebration of the eucharist.

Types of conservatism

I wish now to pursue further a point which emerged in connection with the Council of Chalcedon. There we noted the reluctance of the bishops to formulate a new creed or even to suggest that the Nicene fathers might have omitted anything in their formulation of the apostolic faith. Our first instincts might be to question the wisdom of such a position. Does it not overlook the very real possibility of new and unexpected challenges to the Christian faith? Is there not a limit to the explanations which can be added to an old creed? Isn't it a clear example of trying to pour new wine into old wineskins? I believe such a reaction would be perfectly valid, but it is the job of historians to ask why this was.

[p.29]

One reason was undoubtedly the experience of the mid-fourth century when one council after another tried to establish the apostolic faith. This activity was judged to have a disastrous

⁴⁹ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 210.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 358-67.

⁵² Kelly, *op.cit.*, p. 276.

pastoral effect; it paved the way for agnosticism about the Christian faith within and outside the church. It was also considered that it had been promoted by clergy who were Arians at heart, and who were determined to render the Nicene Creed null and void. Such judgments had the result of boosting the status of the Nicene Creed.

Here we must recall that the creed into which a believer was baptised was the creed he was expected to profess throughout his life. It made no difference if the believer concerned became a bishop. Indeed, these vows may have been repeated at ordination. Thus very good reason was needed if a change was to be made to the creed. And yet at the Council of Nicaea, as far as our limited sources go, no one quarrelled with the principle of a new creed. Perhaps it was self-evident that the emergency situation with the church in turmoil called for extraordinary measures. By the 350s, however, the situation had changed immeasurably. Constantine and the great majority of the bishops who had been present at Nicaea in 325 were dead. Constantine's own standing had become very high because it was accepted that he had died in the faith, being baptised in his final illness. It also meant that there were hazards in bishops seeming to go against what their predecessors (whom they would describe as their fathers in the faith) had agreed at Nicaea.

This emerges from a fascinating account by the church historian Socrates of debate at the Council of Seleucia in 359, one of that notorious series of councils convened to reach agreement on the faith. Socrates tells us that Acacius, bishop of Caesarea, the successor to the famous Eusebius and one of the leading eastern court bishops, said—'Since the Nicene Creed has been altered not once only, but frequently, there is no hindrance to our publishing another at this time.' This did not meet with general assent. One opponent, Bishop Eleusius of Cyzicus, replied, 'The Synod is at present convened not to learn what it had no knowledge of, nor to receive a creed which it had not assented to before, but to confirm the faith of the fathers, from which it should never recede either in life or death.' Socrates goes on to make some observations of his own, which have particular interest for us. He points out that when Eleusius talked of 'the faith of the fathers', he did not mean the Nicene Creed, but a creed published at a Council of Antioch in 341. Socrates argues that Eleusius is hoist on his own petard. His arguments are very revealing—'How is it, O Eleusius, that you call those convened at Antioch "the fathers", seeing that you do not recognise those who were their fathers? The framers of the Nicene creed... have a far higher claim to the title of "the fathers"; both as having priority in point of time, and also because those assembled at Antioch were by them invested with the priestly office. Now if those at Antioch have disowned

[p.30]

their own fathers, those following them are unconsciously following parricides. Besides, how can they receive a legitimate ordination from those whose faith they pronounced unsound and impious? If those, however, who constituted the Nicene Synod had not the Holy Spirit which is imparted by the imposition of hands, those at Antioch have not duly received the priesthood: for how could they have received it from those who had not the power of conferring it.'⁵³ We must, of course, regard this as an expression of a personal viewpoint by Socrates, and yet he cannot be putting forth an altogether unrepresentative position at the time when he was writing—a decade before the Council of Chalcedon. It is clear from Socrates' frequent references to spiritual fathers and from his use of the emotive word 'parricides' that

⁵³ Socrates, *H.E.* 2:40.

great stress was laid on the faith that was passed on by the bishop to the baptizands. Anyone who tried to go against that faith was guilty of serious sin. Especially if he was a bishop!

We might say—what about doctrinal development? Did not the patristic period see such development? Was not the Nicene Creed a supreme case in point? I have to agree, and would point out that the fourth century saw the emergence of an extreme form of doctrinal conservatism in the east, as a result of the prolonged Arian crisis and the unhappy attempts at new creeds which disfigured the middle of the fourth century. It came to be accepted for a variety of reasons that the Nicene Creed was a bulwark not only against Arianism but against all heresies. This is surely a remarkable claim for such a short statement of faith. There was also an implicit recognition that Arianism was the heresy of heresies.

Since the western churches had been less troubled than their eastern counterparts by Arianism, they did not assign it such a high place in their thinking. They did see Arianism as a heresy but only one of many. Hence they were more open to new doctrinal challenges. The Athanasian Creed, for example, which despite its name is a western product from about the mid-fifth century, gives as much weight to christological as to Trinitarian theology, thus reflecting the debates on Nestorianism in the east.⁵⁴ It is also new doctrinal challenges which most concern Vincent of Lerins, who was obsessed with the question of how to distinguish the true faith from heresy and has left us with the most extended treatise on the subject from the early church. For many years his work was axiomatic in Roman Catholic thinking.⁵⁵ Here I simply observe that while Vincent regarded Arianism as a serious error, he did not conclude that since the Catholic Church had found an antidote to it, that would suffice against all future heresies. Indeed, so strongly did Vincent believe that novelty was of the essence of heresy that he was almost bound to foresee the advent of further heresies.

Vincent reflects a different sort of conservatism which had taken root in the western church. He would recognise a process of doctrinal development—not grudgingly but enthusiastically.

[p.31]

He insisted that this was marked by genuine progress and not change. His favourite analogy for this healthy growth was that of a human body. The growth of religion in the soul should be like the growth of the body, which in the course of years unfolds and develops, yet remains the same as it was.⁵⁶ Vincent firmly believed that the Catholic Church had seen healthy growth—'The Church of Christ, zealous and cautious guardian of the dogmas deposited with it, never changes any phrase of them... It devotes all diligence to one aim: to treat tradition faithfully and wisely; to nurse and polish what from old time may have remained unshaped and unfinished; to consolidate and to strengthen what already was clear and plain; and to guard what already was confirmed and defined. After all, what have the councils brought forth in their decrees but that what before was believed plainly and simply might from now on be believed more diligently; that what before was preached rather unconcernedly might be preached from now on more eagerly; that what before was practised with less concern might from now on be cultivated with more care?'⁵⁷ We would have to say that this is an idealistic

⁵⁴ Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ*, pp. 175-91.

⁵⁵ Vincent *Comm*, 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 23. The translation is that of Rudolph E. Morris in *The Fathers of the Church Series Volume 7* (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1949).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

picture—worryingly idealistic because its author believed he was reflecting reality. But there was no doubt that Vincent's outlook was that of the mainstream of western church life.

Vincent did not mention the baptismal creed or indeed any sort of creed in his treatise.⁵⁸ This may reflect a more flexible and less idealistic attitude to the baptismal creed than in the east. It was accepted that this creed should be short so that even the least able could memorise it. This meant that the baptismal creed had limitations, and these were frankly recognised at times. In this recognition of its limitations the west differed from the east and it was to its advantage to do so.

As evidence for this I would point to Augustine of Hippo, who while still a presbyter in 393 wrote a work entitled *De Fide et Symbolo* ('On the Faith and the Creed') for a gathering of bishops.⁵⁹ As well as expounding the creed in detail, Augustine gives some rationale for its proper place in the life of the church. Augustine likens the creed to the milk required by young Christians, but argues there is need too for deeper instruction suited to those who are ready for solid meat.⁶⁰ That meat can be provided by a more detailed exposition of the creed. Augustine clearly does not intend to confine the creed to catechetical instruction. It has a place for mature believers. Besides, heretics can take advantage of the conciseness of the creed to introduce their own errors.⁶¹ The way to avert this is again by exposition of the creed, though Augustine is enough of a traditionalist to hope that this will heighten rather than diminish the status of the creed. He avoids any suggestion that the creed as he knows it is inadequate. The creed has become the starting-point for a deeper investigation of a range of Christian truths. From one who was keen to push the bounds of Christian understanding as far as could legitimately be done, this was a helpful way of approaching the baptismal creed. He

[p.32]

saw his procedure as fulfilling the biblical text (Is. 7:9) which he read as *Unless you believe, you will not understand*.⁶²

Augustine had provided a framework in which the western churches could anticipate further developments in understanding the implications of the faith they had professed at baptism. And I suppose that continues to the present day if we consider how many treatises are still written on the Christian faith based on that ancient baptismal creed we call the Apostles' Creed.

By contrast the eastern churches by the fifth century had tended towards a position where their official creeds had become virtually sacrosanct. Or perhaps a better way of putting it would be this—they regarded creeds almost as Protestants are taught to view Scripture, as though they were ultimately handed down from God and nothing was to be added to or subtracted from them. In the special place they assigned to N and to C, they in effect said that

⁵⁸ I have to qualify this with the observation that Vincent's work survives in a truncated form, and so a reference to such creeds cannot absolutely be excluded. But given the tenor of the surviving portion of his work, I think such a reference unlikely.

⁵⁹ This is conveniently edited with an English translation by the Dutch scholar, E.P. Meijering, *Augustine: De Fide et Symbolo* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1987).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶² English translations now read 'Unless you believe, you will not be established' or something similar.

Arianism had posed a unique challenge to the Christian faith which no subsequent error could repeat. We may well ask—does Arianism merit to be considered in this light?

Appendix 1

The Creed Of Nicaea—as drawn up at the Council of Nicaea (325) and commonly designated N.

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father,

only-begotten, that is, from the substance (ousia) of the Father, God from

God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one

substance (homoousios) with the Father, through Whom all things came into

being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us men and

our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming man, suffered

and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead;

And in the Holy Spirit.

But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before

being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of

[p.33]

nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration

or change—these the Catholic Church anathematizes.⁶³

Appendix 2

The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed—probably endorsed at the Council of Constantinople (381)—often misnamed the Nicene Creed and commonly designated C.

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into existence, Who because of us men and

⁶³ The translation is that of Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 215-16.

because of our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the

Scriptures, and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of Whose kingdom there will be no end;

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified, Who spoke through the prophets;

in one holy Catholic and apostolic Church.

We confess one baptism to the remission of sins; we look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.⁶⁴

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<http://www.earlychurch.org.uk/>

⁶⁴ Translated by Kelly, *op.cit.*, pp. 297-98.