

Harmony 1.4 - The Council of Nicaea (325)

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Last updated 1/26/17

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
Spring 325 - Constantine summons a council in Nicaea		
1.8.4 Because the emperor saw how both of these problems troubled the church, he organized a General Council, summoning all the bishops by letter to meet him at Nicaea in Bithynia.	1.17.1 Matters turned out differently than the emperor had hoped. The disagreement was too great for reconciliation, and the one who had been sent to make peace returned without accomplishing his mission. Because of this, Constantine convened a synod at Nicaea, in Bithynia, and wrote to the most eminent men of the churches in every country, directing them to be there on an appointed day.	1.7.2 But when his hopes were frustrated, he went on to summon the celebrated council of Nicaea. He pledged his word that the bishops and their officials would be furnished with donkeys, mules, and horses for their journey at public expense. When all those who were able to endure the fatigue of the journey had arrived at Nicaea, he went there himself, both to see the multitude of bishops and to fulfill his desire of leading them into unity. At once, he arranged that all their wants should be liberally supplied.
Notable bishops and confessors attend council		
	1.17.3a About three hundred and twenty bishops were present, accompanied by a multitude of presbyters and deacons. There were also men present who were skilled in dialectics and ready to assist in the discussions.	1.7.3a Three hundred and eighteen bishops were assembled. The bishop of Rome, because of his very advanced age, was absent, but he sent two presbyters to the council, with authority to agree to what was done. 1.7.3b During this time many individuals were richly endowed with apostolic gifts, and many, like the holy apostle, bore in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ.
1.8.12b The emperor, when he had completed the festal celebration of this triumph over Licinius, also came in person to Nicaea. Among the bishops, two were especially prominent: Paphnutius, bishop of Upper Thebes, and Spyridon, bishop of Cyprus. After the following, I will explain why I have referred to those two in particular. [Synopsis 09] 1.13.11b As I imagine it will be appreciated by lovers of learning, I shall here add on the names of those who were present, as far as I have been able to ascertain them, with the province and city over which they presided, and	1.17.2a Of those who occupied the apostolic sees, the following participated in this conference: Macarius of Jerusalem, Eustathius, who already presided over the church of Antioch on the Orontes; and Alexander of Alexandria near Lake Mareotis. Julius, bishop of Rome, was unable to attend on account of extreme old age; but his place was filled by Vito and Vicentius, presbyters in his church.	1.7.4 James, bishop of Antioch, a city of Mygdonia (which is called Nisibis by the Syrians and Assyrians), raised the dead and restored them to life. He also performed many other wonders, but it would be superfluous to mention them again in detail in this history, as I have already given an account of them in my work, entitled "Philotheus." 1.7.5 Paul, bishop of Neo-Caesarea, a fortress situated on the banks of the Euphrates, had suffered from the frantic rage of Licinius. He had been deprived of the use of both hands by the application of a red-hot iron, by

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<p>likewise the date at which this assembly took place.</p> <p>1.13.12 Hosius, who was I believe bishop of Cordova in Spain, as I have before stated. Vito and Vicentius, presbyters of Rome, Alexander, bishop of Egypt, Eustathius of Antiochia Magna, Macarius of Jerusalem, and Harpocraton of Cynopolis: the names of the rest are fully reported in <i>The Synodicon</i> of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria.</p>		<p>which the nerves which give motion to the muscles had been stretched out and made dead.</p> <p>1.7.6 Some had had the right eye dug out; others had lost the right arm. Among these was Paphnutius of Egypt. In short, the Council looked like an assembled army of martyrs.</p> <p>1.7.7a Yet this holy and celebrated gathering was not entirely free of opposition; there were some, though so few they were easy to count, who appeared safe, like dangerous shallows. In reality, though not openly, they supported the blasphemy of Arius.</p>
<p>1.8.13 Many of the laity who were skilled in the art of reasoning were also present. Each one was eager to advocate the cause of his own party. Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, as was said before, supported the opinion of Arius, together with Theognis and Maris; of these the former was bishop of Nicaea, and Maris of Chalcedon in Bithynia. These were powerfully opposed by Athanasius, a deacon of the Alexandrian church, who was highly esteemed by Alexander, his bishop. This resulted in jealousy against him, as will be seen later.</p>	<p>1.17.2b Many other excellent and good men from different nations were gathered together. Some were celebrated for their learning, their eloquence, their knowledge of the sacred books and other learning; some for the virtuous quality of their life, and others for a combination of all these qualifications.</p>	
Eusebius's account of those who attended the council		
<p>1.8.4b In response, the bishops assembled out of the various provinces and cities; This is what Eusebius Pamphilus writes about them, word for word, in his third book of the life of Constantine:</p> <p>1.8.5 'So the most eminent of the ministers of God in all the churches which have filled Europe, Africa, and Asia, were brought together. And one house of worship, as it was opened wide by God, contained on the same occasion both Syrians and Cilicians, Phoenicians, Arabs and Palestinians, and in addition to these, Egyptians, Thebans, Libyans, and those who came from Mesopotamia. A Persian bishop was also present at this synod and Scythians were at the assembly as well. Pontus as well, and Galatia, Pamphylia, Cappadocia, Asia and</p>		

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<p>Phrygia, supplied those people who were most distinguished among them. Besides those, Thracians and Macedonians met there.</p> <p>1.8.6 Achaians and Epirots, and even those who lived even further away than those, and the most celebrated of the Spaniards himself, took their seats among the rest. The prelate of the imperial city was absent because of his age; but some of his presbyters were present and stood in for him.</p> <p>1.8.7 Emperor Constantine alone continued to dedicate such a crown, composed as a bond of peace, to Christ his Savior. He dedicated it to him as a thank-offering worthy of God for victory over his enemies by appointing this gathering among us as an imitation of the Apostolic Assembly.</p> <p>1.8.8 For among them, it is said, were gathered “devout men of every nation under heaven; Parthians, Medes and Elamites, and those who dwelled in Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the part of Libya which is toward Cyrene, strangers from Rome also, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.”</p> <p>1.8.9 That congregation, however, was inferior in this way: that everyone present was not a minister of God. In this assembly the number of bishops exceeded three hundred; while the number of the presbyters, deacons, and others who attended them was almost impossible to count.</p> <p>1.8.10 Some of these ministers of God were notable for their wisdom, some for the strictness of their life and patient endurance [of persecution], and others adorned themselves with all of these distinguished characteristics.</p> <p>1.8.11 Some were venerable because of their advanced age, others were conspicuous for their youth and vigorous minds, and others had only recently entered their ministerial career. For all these the emperor arranged for an abundant supply of daily food to be provided.’</p>		

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1.8.12b That is Eusebius' account of those who met on this occasion.		
Debating begins before official start of Council		
1.8.14 Now a short time before the general assembling of the bishops, the disputants competed in preparatory debates before the multitudes.	<p>1.17.6 But before the appointed time arrived, the bishops assembled together and summoned Arius to attend. They began to examine the disputed topics, and each one of them advanced his own opinion. As might have been expected, however, many different questions grew out of the discussion. Some of the bishops spoke against the introduction of novelties contrary to the faith which had been delivered to them from the beginning. Those who had especially adhered to simplicity of doctrine argued that the faith of God ought simply to be accepted; others, however, contended that ancient opinions ought not to be followed without examination.</p> <p>1.17.7 Many of the assembled bishops and the clergy who accompanied them were remarkably skilled in dialectics and trained in the art of rhetoric. They appeared prominent, and so attracted the notice of the emperor and the court. Of that number Athanasius, who was then a deacon of Alexandria, and had accompanied his bishop Alexander, seemed to have the largest share of advice about these subjects.</p> <p>[A simple confessor rebukes the rationalists]</p> <p>1.18.1 A number of the pagan philosophers desired to take part in the debates. Some wanted to learn more about the doctrine that was being taught. Others, who hated the Christians because of the recent suppression of pagan religions, wanted to turn the discussion about doctrine into an argument over words. They sought to introduce dissension among the Christians and make them appear to hold contradictory opinions.</p>	
1.8.15a When many people were drawn in by their interesting discourse, one of the laity, <i>a confessor</i> , a man with an unsophisticated mind, rebuked these rationalists.	1.18.2 It is said, then, that one of these philosophers who prided himself on his well-known superiority in speaking eloquently, began to ridicule the priests. This roused the indignation of a simple old man, who was	

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	<p>highly esteemed as a confessor. Although he was unskilled in logical debate and spoke simply, he dared to oppose him. The less serious of those who knew the confessor, laughed at his expense for what he wanted to do; but the more thoughtful were anxious that, in opposing such an eloquent man, he would only make a fool of himself;</p>	
<p>1.8.15b He told them that Christ and his apostles did not teach us dialectics, craftiness, or vain subtleties, but simple-mindedness, which is preserved by faith and good works</p>	<p>1.18.3 yet his influence was so great, and his reputation so high that they could not stop him from engaging in the debate. He said, “In the name of Jesus Christ, O philosopher, listen to me. There is one God, the maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. He made all things by the power of the Word, and established them by the holiness of His Spirit. The Word, whom we call the Son of God, seeing that man was sunk in error and living like beasts, pitied him, and chose to be born of woman, to interact with men, and to die for them. And He will come again to judge each of us for the deeds of this present life. We simply believe these things to be true. Do not, therefore, work in vain, striving to disprove facts which can only be understood by faith or scrutinizing how these things did or did not actually happen. Answer me, do you believe?”</p>	
<p>1.8.16 When he had said this, all who were present admired the speaker and agreed with what he said; and the disputants themselves, after hearing his plain statement of the truth, exercised a greater degree of moderation. That is how the disturbance caused by these logical debates was suppressed at that time.</p>	<p>1.18.4 The philosopher, astonished at what had happened, replied, “I believe.” He thanked the old man for overcoming him with his argument and began to teach the same doctrines to others. He encouraged those who still held his former sentiments to adopt the view he had now embraced, assuring them on oath that some inexplicable power had compelled him to become a Christian.</p> <p>[Pagan philosophers silenced by Alexander of Byzantium]</p> <p>1.18.5 It is said that a similar miracle was performed by Alexander, who governed the church of Constantinople. When Constantine returned to Byzantium, certain philosophers came to him complaining about innovations</p>	

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	<p>in religion. Particularly, they complained that he had introduced a new form of worship into the state, contrary to what was followed by his forefathers, and by everyone who had formerly been in power, whether among the Greeks or the Romans. They also were trying to debate the doctrine with Alexander the bishop;</p> <p>1.18.6 and he, although he was unskilled in this type of argumentative contest, accepted the struggle at the command of the emperor, who was perhaps persuaded by his life (he was a good and excellent man). The philosophers assembled, but since all of them wished to engage in the discussion, they set apart one whom they considered worthy as a spokesman while the others were to remain silent.</p> <p>1.18.7 When one of the philosophers began to open the debate, Alexander said to him, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ not to speak." The man was instantly silenced. It is then right to consider whether it is a greater miracle that a man, and he a philosopher, was so easily silenced by a word, or that a stone-wall was cleft by the power of a word, a miracle I have heard some attribute to Julian, surnamed the Chaldean. From what I have heard, those events happened in the way I have written above.</p>	
20 May 325 – Council officially begins when Constantine arrives		
<p>1.8.17a On the following day all the bishops were assembled together in one place; the emperor arrived soon after.</p>	<p>1.19.1a The bishops held long consultations; and after summoning Arius before them, they made an accurate test of his propositions. They were intently on their guard not to come to a vote on either side. When the appointed day that had been chosen to settle the points in question finally arrived, they assembled together in the palace, because the emperor had signified that he would like to take part in the deliberations.</p>	<p>1.7.7b When they were all assembled, the emperor ordered a great hall in the palace to be prepared to accommodate them, in which a sufficient number of benches and seats were placed;</p> <p>1.7.8 When he had prepared everything in a way that would honor them properly, he allowed the bishops to enter and discuss the subjects which had been proposed.</p>
<p>1.8.17b When he had entered, he stood in among them and would not take his place until the bishops, by nodding their assent, indicated that they wanted him to sit. Such was the respect and reverence which the</p>	<p>1.19.1b When the emperor was in the same place with the priests, he passed through to the head of the conference, and seated himself on the throne which had been prepared for him, and the synod was then</p>	<p>1.7.9 The emperor, with a few attendants, was the last to enter the room. He was noticeable because of his impressive stature, worthy of admiration for personal beauty and for the still more marvelous modesty set on his</p>

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emperor entertained for these men.	commanded to be seated. 1.19.2a Seats had been arranged on either side along the walls of the palace room, for it was the largest and better than the other rooms.	brow. A low stool was placed for him in the middle of the assembly, but he did not seat himself on it until he had asked the permission of the bishops. Then all the sacred assembly sat down around him.
	[Eusebius of Caesarea delivers an oration to the emperor] 1.19.2 After they were seated, Eusebius Pamphilus rose and delivered a speech in honor of the emperor, giving thanks to God because of him.	[Eustathius of Antioch delivers a panegyric] 1.7.10 Immediately, before anyone else, rose the great Eustathius, bishop of Antioch (the unanimous vote of the bishops, priests, and Christ-loving laity had compelled him, reluctantly, to become the successor when Philogonius, whom I already referred to, passed into the better life). He crowned the emperor's head with the flowers of panegyric, and commended how diligently he had paid attention to ecclesiastical affairs.
Constantine urges for unity		
	[Constantine chastises the clergy for their disputes] 1.17.3b And as was usually the case on such occasions, many priests used the council as an excuse to bring up their own private affairs. They considered this an opportune time to rectify their grievances. Concerning those grievances, each person blamed another and presented a document to the emperor in which he reported the offenses committed against him.	[Constantine chastises the clergy for their disputes] 1.11.4 I do not account it right to pass over the following circumstance in silence. Some quarrelsome individuals wrote accusations against certain bishops, and presented their indictments to the emperor.
	1.17.4 As this kept happening day after day, the emperor set apart one certain day on which all complaints were to be brought before him. When the appointed time arrived, he took the memorials which had been presented to him, and said, "All these accusations will be brought forward in their own time at the great day of judgment, and there will be judged by the Great Judge of all men; it is not right to drag out a hearing like this against each other before me, a man, when the accuser and the accused are priests. Priests ought to present themselves in a way that never falls under the judgment of others. Imitate, therefore, the divine love and mercy of God, and be reconciled to one another; withdraw your accusations against each other. Let us make peace and devote our attention to those subjects connected with the faith, the	1.11.5 This occurred before the establishment of concord. He received the lists, formed them into a packet which he sealed with his ring, and ordered them to be kept safely. After the reconciliation had been effected, he brought out these writings, and burned them in their presence, at the same time declaring upon oath that he had not read a word of them. He said that the crimes of priests ought not to be made known to the multitude, lest they should become an occasion of offense, and lead them to sin without fear.

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	<p>reason we are assembled here.”</p> <p>1.17.5 After this address, in order to nullify each document, the emperor commanded the memorials to be burned, and then appointed a day for solving the disagreements.</p>	
		<p>1.11.6 It is reported also that he added that if he were to detect a bishop in the very act of committing adultery, he would throw his imperial robe over the unlawful deed, lest any should witness the scene, and be thereby injured. Thus did he admonish all the priests, as well as confer honors upon them, and then exhorted them to return each to his own flock.</p>
<p>[Constantine encourages forgiveness]</p> <p>1.8.18 When they had achieved a silence suitable to the occasion, the emperor, still sitting, began to address them. He spoke with words of exhortation to harmony and unity, and advised each person to lay aside every private grievance. For several of them had brought accusations against one another and many had even presented petitions to the emperor the day before.</p> <p>1.8.19 But he, directing their attention to the matter before them, which was the reason they were assembled, ordered these petitions to be burned. He merely observed that ‘Christ urges the one who is anxious to obtain forgiveness, to forgive his brother.’</p>		
<p>[Constantine addresses the bishops]</p> <p>1.8.20a When, then, he had strongly insisted on the maintenance of harmony and peace, he turned their attention back to more closely investigating the questions at hand.</p>	<p>[Constantine addresses the bishops]</p> <p>1.19.3-4 When he had finished, and silence was restored, the emperor said, “I give thanks to God for all things, but particularly, O friends, for being permitted to see your assembly. And the event has exceeded my prayer, in that so many priests of Christ have been led into the same place; now, it is my desire that you should be of one mind and agree with the judgment of your companions. I consider dissension in the Church of God as more dangerous than any other evil. When, then, something that is not good to hear was reported, my soul was deeply pained. I gathered that you had differing</p>	

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	<p>opinions—you, who profit least of all from disagreement as leaders of divine worship and judges of peace. For this reason I have called the priesthood together to a synod. As both your emperor and fellow-physician, I ask for a favor which would be acceptable to our common Lord, which is as honorable for me to receive as it is for you to grant. The favor which I seek is that you examine the causes of the strife and put a harmonious and peaceful end to it so that I can stand triumphant with you over the envious demon. He was provoked to incite this internal revolt when he saw our external enemies and tyrants under our feet, and he was jealous of our good state of affairs.</p> <p>1.19.4 The emperor said this discourse in Latin, and the interpretation was supplied by someone beside him.</p>	
Constantine guides the council to unity		
<p>1.8.20b-23 But it may be useful to hear what Eusebius says on this subject in his third book of the Life of Constantine. His words are these:</p>		
<p>1.8.21 ‘A variety of topics were introduced by each party and lengthy debate arose from the very beginning. The emperor listened to everything with patient attention, quietly and attentively considering whatever was advanced.</p> <p>1.8.22 He partially supported the statements which were made on either side, and gradually softened the severity of those who belligerently opposed each other, placating each side with his mildness and persuasiveness. He addressed them in the Greek language—he was not unacquainted with it. He was at once courteous and endearing, persuading some, winning over others with a plea, and applauding those who spoke well.</p>	<p>1.20.1a The next debate by the priests turned upon doctrine. The emperor gave patient attention to the speeches of both parties; he applauded those who spoke well, and rebuked those who displayed a tendency to bicker. According to his understanding of what he had heard, for he was not completely unfamiliar with the Greek language, he addressed himself with kindness to each one.</p>	<p>1.7.11 Next, the excellent emperor urged the Bishops to have unanimity and concord; he called them to remember the cruelty of the recent tyrants, and reminded them of the honorable peace which God had given them in his reign and through his position. He pointed out how terrible it might be, yes, extremely terrible, that at the very time when their enemies were destroyed, and when no one dared to oppose them, that they would attack one another. They would make their amused adversaries laugh, especially as they were debating holy things, concerning which they had the written teaching of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>1.7.12a “For the gospels,” he continued, “the apostolic writings, and the oracles of the ancient prophets, clearly teach us what we ought to believe concerning the divine nature. Let, then, all contentious disputation be banished; and let us seek in the divinely-inspired word the solution of the questions at hand.”</p>
<p>1.8.23 By spurring everyone on into unity, he succeeded</p>	<p>1.20.1b Finally all the priests agreed with one another</p>	<p>1.7.12b These and similar exhortations he, like an</p>

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<p>in bringing them into similar judgments and conformity of opinion on all the disputed points. There was not only unity in the confession of faith, but also a general agreement as to the time for the celebration of the feast of Salvation. At this time the doctrines which had common agreement were confirmed by the signature of each individual.’</p>	<p>and conceded that the Son is consubstantial with the Father. At the conclusion of the conference there were only seventeen who praised the opinion of Arius, but eventually the majority of these yielded and agreed with the general view. 1.20.2 The emperor deferred to this ruling. He regarded the unanimity of the conference to be a divine approval and he declared that anyone who rebelled against it would be immediately sent into banishment as guilty of trying to overthrow the Divine definitions.</p>	<p>affectionate son, addressed the bishops like fathers, working to bring about their unanimity in the apostolic doctrines. Most of the members of the synod, won over by his arguments, established concord among themselves and embraced sound doctrine.</p>
<p>[Reliability of Eusebius] 1.8.24 In his own words, that is the testimony of these things which Eusebius has left us in writing; and we have not randomly put it in here. Treating what he has said as an authority, we have introduced it here for the legitimacy of this history. We also have this aim in mind: if anyone condemns the faith confessed at this council of Nicaea as false, we will be unaffected by it and not believe Sabinus the Macedonian, who calls all those who came together there ignoramuses and simpletons. 1.8.25 For this Sabinus, who was bishop of the Macedonians at Heraclea in Thrace and made a collection of the decrees published by various Synods of bishops, has treated those who assembled in Nicaea with contempt and derision. He does not understand that when he does so he is charging Eusebius himself with ignorance, who, when under examination, made an identical confession. And in fact some things he has willfully passed over, others he has corrupted, and he has put a construction favorable to his own views on everything. 1.8.26 On the one hand, he commends Eusebius Pamphilus as a trustworthy witness and praises the emperor as capable at stating Christian doctrines. On the other hand, he still brands the faith which was declared at Nicaea as something given out by people who had no knowledge of the matter. In this way he willingly condemns the words of a man whom he himself pronounces to be a wise and true witness.</p>		

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<p>1.8.27 For Eusebius says that of the ministers of God who were present at the Nicene Synod, some were eminent for the word of wisdom and others for the strictness of their lives, and that the emperor himself, who was present and leading everyone into a consensus, established unity of judgment and agreement of opinion among them.</p> <p>1.8.28a Of Sabinus, however, we will make further mention as occasion may require.</p>		
<p>[The Creed of Nicaea]</p> <p>1.8.28b But the agreement of faith, produced by the great synod in Nicaea and praised with a loud voice by Eusebius, is this:</p> <p>1.8.29 “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, the only-begotten of the Father, that is of the substance of the Father; God of God and Light of light; true God of true God; begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father: by whom all things were made, both which are in heaven and on earth: who for the sake of us men, and on account of our salvation, descended, became incarnate, and was made man; suffered, arose again the third day, and ascended into the heavens and will come again to judge the living and the dead. [We] also [believe] in the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>1.8.30 The holy Catholic and Apostolic church anathematizes those who say ‘There was a time when he was not,’ and ‘He was not before he was begotten’ and ‘He was made from that which did not exist,’ and those who assert that he is of different substance or essence than the Father, or that the Son of God was created, or is susceptible to change.”</p>	<p>[The Creed of Nicaea]</p> <p>1.20.3 I had thought it necessary to reproduce the actual document concerning the matter, as an example of the truth, in order that those who follow might possess in a fixed and clear form the symbol of the faith which provided some peace at the time. But since some pious friends, who understood such matters, recommended that these truths ought to be spoken of and heard by the initiated and their initiators only, I agreed with their advice. It is not unlikely that some of the uninitiated may read this book. While I have concealed the portion of material that I ought to keep silent about, I have not altogether left the reader ignorant of the opinions held by the synod.</p>	
The council condemns <i>Thalia</i>, which was written by Arius		
1.9.16a It should also be observed that Arius had	1.21.3 ...The words in which his opinions were	

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written a treatise on his own opinion which he entitled <i>Thalia</i> ; but the character of the book is loose and degenerate, similar in its style and metres to the songs of Sotades. This production also the Synod condemned at the same time.	couched were likewise condemned, and also a work entitled “Thalia,” which he had written on the subject. I have not read this book, but I understand that it is of a loose character, resembling Sotadus in licentiousness. ...	
Constantine rebukes Acesius		
<p>1.10.1 The emperor’s diligence induces me to mention another circumstance that expresses his mind and serves to show how much he desired peace. For aiming at ecclesiastical harmony, he summoned to the council Acesius also, a bishop of the sect of Novatians.</p> <p>1.10.2 Now, when the declaration of faith had been written out and subscribed by the Synod, the emperor asked Acesius whether he would also agree to this creed and to the settlement of the day on which Easter should be observed. He replied, ‘The Synod has determined nothing new, my prince: for now, and even from the beginning, from the times of the apostles, I traditionally received the definition of the faith, and the time of the celebration of Easter.’</p>	<p>1.22.1 It is related, that the emperor, under the impulse of an ardent desire to see harmony re-established among Christians, summoned Acesius, bishop of the church of the Novatians, to the council, placed before him the definition of the faith and of the feast, which had already been confirmed by the signatures of the bishops, and asked whether he could agree to it. Acesius answered that their exposition defined no new doctrine, and that he agreed in opinion with the Synod, and that he had from the beginning held these sentiments with respect both to the faith and to the feast.</p>	
<p>1.10.3 When, therefore, the emperor further asked him, ‘For what reason then do you separate yourself from communion with the rest of the Church?’ he related what had taken place during the persecution under Decius; and referred to the rigidness of that austere canon which declares, that it is not right for people, who after baptism have committed a sin which the sacred Scriptures call ‘a sin unto death,’ to be considered worthy of participation in the sacraments; that they should indeed be exhorted to repentance, but were not to expect remission from the priest, but from God, who is able and has authority to forgive sins.</p> <p>1.10.4 When Acesius had thus spoken, the emperor said to him, ‘Take a ladder, Acesius, and climb alone into heaven.’</p>	<p>1.22.2 “Why, then,” said the emperor, “do you keep aloof from communion with others, if you are of one mind with them?” He replied that the dissension first broke out under Decius, between Novatius and Cornelius, and that he considered such people unworthy of communion who, after baptism, had fallen into those sins which the Scriptures declare to be unto death; for the remission of those sins, he thought, depended on the authority of God only, and not on the priests. The emperor replied, by saying, “O Acesius, take a ladder and ascend alone to heaven.”</p> <p>1.22.3 By this speech I do not imagine the emperor intended to praise Acesius, but rather to convict him, because, being but a man, he fancied himself exempt from sin.</p>	
1.10.5 Neither Eusebius Pamphilus nor any other has ever mentioned these things, but I heard them from a man		

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<p>by no means prone to falsehood, who was very old, and simply stated what had taken place in the council in the course of a narrative. From this I conjecture that those who have passed by this occurrence in silence, were driven by motives which have influenced many other historians, for they frequently suppress important facts, either from prejudice against some, or partiality towards others. So far concerning Acesius.</p>		
<p>The council allows the Meletians back into fellowship but take away their status as bishops</p>		
	<p>1.24.1 After an investigation had been made into the conduct of Meletius when in Egypt, the Synod sentenced him to reside in Lycus, and to retain only the name of bishop, and prohibited him from ordaining any one either in a city or a village. Those who had previously been ordained by him were permitted by this law to remain in communion and in the ministry, but were to be accounted secondary with regards to dignity of the clergy in church and parish.</p>	<p>1.9.1a After Meletius had been ordained bishop, which was not long before the Arian controversy, he was convicted of certain crimes by the most holy Peter, bishop of Alexandria, who also received the crown of martyrdom. After being deposed by Peter he did not acquiesce in his deposition, but filled the Thebaid and the adjacent part of Egypt with tumult and disturbance, and rebelled against the primacy of Alexandria.</p>
	<p>1.24.2 When by death an appointment became vacant, they were allowed to succeed to it, if deemed worthy, by the vote of the multitude, but in this case, were to be ordained by the bishop of the Church of Alexandria, for they were prohibited from exercising any power or influence in elections.</p> <p>1.24.3 This regulation appeared just to the Synod, for Meletius and his followers had manifested great rashness and boldness in administering ordination. So the regulation also nullified the ordinations of every type which differed from those of Peter. He, when he conducted the Alexandrian Church, fled on account of the persecution then raging, but afterward suffered martyrdom.</p>	
<p>1.8.55b At the same time the Synod itself also, as one, wrote the following epistle to the church of the Alexandrians, and to believers in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis</p>		<p>1.9.1b A letter was written by the council to the Church of Alexandria, stating what had been decreed against his revolutionary practices. It was as follows:</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
<p>[This section is also found in Socrates 1.9.1-14]</p>		<p>1.9.2 To the great church of the Alexandrians, which is holy by the grace of God, and to our beloved brothers throughout Egypt, Libya, and the Pentapolis. We bishops assembled at Nicaea, constituting the great and holy council, send greetings in the Lord.</p> <p>1.9.3 Since, by the grace of God, a great and holy council has been convened at Nicaea, after our most pious sovereign Constantine summoned us out of various cities and provinces for that purpose, we at the sacred council thought it most necessary to write you a letter, in order that you may know what subjects were considered and examined, and what was eventually decided on and decreed.</p> <p>1.9.4 In the first place, the impiety and guilt of Arius and his adherents was examined in the presence of our most pious emperor Constantine. We unanimously decided that his impious opinion should be anathematized, with all the blasphemous expressions he has uttered, namely that “the Son of God came to be out of nothing,” that “there was a time when he was not,” and even that “the Son of God, because he possessed free will, was capable of either both evil and good.” They also call him a creature (ktisma) and a work (poiēma).</p> <p>1.9.5 The holy Council has anathematized all these ideas, barely able to endure it as we listened to such impious opinions (or rather madnesses) and such blasphemous words. You must either have been informed of the verdict of our proceedings against him already, or you will soon learn. We will omit relating our actions here, for we would not trample on a man who has already received the punishment which his crime deserved.</p> <p>1.9.6 Yet his deadly error has proved so contagious that it has dragged Theonas of Marmarica, and Secundus of Ptolemaïs, into destruction; for they have suffered the same condemnation as Arius.</p> <p>But after the grace of God delivered us from those detestable heresies, with all their impiety and blasphemy, and from those persons, who had dared to cause such</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>conflict and division among a people previously at peace, the rash actions of Meletius and those who had been ordained by him still remained to be dealt with. We now state to you, beloved brothers, what resolution the Council came to on this point.</p> <p>1.9.7 The Council was moved with compassion towards Meletius, although strictly speaking he was wholly undeserving of favor, and decreed that he remain in office in his own city but exercise no authority either to ordain or nominate for ordination; and that he appear in no other district or city on this pretense, retaining no more than the normal level of authority. The Council also decided that those who had been appointed by him, after having been confirmed by a more legitimate ordination, should be admitted to communion on these conditions: that they should continue to hold their rank and ministry, but regard themselves as inferior in every respect to all those who have been ordained and established in each place and church by our most-honored fellow-minister, Alexander. Thus they will have no authority to propose or nominate whom they please, or to do anything at all without the agreement of some bishop of the catholic church who is one of Alexander's subordinates.</p> <p>1.9.8 On the other hand, those who by the grace of God and your prayers have not been found in schism, but have continued blameless in the catholic church, shall have authority to nominate and ordain those who are worthy of the sacred office, and to act in all things according to ecclesiastical law and custom.</p> <p>1.9.9 When it happens that those holding offices in the church die, then these who have been recently admitted will be advanced to the office of the deceased, provided that they are found worthy, that they are duly elected, and that the bishop of Alexandria ratifies the decision.</p> <p>1.9.10 This right is allowed for all the others indeed, but to Meletius personally we by no means grant the same permission, on account of his former disorderly conduct, and because of the rashness and fickleness of his</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>character. We want no authority or jurisdiction to be given to him, for he is a man liable again to create similar disturbances.</p> <p>1.9.11 These are the things which specifically affect Egypt, and the most holy church of the Alexandrians. If any other canon or ordinance has been established, our Lord and most-honored fellow-minister and brother Alexander, who is present with us, will explain the more specific details when he returns to you, since he has participated in all we have done, and has in fact been the leader.</p> <p>1.9.12 We also have good news for you that we have harmonized our opinions on the subject of the most holy feast of Easter, which has been happily settled through your prayers. All the brothers in the east who have previously kept this festival when the Jews did have agreed with the Romans, with us, and with all of you who have kept Easter with us from the beginning, to follow the same custom as we.</p> <p>1.9.13 So rejoice in these results and in the general agreement and peace, as well as in the cleansing of all heresy. Receive our fellow-minister and your bishop Alexander with great honor and abundant love, because he has greatly delighted us by his presence. Even at his advanced age, he has undergone extraordinary efforts in order that peace might be re-established among you. Pray on behalf of us all, that the things we decided were appropriate may be maintained without violation through Almighty God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory forever. Amen.¹</p>
<p>1.9.15 This epistle of the Synod makes it plain that they not only anathematized Arius and his adherents, but also the very expressions of his beliefs; and that after they agreed among themselves respecting the celebration of Easter, they readmitted the arch-heretic Meletius into</p>		

¹ Translation from NPNF2 vol. 2, pp. 12-3, adapted by AJW, <http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/urkunde-23>.

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
<p>communion, allowing him to retain his episcopal rank, but depriving him of all authority to act as a bishop. It is for this reason I suppose that even at the present time the Meletians in Egypt are separated from the church, because the Synod removed all power from Meletius.</p>		
Paphnutius convinces the council not to impose celibacy on married clergy		
	<p>1.23.1 Zealous of reforming the life of those who were involved with the work of the church, the Synod enacted laws which were called canons.</p>	
<p>1.11.3c The bishops thought it proper to introduce a new law into the church, namely, that those who were ordained to serve as bishops, priests, deacons and subdeacons who had married while still laymen, should no longer have sexual relations with their wives.</p>	<p>1.23.2 While they were deliberating about this, some thought that a law ought to be passed enacting that bishops and presbyters, deacons and subdeacons, should hold no intercourse with the wife they had married before they entered the priesthood;</p>	
<p>1.11.4 While they were discussing this matter, Paphnutius rose in the middle of the assembled bishops and pleaded earnestly with them not to impose such a heavy burden on these men of the church. "Marriage is in and of itself honorable," he asserted, "and sex is not unholy." And so he urged them before God not to harm the church by imposing restrictions that were too stringent. "For not every man," he said, "can endure a life of total abstinence, nor might the wives always preserve their chastity either." He defined intercourse between a man and his lawful wife as chastity.</p>	<p>1.23.3 but Paphnutius, the confessor, stood up and testified against this proposition; he said that marriage was honorable and chaste, and that cohabitation with their own wives was chastity, and advised the Synod not to frame such a law, for it would be difficult to bear, and might serve as an occasion of straying for them and their wives.</p>	
<p>1.11.5 It would be enough, he thought, if those men who were celibate when they entered the ministry remained unmarried, as was the ancient tradition of the church. Yet men should not be separated from wives whom they had married while still unordained. 1.11.6 And he expressed these sentiments although he himself had no experience with marriage, and, to speak frankly, had no knowledge of women. For from boyhood he had been brought up in a monastery, and was especially famous for his chastity. 1.11.7 All the assembled clergy agreed with Paphnutius's reasoning, and silenced all further debate on</p>	<p>1.23.4 He reminded them, that according to the ancient tradition of the church, those who were unmarried when they took part in the communion of sacred orders, were required to remain so, but that those who were married, were not to send away their wives. Such was the advice of Paphnutius, although he was himself unmarried. In accordance with it, the Synod agreed with his counsel, enacted no law about it, but left the matter to the decision of individual judgment, and not to compulsion. The Synod, however, enacted other laws regulating the government of the Church; and these laws may easily be found, as they are in the possession of many individuals.</p>	

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
this issue, allowing married clergy to remain abstinent at their own discretion. So much concerning Paphnutius.		
Reception of the creed and the exile of dissenters		
	1.21.1 It ought to be known, that they affirmed the Son to be consubstantial with the Father and that those are to be excommunicated and voted aliens to the Catholic Church, who assert that there was a time in which the Son existed not, and before He was begotten He was not, and that He was made from what had no existence, and that He is of another hypostasis or substance from the Father, and that He is subject to change or mutation.	
1.8.31 This creed was recognized and affirmed by three hundred and eighteen [bishops]; and because they were, as Eusebius says, unanimous in expression and sentiment, they signed it. Only five would not receive it, objecting to the term homoousios ["of the same essence," or consubstantial]: these were Eusebius bishop of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nice, Maris of Chalcedon, Theonas of Marmarica, and Secundus of Ptolemais.	1.21.2 This decision was sanctioned by Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia; by Theognis, bishop of Nicaea; by Maris, bishop of Chalcedon; by Patrophilus, bishop of Scythopolis; and by Secundus, bishop of Ptolemais in Libya. Eusebius Pamphilus, however, withheld his assent for a little while, but on further examination assented.	1.7.13 There were, however, a few, whom I mentioned before, who opposed these doctrines and sided with Arius; among them were Menophantus, bishop of Ephesus, Patrophilus, bishop of Scythopolis, Theognis, bishop of Nicaea, and Narcissus, bishop of Neronias, which is a town of the second Cilicia, and is now called Irenopolis; also Theonas, bishop of Marmarica, and Secundus, bishop of Ptolemais in Egypt.
1.8.32 "For," they said, "something that is consubstantial comes from something else either by partition, derivation or germination (by germination, as a shoot from roots; by derivation as children from their parents; by division, as two or three pieces of gold from a mass), and the Son is from the Father by none of these modes." Therefore, they declared themselves unable to assent to this creed. Those, then, who scoffed at the term consubstantial would not subscribe to the deposition of Arius.		1.7.14 They drew up a formulation of their faith and presented it to the council. As soon as it was read, it was torn to pieces and was declared to be spurious and false. Such a great uproar was raised against them and they were rebukes so many times for betraying their religion that all of them, with the exception of Secundus and Theonas, became afraid and stood up and took the lead in publicly renouncing Arius.
1.8.33 When they had heard this, the Synod anathematized Arius and all who adhered to his opinions and prohibited Arius from entering. At the same time an edict of the emperor sent Arius himself into exile, together with Eusebius and Theognis and their followers;	1.21.3 The council excommunicated Arius and his adherents, and prohibited his entering Alexandria. The words in which his opinions were couched were likewise condemned, and also a work entitled "Thalia," which he had written on the subject. I have not read this book, but I understand that it is of a loose character, resembling Sotadus in licentiousness. It ought to be known that	1.7.15 In this way the ungodly man was expelled, and, with unanimous agreement, an official confession of faith was drawn up. To this day, it is still received by the churches. As soon as it was signed, the council was dissolved. The bishops named above, however, did not sincerely consent to it; only in appearance.

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
	although Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, and Theognis, bishop of Nicaea, assented to the document of this faith set forth by the council, they neither agreed nor subscribed to the deposition of Arius.	
1.8.34a Eusebius and Theognis, however, a short time after their banishment, delivered a written declaration of their change of opinion and agreement with the faith of the <i>consubstantiality</i> of the Son with the Father, as we will show in what follows here.	<p>1.21.4 The emperor punished Arius with exile, and dispatched edicts to the bishops and people of every country, denouncing him and his adherents as ungodly, and commanding that their books should be destroyed, in order that no remembrance of him or of the doctrine which he had taught might remain. Whoever was found hiding his writings and who did not burn them immediately on the accusation, would undergo the penalty of death and suffer capital punishment. The emperor wrote letters to every city against Arius and those who had received his doctrines.</p> <p>1.21.5 He commanded Eusebius and Theognis to leave the cities in which they were bishops; he addressed himself in particular to the church of Nicomedia, urging it to adhere to the faith which had been set forth by the council, to elect orthodox bishops, to obey them, and to let the past fall into oblivion. He threatened with punishment those who should venture to speak well of the exiled bishops or to adopt their sentiments. In these and in other letters, he made clear his resentment against Eusebius, because he had previously adopted the opinions of the tyrant, and had engaged in his plots. In accordance with the imperial edicts, Eusebius and Theognis were expelled from the churches which they held, and Amphion received that of Nicomedia, and Chrestus that of Nicaea</p>	<p>1.7.16 This was shown later by their plotting against those who were champions of zeal for the religion, as well as by what the following have written about them.</p> <p>1.7.17 For instance, Eustathius, the famous bishop of Antioch, who has been already mentioned, when explaining the text in the Proverbs, ‘The Lord created me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old,’ wrote against them, and refuted their blasphemy. Athanasius’ treatise also agrees with this refutation from the great Eustathius.</p>
Eusebius of Caesarea’s letter explaining his acceptance of the creed		
1.8.34b At this time during the session of the Synod, Eusebius, surnamed Pamphilus, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, after listening attentively for a short time and carefully considering whether he ought to receive this definition of the faith, finally consented to it and subscribed to it with all the rest. He also sent to the		<p>1.11.7 I will insert here the letter concerning the faith, written by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea. It describes the indecency of the Arians, who not only despise our fathers, but reject their own. It contains a convincing proof of their madness.</p> <p>1.11.8 For even though they honor Eusebius as having</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
<p>people under his charge a copy of the Creed, with an explanation of the word homoousios, so that no one would suspect his motives on account of his previous hesitation. Now this is what was written by Eusebius in his own words:</p>		<p>the same opinions as them, they openly contradict his writings. He wrote this epistle to some of the Arians, who were accusing him, it seems, of treachery. The letter itself explains the writer's purpose. Epistle of Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, which he wrote from Nicaea when the great Council was assembled.</p>
<p>[This section is also found in Socrates 1.8.35-54]</p>		<p>1.12.1 Beloved, since rumors usually travel faster than accurate information, you have probably learned from other sources what happened concerning the church's faith at the Great Council assembled at Nicaea. As we do not want the facts to be misrepresented by such reports, we have been obliged to transmit to you, first, the formula of faith which we ourselves [i.e. Eusebius] presented, and next, the second, which the assembled fathers put forth with some additions to our words. 1.12.2 Our own letter, which was read in the presence of our most pious Emperor and declared to be good and free from objectionable statements, reads as follows: 1.12.3 "We report now to you our faith, which we have received from the bishops who preceded us when we were first instructed and received the washing [of baptism], which we have also come to know from the divine Scriptures; as we believed and taught in the priesthood, and in the episcopate itself, and as we also believe at the present time: 1.12.4 "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, God from God, Light from Light, Life from Life, Only-begotten Son, first-born of every creature, begotten from the Father before all the ages, by whom also all things were made; who for our salvation was made flesh, and lived among men, and suffered, and rose again the third day, and ascended to the Father, and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. And we believe also in one Holy Spirit. 1.12.5 We believe each of these to be and to exist, the Father truly Father, and the Son truly Son, and the Holy Spirit truly Holy Spirit, as also our Lord said when he sent</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>forth his disciples to preach, “Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Concerning which things we confidently affirm that this is what we maintain, how we think, and what we have held up until now, and that we will maintain this faith unto death, anathematizing every ungodly heresy.</p> <p>1.12.6 We testify that we have ever thought these things from our hearts and souls, from earliest memory, and now think and confess the truth before God Almighty and our Lord Jesus Christ. We are able to provide evidence that will assure you that even in times past we have believed and preached the same.”</p> <p>1.12.7 There was nothing to contradict in this statement of faith we put forward. In fact our most pious Emperor, before any one else, testified that it was comprised of most orthodox statements. He even confessed that such were his own sentiments, and he advised all present to agree to it, and to subscribe and agree with its articles, with the insertion of the single word, “of the same being as” (homoousios). He gave his interpretation of this word, saying that “<the Son> was not “of the same being as” according to what we experience in our bodies, as if the Son had come to be by dividing or breaking off from the Father. For his nature could not be subjected to any bodily experiences, as it does not consist of matter, exists in a spiritual realm, has no body. Therefore such things must be thought of in divine, unspeakable concepts.” Such were the theological remarks of our most wise and most pious Emperor; but they were intent on adding the word “of the same being as” and drew up the following statement: [The Faith pronounced in the Council]</p> <p>1.12.8 “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, Only-begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of the same being as the Father, by whom all</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>things were made, both things in heaven and things on earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, was made man, suffered, and rose again the third day, ascended into heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead; and we believe in the Holy Spirit. But those who say, ‘Once he did not exist,’ and ‘He did not exist before he was begotten,’ and ‘He came to be from nothing,’ or those who pretend that the Son of God is ‘of another subsistence (hypostasis) or being (ousia),’ or ‘created’(ktistos), or ‘alterable’ (treptos), or ‘changeable’ (alloiōtos), the catholic church anathematizes.”</p> <p>1.12.9 As this formula was being debated, we made sure to inquire in what sense they introduced “from the essence of the Father,” and “of the same being as the Father.” Through intense questioning and explaining, the meaning of the words was examined closely. They explained that the phrase “of the same being as” indicated that the Son is truly from the Father, but he is not a part of him.</p> <p>1.12.10 We felt we could agree to this word when used in this sense, to teach, as it did, that the Son was from the Father, not however a part of his essence. On this account we agreed to the sense ourselves, without denying even the term “of the same being as,” since maintaining peace was our goal, provided we did not depart from the orthodox understanding.</p> <p>1.12.11 In the same way we also accepted the phrase “begotten, not made,” since the council asserted that “made” (poiētos) was a term used to designate other creatures which came to be through the Son, to whom the Son had no similarity. So according to their reasoning, he was not something made that resembled the things which came to exist through him, but was of an essence which is too high to be put on the same level as anything which was made. The divine sayings teach us that his essence was begotten from the Father, and that the mode of his being begotten is inexpressible and unable to be conceived by any nature which has had a beginning of its existence.</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodore
		<p>1.12.12 So when we considered it, we found that there are grounds for saying that the Son is “of the same being as” the Father; not like human bodies, nor like mortal beings, for he is not “of the same being as” by dividing his essence, or by cutting something off, or by having something done to him, or being altered, or by changing the Father’s essence and power (since the Father’s nature has no beginning to its existence, and therefore none of those descriptions apply to it).</p> <p>1.12.13 “Of the same being as the Father” suggests that the Son of God bears no resemblance to the creatures who came into being, but that he is in every way similar to his Father alone who begat him, and that he is not of any other subsistence (hypostasis) and essence (ousia), but from the Father. It also seemed good for us to agree to this term, since we were aware that even among the ancients, some learned and eminent bishops and writers have used the term “of the same being as,” in their theological teaching concerning the Father and Son.</p> <p>1.12.14 So much then for the creed which was composed at the council, to which all of us agreed, not without some questioning, but according to a specific sense, brought up before the most pious Emperor himself, and qualified by the considerations mentioned above.</p> <p>1.12.15 As far as the condemnation they attached to the end of the creed, it did not cause us pain, because it forbade the use of words not found in Scripture, from which almost all the confusion and disorder in the Church have come. Since then no divinely inspired Scripture has used the phrases, “out of nothing,” and “once he was not,” and the rest which follow, there appeared no ground for using or teaching them. We think that this was a good decision, since it has never been our custom to use these terms.</p>
<p>[Theodore 1.12.16-17 is not included in Socrates’ account]</p>		<p>1.12.16 Additionally, it did not seem out of place to condemn the statement “Before he was begotten he did not exist,” because everyone confesses that the Son of God existed before he was begotten according to the flesh.</p> <p>1.12.17 At this point in the discussion, our most pious</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		Emperor maintained that the Son existed before all ages even according to his divinely inspired begetting, since even before the act of begetting was performed, in potentiality he was with the Father, even before he was begotten by him, since the Father is always Father, just as he is always King and always Savior; he has the potentiality to be all things, and remains exactly the same forever.
		1.12.18 We had to pass this on to you, beloved, to make sure our deliberation, our questions, and our ultimate agreement, was clear to you. You see how reasonably we resisted even to the last minute as long as we were offended at statements which differed from our own. But when a candid examination of the sense of the words was conducted, we accepted without contention what no longer pained us, since they appeared to us to be in harmony with what we ourselves have professed in the faith which we have already declared. ²
The arguments of the Arians taken from writings of Eusebius Caesarea		
		1.13 Eusebius clearly testifies that the aforesaid term “consubstantial” is not a new one, nor the invention of the fathers assembled at the council; but that, from the very first it has been handed down from father to son. He states that all those then assembled unanimously received the creed then published; and he again bears testimony to the same fact in another work, in which he highly extols the conduct of the great Constantine. He writes as follows:
		“The emperor having delivered this discourse in Latin, it was translated into Greek by an interpreter, and then he gave liberty of speech to the leaders of the council. Some at once began to bring forward complaints against their neighbours, while others had recourse to recriminations and reproaches. Each party had much to urge, and at the beginning the debate waxed very violent. The emperor patiently and attentively listened to all that was advanced,

² Translation from NPNF2 vol. 4, pp. 74-6, adapted by AJW, <http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/urkunde-22>.

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>and gave full attention to what was urged by each party in turn. He calmly endeavoured to reconcile the conflicting parties; addressing them mildly in Greek, of which language he was not ignorant, in a sweet and gentle manner. Some he convinced by argument, others he put to the blush; he commended those who had spoken well, and excited all to unanimity; until, at length, he reduced them all to oneness of mind and opinion on all the disputed points, so that they all agreed to hold the same faith, and to celebrate the festival of Salvation upon the same day. What had been decided was committed to writing, and was signed by all the bishops.”</p> <p>Soon after the author thus continues the narrative:— “When matters had been thus arranged, the emperor gave them permission to return to their own dioceses. They returned with great joy, and have ever since continued to be of the one opinion, agreed upon in the presence of the emperor, and, though once widely separated, now united together, as it were, in one body. Constantine, rejoicing in the success of his efforts, made known these happy results by letter to those who were at a distance. He ordered large sums of money to be liberally distributed both among the inhabitants of the country and of the cities, in order that the twentieth anniversary of his reign might be celebrated with public festivities.”</p> <p>Although the Arians impiously gainsay the statements of the other fathers, yet they ought to believe what has been written by this father, whom they have been accustomed to admire. They ought, therefore, to receive his testimony to the unanimity with which the confession of faith was signed by all. But, since they impugn the opinions of their own leaders, they ought to become acquainted with the most foul and terrible manner of the death of Arius and with all their powers to flee from the impious doctrine of which he was the parent. As it is likely that the mode of his death is not known by all, I shall here relate it.</p> <p>(Continued in A07)</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
Athanasius' account of the council at Nicaea		
		<p>1.8.6b Athanasius, his fellow combatant, the champion of the truth, who succeeded the celebrated Alexander in the episcopate, added the following in a letter addressed to the Africans.</p>
		<p>1.8.7 “The bishops convened in council to refute the impious assertions invented by the Arians, that the Son was created out of what was non-existent, that He is a creature and created being, that there was a period in which He was not, and that He is changeable by nature. In accordance with the holy Scriptures, they agreed to write that the Son is by nature only-begotten of God, Word, Power, and sole Wisdom of the Father; that He is, as John said, ‘the true God,’ and, as Paul has written, ‘the brightness of the glory, and the express image of the person of the Father.’[Heb. 1:3] The followers of Eusebius, drawn aside by their own vile doctrine, then began to say one to another, “Let us agree, because we are also of God;</p> <p>1.8.8 <i>‘There is but one God, by whom are all things;’</i> and, ‘Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God.’ They also gave particular attention to what is contained in ‘The Shepherd:’ ‘Believe above all that there is one God, who created and fashioned all things, and made them to be out of that which is not.’</p> <p>1.8.9 “But the bishops saw through their evil design and impious fraud and gave a clearer explanation of the words ‘of God’ and wrote, that the Son is of the substance of God; so that while the creatures, which do not in any way derive their existence of or from themselves, are said to be of God, only the Son is said to be of the substance of the Father;</p> <p>1.8.10 this being unique to the only-begotten Son, the true Word of the Father. This is the reason why the bishops wrote, that He is of the substance of the Father. “But when the Arians, who seemed few in number, were</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>again interrogated by the Bishops to see if they admitted ‘that the Son is not a creature, but Power, and sole Wisdom, and eternal unchangeable Image of the Father; and that He is very God,’ the Eusebians were noticed nodding to each other, saying, “These things apply to us as well. For it is said, that we are <i>‘the image and glory of God;’</i> and <i>‘for always we who live:’</i>”</p> <p>1.8.11 There are, also, they said, many powers; “for it is written—<i>‘All the power of God went out of the land of Egypt.’</i> The worm and the locust are said to be <i>‘a great power.’</i> And elsewhere it is written, <i>The God of powers is with us, our helper is the God of Jacob.’</i> To which may be added that we are God’s own not naturally, but because the Son called us <i>‘brothers.’</i></p> <p>1.8.12 The declaration that Christ is ‘the true God’ does not distress us, for the one who came into being is true.”</p> <p>“This was the corrupt opinion of the Arians; but at that time, the bishops, when they discovered their deceitfulness, collected from Scripture those passages which say of Christ that He is the glory, the fountain, the stream, and the express image of the person; and they quoted the following words: <i>‘In your light we shall see light;’</i> and likewise, <i>‘I and the Father are one.’</i></p> <p>1.8.13 Then, with still greater clearness, they briefly declared that the Son is of one substance with the Father; for this, indeed, is the meaning of the passages which have been quoted.</p> <p>1.8.14 The complaint of the Arians, that these precise words are not to be found in Scripture, is proved groundless by their own practice, for their own impious assertions are not taken from Scripture (for it is not written that the Son comes from what was not, and that there was a time when He was not) and yet they complain about being condemned by expressions which, though not actually in Scripture, are in accordance with true religion. They themselves, on the other hand, as though they had found their words on a dunghill, uttered things that truly came from worldly thinking. The bishops, on the other</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>hand, did not find their expressions for themselves, but, received their testimony from the fathers and wrote accordingly.</p> <p>1.8.15 Indeed, there were bishops of old, nearly one hundred and thirty years ago, both of the great city of Rome and of our own city, who condemned those who asserted that the Son is a creature, and that He is not of one substance with the Father. Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea, was acquainted with these facts; he, at one time, favored the Arian heresy, but later signed the confession of faith of the Council of Nicaea.</p> <p>1.8.16 He wrote to the people of his diocese, maintaining that the word ‘consubstantial’ was ‘used by illustrious bishops and learned writers as a term for expressing the divinity of the Father and of the Son.’”</p> <p>1.8.17 So these men concealed their madness because they feared the majority, and gave their assent to the decisions of the council, thus drawing upon themselves the condemnation of the prophet, for the God of all cries out against them, <i>“This people honor Me with their lips, but in their hearts they are far from Me.”</i></p> <p>1.8.18 Theonas and Secundus, however, did not want to take this course, and were excommunicated by unanimous agreement as men who lifted the Arian blasphemy above evangelical doctrine. The bishops then returned to the council, and drew up twenty laws to regulate the discipline of the Church.</p>
Eustathius's account of the council at Nicaea		
		<p>1.8.1 “I will now walk through in further detail how these different events occurred. What happened then? When a general council was summoned at Nicaea, about two hundred and seventy bishops were convened. There were, however, so many assembled that I cannot state their exact number, nor have I taken any great trouble to find out. When they began to investigate the nature of the faith, the formulation of Eusebius was brought forward,</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>which contained undisguised evidence of his blasphemy.</p> <p>1.8.2 Its public reading gave great grief to the audience because of its departure from the faith, while it inflicted incurable shame on the writer.</p> <p>1.8.3 After the Eusebian gang had been clearly convicted, and the impious writing had been torn up in the sight of all, some among them worked together, under the pretense of preserving peace, to silence all the ablest speakers. The Ariomaniacs, afraid that they would be ejected from the Church by a council of so many bishops, sprang forward to anathematize and condemn the doctrines which had been condemned, and unanimously signed the confession of faith.</p> <p>1.8.4 Thus, they retained possession of their episcopal seats through the most shameful deception, even though they should have been dismissed. They continue, sometimes secretly, and sometimes openly, to patronize the condemned doctrines, plotting against the truth with various arguments. Wholly committed to sowing these wicked weeds, they shrink from the scrutiny of the intelligent, avoid the observant, and attack the preachers of godliness.</p> <p>1.8.5 But we do not believe that these atheists can in this way ever overcome the Deity. For though they ‘<i>gird themselves</i>’ they ‘<i>shall be broken in pieces,</i>’ according to the solemn prophecy of Isaiah.”</p> <p>1.8.6a These are the words of the great Eustathius.</p>
Constantine write’s letters concerning the council		
<p>9.16b Nor was it the Synod alone that took the trouble to write letters to the churches announcing the restoration of peace, but the emperor Constantine himself also wrote personally and sent the following address to the church of the Alexandrians.</p>	<p>1.25.4 He [Constantine] wrote to the churches in every city, in order that he might make plain to those who had not been present, what had been rectified by the Synod; and especially to the Church of Alexandria he wrote more than this; urging them to lay aside all dissent, and to be harmonious in the faith issued by the Synod; for this could be nothing else than the judgment of God, since it was established by the Holy Spirit from the concurrence</p>	

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
	of so many and such illustrious high priests, and approved after accurate inquiry and test of all the doubtful points.	
<p>[Constantine's letter to the church in Alexandria] 1.9.17 Constantine Augustus, to the catholic church of the Alexandrians. Greetings, my beloved brothers! We have received a complete blessing from Divine Providence, namely, we have been relieved from all error and been united in a common confession of one and the same faith. 1.9.18 The devil will no longer have any power against us, since all the schemes he in his hatred had devised for our destruction, have been entirely overthrown from their foundations. At the command of God, the splendor of truth has dissolved all the poisons so deadly to unity: dissensions, schisms, commotions, and the like. We all now worship the One by name, and continue to believe that he is the One God. 1.9.19 In order to accomplish all of this, at God's summoning I assembled a large number of bishops at the city of Nicaea, and I joined them in investigating the truth, though I am only one of you, who rejoices exceedingly in being your fellow-servant. 1.9.20 All points which seemed ambiguous or could possibly lead to dissension have been discussed and accurately examined. May the Divine Majesty forgive the unfortunately huge number of the blasphemies which some were shamelessly uttering against the mighty Savior, our life and hope, as they declared and confessed things contrary to the divinely inspired Scriptures. 1.9.21 More than three hundred bishops, remarkable for their moderation and intellectual keenness, were unanimous in their confirmation of one and the same faith, a faith which has arisen in agreement with the truths of the Law of God. Arius alone had been misled by the devil, and was found to be the only one set on promoting this unholy mischief, first among you, and afterwards among others as well. 1.9.22 Let us therefore embrace that teaching which the</p>		

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
<p>Almighty has presented to us. Let us return to our beloved brothers from whom we have been separated by an irreverent servant of the devil. Let us eagerly come together as one common body with those who are our fellow members.</p> <p>1.9.23 This is fitting for such discernment, faith and holiness as yours, that you return to divine favor, since it has been proved that this error comes from a man who is an enemy of the truth.</p> <p>1.9.24 This ruling, made by the collective judgment of three hundred bishops, cannot be other than the doctrine of God, especially where the Holy Spirit has illuminated the divine will by placing it upon the minds of so many dignified persons.</p> <p>1.9.25 Therefore let no one sit on the fence or delay, but let everyone quickly return to the unquestionable path of duty, so that when I arrive among you (which will be as soon as possible), I may together with you return due thanks to God, who closely watches all things, for having revealed the pure faith, and for restoring to you that love for which you have prayed.</p> <p>May God protect you, beloved brothers.³</p> <p>[Socrates' summary of the letter]</p> <p>1.9.26 Thus wrote the emperor to the Christians of Alexandria, assuring them that the exposition of the faith was neither made rashly nor at random, but that it was dictated after much research, and after strict investigation. He assured them that they did not only speak of some things, while suppressing other things in silence. Whatever could be fittingly advanced in support of any opinion was fully stated. Nothing indeed was determined beforehand; everything was previously discussed with minute accuracy so that every point which seemed to furnish a pretext for ambiguity of meaning, or difference</p>		

³ Translation from NPNF2 vol. 2, pp. 13-4, adapted by AJW, <http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/urkunde-25>.

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
<p>of opinion, was thoroughly sifted, and its difficulties removed.</p> <p>1.9.27 In short he describes the thought of all those who were assembled there as the thought of God, and does not doubt that the unanimity of so many eminent bishops was effected by the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>[Sabinus differs in opinion]</p> <p>1.9.28 Sabinus, however, the chief of the heresy of the Macedonians, willfully rejects these authorities, and calls those who were convened there ignorant and illiterate people; no, he almost accuses Eusebius of Caesarea himself of ignorance. He does not consider that even if those who constituted that synod had been laymen, yet as being illuminated by God and the grace of the Holy Spirit, they were utterly unable to err from the truth.</p> <p>1.9.29 Nevertheless, hear what the emperor further decreed in another circular letter both against Arius and those who held his opinions, sending it in all directions to the bishops and people.</p>		
<p>[Constantine's letter ordering Arius' banishment and the burning of his books]</p> <p>1.9.30 Victor Constantine Maximus Augustus, to the bishops and people.</p> <p>Since Arius has imitated wicked and impious people, it is just that he should suffer disgrace. Just as Porphyry, that enemy of piety, for composing licentious treatises against religion found a suitable punishment: He was branded with infamy, overwhelmed with deserved reproach and had his impious writings destroyed; so also it seems fit that both Arius and those who hold his sentiments should be declared to be Porphyrians, that they may take their name from those whose conduct they have imitated. And in addition to this, if any treatise composed by Arius is discovered, let it be handed over to the flames. Then not only will his depraved doctrine be suppressed, but also no memorial of him will be preserved in any way.</p>		

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
<p>1.9.31a Therefore, I decree this: If anyone is found to be concealing a book composed by Arius and does not instantly bring it forward and burn it, the penalty for this offense shall be death; for immediately after conviction the criminal shall suffer capital punishment. May God preserve you!</p>		
		<p>[Constantine’s letter about when to celebrate Easter] 1.9.14b The great emperor also wrote an account of the proceedings of the council to those bishops who were unable to attend. And I consider it worthwhile to insert this epistle in my work, as it clearly evidences the piety of the writer.</p>
<p>[This section is also found in Socrates 1.9.32-46]</p>	<p>1.21.6 When this doctrinal controversy had been resolved, the council decided that the Paschal feast should be celebrated at the same time in every place.</p>	<p>1.10.1 Constantine Augustus, to the churches. The great grace of God’s power has constantly been increasing, as is evident in the general prosperity of the empire. I therefore decided to make it my aim above all else that one faith, sincere love, and unvarying devotion to Almighty God be maintained among the most blessed assemblies of the catholic church.</p> <p>1.10.2 But I perceived that this could only be established firmly and permanently when all of the bishops, or at least the greatest part, were convened in the same place for a council where they could discuss every point of our most holy religion. So we assembled as many as possible, and I myself was also present as one of you; for I will not deny what I especially rejoice in, that I am your fellow-servant. All points were then minutely investigated, until a decision was brought to light which was found acceptable to him who is the inspector of all things, and brought a unified agreement, leaving nothing which could cause dissension or controversy in matters of faith.</p> <p>1.10.3 At the council we also considered the issue of our holiest day, Easter, and it was determined by common consent that everyone, everywhere should celebrate it on one and the same day. For what can be more appropriate, or what more solemn, than that this feast from which we have received the hope of immortality, should be kept by all without variation, using the same order and a clear</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>arrangement? And in the first place, it seemed very unworthy for us to keep this most sacred feast following the custom of the Jews, a people who have soiled their hands in a most terrible outrage, and have thus polluted their souls, and are now deservedly blind. Since we have cast aside their way of calculating the date of the festival, we can ensure that future generations can celebrate this observance at the more accurate time which we have kept from the first day of the passion until the present time.</p> <p>1.10.4 Therefore have nothing in common with that most hostile people, the Jews. We have received another way from the Savior. In our holy religion we have set before us a course which is both valid and accurate. Let us unanimously pursue this. Let us, most honored brothers, withdraw ourselves from that detestable association.</p> <p>1.10.5 It is truly most absurd for them to boast that we are incapable of rightly observing these things without their instruction. On what subject are they competent to form a correct judgment, who, after that murder of their Lord lost their senses, and are led not by any rational motive, but by an uncontrollable impulsiveness to wherever their innate fury may drive them? This is why even in this matter they do not perceive the truth, so that they constantly err in the utmost degree, and will celebrate the Feast of Passover a second time in the same year instead of making a suitable correction.</p> <p>1.10.6 Why then should we follow the example of those who are acknowledged to be infected with serious error? Surely we should never allow Easter to be kept twice in one and the same year! But even if these considerations were not laid before you, you should still be careful, both by diligence and prayer, that your pure souls should have nothing in common, or even seem to do so, with the customs of men so utterly depraved.</p> <p>1.10.7 This should also be considered: In a matter so important and of such religious significance, the slightest disagreement is most irreverent.</p> <p>1.10.8 For our Savior left us only one day to be</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>observed in remembrance of our deliverance, that is the day of his most holy passion. He also wished his catholic church to be one; the members of which are still cared for by one Spirit, that is by the will of God, however much they may be scattered in various places.</p> <p>1.10.9 Let the good sense consistent with your sacred character consider how grievous and inappropriate it is, that on the same days some should be observing fasts, while others are celebrating feasts; and after the days of Easter some should celebrate festivities and enjoyments, while others submit to appointed fastings. For this reason Divine Providence directed that we put into effect an appropriate correction and establish uniformity of practice, as I suppose you are all aware.</p> <p>1.10.10 So first, it was desirable to change the situation so that we have nothing in common with that nation of father-killers who slew their Lord. Second, the order which is observed by all the churches of the western, southern, and northern parts, and by some also in the eastern is quite suitable. Therefore, at the current time, we all thought it was proper that you, intelligent as you are, would also cheerfully accept what is observed with such general unanimity of sentiment in the city of Rome, throughout Italy, Africa, all Egypt, Spain, France, Britain, Libya, the whole of Greece, and the dioceses of Asia, Pontus, and Cilicia. I pledged myself that this solution would satisfy you after you carefully examined it, especially as I considered that not only are the majority of congregations located in the places just mentioned, but also that we all have a most sacred obligation, to unite in desiring whatever common sense seems to demand, and what has no association with the perjury of the Jews.</p> <p>1.10.11 But to sum up matters briefly, it was determined by common consent that the most holy festival of Easter should be solemnized on one and the same day; for it is not at all decent that there should be in such a sacred serious matter any difference. It is quite commendable to adopt this option which has nothing to do with any strange</p>

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
		<p>errors, nor deviates from what is right.</p> <p>1.10.12 Since these things are consistent, gladly receive this heavenly and truly divine command. For whatever is done in the sacred assemblies of the bishops can be traced to Divine will. Therefore, once you have demonstrated the things which have been prescribed to all our beloved brothers, it would be good for you to make public the above written statements and to accept the reasoning which has proved itself to be sound, and to establish this observance of the most holy day. In this way, when I arrive to check on your condition, which I have desired earnestly for some time, I will be able to celebrate the sacred festival with you on one and the same day, and will rejoice with you for all things, as I see that through our efforts divine power is frustrating Satan's cruelty, and that your faith, peace, and unity are flourishing everywhere. May God preserve you, beloved brothers.⁴</p> <p>1.11.1a Thus did the emperor write to the absent.</p>
<p>[Constantine writes other letters against Arians]</p> <p>1.9.64 When the emperor had also written other letters of a more oratorical character against Arius and his adherents, he caused them to be published everywhere throughout the cities, exposing him to ridicule and taunting him with irony.</p> <p>1.9.65 Moreover, writing to the Nicomedians against Eusebius and Theognis, he censures the misconduct of Eusebius, not only on account of his Arianism, but because when he was formerly well-affected to the ruler, he had traitorously conspired against his affairs. He then exhorts them to elect another bishop instead of him.</p> <p>1.9.66 But I thought it would be superfluous to insert here the letters respecting these things, because of their length. Those who wish to do so may find them elsewhere and give them a perusal. This is a sufficient amount of</p>		

⁴ This translation from NPNF2 vol. 2, p. 14-16, adapted by AJW, <http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/urkunde-26>.

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
attention given to these transactions.		
Constantine institutes imperial allowances for the churches		
		<p>1.11.2 He then wrote to the governors of the provinces, directing that provision-money should be given in every city to virgins and widows, and to those who were consecrated to the divine service; and he measured the amount of their annual allowance more by the impulse of his own generosity than by their need.</p> <p>1.11.3 The third part of the sum is distributed to this day. Julian impiously withheld the whole. His successor conferred the sum which is now dispensed because the famine which then prevailed had lessened the resources of the state. If the pensions were formerly triple in amount to what they are at present, the generosity of the emperor can by this fact be easily seen.</p>
The conclusion of the council		
	<p>1.25.1 At the very time that these decrees were passed by the council, the twentieth anniversary of the reign of Constantine was celebrated; for it was a Roman custom to have a feast on the tenth year of every reign. The emperor, therefore, thought it to be opportune, and invited the Synod to the festival, and presented suitable gifts to them.</p> <p>1.25.2 When they prepared to return home, he called them all together, and exhorted them to be of one mind about the faith and at peace among themselves, so that no dissensions might creep in among them from then on.</p>	<p>1.11.1b To those who attended the council, three hundred and eighteen in number he manifested great kindness, addressing them with much gentleness, and presenting them with gifts. He ordered numerous couches to be prepared for their accommodation and entertained them all at one banquet. Those who were most worthy he received at his own table, distributing the rest at the others. Observing that some among them had had the right eye torn out, and learning that this mutilation had been undergone for the sake of religion, he placed his lips upon the wounds, believing that he would extract a blessing from the kiss. After the conclusion of the feast, he again presented other gifts to them.</p>
1.13.11a The bishops who were convened at the council of Nicaea, after having drawn up and enrolled certain other ecclesiastical regulations, which they usually call canons, again departed to their respective cities.	1.25.3 After many other similar exhortations, he concluded by commanding them to be diligent in prayer, and always to supplicate God for himself, his children, and the empire, and after he had thus addressed those who had come to Nicaea, he bade them farewell.	
20 May-July 325 – The duration of the council		
1.13.12b This Synod was convened (as we have discovered from the notation of the date prefixed to the		

Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
<p>record of the Synod) during the consulate of Paulinus and Julian, on the 20th day of May, in the 636th year from the reign of Alexander the Macedonian. Accordingly, the work of the council was accomplished. It should be noted that after the council the emperor went into the western parts of the empire.</p>		