

From Iconoclasm to Arianism: The Construction of Christian Tradition in the Iconoclast Controversy

David M. Gwynn

IN A.D. 787 what would become the seventh ecumenical council met in Nicaea to condemn Iconoclasm, just as the first ecumenical council in 325 had gathered in the same city under Constantine to condemn Arianism.¹ At a fundamental level, the Iconoclast Controversy was a controversy over the nature and interpretation of the Christian tradition. Iconoclasts and Iconophiles alike went to great lengths to emphasise their claims to represent the established teachings of the Church and at the same time to deny that status to their foes.² This paper

¹ There has been much recent scholarly work concerning both the Arian Controversy and Iconoclasm, and I cannot do justice to the full complexity of either of these debates here. The standard modern account of the Arian Controversy is that of R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh 1988), although see also now L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford 2004), and J. Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (New York 2004). For Iconoclasm see A. A. M. Bryer and J. Herrin (eds.), *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham 1977); R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold* (London 1985); K. Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (London 1996); L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680–850): The Sources* (Aldershot 2001); C. Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton 2002); and M. Büchsel, *Die Entstehung des Christusporträts: Bildarchäologie statt Bildhypnose* (Mainz 2003).

² See M.-F. Auzépy, “Manifestations de la propagande en faveur de l’orthodoxie,” in L. Brubaker (ed.), *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* (Aldershot 1998) 85–99, and the discussions of the florilegia of biblical and patristic texts that the different sides compiled in support of their positions in P. Van den Ven, “La patristique et l’hagiographie au concile de Nicée en 787,” *Byzantion* 25–27 (1955–57) 325–362; C. Mango, “The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire, AD 750–850,” in I. Sevčenko and

focuses upon one particular recurring theme of this rhetoric of tradition: the accusation brought by the Iconophiles against the Iconoclasts that those who opposed the veneration of icons in the eighth and ninth centuries were the heirs of the fourth-century Arian heresy.

It is of course true that by the time of the Iconoclast Controversy to represent one's opponents as Arian was to stand within a long tradition of Christian heresiological rhetoric. Arianism was hardly a live issue in the eighth century, even in the west where so-called "Germanic Arianism" had endured far longer than in the east. Instead, Arianism had become the archetypal heresy, and "Arian" was a term of abuse that could be directed against anyone who might be accused of dishonouring Christ.³ Nor was Arian the only such heretical label that Iconoclasts and Iconophiles hurled at each other.⁴ Nevertheless, I believe that the emphasis of the Iconophiles in particular upon their opponents as Arian went beyond simple name-calling. I want to consider the origins and purpose of this polemic and how the polemicists themselves understood the term Arian when they applied it to their foes, before finally returning to the question of how such heresiological rhetoric fits within the wider construction of Christian tradition during the Iconoclast Controversy.

The initial inspiration for the Iconophile polemic against the Arianism of their Iconoclast foes may be found in the writings of the Iconoclasts themselves, in the *Horos* (Definition) of the Iconoclast Council of Hieria in 754 which was quoted and thus preserved in the *Acts* of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787. According to that *Horos*, the Iconoclasts in 754 brought

C. Mango (eds.), *Byzantine Books and Bookmen* (Washington 1975) 29–45; A. Alexakis, *Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115 and its Archetype* (Washington 1996).

³ "In general Arianism was the first resort of those in search of a heretical term to throw at their enemies" (Parry, *Depicting the Word* 142). On the history of Arianism within Christian polemic from the fourth century onwards, see M. Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (Oxford 1996).

⁴ Other earlier heresies that appear in this polemic include the condemnation of individuals or their doctrines as Gnostic, Manichean, Docetic, Marcionist, Apollinarian, Messalian, Novatianist, Samaritan, Judaizing, Nestorian, and Monophysite.

forward in support of their claim that the early Church did not venerate icons a letter written by Eusebius of Caesarea to Constantia, the half-sister of Constantine, denying her request that the bishop send to her an image of Christ. The letter itself does not survive intact, but it can be at least partly reconstructed from the sections of the *Horos* of 754 that were read out and refuted in 787, to which further fragments may be added from the writings of the Iconophile Patriarch Nikephorus.⁵

Eusebius reports that Constantia had written to him “concerning some supposed image (*peri tinos eikonos*) of Christ, which you wished me to send you.” In his reply, Eusebius asks “what sort of image of Christ are you seeking? Is it the true and unalterable one which bears the characteristics of His nature (*phusei tous autou charaktêras*) or the one which He took up for our sake when He assumed the form of a servant (*tês tou doulou morphês*)?” In either case, he continues, such an image is impossible. The divine Christ of course cannot be depicted at all, for the divinity cannot be circumscribed. But Eusebius insists that even the incarnate Christ cannot appear in an image, for “the flesh which He put on for our sake ... was mingled with the glory of His divinity (*tê doxê tês theotêtos anakekrasthai*) so that the mortal part was swallowed up by Life.” This was the splendour that Christ revealed in the Transfiguration and which cannot be captured in human art. To depict purely the human form of Christ before its transformation, on the other hand, is to break the commandment of God and to fall into pagan error.

Scholars remain divided both on the authenticity of the *Letter to Constantia* as a fourth-century composition and on its author-

⁵ The best-known edition of the text is that of H. Hennepf, *Textus byzantinos ad iconomachiam pertinentes* (Leiden 1969) 42–44, of which there is an English translation in C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs 1972) 16–18. A new Greek edition of the surviving fragments has now been prepared by A. von Stockhausen, in T. Krannich, C. Schubert, and C. Sode, *Die ikonoklastische Synode von Hiereia 754* (Tübingen 2002), although in her most recent article Claudia Sode is sceptical that any coherent text can be reconstructed from those fragments: C. Sode and P. Speck, “Ikonoklasmus vor der Zeit? Der Brief des Eusebios von Kaisareia an Kaiserin Konstantia,” *ἸΩΒ* 54 (2004) 113–134.

ship by Eusebius of Caesarea.⁶ However, these were not issues that concerned the Iconophiles who quoted and condemned the letter from the *Horos* of 754 at Nicaea in 787. They denounced Eusebius as an Arian, and it was this accusation which was then extended in turn to the Iconoclasts themselves and which became a recurring theme in the Iconophile writings from the period of the Second Council of Nicaea onwards.

Before we turn to analyse the judgement of the Council of 787 and the anti-Arian polemic of these Iconophile writings in more detail, it is necessary to consider briefly how the Arian Controversy and Eusebius of Caesarea were remembered in the early eighth century at the outbreak of Iconoclasm. What would become the traditional interpretation of the Arian heresy was laid down during the fourth century in the polemical writings of Athanasius of Alexandria.⁷ In his three *Orationes contra Arianos*, composed most probably in the late 330s and early 340s, Athanasius repeatedly condemns his Arian opponents for denying the eternity and essential divinity of the Son and reducing Him to the level of the corruptible created order. According to Athanasius, the Arians taught that:

Not always was God a father, but later He became so. Not always was the Son, for He was not until He was begotten. He is

⁶ Sister Charles Murray initially questioned both the date and authorship of the letter (“Art and the Early Church,” *JThS* N.S. 28 [1977] 303–345), but she subsequently revised her opinion and accepted Eusebian authorship (“Le problème de l’iconophobie et les premiers siècles chrétiens,” in F. Boespflug and N. Lossky [eds.], *Nicée II, 787–1987: Douze siècles d’images religieuses* [Paris 1987] 39–50) following the argument of Stephen Gero, “The True Image of Christ: Eusebius’ Letter to Constantia Reconsidered,” *JThS* N.S. 32 (1981) 460–470. Other recent contributions to these debates include K. Schäferdiek, “Zu Verfärschaft und Situation der Epistula ad Constantinam de imagine Christi,” *ZKG* 91 (1980) 177–186; H. G. Thümmel, “Eusebios’ Brief an Kaiserin Konstantia,” *Klio* 66 (1984) 210–222; and Sode and Speck, *JÖBG* 54 (2004) 113–134. I will not discuss their respective arguments here, although I hope to return to the questions raised by this Eusebian text at a later date.

⁷ For a more detailed analysis of the writings of Athanasius and his interpretation of Arianism on which the argument presented here is based, see my *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the “Arian Controversy”* (Oxford 2007).

not from the Father, but He also came into existence out of nothing. He is not proper to the essence of the Father, for He is a creature (*ktisma*) and a thing made (*poiēma*). Christ is not true God, but He also by participation was made God. The Son does not know the Father exactly, nor may the Word see the Father perfectly, and the Word does not understand nor know the Father exactly. He is not the true and only Word of the Father, but by name only is called Word and Wisdom, and by grace is called Son and Power. He is not unchangeable, like the Father, but is changeable by nature, like the creatures (*ta ktismata*).⁸

This definition of the Arian heresy remained constant throughout Athanasius' numerous polemical writings.⁹ In the *Orationes contra Arianos* there is almost no reference to the Council of Nicaea in 325 which declared the Son to be *homoousios* (consubstantial) with the Father. However, when Athanasius began to uphold the Nicene Creed as the sole bastion of orthodoxy in the 350s, he extended his condemnation of Arianism to all those who challenged the authority of Nicaea, for "he who does not hold the doctrines of Arius necessarily holds and intends the doctrines of the [Nicene] Council."¹⁰ In his last great polemical work, the *De synodis Arimini et Seleucia*, originally composed in 359, he represents every theological statement that he personally rejects, from the individual writings of Arius before the Council of Nicaea to the creed presented to the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia in 359, as the products of a single Arian tradition in opposition to the Nicene truth.

Modern scholarship has demonstrated the significant distortions inherent in Athanasius' polemical construction of Arianism and in his division of the fourth-century Church into Arian and orthodox factions.¹¹ Yet within a decade of Athanasius' death Gregory of Nazianzus would commemorate him as the great champion of Nicene orthodoxy against the Arian her-

⁸ *Oratio contra Arianos* 1.9 (M. Tetz, *Athanasius Werke* I.1 *Die Dogmatischen Schriften* 2 *Orationes I et II contra Arianos* [Berlin/New York 1998]).

⁹ Cf. *De decretis Nicaenae synodi* 6; *De sententia Dionysii* 2; and *Epistula ad episcopos Aegypti et Libyae* 12.

¹⁰ *De decretis Nicaenae synodi* 20 (H.-G. Opitz, *Athanasius Werke* II.1.3 *Die Apologien* 1 *De decretis Nicaenae synodi* [Berlin/Leipzig 1935]).

¹¹ See Ayres, *Nicaea*, and Gwynn, *The Eusebians*.

esy,¹² and both Athanasius' interpretation of Arianism and his polarised construction of the Arian Controversy would be taken up as authoritative by later writers. The fifth-century ecclesiastical historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret derived their interpretations of the fourth-century doctrinal debates to a large extent from Athanasius' writings, and the same influence is also visible in the late-fourth-century heresiological *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis.¹³

Epiphanius divided those Athanasius described as Arians into the true Arians (*Pan.* 69), Semi-Arians (73) who taught that the Son was either *homoiousios* (of like essence) or *homoios* (like) to the Father, and the Aetians or Eunomians (76) who taught that the Son was entirely *anomoios* (unlike) the Father.¹⁴ He also condemned the Arians for denying that the Incarnate Christ possessed a human soul, an accusation which does not feature prominently in Athanasius' polemic and which reflects the debates over Apollinaris of Laodicea toward the end of the fourth century. Like Athanasius, however, Epiphanius above all denounced those associated with Arianism for reducing the Son to the level of the created order. According to the summary that Epiphanius attached to the second section of *Panarion* bk. 2, "the Arians, also called Ariomaniacs, say that the Son of God is a creature (*ktisma*) and the Holy Spirit the creation of a creature (*ktisma ktismatos*), and also that the Saviour only took flesh from Mary and not a soul" (*Pan.* 69.1). This Epiphanian definition was extremely influential on how the Arian heresy was understood in later Christian tradition, as is confirmed by John of Damascus who copied Epiphanius' summary of Arianism verbatim in his own *De haeresibus* 69.¹⁵ As we shall see, the

¹² See the *Funeral Oration* that Gregory dedicated to Athanasius ca. 380 (*Or.* 21).

¹³ K. Holl, *Epiphanius I–III* (Berlin 1915–1933), revised by J. Dummer (Berlin 1980–1985); partial translation P. R. Amidon, *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis: Selected Passages* (New York/Oxford 1990).

¹⁴ In the *De synodis Arimini et Seleucia* Athanasius had in fact accepted as orthodox those who taught that the Son is *homoiousios* to the Father, although he still maintained the superiority of the Nicene term *homoousios* to define the relationship of the Father and the Son.

¹⁵ The *De haeresibus* (PG 94.677–780) is the second part of John of Damas-

Iconophile writers of the late eighth and ninth centuries shared the same definition in their anti-Iconoclast polemic, although John of Damascus himself never drew a connection between Iconoclasm and Arianism.

Eusebius of Caesarea was not a central figure either in the polemic of Athanasius or in the traditional interpretation of the Arian Controversy.¹⁶ Indeed, before the outbreak of Iconoclasm Eusebius appears to have been largely forgotten both as a theologian and as the biographer of Constantine the Great. The eighth and ninth centuries saw a particular emphasis even by Byzantine standards on tradition and continuity with the past,¹⁷ and this was especially true of the ongoing Byzantine interest in the reign of Constantine.¹⁸ A number of *Lives* of Constantine were composed in this period, and the original Council of Nicaea and the condemnation of Arianism are inevitably central themes in these *Vitae*, particularly the question

cus' *Fount of Knowledge*: B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos IV* (Berlin/New York 1981) 19–67; transl. F. H. Chase, Jr., *St. John of Damascus, Writings* (New York 1958) 111–163. The first 80 entries in John's catalogue of heresies are in fact all drawn almost verbatim from the summary outlines in Epiphanius' *Panarion*. On the textual relationship between John's *De haeresibus* and Epiphanius' *Panarion*, see O. Knorr, "Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des 'Liber de haeresibus' des Johannes von Damaskus," *BZ* 91 (1998) 59–69.

¹⁶ Athanasius explicitly attacks Eusebius as an Arian only in the context of the accusations brought against himself at the abortive council of Caesarea in 334 (*Apologia contra Arianos* 77) and after his condemnation at the Council of Tyre in 335 (87). In his later writings Athanasius twice invokes Eusebius' letter to his see after the Council of Nicaea as representative of his own interpretation of the Nicene Creed (*De decretis Nicaenae synodi* 3; *De synodis Arimini et Seleucia* 13). By the fifth century Eusebius' reputation was more controversial, and Socrates (*HE* 2.21) felt compelled to offer a defence of Eusebius against accusations of Arianism.

¹⁷ I. Ševčenko, "The Search for the Past in Byzantium around the Year 800," *DOP* 46 (1992) 279–293.

¹⁸ A. Kazhdan, "Constantin Imaginaire': Byzantine Legends of the Ninth Century about Constantine the Great," *Byzantion* 57 (1987) 196–250. Of course, this Byzantine interest in Constantine was not limited to the period of Iconoclasm, as is amply demonstrated by the entire volume of articles collected in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th to 13th Centuries* (Aldershot 1994).

of Constantine's own attitude towards Arianism and the conflicting traditions concerning the baptism of the first Christian emperor.¹⁹ Yet as Winkelmann has demonstrated, Eusebius is almost entirely peripheral to this tradition, and his original *Life of Constantine* exerted little or no influence upon the later *Vitae*.²⁰ The rediscovery of the Eusebian *Life of Constantine* and of Eusebius himself seems in fact to have been inspired directly by the citation of Eusebius as an authority by the Iconoclasts in 754.²¹ It could indeed be argued that in 754 the Iconoclasts were not fully aware of Eusebius' ambiguous reputation as an Arian sympathiser. This might help to explain why they were

¹⁹ Concerning the medieval hagiographies of Constantine, see in addition to Kazhdan, *Byzantion* 57 (1987) 196–250, the studies of F. Winkelmann, "Das hagiographische Bild Konstantins I. in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit," in *Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte im 9.–11. Jahrhundert* (Prague 1978) 179–203, and S. N. C. Lieu, "From History to Legend and Legend to History: The Medieval and Byzantine Transformation of Constantine's *Vita*," in S. N. C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (eds.), *Constantine: History, Historiography and Legend* (London/New York 1988) 136–176. The baptism of Constantine provides a classic demonstration of how distortions could emerge in the orthodox hagiographical tradition, for the historical baptism of Constantine by the Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia was eventually superseded in Byzantium by the legend that Constantine was baptised by Sylvester of Rome. That legend was emphasised in the *Letter* of Pope Hadrian to Constantine VI and Eirene that was read out at the second session of the Council of 787, and in the early ninth century Theophanes could confidently denounce Constantine's baptism by the bishop of Nicomedia as itself an "Arian forgery" (A.M. 5814). On the evolution of the legend of Constantine's orthodox baptism, see G. Fowden, "The Last Days of Constantine: Oppositional Views and their Influence," *JRS* 84 (1984) 146–170, and Lieu 136–157. For the attitude of Theophanes (and also of Malalas) toward Constantine's baptism, see R. Scott, "The Image of Constantine in Malalas and Theophanes," in Magdalino, *New Constantines* 57–71.

²⁰ F. Winkelmann, "Die Beurteilung des Eusebius von Cäsarea und seiner *Vita Constantini* im griechischen Osten," in J. Irmscher (ed.), *Byzantinistische Beiträge* (Berlin 1964) 91–119, and *idem*, *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantins*² (Berlin 1991) xxvii–xxxiii.

²¹ Averil Cameron and S. G. Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford 1999) 50. John of Damascus did include several passages from Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* in the florilegium that he attached to his third book *On the Divine Images*, in which he also drew material from the same author's *Ecclesiastical History* and *Demonstratio Evangelica*.

prepared to bring the *Letter to Constantia* forward to support their cause.

In any case, I am aware of no direct attack on Eusebius as an Arian in Iconophile writings before the Council of 754. Patriarch Germanus (715–730) at the end of his *Letter to Thomas of Claudioupolis* (quoted in the fourth session of the Council of 787) drew upon Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* for the story of the images at Paneas without negative comment regarding Eusebius himself.²² John of Damascus in his *On the Divine Images*, written probably in the 740s, similarly does not question Eusebius' orthodoxy when he draws upon several Eusebian works in his various florilegia. Averil Cameron is therefore most likely correct that it was only with the Iconoclast citation of the *Letter to Constantia* in 754 that the question of Eusebius' Arianism became the subject of controversy.²³ It is likewise from this time onwards that the comparison of Iconoclasm with Arianism becomes a recurring theme in the polemic of our Iconophile sources.

The earliest evidence for the emerging Iconophile association between Iconoclasm and Arianism may predate the Council of 787, but that evidence is difficult to assess.²⁴ It occurs in the peculiar and controversial text known as the *Parastaseis Syntomoi*

²² Eusebius is condemned as a defender of Arianism in the *Narratio de synodis et haeresibus* 13–14 (PG 98.51–54), but although this work is also traditionally ascribed to Germanus the text that we possess was probably written in the 680s and then interpolated after 787. For bibliography on the debate over the authorship and date of this work see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium* 248.

²³ Averil Cameron, "Texts as Weapons: Polemic in the Byzantine Dark Ages," in A. K. Bowman and G. Woolf (eds.), *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge 1994) 198–215, at 205 n.39.

²⁴ There is one other possible reference to Arian hostility to icons that predates even the council of 754, in a passage from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodore Lector (ed. Hansen 131–133 fr.52a) preserved in the florilegium of John of Damascus (*On the Divine Images* 3.90, ed. Kotter III 182–184). During the reign of Anastasius (491–518), an Arian who insulted a group of orthodox bathers was divinely punished by being immersed in scalding water. An image of the event was set up in the baths, and when an official attempted to hide the image he in turn was punished by the emperor and died before the same image after a divine vision.

Chronikai.²⁵ Both the date and the authorship of this work remain the subject of debate, but the *Parastaseis* is only mildly anti-Iconoclast in tone, and I would therefore follow Ševčenko in placing the main composition of the text in the period shortly before 787, ca. 775–780.²⁶ The prominence of Arius and Arians in the *Parastaseis* presumably reflects contemporary polemic against Iconoclasm.²⁷ The death of Arius himself in a public latrine is celebrated in considerable detail (*Parast.* 39), in a story that goes right back to Athanasius of Alexandria, although it is very unlikely that the author of the *Parastaseis* had read more than the edited version of this episode that appears in Theodore Lector and in contemporary legends of Constantine.²⁸ Most significantly for our present purposes, the Arians are themselves presented in the *Parastaseis* as Iconoclasts:

Likenesses (*eikones*) of Metrophanes, Alexander, and Paul [Bishops of Constantinople 306/7–357] were depicted on boards under Constantine the Great. They stood in the Forum, near the great statue (*stèle*) on the column on the eastern side. These likenesses (*eikones*) the Arians, after they had prevailed, delivered up to be burned in the fire in the Koronion Milion, together with the likeness (*apeikonisma*) of the Mother of God with Jesus Himself who had become an infant in the flesh (*Parast.* 10).

The historical value of this story is essentially nil, but the *Para-*

²⁵ Text and transl. Averil Cameron and J. Herrin, *Constantinople in the Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Leiden 1984).

²⁶ Ševčenko, *DOP* 46 (1992) 290. The *Parastaseis* is in any case a composite text, which makes establishing a precise chronology extremely problematic. For a more detailed discussion of this question see A. Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos* (Bonn 1988) 40–49, who argues for a slightly later date around 800, whereas Cameron and Herrin (*Constantinople* 17–29) attribute the bulk of the work to the first half of the eighth century.

²⁷ Cameron and Herrin, *Constantinople* 25–26.

²⁸ On the use of sources in the *Parastaseis*, see Cameron and Herrin, *Constantinople* 38–45. The author of the *Parastaseis* is aware of the names of the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians, but he knows little or nothing about the contents of their works. In the entire text there is only one accurate citation of a fourth- or fifth-century source, and that is the widely-known story of the Paneas images from Eusebius' *HE*. The original story of Arius' death occurs in Athanasius' *Epistula de morte Arii*, repeated in a slightly modified form in the same author's *Epistula ad episcopos Aegypti et Libyae* 18–19.

staseis thus provides an early indication of the alleged connection between the Iconoclasts and the Arians that was to recur in ever greater detail in later Iconophile works from the Council of 787 onwards.

The symbolism inherent in holding the Council that condemned Iconoclasm in 787 at Nicaea is obvious, but it needs to be remembered that this was not the original intention of the empress Eirene, who initially summoned the Council to meet in Constantinople itself (August 786). It was only after that council was broken up by Iconoclast soldiers that the Iconophiles moved to Nicaea, and this shift was due at least in part to concerns for security and the desire for imperial control (Theoph. A.M. 6278–79). Nevertheless, once the Council did meet in Nicaea in September 787, it was perhaps inevitable that the parallels to the first ecumenical council of 325 would become a prominent theme in the rhetoric both of the Council itself and of later Iconophile tradition.²⁹

Comparison of the two councils and anathemas of Arius recur repeatedly in the letters and personal statements recorded in the *Acts* of 787.³⁰ To quote only the most famous example, at the end of the fifth session, John, the Legate from the East, declared:

Blessed be God, who has glorified this Christ-loving city of the Nicaeans, in the days of our most Christian Sovereigns Constantine and Eirene. Blessed be God, who has counted the same [city] worthy of double honour, for here it was at first that Christ made clear the faith concerning Himself; and now, by this holy Council, He has made manifest the symbols of His dispensation to all. Here was the infamous Arius deposed—here also the heresy of the God-hating Iconoclasts has been annihilated. Blessed be God who, by His Apostle John, declared, I am Alpha and Omega. Blessed be God, who here at the first,

²⁹ “It is perhaps not surprising to find the ghost of Arius stalking this council” (Parry, *Depicting the Word* 142).

³⁰ Mansi XII 951–1154, XIII 1–485; transl. of the complete *Acts* J. Mendham, *The Seventh General Council* (London 1849), and of the *Acts* of the crucial sixth session D. J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto 1986). See also A. Giakalis, *Images of the Divine: The Theology of Icons at the Seventh Ecumenical Council*² (Leiden/Boston 2005).

and here also in these last days, has confirmed the orthodox faith (Mansi XIII 200E–201A).

The rhetoric of such a statement offers little theological indication of how Arianism was understood in 787, beyond what had become by this time the traditional stereotype that the Arians degraded the Son and divided Him from the Father. However, we are rather better informed by the proceedings of the sixth session, in which the repentant Iconoclast Gregory of Neocaesarea was forced to read each section of the *Horos* of 754, with the Iconophile refutation then proclaimed in turn. At Hiereia the Iconoclasts themselves had declared their faith in “the holy, ecumenical, and great council of Nicaea, at the time of the blessed Constantine the great emperor, which deposed the most impious Arius from the priestly dignity for saying that the uncreated Son of God is a creature” (XIII 233B–C). Moreover, they denounced the venerators of icons who “have fallen into error along with Arius, Dioscorus, and Eutyches, and into the heresy of the *Akephaloi*” (52B). But even heretics could receive an ecumenical council, the bishops in 787 replied:

Who would not detest them for saying that she [the orthodox Church] is led astray by Arius, Dioscorus, Eutyches, and the heresy of the *Akephaloi*, while they themselves have had these as teachers and patrons of their own heresy? ... [For] they bring forth as a witness Eusebius Pamphili, whom the entire catholic Church knows as a supporter of the heresy of Arius, as is evidenced by all his writings and publications. He is so by saying that God the Word is second in adoration, subordinate to the Father, and second in dignity—in opposition to the doctrine of consubstantiality—and that the holy flesh of the Lord changed into the divine nature. Consequently, in adherence with his confusion [of the two natures], he does not accept the icon either; nor does the entire accursed group of Ariomaniacs (252E–253B).

This then paves the way for the denunciation of the *Letter to Constantia* itself. Significantly, the bishops in 787 made no attempt to argue, as many modern scholars have done, that the letter is not an authentic fourth-century document. The forgery, misattribution, and misrepresentation of earlier Christian writings was very much an issue in seventh and eighth century

Byzantium.³¹ The Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680–681 went to great lengths to expose interpolations and determine correct readings in the texts brought forward by its participants, and the bishops at Nicaea in 787 likewise sought out complete books to confirm the accuracy of the extracts they quoted, and condemned the Iconoclasts in 754 for failing to do so. The Iconophiles were thus certainly prepared to argue that a text brought forward by their opponents was a forgery. Perhaps the most famous Iconoclast texts that the Iconophiles rejected on precisely these grounds were the writings against images attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis, the author of the *Panarion*. These writings had already been rejected as a potential forgery before the Iconoclast Council of 754 by John of Damascus (*On the Divine Images* 1.25). This argument was expanded at length by the bishops of 787 (XIII 292E–296E), and later by both Theodore the Studite and Nikephorus (who attributed the texts in question to a certain “Epiphanides”).³²

No such argument of forgery or misattribution was ever brought against the *Letter to Constantia*. However, this should not be taken as an indication that the Council of 787 undertook an investigation of the origins or authorship of the letter in order to confirm its authenticity. The bishops had no choice but to defend Epiphanius and deny his authorship of the disputed texts, because Epiphanius was recognised by all in the eighth century as an orthodox Father of the Church.³³ Eusebius of

³¹ In addition to the works cited on florilegia (n.2 above), see Cameron, in Bowman and Woolf, *Literacy* 198–215, and on the period before Iconoclasm P. Gray, “Forgery as an Instrument of Progress: Reconstructing the Theological Tradition in the Sixth Century,” *BZ* 81 (1988) 284–289, and S. Wesel, “Literary Forgery and the Monothelete Controversy: Some Scrupulous Uses of Deception,” *GRBS* 42 (2001) 201–220.

³² The debate over the status of these Epiphanius works still remains unresolved today. For a summary see P. Maraval, “Épiphanes, ‘docteur des iconoclastes,’” in Boespflug and Lossky, *Nicée II* 51–62.

³³ “We reject the writing, while we acknowledge the holy father as a teacher of the catholic Church” (296D). Similarly, Theodore the Studite would later declare that the writings against images attributed to Epiphanius had to be false, for “otherwise they would agree with the inspired fathers” (*Second Refutation of the Iconoclasts* 2.47–48). It was the authority of the alleged author rather than modern literary critical principles that mattered

Caesarea did not possess the same status, and the Iconophiles preferred to denounce his letter (and so in turn the Iconoclasts who had brought the letter forward) as Arian. Indeed, Eusebius was not only “a defender of Arius,” but he had “distinguished himself among the opponents of the holy Council of Nicaea” (312E). The bishops in 787 acknowledged that Eusebius had signed the original Nicene Creed, but he did so only from deceit (316A–B), and additional works of Eusebius were brought forward which were claimed to confirm his impiety.³⁴ Thus

it is proven that he has the same opinion as Arius and his followers. The inventors of Arius’ madness, along with this heresy of apostasy, maintain that there is one nature in the hypostatic union. They are also of the opinion that our Lord, at His redemptive dispensation, assumed a flesh without a soul, saying that His divinity was in place of will and the emotions of the soul. They say so in order, according to Gregory the Theologian, to ascribe suffering to the divinity. It is obvious, therefore, that those who ascribe the passion to the divinity are Theopaschites, and those who share in this heresy do not allow themselves to accept icons ... Therefore Eusebius, being a member of this gang—as has been shown from his epistles and from his historical writings—rejects, as a Theopaschite, the icon of Christ. It is for this reason that he writes to Constantia, the wife of Licinius, that no icon is ever found in his possession (317B–C).

The condemnation of Arianism here as both Monophysite and Theopaschite says considerably more about the concerns of the Iconophiles than it does regarding the actual theology of Eusebius or the contents of the *Letter to Constantia*. It is true as we have seen (227 above) that the *Letter* contrasts the characteristics of Christ’s divine nature with His form as a servant, which might justify the charge that Eusebius taught that there is only one nature in the hypostatic union and (in the passage from the *Acts* 253B, quoted 236 above) that he confused the two natures of Christ. It is also true as stated in that earlier passage

in such a case, and as Gray observes for an earlier period, “the quarrel about forgeries was inseparable from the quarrel about what constituted the authentic tradition” (*BZ* 81 [1988] 286).

³⁴ The letters to Alexander of Alexandria (316C) and Euphration of Balaena (317A), both of which appear to be genuinely Eusebian works.

that Eusebius did explicitly subordinate the Son to the Father, although this was by no means unusual in Eusebius' time. However, the claim that Eusebius attributed suffering directly to the divinity of the Son is explicitly contradicted by his own writings, and there is no evidence that Eusebius even considered the question of Christ's human soul, whether to affirm it or to deny it. The construction of Arianism invoked in the *Acts* of 787 is almost entirely the product of orthodox polemicists of the fourth century, notably Athanasius, Epiphanius, and (as the Council correctly observes in the passage quoted above) Gregory of Nazianzus. Yet it is significant that the bishops in 787 present such theological arguments at all, which go beyond employing "Arian" merely as a term of abuse. The force of the polemic is obvious, for if the Iconoclasts follow such a teacher as Eusebius, then they themselves must be Arian.

The polemical interpretation of the *Letter to Constantia* put forward by the Council of 787 evidently had considerable effect, for the letter was removed from the *Horos* of 754 when that *Horos* was reused by the Iconoclast Council of 815 at the start of the second phase of Iconoclasm.³⁵ However, this did not prevent both the comparison of Iconoclasm and Arianism and the condemnation of Eusebius of Caesarea from continuing to recur in our Iconophile sources. Those who attended the Second Council of Nicaea were commemorated in hagiographical texts that once again compared the affirmation of icons in 787 to the condemnation of Arius in 325, most notably in the *Life of Tarasius*, the Patriarch of Constantinople who presided over the Council.³⁶ Theodore the Studite on occasion also

³⁵ The *Acts* of the Council of 815 are preserved only in fragmentary form in the *Refutatio et eversio* of Nikephorus: J. Featherstone, *Nicephorus patriarchus Constantinopolitanus, Refutatio et eversio definitionis synodalis anni 815* (CCSG 33 [Brepols 1997]). For discussion of this council and its *horos* see P. J. Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and its Definition (*Horos*)," *DOP* 7 (1953) 35–66, and "Church Councils and Patristic Authority: The Iconoclastic Councils of Hiercia (754) and St. Sophia (815)," *HSCP* 63 (1958) 493–505, with the response to the former article by M. V. Anastos, "The Ethical Theory of Images Formulated by the Iconoclasts in 754 and 815," *DOP* 8 (1954) 151–160.

³⁶ "Here [at Nicaea] was forged the sharp sword of the consubstantial

draws upon this polemic,³⁷ and so too does the *Chronicle* of Theophanes, completed ca. 813–814.³⁸ Theophanes can refer favourably to Eusebius as a historical source (e.g. A.M. 5787), but he is fully aware of Eusebius' reputation as an Arian sympathiser (5818, 5829). In his account of the First Council of Nicaea Theophanes presents Eusebius as a theological ditherer (5816), and he repeats this judgement when he narrates Eusebius' death, describing the bishop as a man “without a fixed view and varying his position according to different circumstances” (5829). It is also Theophanes who reports the story that the failure of the Arab siege of Nicaea in 727 was due to the intercession of the original Nicene fathers, “who are honoured there in a church, wherein their venerable images are set up to this very day and are honoured by those who believe as they did” (6218).³⁹

and all immaterial Trinity against the madness of Arius and his followers; here by means of undivided division and divided union the Trinitarian person of essences shone forth theologically”: *Life of Tarasius* 28 (S. Efthymiadis, *The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios by Ignatius the Deacon* [Aldershot 1998]). Interestingly, neither Theophanes (a brief notice in A.M. 6280) nor Theodore the Studite (at least in the latter's writings before 815) place any particular emphasis on the Council of 787, as has been observed by P. Henry, “Initial Eastern Assessments of the Seventh Oecumenical Council,” *JThS* N.S. 25 (1974) 75–92. The Frankish *Libri Carolini*, compiled ca. 793, which condemned the conclusions of the Council of 787, did take up the comparison of the two Nicene Councils, but only in order to denounce the errors of the Second Council in contrast to the great achievements of the Council of 325 (*Libri Carolini* 4.13, and see S. Gero, “The *Libri Carolini* and the Image Controversy,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 [1973] 7–34).

³⁷ See his comparisons of Iconoclasm and Arianism in *Letters* 546.41–42 and 551.23–24 (ed. Fatouros II 827, 840).

³⁸ Introduction, translation, and commentary in C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford 1997). Theophanes' interest in the question of Constantine's baptism has already been noted (n.19 above). As Scott, in Magdalino, *New Constantines* 68–71, observes, Arianism and its condemnation were far more central a theme for Theophanes than for the sixth-century chronicler Malalas, suggesting again that such issues were a much more immediate concern for an Iconophile writer of the early ninth century.

³⁹ On this episode, see now C. Mango, “The Meeting-Place of the First Ecumenical Council and the Church of the Holy Fathers at Nicaea,” *Deltion*

Far more active in the Iconophile construction of the alleged connection between Iconoclasm and Arianism, however, was Nikephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople 806–815.⁴⁰ Throughout his polemical writings Nikephorus repeatedly insists that Iconoclasm derives from Arianism, particularly through the influence of Eusebius of Caesarea. In the *Apologeticus pro sacris imaginibus* or *Apologeticus Maior* (PG 100.533–832), written ca. 818–820, Nikephorus condemns Constantine V for deriving his Iconoclasm from “the insane doctrines of the Arians and from the raving religion of the Manichees” (*Apol.Mai.* 10 [560C]).⁴¹ Iconoclasm is nothing more than a new incarnation of the Arian impiety, and Constantine himself is merely the pupil of his Arian teachers, of whom the greatest is Eusebius, the “*coryphaeus* and *acropolis*” of both Arianism and Iconoclasm (*Apol.Mai.* 11–12 [561A–564C]).⁴² Nikephorus had already begun his condemnation of his Iconoclast opponents as Arian in his *Apologeticus Minor* (PG 100.833–850), written ca. 813–815, and he repeats this denunciation in his three *Antirrhethici* (PG 100.205–533)⁴³ contemporary with the *Apol.Mai.*, in which he again attacks “the impious Eusebius the *coryphaeus* of atheism” (*Antir.* 3.30 [421A–B]).⁴⁴

SER. IV 27 (2005) 27–34. I am grateful to Professor Mango for kindly providing me with an offprint of this article.

⁴⁰ For modern studies of Nikephorus and his writings see P. J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nikephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford 1958); P. O’Connell, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nikephorus I (758–828)* (Rome 1972); J. Travis, *In Defense of the Faith: The Theology of Patriarch Nikephorus of Constantinople* (Brookline 1984); M.-J. Mondzain-Baudinet, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary* (Stanford 2005, transl. R. Franses; French original 1996). The chronology of Nikephorus’ writings adopted here is that of Alexander, 182–188.

⁴¹ The same association of Arianism and Manichaeism recurs in Nikephorus’ *Antirrhethicus* 3.30 (PG 100.421B) and 44 (464B), and also in *Contra Eusebium* 60 (I 465–466 Pitra, especially 466.10–11).

⁴² For the Arians as the *didaskaloi* of the Iconoclasts see also *Apol.Mai.* 76 (796C) and *Antir.* 1.20 (244D), and for Eusebius specifically as *didaskalos* see *Antir.* 2.3 (337A) and *Contra Eus.* 63 (I 473.25–26).

⁴³ French transl. M.-J. Mondzain-Baudinet, *Nicephore: Discours contre les Iconoclastes* (Paris 1989).

⁴⁴ The pun on Eusebius’ name, that the bishop should be known not as

In the same period ca. 818–820, but after the *Apol.Mai.*, Nikephorus also composed a separate work, *Contra Eusebium et Epiphanidem*, against the fourth-century texts that the Iconoclasts had brought forward in support of their doctrines in 754.⁴⁵ As already mentioned, he denounces the Iconoclast texts attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis as forgeries by a certain “Epiphanides.” But he condemns the *Letter to Constantia* and its author “the impious Eusebius” at great length, for Eusebius once more represents “the godless and wicked heresy of the Ariomaniacs, which our teachers call atheist” (*Contra Eus.* 7 [I 380.14–19 Pitra]). Here Nikephorus particularly condemns Eusebius for degrading the Son to the level of all creatures, an accusation which as we have seen was a standard feature of anti-Arian polemic from Athanasius onwards, and he asserts that it was for this reason that Eusebius was opposed to images of Christ (*Contra Eus.* 8 and 47 [382.40–383.4, 443.23–35]). He also further develops the attack begun by the bishops of 787 on Eusebius’ conception of the Incarnation, which Nikephorus regards as the source of the Iconoclast doctrine that the eucharist is the only true image of Christ (see especially *Contra Eus.* 26–30 [414–420]). Thus he concludes, “let the views of Eusebius be refuted. And now that, with the sword of the Word and with the power of the Spirit, we have cut the head off the fierce monster, we ought henceforth to put an end to our speech, even though it [the monster] may skip along with its tail feebly and weakly” (*Contra Eus.* 76 [503.10–15]).⁴⁶ The monster is Iconoclasm. Its head, according to Nikephorus, is the Arian Eusebius and his *Letter to Constantia*.⁴⁷

eusebês (pious) but as *dyssebês* (impious), was much loved by Nikephorus and also occurs in both *Apol.Mai.* 12 (561C) and the *Contra Eusebium et Epiphanidem* discussed below.

⁴⁵ This text was printed as two separate works by J. B. Pitra, *Spicilegium Solesmense* (Paris 1852–58), the *Contra Eusebium* (I 371–503) and the *Adversus Epiphanidem* (IV 292–380). For the argument that these are in fact two parts of a single work, see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 173–178, from whom I have derived the title *Contra Eusebium et Epiphanidem*.

⁴⁶ Transl. Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 175.

⁴⁷ S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V* (Louvain 1977) 50 n.67. Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 175–176, suggested that the

Nikephorus' interpretation of the *Letter to Constantia* and of the role that he believed Eusebius played in the development of Iconoclast theology has exerted great influence upon modern scholars. Florovsky traced a connection from the Iconoclasts through Eusebius to Origen, and concluded that the *Letter to Constantia* "seems to be the key-argument in the whole system of the Iconoclastic reasoning."⁴⁸ Florovsky's argument was rightly challenged by Stephen Gero, but Gero too followed Nikephorus' lead in his own suggestion that the eucharistic doctrine of Constantine V derived primarily if not exclusively from Eusebius' conception of the Transfiguration.⁴⁹ Schönborn went still further, explicitly adopting Nikephorus' model of Iconoclast theology and introducing the *Letter to Constantia* as "a theological blueprint for Iconoclasm,"⁵⁰ while Pelikan simply brands Eusebius as "the father of Iconoclasm."⁵¹ Yet we should be wary in adopting the polemic of Nikephorus so readily at face value. It is certainly true that parallels can be drawn between the *Letter to Constantia* and Iconoclast theology, but those parallels are by no means as straightforward as Nikephorus would have us believe.⁵² Through his construction of Eusebius as the "father of

"head" was either the *Letter to Constantia* or Constantine V's entire florilegium, but the latter suggestion seems less likely.

⁴⁸ G. Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius, and the Iconoclastic Controversy," *Church History* 19 (1950) 77–96, at 84.

⁴⁹ S. Gero, "The Eucharistic Doctrine of the Byzantine Iconoclasts and its Sources," *BZ* 68 (1975) 4–22, especially 16–18, and *Byzantine Iconoclasm* 103–105. The major difficulty with this theory, as Gero acknowledges, is that the eucharistic doctrine of images does not occur anywhere in the extant fragments of the *Letter to Constantia* nor are the Iconoclasts themselves known to have cited Eusebius as an authority for this doctrine.

⁵⁰ C. von Schönborn, *God's Human Face: The Christ-Icon* (San Francisco 1994, transl. L. Krauft; French original 1976) 57. According to Schönborn, Eusebius' letter offered "a christological argumentation against any depiction of Christ ... No wonder, then, that Eusebius' letter became the principal testimony for the accusers of icon devotion, and that Patriarch Nikephorus, in his defense of icon devotion, dedicated an entire book to refute Eusebius" (58).

⁵¹ J. Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (New Haven 1990) 72.

⁵² Perhaps most obviously, as Gero observes (*Byzantine Iconoclasm* 47), it is

Iconoclasm” Nikephorus, like the Council of 787, had discovered the ideal weapon in the struggle for Christian tradition, affirming his own orthodoxy in succession to Athanasius of Alexandria and the First Council of Nicaea and damning Constantine V and the Iconoclasts by association as Arian.

Nikephorus’ arguments were in turn taken up and continued in later Iconophile writings, including hagiographical texts such as the *Life of Ioannikios*⁵³ and the various works that accompanied the “Triumph of Orthodoxy” in 843.⁵⁴ But by far the

clear that Constantine V cited a number of fourth- and fifth-century fathers in support of his own theological position, including Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, and the Cappadocian Fathers. It is Nikephorus who in his polemic focuses almost exclusively on the texts that the Iconoclasts attributed to Eusebius and Epiphanius.

⁵³ Introduction and transl. D. F. Sullivan, in Alice-Mary Talbot (ed.), *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints’ Lives in English Translation* (Washington 1998) 243–351. The *Life* itself, written ca. 847 and then revised in the 850s, attributes to Ioannikios a statement of faith drawn almost verbatim from Nikephorus’ *Apol.Mai.* 18–23 (580D–592A) which includes a declaration that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity must be maintained “in order that we may extinguish the Arian madness, from which and against which is our present struggle” (55). Other heresies are also condemned in the same section of the *Vita*, including the teachings of Nestorius, Eutyches, and Sabellius, but only Arianism is denounced as the source of Iconoclasm, and later in the *Vita* (69) the Iconoclast persecution of Methodius (appointed iconophile Patriarch in 843) is compared to the sufferings of Athanasius at the hands of the Arians.

⁵⁴ For the highly complex text of the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, which enshrined what would become the recognised orthodox tradition from 843 onwards and which includes condemnation of both Arianism and Iconoclasm, see J. Gouillard, “Le synodikon de l’Orthodoxie: édition et commentaire,” *Trav.Mém* 2 (1967) 1–316. Another contemporary text is the so-called *Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilus*, traditionally written by the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem after a synod in Jerusalem in 836 but containing significant post-843 interpolations (transl. J. A. Munitiz et al. (eds.), *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilus and Related Texts* [Camberley 1997]). The *Letter* traces the foundation of the Christian Empire back to Constantine and his condemnation of Arianism (5c), and denounces the Iconoclasts for following the heretical teachings of Valentinus, Marcion, Epiphanius, and “the impious Eusebius, the propagator of the Arian impiety” (9a). In their commentary Munitiz et al. (58 n.199) identify this latter passage as a reference to Eusebius of Nicomedia, but in light of the

greatest exponent of the polemical comparison of Iconoclasm and Arianism in the second half of the ninth century was Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople 858–867 and 877–886. The influence of that polemic on Photius is already apparent in the *Bibliotheca*, composed at least in part before the beginning of Photius' first patriarchate.⁵⁵ Among the many texts discussed in this work are several of the writings of Eusebius (cod. 9–13, 27, 39, 127), and Photius does not miss the opportunity to criticise Eusebius both as a poor stylist and for his sympathies towards Arianism.⁵⁶ In particular, cod. 127 on the *Life of Constantine* attests both to the revival of interest in that work by the ninth century and to Photius' concern for the question of Constantine's baptism and the conflicting traditions for this episode that existed in Photius' own time.⁵⁷ Above all, Photius, like Theophanes, criticises Eusebius for not being more explicit regarding the Arian Controversy: "Eusebius gives the impression of being ashamed and unwilling to make public the facts about Arius—the council's condemnation of him and his fellow heretics, their well-deserved expulsion, also the fate of Arius, the work of divine justice seen by all—none of this does he reveal, and he passes hastily over the council and its proceedings" (cod. 127).

Other texts "reviewed" in the *Bibliotheca* confirm that in addition to the writings of Eusebius, Photius also knew the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians and their presentation of the fourth-century Church—Socrates (cod. 28), Sozomen (30),

Iconophile polemic from 787 onwards that we have examined it is almost certainly Eusebius of Caesarea who is meant.

⁵⁵ For the ongoing debate over the composition of the *Bibliotheca*, see the bibliography cited in Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium* 303 n.42.

⁵⁶ On the wider religious interests of Photius revealed in the *Bibliotheca* see W. T. Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington 1980) 104–109.

⁵⁷ Photius observes that Eusebius in the *Life* places the emperor's baptism in Nicomedia but does not identify who performed the ceremony (cod. 127). Elsewhere he notes that Gelasius of Cyzicus likewise places Constantine's baptism in Nicomedia, but that according to Gelasius Constantine "received baptism in a ceremony conducted by one of the orthodox, not, as some believe, at the hands of a heretic" (cod. 88).

Theodoret (31), and Philostorgius (40)—as well as later traditions including an anonymous *Life of Athanasius of Alexandria* (258). This knowledge of the Arian Controversy is visible in the brief history of the Seven Ecumenical Councils presented in Photius' Letter to Boris-Michael, khagan of the Bulgars, beginning with Nicaea where Arius who reduced the Son to "a creature and a thing made (*ktisma kai poiēma*)" was condemned.⁵⁸ In his letter to the emperor Basil I, written from exile in June 870, Photius is also willing to compare his own suffering to that of the exiled fourth-century Nicenes Athanasius of Alexandria and Eustathius of Antioch or even to that of the Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia, although in every case Photius' ordeal was the greater for only he had his books confiscated too.⁵⁹ A similar reference to the travails of Athanasius and Eustathius occurs in Photius' *Homilies* on Arianism which will be discussed below (*Hom.* 15.10, 16.13). Their suffering represents for Photius a warning that to plot against orthodox bishops is the device of heretics, a subject that was clearly of personal concern for Photius himself.

Photius' interest in the Arian Controversy and his association of Arianism with Iconoclasm can also be seen in the Paris Gregory (*Paris.gr.* 510), the illuminated manuscript of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus which Leslie Brubaker has demonstrated should be attributed to the patronage of Photius as a gift for Basil I in 879–882.⁶⁰ The images incorporated in this manuscript include a depiction of the Council of Constantinople in 381 which confirmed the judgement of Nicaea (f.355^r) and scenes showing the Arian persecution of the orthodox (367^v, illustrating Gregory's sermon against the Arians). As Brubaker observes, both in the Paris Gregory and in his own

⁵⁸ *Ep.* 1 in B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink, *Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani, Epistulae et Amphilochia* I (Leipzig 1983); transl. D. S. White and J. R. Berrigan, Jr., *The Patriarch and the Prince: The Letter of Patriarch Photios of Constantinople to Khan Boris of Bulgaria* (Brookline 1982) 39–79.

⁵⁹ *Ep.* 98 in Laourdas and Westerink, 17 in D. S. White, *Patriarch Photios of Constantinople* (Brookline 1981) 160–165.

⁶⁰ L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge 1999).

writings, “Photius equated iconoclasts and Arians, and re-framed the fourth-century heresy into one resembling that of his own century.”⁶¹

The greatest single statement of this Iconophile equation of their contemporary Iconoclast foes with the Arians of the fourth century, however, lies in a series of four or possibly five *Homilies* that Photius preached either in 861 or in 867 telling the story of the Arian Controversy from its origins down to the Council of 381.⁶² Only two of those *Homilies* now survive, the first largely covering the events of the 330s (*Hom.* 15) and the second the period 337–361 (*Hom.* 16).⁶³ As Cyril Mango comments, “the real purpose of the two Homilies is quite transparent. It is twofold: firstly, to liken Iconoclasm to Arianism, that prototype of all heresies, and secondly, to show that to plot against bishops, provided they are orthodox, is to be on the side of the devil.”⁶⁴

The construction of the Arian Controversy that Photius presents derives heavily from the narratives of the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians, including some important material drawn from the Eunomian historian Philostorgius as well as the orthodox historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. All these historians drew in turn upon the polemical writings of Athanasius of Alexandria, and it is not certain to what extent Photius had read Athanasius’ writings themselves (of Athanasius’ major polemical works only the *Orationes contra Arianos* appear in the *Bibliotheca* [cod. 140], but this of course does not mean that Photius had not read more widely).⁶⁵ In the *Homilies*

⁶¹ Brubaker, *Vision* 262. The images in the Marginal Psalters studied by K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge 1992), have a similar polemical emphasis to the Paris Gregory, directed particularly against Iconoclasts but also against Jews and Muslims.

⁶² For the evidence for the dating of these homilies, see C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1958) 20–24. Greek text: B. Laourdas, *Photiou Homiliai* (Thessalonica 1959).

⁶³ Translated in Mango, *Homilies* 244–278.

⁶⁴ Mango, *Homilies* 239.

⁶⁵ Mango, *Homilies* 237, identifies ten sources for the *Homilies*, of which eight are in the *Bibliotheca*: Gelasius (codd. 15, 88–89), Socrates (28), Sozomen (30), Theodoret (31), Philostorgius (40), the *Life of Metrophanes and Alex-*

Photius preserves correctly the baptism of Constantine in Bithynia in 337, but insists (erroneously) that the baptism was orthodox and not Arian (15.8). He also devotes the opening section of *Homily* 16 to a lengthy comparison of the arch-heretic Arius to the later Iconoclast leader John the Grammarian (16.1). It is against this background that Photius is then able to construct in detail his own conception of the relationship between Arianism and Iconoclasm (16.3 Laourdas, 16.4 Mango):

It is fitting to consider here the similarity between the two heresies. The Arians alleged that the word *homoousios* was a cause of offence to most people; the Iconoclasts started by saying that the depiction of images down below, near the ground, was a cause of error to the more simple-minded. The Arians: hence, instead of *homoousios*, this corporeal and lowly word, it is proper to say *homoiousios* of the Son's relation to the Father, this being somehow more elevated and more fitting for the incorporeal, and avoiding the division of essence. The Iconoclasts: hence, instead of depicting images down below, near the ground, they should stand in an elevated position, since this is more appropriate for images, and avoids the reproach of deceit. The Arians: *homoiousios* is not proper either, but instead of it we must say *homoios*, having altogether excised *ousia*. The Iconoclasts: it is not proper to reverence even pictures which are high up, but to let them stand only for the sake of the subject represented, adoration being altogether spat upon. The Arians: the word *homoousios* is without scriptural authority; the Iconoclasts: the worship of images is without scriptural authority. The Arians: the Son should be called *anomoios*, a creature and a thing made (*ktisma kai poiêma*), while the words *homoousios*, *ousia*, and *homoiousios* should be completely banished from the Church. The Iconoclasts: images should be called vain idols, and their making, representation, and worship should be altogether banished from the Church ... Is it small, do you think, the resemblance and like-

ander (256), the *Life of Paul of Constantinople* (257), and the *Life of Athanasius of Alexandria* (258). The other two sources proposed by Mango are the *Apologia contra Arianos* and *De synodis Arimini et Seleucia* of Athanasius, but these works are not in the *Bibliotheca* and it is difficult to determine if Photius drew upon Athanasius' writings directly or if the *Homilies* simply reflect the influence that Athanasius exerted on the narratives of the later ecclesiastical historians.

ness which the sons bear to their fathers, the successors to their leaders, the pupils to their teachers?

This passage provides the clearest indication of how an Iconophile polemicist actually understood the Arian heresy with which the Iconoclasts were condemned by association. As Cyril Mango has observed, Photius places much of his emphasis in his *Homilies* on a comparison between the tactics of Arians and Iconoclasts rather than a comparison of their beliefs.⁶⁶ The actual theological presentation of Arianism that Photius offers is inevitably highly simplistic, but it is also important. Some of his statements are indeed verifiably correct, for in the fourth century some individuals did reject the Nicene term *homoousios* on the grounds that it was a corporeal and unscriptural term (one man who certainly felt that way was Eusebius of Nicomedia). However, Photius' insistence that the Arians taught that the Son was created and made is as we have seen a direct product of the polemic of Athanasius and subsequent orthodox writers, and so too is his reduction of all those who rejected the description of the Son as *homoousios* to the Father into a unified Arian party. Following Athanasius and Epiphanius, Photius interprets the use of the terms *homoiousios*, *homoios*, and *anomoios* to describe the relationship of the Son to the Father as evidence of Arian deception. In reality, *homoiousios*, *homoios*, or *anomoios* were not terms used by a single faction to conceal its heresy, but represent differing positions in the broad theological spectrum of the fourth-century Church. Nevertheless, it remains significant that in his *Homilies* Photius, like the Council of 787, presents a theological interpretation of Arianism at all, an interpretation which reinforces his use of this anti-Arian polemic against his contemporary foes.

In the comparison that Photius draws between Iconoclasm and Arianism in *Homily* 16, as in all the Iconophile writings of the eighth and ninth centuries considered in this paper, the image of the Arian Controversy that is presented is one that has been shaped to serve the author in his contemporary context. The very prominence of this anti-Arian polemic in

⁶⁶ Mango, *Homilies* 239–240.

homilies that Photius preached in the 860s and the pervasiveness of that polemic in Iconophile writings from at least the Second Council of Nicaea onwards underlines once again that Arian in this later Byzantine world was more than just a simple term of abuse. The Iconophile construction of the Iconoclasts as Arian recurs not only in conciliar documents and learned theological treatises but in chronicles, hagiographies, and sermons. The polemic unites the great Patriarchs Nikephorus and Photius with Theophanes and the anonymous author of the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, each adapting the polemical model according to his own needs.

The Iconophiles and the Iconoclasts were engaged in a struggle over the interpretation of Christian tradition, a struggle that the Iconophiles eventually won. The Iconophile insistence that their opponents were in some sense Arian was an important weapon in securing that victory, for such an accusation served not only to condemn the Iconoclasts but also reinforced the claim of the Iconophiles themselves to be the true heirs of the great church fathers of the fourth century, Athanasius and the Cappadocians. This Iconophile victory was a crucial component in the wider rediscovery and reinterpretation of the past that characterises the years of Byzantine recovery in the eighth and especially the ninth century.

Yet in constructing their alleged relationship between Arianism and Iconoclasm, the Iconophiles were drawing in their turn upon an earlier reinterpretation of Christian tradition. We today see the Iconoclasts through the distorted lens of Iconophile polemic. The polemical model of the Arian Controversy that Athanasius of Alexandria and his orthodox successors had created and which the Iconophiles inherited is likewise a construct, a construct that does little justice to the true nature of the debates that divided the fourth-century Church or to the concerns and beliefs of those like Eusebius of Caesarea who held to doctrines that would come to be condemned as heresy. What is visible throughout the writings both of Iconophiles like Nikephorus and Photius and of earlier fathers like Athanasius is thus the ongoing construction of a particular conception of Christian tradition, a process that has continued to the present day. This orthodox conception of the Christian past has exerted far more influence upon subsequent Christian history

than the reality of either the fourth-century controversies or Iconoclasm. Contrary to the convictions of the Byzantines themselves, tradition is not and cannot be static, for it is only through the ongoing renewal and reinterpretation of tradition that the past can remain relevant to later generations. However, the distortions that this ongoing process of reinterpretation can create in our knowledge of the past must also be remembered, as we have seen demonstrated in the polemic of the Iconophiles of the eighth and ninth centuries and the heresiological relationship that they so successfully constructed from Iconoclasm to Arianism.⁶⁷

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Christ Church, Oxford
OX1 1DP U.K.
david.gwynn@christ-church.oxford.ac.uk

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