How the Emperors of the Fourth Century Defined Christian Orthodoxy

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Abstract

In discourses centered on the process of defining orthodoxy that developed from Constantine onwards, the role of the emperor is in scholarly works quite a disputed one. Be it that the now Christian emperor had a logistical role when it came to the definition of the faith, merely ordering councils and leaving discussions to those more experienced, or the idea that the emperor was more knowledgeable on doctrine and the faith than we believed, the emperor is one whose role has sometimes been sidelined. This is why this paper will analyze the changing shape of the role of the emperor in defining orthodoxy, from Constantine till the end of the Fourth Century AD with Theodosius I, and what the emperor meant for a process of defining Christian orthodoxy. It will argue that despite orthodoxy not being entirely agreed on, established, or accepted by the end of the Fourth Century AD, the emperors played a crucial role in shaping the process to theologically and doctrinally define it, perhaps even assisting to define the complicated parts of it usually attributed to the theologians. Therefore, it is important that we analyze imperial interactions with wider ecclesial authorities and understand the extent of polemic or praise the emperors received, equally understanding just what kind of stances had been demonstrated between Constantine and Theodosius. This analysis will allow us to gain an understanding of how the process of defining orthodoxy developed and just what role the emperors had in it, or how they understood defining orthodoxy, either through doctrinal discussions, refuting heresy and defining orthodoxy by what it isn't, or through ecclesial alliances. By understanding that the emperor did play a role, and what role exactly, we may construct a better understanding of the Trinitarian debates that characterized the Fourth Century AD, and which transformed well into the fifth.

Introduction

Orthodoxy, derived from the Greek 'orthos' (right) and 'doxa' (belief), is defined as an adherence to correct beliefs and doctrines, yet in the context of our study as a dissection of the Fourth Century AD Eastern Orthodox tradition, will come to mean the implementation of a Christianity that had to be correct against other beliefs that the champions of orthodoxy saw as justifiably correct. This understanding of orthodoxy that was pursued heavily after the Arian Controversy saw greater involvement from emperors in regard to the making of its definition and understanding. The emperors including Constantine and those after came to understand the importance of defining this faith that had become plagued by a plethora of variably different and coexistent Orthodoxies. Therefore, with the end of the pagan imperial authority, the presence of Christian emperors added into the fray an authority that could play a crucial role in the essential process of defining orthodoxy or defining a process that would see a definition of orthodoxy be achieved. Due to this, our study will aim to reveal how the role of the emperor, now Christian, became central to the process of defining orthodoxy and therefore assert against scholarly characterisations of the role of the emperor as purely logistical, revealing a role that was capable of allowing both a smooth definitional process to be led by bishops and by imperial involvement in doctrinal debates.

Elucidating orthodoxy was nonetheless impossible due to its complexity. Preceding the Fourth Century AD, diverse theological perspectives co-existed and were debated, questioning the Son's subordination, begotten nature, and co-existence with the Father, as well as broader Trinitarian concepts of substance and distinctiveness. Attempting to define orthodoxy before Constantine stemmed from convoluted and unorganised attempts at understanding Apostolic writings, the Church Fathers, and broader writings such as the Septuagint, which were crucial in detailing Christ's nature, yet proved inefficient as bishops formed their own differing regional interpretations of these writings and their orthodoxy. Equally, speaking conciliarily, pre-Constantinian Councils were often regional, focusing on ecclesiastical issues and declaring certain Orthodoxies heretical without authoritative enforcement. Bishops wrote letters

affirming their orthodoxy and seeking imperial support, as shown when the Church asked pagan Emperor Aurelian to depose Paul of Samosata. Evidently, elucidating orthodoxy was impossible due to its complexity, yet Christian emperors now provided a patronage and a legal authority that put bishops into one collective that could more effectively pursue a definition. Thus, from Late Antique theologian Richard Hanson's summarisation of this process as a repeated trial and error,[1] we may deduce that from Constantine, the scope for error began to be diminished. Constantine, for instance, multifariously catalysed efforts to define orthodoxy, and so would his successors, and while emperors failed to define orthodoxy, their authority allowed bishops to attempt to define orthodoxy now that they were free from persecution and possessed civic legitimacy. Still, this study will also consider the hindrances caused by the emperor's individual pursuits of orthodoxy, as imperial clashes with the bishopric caused by discrete imperial backings of one orthodox perspective complicated the defining process. Altogether, this study's significance will lie in the shifting attempts to define orthodoxy now caused by the presence of Christian emperors who transformed this dynamic, giving bishops greater freedom to appeal for support to promote a defined orthodoxy, allowing critical decisions to be made regarding orthodoxy, and further debates on scriptural understanding to be had. However, this equally intensified Christian division and encouraged greater doctrinal competition.[2]

Against that complex background, the Fourth Century AD begins the multitude of questions on the Christian faith following the emergence of the Arian Controversy, a debate concerned with a fundamental Trinitarian nature. The debate began around 318 AD as a theological phenomenon emerging from a proposition offered by the Presbyter Arius, a holder of a subordinationist Trinitatian theology, to Alexander of Alexandria, the 19th Patriarch of Alexandria and a key supporter of Nicene orthodoxy. Arius proposed an alternate orthodoxy to a supposed discussion of a Sabellian orthodoxy that Alexander discoursed,[3] one which spoke of

[1] Richard P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*, (T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 1988), 24.4 (p. 873).
[2] Averil Cameron, *The Cost of Orthodoxy*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 15–20 (p. 17).
[3] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History (EH)*, I.5.

God as one person revealing himself in three modes, a 'unity in trinity.' Arius proposed that 'there was when the son was not', in turn questioning Jesus' co-eternity with the Father, his begotten nature, and whether God was indivisible, placing Jesus as either second to God or a demi-God, as posited by Athanasius. Consequently, Alexander condemned Arius at the 321 AD council of Alexandria, calling his views 'those of a madman'. Constantine was initially unaware of the controversy's doctrinal significance, calling the debates trivial. His 324 AD letter to Alexander and Arius stressed reconciliation yet Constantine, nonetheless, attempted to foster civil discourse during the Arian Controversy. His post-Nicene letters revealed an emperor transformed by the debates, repeatedly emphasising that the devil (Arius) held no power over the people.[4] Regardless, his efforts for dialogue failed, and the Arian Controversy exploded with religious fervour into a fluid and incongruous landscape where defining orthodoxy was extensively characterised by the importance of championing one orthodox interpretation against another.

Nevertheless, pertaining to the role of the emperor in defining Trinitarian. We must first state that there were numerous debates in the years after Nicaea. Majority of these explored the Trinitarian role of Jesus and his relation to the Father as consubstantial, like in all things, or simply like the Father., We must also understand that defining orthodoxy was just as influenced by sources in which writers fabricated heresies to champion their own preferred orthodoxy. Due to this, emperors' actions and words were multifariously interpreted by sources to fit their agendas. Considering Constantius II, sources initially acted well towards the emperor, yet writing on his minor support of "Arianism" in the 350s when the councils of Seleucia (358 AD), Ariminum (358 AD) and Constantinople (359 AD) reduced Nicene orthodoxy to a *Homoean* doctrine, especially following Acacius of Caesarea's antics in 359 AD, they began labelling Constantius as an Arian, crafting his heretical identity.

[4] 'Letter of Constantine to the church of Alexandria following the Nicene Council (325)', cited in Socrates, *EH*, I. IX.

Evidently, while Christian emperors altered the dynamics of defining orthodoxy, imperial authority sparked contention. Typically, the emperor's authority and patronage were welcomed. The emperor was a great asset for bishops, while for some, a tool or a medium through which to portray agendas, as Eusebius did by claiming that Constantine supported a Caesarean Creed that defended Eusebius in the face of Arian accusations by adding the conflicting term *Homoousios* (of the same substance) to it, thus legitimising its, and Eusebius', orthodoxy. Furthermore, emperors were climacteric in initiating processes to define orthodoxy. Still, contemporaneous embraces of the emperor shifted between praising the emperor's promotion of orthodoxy or producing anti-imperial invectives against their adherence to an "illegitimate" orthodoxy. That said, these invectives were anomalous occurrences, since all figures supported the existence of a Christian emperor's intervention, challenging scholarly assertions such as Peter Heather's that the emperor's role was purely logistical. Still, to grasp the extent of emperors' attempts to define orthodoxy from the reign of Constantine onward, we must examine their interactions with bishops and how their attempts to define orthodoxy failed to align with contemporaneous constructions of orthodoxy.

Constantine's Blueprint: Mapping the grounds for defining orthodoxy

It is generally understood that Constantine was far from defining orthodoxy, hence why Averil Cameron's assertion that Constantine did not make Christianity the official religion of the empire[5] due to the theological splits that followed a Nicene Council that revealed more questions than answers is cogent. Nonetheless, Constantine's role as the first Christian emperor proves indispensable to our study, as his Christian patronage assisted an increasingly crucial necessity of understanding Christ's divinity. Firstly, Constantine became involved in an explosive Arian Controversy which revealed issues that required a Christian emperor to assist debates on. The controversy erupted in 321 AD when Alexander of Alexandria condemned the presbyter Arius for some previously proposed teachings. In 318 AD, Arius had challenged the standard

[5] Cameron, (2012), p. 2.

that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit existed co-eternally, instead proposing that the Son was created, therefore subordinating the Son's divinity and attacking the orthodoxy that the Son was consubstantial with the Father. Arius was dangerously unclear in his subordination of the Son. Potentially influenced by beliefs that promoted the sole indivisible nature of God, such as Monarchianism, Arius threatened to subvert the distinctiveness of the Trinity and, as Athanasius polemically stated, reduce the son to a demi-God and introduce polytheism. Due to this, Alexander justified his condemnation of Arius on that exclamation of Arius that claimed that 'There was a time when the son was not', implying that the Son, being begotten, was created and could not have been co-eternal with the Father.[6]

Unaware of its severity and busy addressing a Donatist schism - an issue related to the acceptance back into the Church of former Christians who lapsed under the great persecution and abandoned Christianity to save their lives - Constantine initially overlooked the Arian Controversy. His letter to Alexander and Arius, dated 323 AD. or 324 AD., displayed an apparent indifference to the debate, stating that Arius and Alexander shared the same mindset.[7] Therefore, scholarly assertions often debate whether Constantine believed the controversy warranted significant attention, even encouraging his close imperial advisor Hosius of Cordova to send letters to Arius and Alexander demanding the abandonment of insignificant questions. Constantine did not grasp the seriousness of the debates and believed he could easily maintain unity. However, very soon, in 324 AD, a significant episcopal council was convened first in Ancyra and then moved to Nicaea. The First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 AD) was called to address the controversy. Contrary to widespread belief, there are reasons to suspect that Constantine did not initiate the council. One scholarly interpretation that supports this claim is that of Samuel Fernandez, who argues that there had been an episcopal call for a council prior

[6] Peter Heather, *Christendom: The Triumph of a Religion*, (Penguin Books: London, 2023), pp. 57–58.
[7] 'Letter of Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Alexander and Arius (323)', II.63–73 (64).

to Hosius' mission.[8] Fernandez believes that Constantine lacked interest in instructing Hosius to convene a council for something easily resolvable through imperial letters alone, proposing that what happened was that Hosius, upon arriving in Alexandria, learned of the gravity of the controversy and encouraged a conciliar formation, partly influenced by an alignment with Alexander's orthodoxy. Eventually, by the time Hosius returned to Constantine, it appeared that a decision to convene the council had been reached, and not by Constantine, something he himself suggested. A letter from Constantine, preserved in Syriac and translated in Stevenson and Frend's work, *A New Eusebius*, explicitly states that "a council formally agreed to meet in Ancyra should move to Nicaea."[9] This seems to convey that Constantine did not convene the council, yet I take this ambiguous claim with caution, as we do not know if Constantine is referring to a council he had convened or been informed of.

Nonetheless, Following the council things were not as smooth. On a positive note, Arius' condemnation was definitive, while the Trinitarian nature of the Son was written out as being *Homoousion to Patri (consubstantial with the Father)*. It was evident that Constantine acted proactively in finding a theological solution,[10] while equally understanding the importance of leaving the councils' theological debates up to the bishops whose judgement he regarded as equal to God's.[11] However, *Homoousios*, not the general idea of consubstantiality, remained a contested term and thus, several bishops objected to the Nicene Creed, including Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius signed the Nicene Creed with a degree of reluctance, while still facing characterisation as an Arian sympathiser. One of the initial conciliar discussions may have even been the status of the creed-rejecting bishops. This saw Eusebius' self-defence presented through a Caesarean Creed, which he insisted was approved by Constantine, evidently as an attempt to defend Eusebius against Arian accusations. Eusebius undoubtedly crafted a Constantine that defended

[8] Samuel Fernandez, 'Who Convened the First Council of Nicaea: Constantine or Ossius', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 71.1 (2020), pp. 196–211 (p. 200) https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flaa036 [accessed April 4 2025].
[9] '289. Constantine Summons the Council of Nicaea', p. 338.
[10] Wolfram Kinzig, *A History of Early Christian Creeds*, (De Gruyter: Berlin, 2024), 6.4.2 (p. 245).
[11] 'Letter of Constantine to the Catholic Bishops (314)', pp. 189–191 (p. 190).

his reluctant Nicene agreement which David M. Gwynn reveals in arguing that Eusebius claimed that Constantine needed to interpolate *Homoousion* into his creed to legitimise it.[12] Rightfully so, Eusebius required secure recognition of his orthodoxy, and in a letter to his church on the Creed of Nicaea (325 AD), detailed his orthodoxy and his *Homoousion* justification, claiming that the son is unlike any other creature and is only 'assimilated' to his father, who begot him.[13] Eusebius confidently says that Constantine saw no contradiction to his creed and testified that it was 'most orthodox', merely interpolating *Homoousios*, which Constantine supposedly defined as not according to bodily (material) affections.[14] Constantine did no such thing; more likely, Hosius did, yet Eusebius needed this fabricated imperial support to defend his orthodoxy, omitting the names of figures like Hosius.

Eusebius thus raises several questions on Constantine's proactive role at Nicaea and his *Homoousion* inclusion. Beginning with a wider scholarly consensus, numerous contemporaneous and modern sources agree on *Homoousios's* deliberate inclusion as a term that Arius feared, a tool that defined orthodoxy in a way that manifested Arius and his followers' Nicene rejection.[15] Some sources, notably Philostorgius and Athanasius, even argue for a *Homoousion* alliance of Hosius and Alexander, intending to defeat and exile Arianism,[16] something Constantine possibly supported through his zealous destruction of Arius' works following Nicaea.[17] However, to assume that Constantine had such doctrinal knowledge to apply *Homoousios* as a term against the Arians is to make a weak assumption as we know little of Constantine's doctrinal reach.

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[12] David M. Gwynn, 'Reconstructing the Council of Nicaea', (2021), pp. 95–100 (p. 100).
[13] '291. Letter of Eusebius of Caesarea to his Church (325), on the Creed of Nicaea', p. 346.
[14] Ibid, p. 346.
[15] For the usage of Homoousia as an anti-Arian tool, see: Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004), 4 (p. 90); Kinzig, (2024), 6.4 (p. 262); Keegan A. Chandler, *Constantine and the Divine Mind: The Imperial Quest for Primitive Monotheism*, (Wipf & Stock: Oregon, 2019), p. 138; Sara Parvis, 'The Reception of Nicaea and Homoousios to 360', (2021), p. 252; Hanson, (1988), 6.4 (p. 172); '284. Letter of Arius to Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, c.320', p. 327.
[16] Philostorgius, *EH*, I.7; Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum,* 42.3.
[17] Rebecca Lyman, 'Arius and Arianism', (2021), p. 45; 'Letter of Constantine to the Bishops and the People', I.9

Following, we come to the question of the extent of Constantine's intervention and whether he personally included *Homoousios,* something that is debated through multitudinous interpretations. One inaccurate claim is the oversimplistic assertion of Timothy Barnes, who states that Constantine viewed Eusebius' beliefs as identical to his, yet proposed the interpolation of *Homoousios* to make them genuinely Orthodox.[18] Evidently, in lacking a doctrinal lens, Barnes excludes a crucial analysis of the extent of Eusebius' rhetoric, which fabricated this imperial backing to prevent his excommunication. Nonetheless, Ayres develops Barnes' argument, evoking a characterisation of Constantine as a great theologian by repositing Eusebius' claims, adding that Constantine 'spoke, endorsed, and clarified the term' while also adding that he 'partially understood *Homoousios* but included it without material connotation to please objectors.'[19] With this, both Kegan Chandler and Kinzig agree, further asserting that Constantine achieved a greater role in defining orthodoxy through the inclusion of *Homoousios* by allowing it to be interpreted in new ways,[20] and allowing its adjectival use in affirming the son's full divinity.[21] Still, as many scholars and I would agree, it is Hanson who demonstrates the reality of Constantine's role as small, manipulated, and ambiguous. Hanson counterposes claims establishing Constantine as a gifted theologian who "dominated" all the proceedings. He explains how Constantine had one or two interventions or suggestions of *Homoousios's* potential interpretation, and so we should not view him as a 'Talleyrand at the Congress of Vienna'.[22] With this, I agree, while opposing those views of Kinzig and Chandler through the assertion that Constantine's allowance of a vague interpretation of *Homoousios* failed to define orthodoxy as uncertainties on the nature of Christ persisted. Nonetheless, many still agree that Constantine was consequential, with the faith he established at Nicaea intending, 'above all', to restore

[18] Timothy Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire*, (Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, 2011), 6 (p. 122).
[19] Ayres, (2004), 4 (p. 96).
[20] Chandler, (2019), p. 138.
[21] Kinzig, (2024), 6.4 (p. 258).
[22] Hanson, (1988), 6.3 (p. 171).

concord to the empire.[23] Yet, our understandings of his role at Nicaea remain fragmented; was he heavily involved, an observing sideliner, or, regarding the extent of his involvement, fabricated? Overall, what is evident is that Constantine played some role in a fragmented process of 'harmonisation', aiming to define orthodoxy, which unsurprisingly persisted.[24]

The Shifting Sands of orthodoxy: Attempts to define orthodoxy from Constantius to Valens.

Constantine proved crucial in strengthening the foundations of discussions that aimed to define orthodoxy. Nonetheless, those debates surrounding the correct Trinitarian explanation that he was incapable of resolving, endured during the reign of his sons Constantius II (337–361 AD) and Constans (337–350 AD), and their successors Jovian (363–364 AD), Gratian (367–383 AD), and Valens (364–378 AD), intensifying with a religious fervour that convoluted the emperor's role. Arius's heresy soon died out, yet its questions survived into the middle decades of the Fourth Century AD, alongside Athanasius's polemical orations that labelled anyone not following Alexander's teachings as Arian. Consequently, a landscape was created in which the emperor either championed orthodoxy or was an 'Arian' for not adhering to a specific rhetoric.

During Constantius II's and Constans' reigns, imperial contributions to a successful definition of orthodoxy varied. Beginning with Constantius, our sources often painted him as Arian and not a supporter of 'genuine orthodoxy'. These claims, one being Athanasius' that states that Constantius leaned toward Arianism, and the other being the modern interpretation of John Leedom that paints Constantius as a 'lukewarm Arian',[25] are egregious. Constantius repeatedly prioritised compromise and unity, legitimising his imperial authority by emulating

[23] Jesus Christ, 'Son of God, Savior: 1700th Anniversary of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325-2025)', *International Theological Commission* (Holy See: Vatican, 2025) 3.2 (p. 29) https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20250403_1700-nicea_fr.html [accessed 13 April 2025].
[24] Heather, (2023), p. 68.
[25] Joe W. Leedom, 'Constantius II: Three Revisions', *Byzantion*, 48.1 (1978),

Constantine's. During the consecration of the Golden church of Constantine, bishops targeted by that anti-Arian Athanasian polemic preached to Constantius that they were 'genuine Christians and not Arians.' Therefore, Constantius, demonstrating his desire for concord and an end to heresy, called a council to define orthodoxy through compromise. Constantius's council of Antioch (341 AD) highlighted one of the initial indicators of Constantius's orthodoxy. Being enmity to *Homoousios* due to its incendiary nature, terms such as *ousia* (essence) and *una substantia* (one hypostasis) were omitted. Many scholars, famously Lewis Ayres, have therefore debated whether this council aimed to 'supplant' the Nicene Creed.[26] Still, I believe more that Constantius organised Antioch in a way that equally revealed the plan for his authoritative beliefs. Consisting of four creeds, two revealed how Constantius undertook the promulgation of an acceptable orthodoxy. Simplification after simplification, the second creed addressed a peculiar trinitarian subsistence emphasizing the idea of 'three in subsistence and in agreement one'[27] while the fourth creed avoided Nicene consubstantiality overall. *Homoousios* was intentionally targeted with *ousia* and *substantia* being removed entirely. Even further, Constantius anathematised all who taught that the son was a creature, demonstrating his own miscalculated insistence on a 'middle way'.[28]

Regardless, Constantius was perceived as distrustful by Constans, adhering to Athanasius' opposition to any non-Nicene orthodoxy. Constans and Athanasius believed that an ecumenical council would uphold unity, thus convening the council of Serdica in 342/343 AD, which Hilary of Poitiers believed would free the Catholic Church from dissensions. Serdica, however, was nothing more than a remarkable disaster deepening an already damaging ecclesial rift. Unsurprisingly, Serdica failed, and despite Hilary's hope for this council, Leedom and Ayres agree that this council was a 'total fiasco'[29] and a 'disaster'.[30] Regardless, to idealists like Hilary

[26] Ayres, (2004), 5 (p. 119).
[27] Athanasius, *De Synodis,* 23 (p. 1130).
[28] J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (Longman: New York, 1972) p. 266, cited in Leedom, (1978), p. 138.
[29] Leedom, (1978), p. 138.
[30] Ayres, (2004), 5 (p. 123).

the failure of the council ended up being unjustifiably attributed to the emperor rather than to disagreeing bishops. Despite pleading to Constantius not to forget those who in 341 AD cried, 'I am Christian, not Arian',[31] Hilary would have been better to remark this at those bickering bishops who doomed the council. Hilary was not at Serdica and, at this point in his career, had not encountered the rhetoric of Constantius II that was sympathetic to Orthodoxies that some viewed as Arian. Therefore, his anti-imperial rhetoric was misguided, as Constantius demonstrated the same intention to define orthodoxy through unity that he would in the 350s. Still, despite Constans' and Constantius' adherence to Constantinian religious policy, Serdica failed as both emperors competed, intending to achieve religious accommodation and revealing an imperial struggle for supremacy that extensively characterised the Fourth Century AD. That said, while Constantius pursued a peace-necessitating orthodoxy defined through inclusivity, Constans is remembered as genuinely Orthodox for fervently preaching the legitimacy of Nicene orthodoxy.

All things considered, Constantius still pursued unity, and in his mind needed to adopt a stricter stance towards orthodoxy, becoming involved in establishing a Lengthy Creed (*Ekthesis Macrostichos*) at the Council of Antioch in 345 AD. Its credal contents, which Socrates' Ecclesiastical History notes, affirmed that 'those who believed that the Son was created from nothing were considered aliens', while 'those who preached three Gods were anathematised'.[32] Constantius now defined orthodoxy through what was deemed unacceptable, with this creed also developing his pursuit of a compromising orthodoxy by altering the Fourth Antiochene Creed and reaffirming a perfect Trinitarianism. Following this, Constantius convened several councils, dictating religious policies he wished the populace to accept: The first Synod of Sirmium (351 AD), which Constantius convened to condemn Photinus of Sirmium for views that were dangerously close to Paul of Samosata's monarchianism, re-promoted the Fourth Antiochene Creed, taking a stance against Marcellus and Photinus by writing out 27 anathemas.

[31] Hilary of Poitiers, 'Address of the Synod of Serdica to the Emperor Constantius', p. 65.
[32] Socrates, *EH*, II. XIX (p. 129).

Still, Western bishops continued to distrust Eastern orthodoxy and in branding all who distinguished between the Father and the Son through three hypostases as unorthodox, pushed Constantius to arbitrarily persist against them at Milan and Arles (355 AD), further enforcing the Fourth Antiochene Creed and exiling Athanasius again.

Even so, Constantius' mendacious characterisation as an Arian persisted, while his credibility faltered due to his flexible orthodoxy. This was evidenced by his ephemeral support, at a Synod of Sirmium (357 AD), of an *Anomoian* Creed of Valens of Mursa that stressed that God was greater than the Son,[33] and which contained no anti-Arian anathemas. This 'Blasphemy of Sirmium', a problematic orthodoxy, Basil of Ancyra would attempt to refute at the Council of Ancyra (358 AD). Basil eagerly sent a delegation warning Constantius of the dangerous Arian implications of Valens' creed, winning Constantius over to what Leedom called a '*Homoean* doctrine' that was an 'eloquent comment' on Constantius' Arianism.[34] However, I find Leedom's declarations to be myopic. Leedom fails to address the synodical proceedings and significance of the Council of Ancyra, where Basil initially proposed a *Homoiousian* Creed in response to Valens' *Anomoianism*, before sending the delegation to Constantius. Instead of a *Homoean* Creed, Basil reproposed *Homoiousianism* at the Fourth Synod of Sirmium (358 AD), forming the foundational beliefs for his Dated Creed, asserting that 'the Son is like the Father in all things.'[35]

Basil's Dated Creed allowed the Westerners to view the Son as 'like' the Father in essence and will, and the Easterners to concur that 'like' did not mean identity, ensuring no Trinitarian disruption. However, since the Fourth Synod of Sirmium was a council of *Homoean* bishops pursuing a 'compromise formulary',[36] as Socrates claimed, we can understand how Basil's *Homoiousianism* became short-lived. This is because Constantius, in liking the ambiguity of the Dated Creed and viewing this council as an opportunity to create a compromising orthodoxy,

[33] Ibid, II. XXX (p. 156).
[34] Leedom, (1978), p. 140.
[35] Ibid, p. 140.
[36] Socrates, EH, II.XXXVII (p. 166).

repurposed Basil's Dated Creed by further diluting his *Homoiousianism*, reducing 'like in all things' to a consensually acceptable 'like'[37] at the second half of the Fourth Synod of Sirmium (359 AD). Unmistakably, Constantius demonstrated his authority by pushing Basil into conforming to a creed that he considered more unifying than the *Homoiousianism* that was even considered at Nicaea,[38] chartering a middle ground between an unscriptural *Homoousion* and the neo-Arian Dedication Creed. Furthermore, being puppeteered by Constantius, *Homoeans*, and Acacius of Caesarea, Basil now unwillingly represented the foundational element of *Homoeanism*, unwillingly assisting Constantius' wish to reject *Homoousion* terminology[39] through a *Homoeanism* that defended the unity of the Father and the Son, while rejecting unscriptural terms.[40] Most evidently, Constantius held the unity of the East and the West together through this compromising belief that 'the Father and the Son are simply [yet ambiguously] alike.'[41]

Regardless, despite this compromise, Constantius required an acceptance of this reconciliatory *Homoeanism*. Therefore, at the twin councils of Ariminum and Seleucia (359 AD), Constantius pursued approval. However, as a challenge to the success of the imperial authority, I firmly believe that no historian will dispute that Constantius' ambition is partially part of the reason for the outcomes of these councils being catastrophic and underachieving. For one, Constantius split the councils, guaranteeing that the two sides never met. As a result, the bishops at Ariminum initially rejected Constantius' *Homoean* Dated Creed, reaffirming Nicaea's *una substantia* before Constantius forced their acceptance of a modified *Homoeanism* at Nike.[42] Contrarily, the Eastern bishops at Seleucia also rejected Constantius' Dated Creed, yet this time

[37] Ibid, II. XXXVII (p. 166).
[38] Phillip R. Amidon, S.J., 'Philostorgius: Church History', *Writings from the Greco-Roman World*, 23, (Society of Biblical Literature: Atlanta, 2007), XV.
[39] Kinzig, (2024), 6.5.
[40] David M. Gwynn, *Christianity in the Later Roman Empire: A Sourcebook*, (Bloomsbury: London, 2014) p. 79.
[41] Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 8 (p. 1113).
[42] Nathan Israel Smolin, *Christ the Emperor: Roman Emperor and Christian Theology in the 4th Century AD*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2024), p. 341.

in favour of reaffirming the Fourth Antiochene Creed and the Council of Ancyra's *Homoiousian* ideals.[43]

Nevertheless, Constantius succeeded in failing and weakening the argument for a strong imperial role. For one, divisions persisted, especially since, as fervent Nicene supporters claim, Constantius' *Homoeanism* was a blatant promotion of the wrong orthodoxy. Thus, Constantius' failure to promote Nicene orthodoxy landed him in the mouth of contemporaneous polemics, with champions of Nicene orthodoxy portraying Constantius as a Judas Iscariot of orthodoxy. This was an extremely egregious portrayal, demonstrated best by the polemics of the three pro-Nicene contemporaries. Firstly, there is the polemic of fervent anti-Arian bishop Lucifer of Cagliari, whose *Moriundum esse pro dei filio* characterises Constantius as a 'corrupter of truth' who is 'wretched' in matters where he thinks he is great.[44] Finally, and on the more extreme, the rhetoric of Athanasius and Hilary continued this invective, with Athanasius repeatedly holding Constantius responsible for the actions of the 'Arians' against the orthodox,[45] and Hilary considering him a literal antichrist who had assumed power.[46] Still, I would argue that these polemic representations of Constantius, clearly responding to his harmonious orthodoxy, are prejudiced from the perspective of adamant supporters of Nicene consubstantiality. They are characterisations that I refute, as Constantius never acted so tyrannically. Instead, Constantius followed the religious policy of concord that Constantine exemplified, and in the end, Constantius proved not to be thwarted:[47] His Dated Creed eventually formed the Constantinopolitan Creed of the Council of Constantinople (360), which defined the nature of the Trinity as 'God from God, like (*Homoeos*) the Father' and

[43] Ibid, p. 341.
[44] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 1-2.
[45] David M. Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2012), pp. 40–50 (p. 48).
[46] Hilary of Poitiers, *In Constantium*, 1-2.
[47] Leedom, (1978), p. 141.

abolished the application of *ousia* and *substantia* to the Father and the Son as they were nothing more than alike.[48]

That said, I argue that Constantius proved incapable of creating peace or defining orthodoxy, leading many, such as Jerome, to groan that the world was astonished to find itself Arian.[49] Eventually, however, Constantius ceased to be and with his death the role of the emperor in defining orthodoxy was changed again, now through the accession of the idiosyncratic Jovian who reiterates the study's assertion that not all emperors were wholeheartedly resolute in attempting to define orthodoxy. Jan Willem Drijvers, in *The Forgotten Reign of the Emperor Jovian*, discusses the interactions between Jovian and the recently unexiled Athanasius. 'It is possible that they met and deliberated on extensive ecclesial conflicts from Hierapolis to Antioch, a topic Jovian had difficulty understanding'. Drijvers, however, erroneously asserts that Jovian did not understand the differing theological perspectives on the Son's relationship to the Father,[50] as we know little about the extent of Jovian's theology. Hanson, for one, tells us that Jovian knew the *Homoousion* doctrine.[51] Nonetheless, Athanasius perceived potential in Jovian to promote Nicaea and combat polemical Arianism. Following his reinstalment after a third exile, aiming to flatter the emperor, Athanasius famously penned a letter in 363 which stated how beneficial it is for an emperor 'to learn about heavenly matters.'[52] Athanasius conveyed the faith of Nicaea to the emperor, bluntly warning against the teachings of Arius, which he had attributed to omissions of the concept of 'coessentiality'.[53]

However, contemporary polemical influence upon the emperor resurfaced and was unavoidable even now, as in Athanasius' *Petitiones Arianorum* from Lucius to Jovian, a different narrative of Jovian is portrayed—one that re-establishes the notion of a crafted imperial image.

[48] Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 30 (p. 1144).
[49] Jerome, *The Dialogue Against the Luciferians*, 19.
[50] Jan Willem Drijvers, *The Forgotten Reign of the Emperor Jovian*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2022), pp. 93–102 (p. 95).
[51] Hanson, (1988), 18.4 (p. 580).
[52] Athanasius, 'Letter LVI — To the Emperor Jovian c.363', (p. 1363).
[53] Ibid, p. 1363.

Akin to Eusebius' Constantine, the petitions depict an emperor with a distorted image, presenting Jovian as a buttress for Athanasius' Nicene *Homoousion* embrace. Drijvers correctly reveals how the petitions serve the polemic of Athanasius.[54] There is an almost grand exaggeration of Nicene orthodoxy that these petitions imply Jovian supports; he sternly informs Lucius and the Arians that he has reinstated Athanasius for upholding correct Orthodox opinions and teaching accordingly.[55] This claim is evidently propagandist. While Jovian may have supported the legitimisation of Nicene orthodoxy, the petitions asserting his steadfastness in defence of Athanasius and *Homoousion* provide a strong inclination to believe that this may be a Jovian crafted by Athanasius. Therefore, I am more disposed to agree with Drijvers' view that Jovian was likely a figure who did not take sides in Christological debates and was easily perceived as a tool by both Nicene and anti-Nicene Catholics.[56]

Jovian, however, had no significantly long reign to evaluate and analyse attempts to define orthodoxy, and with his death, the landscape of imperial attempts to define orthodoxy shifted into another incongruous phase similar to Constantius' and Constans'. Gratian's Western accession and the problematic counterpart of Valens' Eastern accession reaffirm how defining orthodoxy through imperial actions was both Daedalian and involuted. Gratian, despite beginning his reign with neutrality towards ecclesiastical matters, maintained an extent of 'defined orthodoxy', primarily due to his increased Nicene support in the 370s. Contrastingly, Valens faced the same degree of criticism that Constantius confronted. Promoting a similar sense of accommodation for 'heretical Orthodoxies' that Constantius had undertaken, Valens embraced a *Homoean* doctrine. I do, however, believe that Valens' criticism is quite harsh. Valens desired, like Constantine once had, a brotherly unity within orthodoxy. Noel Lenski correctly

[54] Drijvers, (2022), p. 97.
[55] Ibid, p. 99.
[56] Ibid, p. 100.

deliberates that despite exiling Athanasius in 365 AD, involving himself in theological disputes, and acting as arbitrarily as Constantius, Valens had the enforcement of 'concord' in mind.[57]

The involvements of Valens and Gratian, however, help us understand emperors a bit better. Generally speaking, when we discuss how emperors defined orthodoxy, we fail to categorise them as either emperors who championed one orthodoxy against any other deemed heretical, such as Gratian, or those emperors who chose not to take sides but endeavoured to please all by promoting an accommodating and compromising orthodoxy, as Valens did. Thus, the reign of Valens, while historically criticised, demonstrated an imperial attempt to define orthodoxy that was characterised by uniformity and peace. The issue with Valens, however, was that much like Constantius, he believed that acting forcefully was the right approach, failing to realise that 'belief cannot be dictated by force.'[58] Still, history misguidedly holds Valens against his Arian baptism, while his life was neither heretical nor Arian. We can say of Valens the same way we will tell of Gratian that many of their religious policies and attempts at defining orthodoxy were significantly influenced by key bishops. Just as Ambrose will be seen as influencing Gratian, Eudoxius of Antioch and Euzoius of Antioch were two Arians influencing Valens. To better understand the role of emperors in defining orthodoxy, we must examine how key Church figures influenced their role.

In recalling a synod under Valens in 364 AD at Lampsacus, *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* reiterates how the arguments of the Basil-backing *Homoiousians* at Lampsacus were brushed aside in the face of a Valens who believed that Eudoxius's *Homoeanism* was superior.[59] This account by Sozomen forms Noel Lenski's construction of the argument that Eudoxius and Euzoius played a significant role in Valens' religious policies. It was Eudoxius who pushed Valens into 'annulling the *Homoiousian* synod at Lampsacus',[60] while Euzoius encouraged Valens's

[57] Noel Lenski, *Failure of Empire, Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A. D*., (University of California Press: California, 2002) pp. 211–263 (p. 243).
[58] Ibid, p. 243
[59] Sozomenus, *EH*, VI.VII (p. 779).
[60] Lenski, (2002), p. 244.

instatement of a *Homoean* bishop at Alexandria, as noted by Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. Valens, however, was a victim, and many contemporaries pitied him, such as Gregory of Nazianzus, who claimed that Valens was debased by an entourage of *Homoean* advisers in his company.[61] Interestingly, Gregory is not as erroneous in this regard as the help and subversion from Eudoxius, Euzoius, and Valens of Mursa, pushed Valens to exile *Homoiousian* bishops, contrastingly instating *Homoean* bishops and allowing Arianism to triumph. Regardless, despite the bishops' efforts around him, Valens still wished to champion the unifying, simplistic *Homoeanism* of the Constantinopolitan Creed, which he believed would create peace and prosperity.[62] That said, harsh attacks upon *Homoiousianism* and manipulated support of bordering-Arian-*Homoeanism* have left Valens labelled as an Arian sympathiser.

Nonetheless, Valens and Gratian intended to define orthodoxy and create harmony in the Church,[63] yet their natures and actions placed them in opposition. Gratian championed a defined Nicene orthodoxy, while Valens promoted a *Homoean* doctrine of simplicity and peace that legitimised him and his continuity with the reign of Constantius.[64] Regardless, the emperor's efforts did little in the grander scale of things. For his part, Gratian fervently defended Nicene orthodoxy, yet his support for that orthodoxy was also extensively puppeteered. Around 378 AD, it is thought that Gratian became close friends with Ambrose of Milan, who would later become his Eudoxius. Ambrose held Nicene orthodoxy in high esteem, making his encounter with Gratian pivotal. Having an imperial ally who 'sympathised' with Ambrose's ideals facilitated an 'effective' process of countering the *Homoeans*, who Ambrose found immensely troubling.

Consequently, to initiate the process of excluding the heretical *Homoeans* from the Nicene landscape, Ambrose wished for a council in the West to challenge those *Homoeans* that threatened *Homoousion* orthodoxy, and thus the council of Aquileia (381 AD), which was

[61] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration XLIII* (43), (p. 802).
[62] Lenski, (2002), p. 243.
[63] Ibid, p. 243.
[64] Smolin, (2024), pp. 317–338 (p. 325).

appealed primarily to Gratian,[65] sought to achieve this. To effectively understand why we remember Aquileia as a key council, we must recognise its reiteration of our study's view of the emperor as a figure who was used as a tool by bishops for the pursuit of one orthodoxy. When we observe councils like Aquileia, we must remember the fabricated Arianism that our contemporaries do not mention. Towards the end of the Fourth Century AD, various Orthodoxies—the *Homoiousian* semi-Arians, the *Homoeans*, and finally the *Anomoeans*—were frequently categorised as Arian in an Athanasian manner, with the prevailing orthodoxy always being Nicaea. This therefore meant that at Aquileia, the *Homoean* opposition led by Palladius of Ratiaria was blown to smithereens by a widely superior Ambrose. Ambrose thought he was doing the right thing by driving out heresy, as in a letter of 381 AD to Theodosius, where he justifies calling Aquileia, he states how much easier it was to defeat heresy at Aquileia than to establish concord among the Catholics.[66]

The *Homoean* misfortune at Aquileia, however, equally stemmed from the fact that Gratian had condemned Ambrose to explain his faith in 378 AD, something Ambrose had taken as an opportunity to actually convince Gratian of his opponent's unorthodox nature, rather than explain his own. Emulating typical Athanasian polemic in the first two books of his *De Fide*, Ambrose's opponents 'taught' that the Father was 'dissimilis' from the Son, labelling the *Homoean* bishops as 'radical *Anomoeans*'.[67] Palladius, of course, took great offence, yet the *Homoean* bishop had little to say or do in the face of Ambrose and a Gratian who was now an unwavering Nicene Orthodox. Ambrose had convinced Gratian not to invite the Eastern bishops to Aquileia, now a council where the opposition to the *Homoeans* consisted of a group of radical *Homoousion* bishops and an emperor who wagged his tail alongside Ambrose.

However, the Council of Aquileia furthered divisions between the East and West and between bishops and the emperor. In executing Aquileia the way he did, especially through his

[65] Hanson, (1988), 18.5 (p. 596).
[66] Ambrose, 'Letter 13 to the Emperor Theodosius 381/382, On the results of the Council of Aquileia'.
[67] Steinhauser, Council of Aquileia, p. 277.

exclusion of the East, Ambrose distanced himself from the East and Theodosius I, Valens' successor, while despite Gratian and Ambrose temporarily curtailing the *Homoean* threat in the West, the heresy persisted. Overall, Gratian failed to resolve debates over orthodoxy with a diverse group of bishops, leaving Theodosius to attempt, once more, to define and implement orthodoxy, sidelining the West and Ambrose.

The Device of Theodosius I: A Study of Theodosius I's insufficient attempts to define orthodoxy

Theodosius I's accession marked the conclusion of the Fourth Century AD imperial attempts to define orthodoxy. Despite ruling in the East from 379 AD. until 392 AD., Theodosius influenced the entire empire, particularly in light of the legacy of Valentinian I (364-375 AD) and his irreligiosity. He is pivotal to our study as his 'successful' definitional process arose as much from his policies as from his remarkable adherence to Nicene Trinitarianism. Thomas Hodgkin's *The Dynasty of Theodosius* emphatically states how Theodosius initially refrained from aligning himself with either side of the Arian Controversy[68] till after an urgent baptism from the bishop Acholius.[69] Falling ill and fearing death, Theodosius ardently baptised himself in the Trinitarian faith upheld by his father yet soon recovered through 'divine intervention'. Following this, the first thing Theodosius initiated post-recovery was an embrace of an anti-heretical stance, convening a council to champion peace and define a superior orthodoxy. Thus, at a synod in Constantinople, emulating his predecessors, Theodosius intended to continue the unifying stances of Constantius, Valens, and Constantine alongside their acceptance of ecclesiastical dominance.

The Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople (381 AD), held 56 years after the first Ecumenical council in Nicaea (325), continued a legacy of upholding a resolute co-eternal Trinitarianism. Naturally, the council possesses issues that obscure our understanding of it. Its

[68] Thomas Hodgkin, *The Dynasty of Theodosius*, (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991) pp. 107–110
[69] Socrates, *EH*, V. VI.

doctrinal decisions are non-existent, leaving us with an encyclical sent to the Westerners informing them of what transpired. As for the proclaimed orthodoxy, the Nicene Creed of 325 AD had taken on various forms, yet a version of it was made official in 381 AD, when the Son was declared as 'of one being with the Father. For Theodosius, however, the Council needed to reassert peace with unity as its sole objective.[70] Yet, the difference with Theodosius championing one orthodoxy, as compared to his predecessors, is that Theodosius was an emperor who contemporaries considered on the right side of orthodoxy. According to the Eastern perspective, all the persecutions and oppositions since Nicaea were accepted for the sake of that evangelical orthodoxy[71] which Theodosius vehemently supported. For once, there were no antagonistic polemics crafted to attack the emperor, or if there were, they were undoubtedly destroyed. As Socrates tells us, Theodosius acted wholeheartedly for the faith, even including in discussions groups that were frowned upon, such as the Macedonians. Inclusion promoted unity per his policy, and this was unopposed.[72] Unaware to his fanatic contemporaries, however, Theodosius acted the same way his predecessors had when it came to defining orthodoxy, yet the only difference in the reception of Theodosius from our sources, as we will see, is that he was doing this for the right orthodoxy, and so no tyrannical characteristic was polemicised, while his arbitrary character was championed.

Eventually, orthodoxy was ordained as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit being equal in three perfect hypostases and 'in dignity equal,' reaffirming 'the single divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within (sub) an equal majesty and an Orthodox (pia) trinity'.[73] Through this, Theodosius simultaneously continued the imperial characteristic of 'attributing the definition of orthodoxy to the legitimate bishops', and expelling heresy, now immensely championed for it. Yet what had changed? Constantius and Valens had done the same, so why was it different now that it was done in the name of a legitimate orthodoxy? What changed is

[70] The Synodical Letter, Second Ecumenical Council (381 CE), p. 194.
[71] Ibid, p. 196.
[72] Socrates, *EH*, V. VIII.
[73] Hanson, (1988), 23.3 (p. 804).

that the emperor now vehemently stood for the orthodoxy of our sources. Firstly, no one, except "heretics", opposed Theodosius' *Cunctos Populos* edict, which forcefully declared Damasus of Rome and Peter of Alexandria as the spearheads of genuine orthodoxy. Of course, naming bishops as 'paragons of pro-Nicene orthodoxy'[74] mattered as this went hand in hand with the Church's recognition of bishops who were 'singularly representative' of orthodoxy through their writings and expertise. The difference now, however, was that while Constantius and Valens had done the same with the bishops they promoted, such as Eudoxius, they were not adherents to what our sources believed was the genuine orthodoxy; this, therefore, warranted those contemporary polemic characterisations of the emperors, something Theodosius was exempt from.

It is due to that assertion that Theodosius's ability for forceful imposition should not be discredited; he was very capable of imposing his adamancy towards Nicene Trinitarian, vehemently opposing the further uprising of Arianism. What differed, however, is that Theodosius was doing all of this for the 'legitimate orthodoxy', and thus, the following examples were justified and unchallenged. Sozomen tells us that the Arian Lucius was chased out of Alexandria,[75] while concurrently, Socrates states that the Arian bishop Demophilius was asked if he would subscribe to the *Homoousion* faith yet was exiled and told to quit his churches upon refusing this.[76] Theodosius was doing the same thing Valens had done when he exiled Meletius of Antioch.[77] Furthermore, while Valens faced criticism for promoting Eudoxius against the *Homoiousians* at Lampsacus, Theodosius' promotion of bishops aligned with Meletius gained no opposition, as he supported the most evangelical faith. Unmistakably, what mattered for contemporaries, and for Theodosius, was that orthodoxy was defined through that fundamental idea of what was Orthos (right) and what was Pseudo (wrong), therefore anathematising

[74] Mark Delcogliano, 'The Emergence of the Pro-Nicene Alliance', (2021), p. 278.
[75] Sozomenus, *EH*, VII. V.
[76] Socrates, *EH*, V. VII.
[77] Theodoret, *EH*, IV. XII.

Orthodoxies such as the Sabellians, Marcellians, and Apollinarians[78] and their 'teachings of madmen."[79] It was clear that sources justified Theodosius' imposing reiteration of the phrase 'anathema to heresy' as they believed it was in support of the legitimate orthodoxy, something Theodosius demonstrated, especially through his *Nullis Haereticis*,[80] describing a pro-Nicene defender as one who believed in the undivided substance of the uncorrupted trinity and the Father's indivisible unity.[81]

Still, at heart, Theodosius, like every other emperor before him, maintained that idea of concord, peace, and unity in mind. All that changed was that he promoted harmony for the legitimate faith [according to our sources]. Likewise, just like Constantine, Constans, and Valens, he practised his role of an enforcing observer while still being capable of imposing himself arbitrarily. Furthermore, he also understood the importance of a consensus, and like his predecessors, prioritised having bishops on his side and distancing himself from polemically labelled so-called heretics. Yet, because of his spirited support for Nicene Trinitarianism, sources turned a blind eye to the way he went about defining orthodoxy and gaining his consensus—arbitrarily or through clear explanation of the faith—which, while akin to those emperors deemed Arian or antichrists, warranted no vitriolic polemic of his imperial involvement. That said, Theodosius' orthodoxy still managed to create a radical shift from the dangerously Sabellian Nicene Creed. His Trinitarian orthodoxy was so distinct that I unchallengingly agree with J.N.D. Kelly's assertion that Constantinople represented an entirely new creed rather than an adaptation or 'modification' of Nicaea.[82] '*Ousia*' and 'consubstantial with the Father' were redeployed, stating 'of the same being', allowing orthodoxy to remain relatively Nicene.

[78] The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Canons of the Council of Constantinople (381), Canon I (p. 365).
[79] CTh, 16.1.2.i.
[80] Ibid, 16.5.6.
[81] Delcogliano, (2021), p. 277.
[82] J.N.D Kelly, (1972), pp. 296–305 (p. 304).

Conclusion

Concluding our analysis of the Theodosian device of unwavering orthodoxy, we may undertake a summarisation of how Fourth Century AD. emperors attempted to define orthodoxy. Ahead of this, I would like to reassert that presently, our Catholic and Orthodox Churches are still theologically divided in regards to the Trinity, so orthodoxy has yet to be correctly defined. None of the emperors examined successfully defined an enduring orthodoxy. Be that as it may, most emperors consistently pursued unity and religious unification; despite what form of orthodoxy was promoted, their primary concern was that a form of orthodoxy was championed. Nonetheless, influential contemporary ecclesiastics with sectarian views of orthodoxy extensively undermined these imperial attempts.

Furthermore, imperial conciliary congregations formed only one part of the puzzle of defining orthodoxy. The emperor's approach varied, complicating the goal. Attempts to define orthodoxy ranged from imposing an orthodoxy influenced by bishops like Athanasius and Eudoxius to supporting an individualistic and compromising orthodoxy, intending to unite divided Christians. Thus, as a limitation of the extent to which emperors attempted to define orthodoxy, our study has demonstrated that emperors were not always central to many conciliary proceedings, as experienced bishops often were. Emperors were more significant for their ability to impose outcomes influenced by various parasitic *Homoousion*, *Homoiousian*, or *Homoean* figures.

Concludingly, emperors failed to define orthodoxy in terms of theological expositions but were crucial in pursuing a workable definition. Furthermore, sources portrayed some emperors as champions of one orthodoxy or heretical "Arians"; however, this characterisation is erroneous. They were not heretical; instead, they leaned towards a legitimate orthodoxy. Unfortunately, while lacking doctrinal expertise, emperors regrettably allowed ecclesiastical authorities to control the definitions of orthodoxy, authorities who often favoured one orthodoxy while branding others as heretical. Emperors merely entrenched the "victorious orthodoxy", and only Theodosius can be said to have significantly attempted to promote one definitive orthodoxy, yet

he, too, could not achieve a long-lasting consensus. Post-Theodosius, these debates persisted as orthodoxy remained and remains too fragmented and complex to define, despite ongoing attempts to do so.

Appendix I

Glossary page of Orthodox terms

1. Homoousianism: The Orthodox doctrine posits that the Son is Consubstantial (same substance or essence) with the Father and that they are also identical in essence (ousia), nature, or substance. Homoousianism also places an emphasis on the coeternal divinity of the Father and the Son.
2. Consubstantial: The belief that the Son is like the Father in all things (Homoousion/Homoousion tō Patri) yet equally used for Trinitarian emphasis that God is one essence split into three distinct beings: the Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit.
3. Homoiousianism: The Orthodox belief that the Son is of a similar but not identical being and/or essence with the Father. Like a perfect copy of something and so they are alike in nature yet not entirely identical.
4. Homoios kat ousian: like according to essence.
5. Homoianism/Homoeanism: an oversimplification of the Homoousion doctrine. It rejected Ousia (essence) and reduced the faith to a simple 'like'. Maintained an extent of subordination and did not specify the nature of ousia or divinity.
6. Heterousian/ Anomoian: A belief unique from the others that taught that the Son was neither Homoousion with the Father nor Homoean. Their main belief was 'dissimilis' (dissimilar) in essence or nature (Anhomoios)
7. Sabellian: Emphasised the unity and monarchical nature of God and rejected the trinitarian doctrine while also preaching modalism.
8. Modalism: A belief that the identities of the Trinity are not separate and distinct entities but rather manifestations of one God.
9. Adoptionism: The Adoptionists proclaimed Jesus an adopted man who gained divinity through the transference of the divine Logos into him. Dangerously preached man-to-divine rather than divine-to-man

10. Marcellianism: An extreme Sabellianism that viewed the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as transitory statuses that eventually merged into one God. It had Platonic influences.
11. Una substantia: one substance
12. Ousia: essence

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