

Standing Apart

*Mormon Historical Consciousness
and the Concept of Apostasy*



Edited by

MIRANDA WILCOX and

JOHN D. YOUNG

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In memory of
Spencer W. Kimball (1895-1985)
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*Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace,
and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers,
and the hearts of the fathers to the children.*

Doctrine and Covenants 98:16

*... for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the
fullness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher
in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding
together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should
take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the
present time.*

Doctrine and Covenants 128:18

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	00
<i>Contributors</i>	00
<i>Abbreviations and Notes on Sources</i>	00
Introduction, —MIRANDA WILCOX AND JOHN D. YOUNG	00

PART ONE: *Contextualizing The Lds Great Apostasy Narrative*

1. Historical Periodization in the LDS Great Apostasy Narrative,
—ERIC R DURSTELER 00
2. “Except among that Portion of Mankind”: Early Mormon Conceptions
of the Apostasy, —CHRISTOPHER C. JONES AND STEPHEN J. FLEMING 00
3. James Talmage, B.H. Roberts, and Confessional History in a Secular
Age, —MATTHEW BOWMAN 00
4. Narrating Apostasy and the LDS Quest for Identity, —MIRANDA WILCOX 00

PART TWO: *Re-Narrating the Apostasy: New Approaches*

5. Competing Histories in the Hebrew Bible and in the Latter-day Saint
Tradition, —CORY D. CRAWFORD 00
6. Latter-day Saint Perceptions of Jewish Apostasy at the Time of Jesus,
—MATTHEW J. GREY 00
7. Purity and Parallels: Constructing the Apostasy Narrative of Early
Christianity, —TAYLOR G. PETREY 00

8. Rereading the Council of Nicaea and its Creed, —LINCOLN H. BLUMELL 00

9. Ancestors: Anti-Arian and Anti-Mormon Discourse in the Struggle for Christianity, —ARIEL BYBEE LAUGHTON 00

10. “Complexity and Richness”: Re-envisioning the Middle Ages for Mormon Historical Narratives, —SPENCER E. YOUNG 00

11. King Ratbod’s Dilemma: Apostasy and Restoration in the Sixteenth and Twenty-First Centuries, —JONATHAN GREEN 00

12. Covenantal Pluralism in the Qur’ān: Alternatives to the Binary Logic of Apostasy,—DAVID D. PECK 00

13. Long Narratives: Towards a New Mormon Understanding of Apostasy —JOHN D. YOUNG 00

Epilogue: “We have only the Old Thing”: Rethinking Mormon Restoration —TERRYL GIVENS 00

Appendix: First Presidency Statement on God’s Love for All Mankind 00

Index 00

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We dedicate this book to the memory of two LDS church presidents, Spencer W. Kimball and Gordon B. Hinckley, the prophets of our early childhood and early adult years, respectively. Their sermons, revelations, and official statements form much of the foundation for the conversations that take place in this book. In presiding over periods of unprecedented growth of the LDS church, their leadership ultimately necessitated a fuller and richer LDS engagement with the world's diverse religious, cultural, and historical traditions. From the beginning, our chief goal for this project has been to contribute to that ongoing engagement.

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Abbreviations

BYU	Brigham Young University
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
FARMS	Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
D&C	Doctrine and Covenants
GCS	Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller
KJV	King James Version of the Bible
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
LDS	Latter-day Saints
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
NRSV	The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
PG	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca</i> . Ed. Jacques Paul Migne. Paris, 1856-66.
PL	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i> . Ed. Jacques Paul Migne. Paris, 1844-55.
SC	Sources Chrétiennes

Notes on Sources

We cite the following apparatus published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 2013 unless otherwise noted. The texts can be accessed at www.lds.org/scriptures.

The Bible Dictionary

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Holy Bible.

The Pearl of Great Price, including Joseph Smith—History [JS-History]

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains archives of its current curriculum materials, magazines, and scriptures at www.lds.org.

Ensign (1971-)General Conference Archive (1971-)

Liahona (1971-)Periodicals formerly published by or for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can be accessed through the Church History archive at <http://archive.org/details/churchhistorylibrary> or archives listed below.

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Standing Apart

Rereading the Council of Nicaea and Its Creed

Lincoln H. Blumell

THE COUNCIL OF Nicaea, convoked in A.D. 325 under the patronage of Constantine I and long recognized as the first ecumenical council of the ancient church, typically evokes strong feelings of antipathy from most Latter-day Saints.¹ Even a cursory survey of the limited LDS scholarship on this church council reveals that this council is often maligned and treated with considerable disdain and contempt. While Latter-day Saint denunciations of this council range over various issues, from accusations of priestcraft, to philosophical speculation run amok, to ecclesiastical and political grandstanding at the expense of doctrinal purity, there has never been a detailed assessment of this council from an LDS perspective that has substantively engaged with the council or its creed.² Furthermore, while LDS treatments are quick to point out the problems of Nicaea, no LDS scholars have taken the time to properly delimit the problems and explore whether there may be theological resonance with any of the conciliar propositions at Nicaea. For example, since the method for determining the timing of the celebration of Easter set forth at Nicaea is in principle followed by Latter-day Saints today, it may be argued that there is at least one element of the council with which Latter-day Saints find no fault. Since the Council of Nicaea has been represented as a defining event in the history of ancient Christianity and in the LDS Great Apostasy narrative, this study aims to elucidate this council with reference to LDS theology and Christology.

Contextualizing the Council of Nicaea

Regrettably, most LDS treatments of Nicaea are superficial and tend to present the council in vacuo, but one cannot begin to properly understand, let alone engage with, Nicaea without first grasping some of the underlying factors and theological

currents of the third and early fourth centuries.³ Furthermore, though most LDS (as well as some non-LDS) treatments of Nicaea tend to frame this dispute in Trinitarian terms, this assessment is not entirely accurate. Strictly speaking, the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) was not the focus of the council, as the status of the Holy Spirit was never substantively addressed; rather, the primary focus of the council had to do with delineating the proper ontological relationship between the Father and the Son as it pertained to the Son's divinity. More specifically, the council sought to articulate exactly how Jesus ought to be considered divine and, as such, how he ought to be viewed in relation to the Father. This issue was therefore not so much a debate about whether or not Jesus was divine, as both sides in this debate ascribed divinity to Jesus,⁴ as it was a debate that sought to clarify and qualify the exact nature of Jesus's divinity so as to maintain a facade of monotheism (as opposed to ditheism) without diminishing Jesus to the status of a demigod or creature.⁵

If one surveys Christian writers of the second and third centuries to see how they conceived of Jesus's divinity and articulated his relationship to the Father, two things become evident. The first is that no two writers seem to have agreed exactly on the specifics of these questions; the second is that if there was some general agreement shared between them, it was that Jesus was divine but that he was a distinct being from the Father and was subordinate to him.⁶ In fact, many of these same writers argued not only that Jesus was inferior to the Father but that he was even ontologically different from the Father, who alone was "ingenerate."⁷ Additionally, it may be noted that the term *Trinity* (Grk. τριάς; Lat. *trinitas*) is not used with any technical meaning, as it would be in subsequent centuries, to define and circumscribe the relationship existing among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁸

While it is generally the case that most Church Fathers of the second and third centuries regarded Jesus as subordinate to and distinct from the Father, there were a few notable exceptions. Leaving aside groups such as the Gnostics, Docetists, and Marcionites, who had a different understanding of Jesus's ontology as it related to the Father, there were a few Christians who argued for the absolute unity of the Father and the Son, so that they regarded them as basically one and the same being who had different modes of manifestation (i.e., Modalistic Monarchianism). However, what needs to be pointed out here is that those who espoused various forms of this view (e.g., Sabellius, Paul of Samosata) were widely criticized by their peers and condemned by a number of different church leaders.⁹

Keeping these theological antecedents in mind, it is now possible to broach the specific controversy that arose at the beginning of the fourth century and prompted the Council of Nicaea. Sometime circa A.D. 318 it is reported that the bishop Alexander of Alexandria (bp. c. 312–28) preached a sermon to some local clergy in which he attempted to expound the unity of the Father and the Son in

precise philosophical language. To one of the presbyters in attendance, a man named Arius, the sermon smacked of Sabellianism; Arius felt that Alexander had overemphasized the unity of the Father and Son at the expense of their distinctiveness and had made a number of claims that were theologically incorrect.¹⁰ The debate quickly shifted from a personal theological quarrel over the unity of the Father and the Son to a local dispute when both Alexander and Arius marshaled support from friends and local clergy; before long the whole church in Alexandria had become embroiled in this controversy and had taken sides. However, since Alexander naturally wielded more ecclesiastical authority and power than Arius, he convened a council of Egyptian bishops, formally excommunicated Arius, and then issued an encyclical letter to various bishops condemning the doctrines of Arius and explaining the reason for his excommunication.¹¹ Upon being excommunicated and driven from the city, Arius wrote to Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia to complain of his treatment and to make theological allies in the east.¹² Eventually Arius made his way to Nicomedia, continued to promote his cause through a vigorous epistolary campaign, and even sent a letter to Alexander defending his theological views;¹³ other bishops came to Arius's defense and reproached Alexander for not fully understanding Arius's position.¹⁴ Since so many prominent Christians from diverse parts of the empire took sides in the debate, it is easy to see how this controversy rapidly spread and polarized a number of different Christian communities.

This controversy was not entirely about Arius's protest against some of the teachings of Alexander. Arius also had some very particular ideas about the relationship between the Father and the Son and had been actively promoting them. However, the challenge with reconstructing Arius's theology is that few of Arius's writings survive, in large part because they were condemned to flames following the Council of Nicaea; therefore, much of what Arius allegedly taught has to be gleaned from the writings of his later opponents.¹⁵ According to them, Arius was adamant that the Father and Son were two distinct beings and that the Son was completely subordinate to the Father.¹⁶ That is, Arius seems to have believed that God alone was ingenerate whereas the Son was at some point created and brought into existence. It was reported that Arius and his followers often cited the Septuagint translation of Proverbs 8:22, taking "wisdom" to refer to the "Word" (Grk. *λόγος*) or Jesus, as evidence that while Jesus was the first of God's creations, he was nonetheless a creature.¹⁷ His opponents attributed the oft-cited phrase "there was when he was not" (*ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν*) to Arius to encapsulate his belief that Jesus was not coeternal with the Father.¹⁸ Here Arius was careful not to say "there was a time when he was not," though this phrase is sometimes mistakenly translated this way, because Arius acknowledged that Jesus's creation could have occurred anterior to the whole inception of time. Though Arius argued that Jesus was a creature, he was careful to differentiate him from humans by virtue of the

fact that Jesus was the very agent by which the creation of the world, and all things in it, came about. Nevertheless, as a creature, Jesus could be susceptible to change. Arius's logic here was that since creation itself presupposes a change, creatures by their very nature were susceptible to mutability and alteration in contradistinction to God, who alone was unchanging and immutable.¹⁹ This claim was an important component of Arius's Christology. While he was adamant that Jesus never sinned, he maintained that it was possible for Jesus to sin, given his nature. Jesus was in every sense morally mutable but chose not to succumb to temptation and sin.²⁰ Thus, for Arius, the temptations of Jesus were real in every sense of the word. This especially infuriated his opponents, since they argued that Arius had effectively admitted that Jesus could have actually fallen much like the devil but did not: not because by nature he was incapable of change and therefore completely immune to sin but because he made a choice to resist it.²¹ Though some of Arius's ideas were his own and seem to have originated with him, others were informed and shaped by earlier writers. Perhaps one of the reasons he was able to marshal a few very influential bishops to his side was that his ideas had a pedigree of some antiquity.²²

Notwithstanding the trouble the controversy was wreaking in the church, Constantine did not begin to play a very proactive role until autumn 324. Up to this point, tensions between Constantine and Licinius, the eastern emperor, had been escalating and were only resolved when Constantine defeated Licinius in the Battle of Chrysopolis in September 324 and became sole ruler of the entire empire. With the threat of Licinius neutralized, Constantine promptly turned his attention to the theological dispute and sent a letter to Alexander and Arius in which he spoke of his concern for the unity of the church and sternly warned them both to resolve their differences.²³ But neither the letter nor imperial threats quieted the controversy.²⁴ Therefore, a stronger remedy was needed, and sometime in late December 324 or early January 325 Constantine determined to hold a council to address the matter. Though this council would ultimately commence in May 325 at Nicaea, a city in central Bithynia,²⁵ it appears that it was initially determined that the council would take place in Ancyra in Galatia but it was then moved to Nicaea because it was closer to Constantine's eastern capital in Nicomedia.²⁶

Unfortunately, the conciliar proceedings for Nicaea are no longer extant; therefore, to reconstruct the broad outlines of this council a number of different and diverging sources must be drawn upon.²⁷ From these sources four key documents survive from the council: (1) a creed (*symbolum*), (2) a synodal letter addressed to the churches outlining the results of the council,²⁸ (3) a decree concerning the date of Easter,²⁹ and (4) twenty canons that related to matters of church discipline.³⁰ However, turning to most LDS treatments of Nicaea, it becomes evident that there is often little engagement, let alone much critical

assessment, of the key primary sources, as many treatments tend to base their analysis on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century confessional histories that are often quite hostile to Nicaea.³¹

When the council was announced bishops and churchmen from all over the empire were invited, and somewhere between 250 and 300 bishops attended the conference.³² According to tradition, the council opened on May 20, A.D. 325, and lasted anywhere from six weeks to two months.³³ Eusebius of Caesarea, an eyewitness, reports that on the first day of the council all in attendance met in a large room in one of the innermost chambers of the palace and, upon finding their seats, stood anxiously awaiting the arrival of the emperor. When the emperor arrived with a small coterie of attendants, he addressed the participants of the council with a short inaugural speech in Latin in which he entreated all present to come together in unity for the benefit of God's church.³⁴ Eusebius reports that, after the conclusion of Constantine's speech, theological discussions immediately ensued, discussions that Constantine mediated.³⁵

Given that there are no proceedings for the council, our knowledge of its day-to-day workings is incomplete; nevertheless, a few sources describe the apparent circumstances under which the Nicene Creed was drafted. It was reported that Arius, although he was not a bishop, was periodically allowed to attend various sessions where his teachings were vigorously discussed and debated.³⁶ Furthermore, his supporters were the first to try to get a creed accepted and so put forward one of their own.³⁷ But this creed was subsequently rejected, and it apparently engendered such opposition from certain quarters of the council that it was torn to pieces in the presence of all.³⁸ Such extreme acts of factionalism at the council were also attested by Athanasius, who reported that during the actual framing of the creed there were at times intense periods of strife and division over the use and implications of certain phrases.³⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea claimed that he was one of the central figures behind the creed itself. In a letter addressed to the congregations over which he had episcopal authority, Eusebius explained how the Nicene Creed came about, so as to prevent the spread of false reports and misleading gossip. He claims that he presented a creed that he had drafted at one session of the council and that it was readily accepted by the emperor, who promptly instructed others to sign it once the word for "same substance" (Grk. *ὁμοούσιος*; sometimes rendered "consubstantial") had been added.⁴⁰ Though the creed Eusebius presented to the council differs from the official version of the Nicene Creed by more than just one word, it seems reasonable that his creed may have served as some kind of general model for the Nicene Creed.

After the creed was finished, all bishops were asked to subscribe to it by signing a document that attested to its orthodoxy. Initially five bishops refused to sign, but after being threatened by the emperor, three changed their minds. The two

who refused to affirm the creed were exiled. Arius was also condemned, excommunicated, and exiled; it was further decreed that all of his writings should be consigned to flames.⁴¹

An LDS Reading of the Nicene Creed

The most well-known and enduring symbol of Nicaea is the creed issued by the council, which, on the one hand, was constructed to set forth a concise statement of belief about the Father and the Son that could be subscribed to by a broad range of Christians yet, at the same time, could effectively and decisively refute Arius's theology. Since the creed represents the single most important theological accomplishment of the council, it has often been the focus of LDS (and non-LDS) scholarship. However, there are a few significant misconceptions about the Nicene Creed that are often perpetuated in LDS scholarship that require clarification and correction. The first misconception has to do with the overt antipathy typically directed toward the creed in select LDS treatments. Undoubtedly such hostility can be traced to Joseph Smith's account of his First Vision, in which God told him that "all their creeds were an abomination" (JS-History 1:19). It is a common LDS assumption that this statement refers to the creedal statements of ancient Christianity, particularly the Nicene Creed; however, it seems more likely that it refers instead to the professions of belief of Joseph Smith's contemporaries.⁴²

Second, due in part to the general LDS antipathy toward this creed, some are quite uniformed about the tenets that the Nicene Creed professes. At least at a popular level, some Latter-day Saints expect that the Nicene Creed asserts that God is "invisible, without body, parts, or passions," but this oft-quoted line actually comes from the *Westminster Confession of Faith* drafted more than thirteen hundred years later (A.D. 1647).⁴³ This misconception has no doubt been fostered by certain LDS works that have discussed the concept of an immaterial God, using the very language contained in the *Westminster Confession*, while referring to the Nicene Creed.⁴⁴ Similarly, some Latter-day Saints occasionally confuse select phrases from the *Athanasian Creed*, a confession of faith that likely dates no earlier than the middle of the fifth century and was never ratified by an ecumenical council, with the *Nicene Creed*. This confusion results perhaps because authoritative LDS publications have used ambiguous language to describe the Nicene Creed: "The creed of Nicaea, the 'incomprehensible mystery,' of which its originators seemed so proud, precisely because it could not be understood, substituted for the personal God of love and for the Jesus of the New Testament an immaterial abstraction."⁴⁵ Finally, certain LDS treatments of the "Nicene Creed" do not actually treat this creed but, instead, treat the later "Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed," the definition of faith reportedly composed at the Council of Constantinople

some fifty-six years later in A.D. 381 and recited in the liturgy of many Christian denominations. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed alters, omits, and expands certain aspects of the Nicene Creed; an important addition is the section on the nature of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ The confusion likely arose from the fact that the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed is still used authoritatively by a number of Christian communities with the title “Nicene Creed.”

	Nicene Creed, English	Nicene Creed, Greek
1	We believe in one God, Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;	πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα θεὸν πατέρα παντοκράτορα, πάντων ὁρατῶν τε καὶ ἀοράτων ποιητήν,
2	And [we believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, who for us humans and for our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming human, suffered and rose again on the third day, and ascended into the heavens, is coming to judge the living and the dead;	καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ, τουτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί, δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο τὰ τε ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῆ, τὸν δι’ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα καὶ σαρκωθέντα, ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, παθόντα καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, ἀνελθόντα εἰς οὐρανοῦς, ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς,
3	And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit.	καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα.
4	But those who say “there was when he was not,” and “before he was born he was not,” and that “he was made of things that were not,” or assert that the Son of God is of a different essence or substance [from the Father] or that he is a creature, or subject to change or alteration—these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.	τοὺς δὲ λέγοντας “ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν” καὶ “πρὶν γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν” καὶ ὅτι “ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐγένετο” ἢ ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας φάσκοντας εἶναι ἢ κτιστὸν ἢ τρεπτὸν ἢ ἄλλοιωτὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, τοὺς ἀναθεματίζει ἡ καθολικὴ καὶ ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

Though a few different forms of the actual Nicene Creed exist, since it is preserved by various Church Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, on the whole the differences are fairly minor, so the original Nicene Creed can be reconstructed in its entirety with a high degree of confidence.⁴⁷ For convenience the creed may be divided into four parts, with the first three sections relating to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, respectively, and the final section serving as an anathema against the teachings of Arius:⁴⁸

Though the creed is much maligned in LDS scholarship, some Latter-day Saints may perhaps be surprised upon reading the actual creed to find that in various places it is seemingly more innocuous than they may initially have expected. Latter-day Saints would likely take no issue with the relatively straightforward confession about God the Father from the first section or the simple assertion about the Holy Spirit in the third section. Similarly, in section 2 where confession is made about the Son there are a number of elements that Latter-day Saints would not contest. To illustrate this point, we can compare the first three sections of the Nicene Creed with doctrinal statements about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit found in the nonbiblical LDS scriptural canon (i.e., *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *Pearl of Great Price*). It becomes apparent looking at table 8.1 that the Nicene Creed contains elements that parallel doctrines taught in LDS scripture.

In spite of similarities, certain elements in the Nicene Creed disagree with LDS doctrine. The sections with the greatest dissonance with LDS doctrine come from section 2, which relates to the Son, and section 4, which contains the anathema against Arius's teaching.

Though there is certainly much in the second section that parallels LDS tenets, there is a subsection that is potentially very problematic as it could be seen to obfuscate, even eradicate, the distinctiveness of the Father and the Son. After the initial confession of Jesus in section 2 there is a brief excursus wherein the nature and very being of Jesus are described. This section, which reads "from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father," was added not merely in an attempt to clarify the relationship of Jesus and the Father; it was specifically fashioned, much like the anathema in section 4, to directly refute certain of Arius's ideas about Jesus. To reiterate, Arius had argued not only that Jesus was a distinct being from God but that his very nature, or essence, was also fundamentally different. Whereas God was ingenerate and eternal, Arius argued, Jesus was a creature who had a beginning at some point and was thus made of a different essence or substance than the Father. For Arius's opponents this conclusion posed problems because it made Jesus less than God and threatened his divinity; in fact, many questioned whether Jesus could really be considered divine if he were truly a creature. To guard Jesus's divinity it was determined at the council that the creed

Table 8.1 A Comparison of the Nicene Creed with LDS Scripture

Nicene Creed	LDS Scriptures (Except the Bible)
1 We believe in one God, Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;	1 Nephi 13:41; Alma 11:26–29, 11:35, 14:5; Article of Faith 1
2 And [we believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten,	Mosiah 4:2–3; Alma 3:28, 37:33, 38:8, 46:39; Helaman 5:9, 13:63; Nephi 20:31; Mormon 5:14; Article of Faith 1 2 Nephi 25:12; Jacob 4:5, 4:11; Alma 5:48, 9:26, 12:33–34, 13:5, 13:9; D&C 20:21, 29:42, 29:46, 49:5, 76:13, 76:23, 76:25, 76:35, 76:57, 93:11, 124:123, 138:14, 138:57; Moses 1:6, 1:13, 1:16–17, 1:19, 1:21, 1:32–33, 2:1, 2:26–27, 3:18, 4:1, 4:3, 4:28, 5:7, 5:57, 6:52, 6:57, 6:59, 6:62, 7:50, 7:59, 7:62
that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth,	2 Nephi 2:14; Mosiah 3:8, 4:2, 5:15; Alma 18:28–29, 22:10–11; Helaman 14:12; 3 Nephi 9:15; Mormon 9:11; D&C 38:3, 45:1; Moses 1:30–33, 2:1
who for us humans and for our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming human,	1 Nephi 11:16, 11:26–31; Mosiah 3:5–6, 3:9–12, 7:27; Alma 4:14, 6:8, 7:8, 9:28, 11:40, 36:17, 37:9; Helaman 5:9, 13:6; Ether 3:9; D&C 93:3–4
suffered	1 Nephi 11:32–33, 19:10; 2 Nephi 9:21; Mosiah 3:7; Alma 7:11–13; D&C 18:11, 19:18, 45:4
and rose again on the third day, and ascended into the heavens,	2 Nephi 25:13, 26:1; Mosiah 3:10, 18:12; Alma 33:22, 40:20; Helaman 14:20; 3 Nephi 10:18, 11:12; D&C 20:23–24
is coming to judge the living and the dead;	Alma 11:44, 33:22, 44:23; Moroni 10:34; D&C 49:7, 76:68, 77:12; Moses 6:57
3 And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit.	3 Nephi 28:11; D&C 130:22; Article of Faith 1

must emphasize Jesus's complete unity with the Father, not only in will but also in very substance, with terminology that left little room for speculation and could not be easily subverted by Arius and his followers. To stress the ontological uniformity of Jesus and the Father the term *homoousios* (Grk. ὁμοούσιος; Lat. *consubstantialis*), commonly translated as "same substance" or "consubstantial," was incorporated into the creed. The term was invoked, so the sources say, to safeguard the divinity of Jesus by pointing out that by nature Jesus shared the same divine substance as the Father, a substance that differed from that of creatures; as such, Jesus's divinity could not be compromised.

The term *homoousios* has been a source of controversy for theologians since it was added to the Nicene Creed, and it likewise raises questions for Latter-day Saints. First, it was pointed out by both its detractors and its proponents that the term *homoousios* is not scriptural; nowhere in the scriptures is Jesus ever described as "homoousios to the Father" (ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ). For a creed that attempted to articulate the relationship of the Father and the Son relying solely on scriptural precedent, this word represented a significant exception.⁴⁹ Second, the term proved problematic because there was no unanimous agreement on what it actually implied, and so it was imbued with different meanings by different interpreters; consequently the Nicene Creed could mean somewhat different things to different people.⁵⁰

In particular, the confusion that surrounded this term at the council had to do with whether or not it meant specific or generic sameness of the substance of the Father and the Son.⁵¹ If the term implied specific sameness and was understood in a strictly materialistic sense, then it implied that Jesus and the Father were literally of the very same substance, so that they effectively shared the same being. The creed could therefore be seen as a genuine return to Sabellianism or Modalistic Monarchianism, where one God appears in different manifestations (Father and Son). Though later commentators of Nicaea tried to distance the term from this connotation, since it smacked of Sabellianism, which had been roundly condemned by various third-century Christians, there can be no doubt that certain framers of the creed such as Alexander of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, and Marcellus of Ancrya, intended this meaning.⁵² Therefore, if *homoousios* is understood in a specific materialistic sense, then Latter-day Saints must reject the term, since it distorts and obscures the distinct relationship of the Father and the Son by essentially collapsing their essences into one undifferentiated being.⁵³

On the other hand, if *homoousios* is taken generically, to imply that the Father and Son shared by nature the same essence, without necessarily implying that they were of the very same substance, then the distinct beings of the Father and Son could be maintained without differentiating their ontological status. Latter-day Saints could be more sympathetic to this interpretation since there is also no inherent problem posed to LDS theology in believing that by nature the

Father and Son are ontologically the same. Rather, the issue at stake has to do with the explicit nature of the unity of the Father and the Son and whether *homoousios* can properly circumscribe and nuance all the facets of their unity and at the same time properly differentiate them as two divine personages.⁵⁴

Another problem with this term has to do with its prehistory before Nicaea. In A.D. 358 a group of “Semi-Arian” bishops led by George of Laodicea convened a small council in Ancrya to advocate a mediating position between the Arian (and later Anomoean) position, which advocated that Jesus was unlike the Father, and the Nicene position, which advocated that Jesus was *homoousios* with the Father. These bishops argued instead that Jesus was of “like substance” to the Father and preferred instead to express the relationship by reference to the term *homoiousios* (Grk. ὁμοιούσιος).⁵⁵ In their attack on *homoousios* they had done some homework and pointed out that the conciliar proceedings of the Council of Antioch in A.D. 268 revealed that this very word had been condemned by that council when it excommunicated Paul of Samosata because it obfuscated the differentiation of the Father and the Son. Therefore, this group of Semi-Arians cited ecclesiastical precedent for their outright rejection of *homoousios*.⁵⁶ When it became more widely known that *homoousios* had indeed been condemned at an earlier church council, not a few persons were genuinely perplexed that it could have been used in the Nicene Creed; nevertheless, advocates of the term such as Athanasius and later Hilary would contend that when it was condemned at Antioch it contained a different nuance that was not being implied at Nicaea.⁵⁷ While there may be something to this argument, given the ambiguity associated with the term at Nicaea and the fact that some framers of Nicaea interpreted it in the very way that the Council of Antioch seemingly condemned, its appropriateness in the Nicene Creed may be questioned. Additionally, this episode brings into sharper relief the fact that Nicaea was genuinely setting a new course for Christian theology in a way that represented a departure in certain respects from earlier centuries.

Another issue with the term *homoousios* that Latter-day Saints would have a difficulty with is the way this term made its way into the creed. Eusebius reported that it was Constantine himself who initially proposed the term after Eusebius had read out a potential creed of his own.⁵⁸ According to Eusebius, Constantine liked his proposal but felt that in order to succinctly and definitively express the relationship of the Father and Son and ward off Arianism the term *homoousios* needed to be added. It is ironic that the single most controversial and unscriptural word in the entire creed was not included at the suggestion of an ecclesiastical leader, such as a bishop or patriarch trained in the scriptures and informed in matters of technical theology, but, rather, was included because an unbaptized emperor insisted on its use.⁵⁹ As is clear from Eusebius’s report he was less than enthusiastic about the inclusion of the term, but since it was demanded by Constantine, who alone

wielded authority over the entire empire, who brought an end to persecution, and who generously and sumptuously hosted the council, neither Eusebius nor anyone else felt inclined to challenge him on this point.⁶⁰ Though Latter-day Saint treatments tend to go too far in their censure of Constantine's involvement at the council, decrying "caesaropapism," and miss many of the complexities of this and other episodes, at a certain level their blunt disapproval has some merit. In a matter of such theological importance Latter-day Saints are right to be wary about the deference given to a non-Christian emperor who had no real authority to speak on matters of theology and whose chief concerns were to quell the divisive discussions that had plagued the council and to promote ecclesiastical unity above all else.⁶¹

The other section of the creed that poses problems from an LDS perspective is the fourth section, which contains the anathema against Arius. In fact, certain parts of this section are potentially far more troublesome for Latter-day Saints than the use of *homoousios* earlier in the creed because they are at odds with certain LDS doctrines concerning the nature of the Son.⁶² However, because LDS treatments of the creed have generally lacked a proper contextual understanding, they have missed the Christological problems posed by the final section of the creed. Among other things the anathema asserts that Jesus was not subject to "change or alteration" (τρέπτὸν ἢ ἀλλοιωτὸν).⁶³ To fully comprehend the implications of this laconic phrase one needs to understand its larger context. One of Arius's key points of contention was that because Jesus was a creature, he was genuinely susceptible to change and mutability. Arius took Luke 2:52 literally: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Using this text, Arius argued not only that Jesus was susceptible to change but that he was also subject to "progress" (Grk. προκοπή).⁶⁴ Arius also believed that as a mutable being Jesus was truly susceptible to temptation and sin. Though Arius was quick to point out that Jesus never succumbed to temptation and sin and that Jesus had lived a perfect life, he argued that Jesus resisted of his own volition and that he could have actually sinned, had he so chosen, and thus nullify his atoning sacrifice.⁶⁵ This was a radically different Christology from that of his opponents—the version subsequently espoused in the Nicene Creed—which argued that because Jesus was ontologically the same as the Father, he must therefore be coeternal and by implication unchanging and immutable by nature. Applying this logic to Jesus's mortal ministry implied that Jesus was therefore completely immune to temptation and sin because by his very nature or essence he was totally incapable of any change.⁶⁶ The problem with this position from an LDS perspective is that if one continues with this line of reasoning, one would be forced to concede that Jesus was never truly tempted during his mortal ministry, as genuine temptation necessarily presupposes the real possibility of change. Thus, according to this view the temptations of Jesus could not be considered anything more than

illusions. Therefore, from an LDS perspective the Nicene Creed raises theological problems about Jesus's human experience.

In contrast, Latter-day Saints turn to passages in the Book of Mormon and the *Doctrine and Covenants* that speak about Jesus's ministry in ways that describe how he possessed free will and by implication moral mutability so that he could be genuinely tested and tried during his ministry. Thus Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus had a truly human experience. For example, D&C 20:22 states that Jesus "suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them." In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Abinadi describes how Jesus "suffereth temptation" but "yieldeth not to the temptation" during his mortal ministry (Mosiah 15:5). Central to LDS theology on this point is the belief that Jesus, like all mortals, was endowed with free agency and was necessarily susceptible to mutability; therefore, his mortal example was all the more meaningful and a central facet of his redeeming mission.⁶⁷ Additional passages in the Book of Mormon support this belief; both King Benjamin (Mosiah 3:7) and the prophet Alma (Alma 7:10–13) preached that Christ was truly and genuinely tempted so that he could really understand what it was like to be human, could serve as an exemplar, and thus "could know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12).⁶⁸ On the other hand, it could be argued from an LDS perspective that the Jesus of the Nicene Creed cannot succor his people, for he cannot genuinely know what temptation is if he is incapable of being tempted. In other words, if Jesus is immune to temptation and sin by his very nature and not by choice or moral agency, how genuine was his mortal experience?

It is notable that fourth-century theologians, including some of the framers of the Nicene canons, worried about the same problems that Mormons might pose to the Nicene formulations. In the decades following Nicaea, the problem that the final section of the creed posed to Christ's humanity did not go unnoticed as debate began about how to define and circumscribe Christ's human and divine natures. Some theologians, such as Athanasius, recognized that the Nicene Creed challenged Christ's humanity but, for the most part, offered no alternate solution.⁶⁹ Some pro-Nicene advocates even went so far as to delete passages from the scriptures that seemingly contradicted Nicene theology regarding Christ's humanity; Epiphanius of Salamis disapprovingly records how certain "orthodox" Christians (i.e., pro-Nicene Christians) omitted Luke 22:43–44, Christ's suffering in Gethsemane, from select copies of the scriptures because the passage could no longer be understood.⁷⁰ At the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381, when the Nicene Creed was effectively revised and became the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, the final section containing the anathema against Arius was dropped. Nevertheless, lingering questions regarding Jesus's humanity persisted and served in part as a catalyst for another ecumenical council, the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, where significant attention was devoted to this matter.⁷¹

Conclusion

In this brief chapter my purpose was to analyze the Council of Nicaea with greater detail, clarity, precision, and objectivity than it has previously received in LDS scholarship by engaging with primary sources and acknowledging recent scholarship. Far more could be said about this important church council, which truly represents a defining moment in the history of ancient Christianity and the LDS understanding of the Great Apostasy. Exploring the theological and social contexts of the Nicene Council and Creed both challenges and confirms certain LDS assumptions about them and should open possibilities of dialogue, respectful disagreement, and the realization of mutual concerns with those who view Nicaea in a different light.

NOTES

1. Jennifer C. Lane, "The Creeds and Councils," in *The Life and Teachings of the New Testament Apostles: From the Day of Pentecost through the Apocalypse*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzzapfel and Thomas Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 317–19; Tad R. Callister, *The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 62–65; Alexander B. Morrison, *Turning from Truth: A New Look at the Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 117–22; Richard R. Hopkins, *How Greek Philosophy Corrupted the Christian Concept of God* (Springville, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 2005), 198–201; John W. Welch, "‘All Their Creeds Were an Abomination’: A Brief Look at the General Creeds as Part of the Apostasy," in *Prelude to the Restoration: From the Apostasy to the Restored Church*, ed. Fred E. Woods, Steven C. Harper, Andrew H. Hedges, Patty A. Smith, and Thomas R. Vallett (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 228–49; Bijhan Nasser-Faili, "Early Christian Creeds and LDS Doctrine," *Journal of Latter Day Saint History* 12 (2000): 12–23; Kent P. Jackson, *From Apostasy to Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 38–40; Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994), 125–37; Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 71–89; Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, 3d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 44–52; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 535–37; B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons Co., 1893), 189–91; B. H. Roberts, *History of the Church vol. 1* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), lxxv–lxxxvii, passim; Milton V. Backman Jr., *American Religions and the Rise of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 11–15; J. Reuben Clark Jr., *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 60–63; James L. Barker, *Restoration of the Divine Church* (Salt Lake City: Kate Montgomery

- Barker, 1960), 60; B. H. Roberts, *The "Falling Away" or The World's Loss of the Christian Religion and Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1950), 48–49; James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy Considered in the Light of Scriptural and Secular History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 102–5.
2. Many LDS treatments of Nicaea suffer from an acute case of dilettantism and either are so cursory or superficial that they effectively offer nothing substantive about the council or are uninformed and perpetuate certain inaccuracies. It is regrettable that there has never been a detailed LDS treatment of this important church council that comprehensively deals with its theological consequences from an LDS perspective. While the present analysis hopes to contribute to a better understanding of Nicaea, it can but only partially fill this void. For a proper treatment of this subject a book-length monograph would be required.
 3. Though the Council of Nicaea is recognized as the first ecumenical council of the church that had broad authority, it was not the first council of the ancient church, despite certain LDS portrayals that give this impression. If one counts the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, already in the first century there is evidence for church councils. In the second and third centuries church councils were conducted primarily on a local or regional basis with limited geographic authority.
 4. Though the charge is sometimes made that Arius denied the divinity of Jesus, this allegation is not entirely accurate. By Nicene standards this may be the case, but within Arius's own theological system he certainly ascribed a divine or god-like element to Jesus. See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–81* (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 120–22.
 5. For insightful treatments of the key theological issues at the Council of Nicaea, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 85–100; and Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 152–72.
 6. Justin, *First Apology*, in *Die ältesten Apologeten*, ed. E. J. Goodspeed (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1915), 1.13; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, in Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten*, 56.3; Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians*, in *Zwei griechische Apologeten*, ed. J. Geffcken (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), 10.5; Dionysius of Alexandria, in Athanasius, *On the Opinion of Dionysius*, in *Athanasius Werke. Band II. Die apologien*, ed. H.-G. Optiz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1935–41), 4.2–3; Origen, *First Principles*, in *Traité des Principes*, ed. H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti, SC (Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1978–84), 4.4.1; cf. Origen, *Against Celsus*, in *Origène: Contre Celse I*, ed. M. Borret, SC (Paris, Les Editions de Cerf, 1967), 1.23; Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, in *Commentaire sur saint Jean*, ed. C. Blanc, SC (Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1966–92), 2.75; Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, in *La Préparation évangélique*, ed. J. Sirinelli, SC (Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1974–91), 7.15.

7. It may be pointed out here that while certain early Church Fathers described God as “uncreated” (Grk. ἀγένητος) or “ingenerate” (Grk. ἀγέννητος) (e.g., Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, in *Die Apostolischen Vater*, ed. F. X. Funk, rev. K. Bihlmeyer [Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 1924], 7.2; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 5.4; Athenagoras, *Plea for the Christians*, 4.1–2, 6.2, 8.2–3, 10.1, 15.1, 19.1–2, 22.3–5, 23.5, 30.3), these epithets are never used in either the Septuagint or the New Testament to describe God. In the pre-Nicene period these two terms were used interchangeably and would not be distinguished until after Nicaea.
8. Theophilus of Antioch is the first Christian writer to employ τριάς when he argues that the first three days of creation are types of the τριάς, “triad,” of God, his word, and his wisdom (*To Autolytus*, in *Trois livres à Autolytus*, ed. G. Bardy, SC [Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1948], 2.15). Yet it is clear that Theophilus was not using τριάς as a technical term for understanding what much later came to be understood as the triune nature of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Similarly, Clement of Alexandria is the first to use the phrase “holy trinity/triad” (ἁγία τριάς) but has it refer to the attributes of “faith, hope and love” when discussing 1 Corinthians 13:13 (*Miscellanies*, in *Les Stromates*, ed. C. Mondésert, SC [Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1951–2009], 4.754).
9. Paul’s Christology was not merely Monarchian but also had an adoptionist element, as he argued that Jesus the Word, or the Logos, was essentially an attribute of the Father and that when it entered into the man Jesus he then became the “Son of God.” See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. E. Schwartz, SC (Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1952–60), 7.27–30.
10. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. P. Périchon and P. Maraval, SC (Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 2004–7), 1.5; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. J. Bidez, SC (Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1983–2008), 1.15.
11. Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.15; Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.6; Athanasius, *Defense of the Nicene Definition*, in Hans-Georg Optiz, ed., *Athanasius Werke* 2.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1940), 34.
12. Arius, in Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. L. Parmentier and G. C. Hansen, SC (Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 2006–9), 1.4.
13. Arius, in Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, in Optiz, *Athanasius Werke* 2.1, 16.
14. Eusebius, *Epistle to Alexander*, in H.-G. Optiz, ed., *Athanasius Werke*, 3.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1934), 14–15 (no. 7); Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, 17.4.
15. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.9. Arius’s lone treatise, *Thalia* (Banquet), only survives in fragments because later writers felt compelled to cite it in order to refute it.
16. Thus it is reported that Arius often cited John 14:28, “My Father is greater than I,” to highlight Jesus’s subordination to the Father.

17. LXX Prov. 8:22: "The Lord created me [i.e., Wisdom] in the beginning of his ways for his works."
18. Arius, in Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, 16.
19. Arius's thinking here is in some ways reminiscent of Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 5.4, which differentiates between an unchanging God, who is thus because he is "uncreated" (ἀγέννητος), and "creatures" (γεννητός), who by nature are mutable and "corruptible" (φθαρτός).
20. Recalling Arius's beliefs in order to decry them, Athanasius remarks that according to Arius Jesus possessed genuine free agency so he could actually change if he saw fit: "And by nature, as all others, so the Word Himself is alterable, and remains good by His own free will, while He chooseth; when, however, He wills, He can alter as we can, as being of an alterable nature" (Athanasius, *Orations against the Arians*, in *Athanasius Werke. Band I. Die dogmatischen schriften*, ed. M. Tetz [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996–2000], 1.50).
21. In his letter condemning Arius, Alexander points out that Arius and his followers when pressed would admit that Jesus, because he was morally mutable, could have potentially fallen like the devil: "Someone accordingly asked them [Arians] whether the Word of God could be changed, as the devil has been and they feared not to say, 'Yes, he could; for being begotten, he is susceptible of change.' We then, with the bishops of Egypt and Libya, being assembled together to the number of nearly a hundred, have anathematized Arius for his shameless avowal of these heresies, together with all such as have countenanced them" (in Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.6).
22. Hansen, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 60–98; Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 2–25.
23. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, in *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin*, ed. F. Winkelmann, GCS *Eusebius Werke* 1.1 (Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1975; rev., 1991), 2.69.
24. It is likely that when Ossius met with Alexander and Arius and delivered the letter from Constantine he probably convened some kind of small council in Alexandria to effect some kind of reconciliation. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 18.
25. Today Nicaea is known by the modern name of Iznik, located in northwest Turkey on the eastern side of Lake Iznik.
26. Constantine, *Epistle to Alexander and Arius*, in Opitz, ed., *Athanasius Werke*, 3.1.36–41 (no. 18). For an English translation, see J. Stevenson, ed., *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337* (London: SPCK, 1987), 334–37, no. 288.
27. The principal patristic sources include Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3.4–21; Athanasius, *Letter to the Bishops of Africa*, in Opitz, ed., *Athanasius Werke*, 1.1.1–64; Athanasius, *Defense of the Nicene Definition*, 19–20; Rufinus, *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Eusebius Werke. Die Kirchengeschichte*, ed. F. Winkelmann, GCS, 2.2

- (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 10.2–6; Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.5–9; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.17–25; Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.6–12.
28. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.9; cf. Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.9; Gelasius, *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Anonyme Kirchengeschichte (Gelasius Cyzicenus, CPG 6034)*, ed. G. Hansen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 2.33.
 29. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3.17–20; cf. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.9.
 30. Rufinus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.6; cf. Gelasius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.32.1–2.2.
 31. For example, J. F. McConkie has a penchant for repeatedly quoting Edward Gibbon (1737–94) and Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693–1755) in *Sons and Daughters of God*, even though these sources are long outdated and overtly tendentious.
 32. Different numbers were given by varying ancient authorities: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.8, mentions more than 250; Eustathius of Antioch, in Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.7, mentions more than 270; Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.8, notes more than three hundred; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.17, gives the number 320. The number that eventually won widespread acceptance was 318 (Athanasius, *Letter to the Bishops of Africa*, 2; Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.6) since it seemed to resonate with Genesis 14:14, where Abraham took 318 servants and rescued the kidnapped Lot. This number was therefore used as a rhetorical strategy by later proponents of Nicaea to invoke divine authority for the council and emphasize a consensus by participating bishops.
 33. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.13. Some argue instead for a date of May 19; see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 1982), 211.
 34. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3.12.2–5.
 35. *Ibid.*, 3.13.1–2.
 36. Rufinus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 10.5.
 37. Eustathius, in Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.8.1–5.
 38. *Ibid.*, 1.8.
 39. Athanasius, *Defense of the Nicene Definition*, 19–20.
 40. Eusebius, in Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.8.
 41. *Ibid.*, 1.9.
 42. Roger R. Keller, “Christianity,” in Spencer J. Palmer, Roger R. Keller, Dong Sull Choi, and James A. Toronto, *Religions of the World: A Latter-day Saint View*, rev. ed. (Provo: BYU, 1997), 199–200.
 43. See Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3: *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds* (1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983), 606.
 44. McConkie, *Sons and Daughters of God*, 129.
 45. Thomas S. Monson, “The Search for Jesus,” *Ensign*, December 1990, 4.
 46. For a comparison of the Nicene and Niceno-Constantinopolitan creeds, see Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 815–20.

47. See G. L. Dossetti, *Il simbolo di Nicea e di Constantinopli* (Rome: Herder, 1967), 29–167, which gives a comprehensive analysis of the various early witnesses of the Nicene Creed proper.
48. The Greek text of the Nicene Creed is taken from Norman J. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, vol. 1: Nicaea I to Lateran V* (London: Sheed and Ward; and Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 5. The English translation is my own.
49. Athanasius, *Defense of the Nicene Definition*, 19–20, asserts that when the creed was starting to come together the supporters of Arius kept twisting the meaning of certain phrases so that the framers of the creed had to resort to using nonscriptural language to precisely express the relationship of Jesus and God.
50. In hindsight, given the debates that raged over *homoousios* for the next forty or fifty years after Nicaea, it initially raised many more problems than it solved. Looking back at the protracted infighting that went on over the use of the term *homoousios* after the council, the perceptive ecclesiastical historian Socrates remarked with some regret how the term had had a polarizing effect because of the very confusion it incited. See Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.23.
51. Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 198.
52. Similarly, it is evident that persons such as Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arius implicitly had this meaning in mind when they heard of the term.
53. Here it is worth adding that the accompanying phrase “from the substance of the Father” (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς), which appears in this subsection just before *homoousios* and was dropped from the later Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, was eventually rejected because it was seen to lend weight to this materialistic interpretation that failed to adequately differentiate the personages of the Father and the Son. Hubert R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 243, notes, concerning the use of οὐσία in the Nicene Creed proper, that it “hid a potential Sabellian interpretation of the *symbolum* [i.e., Nicene Creed], that is, an inadequate differentiation of the divine ‘persons.’”
54. Given all the baggage that went along with this term, one almost needs a separate creed to first define what *homoousios* meant since it was used very differently by various framers of the Nicene Creed. Though LDS criticisms of the Nicene Creed often charge that it blurs the boundaries between Father and Son, in a few places in LDS scripture the complete oneness of the Father and Son is expressed in unequivocal terms that could similarly blur boundaries: 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 15:1–5; 3 Nephi 1:14, 11:21, 11:36; Mormon 7:7; cf. D&C 20:28, 93:2–4.
55. The difference between *homoiousios* (like substance) and *homoousios* (same substance) falls on one letter, iota. Despite the well-known saying, “I don’t care

- one iota,” in the mid-fourth century much hung on this one letter. The synodal letter for the Council of Ancrya, including the anathemas, may be found in Epiphanius, *Refutation of All Heresies*, in *Epiphanius (Ancoratus und Panarion)*, ed. K. Holl (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1915–33), 73.2.1–11.11.
56. In the final anathema (no. 18) attached at the end of their synodal letter (Epiphanius, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 73.11.10) they explicitly condemn anyone who confesses that Jesus is homoousios with the Father. Hilary, *On the Councils*, in *S. Hilarii Pictaviensis Opera*, ed. A. Feder (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1916), 81: “The second reason that you added was that our fathers, when Paul of Samosata was pronounced a heretic, also rejected to the word *homoousios*, on the ground that by attributing this title to God he had taught that He was single and undifferentiated, and at once Father and Son.” Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, 43: “But since, as they allege (for I have not the Epistle in question), the Bishops who condemned the Samosatene have said in writing that the Son is not *homoousios* with the Father, and so it comes to pass that they, for caution and honor towards those who have so said, thus feel about that expression, it will be to the purpose cautiously to argue with them this point also.”
 57. Hilary, *On the Councils*, 81; Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, 43–46, which gives a somewhat extended defense of the term *homoousios* and tries to show how it was understood differently at Antioch than at Nicaea.
 58. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.8, gives the following explanation of the term: “Our most pious emperor himself was the first to admit that they were perfectly correct, and that he himself had entertained the sentiments contained in them; exhorting all present to give them their assent, and subscribe to these very articles, thus agreeing in a unanimous profession of them, with the insertion, however, of that single word ‘*homoousios*’ (consubstantial), an expression which the emperor himself explained, as not indicating corporeal affections or properties; and consequently that the Son did not subsist from the Father either by division or abscission: for said he, a nature which is immaterial and incorporeal cannot possibly be subject to any corporeal affection; hence our conception of such things can only be in divine and mysterious terms. Such was the philosophical view of the subject taken by our most wise and pious sovereign; and the bishops on account of the word *homoousios*, drew up this formula of faith.”
 59. Constantine was not baptized until he was on his deathbed in the spring of 337, and he was baptized by none other than Eusebius of Nicomedia, who, it may be noted, had initially refused to sign the creed and was later exiled by Constantine following the Council of Nicaea. While Eusebius of Caesarea reports that it was Constantine who insisted on the use of the term, some have speculated that perhaps someone such as Ossius of Cordoba may have nudged the emperor in

- this direction. See Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 251–52. Taking a similar line in *The Church in Ancient Society*, 198, Henry Chadwick suggests that Constantine may have been influenced by some anti-Arian bishop(s) since Arius had specifically mocked this term in his *Thalia* and in a letter to Alexander where he alleged that it smacked of Manichaeism (Athanasius, *Orations against the Arians*, 1.9).
60. Eusebius's dislike for this term is readily manifest in the letter he sent to congregations in Palestine following the council (Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.9) where he discussed the term and tried to play down its significance. See W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 499.
61. This is not to imply that Constantine did not care about doctrinal accuracy or that he had no interest in forging a creed that was doctrinally sound. All the same, however, his overriding interest was ecclesiastical peace and concord, and he was willing to ignore important theological details so long as this objective was met. This is illustrated in his letter to Alexander and Arius at the start of the controversy when he charges them to be reconciled and where he tells them that it is OK if they have differences in matters of theology so long as they stop fighting and agree on certain issues. In fact, he even states that their argument is about “some insignificant point of dispute” (ὕπερ ματαίου τινὸς ζητήσεως [Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 2.69.1]). Thus he enjoins them to be more like philosophers who can disagree with each other yet be united in larger matters (*ibid.*, 2.71.2).
62. This is not the place to discuss in detail LDS Christology. For those seeking a more detailed assessment, see Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 198–201; and Matthew Bowman, “The Crisis of Mormon Christology: History, Progress, and Protestantism 1880–1930,” *Fides et Historia* 40, no. 2 (2008): 1–26.
63. Here I disagree with Nasser-Faili, “Early Christian Creeds and LDS Doctrine,” 15, and by extension, Welch, “All Their Creeds Were an Abomination,” 248n14, which commends Nasser-Faili's treatment of the Nicene Creed, because Nasser-Faili does not fully grasp the context and implications of what is being promoted by the creed when he applauds it for asserting the “unchangeable” nature of Jesus.
64. On Arius's views of Jesus's progression, see Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh, *Early Arianism—A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 17. See also D&C 93:11–17, which discusses the “progression” of the mortal Jesus.
65. This is evident from Alexander's letters in Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.6, where he reports that the followers of Arius conceded that Jesus could have fallen like the devil since he was morally mutable.
66. Frances M. Young and Andrew Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 45–46,

notes, “For a Saviour who realistically faced and conquered genuine temptations to which, being *τρέπτός* (changeable), he might have succumbed but over which he nevertheless triumphed *κατὰ χάριν* (by grace), has some soteriological advantages over a divine being who triumphs willy-nilly.”

67. As a result, there is a prominent exemplarist feature in LDS Christology.
68. See also D&C 88:6.
69. For example, Athanasius in a letter written c. 371 to Epictetus, bishop of Corinth, attempts to reconcile Christ’s consubstantiality with God with his full humanity but is unable to do so cogently and merely reiterates that Jesus is fully human without demonstrating how exactly this could be reconciled according to the Nicene faith (Athanasius, *Letter to Epictetus*, in G. Ludwig, *Athanasii epistula ad Epictetum* (Jena: Pohle, 1911), 3–18. Others detect in Nicene orthodoxy a diminution of Christ’s mortal ministry, as it is effectively reduced to nothing more than an appearance of God akin to his appearances in the Old Testament: Basil, *Epistles*, 210, 263.5, in *Saint Basil: The Letters*, ed. and trans. R. J. Deferrari, 4 vols., Loeb Classical Library 190, 215, 243, 270 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961–64), 3:194–215, 4:88–101.
70. Epiphanius, *Firmly Anchored One*, in Holl, *Epiphanius*, 31.4–5: This passage (i.e., Luke 22:43–44) “is found in the unrevised copies of the Gospel of Luke, and St. Irenaeus, in his work *Adversus Haereses*, brings it as a testimony to confute those who say that Christ seemed to be manifest [in the flesh]. But the Orthodox, being afraid and not understanding the meaning and power of the passage, have expunged it. Thus, ‘when he was in agony he sweated and his sweat became as drops of blood, and an angel appeared strengthening him.’” Cf. Epiphanius, *Firmly Anchored One*, 37.1–6, and Epiphanius, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 49.61.1–3, where he defends and explains the meaning of Luke 22:43–44. See also Oliver Kösters, *Die Trinitätslehre des Epiphanius von Salamis. Ein Kommentar zum “Ancoratus”* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003), 202–3n402; Urban Holzmeister, “Spricht Epiphanius (Ancoratus 31,4) vom Blutschweiß des Herrn oder von seinen Tränen,” *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 47 (1923): 309–14.
71. The Council of Chalcedon was convened between October 8 and November 10, 451. Among other things, it was determined at this council that Christ was a composite being who consisted of two natures (*δύο φύσεις*), both human and divine.