

CURRENT THEOLOGY

ARIUS AND THE ARIANS

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"Surveying the publications on Arianism in the past ten years, it becomes clear that the questions are far from settled. A revision of older views, especially those formulated by the German historians of dogma early in the twentieth century, is under way."¹ Joseph T. Lienhard's judicious remark concludes a recent survey of nine books published from 1971 to 1982.² My intention is not to duplicate the critical analysis of these books, already well done by Lienhard, even if most of his observations are fairly short.³ It would be helpful to reflect on the suggested orientation of the contemporary inquiries about Arianism, as a revision of German views from the early decades of this century. In fact, to know how far patristic research in the 80's is actually "oriented" by its dependence on a former generation of scholars, or marked at all by new methodological criteria or by a new sort of ideology, is a task beyond the limits of the present bulletin. Such an important question is a task for a colloquy.

In the present instance I ask only *why* "the questions are far from settled" in any contemporary attempt to interpret Arius and the so-called Arian crisis of the fourth century. In trying to clarify the reasons for what seems to be a fatal uncertainty in these matters, I shall add further bibliography to Lienhard's data. My main purpose, however, is to examine the motives and the achievements in today's studies on Arianism; I hope to pinpoint a few critical sources of this "unsettlement" on which all who are engaged in these studies may agree.

Perhaps it is best to enumerate bluntly, at the start, the sources of this

¹ Joseph T. Lienhard, "Recent Studies in Arianism," *Religious Studies Review* 8 (1982) 331-37, at 337.

² The nine works under scrutiny are: E. Bellini, ed., *Alessandro e Ario: Un esempio di conflitto tra fe e ideologia. Documenti della prima controversia ariana* (Milan, 1974); R. A. Norris, Jr., tr. and ed., *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia, 1980); W. G. Rusch, tr. and ed. *The Trinitarian Controversy* (Philadelphia, 1980); R. Klein, *Constantius II. und die christliche Kirche* (Darmstadt, 1977); M. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome, 1975); T. A. Kopeček, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); E. Boularand, *L'Hérésie d'Arius et la "foi" de Nicée* (Paris, 1971); R. Lorenz, *Arius judaizans? Untersuchungen zur dogmengeschichtlichen Einordnung des Arius* (Göttingen, 1979); R. G. Gregg and D. E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia, 1981).

³ A full discussion of Gregg and Groh, Lorenz, and Kopeček, can be found in *RechScR* 70 (1982) 600-607.

malaise: (1) a too limited knowledge of the *primary sources*; (2) a lack of appropriate *methodology* in the treatment of these sources; (3) a one-sided consideration of *the social and political setting* of Arianism; (4) a reluctance to accept what *theology* meant for Arius and the so-called Arians. These four limitations are not designed as a veiled attack on my colleagues who share my own project of trying to reach a clearer understanding in Arian matters. Limitations are imposed more or less directly on all of us, and this for very different reasons. It is the hermeneutical state of today's research which is questioned here, not so much the individual contributions of the interpreters, even if they illustrate (sometimes quite unwittingly) the limits of scholarship on which I insist.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The primary sources on the Arian controversy are in poor condition. A general agreement on this point is often accompanied by a fairly general disinterest on the needed remedies. It is not a question of new sources of that kind. The historical recovery of the Christian heritage on the Arian issue, as well as in many similar areas, demands not so much a hunt for unknown witnesses from the past as a more accurate hermeneutical practice with witnesses well known. Yet such discoveries occur. The most spectacular is that of a young Austrian scholar, Johannes Divjak, who recently identified in the codex Lat. 16861, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and in codex 203 of the public library of Marseille, a set of twenty-eight letters written by the older Augustine, with two others sent to him, and a last one from Jerome to Aurelius, bishop of Carthage.⁴

In the Arian and anti-Arian literature (or among its poor remains after the dogmatic struggles of the times of the Constantinian empire) special mention should be made of H. Nordberg's *Athanasiana* (Helsinki, 1962), first critical edition of the significant pseudepigraphic "Five Homilies," "Expositio Fidei," and "Sermo Maior," and of M. Richard's *Asterii Sophistae Commentariorum in Psalmos quae supersunt* (Oslo, 1956). In both cases invaluable primary textual evidences became available. They are still waiting, after twenty or thirty years, for their doctrinal exploration on a doctoral level or in a monograph. Other sources, like the fascinating Arian series of homilies called *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* (PG 56) among the Pseudo-Chrysostomiana, have not yet appeared in a critical edition, or even attracted the attention needed for their thorough analysis. Like many Arian texts, the *Opus imperfectum* is known thanks to the historians and philologists who worked on it at the beginning of this century. Unfortunately, its message remains sealed and sterile for today's hermeneutics applied to Arianism.

⁴ *Epistulae ex duobus codicibus nuper in lucem prolatae* (CSEL 88; Vienna, 1981).

The benefit of a systematic, rigorous study of isolated, even badly damaged, primary Arian sources for a better understanding of Arianism as a whole, in all its political and religious complexities, has been shown recently by Roger Gryson's masterful publications concerning the synod of Aquileia in September 381.⁵ The dramatic showdown between Ambrose of Milan and the last Arian bishops in the west of the Roman Empire is now convincingly illuminated thanks to the paleographic and lexicographic accomplishments of Gryson, a professor at Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. The "Arian collection from Verona," *Veronensis LI*, 157 folios, probably a local product from Verona itself under the reign of the Gothic ruler Theodoric (493–526), is unique in being the only complete Arian book we possess today.⁶

But all the older or most recent critical editions of primary sources on Arius and the Arians are still dominated by the *Urkunden zum arianischen Streite* (*Athanasius Werke* 3) published by H.-G. Opitz in 1934. After half a century it would be worth submitting the whole collection of thirty-four documents to an updated analysis which could lead to more than one interesting discovery. The letters of Constantine are quoted or translated or paraphrased by recent historians, like Paul Keresztes or Timothy D. Barnes (see below). The letters of Alexander of Alexandria are translated and very briefly commented upon by Enzo Bellini, as noted by Lienhard.⁷ But in both cases the emperor's and the Alexandrian bishop's writings deserved a genuine study, on the linguistic level, in regard to their style and content.

Urkunde 18, transmitted in Syriac, but retrotranslated into Greek by E. Schwartz, is a letter from the Antiochene synod of the winter 324–25. It was scrutinized by E. Abramowski in an article in the *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* (86 [1975] 1), "Die Synod von Antiochien 324/25 und ihr Symbol," which gives not only illuminating advice for a better Greek text but helps to locate the synod in its Origenian tradition.

Urkunden 1, 6, and 30, being written, or at least signed, by Arius, lead to most difficult and vital challenges for scholars interested today in Arian primary sources. On one side, they need to be interpreted themselves in the light of precise circumstances, about which we lack most of the needed information. On the other side, their real significance can only be elucidated with the help of what we may learn about Arius thanks

⁵ *Scolies ariennes sur le concile d'Aquilée* (SC 267; Paris, 1980); *Le recueil arien de Véronne* (Instrumenta patristica 13; The Hague–Steenbrugge, 1982).

⁶ Gryson, *Le recueil arien de Véronne* 70.

⁷ "Recent Studies" 331. The translation into English, with an extensive philological, historical, and theological commentary, of Alexander of Alexandria's letters and other remains, to the extent that such remains are identifiable, would be a fine topic for a doctoral dissertation.

to Athanasius. Since P. Nautin made a few stylistic observations on *Urkunde* 1, with a speculative conjecture about two anti-Arian interpolations in it,⁸ no one has tried to evaluate these rare documents, proper to Arius, with new interpretative techniques. But they have been carefully checked, and compared with other testimonies from Arius, by R. Lorenz in his book *Arius judaïzans?* cited above.⁹ Their comparison with the Arian quotations in Athanasius introduces some urgent methodological remarks about the correct treatment of that sort of sources.

METHODOLOGY

A methodical use of Arian quotations transmitted through the writings of the anti-Arian leader par excellence, Athanasius of Alexandria, rests on a first set of criteria unanimously recognized: (a) Arius is cited by Athanasius for a strictly polemical purpose; (b) most of the quotations are fragmentary; (c) they are transmitted out of context, and exposed to arbitrary changes at the convenience of their citer. As early as 1926, Gustave Bardy popularized his conviction that the Athanasian quotations from Arius' *Thalia* are careless.¹⁰ John Henry Newman had already suggested the same opinion, reinforced in printed form by A. Robertson.¹¹ The traditional view inclined scholars to give less credit to Athanasius when he quoted his worst enemies in the heat of a bitter and long-lasting fight. Even if this a priori distrust seems reasonable, it should have engaged the critics (and G. Bardy among the first) in analysis of the techniques of citing in Athanasius.

But there is a whole set of other criteria, linked with the aims of literary criticism, which never became effective enough, it seems to me, in the way scholars handled Arius as quoted by the Alexandrian bishop: (a) Being quotations, the passages from the *Thalia* and the other Arian extracts belong, first of all, to the works in which they are located. (b) The use of the Arian quotations by modern scholars for their historical and theological purposes is always, and necessarily, combined with a simultaneous use of the Athanasian writings which transmit to us these quotations. To use a critical eye on the quotations, with an uncritical

⁸ P. Nautin, "Deux interpolations orthodoxes dans une lettre d'Arius," *Analecta Bollandiana* 67 (1949) 137-41.

⁹ See also G. C. Stead, "The *Thalia* of Arius and the Testimony of Athanasius," *JTS*, n.s. 29 (1978) 20-38.

¹⁰ "Saint Alexandre d'Alexandrie a-t-il connu la *Thalie* d'Arius," *RevScRel* 7 (1926) 527-32; more explicit, *Recherches sur saint Lucien d'Antioche et son école* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1936) 247: "L'évêque d'Alexandrie indique très inexactement ses sources . . . Saint Athanase abrège, résume, bouleverse les textes qu'il cite."

¹¹ In A. Robertson's edition of the Athanasian *Discourses against the Arians* (NPNF, 2d series, 4 [1891] 308 f.) only the "commencement of Arius' *Thalia*" is printed as a trustworthy quotation, the rest being printed as if it were Athanasius' text.

view on their immediate literary setting, is itself uncritical. (c) Athanasius as a citer of Arius justifies his quotations. He introduces them, divides them, concludes them, and usually adds to the distinct parts of the quoted texts some short comments. The Arian texts in the status of quotations need then to be understood in regard to their Athanasian frames. (d) If the same quotations are recurrent, any interpretation of their repeated wordings in different works of Athanasius rests on the chronology fixed for these works. It would seem hazardous to decide anything about the repeated phrases, and especially about their possible variations, before having cleared up the foundations of the fixed chronology. (e) The practice of polemic quotations in late antiquity presents a certain flexibility. Even careful authors, like Eusebius of Caesarea, may put their own mark on their citations. In dogmatic polemics it is not always easy to detect where a quotation stands or ends, or if its text has only been paraphrased. Before being charged as untrustworthy or negligent, these authors deserve to be recognized as following the practices of quotation customary in their time.

The list of literary criteria required for the appropriate treatment of Arian quotations in Athanasius would sound tedious if continued in the same abstract way. One certitude supports them in any case: *we reach the essential Arius through Athanasius*, and in no other way. The historian who writes on Arius without the needed concern for the Athanasian literary mediation can easily miss the point, as soon as he¹² or she¹³ characterizes Arius' thought and position with the help of quoted extracts, which must be understood in the light of the writer who transmits them to us. There still exists a broad disagreement among experts about the value of Arian quotations, of Arian documents, found in the literary heritage of Athanasius. One of the main sources of uncertainty in this matter results very often from a lack of appropriate forms of literary criticism.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SETTING

Four books may exemplify the limitation of contemporary scholarship focusing on Arianism in regard to its social and political setting. Paul Keresztes, who teaches classics and history at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, has produced a somewhat anachronistic *laus*, in the old classical fashion, of *Constantine: A Great Christian Monarch and Apostle* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1981; 218 pp.). He offers readable, even elegant, English translations of all the writings of Constantine faced with the so-

¹² See below, the instances of Klein and Barnes, but most of all the book on Arius' doctrine of salvation by Gregg and Groh.

¹³ See Lienhard's review, n. 1 above, or, among many other negative reviews, K. M. Girardet, *Historische Zeitschrift* 231 (1980) 141-43.

called Arian crisis. Quoted at full length, these writings are now available for teachers and students.

Unknown to Keresztes, the volume of Richard Klein, *Constantius II. und die christliche Kirche* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977; 321 pp.), follows a similar path of historical apologetics, with less politeness, more pugnacity, and an almost partisan viewpoint. Klein devotes the second half of his book (160–269) to Constantius' *Aussenpolitik*, his warfare and politics with Armenia, Persia, and the Goths. This horizon should not be overlooked in a consideration of the religious turmoil spread over the east and the west of the Roman Empire under the rule of Constantine's younger son, even if one concludes with Lienhard that "Constantius' religious dealings with nations outside the Roman Empire are not of any great significance" ("Recent Studies" 333).

A History of Neo-Arianism, by Thomas A. Kopeček,¹⁴ covers the last years of Constantius' reign and follows the neo-Arian party in its "transformation from a party to a sect" down to 377 and until its extinction around 395. The critical, well-balanced, and perfectly documented presentation of both neo-Arian leaders, Aetius and Eunomius, confers on Kopeček's whole study a refreshing quality of sound objectivity. This is a helpful work for experts as well as for students. One of its best features throughout the two volumes is the stress on the social setting of each initiative taken by Aetius or Eunomius, or by the bishops who opposed them.

One of the main failures of this research¹⁵ belongs to a certain lack of criticism in regard to the Athanasian writings. A more recent compilation of modern scholarship, alert and richly documented, on *Constantine and Eusebius*, by Timothy D. Barnes,¹⁶ will elicit some other comments in the next issue of this bulletin, which will be dedicated to Athanasius. Here, Part 1 on Constantine, 2 on Eusebius, and 3 on the Christian Empire are only considered in reference to Arius and to the notion of Arianism, as investigated and developed by Barnes. As a general appraisal of this valuable study, one must agree with its own advertising: "Mr. Barnes gives the fullest available [add: in English] narrative history of the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine." More than half the volume is occupied by the notes, bibliography, and indexes—a substantial harvest of historical erudition, introducing patristic scholars into less familiar primary sources and into the most qualified contemporary expertise in classics and late Roman history at once. The field covered by Barnes is immense; the institutional and social contexts are well rendered in all

¹⁴ Patristic Monograph Series 8 (2 vols.; Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979; 553 pp.).

¹⁵ L. R. Wickham mentions also some defective translations: *JTS*, n.s. 33/2 (1982) 572.

¹⁶ Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1981; 458 pp.

their complexities. One becomes more aware of the deep reciprocal implications of the Christian religion and the imperial politics in what may be called the genius of Constantine.

A limitation of scholarship common to these four books for very different reasons concerns precisely Arius and the Arians. Keresztes poses his imperial hero filled with "the fervour of the novice," as a "sincere neophyte, or rather catechumen," offended in his pure soul by "the humanistic, materialistic, and down-to-earth logic of the Alexandrian priest" (117). Old hagiographic clichés are thus combined with what seems to derive from a misunderstanding of the traditional portrait of Arius as a follower of Lucian of Antioch in his biblical exegesis. The literary and prosopographic presentation of Constantine reveals no real concern for the genuine political and social setting of Arius himself or of the earliest Arians. A one-sided description of the imperial scene misses the local, Alexandrian scene, decisive for any balanced approach to the historical encounter between the Western liberator of the Eastern Empire, after his final victory over Licinius, and the Libyan priest, settled in Alexandria and excommunicated by his local bishop. More than that, Keresztes, writing on Constantine, has in common with Bouларанд, writing on Arius and Nicaea (see my notes 2-3), a prejudiced dogmatic attitude which allows him to judge the heresiarch in the light of what he believes to be the true orthodoxy, more than in the line of his capacity as a historian.

Richard Klein's "impulse" in the study of Arius intends to establish the thesis of the Emperor Constantius as totally free from pro-Arian feelings. The imperial politics were in this case twisted unwillingly and finally biased in the common historiography, thanks to "the propagandistic arguments of Athanasius" (29). In the early 40's, an "inclination of the emperor as well as of the Oriental bishops toward the Arian doctrine is excluded" (45). In 357, at the time of the pro-Arian synod of Sirmium, and of the "blasphemy" of Sirmium as the pro-Nicaeans called it, a provisory political turn to Arianism from the side of Constantius must be conceded, but "there is no question about an inner conviction in assuming Arian formulae and doctrines" (64). Even if there is some small truth in such statements (the religious personality of this Augustus being sufficiently complicated to allow several contrasting judgments), Klein's partisan conclusions lead him to lay the sole charge on the "Athanasian polemic" (101) for diffusing the image of a Constantius inclined to Arianism. Klein comes to speak in a paradoxical way of "the Arian propaganda of Athanasius" (113, 116), meaning by it the calumnious abuse of the denomination "Arian" by Athanasius in indicting his political foes. Klein's genuine contribution consists only in dramatizing a very common view, and I would easily agree with a less polemic analysis of

the analogical and rhetorical value of the controverted epithet in Athanasius' writings. But such an agreement would need to rest on a certain familiarity with the writings. Klein offers such a one-sided picture of the emperor's politics in religious matters that he neglects to wonder what Arius' proper doctrine actually meant for his contemporaries. In the study of Arius it seems hard to find the right equilibrium between a precise evaluation of theological motives and a balanced appreciation of the political realities.

Thomas A. Kopeček is not liable to this sort of criticism in his *History of Neo-Arianism*. But the very success of this task illustrates for me another limitation of contemporary scholarship when devoted to Arius and to the Arians. The crisis of the Christian Church in the fourth century was more activated by Constantine's sovereign patronage and its consequences than by anything else. It is therefore of primary importance, when one outlines the later phases of the theological controversy, to keep in mind the very first steps of "Arianism" when it became a political issue under Constantine. In the earlier decades of the twentieth century, A. Harnack, J. Gummerus, L. Duchesne, and a few others had developed the panoramic views of the successive stages and struggles of the so-called Arian crisis. E. Schwartz completed their work with a sharper, much more documented exposition of the political crisis in Church and state at the time of Athanasius. The *Urkunden* edited by Opitz are among the most durable fruits of the powerful revival in the studies on Arianism for which Schwartz has to be credited. Now Kopeček shows, I would suggest, the inevitable difficulty faced by a younger generation after several decades of more and more specialized researches in patristics in general, and in the historiography of the Constantinian era in particular.¹⁷ It is certainly not hypercriticism if, as more and more problems of chronology and authenticity wait for new solutions, the more rigorous scholarship exercises its normal right in regard to Arius and the Arians. But in the case of Kopeček's dissertation, neo-Arianism fails to identify itself as neo, the needed counterexpertise on the first and genuine Arianism, that especially of Arius himself, being omitted in this work. Therefore the historical perspective, which would help to underscore the original significance of Aetius and Eunomius, is more or less obliterated. But, given the obscure data on Arius, who gave his name to the main dogmatic fight of his century, and given the limits of a dissertation, how could Kopeček have concentrated in a few chapters the needed critical information? In studying carefully the *last* phase of the so-called Arian crisis, he demonstrates *e contrario* the obvious need of a similar, reshaped, and deepened study of its *first* phase. He is not blinded by dogmatic

¹⁷ On this situation see the comments of Robert Wilken in "Diversity and Unity in Early Christianity," *The Second Century* 1 (1981) 101-10.

prejudice or fanatical apologetics; his view becomes limited only by the lack of a global perception of what Arius and Arianism represent on the turbulent scene of the fourth century.

One could hardly address this same complaint against T. D. Barnes in his approach to *Constantine and Eusebius*. Barnes multiplies with delight the entrees into the heart of the matter, in devoting substantial chapters to Diocletian and Galerius before starting with Constantine, or a less vivid but extensive summary to Origen of Alexandria before describing Eusebius as a biblical scholar,¹⁸ a historian, and an apologist. He also introduces the reader to the manifold disciplines of contemporary historical criticism, including papyrology, chronography, text criticism, classics, hagiography, numismatics, philosophy, "and even theology," as Goethe's Dr. Faust would have observed. This welcome multidisciplinary practice does not exclude personal preferences for critical redating, which gives a more spicy flavor to his vigorous style. For all these admitted qualities, the figure of Arius seems, so to say, evanescent in Barnes's recent book. We are brought to an extreme opposite to that of Klein. In Barnes's view, almost everyone around Constantius and Constantine himself, not to speak of Constantius II, became "Arian." In particular, Eusebius of Caesarea without any doubt, and the Oriental bishops as a whole, were true "Arians." After having read this book, it is impossible to see how and why Arius was a special source of trouble, or why soon after his death he was anathematized and his memory damned by these same "Arian" bishops celebrated by Barnes.

The Constantine whom Eusebius quotes speaks of a first God and a second God who are 'two substances with one perfection,' and he asserts that the substance of the second God derives its existence from the first. In 338 or 339, such views were unmistakably Arian. It is hard to believe that Eusebius did not intend his readers to infer that Constantine shared his own Arian views (271).

Who knows, after all? One suspects, however, that the author who comes to such a conclusion omitted to elaborate specific views about the Arian theology. Why not claim that the common Middle Platonic doctrine of the Godhead is somehow Arian?

This powerful investment in the narrative history of the political and institutional transformation of the Roman Empire during the fourth century, though useful and illuminating after the works of giants like A. H. M. Jones and E. Schwartz among many others, even if enriched by the meticulous checking of all sorts of primary sources, just does not

¹⁸ An occasional small slip is added to a few too hasty comments on P. Nautin's recent *Origène*, p. 170, where Barnes claims that Eusebius spoke about Hosea 5:14, in his *Prophetic Extracts*, with a statement "taken over from Didymus of Alexandria," not yet born at that time.

supply the indispensable analysis of the Arian documents considered in their own social, political, and theological setting. A one-sided approach prevents Barnes from identifying the real historical figure of Arius. It misleads him completely—like R. Klein, as it seems to me—in his negative evaluation of Athanasius, and this to the point of letting him apparently ignore the fact that the Alexandrian bishop was also a Christian theologian and a spiritual leader acclaimed by his people for a record period of forty-five years in office.

THEOLOGY

Finally, it is theology that builds up the essential issue as soon as Arius and the Arians become the subject of scholarly inquiry. What makes Arian sources rare is the militant theology of the fourth-century Church which destroyed them. And what makes their remains obscure is the difficulty contemporary scholars have interpreting their theology comprehensively enough. It is also theology which overshadows the appropriate literary treatment of the Arian sources. Since F. C. Baur, historical theology was often reduced to a form of history of ideas, the latter being of course formulated by the historian himself, the interpreter of the past, in command of the primary sources. The most striking effect of this strategy was to produce histories of Christian dogma claiming to recover the true doctrinal meaning of sources never considered for themselves. *Literary* testimonies, however, are supposed to be treated first by *literary* criticism, even if they transmit sublime truths. This principle should be equally admitted for the Koran, the Talmud, or the Jewish-Christian Scriptures. The same holds true of the vast amount of documentation witnessing to the Christian tradition in its founding stage and in its later historical journey through the cultures of East and West.

In the case of Arius, no consensus of opinion among modern theologians dispenses from the arduous philological and doctrinal recovery of his devastated heritage. Textbook theology used to obliterate the needed process of acute discernment, and apologetic routines led to superficial solutions. A strict form of literary criticism applied to the sources giving access to Arius' thought calls for, and presupposes at the same time, a renewed theological availability in order to interpret without a fixed set of patristic commonplaces the thought of this singular theologian of the past. And when the stress of the studies on Arius and the Arians is laid on their social and political contexts, a new *theological* awareness of their significance is even more necessary. As the battle in which they were engaged was ultimately a theological one, all the necessary contextual detours, imposed by the need we recognize for more realistic approaches to their situation, achieve the goal of introducing us to Arius and the Arians themselves—only at the price of a stronger theological compre-

hension. Otherwise we would confuse the Oriental moderate forms of Origenism in the east of the fourth-century Empire with the radical theory proper to Arius, or we would blur the distinctive features of this peculiar theory in its genuine distance from neo-Arianism, and so on.

The last and most demanding step, in reviewing here the hermeneutical status of contemporary studies on Arius and the Arians, should then be opened by asking: Why are the questions about Arian theology far from settled today?

The Identification of Arian Sources

I shall limit my observations to the Arian sources transmitted by Athanasius which are quoted and alluded to most commonly in recent critical literature. Following the general outline fixed by G. Bardy,¹⁹ G. C. Stead undertook a scrutiny of Arius' fragments located in Athanasian writings. This task had been neglected by E. Schwartz and his followers, mainly because the critical edition of the *Athanasius Werke* in the collection of the Berlin Academy did not yet include the dogmatic writings, but only most of the apologies. As this edition could not be completed after World War II, many decisions about the textual data in Athanasius are still somehow provisory.²⁰ Happily, among the apologies published by H.-G. Opitz²¹ one finds *De synodis* with its full quotation of the "Blasphemies of Arius."²² This remarkable piece, introduced by Athanasius as being the *Thalia* of Arius, is one of the key texts in the access to the heresiarch provided for many centuries by his opponent. In "The *Thalia* of Arius and the Testimony of Arius,"²³ Stead noted a misprint in Opitz' text of the *Blasphemies* (243, 17, read *exichniasai*, not *-sei*); otherwise their original wording seems to be warranted.²⁴ It is Stead's distinguished merit to have drawn the attention of critics to the many doctrinal observations made possible thanks to a precise analysis of *De synodis* 15, and thanks to its comparative study with other quotations from the Arian *Thalia* given by Athanasius. In his other publications, e.g., in "The Platonism of Arius,"²⁵ "Rhetorical Method in Athanasius,"²⁶ or *Divine Substance*,²⁷ Stead quotes the *Thalia* indistinctly in

¹⁹ Main publication in this matter: *Recherches sur s. Lucien d'Antioche et son école* (Paris, 1936).

²⁰ The editor, H.-G. Opitz, was killed at the Front in 1943. My own collations of *C. Ar.* show no substantial change in the text edited by Montfaucon and reprinted in PG 26.

²¹ *Athanasius Werke* 2/1 (1934-37).

²² Chap. 15 (Opitz 242-43).

²³ *JTS*, n.s. 21 (1978) 20-52.

²⁴ The other textual improvements of the *Blasphemies*, suggested by Stead (50-51) for metrical reasons, are only hypothetical and not to be considered here.

²⁵ *JTS*, n.s. 15 (1964) 16-31.

²⁶ *VC* 30 (1976) 121-37, at 130, n. 12.

²⁷ Oxford: Clarendon, 1977, 241; my review, *RechScr* 70 (1982) 599-600.

Syn. 15 and in *Contra Arianos* 1, 5–6.²⁸

This lack of differentiation, inaugurated by Bardy in a detailed text analysis, was already admitted by editors and scholars in the nineteenth century and earlier. What is new is the contemporary attempt to catch Arius' genuine creativity as a theologian and as a literary witness of his own theology from a more critical perception of his statements in the *Thalia*. Here I deal first with this perception itself, which supposes a positive identification of the sources in question. We will see later the theological models deduced from these sources, or invented for what was supposed to be a better understanding of them. The need for clarifying the common perception of the Arian *Thalia* is obvious. It is also of basic importance, for the whole interpretation of Arianism, to know if Arius, as quoted by Athanasius, has really been correctly identified. We will observe in the next section how R. C. Gregg and D. E. Groh (see n. 2 above) use parts of the Arian text quoted as the *Thalia* in *C. Ar.* 1, 5 for the central argument of their "view of salvation" in Arian terms, with a strong claim of being supported by *Syn.* 15. R. Lorenz (n. 2 above) repeats Stead's practice in his synoptic presentation of the fragments of Arius preserved in Athanasian works, as well as in their theological discussion.²⁹ M. Simonetti, in what may be considered the best general study on Arianism available today (n. 2 above), fixes with authority the same textual practice and stresses its importance:

Veri e propri frammenti di quest'opera [*Thalia*] due soltanto sono giunti a noi ad opera di Atanasio: l'inizio (*frag.* 1) *apud* Athan., *CA* 1,5; e un lungo passa di 42 versi (*frag.* 2) *apud* Athan. *Synod.* 15, che ha l'aria di essere un aggregato di brevi passi non continui fra loro: *questo frammenta è dottrinalmente molto importante.*³⁰

I mentioned for the first time my doubts about Arius as the author of the *Blasphemies* put under his name in *Syn.* 15 at the Oxford Patristic Conference in September 1979,³¹ and I gave a more explicit comment on the *Blasphemies* in a colloquy organized at the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Berkeley, California, in December 1981.³² Simonetti noted that the so-called *Thalia* fragment in *Syn.* 15 "looked like an aggregate of small passages without continuity among them," but he did not

²⁸ PG 26.

²⁹ Chap. 2 and 3: 37–66.

³⁰ P. 44; the last italics are mine.

³¹ *Studia patristica* 18, in three parts, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford and New York: Pergamon, 1982) 989.

³² *Holy Scripture and Hellenistic Hermeneutics in Alexandrian Christology: The Arian Crisis* (Berkeley: G.T.U. and U.C., 1982) 14–15. For a full analysis, see my forthcoming book *Athanase d'Alexandrie évêque et écrivain: Une recherche sur les traités Contre les Ariens* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1983).

investigate the matter. A closer examination would have had to start with a literary analysis of this long citation. When Christopher Stead noted in 1978, at the start of his own remarks on *Thalia* in *Syn.* 15, "the general impression given is distasteful to orthodox sentiment . . . the quotations are only a hostile selection from a larger whole,"³³ he projected over *Syn.* 15, as Bardy and many other critics have done, what could have been said more evidently about the *Thalia* in *C. Ar.* 1, 5–6. As a matter of fact, it is completely wrong to identify "a hostile selection" of extracts from Arius in *Syn.* 15. The quotation in *Syn.* 15 of that "selection" is hostile, not the "selection" itself. And there is no "selection" at all, as Stead and probably Simonetti supposed it, always arguing in conformity with the model of quoting applied for the *Thalia* produced in *C. Ar.* 1, 5–6. The "aggregate," or "selection," of *Syn.* 15 does not show the marks of an anti-Arian citer intending to condense in such a digest the perversity of the heresy he denounces. On the contrary, the whole quotation of *Syn.* 15 reveals the careful thought and the dialectical ability of an author eager to express his own theological concern through the paraphrase of the *Thalia* he elaborates. Not only are the sentences "selected" truly Arian, but so is the actual collection constituted by them. All the grammatical and lexical means used to put the "selected" sentences together tend only to one purpose, which is to stress the logical value of the different propositions and their coherency as a whole. In other words, we cannot speak of a "selection," even of a friendly one, or better an Arian one, the whole text being deliberately construed around the thesis announced in the first proposition, and evolved from sentence to sentence in order to explicitate the theological content of that initial proposition. What may have suggested a "hostile selection" is the interesting fact that the anonymous author tries to integrate in his commentary several characteristics taken over from the *Thalia* quoted in *C. Ar.* 1, 5.

No need for more details about this literary find; they have been given elsewhere.³⁴ But I hope I have indicated clearly enough that the usual hermeneutical practice with the main sources of Arius' own theology is not always as free from misleading routines as it should be.

A similar clarification should be attempted in *C. Ar.* 1, 5 about the two Arian fragments inserted by Athanasius into his first and genuine citation of the *Thalia* (PG 26, 21b9-d1). They were bluntly declared parcels of

³³ "The *Thalia*" (n. 23 above) 24.

³⁴ See the publications mentioned in n. 32 above. In his responses to my Berkeley paper, Kopeček agreed with the analysis of *Syn.* 15 epitomized here (*Holy Scripture and Hellenistic Hermeneutics* 53). But Stead, in what he called "some provisional comments," concluded with "I stand by my judgment of 1978" (*ibid.* 73–74.) The discussion obviously needs to be continued in the same serene and stimulating way.

the *Thalia* itself by Bardy.³⁵ Stead still does not examine their provenance and their function in *C. Ar.* 1-2. However, they could help greatly to identify the structure of the *Thalia* in *C. Ar.* 1, 5-6, and they deserve to be linked with the other quotations of Asterius in *C. Ar.* 1-2. Then only would their real nature and significance as another Arian source become available.³⁶

I should also stress the need for further work on Arian exegesis, in order to state what sort of primary information we may receive through the *Contra Arianos* and other Athanasian writings.³⁷

The Theological Interpretation of Arian Sources

The doctrinal figure of Arius is polymorphic indeed in contemporary scholarship, according to the different erudite foundations on which the critics build their portrayals. The Alexandrian heresiarch does not look the same (1) if he is pictured on the strict basis of his own sayings, as available through the ancient sources; (2) if he is approached according to the anti-Arian reaction of the fourth century, in which case the presence of Athanasius is overwhelmingly predominant; (3) if he is encountered only on the non-Alexandrian and nontheological scene of imperial politics at the time of Constantine and his sons. I need add here only a few comments about Arius as recognized in his theological position on the ground of the sources mentioned above.

These sources being fragmentary, and manipulated by their known or unknown transmitters, the doctrinal image of Arius which they project is necessarily fragmentary as well, and quite often biased by uncontrolled manipulations. We face on this point one of the most unsurmountable limits of any possible knowledge based on scientific grounds about Arius and Arianism. In the best of cases the figure of the Alexandrian priest remains enigmatic. But in regard to the primary sources this figure becomes more confused, if not contradictory, as soon as contemporary criticism fails to identify those sources correctly. The supplementary difficulty created by an eclectic or confusing analysis of the fragments of Arius may explain how one comes to conclusions which sound unexpect-

³⁵ Noted by Stead, "The *Thalia*" 27.

³⁶ In "The *Thalia*" Stead seems to follow Bardy, who attributed the Asterius fragment to Arius: "The concluding sentences of *C. Ar.* I, 5, which charge Arius. . . . The *de Synodis* extract of the *Thalia* provides no evidence on this point. . . ." For a partial and incidental mention of the questions raised about these fragments, see *Holy Scripture and Hellenistic Hermeneutics* 14. More will come in *Athanase d'Alexandrie évêque et écrivain*.

³⁷ T. E. Pollard, "The Exegesis of Scripture and the Arian Controversy," *BJRL* 41 (1959) 414 ff; *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970) chaps. 4-7.

edly trivial.³⁸ Finally, it is not surprising that most of the recent attempts to outline Arius' theological profile are, in fact, managed on other levels than on the circumscribed and problematic basis offered by the poor remains of his writings.

Two Contemporary Views on Arius

Early Arianism: A View of Salvation, by Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, deals explicitly with Arius himself and projects a very peculiar image of his doctrinal position. According to this image, "the Arian Christ was a 'creature' or a 'work' of God and the Creator who had been promoted to the rank of a divine son and redeemer" (1). The authors imply that such a notion of Christ "does not mean that cosmology or the doctrine of God was their [the Arians'] early starting point, as almost all modern scholars have contended" (2). Surprisingly enough, a few lines further on they add: "the early Arians seem to have proceeded from their exegesis of the scriptures to the conclusion that even the preexistent Christ was, and had to be, a creature, no matter how exalted were the results of his creaturehood" (ibid.). It seems rather paradoxical to let the first Arians conclude in this way, by eliminating the doctrine of God from their "starting point." But the authors do not care about this; they see only how they can develop, from there on, the "view of salvation" which they attribute to Arius and to his earliest "companions," Asterius and Eusebius of Nicomedia.

Two observations seem indispensable here. In their first chapter the authors do not wonder how such a reductionist idea of Christ could have been accepted in a Christian church of the fourth century. Secondly, neither here nor elsewhere in the next chapters do Gregg and Groh ask what it means to emphasize so strongly the most severe accusations of Arius' episcopal censors, Alexander and Athanasius of Alexandria. Hoping to avoid metaphysics about the Arian notion of God and of Christ, as well as the biased polemics in the anti-Arian allegations of the Alexandrian bishops, they limit Arius' central concern to "the existential and psychological aspects of creaturely existence in the ministry of Jesus" (3). Where they find the episcopal opponents denouncing Arius for stressing evangelical data in order to deny the true divinity of Jesus, Gregg and Groh observe that "to the physical limitations of the body the Arians added the full range of psychological and spiritual limitations of a creature" (4), and that their central Christological motivation was "the desire to chronicle the savior's creaturely characteristics for a positive soteriology" (12). They undertake to develop the "constructive' elements

³⁸ For instance: "Arius . . . , though sharing the traditional inconsistency of language, remains much more nearly within the logical limits of a doctrine of three hypostases" (Stead, "The *Thalia*" 39).

of Arian Christology," in pointing out that the "positive christological concern" of Arius and of his first followers "goes almost entirely unnoticed in the scholarly and popular literature on Arianism" (ibid.).

On one side, Gregg and Groh declare that the theory of the Logos and the cosmo-theological frame of the nascent Arianism was arbitrarily imposed in its evaluation by Alexander and Athanasius, and they are no longer interested in it. On the other side, they interpret exclusively in an "existential and psychological" viewpoint tesserae from the New Testament which the Alexandrian bishops considered as having been abused by the earliest Arians against the dogma of the equality of Father and Son. Thereby they claim frankly: "We are not interested in the orthodox opposition except insofar as it transmits the Arian position" (25).

In other terms, Gregg and Groh present a view on Arius dependent on one limited part of the canonical dossier elaborated by Alexander and Athanasius for his excommunication and for the refutation of his doctrine. Admittedly, any view of Arius depends in some way on the "orthodox" reaction of these two bishops. But in the case of Gregg and Groh this dependence looks very curious if its references are examined more precisely. From p. 3 on ("Athanasius introduces a series of Gospel texts used by the Arians . . ."), and without interruption in the whole book, the basic view on Arius stressed by the authors derives from the third treatise *C. Arianos* in the Athanasian corpus, and it is intimately combined with the testimony of the so-called *Thalia* in *Syn.* 15.³⁹ The Arian "view of salvation," reconstructed in the different chapters of Gregg and Groh, is exactly the view in opposition to which the author of *C. Ar.* 3 hoped to establish his own anti-Arian doctrine. In a debate ideologically overlaid as was the Arian debate in Alexandria during the first quarter of the fourth century—after all, in any debate of that sort—"position" and "opposition" are correlated and convertible terms. I cannot see how one is consistent with historical logic in arguing on the ground of a "position" defined by the correlate "opposition," without focusing as critically as possible on this "opposition." The case of Gregg and Groh's "Arius" becomes even more untenable, should their main source of information, *C. Ar.* 3, be considered uncertain in its Athanasian authenticity, as their second primary source, the so-called *Thalia* of *Syn.* 15, must be excluded for other reasons from direct access to Arius' thought.⁴⁰

Rudolf Lorenz' *Arius judaizans?* is a very strange book. Why the title does not ask "Arius Origenistic?" remains obscure. Lorenz starts with a first chapter, mentioned above, where he enumerates in a synoptic form

³⁹ I stressed this one-sidedness in the compromising support given to Gregg and Groh by "Athanasius" in *RSR* 70 (1982) 604 f. An unpublished paper by S. G. Hall on the same issue is mentioned in *JTS*, n.s. 34 (1983) 74, n. 93.

⁴⁰ See my Oxford paper from 1979, quoted in n. 31 above.

all the fragments of "Arius" transmitted by Alexander (Encyclical *Henos Sōmatos*) and Athanasius (*C. Ar.* 1, 5-6, 9; *Ep. ad episc. Aeg. et Libyae* 12; *De decr. Nic. syn.* 6, 1-2; *Syn.* 15). He presents a "provisory determination of Arius' theological starting point" (title of chap. 3) which is not only "provisory" but as problematic as the similar analysis provided by Stead, *Syn.* 15 being constantly mixed up with the other testimonies of Arius' thought. In such a study the method of the traditional *Dogmengeschichte*, being a "theological" one, seems to consider it superfluous to submit to the needed *literary* criticism of the *literary* witnesses on which it depends. In fact, the immediate sources of Arius' doctrine are treated in this analysis from a contextual point of view. It helps to understand why in the following chapters, where different possible contexts are examined in regard to the fragments of Arius, the latter are never treated in their own right, but atomized and reduced to a dust of dispersed thoughts, illuminated by heterogeneous parallels from Origen, Philo, the Gnostics, the adoptionists, and late Judaism with its different sects. Only in his ninth and final chapter does Lorenz go back to a direct consideration of Arius' doctrine, this time comparing it with the teaching of Eusebius of Nicomedia, Asterius, and Lucian of Antioch, or in its credal form with the creed of Nicaea, the second creed of Antioch, and the creed of Eusebius of Caesarea.

The main conclusions of this synoptic analysis must be welcomed: *Arius distances himself from the Collucianists as well as from Origen, even if he reveals many of their views. He cannot be explained as just a more radical subordinationist in the line of the traditional Origenian theology.* This conclusion of Lorenz should be considered decisive and durable. It gives its value to the whole book, even if the last section of the last chapter, "Vergleich der origenistischen Christologie im engeren Sinne (Lehre von der Menschwerdung) mit Arius" (211-24), devalues in fact all the earlier chapters. In this last step, Lorenz thinks he has established that the pre-existent Origenistic soul of Jesus was confused by Arius with the incarnate Logos. I have shown elsewhere why this solution seems highly speculative and inconsistent.⁴¹

These two antagonistic views on Arius complement each other in their reciprocal failure. Gregg and Groh insist on the "nonmetaphysical" doctrine of salvation, according to which Arius would have aimed at a pastoral and pietistic revival in his church, with Jesus, "the obedient Logos," as "one of many brothers" "*a representative creature*" (29-30, italics in text). They modernize the oldest data of the Arian controversy, in adapting to our contemporary language the anthropology they find expressed in these data. Lorenz antiquates Arius in his own time, in

⁴¹ *Holy Scripture and Hellenistic Hermeneutics* 30-31; see also Lienhard, "Recent Studies" 334 f.

imagining him trapped and confined in the most problematic corner of Origenistic metaphysics. His paradoxical approach frees Arius from the patristic commonplace which used to keep him bound to Origenian subordinationism in the philosophical realm of Middle Platonism; but at the same time it leads him to a sophisticated Origenistic metaphysician whose alter ego would be, two generations later, Evagrius Ponticus. In reviewing such extreme interpretations, the most positive remarks may stress their obvious freshness in the attempt to liberate Arius' doctrinal position from desiccated textbook patrology. A more reserved appraisal is due to the deficient critical foundation of these attempts, as soon as the primary sources giving access to Arius have to be considered. There still exists a vital need for such consideration, and a constant one, which must be urged again and again.

"The Logic of Arianism"

An excellent article has been published under this title by R. D. Williams in the last issue of the *Journal of Theological Studies*.⁴² The author examines the logical features of Arius' earliest and most striking theses: his negation of the Son "proper to the Father's substance," his rejection of the Son as a "consubstantial portion" of the Father, his opposition to the doctrine of "two unbegotten." He shows convincingly that the position of Arius, authenticated by many declarations of Arius and others, needs to be interpreted as a philosophical one, and he undertakes "to suggest what kind of philosophical assumptions Arius brings to his theology" (58). For the use of "proper" (*idios*), Williams claims that the best context of Arius' argument is given by Porphyry.

It is well to recall that in 333 Constantine ordered the destruction of Arius' writings and those of his supporters, calling them "Porphyrians." "Perhaps it reflects a recognition that echoes of Porphyrian logic could indeed be caught in Arius' work" (60). Williams points to the discussion of the meaning of *idios* developed in Porphyry's *Isagoge*. "Whether or not Arius has Porphyry directly in mind, it is clear at least that he knows what he means by *idios* and knows that it cannot be applied to a *hypostasis* but only to the defining properties, the eternal and essential attributes, of God" (62).

For the notion of a "consubstantial portion," the best philosophical parallel is also Neoplatonic: "It is worth noting that *meros homoousion* for a component part of a *synthetos* substance is partly paralleled in an important passage of Iamblichus' *de mysteriis*" (III, 21.150.9, p. 128 E. des Places).⁶⁴ Cautiously Williams adds: "There is no way of telling whether or not Arius knew Iamblichus' work" (*ibid.*), but he stresses firm affinities between Arius' notion of "consubstantial" and the Iamblichian

⁴² *JTS*, n.s. 34 (1983) 56-81.

doctrine (65 f.). A longer analysis devoted to the Arian refusal of *duo agennēta* explicates a complete and coherent set of other philosophical teachings belonging to the line of theology developed by Arius. His final conclusion, if critical and well balanced, is sympathetic to the Alexandrian priest: "above all, by relentlessly pressing home the logic of treating 'God' as the name of a unique subsistent, he stirred an intellectually careless Church into a ferment of conceptual reconstruction. . . . Theology continues to need its Ariuses" (81).

Thanks to Williams, we have finally encountered in this bulletin the real Arius; at least, we are afforded a glimpse of him. I call him "real" because he is treated seriously in his own way: the way of a scholarly trained philosopher who speaks and writes in a technical language, who presents in his lexical data and his style the rigor of a systematic thinker, who belongs to a definite school of thought. It was the same Arius I had in mind when I communicated in 1981 a few observations about "the logic of the *Thalia* and the *Ennead V.*"⁴³ Later on I found a signal in the same direction given by R. M. Huebner, *Der Gott der Kirchenväter und der Gott der Bibel: Zur Frage der Hellenisierung des Christentums* (Munich, 1979). Huebner's conjecture and my interpretation of the logical structure of the *Thalia* in the light of Plotinus, and with special mention of Iamblichus, needed more evidence from the philosophical milieu echoed by Arius. Williams' article is an important contribution to such evidence.

On two points this contribution could be easily improved. (1) If Williams would agree with my statement about the *Blasphemies* transmitted in *Syn.* 15 (not from Arius, but from a neo-Arian in the second half of the fourth century), he could observe on pp. 60, 61, 62, 66, 67, 77, and 78 of his article how the quotations from *Syn.* 15 regularly interfere with what he concludes from *C. Ar.* 1, 5-6 or from other early writings of Arius: the phrases and termini read in the *Blasphemies* deepen and strengthen what is said in the other writings, or they introduce a new term, a new image, which needs a special justification. A better knowledge of Arius' immediate philosophical context underlines the need for a stricter determination of Arius' own proposition. (2) The author, especially pp. 73 and 76-77, has a few interesting comments on Athanasius' refutation of Arius and of the early Arians. He succeeds in showing that, in contrast to Arius, the Alexandrian bishop adopts a nontechnical language. He also gives us to understand that behind the preference for a nontechnical style of argumentation Athanasius can nevertheless be aware of the philosophical techniques engaged in the dispute. It would be illuminating, for a more precise comprehension of both Arius and

⁴³ *Holy Scripture and Hellenistic Hermeneutics* 35-40.

Athanasius, to examine further the logic of the Athanasian *Contra Arianos*.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ One of the goals aimed in my forthcoming *Athanasie d'Alexandrie évêque et écrivain* is to prepare the way toward a logical analysis of *C. Ar* on the basis of their thematic, lexical and theological analysis.—Let me add here some recent work on Arius and the Arians. Kurt Aland, in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (= ANRW 23/1 [1979] 60–241), published the equivalent of a book on the relations between Church and state from the New Testament to the era of Constantine. This study is ignored by Keresztes and Barnes. Aland offers useful insights into what can be reconstructed about Constantine's conversion. See also A. M. Ritter, "Arianismus," *TRE* 3 (1978) 692–719, and A. Solignac, "Marius Victorinus," *DSpir* 10 (1980) 616–23. *Luciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt*, ed. G. F. Diercks in *CC ser. lat.* 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978; 565 pp.), and *Luciferi Calaritani De regibus apostaticis et Moriendum esse pro Dei Filio*, ed. V. Ugenti in *Studi e testi Latini e Greci* 1 (Lecce: Milella, 1980; 215 pp.), give a completely renewed access to the writings of the most vibrant pro-Nicene resister to Constantius II. The *index verborum* in Diercks counts 180 pages; in Ugenti, 52.