

# Arianism

## Arianism Heresy

**Time of Heresy:** 318 led by a priest in Alexandria, Egypt which was a major cultural center at the time, name Arius who was born in Libya ( 260 ad - 336 ad). He studied in Antioch. His bishop condemned Arius and excommunicated him and his followers, but the error continued to spread. His Bishop was Alexander of Alexandria.

**What are the teaching of Arianism?** - Many people in the first century were trying to make sense of Jesus being both divine and human, and the trinity, including Arius. In doing this he ends up coming to a conclusion that denies the divinity of Jesus Christ. He says that the divinity incarnate of Jesus is not the full divinity. That instead he is kind of divine and kind of human. That he was a created and finite, not of equal divinity with the Father. Jesus is not the same substance or nature with the Father. (Between Monophysitism and Nestorianism)

It was the first Christological heresy to seriously threaten the Church. It denied the Divinity of Christ. Arius, while at the Catechetical School in Alexandria, proposed a problem: If the Son of God is begotten of God the Father, then the Father existed before the Son. Since the Father existed before the Son, the Son is unlike the Father. The Son is not co-eternal with the Father. According to Arius, the Son was created by the Father and not Divine as the Father.

Arius' main error was that he imposed time on the eternal (timeless) nature of God. As a father begets a son, he gives his nature to his son. For humans, the father exists before the son, since humans live in time. Begetting for humans is an act embedded in time and matter. This is part of human nature. But for God, the Father gives His spiritual, divine, timeless nature to His only-begotten Son (Heb. 1), so "before" and "after" are meaningless. Even though the Son is begotten of the Father, this does not imply that the Father existed before the Son. Also the Son of God is begotten and not created. (Even a human father only begets his children and does not create them.)

Resource: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resource/55972/arianism>

## Which Early Church Father opposed Arianism? St. Athanasius of Alexandria

St. Athanasius (296-373 A.D.) was born in Alexandria, Egypt, to noble Christian parents. He received an excellent education in theology, philosophy, rhetoric, and law, which he directed to the service of God. He made great progress in both wisdom and virtue, and made a spiritual retreat in the Egyptian desert with St. Anthony the Great.

St. Athanasius became the **Bishop of Alexandria** and served in that role for 46 years. He tirelessly and courageously devoted most of his life to defeating the Arian heresy, which denied the divinity of Christ. When the majority of his fellow bishops were Arian heretics, which threatened the integrity of the whole Church, Athanasius stood firmly and almost single-handedly against their error using his philosophical knowledge, theological wisdom, rhetorical skill, and strength of spirit. Despite having the support of several popes, he suffered great trials, scandals, and persecutions at the hands of his doctrinal enemies, and spent much of his life in exile. He was a participant in the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. and did much of the theological work which supported the condemnation of the Arian heresy and the formulation of the Nicene Creed. St. Athanasius is known as one of the greatest champions of

Catholic doctrine to have ever lived, earning the title, "Father of Orthodoxy." St. Athanasius was later declared a Doctor of the Church. His feast day is celebrated on May 2nd.

**What council touched on it?** Primary topic Nicaea I the first ecumenical council in 325 convened by Emperor Constantine (To keep unity if the Empire under Christianity) that was responsible for writing the Nicene Creed. Every time we say this at mass we are opposing the Arian heresy and it is so important that we say it every Sunday at mass.

**What is true about the teaching?** There is one God and Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

**What is false about the teaching?** There are not three distinct persons in God, co-eternal and co-equal. This heresy held that there is only one person in God, the Father. Arians believed that the Son is only a creature, made from nothing, ex nihilo, like all other created beings. Teaches that Jesus was the man who became God, not God who became Man. Problem is if Jesus is not truly human we are not saved and if he is not truly divine we are not saved. Sin is the problem not matter or flesh. God's revelation is not secret, the gospel is public knowledge.

Homoousia/Consubstantial was the term the Church ended up using to define that Jesus is the same substance with the Father or one in being with the Father. "God from God, Light From Light, True God from True God, begotten not made one in being or (homoousia/Consubstantial) with the Father"

### **Other Biblical Resources to oppose Arianism**

John 1:1-3 - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and the life was the light of the human race;

Genesis 1:1-3 - "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth and the earth was without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters The God said (**Word and Breath**): Let there be light and there was light"

John 1:14 - "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the Glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

John 10:30 - Jesus says "I and the Father are one"

John 17:20-23

2Cor 13:13 - The grace of Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all"

1Cor 8:6, Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 44:6

Reference- <https://www.catholic.com/tract/the-great-heresies>

### **How do these heresies exist today?**

Examples of Gnosticism today: Dan Brown book Da Vinci Code, Star Wars, Dr. Strange, "Culture of Self invention, what is going on inside of me is what it's all about" such as Gender Ideology, Conspiracy Theories, (Marxism), Disney World, Escapism.

Examples of Arianism today: Jehovah's Witness, Church of Latter Day Saints, Modernism (human reason is the judge of all)

### **Closing prayer - The Nicene Creed**

True or False

1. Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God. - FALSE! 66% of Catholics agree
2. Jesus was a great teacher but he was not God. - FALSE! 57% of Catholics agree