



Ecclesiastical History

Part 2



Ecumenical Council of Nicea



Saint Mina Coptic Orthodox Church

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Who is Arius?

- Arius was an ex-priest from Libya who became a heretic.

What was his heresy?

- His heresy denied the divinity of Christ (i.e. claimed that Christ was not God Incarnate).

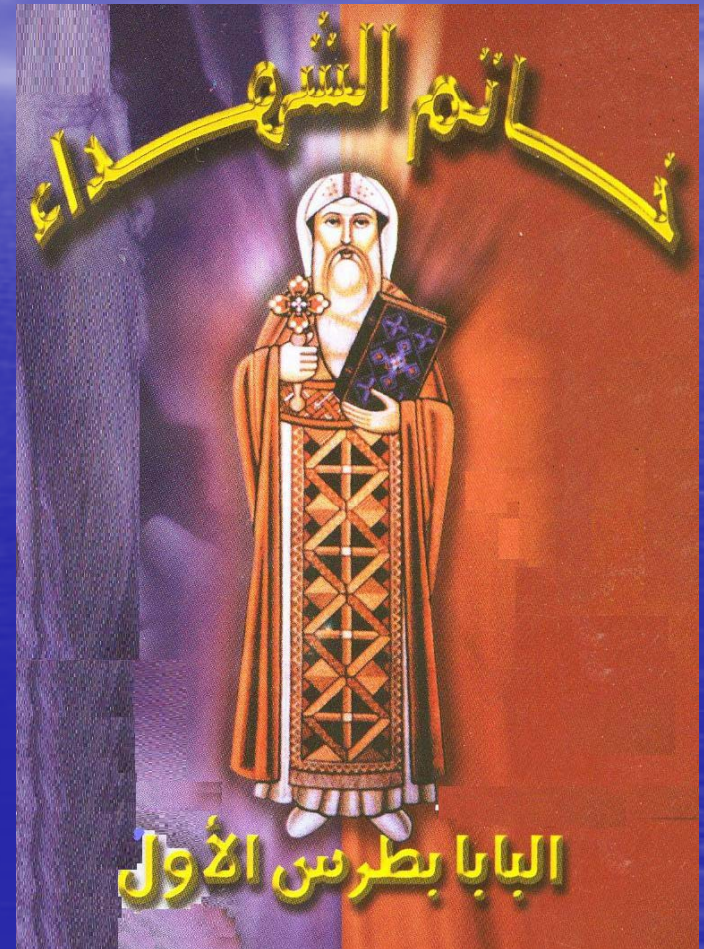
Pope Theonas & Arianism

- From about 283 to 301 A.D. (Eusebius, "Chronicle"), the holy reign of Pope Theonas of Alexandria, started the teachings of the former priest Arius the Libyan.
- His Holiness the Pope, commissioned the new priest, Fr. Peter (his personal secretary) to head the investigation into the claims of Arius.
- After great examination, Fr. Peter returned to Pope Theonas with a report about Arius' disturbing teachings.
- The Pope therefore convoked the first council in Alexandria at which Arius was excommunicated.
- **From that moment onward Arius would be excommunicated at many councils and by many popes.**



Pope Peter & Arianism

- After Fr. Peter (who was the candidate nominated by Pope Theonas) ascended the apostolic throne of St. Mark, he upheld the excommunication of Arius by his predecessor, Pope Theonas.
- He would refuse every offer of repentance from Arius even until his martyrdom.
- At the night of his martyrdom, his personal secretaries Fr. Archillas and Fr. Alexander both approached him asking his absolution for Arius.
- He relayed to them a story of how Christ came to him the previous night in a torn garment and which the Holy Pope questioned the LORD saying "LORD, who has done this to you?", the LORD replied "Arius because he has separated ME from MY FATHER. Therefore, beware never to accept him into the faith!"
- After telling them this story, Pope Peter give his decree binding both his disciples to two very important tasks: heading the church after him and confirming the excommunication of Arius.
- The next morning Pope Peter receives the Crown of Martyrdom and Fr. Archillas becomes the new pope.



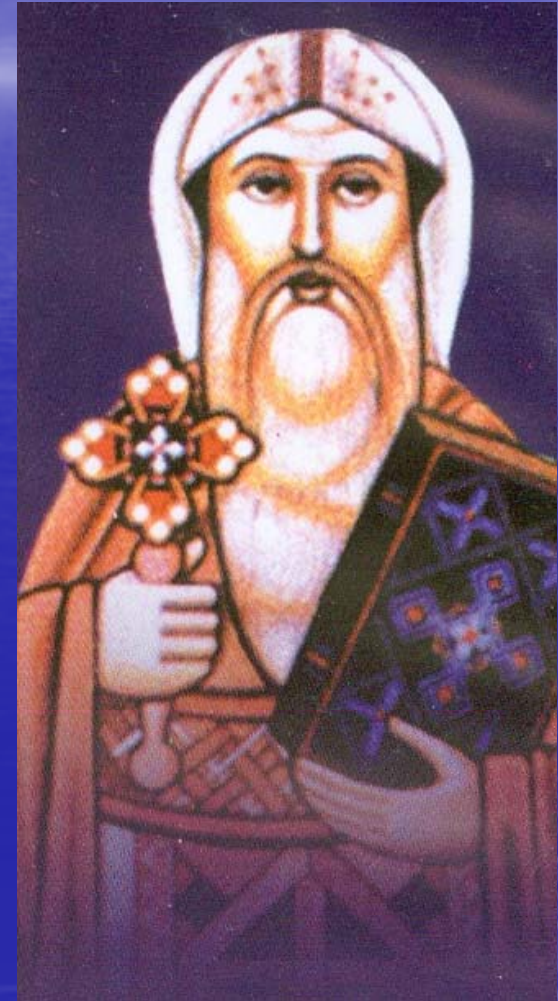
Pope Archillias & Arianism

- Days later a party of the Arians manage to create a cunning proposal to the pope in which Arius falsely denies his heresy and accepts the Orthodox faith: deceived by this the pope gives Arius the absolution.
- Pope Archillias reigned for only six month.



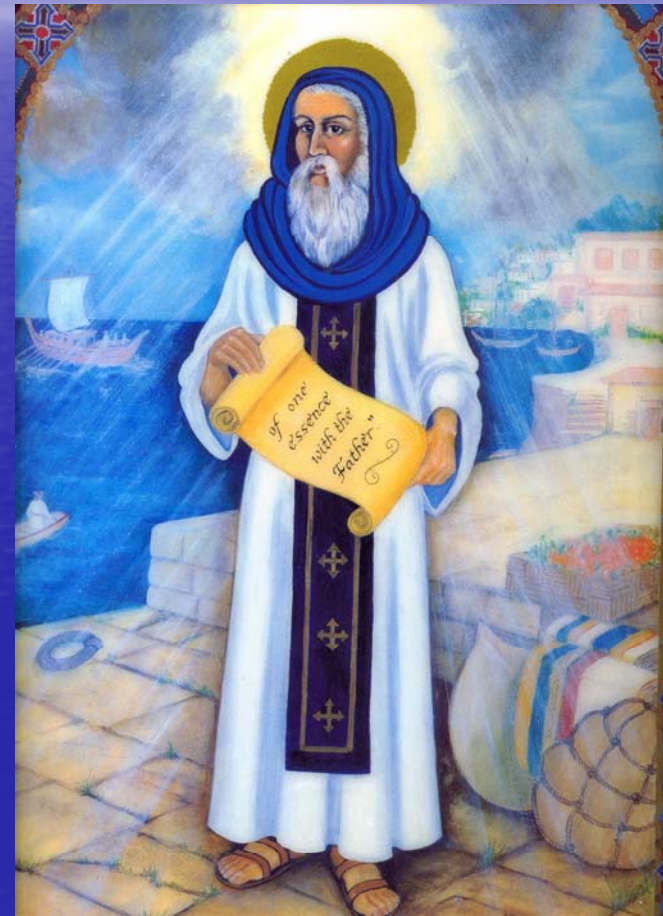
Pope Alexander & Arianism

- Six month later, Pope Archillas departs and Fr. Alexander becomes the new pope.
- Having a perfect understanding of the Arian heresy, Pope Alexander re-establishes the excommunication of Arius.
- "As early as 320 or 321 St. Alexander, 19th Pope of Alexandria, convoked a council at Alexandria at which more than one hundred bishops from Egypt and Libya anathematized Arius" (Catholic Encyclopedia).
- Sadly, Arius continued to recruit followers into his heresy.
- Being finally driven out, he went to Palestine and from there to Nicomedia.
- During this time St. Alexander published his "Epistola encyclica", to which Arius replied; but henceforth it was evident that the quarrel had gone beyond the possibility of human control.



Pope Athanasius & Arianism

- Saint Athanasius the Apostolic is the 20th Pope of Alexandria and the Champion of the Faith at the Nicene Council
- He was exiled 5 times from his Throne for the sake of the faith at the hands of the Arian Imperial court.



Calling the Ecumenical Council

- The emperor himself begged the bishops of every country to come to Nicae.
- Several bishops from outside the Roman Empire (e.g., from Persia) came to the Council.
- The choice of Nicae was favourable because it was easily accessible to the bishops of nearly all the provinces, but especially to those of Asia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Greece, and Thrace.
- St. Athanasius, a member of the council speaks of 318 Bishops who attended the council in his letter "Ad Afros".



Famous Attendees of the Council

- **Pope St. Alexander of Alexandria** (Egyptian)
- **the archdeacon St. Athanasius of Alexandria** (Egyptian)
- **Bishop Eustathius of Antioch** (Greek)
- **Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem** (Greek)
- **Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea** (Greek)
- **Bishop Hosius of Cordova** (Latin)
- **Victor and Vincentius, the two Roman priests representing the Roman bishop** (Latin).
- **St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra** (known as **Santa Clause** in the English-speaking world)
- the Arian follower **Eusebius of Nicomedia**.



The Significance of the Crisis

- Clearly, denying the equality of the Son to His Father in essence means denying the Divinity of the Son, His Eternity, His Omnipresence, His Omnipotence and most relevant to us: HIS SALVATION OF MANKIND.

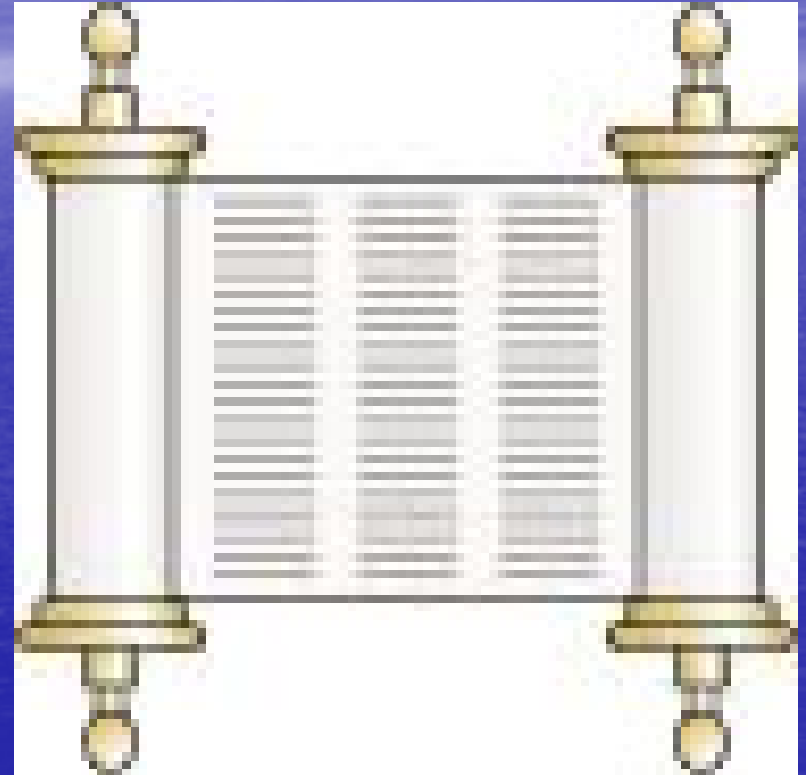
WHY?

- BECAUSE IF CHRIST WAS NOT GOD INCARNATE THEN HE CANNOT BE UNLIMITED AND THEREFORE HIS SACRIFICE CANNOT BE ADEQUATE
- **ADAM'S SIN WAS COMMITTED BY A MAN AGAINST GOD WHO IS UNLIMITED, THEREFORE, THE REMEDY OR PRICE OF THIS PARTICULAR SIN MUST BE THE DEATH OF AN UNLIMITED MAN-BUT WHAT MAN IS UNLIMITED UNLESS THIS MAN IS HIMSELF GOD IN THE FLESH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**



The Events of the Nicene Council

- At this stage, in 325 A.D., was held the Holy Ecumenical Council of Nicea.
- The actual co-ordinator seems to have been Bishop Hosius of Cordova, but the final judgement came from Pope St. Alexander of Alexandria.
- Of all the Acts (minutes) of this Council, which, it has been maintained, were numerous, only three fragments have reached us: the **creed**, the **canons**; the **synodal decree**.



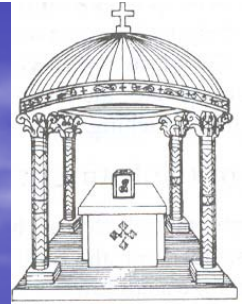
Emperor Constantine and the Nicene Council



- The Council was opened by the righteous Emperor Constantine.
- The emperor waited until all bishops were seated before entering.
- He was clad in gold and covered with precious stones in the fashion of an Oriental King.
- He sat on a Golden throne among the bishops.
- After he was welcomed, the emperor made an address in Latin, expressing his will that religious peace should be re-established.
- He had opened the session as honorary president but left the theological discussions to the ecclesiastical leaders of the council.



The Nicene Canons (1 of 2)



- **Canon 1:** On the admission, or support, or expulsion of clerics mutilated by choice or by violence.
- **Canon 2:** Rules to be observed for ordination, the avoidance of undue haste, the deposition of those guilty of a grave fault.
- **Canon 3:** All members of the clergy are forbidden to dwell with any woman, except a mother, sister, or aunt.
- **Canon 4:** Concerning Episcopal elections.
- **Canon 5:** Concerning the excommunicated.
- **Canon 6:** Concerning patriarchs and their jurisdiction.
- **Canon 7:** confirms the right of the bishops of Jerusalem to enjoy certain honours.
- **Canon 8:** concerns the Novatians.
- **Canon 9:** Certain sins known after ordination involve invalidation.
- **Canon 10:** *Lapsi* who have been ordained knowingly or surreptitiously must be excluded as soon as their irregularity is known.

The Nicene Canons (2of2)



- **Canon 11:** Penance to be imposed on apostates of the persecution of Licinius.
- **Canon 12:** Penance to be imposed on those who upheld Licinius in his war on the Christians.
- **Canon 13:** Indulgence to be granted to excommunicated persons in danger of death.
- **Canon 14:** Penance to be imposed on catechumens who had weakened under persecution.
- **Canon 15:** Bishops, priests, and deacons are not to pass from one church to another.
- **Canon 16:** All clerics are forbidden to leave their church. Formal prohibition for bishops to ordain for their diocese a cleric belonging to another diocese.
- **Canon 17:** Clerics are forbidden to lend at interest.
- **Canon 18:** recalls to deacons their subordinate position with regard to priests.
- **Canon 19:** Rules to be observed with regard to adherents of Paul of Samosata who wished to return to the Church.
- **Canon 20:** On Sundays and during the Paschal season prayers should be said standing.

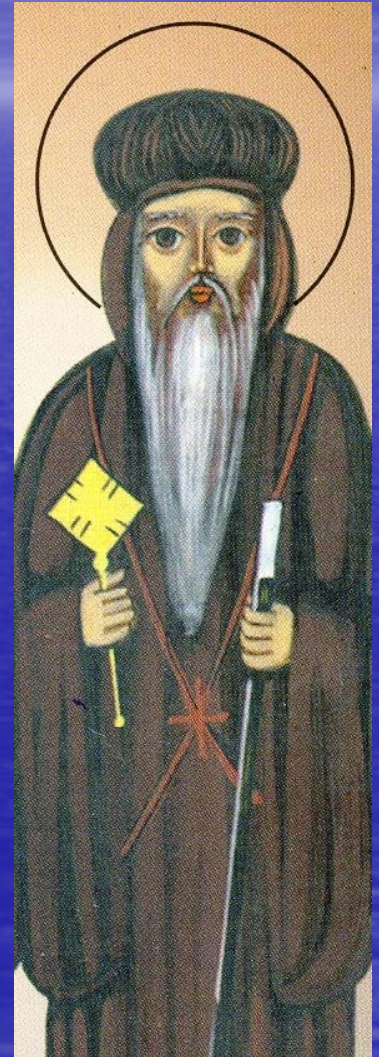
Nicene Theology



- **Rule #1:** Those who say: There was a time when He was not, and He was not before He was begotten; and that He was made out of nothing (*ex ouk onton*); or who maintain that He is of another hypostasis or another substance [than the Father], or that the Son of God is created, or mutable, or subject to change, [them] the universal Church anathematizes.

Reaction of the other Bishops

- All the 318 bishops declared themselves ready to subscribe to this Nicene Creed, convince that it contained the ancient faith of the Apostolic Church.



The Opposition

- The opponents were soon reduced to two, Theonas of Marmarica and Secundus of Ptolemais, who were exiled and anathematized.
- Arius and his writings were also branded with anathema, his books were cast into the fire, and he was exiled to Illyria.

Date of the Resurrection Feast

- **Easter must be celebrated by all throughout the world on the same Sunday;**
- **that this Sunday must follow the fourteenth day of the paschal moon;**
- **that that moon was to be accounted the paschal moon whose fourteenth day followed the spring equinox;**
- **that some provision should be made by the Church of Alexandria as best skilled in astronomical calculations, for determining the proper date of Easter and having the Pope of Alexandria communicating this date in his annual Pascal Epistle to the rest of the world.**



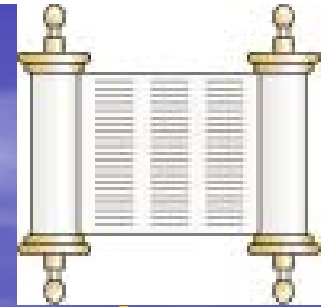


Meletius of Lycopolis

- Meletius of Lycopolis (present-day Assiut) had during the Diocletian persecution sacrificed to idols and so was excommunicated.
- However, he seeking to gain absolution after the persecution ended, was denied.
- In revenge he started to officiate the Office of Pope from within the bounds of Lycopolis.
- He ordained "bishops, priests, and deacons" and introduced Jewish beliefs and heresies into the Church.

- Pope Peter then excommunicated him and in subsequent order, Pope Alexander and Pope Athanasius in due time.
- However he sided with the Arians to bring down the Alexandrian Papacy from the time of Pope Theonas until that of Pope Athanasius.
- His ambitions for papacy where all crushed and eradicated at the Holy Ecumenical Council of Nicea.
- The benefit of this man's controversy settled the affairs and interactions of Popes and Bishops permanently in that the Pope of Alexandria reigns supreme in his jurisdiction and that every bishop under his reign must yield to his command and in everyway exercise his power to ordain ONLY priests and deacons and ONLY within his diocese.

The Nicene Creed



- We believe in One God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, Who created heaven and earth and all things seen and unseen. We believe in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, True God of True God, Begotten not created, of one essence with the Father [*homoousion to patri*], by Whom all things were made; who for us men and our salvation came from Heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became Man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures, ascended into heaven; He sits at the right hand of His Father, and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end. Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit.
- (*Catholic Encyclopedia* & revision from *Eusabius' Ecclesiastical History*)

The Conclusion



- The Nicene Council having been finished Constantine celebrated the 20th anniversary of his reign, and invited the bishops to a party, at the end of which each of them received rich presents.
- Several days later the emperor commanded that a final session should be held, at which he assisted in order to exhort the bishops to work for the maintenance of peace; he commended himself to their prayers, and authorized the fathers to return to their dioceses.
- The greater number hastened to take advantage of this and to bring the resolutions of the council to the knowledge of their provinces.



Thanks for Listening