

## **The Arian Heresy, Council of Nicea and the Creed**

### **Objectives**

To understand the fallacies of the Arian heresy and how it was condemned

### **References**

- The Era of Ecumenical Councils (Asr El Magamee) by Fr. Kyrollos El Antony
- Diocese of the Southern United States - [www.suscopts.org](http://www.suscopts.org) (Servants and Preservants articles)

### **Scriptural Verse**

“But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them” (2 Timothy 3: 14)

### **Lesson guidelines**

1. Qualifications of an Ecumenical Council
  - Held because of a Heresy
  - Held by an emperor’s invitation
  - Attended by most of the bishops to represent the whole world
  - Must issue a Statement of Faith
  
2. Only 3 Ecumenical Councils met these Criteria
  - Nicea, 325 AD
  - Constantinople, 381 AD
  - Ephesus, 431 AD
  
3. The Council of Nicea
  - Arius, a priest from Alexandria blasphemed against the Son of God, saying that He is not equal in essence to God His Father and there was a time when the Son did not exist.
  - King Constantine the Great was the Emperor who presided over the Council. He was great in dealing with the bishops and priests and he made a great party at the end of the council’s meeting and sent gifts and charity to the poor of all the cities.
  - 318 Bishops were in attendance. Pope Alexandros went from Alexandria with his archdeacon and private secretary St. Athanasius the Apostolic (the 20<sup>th</sup> Alexandrian Pope).
  - The president bishop was Hosius of Cordova who was selected both for his age and sanctity.
  
4. Resolution of the Council
  - St. Athanasius, and St. Alexandros from Alexandria, and Leontius, Bishop of Ceasarea were the main figures in authoring the Creed of the Church which refuted Arius’ heresy. It started with “We believe in one God” and ended before

reciting the part “We believe in the Holy Spirit”, which was added at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD.

**NOTE:** The word “Truly” is only found in the Arabic translation to respond to the Muslims’ accusations that we believe in 3 gods.

- The creed was unanimously signed by all bishops.
- They excommunicated Arius and he was exiled by Constantine.
- They set the date for celebrating Easter and delegated the responsibility of yearly informing all the bishops of that date to Pope Alexandros.
- They set the rule for only one baptism in a lifetime, there would be no second baptism for those who renounce the faith and then repent.
- Formulated twenty canons – one of which allowed the priests to marry while they were lay people.

### **Conclusion**

The Council of Nicea was held to refute the Arian heresy, which in essence denied the divinity of Christ. The Creed was an important outcome of that Council, through it believers from all over the world (Orthodox, Catholics, etc.) understand the divinity of the Lord Christ.

**NOTE:** That creed is still recited by all churches; not only Orthodox.

### **Activities/Discussion Points**

1. Why it was so important to refute the Arian heresy?
2. What were the mistakes in his teachings?
3. How did Arius die?
4. How does the Council and the Creed affect our beliefs today?
5. How does the Creed reflect the relationship between the Father and the Son?
6. Break out into small groups and assign portions of the Creed to each group. Have them find the scriptural verses that prove the Creed.