



THE HERESY OF ARIANISM IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP

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Abstract

The idea and talk about God the Father, God the Son, and the relationship between them has gone beyond one religious leader or tradition claiming totality of revelation or knowledge. In fact, from the analogy of the visit of the six blind men to an elephant, and their consequent diverse descriptions of same elephant, revealed the fact that all creations are 'blind' to the absolute comprehension of the Ultimate Reality who manifests Himself to whoever He wills. The consequences of our inability to keep in check our religious biases and inclinations are wide and obvious. This paper titled "Arianism: A Christological controversy of the Early Church", is thus, a survey of theological controversy of the early church. The paper examined the teachings of Arius which threw the early church into a new theological era. The paper which also delved into the prevailing christologies of the time of Arius, adopted a literal, descriptive, and historical research methods, revealed, among other things, that Arianism threatened the unity and peace of the church, and by extension the Roman empire; the teaching equally re-awakened the radical Origenistic viewpoint of Subordinationism or Adoptionism which reduced the Son to a secondary deity or a demi-god. The paper concluded by recommending a synergy or co-operation of the State and Church in enhancing peaceful co-existence in the society.

Key words: Arianism, Arius, Heresy, Historical Jesus, Theological Doctrines, Nicene Council

Introduction

Between 313 and 451 AD, theological controversies resulted in councils attempting to resolve the issues by formulating creeds. These councils brought about such great universal formulations of the Christian church such as the Nicene Creed. It was the era when the main dogmas of the Christian church were developed. These formulations were results of intense thought and searching of the Bible and the writings of the Fathers in order to interpret correctly the meaning of the scriptures on disputed points and to avoid erroneous opinions.

Cairns (1996) and Boer (2013) agree that the Council of Nicaea was the first among the first seven ecumenical councils in the history of the church. Convened by the Roman Emperor, Constantine

the Great, on the recommendations of his religious adviser – Hosius of Cordova, the council was held in 325 AD at Nicaea with about 318 bishops in attendance. The interest of the Roman Emperor in summoning the council was his perception of a possible breakdown of peace and unity in the empire consequent upon prevailing theological controversies among the clergy cum religious organisations. Constantine's initial approach to resolving the theological crises especially between Athanasius and Arius was the writing of letters wherein he prayed for peace; however, the crises had so deepened that not even signed letters from the Emperor could abate the situation anymore. State intervention was thus pertinent!

Declared heretical by the Council, Arius and his teachings were banished and condemned respectively. The aim of this paper is therefore to examine the teachings of Arius which have earned him a space in church history. The study will also delve into the theological climate of the time of Arius, the effects of his teachings even in contemporary Christendom and finally make scholarly recommendations to curtail similar doctrinal controversies.

The traditions of Jesus

It is difficult to write with certainty an authentic account of Jesus. This is partly owing to the fact that the history of his life and death reveal nothing of the worldwide movement he is believed to have founded. Whereas there are no contemporary accounts written of his life, works and death, what can be established with the historical Jesus depends, to a large extent, on the Christian traditions especially on the oldest materials used in the compositions of the synoptic accounts which reflect the stand point and outlook of the later church and its faith in Jesus.

Aside, non-Christian resources are meagre and contribute almost nothing to the history of Jesus though the mention of his name in the *Annals* of the Roman historian, Tacitus, is nevertheless worthy of mention. In his account of the persecution of Christians under Emperor Nero, Tacitus explained that the name Jesus is derived from 'Christ', whom the procurator Pontius Pilate had executed in the reign of Tiberius. This explanation only afforded proofs of the ignominious end of Jesus as the founder of a religious movement and illustrated the common opinion in Rome about

him. As for Josephus, the Jewish historian, Jesus, called 'Christ', was simply the brother of James who was stoned in AD 62.

Furthermore, the gospels were not composed until about 30 years after the death of Jesus, though they were before then preserved in oral traditions and written forms. Jesus himself taught in Aramaic; his history was preserved not purely out of academic interest but of its relevance to the Christians of subsequent generations. Thus, what we find in the gospels is not pure history but applied; it is history interpreted and history metaphorised in the light of experience. The traditions of Jesus grew because the experiences of the risen-living Christ within the Christian community helped in reshaping their perception of Jesus' ultimate identity and significance.

As a developing tradition, the gospels contain two kinds of voices – the voice of Jesus and the voices of the Christian community. Powell (1999) fittingly opined that the quest for the historical Jesus will thus involve the attempt to identify and separate these voices. It is in this sense that the name and identity of Jesus has two references – Jesus of the past and Jesus of the present or Pre-Easter and Post-Easter Jesus respectively. The Pre-Easter Jesus, otherwise known as Jesus of history or historical Jesus, refers to Jesus during his early life time; a Galilean Jewish peasant of the first century; a flesh and blood figure of the past. This Jesus is dead and gone. This claim does not however deny Easter but simply recognizes that the protoplasm (Jesus) is not around anymore (Gbule, 2019). The Post-Easter Jesus is indicative of what Jesus became after his death. This specifically means Jesus of the Christian tradition and experience. As the Jesus of Christian experience, the Post-Easter Jesus is an experiential reality not simply an article of faith (Erhman, 2014). This emphasis is necessary so as not to confuse the Pre-Easter Jesus as more divine than the human. Similarly, if we constantly emphasize his divinity at the expense of his humanity we lose track of the fundamentally remarkable human being that Jesus was. The failure to distinguish between the Pre and Post-Easter Jesus risks losing the both. This background had set the stage for the doctrinal and Christological crises that dominated the fourth and fifth centuries in Christendom, incidentally, the time of Arius.

Prevalent Christological climate in the time of Arius

As a background to the teachings of Arius, an examination of the prevalent Christological climate of his time is necessary, after all, Arius did not teach in a vacuum but within a historical period of several or complex theologies which understandably would influence greatly his views.

The word Christology, derived from the Greek words *Khristos* and *logia* literally means ‘the understanding of Christ’ (Erhman, 2014). Broadly, the International edition of the New Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language sees Christology as ‘the aspect of theology concerned with the definitions of the limits of the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ’. Thus, Christology studies the person of Christ, his humanity and divinity, and the relationship between these natures in relation to the Father. It is understandable therefore, that Jesus Christ is the centre of Christology; he’s the centre of the gospel narratives. Fittingly, ‘Christianity is Christ’ (Dederen, 2000:160). Assertively, the prevailing debate in the time of Arius was: who was Christ, and what was his relationship with the Father?

One difficulty in responding very quickly to this question is the fact that ‘Jesus himself did not leave us a written legacy (Jesus Paper)’ (Witherington, 2007:9). In the opinion of Boer (2013), the early church had, naturally, without any feeling of contradiction, accepted Jesus Christ as a man, confessed and worshipped him as divine, ‘though it recognized a mystery in his person’ (Boer, 2003:108). Rather than debate the mystery, the early church adored and revered him. This ‘mystery’ aspect of the person of Christ had never been lost in Christianity but always been pressed to the background till about the fourth century when it became a subject of intense theological debates which Boer traced to the followings:

1. The introduction of the Greeks to the church through the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. The educated Greek mind was highly intellectual, thus, it loved to reflect on difficult theological and philosophical problems

2. Greek philosophy distinguishes between the spiritual and material; becoming a Christian did not always alter the Greek way of thinking. Thus, for the Greeks, the creation of the world and the incarnation of the Son of God were major religious and intellectual issues
3. The Old Testament is strongly monotheistic. If Christ is very Christ, what then is his relationship to the Creator God of Israel?

The question about Christ - his relationship to the Father, and his human and divine natures was thus unavoidable, yet not even the New Testament or the Apostolic Fathers who wrote from AD 90 – 140 could give a direct answer (Boer, 2003:109). How could it be understood that the Son who is called *Logos*, or *Word* (John 1:1), who became flesh in the Messiah, is both with God and is God (John 1:1-2)? Could God be one, and, at the same time more than one? These ‘irreconcilable issues’ soon led to diverse responses. Thus, Christianity in the second and third centuries was unmonolithic but diverse and fluid in theologies, religious practices and social structures. Each region of the early church – Egypt, Antioch and Asia Minor, had its own interpretation of doctrine because several theologies held sway in each region. For instance, below is a survey of various theologies at the time.

Sabellianism

Sabellius, trying to protect the unity of God, taught that God revealed himself in three layers or modes, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Sabellians taught that the Father was born, suffered and died. This teaching earned them the name *Patripassians* – the father suffers. Sabellius was not the originator of this idea however, but the Asia Minor duo of Praxeas and Noetus. The movement was named after Sabellius because he gave it in its final form in Rome (Dunns, 2003). Sabellianism was also known as *Modalistic Monarchianism* because of one revelation in difference modes.

Origen

Origen, one of the early church fathers, based his theology on modalism insisting that the Logos or the Word or Christ originated from the divine Father, the ungenerated source, and that there was never a time the Father did not exist. Origen insisted that the Logos was divine, eternally created,

but occupied a secondary status lower than the Father. He asserted that there can only be one Father, *monas*, or divine, who can be recognized as the originating principle, '*arche*'.

Justin

To Justin Martyr of Samaria, before the creation of the world God was alone and there was no Son. He however argued that within God there was 'Reason' or 'Mind' (Logos) which God begat or brought up as His agent to create the world (Bock, 2002). Justin aligned himself with the Greek view that God cannot concern himself with matter, thus, He (God) brought up a divine being (Logos) to do that for Him. The Logos was called *Son* because he was born but known as *Logos* because he was taken from the Reason or Mind of God (Boer, 2003:110). Fittingly called an apologist, Justin posited that the Son was a creature, even though powerful enough to create the world; he was lower than the Father or 'subordinate' to the Father. Thus, the apologists were *subordinationists*, for they believe that the Son is subordinate to the Father.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon, was less influenced by Greek philosophies in his views of Christ. He confesses God the Creator, God the Son as co-existing and co-eternal with the Father. He believed that the Son was very man and very God. As to how the Son was produced by the Father, Irenaeus opined that 'no man understands that generation or production, or calling, or revelation, or whatever name one may describe his generation, which is in fact altogether indescribable' (*Against Heresies*). One could speculate, from the teachings of the apologists and Irenaeus, whether Christianity is monotheist or polytheist.

Tertullian

In the opinion of Tertullian, there was one divine nature shared in common by the Father and the Son. Though they share this divine nature in common, the Father and the Son were two separate and distinct beings. This implies that there is one divine nature but there are two divine persons each with specific functions. Again, to Tertullian, the Son was not eternal. The eternal God became Father when He begat the Son, just as He became Creator when He made the world. Tertullian to this end was an Apologist (Witherington, 2007). He later however edited his position that there

were three divine persons sharing the one divine nature Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. It could be argued that Tertullian actually laid the foundation for the Trinitarian controversy.

Adoptionism

Maurice (1995) and Boer (2013) agree that Theodotus of Greek, Paul of Samosata were prominent in the development of the doctrine of Adoptionist Christology. Adoptionism teaches that Christ was a full flesh and blood human being who was neither pre-existent nor born of a virgin. This means that Christ was born and lived like any other human being except that at his baptism he was 'adopted' by God to a special relationship which would include mediating God's will on earth, hence the description, Jesus the Son of God.

Another version of Adoptionism however asserts that God actually indwelt or possessed Jesus at baptism so that a divine agent known as 'Christ' came upon him. The entrance of the divine essence consequently empowered Jesus for special ministry. This divine possessor, according to this version, unpossessed or separated from Jesus before his crucifixion to the divine abode, *pleroma*. This means that crucifixion was an act Jesus suffered alone. This teaching, hitherto, was known as *separationism* – a view reminiscent of the second century Gnosticism. Furthermore, Adoptionism also teaches that Jesus was God himself who was in the world to redeem his people. This view insists that as God, Jesus never experienced any restrictions characteristic of mankind. This is docetism! This therefore means that Jesus was not really human but seemed or appeared to be. Adoptionism, also called *Dynamic Monarchianism*, was rejected by the west because it could not accept that salvation came by man (Boer, 2003). The above survey explained the theological climate upon which Arius championed his teaching.

Who was Arius?

Arius was born at about 250 AD in Libya. He was baptized eight days later. Prior to his baptism, his parents were unsure of what to name him (Kouns, 2013). His mother, Arete, had wished to name him after any of the martyrs, but his father, Ammonius, insisted on naming the boy 'Arius' after the Roman who had been his partner in the old sea-faring days.

Irrespective of the fears that the name 'Arius' was associated with Greek mythology and therefore odious, Ammonius was quoted to have insisted: "I will not change the name; let him be called Arius. Besides, what is in a name? My own idolatrous name signifieth 'dedicated to Am-un', yet I hope ye take me to be a Christian" (Kouns, 2013:18). Thus, against all persuasions, the child was finally christened Arius (Kouns, 2013). This debate in the naming of Arius buttressed the assertion of Omenka (2018) that the naming of a child, especially in Africa, is influenced by a host of factors. These factors according to Omenka include the circumstances surrounding the birth of the child; the period or time of the year or day of the week the child is born, a prevailing social event, the hopes, aspirations or life prayers of the parents, and so on. Perhaps the 'controversy' in the naming of Arius was only a shadow of the controversies he would be associated with in the fourth century!

Brought up at Antioch, a school fellow of Eusebius who was bishop of Nicomedia (232 - 337 CE) and Constantinople (337 – 341 CE) (Owete et al, 2003), Arius was a pupil of Lucianus of Antioch who in turn was a pupil of Paul of Samosata (bishop of Antioch (260-272), a staunch adherent of *dynamic monarchianism* (Boer, 2013). In the fourth century, Arius became a presbyter in the Baucalis church in Alexandria. He was an ascetical moral leader of a Christian community. Before he collapsed and died at about 336 AD while walking the streets of Constantinople (now Turkey), Arius had founded the ever controversial doctrine of *Arianism*. Adherents of his views became known as *Arians*, a term according to Wiles (1995) was derived from the name Arius, a derogatory title conferred by his theological opponents.

Arianism and the Nicene Council

Reconstructing what Arius actually taught, and why, is a formidable task, both because little of his own work survived except in quotations selected most times for polemical purposes by his opponents, and also because there is no certainty about what theological and philosophical traditions formed his thought (Wiles, 1996). Nonetheless, concerned about the unity of God, Arius taught that the Father alone is without a beginning but the Son, or *Logos*; God created the *Logos* to create the world. Arius considered God so far removed from this world to the extent that He is

unknowable. He taught that Jesus had a human body but not a human soul. In the place of the human soul Jesus had the Logos, thus, Jesus was a creature neither God nor man. He was not God because the *Logos* in him was created; he was not man because he did not have a soul. He maintained that God is the one and only, utterly transcendent who did not create by direct contact with the world but did so through the Son whom He antedated as any human father does his son. To him, unlike the Father himself, the Son was brought into existence out of nothing and before times by the Father himself. Hence, though called God, the Son is not God the way the Father is. In fact, there was a time when he was not; his nature is not the same as the Father's (Owete et al, 2013).

Generally speaking, Arius's teaching in its entirety reduced the Son to a secondary deity. The mere suggestion of co-eternity or co-substantiality of the Son with the Father conveyed to Arius to entail presupposing two self-existent principles which spelt the destruction of monotheism. And that his being called God or Son of God were in fact courtesy titles. Even if he is called God, in the opinion of Arius, the Son is not truly God, except by participation in grace. Thus, it is by grace that Christ is designated "Son".

Meanwhile the synod of bishops at Alexandria under the leadership of Alexander alarmed at Arius' radical and rationalistic profession of faith deposed and excommunicated him in 321. But Arius' resolute co-adjutor, Eusebius of Nicomedia was not happy about the condemnation and so absolved him of any guilt. Thus, in 323 AD, he invited Bishop Alexander to a synod at Nicomedia in Bithynia. Alexander affronted by the invitation sent Athanasios, his deacon, to represent him. At the synod, Arius quoted copiously from the scriptures to elicit his claim. Notable among such texts is the one that reads in part, "If you loved me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I . . . (John 14:28). To Arius, the above text suggested the inferiority of the Son to His Father.

Although, the synod influenced by Eusebius pronounced judgement in favour of Arius, Athanasios representative of orthodoxy did not accept Arius' explanations. He stood for the teachings of the church whose theology insisted that the Son is *homoousion* with the Father. That is, the Son is of

the same substance with the Father. This found credence from the text, the Father and I are one” (John 10:30). However, the inability of the contenders to arrive at a conclusion in Nicomedia led to a long drawn bitterness between Athanasius and Arius. This in turn created a deep rift within the rank and file of the church.

Following these exchange of condemnations between the Arians and various gatherings of clergy in Egypt, Palestine and Syria, the Roman Emperor, Constantine 1, anxious for unity and peace in the church and within his empire, sent emissaries to mediate the conflict. This effort failed and the controversy continued unabated such that the entire foundation of Christendom was on the verge of schism. Consequently, in May 325 AD, the Emperor, on the recommendations of his religious adviser – Hosius of Cordova, summoned the first ecumenical council at Nicaea to settle what he termed a “fight over trifling and foolish verbal differences”, and hence, re-establish doctrinal unity in the church.

The focus of the Council of Nicaea was the nature of the Son of God and his precise relationship to God the Father. Arius taught that Jesus Christ was divine or holy and was sent to earth for the salvation of mankind but that Jesus Christ was not equal to God the Father in rank and that God the Father and the Son of God were not equal to the Holy Spirit (Rausch, 2003). Under Arianism, Christ was instead not consubstantial with God the Father since both the Father and the Son under Arius were made of "like" essence or being, but not of the same essence or being (Bervelius (2000). In the Arian view, God the Father is a Deity and is divine and the Son of God is not a Deity but divine (I, the LORD, am Deity alone (Isaiah 46:9). God the Father sent Jesus to earth for the salvation of mankind (John 17:3). *Ousia* is essence or being, in Eastern Christianity, and is the aspect of God that is completely incomprehensible to mankind and human perception. It is all that subsists by itself and which has not its being in another.

According to the teaching of Arius, the preexistent Logos and thus the incarnate Jesus Christ was a begotten being (Kelly, 1978); only the Son was directly begotten by God the Father, before ages, but was of a distinct, though similar, essence or substance from the Creator. His opponents argued

that this would make Jesus less than God and that this was heretical (O' Collins, 1995). Much of the distinction between the differing factions was over the phrasing that Christ expressed in the New Testament to express submission to God the Father. The theological term for this submission is *kenosis*. This ecumenical council declared that Jesus Christ was a distinct being of God in existence or reality (hypostasis), which the Latin fathers translated as *persona*. Jesus was God in essence, being and nature (*ousia*), which the Latin fathers translated as *substantia* (O' Collins, 1995).

The Nicene council which was attended by about three hundred and eighteen (318) bishops (Boer, 2013) declared Arius a heretic after he refused to sign the formula of faith stating that Christ was of the same divine nature as God. This formula of faith is known as the *Nicaean Creed* which in its authoritative form states "we believe in One God, the Father of all Sovereignty, Maker of things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, of the same substance of the Father (homoousios) . . . Begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father; through whom all things are made (Prince and Gardis, 2005).

Aftermath of Nicene

Wiles (1996) speculated that Constantine is believed to have exiled those who refused to accept the Nicene creed - Arius himself, the deacon Euzoios, and the Libyan bishops Theonas of Marmarica and Secundus of Ptolemais - and also the bishops who signed the creed but refused to join in condemnation of Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea. The Emperor also ordered all copies of the *Thalia*, the book in which Arius had expressed his teachings, to be burned. However, Mirbt (1911) doubted whether Constantine's son and ultimate successor, Constantius II, who was a Semi-Arian Christian, was exiled.

Although he was committed to maintaining what the church had defined at Nicaea, Constantine was also bent on pacifying the situation and eventually became more lenient toward those condemned and exiled at the council. First, he allowed Eusebius of Nicomedia, who was a protégé of his sister, and Theognis to return once they had signed an ambiguous statement of faith. The two, and other friends of Arius, worked for Arius's rehabilitation (Gibbons, 2002).

At the First Synod of Tyre in AD 335, they brought accusations against Athanasius, now bishop of Alexandria, the primary opponent of Arius. After this, Constantine had Athanasius banished since he considered him an impediment to reconciliation. In the same year, the Synod of Jerusalem under Constantine's direction readmitted Arius to communion in AD 336. Ayres (2004) and Berndt (2014) agree that Arius died on the way to this event in Constantinople. Some scholars suggest that Arius may have been poisoned by his opponents. Eusebius and Theognis remained in the Emperor's favor, and when Constantine, who had been a catechumen much of his adult life, accepted baptism on his deathbed, it was from Eusebius of Nicomedia (Ayres, 2004).

Effects of Arianism in the early church

1. It threatened the unity and peace of the church, and by extension the empire
2. The teaching re-awakened the radical Origenistic viewpoint of Subordinationism or Adoptionism which reduced the Son to a secondary deity or a demi-god
3. The teaching also divided the church in its structures and religious practices as well as personnel (bishops some sympathized with Arius and some Athanasius). Most Arians formed their churches and declared ambiguously that the Son was unlike the Father, *anamoousios*
4. It undermined salvation by grace. If Christ was a human being, then his blood cannot save; also Christ as a spirit, phantom, cannot shed blood
5. It led to the formulation of the Nicene Creed, orthodoxy
6. It led to the convocation of the first ecumenical council which became a pattern and reference point of policies in religious matters

Arianism from the 5th to the 7th century

Much of the south-eastern Europe and central Europe, including many of the Goths and Vandals respectively, had embraced Arianism (the Visigoths converted to Arian Christianity in 376), which led to Arianism being a religious factor in various wars in the Roman Empire. In the west, organized Arianism survived in North Africa, in Hispania, and in parts of Italy until it was finally

suppressed in the sixth and seventh centuries. Visigothic Spain converted to Catholicism at the third council of Toledo in 589. Grimoald, the king of the Lombards (662-671), and his young son and successor Garibald, were the last Arian kings in Europe.

Recrudescence of Arianism in the 16th to the 19th centuries

Following the Protestant Reformation from 1517, it did not take long for Arian and other non-Trinitarian views to resurface. The first recorded English anti-Trinitarian was John Assheton, who was forced to recant before Thomas Cranmer in 1548. At the Anabaptist Council of Venice 1550, the early Italian instigators of the Radical Reformation committed to the views of Michael Servetus, who was burned alive by the orders of John Calvin in 1553, and these were promulgated by Giorgio Biandrata and others into Poland and Transylvania (Berndt, 2014).

According to Berndt, the anti-Trinitarian wing of the Polish Reformation separated from the Calvinist *ecclesia major* to form the *ecclesia minor* or Polish Brethren. These were commonly referred to as "Arians" due to their rejection of the Trinity, though in fact the Brethrens or Socinians, as they were later known, went further than Arius to the position of Photinus. The epithet "Arian" was also applied to the early Unitarians such as John Biddle, though in denial of the pre-existence of Christ they were again largely Socinians, not Arians. In 1683, when Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury, lay dying in Amsterdam – driven into exile by his outspoken opposition to King Charles II – he spoke to the minister Robert Ferguson, and professed himself an Arian.

In the 18th century the "dominant trend" in Britain, particularly in Latitudinarianism, was towards Arianism, with which the names of Samuel Clarke, Benjamin Hoadly, William Whiston and Isaac Newton are associated (Gibbons, 1995). According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, in modern times some Unitarians are virtually Arians in that they are unwilling either to reduce Christ to a mere human being or to attribute to him a divine nature identical with that of the Father, though their doctrines cannot be considered representative of traditional Arian doctrines or vice versa.

Arianism Today

The teachings of the first two ecumenical councils – which entirely reject Arianism – are held by the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East and all churches founded during the Reformation in the 16th century or influenced by it (Lutheran, Reformed/Presbyterian, and Anglican). Also, nearly all Protestant groups (such as Methodists, Baptists, and most Pentecostals) entirely reject the teachings associated with Arianism. However, there are modern groups such as the Unitarians, Jehovah's Witness, and so on, which appear to have embraced some of the principles of Arianism. Although the origins of their beliefs are not necessarily attributed to the teachings of Arius, many of the core beliefs of Unitarians and Jehovah's Witnesses are very similar to them.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) concerning the nature of the Godhead is a nontrinitarian theology. The first Article of Faith of the Church states: "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." Further, their Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 states: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us." Similarities between LDS doctrines and Arianism were noted as early as 1846 (Brennecke, 1999).

The LDS Church's view of the Godhead breaks with Nicene Creed tradition and believes it returns to the teachings taught by Jesus. Similarly, LDS doctrine does not accept the creed's definition of Trinity that the three are "consubstantial" nor agree with the Athanasian Creed's statement that God and Christ are "incomprehensible" (Dorsett, (2012). In contrast, the view of the LDS Church view is that it is self-evident in the Bible that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are separate persons: three divine beings as illustrated in the Farewell Prayer of Jesus, his baptism at the hands of John, his transfiguration, and the martyrdom of Stephen.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses, a Christian religious group, was founded in 1872 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by the American clergyman, Charles Taze Russell, with congregations in nearly all countries. Members of the group, though now called Witnessess, were originally called *Russellites*. The legal governing body of Jehovah's Witnesses is the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, incorporated in 1884. European members belong to the affiliated International Bible Students Association, incorporated in London in 1914. International headquarters is in Brooklyn, New York (Microsoft Encarta, 2008).

The group, which regards each member as a minister, believes in the second coming of Christ. Aside accepting themselves as practitioners of primitive Christianity, they stress on Bible study and absolute obedience to biblical precepts. With meeting places known as Kingdom Halls, the Jehovah's Witnesses adopts a door to door approach in spreading its teaching and distribution of literatures.

Jehovah's Witnesses are often referred to as "modern-day Arians" or "Semi-Arians", though usually by their opponents (Bourque, 2010; Dorsett (2012)). While there are some significant similarities in theology and doctrine, the Witnesses differ from Arians by saying that the Son can fully know the Father (something which Arius himself denied), and by their denial of personality to the Holy Spirit. The original Arians also generally prayed directly to Jesus, whereas the Witnesses pray to Jehovah God, through Jesus as a mediator (Awake, 2014).

Church of God (Seventh-day)

The Church of God (7th day) also hold views similar to Arianism. They profess belief in one true God who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and the creator of all. In their opinion God sent his son Jesus to be a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. He is a separate being from his son, Jesus. The church teaches that the Holy Spirit is the power of God and not a separate being with a separate consciousness. It does not believe in the teaching of the Trinity, in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three parts of a single being who is God, instead, it believes the Father and the Son are

separate beings with separate consciousnesses and that the Holy Spirit is not a conscious being but the power of God.

Summary and Conclusion

Arianism is a theological heresy which asserts that Jesus Christ is the Son of God begotten at a point in time; a creature distinct from the Father and therefore subordinate to him. The nature of Arius's teaching and his supporters were opposed to the theological views held by Homoousian Christians, regarding the nature of the Trinity and the nature of Christ. The Arian concept of Christ is based on the belief that the Son of God did not always exist but was begotten within time by God the Father. Though Arianism was severally condemned, it is still evidently active in especially contemporary Christendom. It must be admitted that Arianism seemed to protect the unity of God against the danger of polytheism; it satisfied the deep-rooted Greek idea that God cannot be the creator of this world. Though Arianism declared the Son as God, it was only a manner of speaking.

Recommendations

1. There should be synergy between the State and the Church in ensuring peace and unity in the contemporary society.
2. Irrespective of our religious biases or inclinations, objectivity should guide our analysis of issues and scriptures
3. Sound biblical doctrines should be taught in schools and churches
4. Personal understandings of scriptures or new theological lights should be presented in small groups or committees for debates instead of the pulpit first.
5. Religious leaders must not use the church or pulpit as a forum to rebirth old personal differences or attack those perceived as opponents. They should separate between personal and church issues.

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