

A Chronology of the Arian Controversy

[311 CE](#): Egypt - Arius is ordained a presbyter by bishop Achillas of Alexandria, successor to Peter, who was martyred in 311.

[311 CE](#): Palestine - Sometime between 311 and 318, Eusebius of Caesarea becomes bishop of Caesarea.

[312 CE](#): Egypt - Alexander becomes bishop of Alexandria.

[317 CE](#): Asia Minor - Eusebius, a follower of Lucian of Antioch, becomes bishop of Nicomedia.

[318 or 319 CE](#): Egypt - In an informal discussion on the Trinity between Bishop Alexander and his presbyters, Arius accuses Alexander of Sabellianism. He goes on to frame his adoptionist views following the theology of Lucian of Antioch. Afterwards, Alexander of Alexandria convenes a council that condemns and exiles Arius. Arius then writes his [Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia](#) in which he complains of being unjustly persecuted. The letter mentions that Eusebius of Caesarea and many other Eastern bishops have also been condemned. Arius then travels to Nicomedia at the invitation of Eusebius, after which Eusebius advances a letter writing campaign to the bishops of Asia Minor in support of Arius. Due to his rigorous support of Arius, Eusebius "transform[s] what might have remained an Egyptian dispute into an ecumenical controversy" (Quasten III, 191).

Sometime during the same year, Alexander writes his [Catholic Epistle](#) in which he informs his fellow bishops that Eusebius of Nicomedia is also spreading the Arian heresy. He warns his colleagues not to follow Eusebius, lest they too fall into apostasy.

[320 CE](#): Asia Minor - (c) While in Nicomedia, Arius writes his [Letter to Alexander of Alexandria](#) in which he presents another summary of his views. About the same time, Arius writes *The Banquet* (or the *Thalia*), perhaps in an attempt to popularize his doctrine. Only fragments of this work survive, mostly in the form of quotations in the writings of Athanasius.

[324 CE](#): Egypt - Alexander writes a [Letter to Alexander of Constantinople](#) that is also sent to bishops outside of Egypt. In this letter, Alexander warns his fellow bishops of the danger of the Arian threat. He also names Lucian of Antioch and Paul of Samosata as the true originators of this heresy.

[325 CE](#): Palestine - Hosius, a representative of the Emperor Constantine, presides over an anti-Arian council in Antioch sometime during the early months of this year. This council condemns Eusebius of Caesarea for being an Arian sympathizer and formulates a doctrinal creed in favor of Alexander's theology.

[325 CE](#): Asia Minor - Constantine convenes the Council of Nicaea in order to develop a statement of faith that can unify the Church. The [Nicene Creed](#) is written, declaring that the

Father and the Son are of the same substance (*homoousios*), thereby taking a decidedly anti-Arian stand. Arius is exiled to Illyria.

[327 CE](#): ??? - Arius and Euzoios write a [Letter to the Emperor Constantine](#). This letter includes a creed that attempts to show the orthodoxy of Arius' position and a petition to be restored to the Church.

[328 CE](#): ??? - Constantine recalls Arius from exile in Illyria.

[328 CE](#): Egypt - Alexander of Alexandria dies on April 17th. Athanasius becomes bishop of Alexandria on June 8th.

[335 CE](#): Palestine - A [Pronouncement of the Synod of Tyre and Jerusalem](#) restores Arius and his friends into communion with the Church. Both Eusebius of Caesarea and Eusebius of Nicomedia have leading roles in this synod. Athanasius is deposed and so goes to complain to the Emperor Constantine, whom he encounters mid-road. After Athanasius persists in requesting an audience, Constantine agrees to hear his complaint. The Emperor then writes his [Letter to the Bishops Assembled at Tyre](#) (LNPF ser. 2, vol. 2, 278) requesting that they meet in his presence to discuss the matter. Some of the bishops flee home, but Eusebius of Nicomedia and his consort go to meet with Constantine.

[336 CE](#): ??? - The Emperor agrees with the findings of the council concerning Athanasius, and so in February, he exiles him to Trier.

[336 CE](#): ??? - Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra, is deposed by a council at Constantinople. He had written a treatise in 335 defending the Nicene theology, but was considered a Sabellian by his opponents.

[336 CE](#): Greece - Arius dies suddenly in Constantinople on the evening before a formal ceremony was to restore him to his presbyterial rank.

[337 CE](#): Asia Minor - Eusebius of Nicomedia baptizes Constantine, who dies on May 22nd in Nicomedia. His eulogy is delivered by Eusebius of Caesarea. The empire is divided among his three sons: Constantius in the east, Constantine II takes Britain and Gaul, and Constans is over Italy and Illyricum. On June 17th, Constantius, orders the return of Athanasius to Alexandria.

[338 CE](#): Greece- Eusebius of Nicomedia is installed as bishop of Constantinople.

[338 CE](#): Palestine - A council at Antioch deposes Athanasius and orders a second exile.

[339 CE](#): Egypt - Athanasius flees Alexandria in anticipation of being expelled. Gregory, a man from Cappadocia (not Gregory of Nazianzus or Gregory of Nyssa), takes over as bishop of Athanasius' see.

[339 CE](#): ??? - Eusebius of Caesarea dies late in 339 or early in 340.

[340 CE](#): ??? - After the death of Constantine II, Constans becomes sole ruler of the west. He supports the Nicenes and Athanasius, while his brother in the east, Constantius, as we know, opposes the Nicene theology. Also, [Julius I](#), bishop of Rome, receives Marcellus and Athanasius into communion with the Roman church.

[341 CE](#): Palestine - Two Arian councils are held in Antioch during this year, the first on the occasion of the dedication of a church which was begun under the direction of Emperor Constantine. Of the ninety-seven bishops present, none are from the West and most are hostile to Athanasius. During this council, the [First](#), [Second](#) and [Third](#) Arian Confessions are written, thereby beginning the attempt to produce a formal doctrine of faith to oppose the Nicene Creed. (The *Second Arian Confession* is also known as the *Creed of the Dedication*.) The [Fourth Arian Confession](#) is written at the second council of the year. The bishops of the east deny being Arians, issuing the famous statement, "How, being bishops, should we follow a priest?" (The priest that they refer to is, of course, Arius.)

[341 CE](#): ??? - Eusebius of Nicomedia dies in the winter of 341-342.

[342 CE](#) or [343 CE](#): ??? - Constans convenes a council in Sardica in an attempt to restore unity to the Church. The council is a fiasco. The western bishops and eastern bishops separate and denounce each other. The west release a statement claiming to be an attack on Arianism, the East retire to Philippopolis and release a statement, dated from Sardica, which justifies the deposition of Athanasius and Marcellus and condemns Julius I and others. To this is appended the 4th creed of Antioch with additional anathemas directed at Marcellus.

[344 CE](#): ??? - Another Arian council is held in Antioch. Here, the council writes the [Fifth Arian Confession \(or Macrostich\)](#), which is notably longer than the confessions written at Antioch in 341. The *Macrostich* is the Eastern creed of Sardica plus eight paragraphs addressed to the western bishops.

[345 CE](#): Italy - A council is held in Milan. Western bishops read the *Macrostich*.

[345 CE](#): Egypt - Gregory, bishop of Alexandria, dies in June.

[346 CE](#): Egypt - Athanasius is restored to the Alexandrian see.

[347 CE](#): Italy - A second council is held in Milan.

[350 CE](#): ??? - The rebel Magnentius murders Constans.

[351 CE](#): ??? - A second council is convened at Sirmium under the supervision of Basil of Ancyra. The [Sixth Arian \(or First Sirmium\) Confession](#) is written, which seems to be an expanded revision of the Fourth Arian Confession written in 341.

[353 CE](#): ??? - A council is held at Arles during autumn that is directed against Athanasius.

[353 CE](#): ??? - Constantius defeats Magnentius and becomes sole ruler of the empire; with Constans, who supported the Nicenes, gone, he works to eliminate the Nicene theology.

[355 CE](#): Italy - A council is held in Milan. Athanasius is again condemned.

[356 CE](#): Egypt - Athanasius is deposed on February 8th, beginning his third exile.

[356 CE](#): Egypt - George is named bishop of Alexandria. Aetius, who claims that the Son is unlike (*anomoios*, hence the title *Anomoeism*) and cannot be of the same or similar essence as the Father, is an influence on George.

[357 CE](#): Palestine - Eudoxius, another theologian influenced by Aetius, becomes bishop of Antioch.

[357 CE](#): ??? - The third Council of Sirmium is convened during the summer. The [Seventh Arian \(or Second Sirmium\) Confession](#) (also called "The blasphemy") is written. The Western bishops move as close as they will to finding a compromise with the Arians. Both *homoousios* (*of one essence*) and *homoiousios* (*alike in essence*) are avoided as unbiblical, and it is agreed that the Father is greater than his subordinate son.

[358 CE](#): ??? - A council held at Ancyra, under the leadership of its bishop, Basil, releases a statement using the term *homoiousios*. The bishops attending are labelled "Semi-Arian."

[359 CE](#): ??? - The fourth council of Sirmium is convened on May 22nd. The Fourth Sirmium Confession (or the Dated Creed?) is written. It proposes a compromise formula, which is not technical, and is designed to please everybody (though it is too watered-down to do any good).

[359 CE](#): ??? - Constantius summons two councils to finish what Nicaea had started, that is, to develop a unifying creed for Christianity. The Synod of Ariminum (Rimini) is held in the West during May and is attended by more than 400 bishops. The Synod of Seleucia is held in the East during October (or December?) and is attended by about 160 bishops. Here, the [Ninth Arian Confession](#) is written, which affirms that Christ is "like the Father" while, at the same time, anathematizing the Anomoeans. In the end, both councils agree to this semi-Arian statement of Faith, even though it does not specify *how* the Son is like the Father. However, the agreement seems to have been coerced at Ariminum, which may have otherwise ended in favor of Nicaea.

[360 CE](#): Greece - A council is convened in January to review the conclusions of Ariminum and Seleucia from the year before. The [Tenth Arian Confession](#) is written. Commenting on this council from a perspective of twenty years later, Jerome writes that the world "awoke with a groan to find itself Arian."

[360 CE](#): ??? - Constantius' armies are facing difficulties and meeting defeat. The Gallic forces declare Julian, Constantius' cousin, emperor, rather than giving their support to the failing Constantius.

[361 CE](#): ??? - Constantius dies on November 3rd after naming Julian as emperor.

[361 CE](#): Palestine - A council is held in Antioch during the installation of Euzonius as bishop of Antioch. (Euzonius had been excommunicated with Arius in 318 and 325 and restored with him in 335.) During this council, the *Eleventh Arian Confession* is written. This creed is strongly Anomoean, leading Athanasius to remark that the Arians have reverted back to the first doctrines framed by Arius.

[373 CE](#): ??? - Athanasius dies on May 3rd.

[381 CE](#): Greece - The First Council (Second Ecumenical) of Constantinople is convened to review the controversy since Nicaea. Under the direction of Gregory of Nazianzus, the Nicene Creed is re-evaluated and accepted with the addition of clauses on the Holy Spirit and other matters.

[383 CE](#): ??? - The findings of the First Council of Constantinople are reviewed. 383 can be identified as the year that the Arian controversy ended, provided that we take this to mean that the orthodox Church finally accepted a non-Arian statement of faith that went uncontested by further Arian confessions. Though Arians continue to exist long after this year, the theological agenda of the Church turns from the Trinity and headlong into another controversy, the Christological Controversy of the fifth century.

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