

Adrian Ignat

The Spread Out of Arianism. A Critical Analysis of the Arian Heresy

Abstract

In the religious life of Church appeared so many heresies, one more important than another. Everyone had a new religious system, with which he tried to change the faith of the people, of the Church. In our example Arianism was almost as much a philosophy as a religion. It assumed the usual postulates, worked by the usual philosophical methods, and scarcely referred to Scripture except in quest of isolated texts to confirm conclusions reached without its help. Marcion or Montanus were easily recognized; the case of Arius or of Eusthatus was more difficult. The case of Pelagius was more difficult still. But in every important moment of history of Church there appeared one or more men who established the Orthodox doctrine.

On this paper I will focus on the Arian heresy, trying to show how this heresy spread out on the Roman Empire and how it kept his strength for many century on the spiritual



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formation of some people.

Keywords

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Introduction

What is a heresy? “The Greek word *hairesis* (literally *choice* or *thing chosen*) was applied to the doctrines of philosophical schools. But already in I Cor. 11.19 and Gal. 5.20 Paul uses the term in a negative sense to mean a divisive faction. In the work of Ignatius of Antioch (35-107), that is, even before the days of the conciliar definitions of Christian faith, it denotes theological error. Tertullian (160-225) identifies the root of heresy as the willful choice of philosophical opinion over revealed Christian truth”¹.

The ecclesial meaning of the term signified the sin of a person who, having been baptized and calling him or herself a Christian, denied a defined doctrine of faith even after having been formally instructed. These notions have two aspects: formal and material/concrete. In the first aspect, heresy is the persistent adherence to erroneous teaching. The second aspect, material, heresy means adherence to error, and acting upon this error, without such culpability. The definition of heresy is dependent, therefore, on acknowledged doctrine of the Church. Heresy is the dislocation of some complete and self-supporting doctrine by the introduction of a denial of some essential part therein. Eusebius of Caesarea considered Simon Magician to be

¹ Alan Richardson and John Bowden, *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983, p. 249.

the father of all heresies. "A heresy is usually a genuine hunger eating the wrong fruit"².

Arianism was the first of the great heresies. Arianism was the debate within the Church in the fourth century over the divinity of Jesus Christ. It was great because this heresy, from its beginning, changed the minds of people and urged them to understand divinity in rational way. Since it is very difficult to rationalize the union of the Infinite with the finite, there is an apparent contradiction between the two terms - the final form into which the confusion of heresies settled down was a declaration by the Arians that our Lord was of as much of the Divine Essence as it was possible for a creature to be, but He was none the less a creature.

1. Arius and Athanasius - Complex Personalities From the Fourth Century

1.1. Arius

Arius (256-336), a native of Libya, received his theological training in Antioch at the School of Lucian, whom Bishop Alexander of Alexandria called one of the fathers of Arianism. From Antioch, he went to Alexandria where he was ordained deacon and later priest. He was appointed to the Church of St. Baucalis, the most important church from Alexandria. Arius was one of the public preachers of Alexandria and, some suppose, Master of the Catechetical School. About the year 318, he began to excite much discussion by a theological doctrine of his own, which he presented in his sermons as the faith of the Church³.

The influence of School of Lucian in Antioch ("*ad litteram*" interpreting of Scripture) led and supports Arius to become the promoter of this new interpretation of Scripture. Lucian of Antioch, the mentor of Arius, died a martyr's death in 312,

² Lynn Harold Hough, *Athanasius: The Hero*, Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1906, p. 44.

³ Rev. R. Wheler Bush, *St. Athanasius: his life and times*, New York: E. & J. B. Young & Co., 1888, p. 42.

leaving to Arius a rich heritage – a foundation of rational understanding. Arius was an unusual man, even for his time. "Arius was tall and gaunt, his hair tangled, his eye piercing, his movements quick and nervous. He was a musical genius, and he hit upon the idea of popularizing his doctrines by composing hymns set to the tunes of the banquet halls of the time. He was strongly ascetic in his way of life, strict, rigid, pure, and though very attractive to the ladies and "going about from house to house", he yet lived on unimpeachable life, free from all scandal"⁴.

Because Arius impressed those he met with his ascetic and rigorous attitude, with his eminence, his gravity, his self-mortification, and most of all his loyalty to Lucian of Antioch, the success of his doctrine in Alexandria and in other places was very strong. "He was logical-minded in his mental processes; dry, cold, clear, but somewhat thin in his intellectual range. He was an African by birth, but he studied in Antioch rather than in Alexandria, and in the famous school city he came under the influence of Lucian, the real founder of that school"⁵. Harnack calls Lucian the real originator of the heresy, the Arius before Arius. He had been a disciple of Paul of Samosata, but later he came under the influence of Origen, and finally produced a "blend" of the doctrines of these two men. His students revered him, and, in return, he laid his mind and spirit upon them. One of the students influenced by him was Eusebius of Nicomidia.

In his actions, Arius had the support of his early friend, Bishop Eusebius of Nicomidia, who was the ecclesial advisor of Constantia, Emperor Constantine's sister. Eusebius of Nicomidia later became close to the Emperor and baptized him in the Jordan. Eusebius was also a very important ecclesial advisor to the sons of Constantine, especially for Constans. He

⁴ Rufus M. Jones, *The Church 's debt to heretics*, London: James Clarke & Co., Limited, 1925, p. 86.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

also tried to introduce Arian beliefs in all regions of Empire⁶. “The State allowed the Church possibilities: often it sought to direct the Church’s choice of a particular possibility; and sometimes it caused the Church, or a part of the Church, to seek to declare its own self-definition, even when the State disagreed”⁷.

Major problems for Arius began when launched (Sabellianism) against Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria. Sabellius maintained that God was one being but with three faces. These faces are not distinct persons, like in the Orthodoxy, are only manifestation of God in time. The Bishop retaliated by accusing Arius of heresy, and so the battle began. Arius, in his early period, taught the position that Christ had been made, or created by God of non-existence.

Arius was strongly Aristotelian in his intellectual position. God, for Arius, was transcendent⁸. As a transcendent Being, He is not present. He remains forever in Himself, and to Himself, and by Himself. God is distant, He could not be revealed. If the Platonism was no longer a danger to the Church, Athanasius felt free to use Platonic ontology in order to express his doctrine about God, especially the relation between Father and Son⁹. The orthodox Christian faith is a kind of Christian faith, which is to a large degree expressed, in Platonic terms. “Reading through his works one is struck by the fact that on the hand Athanasius gives the impression that he saw it as a synthesis, on the other hand as an antithesis. It is clearly a synthesis in the sense that he is constantly using Platonic language and arguments, it is equally clearly an antithesis in the sense that he is constantly attacking philosophy and philosophers”¹⁰.

⁶ John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the fourth century*, London: E. Lumley, 1871, p. 245.

⁷ Alwyn Pettersen, *Athanasius*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995, p. 7.

⁸ Rufus M. Jones, *The Church’s debt to heretics*, p. 88.

⁹ E. P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius synthesis or antithesis?*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968, p. 131.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 130.

The tension between these two systems is very visible. Everyone knows that Platonic system is opposed to Aristotelian system. From there is very deductible the difference and opposition of Orthodoxy, in one hand, and Arianism, in other hand.

At the foundation of the Arian system is an axiom, which blocked an understanding of the Orthodox position on the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. This principle required the Godhead to be not only uncreated, but also unbegotten (αγεννητος) The conclusion of this axiom is that the Son of God, the Logos, because He was begotten could not truly be God. If the Son was not truly God, what was He? He was the first of God's creatures not from the divine substance. Thus, He differs in essence from the Father. There was a time when the Son of God did not exist (ην οτε ουκ ην). He was the Son of God, not in the metaphysical, but in the moral sense of the word. According to Athanasius the Arians asked: "How do you dare to say that the one having a body is the proper word of the Father's essence, so that he endured such a thing as this [that is, the cross]?"¹¹

The title of God is improperly given the Son, because the only true God adopted Him as Son in foresight of his merits. From this sonship by adoption, the adopted Son, no real, does not participate in the divinity, nor share true likeness to God. The Logos holds a middle place between God and the world. God created Him to be the instrument of creation. He is still less than God that He fulfilled in Jesus Christ the function of a soul. Finally, it must be remembered, in order to understand the force behind the spread of Arianism, that the theology of Arius was not entirely new. It was connected with the Neoplatonic philosophical system of his time. It was nothing but an extreme development of the theory of subordinationism that, in a more

¹¹ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. I, Westminster: The Newman Press, 1960, p. 8.

moderate form had been taught before Arius and had many adherents.

1.2. Athanasius

The Orthodox view in Arian controversy was represented by Athanasius. In 328 CE, Bishop Alexander was succeeded by one of the most imposing figures in all ecclesiastical history and the most outstanding of all Alexandrian bishops, Athanasius (295-373 CE). He enjoyed an advantageous position, for Alexandria was the second most important city in the Eastern Empire and one of the four most influential cities in the world. "The people of Alexandria have been called the Parisians of the ancient world"¹². He also enjoyed strong popular backing, which never failed him and made his enemies hesitate to take extreme measures against him. This fact is known from a letter, which Athanasius sent to Constantine¹³.

Athanasius was born in 295 CE at Alexandria where he received classical and theological education. "He received a thorough grounding in the scriptures and in biblical exegesis, which formed the basis of his thought and writings throughout his life"¹⁴. He was regarded as both bilingual and bicultural, being equally at home in Coptic and Greek. His theology can be considered to represent a fusion of Coptic literalism and Hellenistic spiritualism¹⁵. Also "reading through his works one gets the impression that he must have been, just like for instance Augustine and Jerome, a man with an extraordinary good memory: without using a card-index he is capable to produce arguments from a substantial number of sources"¹⁶.

¹² Lynn Harold Hough, *Athanasius: The Hero*, p. 32.

¹³ Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius; Theology and Politics in the Constantinian empire*, London: Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993, p. 20.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹⁶ E. P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius synthesis or antithesis?*, p. 115.

If Arius thought everything through a cold reason, Athanasius used the reason, but not in the contradiction with revelation, but confirms it. This stems from his theory that human reason is an image of God's Reason. The theory that human reason is an image of god's Reason shows some similarity with the quite generally held philosophical doctrine of the affinity between the human and the divine.

Alexandria, where Athanasius grew up, offered all her citizens the possibility to study philosophy, classical literature and religion. The sphere of religion was strongly outlined through the Alexandrian school, well known for its scholars: Panten, Origen, and Clement. At the same time of his writing, "Athanasius asserted that Christian theology had triumphed over pagan philosophy that the wisdom of the Greeks was disappearing and the demons no longer possess their former power"¹⁷.

Athanasius had a relationship with the monks of the Thebais early in his life. After he was ordained a deacon, he accompanied Bishop Alexander to the Council of Niceae. Three years later, he succeeded Alexander as bishop. Because Athanasius succeeded Alexander, some people (e.g., the Meletians) disliked him and brought false accusations against him. In the Synod of Tyre in 335 CE, his enemies gathered together and decided to depose him. Athanasius resisted. Subsequently, "at the instigation of Eusebius, bishop of Nicomidia, they again deposed Athanasius in a synod at Antioch (339) and elected Pistus, an excommunicated priest, as bishop of Alexandria"¹⁸.

From the start of his episcopate, Athanasius faced a war on two fronts – in Egypt, against the Meletians and a rival bishop of Alexandria who claimed his see, and outside Egypt, against the allies of Arius, who wished to complete his rehabilitation by securing his return to Alexandria. In Egypt, the Meletian faction

¹⁷ Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius; Theology and Politics in the Constantinian empire*, p. 12.

¹⁸ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. I, p. 21.

already supported Arius. This group despite its profession of orthodoxy, continued in alliance with him, through jealousy of the Church, even after he had fallen into heresy¹⁹.

When he participated in the Council of Niceae in 325CE, Athanasius was still a young man, not quite thirty years of age. He was a deacon in the Church and already his strength and eloquence were remarkable. He lived to be seventy-six or seventy-seven years of age and during his entire life, he maintained with inflexible energy the full Orthodox doctrine of Trinity²⁰. Even after the Council of Niceae established the orthodox faith, the Arian party continued to have influence, even into the next century.

When the first compromise with Arians was suggested, Athanasius was already Archbishop of Alexandria. He categorically refused any compromise with Arians. When Emperor Constantine ordered him to re-admit Arius to Communion in the Church, he refused²¹.

At the time, this was a perilous step, because no one had the right to disobey the emperor. It was possible for this to be interpreted by Constantine as an act of *Laissez majeste!* In the Holy Roman Empire, the punishment for this act was death. But Athanasius benefited from the support of the masses that were orthodox. For this reason, Emperor Constantine could not punish him with death. Instead, he was exiled to Gaul. But, in exile, Athanasius was even more passionate than in Alexandria. His attitude served to reinforce the strong Orthodox feelings in this part of Empire. He was later recalled from exile.

In this period of time Pistus, the Arian candidate, tried to occupy the see of Alexandria. When he was not successful, the Arian faction removed Athanasius by force and installed the Cappadocian Gregory. Athanasius fled to Rome. There Pope

¹⁹ John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the fourth century*, p. 245.

²⁰ Rev. R. Wheler Bush, *St. Athanasius: his life and times*, p. 19.

²¹ Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius; Theology and Politics in the Constantinian empire*, p. 20.

Julius I called a synod that exonerated him. Athanasius participated in the Synod of Sardica south of the Danube in 343 CE, where it was decided that Athanasius was the last legal bishop of Alexandria. After Gregory's death, Athanasius returned to Alexandria.

Athanasius' protector, Constans, died in 350 CE. Constantius, new emperor of both the East and the West, summoned a synod at Arles in 353 and introduced another usurper, George of Cappadocia, to the see of Alexandria. Athanasius was forced a third time to leave this diocese. This time, he fled to the monks of the Egyptian desert.

The usurper, George of Cappadocia, was murdered in 361 and the new emperor, Julian, recalled the exiled bishops. Athanasius again began working to reconcile the Semi-Arians (the doctrinal party from Council of Niceae) and the orthodox party. But Emperor Julian did not want peace to be disturbed in the empire and issued an imperial order to expel Athanasius as a "disturber of the peace and enemy of the gods". Julian died the following year (363), and Athanasius was able to return²².

Athanasius was exiled a fifth time in 365 after Valens became ruler of the East. But, because the people of Alexandria threatened to revolt against this order of exile, Valens restored him to his office February 1, 366. He spent his remaining days in peace and died May 2, 373. Athanasius left a powerful legacy, one so great that the Greek Church calls him "the Father of Orthodoxy" and the Roman Church counts him among the four great Fathers of the East. "Athanasius was orthodoxy alive"²³.

2. The Conditions Which Favored the Spread of this Heresy

The humanity of Jesus Christ, our Lord, was not in doubt. He had been born as men are born; He died as men die. He lived as a man and had been known by a very large number of men and

²² Lynn Harold Hough, *Athanasius: The Hero*, pp. 134-135.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

women who had followed Him, and heard Him and witnessed His actions.

But, not everyone understood Jesus in the same way. The Jews could not conceive how the oneness of God, with the Divine Transcendence, which they alone confessed in a world of idolaters, could include the Incarnation of God. The pagans could readily understand that Jesus was a divine being and were prepared to admit him into company of their numerous gods. They were familiar with the notion that gods appear in human shape. There was no lack of heroes who had been deified²⁴.

In a radically monotheistic thought system, a Messiah, especially a Messiah conceived as the blessed Son - in the official Jewish formulation, the belonging Son - of the Father must remain a being infinitely different in substance from the infinite and single God alone in his transcendence, ineffable and unimaginable, whose only sanctuary was the Holy of Holies, the empty and symbolic room hidden within the one and only temples. The Greek thinkers accepted the belief in Christ but conceived of him as a mediator, the "Son of God" Messiah was separate from the inaccessible God above all being whom great Greek philosophers like Plato and Plotinus had seen in glimpses.

Thus, the Stoics took the term *logos* from Heraclitus of Ephesus, and use it to define the divine Reason immanent in the universe, a rational Soul vitalizing and guiding all that is. Logos is wisdom, intelligence, mind, thought, will purpose. He is the divine Agent, the Image of God, the firstborn Son of God. He was preexistent before His incarnation, the active Reason, the operative Power of God. He is personalized as Christ and, in all

²⁴ Jean Guitton, *Great Heresies & Church Councils*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965, p. 80.

his activities, He is identical with God. He creates; He reveals; He mediates between the Infinite and the finite²⁵.

Prior to 313, the year of The Edict of Milan, the Church had not been confronted with any great heresies, after this year there was a big explosion of heresies. Before 313 Roman Empire persecuted the Church, but after this year the Church had a freedom from persecution. It becomes an important element when Christianity becomes a state religion of the Roman Empire.

In the time of persecution the Church was confronted with the particular problems of lapsi (Christians who give up the Church for own salvation) and the incorporation of them in the Church. At the same period some distinct faction, rigors, was against this movement. The Church keeps now the prospect of dissections and schism (Donatist, Meletian). In other hand is visible, the most in Egypt, a tension between some bishops and the ascetic monks. Another tension in Egypt is between the Coptic Christians and Greek Christians. It is not just a linguistically difference, as is a disapproval of any Egyptian compromise with alien powers²⁶.

When Arius presented his system, he found many adherents, who now saw the opportunity to change Orthodoxy to a “more rational” system. The destruction of the pagan religions and their replacement with Orthodoxy created the fertile soil for this heresy to take root. Many regretted the loss of the old gods, but thought it not worthwhile to risk anything in their defense. When the power of Arianism was manifested in those first years of the Graeco-Roman world, Arianism became the nucleus or center of many strongly surviving traditions from the older world; traditions that were not religious, but rather intellectual, social, moral, and literary. Thus, Arian beliefs interested people not so much in their religious beliefs, as in their interests.

²⁵ Rufus M. Jones, *The Church 's debt to heretics*, London: James Clarke & Co., Limited, 1925, p. 64.

²⁶ Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995, p. 6.

A great number of the old families were reluctant to accept the social revolution implied by the triumph of the Christian Church. They naturally sided with a movement which they instinctively felt to be spiritually opposed to the life and survival of the Church and which carried with it an atmosphere of social superiority over the populace. The Church relied upon and was supported at the end by the masses. Men of old family tradition and wealth found the Arian beliefs more sympathetic than the ordinary Orthodox and a better ally for gentlemen.

Many intellectuals were in the same position. They did not have family pride or social tradition from the past, but they had pride in their culture. They remembered, with a sense of loss the former prestige of the pagan philosophers. In the Roman Empire the study of Greek philosophy was on honor. A strong desire to restore old ways facilitated the explosion of Arianism.

The Roman Empire was a military state. Promotion to positions of power came through the Army. But the Army in Roman Empire was Arian. Or at least many emperors had an Arian policy or tolerance of Arianism. In contrast, the wider populace sustained Orthodoxy. The soldiers, whether of barbaric or civilized recruitment, felt sympathy with Arianism for the same reason that the old pagan families felt sympathy with Arianism. The Army then, and especially the Army chiefs, backed the new heresy for all they were worth, and it became a sort of test of whether you were somebody or not²⁷.

The attitudes of emperors in leadership fluctuated between Orthodoxy and Arianism. On the one hand they felt the pressure to please the populace and, on the other hand, the demands of the army. Every emperor must be sufficiently able to deal with both parties.

The Arian system was both interesting and easy. It was based on Scripture, but with rational interpretation. Arius wanted to elevate the divinity of God, and, thus he transformed the

²⁷ Jean Guitton, *Great Heresies & Church Councils*, p. 88.

divinity of God into one inaccessible and completely transcendental divinity. He did not wish to affirm the Incarnation, because in this way God's holiness could be lost. But Orthodoxy believed that God became flesh for salvation of human beings. This truth was difficult for Arius and his followers to understand. It was easier for them to affirm that Jesus Christ was not God, but a creature of God. The Arian heresy was considered one of the many forms of the powerful heresy of Monarchianism. The earliest form of the Monarchian doctrine was the humanitarian view of *the Adoptionists*, who were so named from the fact that they held Christ to have been a man whom God adopted to be His Son.

What arguments did Arius use in the support of his heresy? The Old Testament, speaking of Wisdom, had stated plainly that God created Wisdom. In the synoptic gospels, affirmations of his humanity that seem to exclude his divinity came from Jesus' own mouth. The Acts of the Apostles spoke of him as *a man approved of God*. All the passages in the Epistles of Paul in which he spoke of Christ could be read to mean that Jesus was the most perfect of all creatures, the creature in whom all others had been willed, thought, predestined, and saved, but that he was not identical with God the Father.

The early Church Fathers had great difficulty explaining the distinction of the two births of the Word: 1) one the eternal birth before the time of which St. John spoke in the prologue to his gospel, and 2) the birth in time of Jesus of Nazareth, born of the Virgin Mary, which was anticipated into the Old Testament by prophets. It was difficult to make the distinction between the eternal Son of God and Son of God made man. This was especially true because the gospel is not a theology of the Divine Relations, but a history of the relation of those Relations with man, a history of our salvation. The preaching of the Apostles and the teaching of Jesus take place in concrete events

in history. The Word that is spoken of here is not the Word-as-such but the Word-Incarnate, Son of the Virgin Mary²⁸.

Pliny, the Emperor's magistrate in province of Bithynia who observed the Christians in their Sunday liturgy, wrote to the Emperor: "They sing to Christ as to a god. They worship. The depth of their faith remains inexplicable unless one accepts that Jesus Christ, Son of God, their Savior, is taken to be God himself, in the strict sense of the word God"²⁹.

3. The Spread of Arianism in the Roman Empire

The enemies of Orthodoxy worked hard after the Council of Niceae to reestablish Arianism as a religion of the Empire. In their efforts, they succeeded in recalling Arius from his exile. After the death of Constantine in 336 CE, Eusebius of Nicomidia and Eudoxus of Constantinople with the help of Emperor Constantius succeeded in exiling Athanasius, the defending bishop of Niceae. They met with other bishops at Sardica and at Sirmium to work out confessions of faith in which the word *homoousios* was either omitted or else replaced by words akin to those of Niceae, but still acceptable to the opponents of Niceae Creed. None of the three formulas proposed at Sirmium contains the term *homoousios*.

Arius was exiled first time in the South of Danube, in the provinces of Illyricum. Here he won many adherents from among the younger bishops. They supported him in the Council of Tyre (335), Sardica (343) and Sirmium (378). "Two young illyriens, Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa" signed documents in the Council of Tyre against Athanasius³⁰.

Under the pressure of the Imperial powers, irregular meetings took place in the East. In 359 CE, a Council at Remini in Italy

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 82.

²⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, London, England: Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000, p. 277.

³⁰ Sources Chretiennes, *Scolies Ariennes sur le Concile d'Aquilee*, Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 29, 1980, p. 101.

attended by four hundred Western bishops, and another at Seleucia in Asia Minor with one hundred and fifty Eastern bishops, rejected the term *homoousios*. This was the moment of which St. Jerome wrote: “Ingemuit totus orbis et arianum se esse miratus est”³¹. The great episcopal sees were held by semi-Arians: Lisbon, Arles, Ravenna, and Sirmium in the West, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Caesarea, Antioch, Nicomedia, and Constantinople in the East. In Rome Pope Liberius had been banished. He also sacrificed Athanasius for reconciliation, adopting the Semi-Arian creed³².

For a time the Church became semi-Arian and anti-Nicene, but the Orthodox faith did not disappear. One important role played by Athanasius was in the remaking of the Orthodox faith. Despite his exile, he continued to sustain and to speak of the pure Orthodox faith. People recognized him as a “good Christian and a true bishop”.

“His mind was clear and could clear other minds. His character was like steel. He was impervious to threats, subtleties, tricks or compromise. He drew fresh strength from every obstacle. He never yielded. In the teeth of the seeming success of the powers and of seemingly unanimous false decisions, in the teeth of the seeming dialectic of history he stood up to defend pure quality, the truth. By his intelligent loyalty to the past he shaped the future. His voice was clear and steady and never dismayed, though he was condemned again and again by pseudo-councils. Supporting Athanasius and Hilary who controlled and briefed the clergy of Gaul, most of the laity had remained faithful”³³.

4. The Spread of Arianism Outside of the Roman Empire

Arianism had penetrated the provinces of Danube. “Dans les provinces danubiennes ou avaient ete bannis Arius et ses

³¹ St. Jerome, *Adversus Lucifer*, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.html>, p. 19.

³² Jean Guitton, *Great Heresies & Church Councils*, p. 86.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

partisans de la première heure, l'arianisme poussa des racines profondes" – In the Danube provinces where Arius and his advocates was exiled Arianism established strong roots³⁴. It affected not only the provinces of Roman Empire but also the provinces outside of Empire. Thus, when the Goths occupied those provinces, they adopted the Arian form of Christianity. This was because Arianism, much more than orthodoxy, lent itself to those forms of faith that suit unpolished people. Its liturgy was secret, in the Gothic language, and took place during the night or at dawn. Its theology was crude and undeveloped. There were no monks. The affirmations of faith were violent. Its piety had a military cast. The Trinity had been all but cut apart.

The most important Arian writer and Arian bishop from Gothia was Ulphilas. He translated the Scripture in the Gothic language and baptized the Gothic people. It was a religion well adapted to people that had just emerged from Germanic paganism³⁵.

"Apart from his Bible Ulphilas published much; but many of his books seem to have devoted to the question of the difference between the Father's divinity and the Son's. They were in some cases written in no very amicable tone – all who did not accept the creed of Rimini, Homoousians and Homoiousians alike, were dismissed without compunction as nothing less than Antichrist"³⁶.

Some of these works may have perished when king Reccared was converted to Catholicism in Spain in 589, and his orders were carried out to such effect that not a single Gothic text has survived in Spain³⁷.

The work of Ulphilas in the lives of Gothic people can be considerate similar with the work of Martin Luther in sixteen

³⁴ Sources Chrétiennes, *Scolies Ariennes sur le Concile d'Aquilee*, p. 101.

³⁵ Mircea Păcurariu, *Romanian Orthodox History of Church*, v. I, Bucharest: Romanian Orthodox Church Editor, 1991.

³⁶ E. A. Thompson, *The Visigoths in the time of Ulfila*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966, p. 115.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

century. Luther translated the Bible from the original language into German. Ulphilas in fourth century did more: He created an alphabet for the Goths and, after ward, translated the Bible. Luther transformed the Germany in sixteen century, preparing it for the Enlightenment and Modern period. Similarity Ulphilas established a new school of Theology in South of Danube. Here he trained perspective missionaries for Goths and territory. The intellectual preparation of Ulphilas was considered very advanced for his period. He knew Greek, Latin, Goth languages. He used this knowledge in the service of Theology. The same is Luther who implemented a new course in the history of Germany³⁸.

At this time, these barbarians were the dynamic element of European society. They included the Goths, the Ostrogoths, the Vandals, the Suevi, the Burgundians, the Rugians, the Alans, the Alemanni, and the Lombards. In the sixth century, the new forces, the army, the young dynasties, and the rising powers were all Arian in the West. This situation remained until a most improbable event occurred: the rise of Clovis, a still un-Christianized barbarian and conqueror of the most powerful Arian state. In the East the Roman Empire put its stamp in the spreading of Arian heresy. After a series of Arian Emperors, the Orthodox Emperors came to the throne, and established forever the official doctrine of the Empire³⁹.

5. Romanian Contribution to Orthodoxy in the Church in Fourth Century

In contrast to Arian Goths who lived for two or three generations on the territory of Dacia, north of Danube where Romania is today, the romantic people who lived here kept the Orthodox faith. As proof of this was the participation of a bishop from this land at the Council of Niceae. Eusebius of

³⁸ Mircea Păcurariu, *Romanian Orthodox History of Church*, v. I.

³⁹ Jean Guitton, *Great Heresies & Church Councils*, p. 88.

Cezareea wrote this in his History of Church: “Nor the Schytanus does not miss from there”.

Another example is the presence of Valens in this territory in his war against Goths. Winning the war against the Goths, Valens came in Tomis (369), a city from the coast of Black Sea, and try to mediate the dissension between Arians and Orthodox. He sought the possibility of communion in the same church with Orthodox believers. The bishop from Tomis, Betranion, was opposed and this left with the Orthodox believers. For this, Valens punished the bishop by sending him into exile. At the insistence of population, the emperor reversed his decision and revoked the punishment. For the next period the region of Scytia Minor was recognized as a very Orthodox region of Empire. It was in the middle of Goth, Gepids, Vandals or another migratory, like a forte point of Orthodoxy⁴⁰. These bishops participated in the Council of Sardica and Sirmium, and signed for the orthodox faith.

From this part of the world came two important names in theology: Saint John Cassian and Dionisios Exigus. Saint John Cassian established mission in France, Marcilia, and Dionisios Exigus went to Rome where he established the calendar of our era. They exported the theology of the East to the West, making the connections and participating in the unity of Church in West and East.

6. New Forms of this Heresy in the World

“Islam is an Arabic word meaning “surrender” or “obedience” to God. Muslim, “one who has surrendered”, comes from the same root. Surrender is believed to be humanity’s proper response to God”⁴¹. Islam was built upon the basis of existing religions in the sixth century in the world. It takes something from the Jews, Christians and from pre-Mohammedan religion. Its vitality and

⁴⁰ Mircea Păcurariu, *Romanian Orthodox History of Church*, v. I.

⁴¹ Niels C. Nielsen, *Religions of the World*, New York: Bedford/ St. Martin’s Boston, 1993, p. 427.

endurance soon gave it the appearance of a new religion, but those who were present during its rise saw it for what it was: not a denial, but an adaptation and misuse, of the Christian things. Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was not, like Arius, a man of Christian birth and doctrine. He came from pagan roots. But much of what he taught was Christian doctrine, oversimplified. He lived at the frontiers of Christian Empire, which inspired his convictions. He came of, and mixed with, the degraded idolaters of the Arabian wilderness, the conquest of which had never seemed worth the Romans while⁴².

Islam has, like in the Mosaic religion, a profound theo-centric and monotheist character. "Say, He is Allah, one. Allah, the Eternal. He has not begotten nor was He begotten, and He has no equal"⁴³. It is strong affirmation, which eliminates the existence of Trinity. It is necessary to say here that in the Arabic regions, after the Council of Chalcedon exist the new Churches. They are non-Chalcedonies and monotheist. In my consideration these Churches have a strong influence in the development of Islam.

Like Arius, Mohammed trying to accentuate the unity and omnipotence of God lost the Trinity. The central point where the Islam struck home with a mortal blow against Orthodox tradition was a full denial of the Incarnation. Arius did not deny the Incarnation of the Son, but make rather the Son a creature of God. Mohammed went farther than Arius and stated that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, was a simply prophet, like Moses or Abraham, a man like other men. In this way Islam eliminated the Trinity altogether.

With that denial of the Incarnation went the whole sacramental structure. He refused to know anything of the Eucharist and from here all the results. What is curious in Islam, is the fact that Mohammed called the Jews people infidels:

⁴² Hilaire Belloc, *The great heresies*, Freeport, New York, 1968, p. 70.

⁴³ Koran, 112: 1-4, http://ar.islamway.net/SF/quran/data/The_Holy_Quran_English.pdf

*They did not believe in Jesus,
They invented against his mother an atrocious lie⁴⁴.*

In Islam was a combination of many things; the attractive simplicity of the doctrine, the sweeping away of clerical and imperial discipline, the huge immediate practical advantage of freedom for the slave and riddance of anxiety for the debtor, the crowning advantage of free justice under few and simple laws easily understood - that formed the driving force behind the astonishing Mohammedan social victory. The Mohammedan movement was essentially a "*amalgam of religions*", which survived in special condition.

I spoke before about the spread of Arianism outside of Empire. The most important people who received the Arian baptize, was the Goths. They were established in the Western part of Europe. The South parts of Gothic people were called Visigoth. They established themselves in Spain. The Western part of Church, represented by Pope of Rome, tried to convert Visigoth to Orthodox faith. In their efforts the Western clergy used the annex *Filioque*, like a strong argument. In time this annex become familiar and a part of Western doctrine. With this annex the Person of Jesus Christ was lifted up and He became equal with Father, for Arian Visigoths. This made possible the integration of the Visigoths into the Christian Church.

The Pope and other Western bishops considered that the annex *Filioque* was not an innovation; it was something natural which defined the inter-Trinity relationships. The Eastern part of Church saw in *Filioque* a real danger, a shift toward division of the Trinity. The doctrine of *Filioque* was established in the Council of Toledo, in Spain, in 589 and in the Council of Aachen in 809. This addition was one reason for the Great Schism from 1054. Ones again the Arian heresy caused to Christian Church a big problem, which has been unresolvable for a long time and maybe will continue to be (who knows).

⁴⁴ Koran, 4, 155.

In the 19th century, in the religious life of people, appeared a new denomination with real aggressive character. This denomination, which is not Christian, believes that God is one - Jehovah - a monarchian system. They affirm that the only God who exists is Jehovah and that God is not Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). It has something in common with Arian heresy, and something different.

Arianism is very simple and direct, clear-cut, easy to interpret and sharply marked off from orthodoxy. It is often called *Unitarianism*, but it is characteristically different from the historical forms of Unitarianism. Christ is not a good man – He is not a man at all. He is a third being, intermediary between God and man, but He is to be worshipped as a divine being, something like a pagan demi-god, only greater. In fact Arianism was not properly a Christian faith; it was essentially pagan philosophy, and poor philosophy at that, though Arius endeavored to build his teaching around certain well-selected texts of Scripture, which gave it the charisma, and odor of sanctity⁴⁵.

It is very interesting how the Arian system keeps its strength after so many centuries, after so many controversies. Arius was the father of many heresies, which have grown up after him. From his roots many heresy take the saps, like the branches from the root of tree. These branches develop own systems, but checking the genesis of them we will see the old root.

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⁴⁵ Rufus M. Jones, *The Church 's debt to heretics*, London: James Clarke & Co., Limited, 1925, p. 89.

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http://ar.islamway.net/SF/quran/data/The_Holy_Quran_English.pdf