

## #3 The Council of Nicaea



**TURNING POINTS IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY**

**PAUL E. ENGLE 2022 ScriptureGateway.com**

A wide-angle photograph of a church interior during a service. The church has yellow walls and multiple arched windows with pink and white stained glass. A large congregation is seated in wooden pews, facing the front where a priest or minister stands at a podium. A golden circular overlay contains the text.

**What are the  
two creeds most  
used around the  
world?**

# STORY OF HOW THE NICENE CREED CAME TO BE USED AROUND THE WORLD

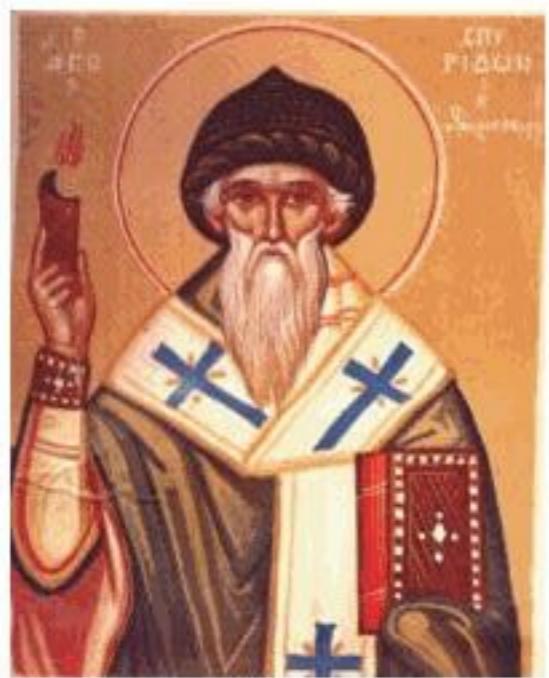
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- \* EVENTS THAT LED UP TO THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA
- \* EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE WHEN THE COUNCIL MET
- \* EVENTS THAT FOLLOWED THE COUNCIL



## I. WHAT EVENTS LED UP TO THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA?

The story begins  
in Northern  
Africa in the  
200's to 300's.



Arius (c. 250-336 A.D.)

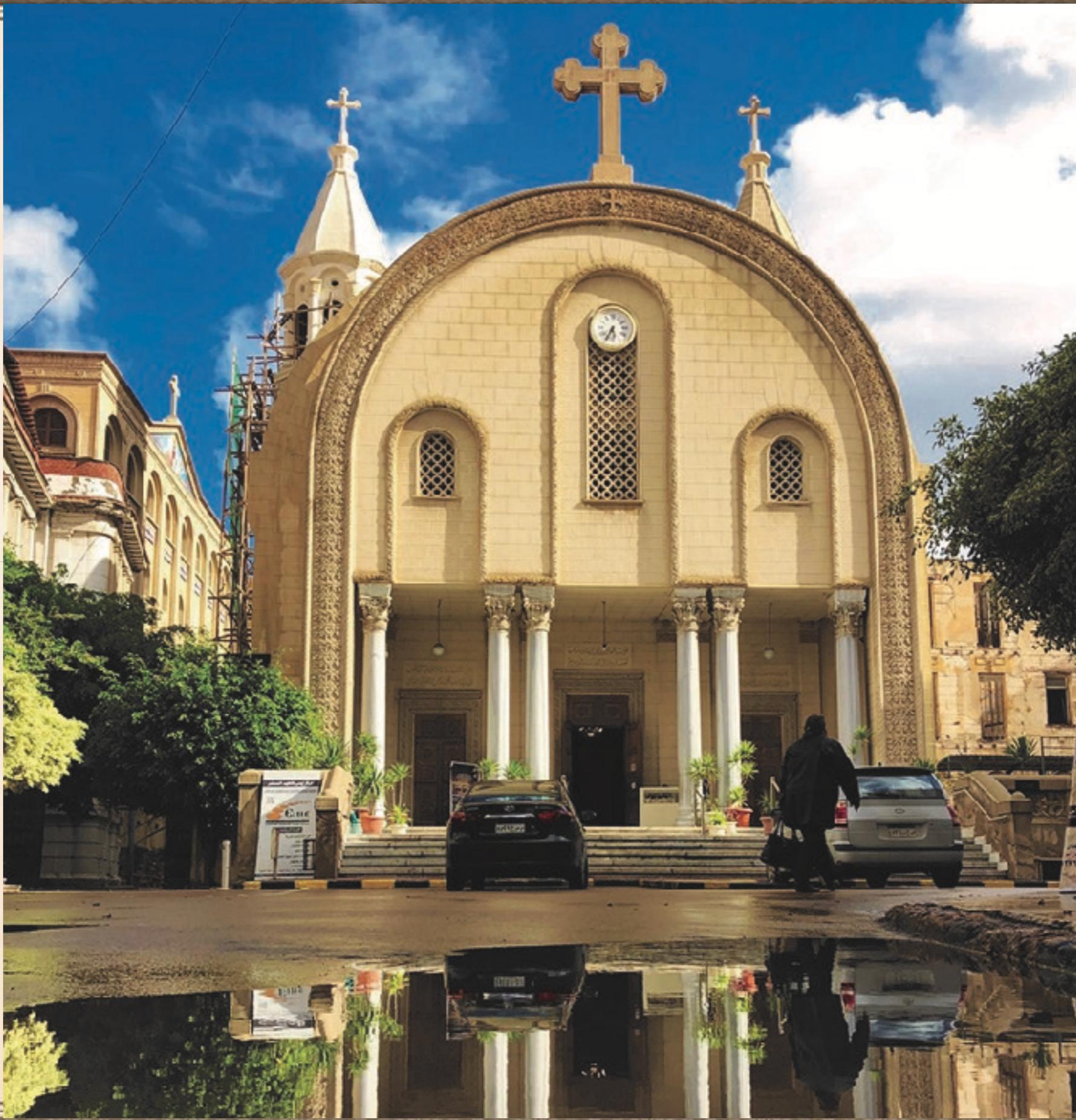


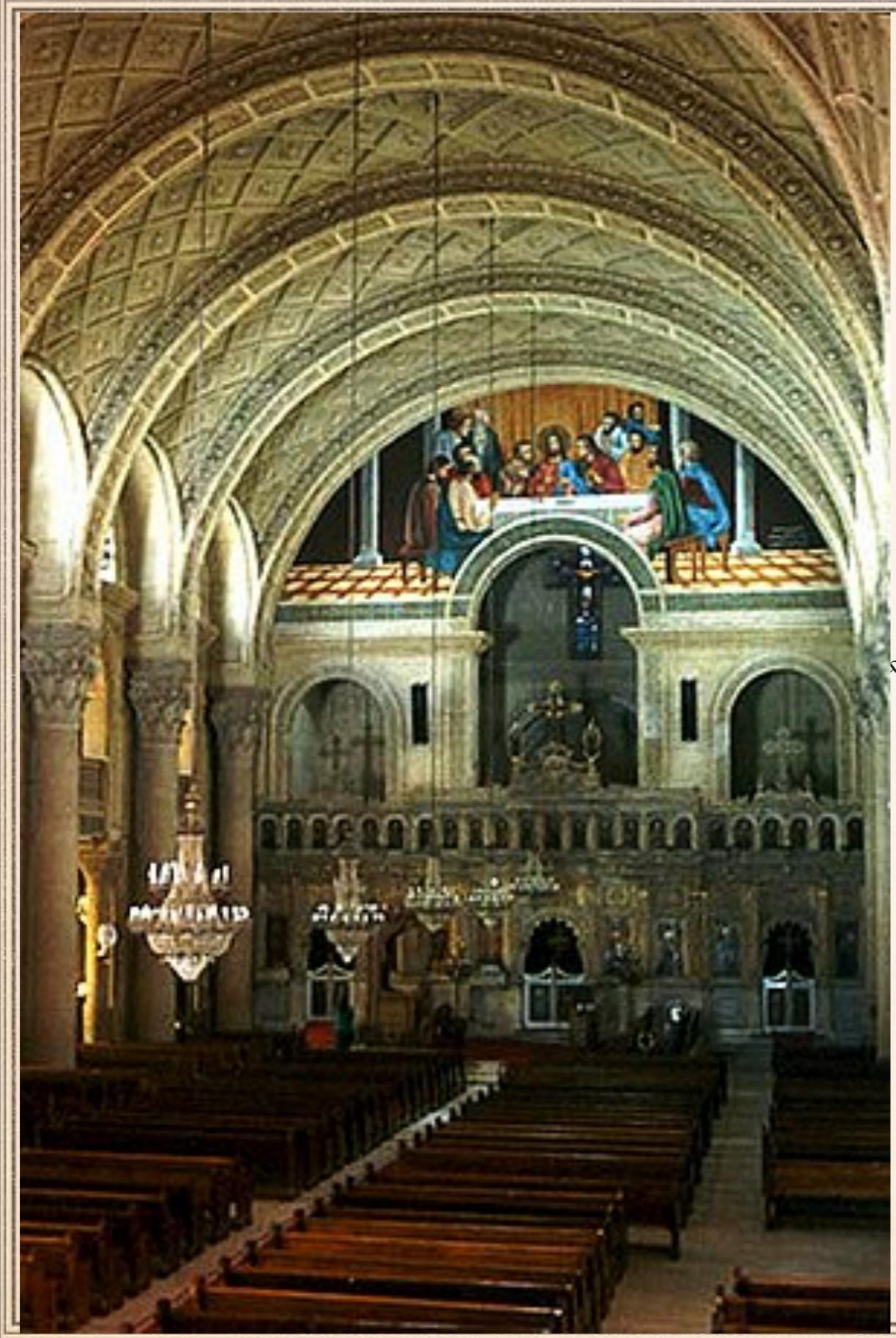
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**ARIUS born in Libya c.250.  
Moved to Middle Eastern city of Antioch  
Chosen as presbyter in 313 moves to  
Alexandria**

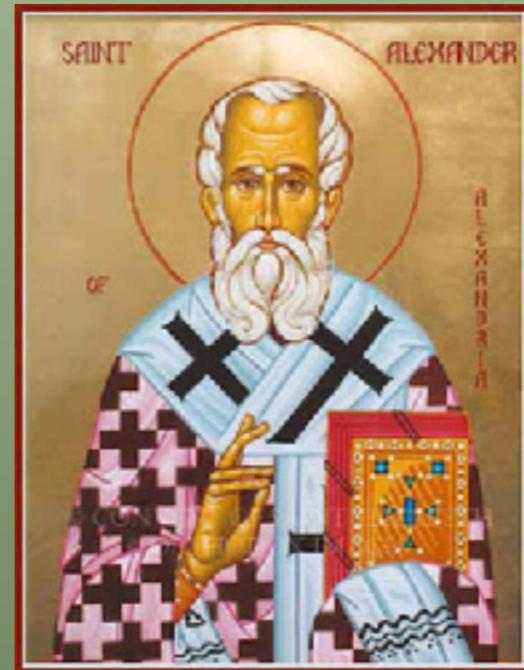


Arius moved to  
Alexandria,  
Egypt to serve at  
Saint Mark's  
church. There's a  
church on the  
same site today.





Arius does some  
preaching here at St.  
Mark's in Alexandria...



***But his bishop,  
Alexander  
becomes upset  
with what he  
is preaching***



**His ideas began  
to influence  
people.**

Arius was tall, thin, walked barefoot, & had winsome personality. Also musical. Wrote popular songs for his theological words. Sung in streets.

Challenging  
Alexander's  
teaching of  
Father and  
Son "co-  
eternal"



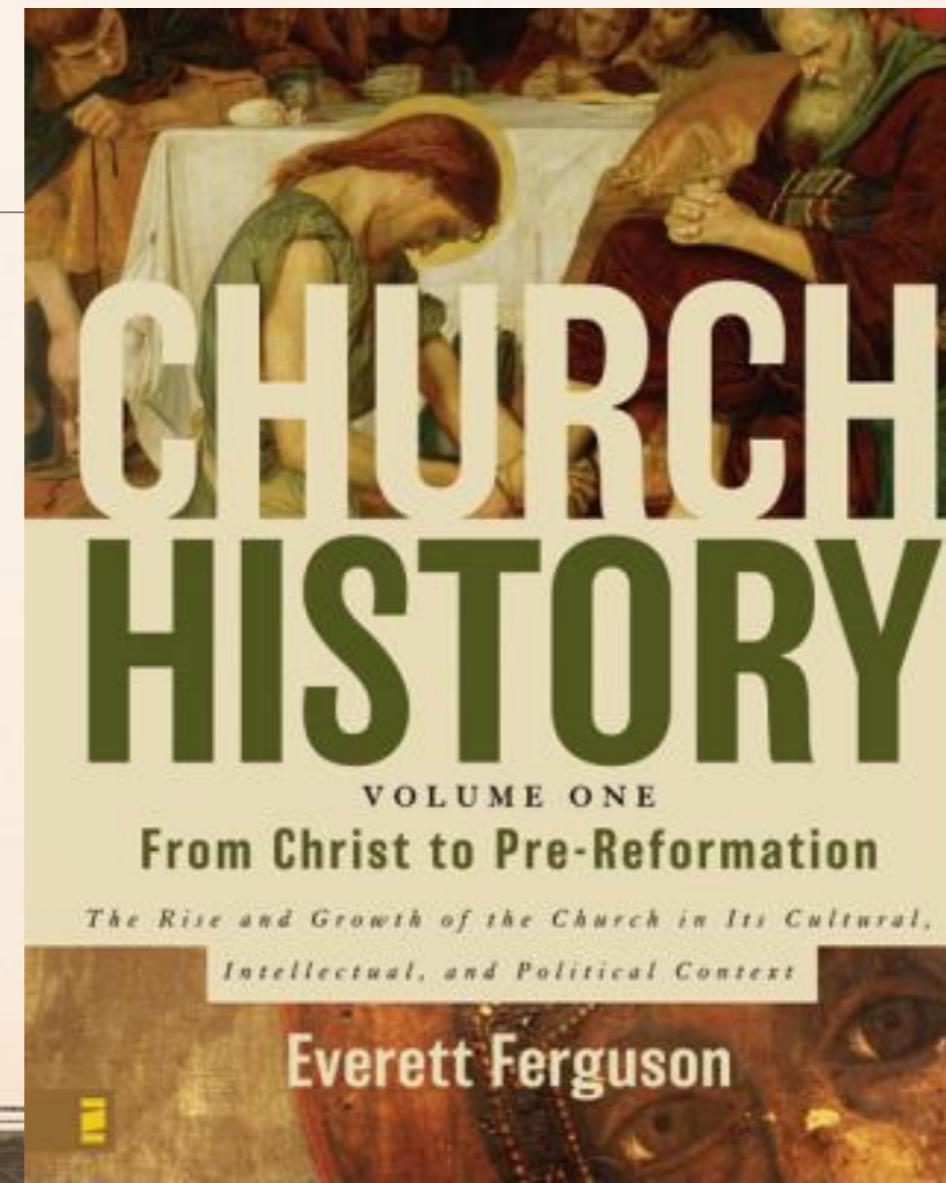
*“Once the Son did not  
exist” (Arius)*  
There was (once) a time  
when Christ was not.

**God so loved  
the world  
He gave  
His only  
Begotten Son**



**Arius thought “begotten” meant “created”.**

*“Arius taught that Jesus Christ was not derived from the substance of the Father, but, as the first and highest of God’s creations, became the instrument of all the rest of creation.”*



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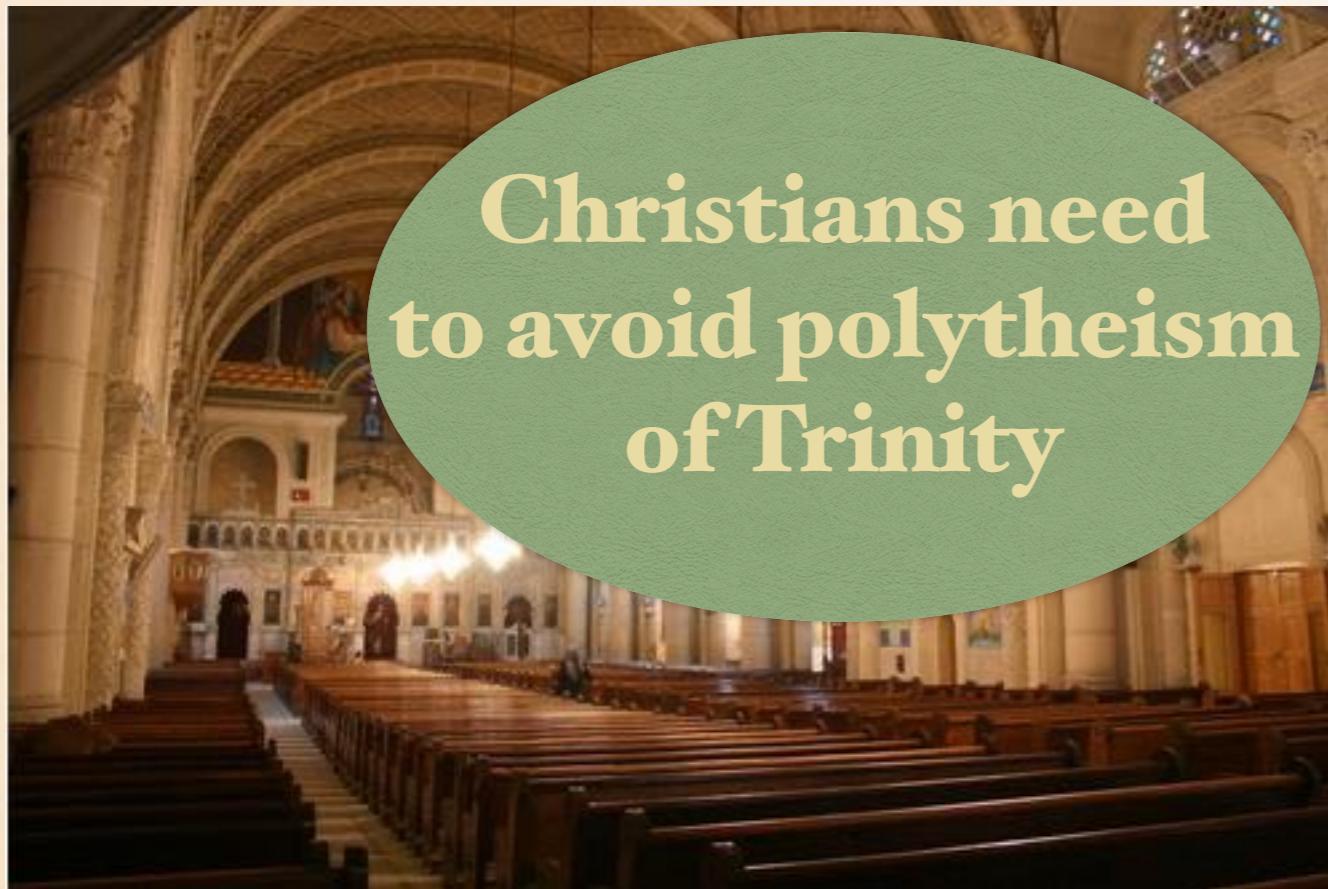
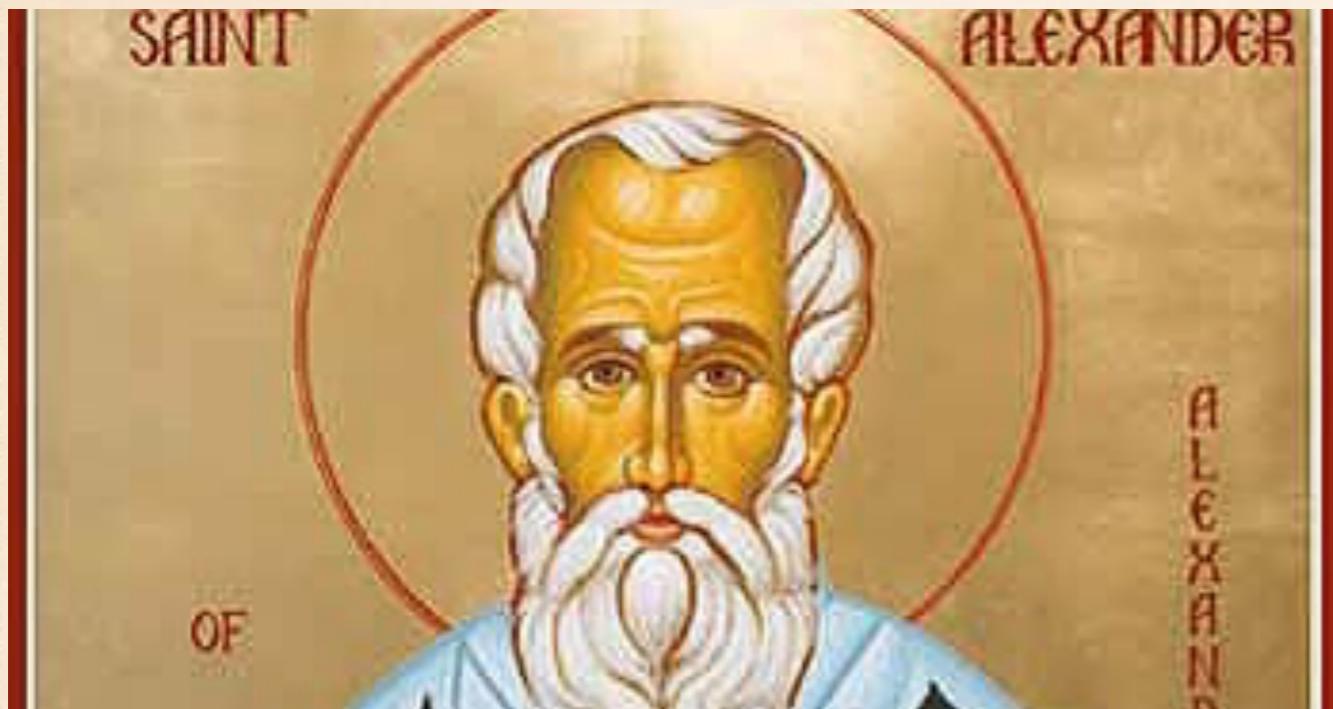
Many Christians disagreed with Arius so began singing a song that's still used in the church today.

269

**Gloria Patri.**

CHARLES MEINEKE.

The musical score consists of two staves of music in common time (indicated by '4') and G major (indicated by a single sharp sign). The top staff begins with a treble clef and the bottom staff with a bass clef. The lyrics are integrated into the music, appearing below the notes. The first section of lyrics is: "Glo-ry be to the Fa-ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho - ly Ghost; As it". The second section of lyrics is: "was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. A-men, A - men." The music features various note values including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The piano accompaniment is indicated by a treble clef and a bass clef with a double bar line and repeat dots.



Christians need  
to avoid polytheism  
of Trinity

Bishop  
Alexander in  
Alexandria  
preaches sermon on  
*“the great mystery of  
the Trinity in unity.”*

**Stirs up Arias to  
attack sermon.**

Writes letter to  
bishop.

ARRIUS ERSTKETTER TOT ALEXANDRIA.



Arius knows  
that Christians  
refer to Jesus as  
“Lord and  
Savior.”

He argues that  
these titles refer  
to Christ in  
relationship to  
his disciples.



# Arius

Alexander  
the bishop  
suspended me from my  
office in the church. But  
this doesn't silence me. I  
think that saying Christ is  
co-eternal with the Father  
is endorsing polytheism.  
It must be opposed!

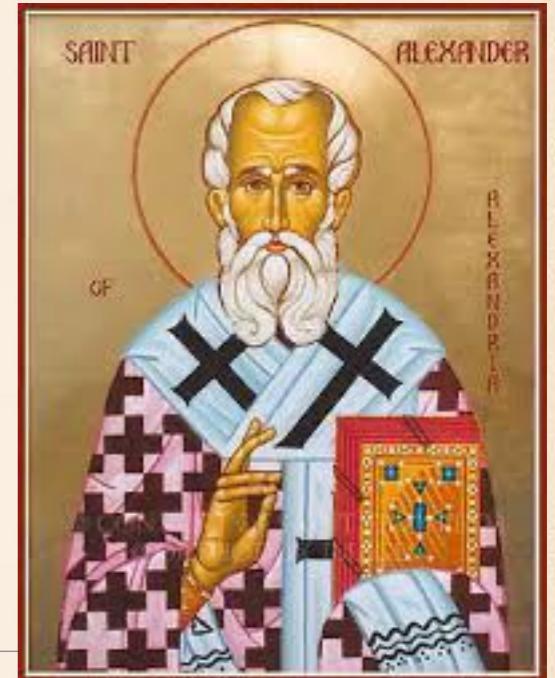
Arius



Condemned



Alexander



Alexander has Arius condemned at  
Synod in Alexandria (317-318)  
Another condemnation at Synod in  
Antioch (325)



Arius flees and hides in palace of  
Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia

The conflict  
over these  
views of  
Arius  
spreads —it  
threatens  
the unity of  
the Roman  
Empire





Roman  
Emperor  
Constantine calls  
for an ecumenical  
council of the  
church

CONCILIVM  
NICAENVM-I



## II. WHAT TOOK PLACE AT THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA?



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RUTH A. TUCKER  
**PARADE  
*of FAITH***

A Biographical History of the Christian Church





Where held? NICAEA - (now Iznik, Turkey)  
c. 138 km (86 mi) from Istanbul (Constantinople)



**WHO WAS PRESENT?**  
Hundreds of church  
leaders invited from East  
and West.

**Began meeting May 20,  
AD 325**  
**(Some say June 19)**

**Produced “The Creed of  
the 318”**

c. 250 attended

# ERA WHEN COSTLY TO STAND UP FOR TRUTH



- \* Two bishops lost eye from persecution
- \* Another bishop hamstrung
- \* Bishop Paul of Caesarea hands hot irons — paralyzed

# What were the proceedings ?



# Groups in the room



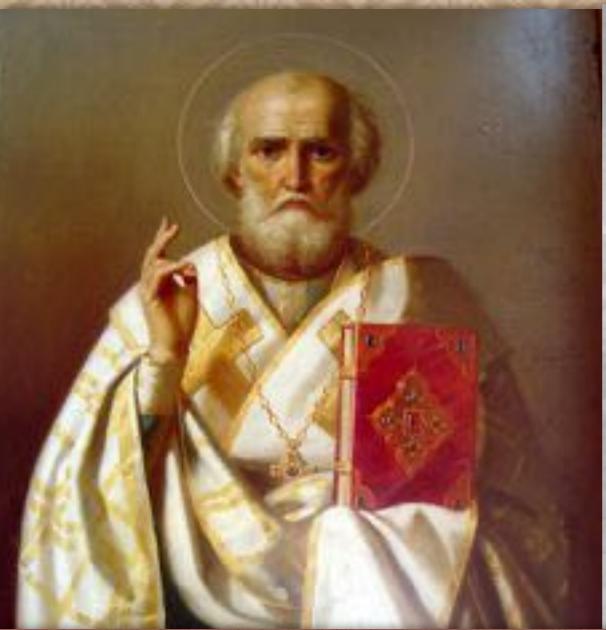
**Supporters  
of Arius led by  
Eusebius of  
Nicomedia**

**Moderate  
subordinationists  
following Origin**

**Conservatives  
hostile to new  
doctrine &  
concerned  
about unity**

**Leaders viewing  
teaching of Arius as  
dangerous & wanted to  
outlaw it.**

**Monarchists with  
implicit Modalism  
(Eustathius)**



**Bishop Nicholas of Myria in Lyccia (Turkey)**  
**Each Dec. 6 became St.**  
**Nicholas Day in parts of world.**  
**He loved children and gave gifts to them.**

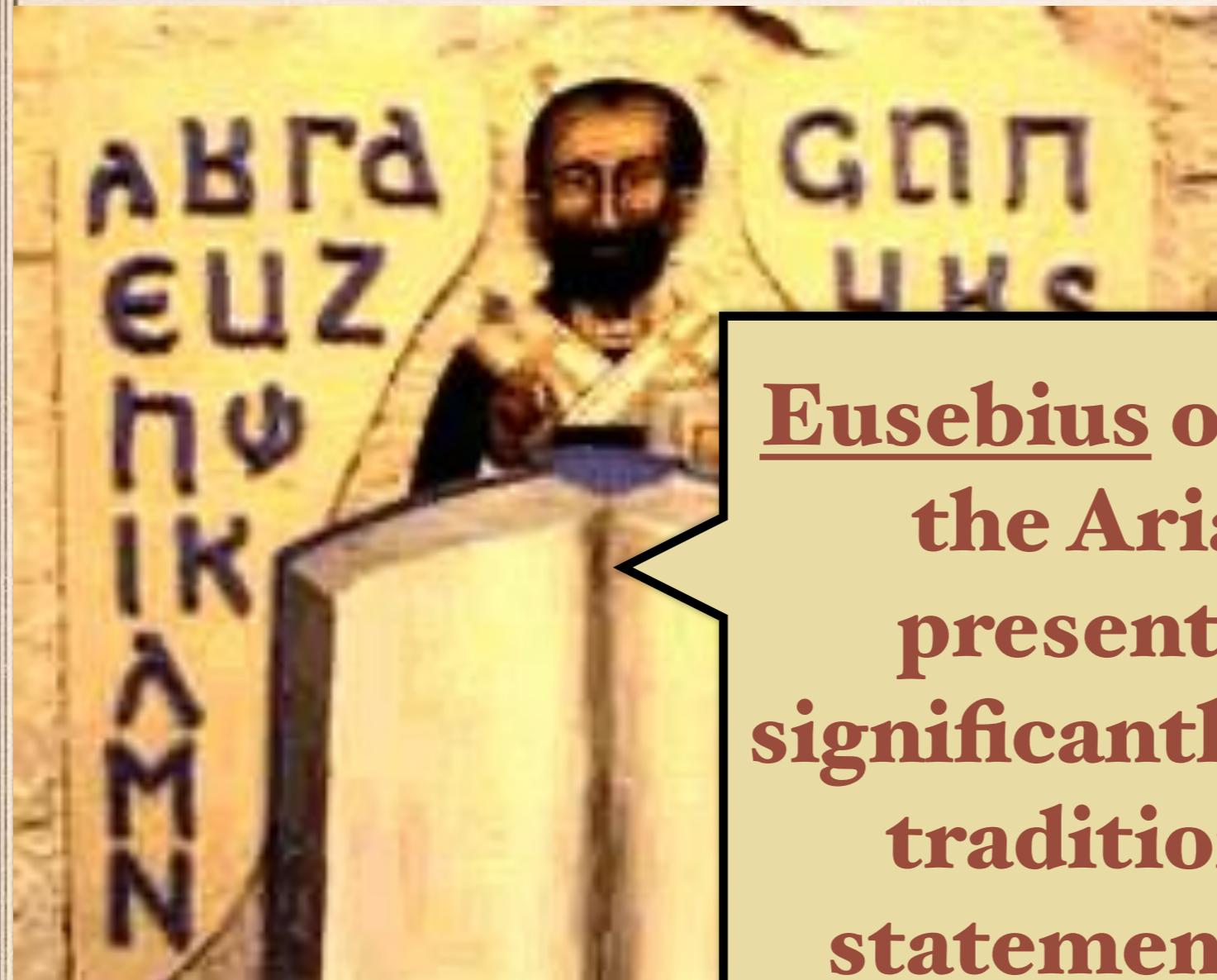


# The Council of Nicaea – AD 325



Overwhelming majority did not agree with Arius who was present.

Constantine the Emperor gave opening address - unity.



Eusebius of Nicomedia led the Arian party and presented a formula significantly different from traditional orthodox statements. Met strong disapproval.



Even Arius  
could not  
convince  
the  
delegates of  
his view.





**Most of Arian bishops abandoned their support for the statement.**



**Delegate stood before group and physically tore the document to pieces before everyone !**

**BLASPHEMY!  
Condemn him !**



# ST. ATHANASIUS

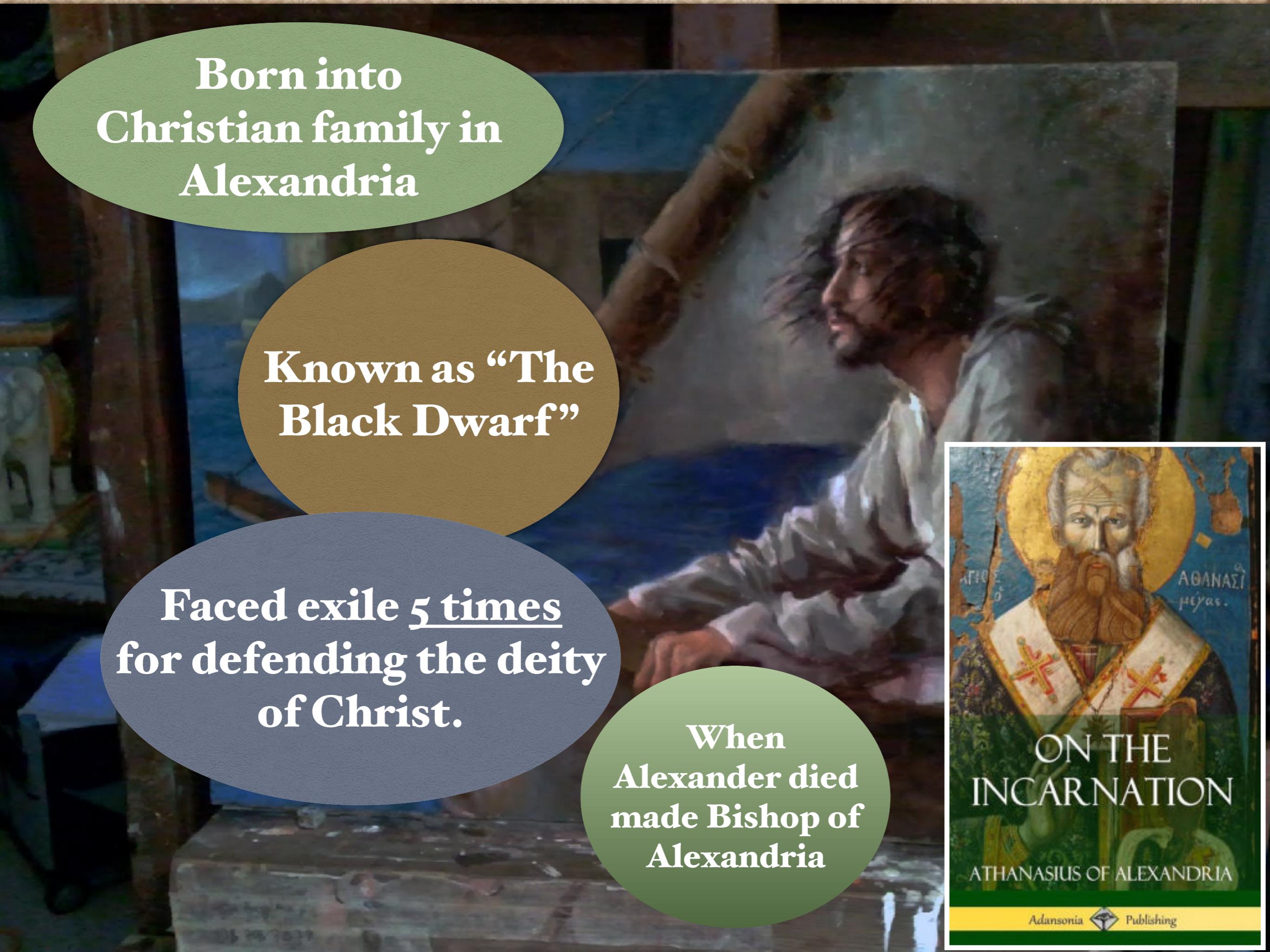
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BISHOP  
DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

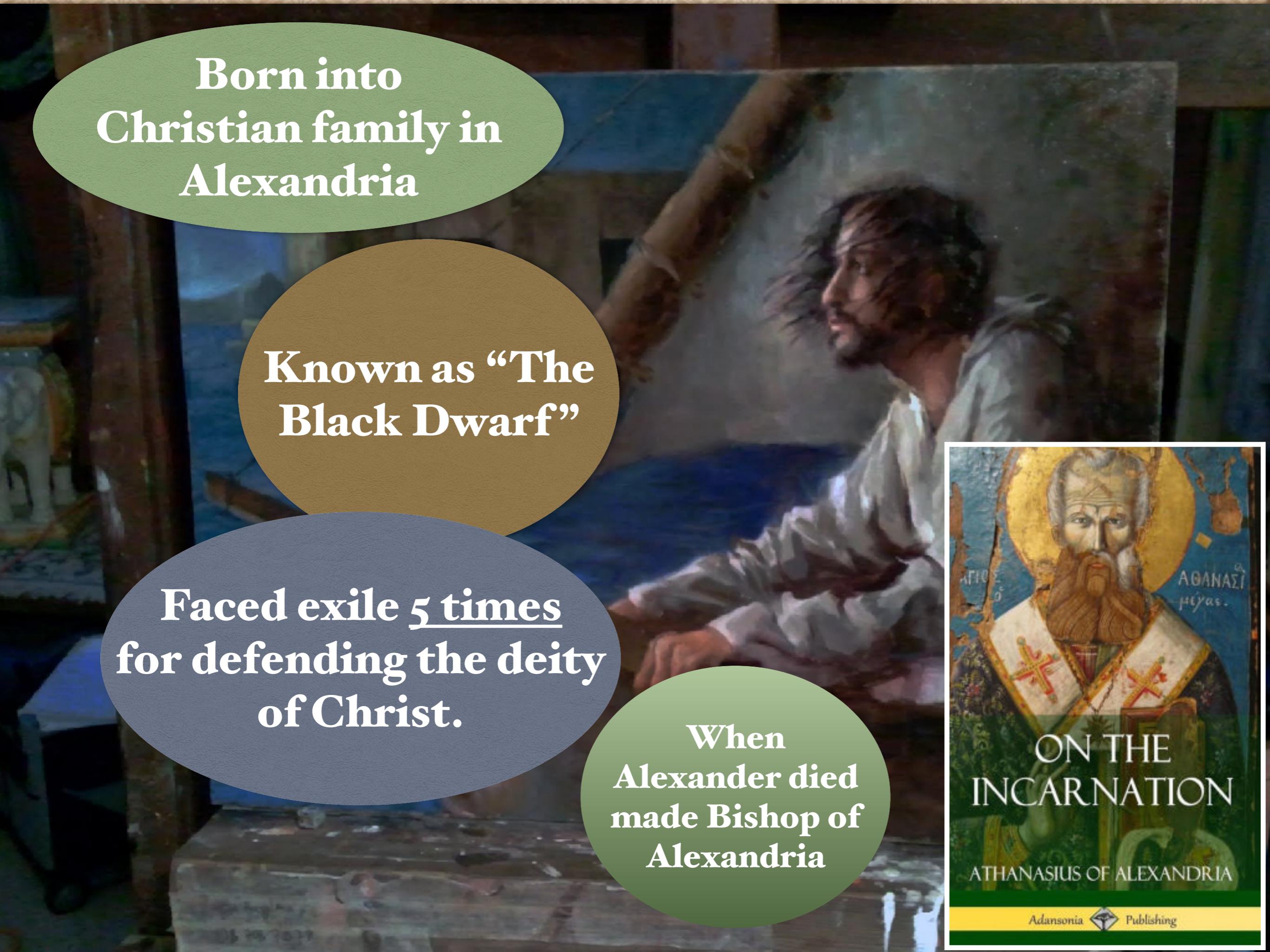
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May 2nd

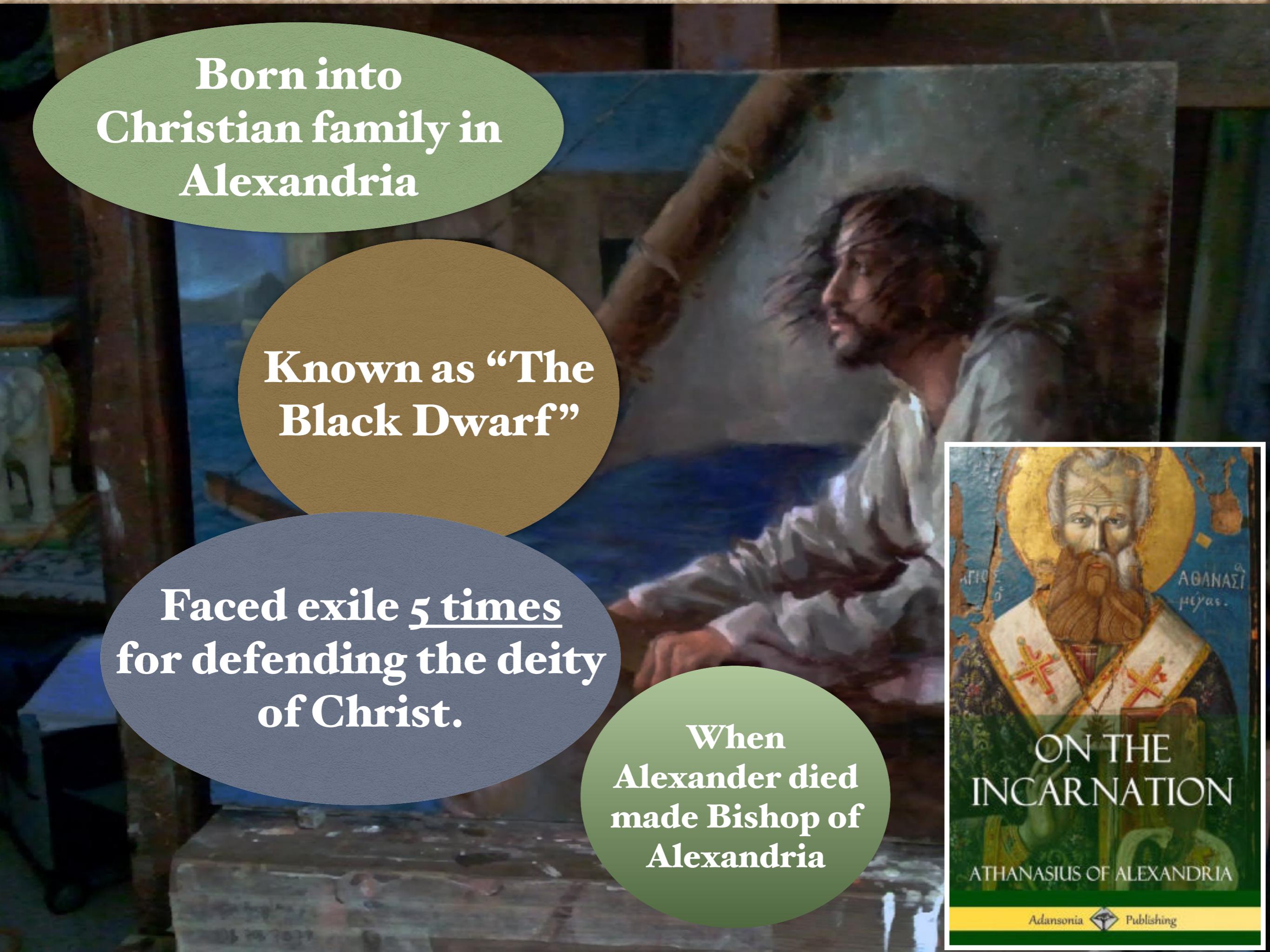
Main opposition leader speaking against Arius.



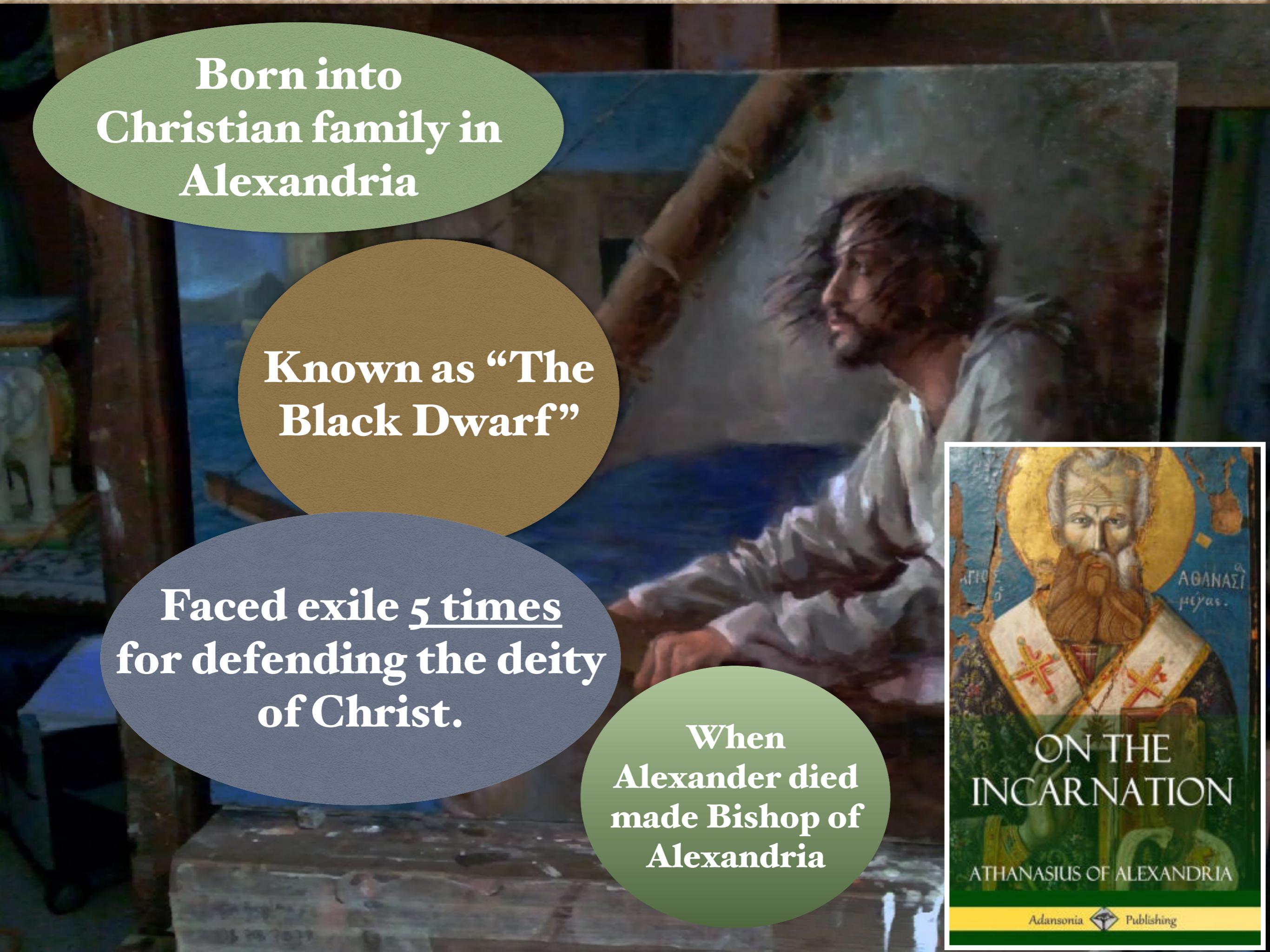
Born into  
Christian family in  
Alexandria



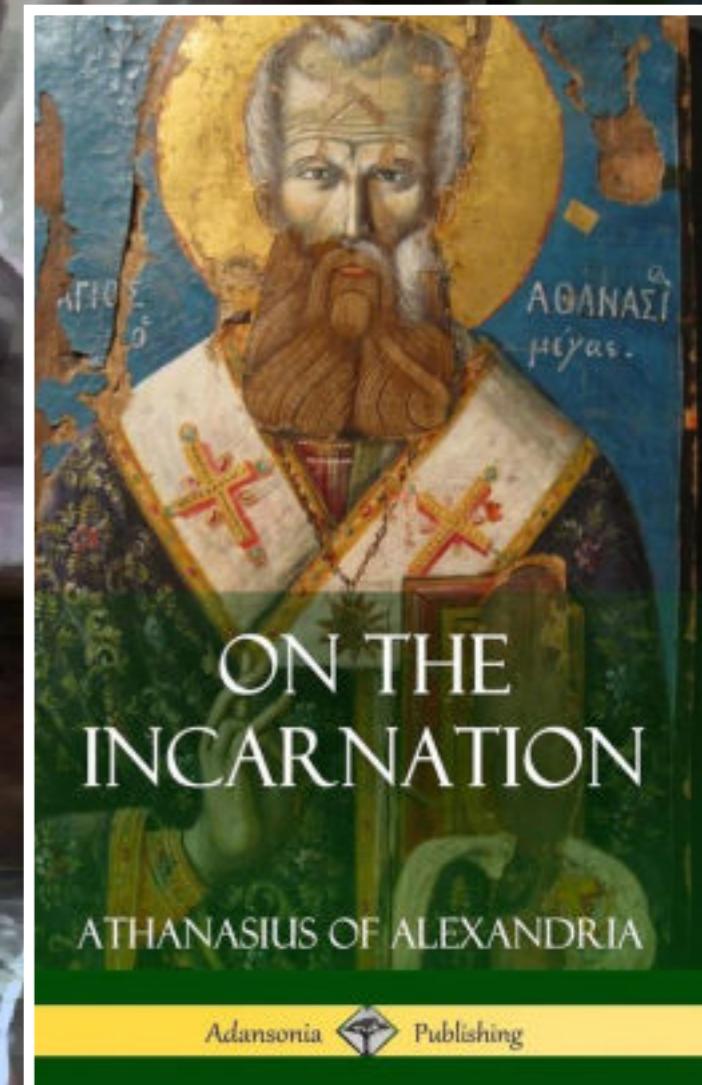
Known as “The  
Black Dwarf”

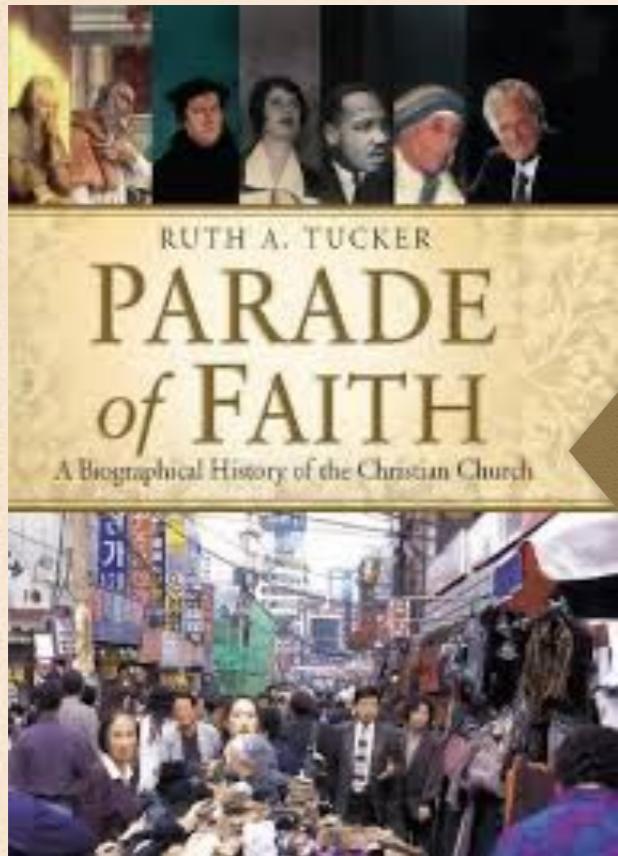


Faced exile 5 times  
for defending the deity  
of Christ.



When  
Alexander died  
made Bishop of  
Alexandria





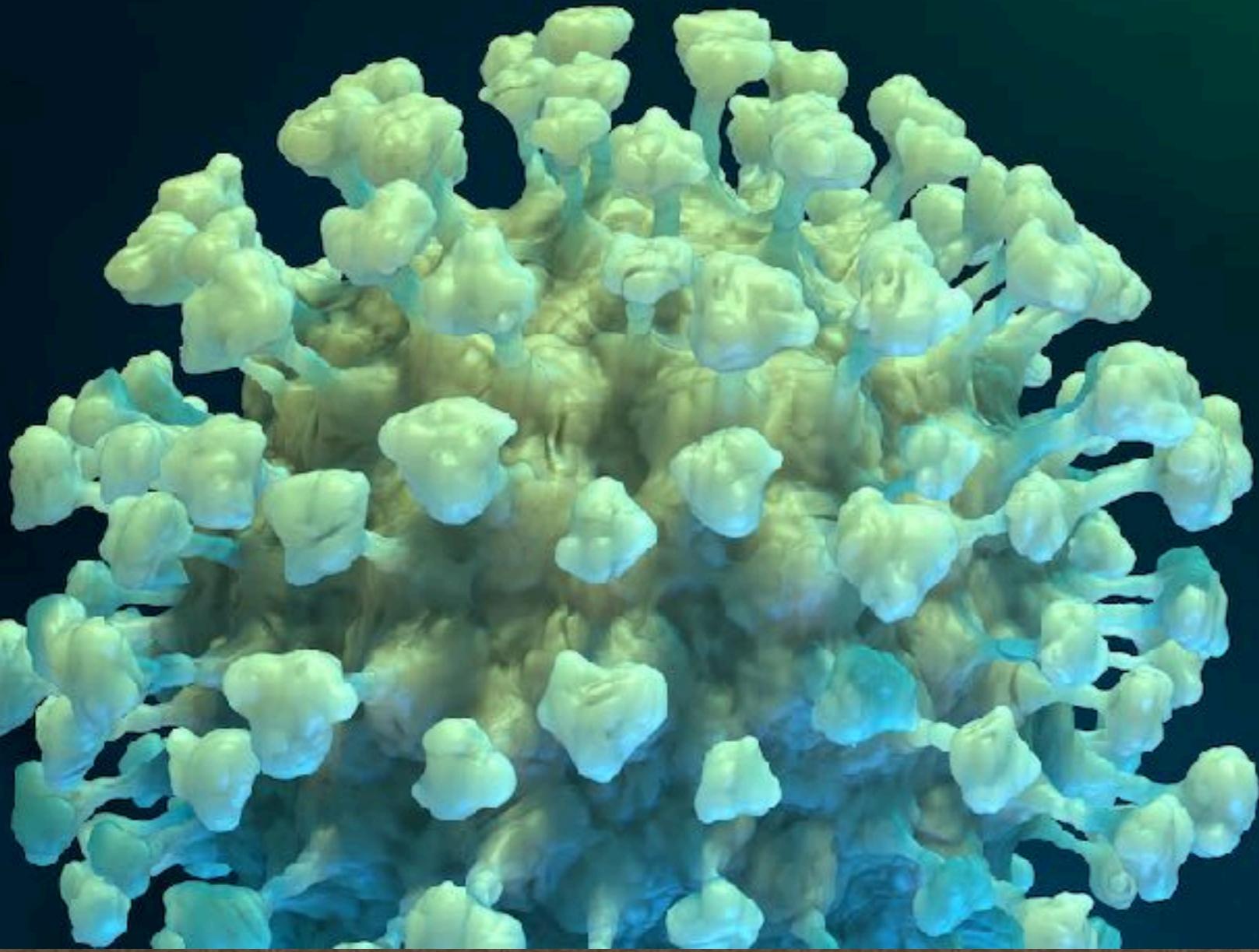
**“He insists that there is no place in Christian thought for any kind of an intermediate being between God and man, between Creator and creature. And he argues passionately that true redemption is accomplished only through God the Son, not an intermediary. Athanasius wins the day at the Council of Nicaea, the Father and the Son are co-eternal and of one substance (**homoousius**).”**



**Hosius presided over Council.  
Helped them draft Nicene Creed**

SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus Variant B.1.1.529

# OMICRON





Debate centered around two Greek words differing only in one letter - “ο”

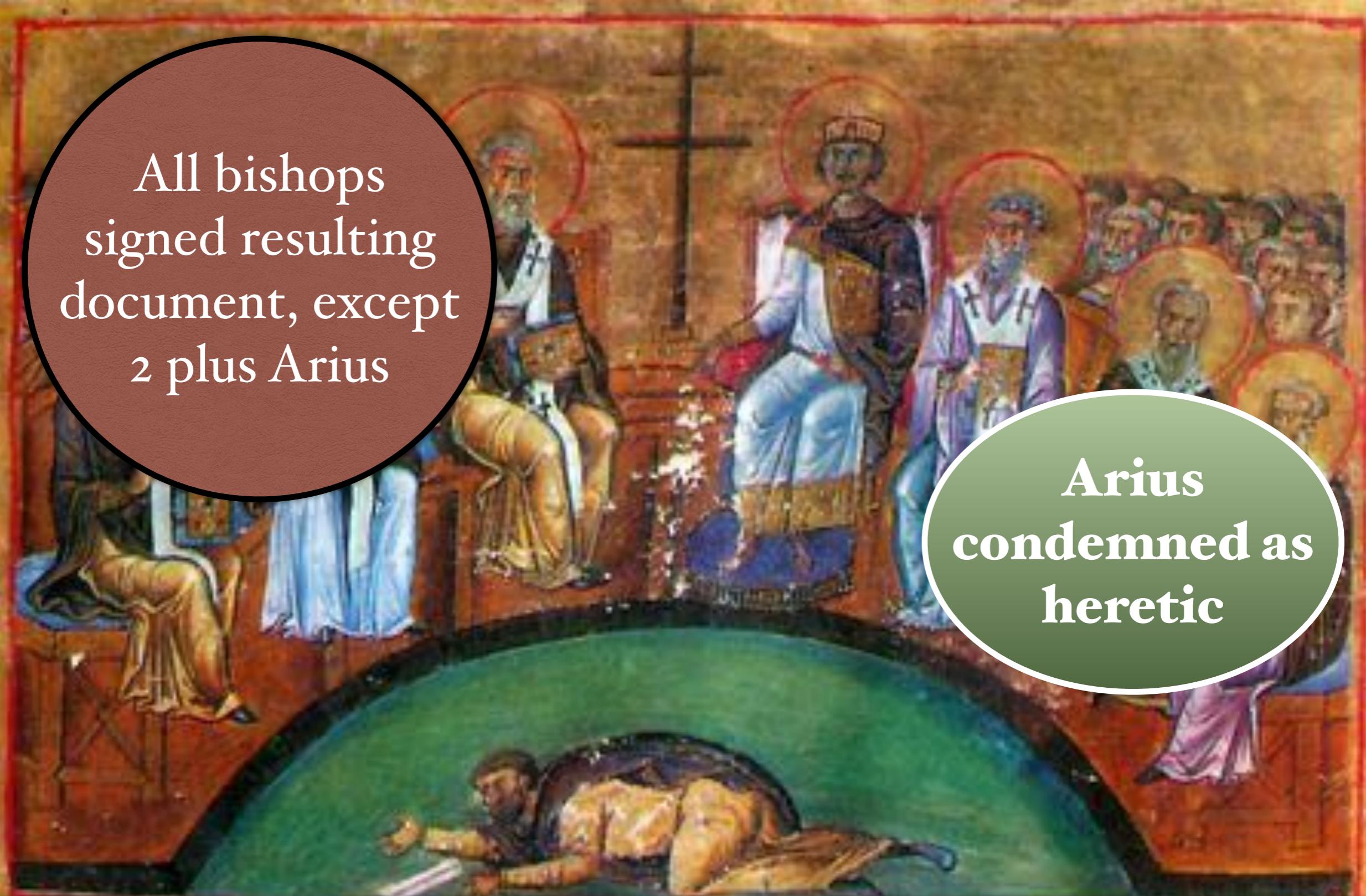
**Homousia** = (essence) Christ not from the same essence as the Father, but similar.

This view rejected !

**Homoousia** - of the same substance (essence).

Son of same essence as God the Father, not a created being coming from Father. Christ is fully God with the same divine nature as Father.

SON IS NOT JUST  
SIMILAR BUT IS THE  
SAME SUBSTANCE.



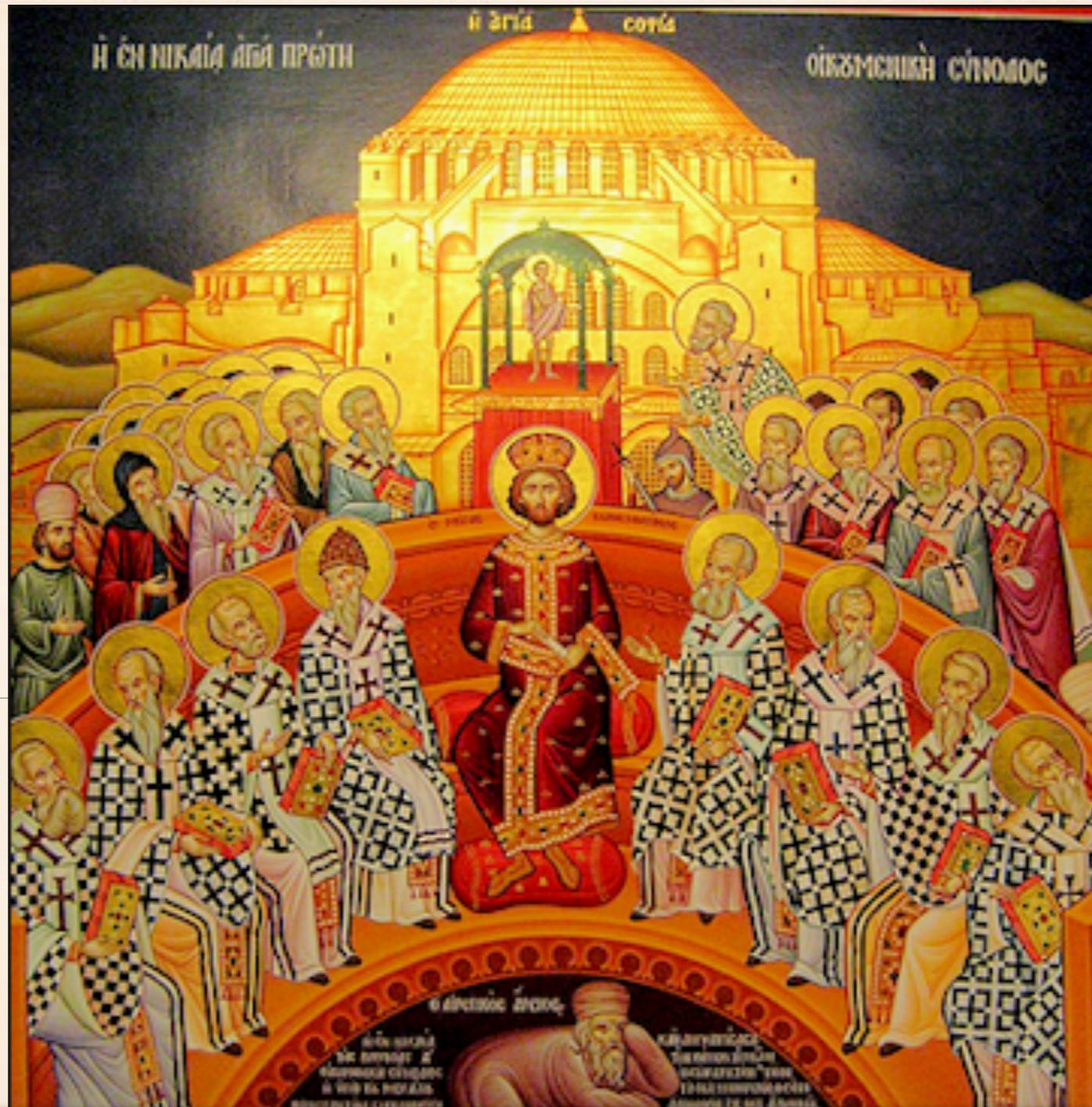
All bishops  
signed resulting  
document, except  
2 plus Arius

Arius  
condemned as  
heretic

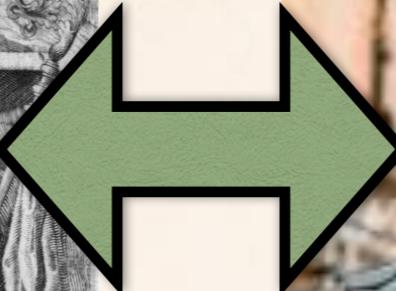
**Anyone preaching his ideas or possessing his manuscripts  
may be convicted of a capital crime.**

## Views of the Arians rejected:

- That “there was when he was not” or “He came to be from nothing.”
- **That the Son of God is “created”, or “alterable” or “mutable”.**
- That the Son of God is “of another substance or essence” or “created” or “changeable.” They said, “these are the catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizers.”



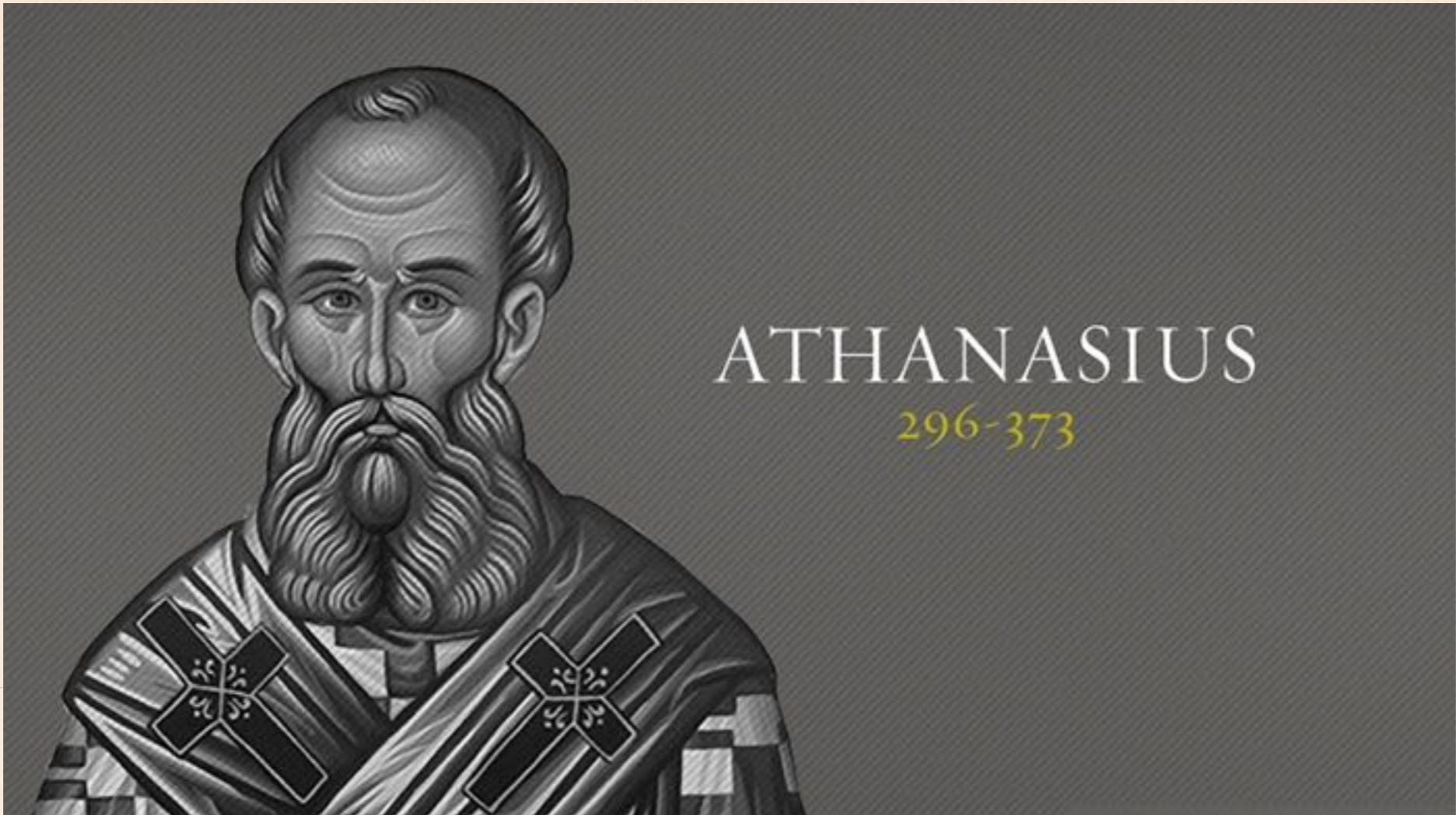
# RESULTS OF THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA



Arius

Constantine the Emperor

#1 Though Arius is exiled, he still has a large, loyal following. Constantine the Emperor is sympathetic to him & demands that he be restored to his former position (AD 327)



ATHANASIUS  
296-373

#2 Athanasius opposes this & wins temporary victory. But in 335 AD he's exiled to Gaul (France). False accusations — woman and grain

#3 So Arius  
comes back into  
favor. But  
before he can  
re-enter church  
and celebrate  
communion he  
dies suddenly.





Arius parading through streets with crowds. As approached Constantine's fountain he felt a sense of terror and then faint. Inner organs.....

# TWO EXPLANATIONS FOR DEATH OF ARIUS

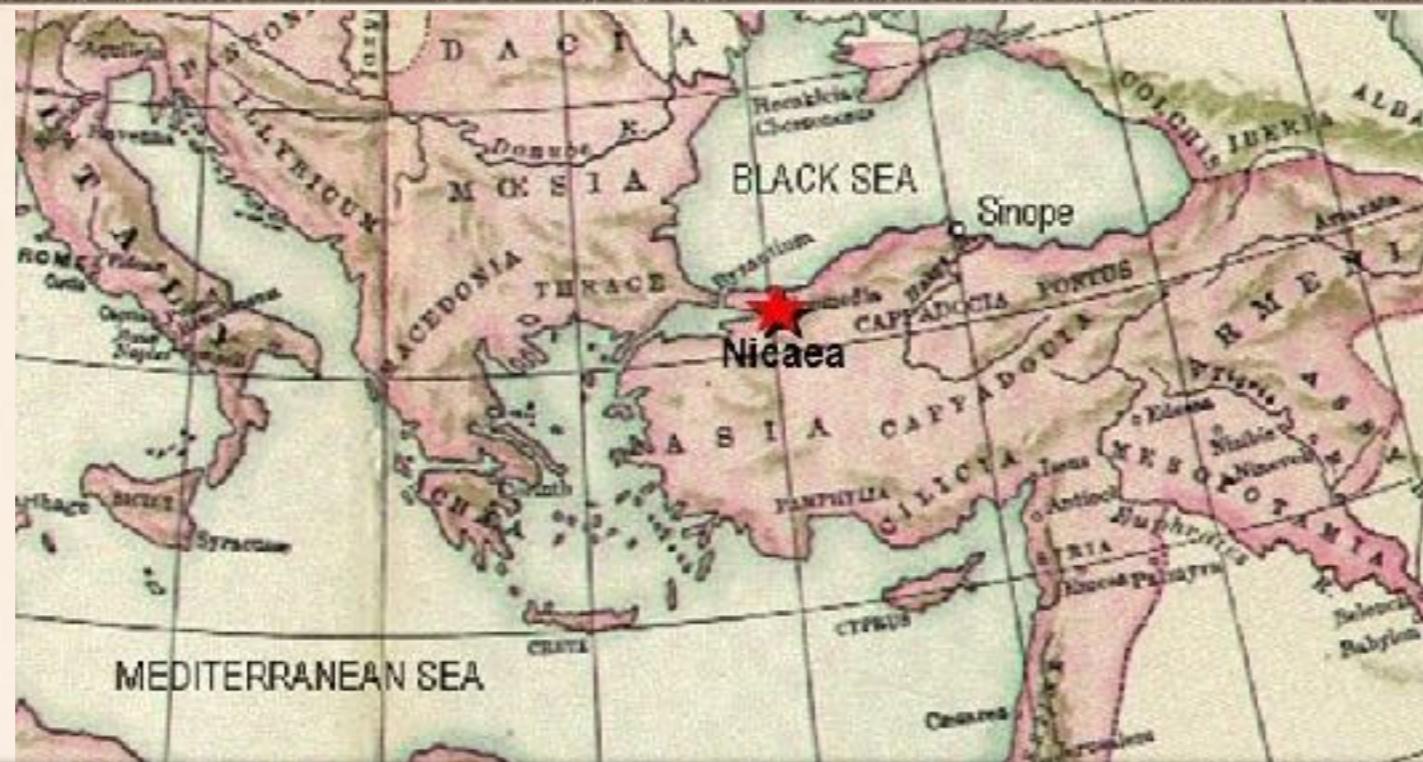
WAS IT  
THE  
JUDGMENT OF  
GOD FOR HIS  
HERETICAL  
VIEWS?

WAS HE  
POISONED BY  
HIS  
ENEMIES?



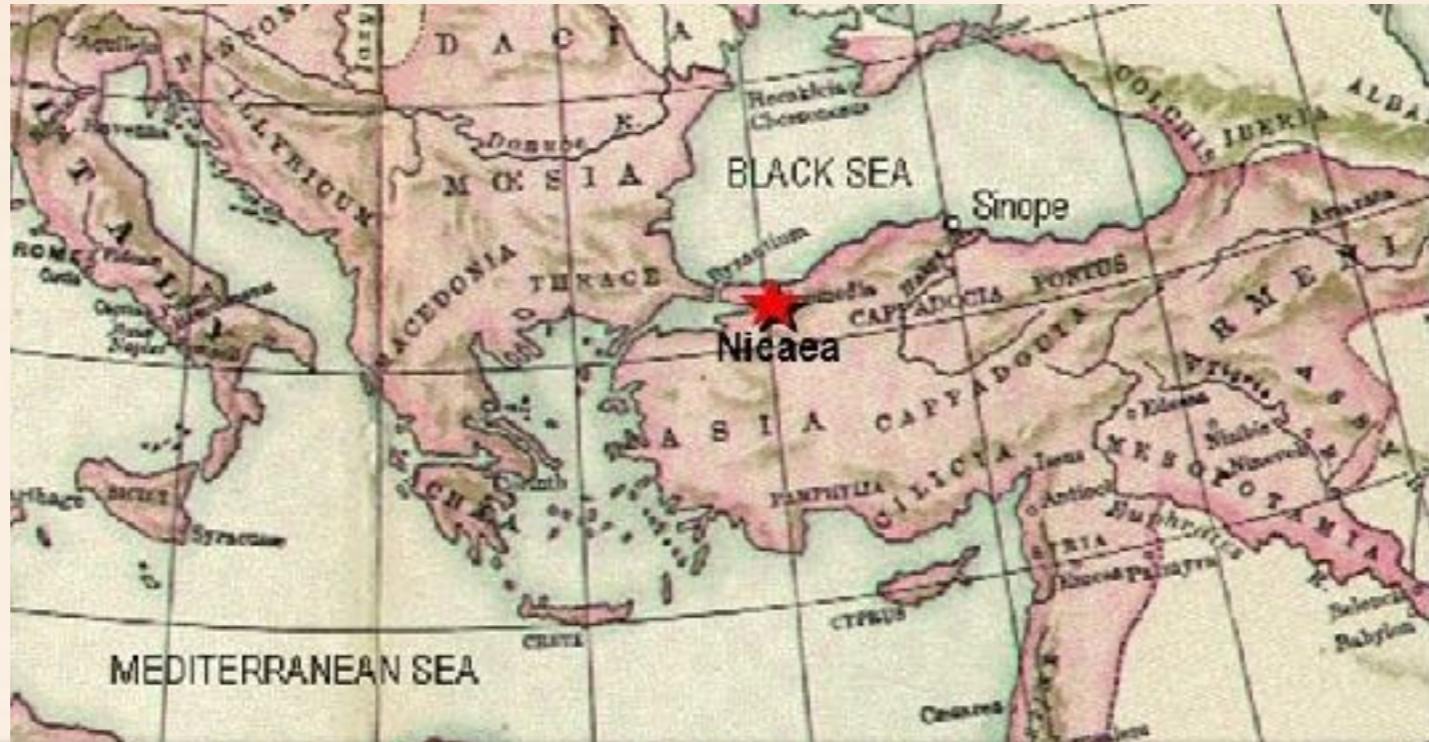
## Council of Constantinople 381

Arianism continues to be problem. But new council sets up once for all that Arianism is a heresy. The Nicene Creed prevails.



## Three Reasons why Council of Nicæa is important turning point

#1 It's an important turning point because it's the **first ecumenical (universal) Council of the Church.** [Unites East and West bishops.]



#2 It's an important turning point because it marked a change in the relation of the church to the civil government.



As  
politician he called  
for council.



**ALLIANCE OF CHURCH AND STATE CONTINUED  
12-14 centuries — still in state Church of England**

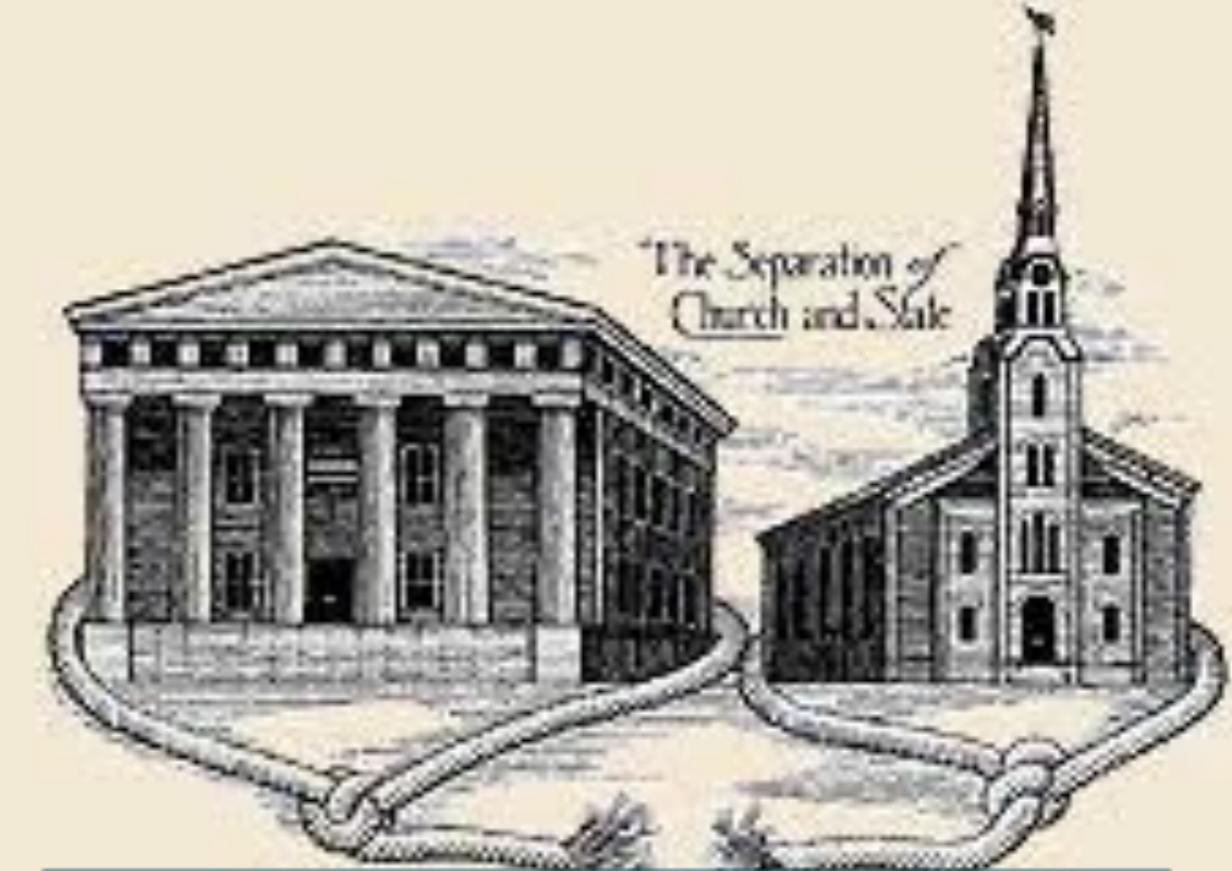
# TURNING POINTS

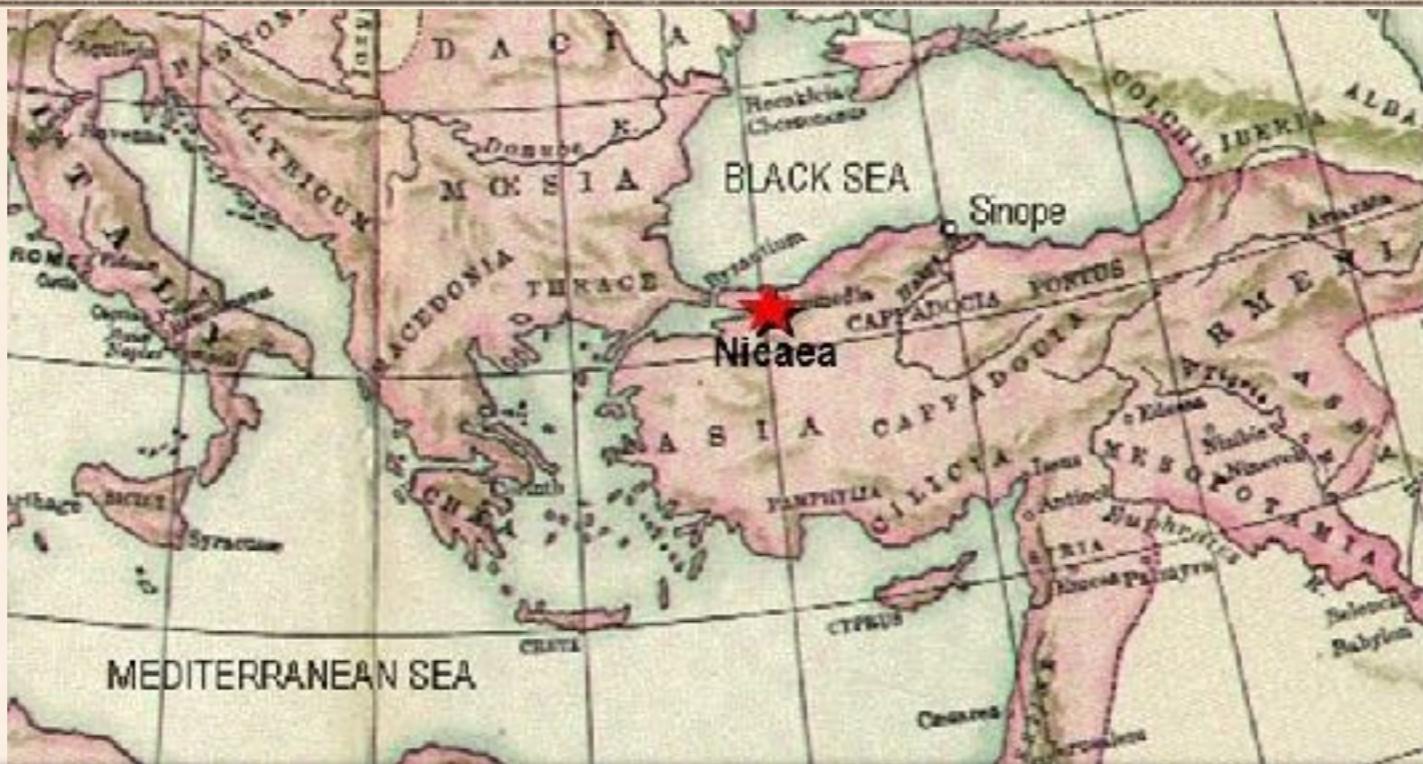
THIRD EDITION

Decisive Moments *in the History of Christianity*

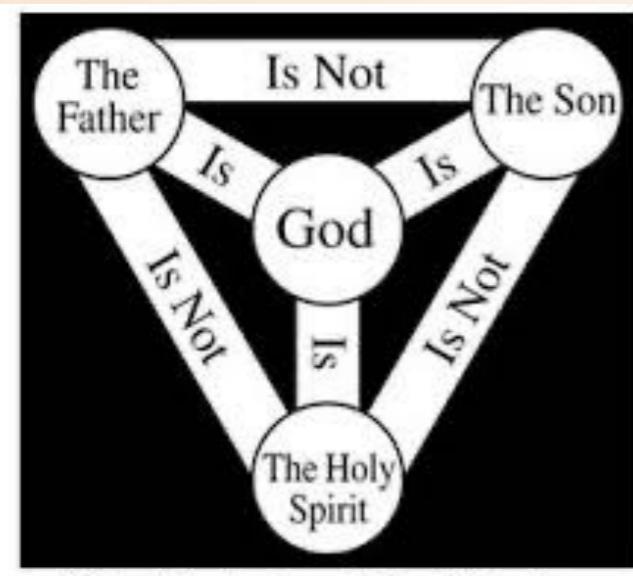


MARK A. NOLL

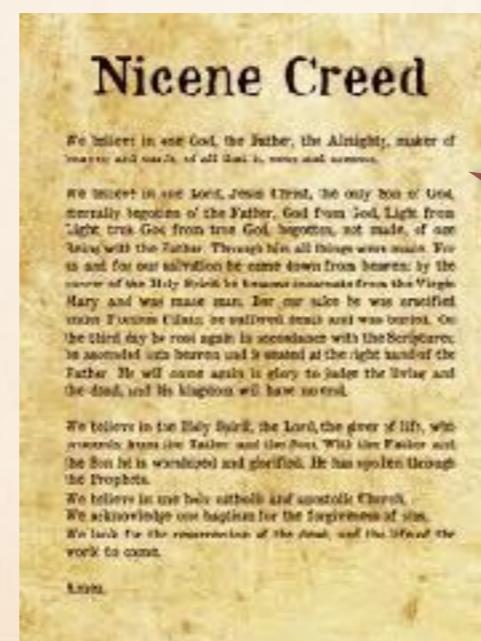




**#3 It's an important turning point in clarifying the Biblical view of the deity of Christ.”**



The Doctrine of the Trinity



**Nicene  
Creed has endured  
for 17 centuries**

**Ousia=**

**essence**

**Heterousios =**

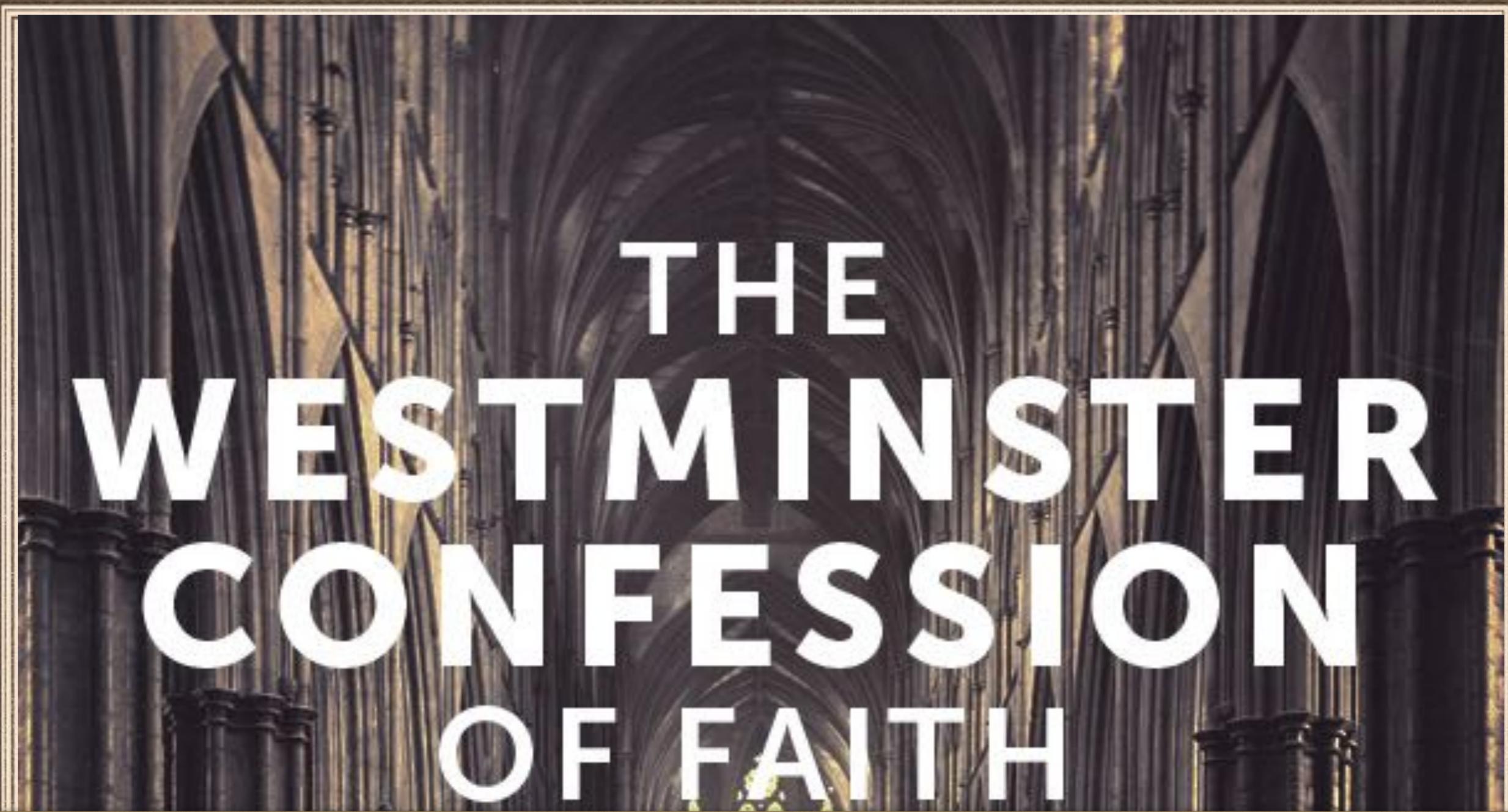
different/unlike essence  
HERETICAL

**Homoiousios =**

similar/like essence but not  
begotten  
HERETICAL

**Homoousios =  
(double omicron)**

**Begotten from Father's  
same essence—not  
created  
NICAEA**



# **THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSTION OF FAITH**

The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very  
and eternal God, of one substance,  
and equal with the Father,

**Begotten:** “To come forth, to proceed. The Son is eternally begotten from the Father’s essence.”

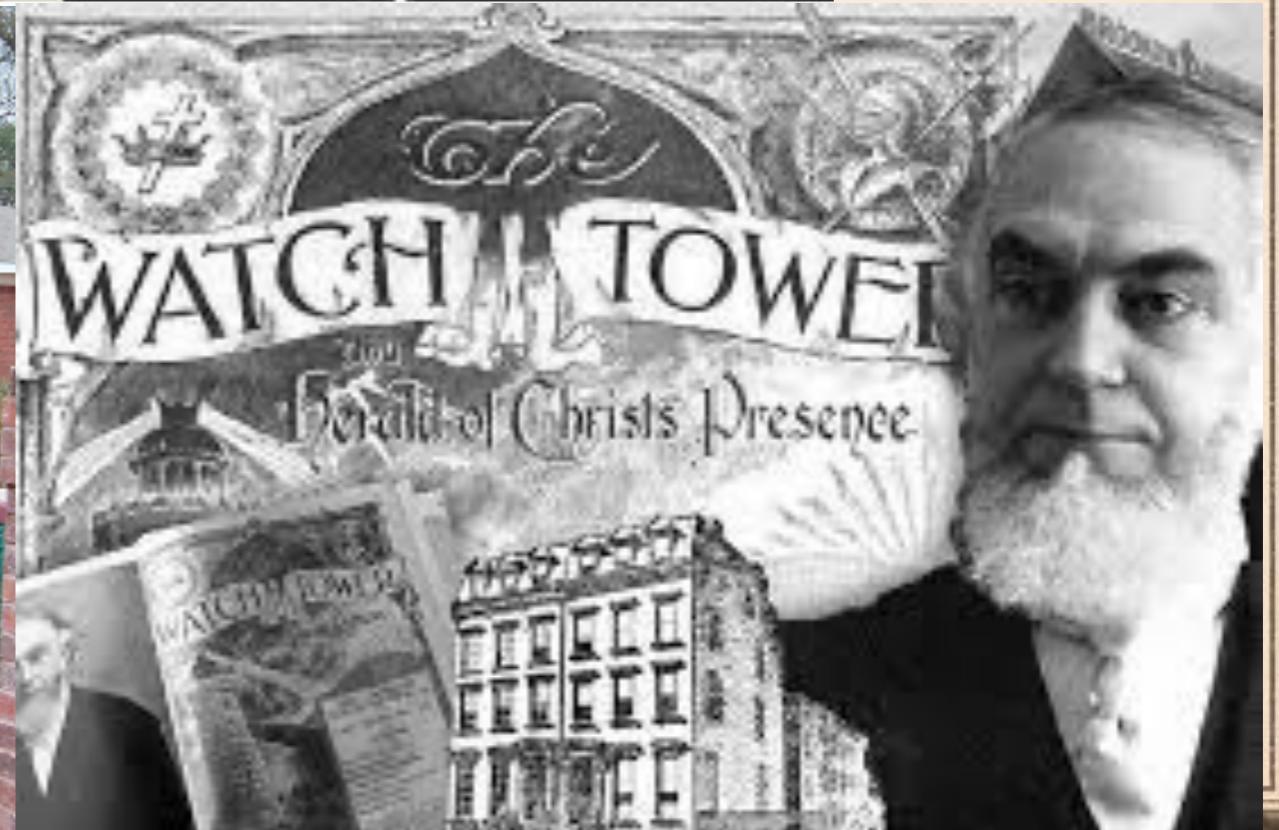
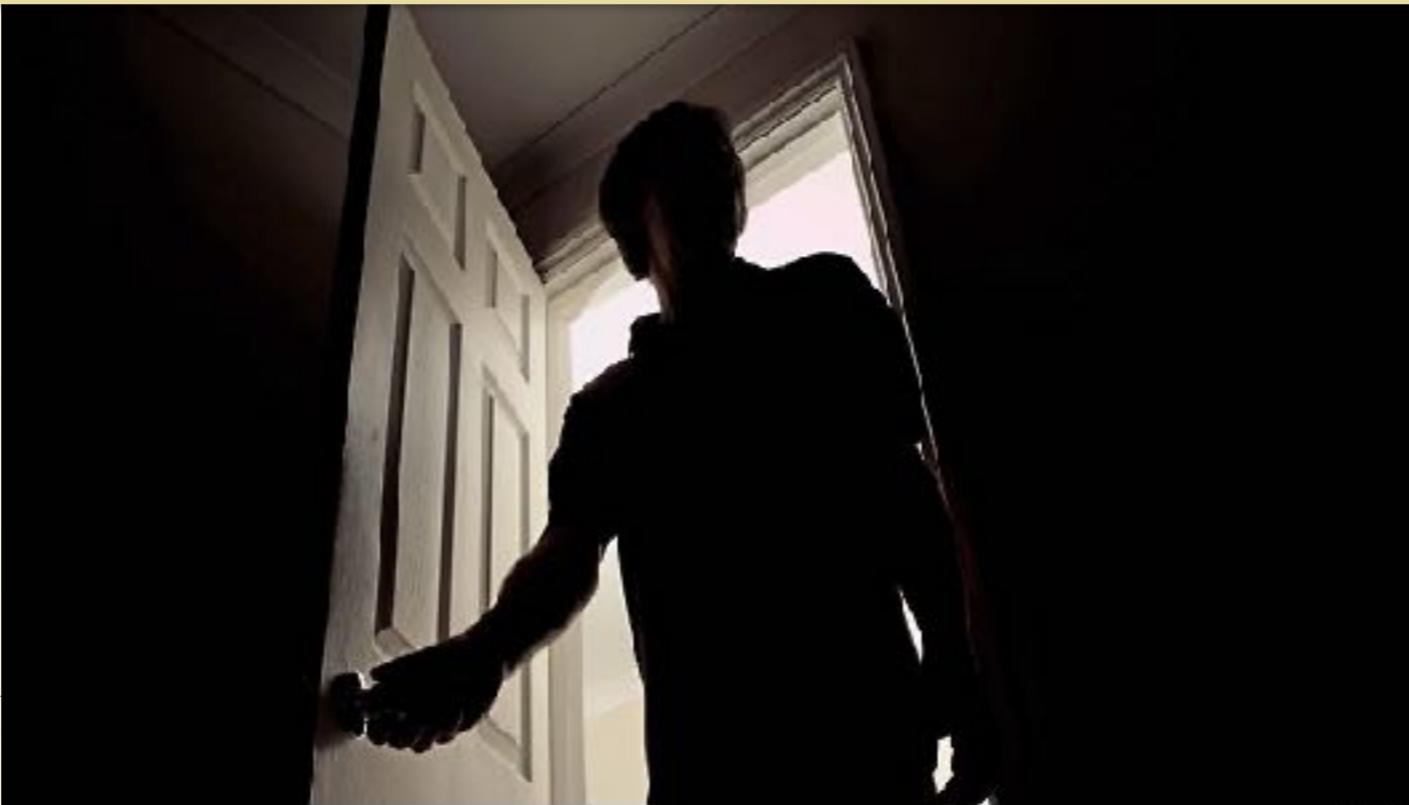
Also called ETERNAL GENERATION



The Son is equal to the Father because the Son is  
“begotten... of the same essence as the Father.”

CO-EQUAL AND CO-ETERNAL

# Arianism can creep into the church today





HERESY

**Summary of JW teaching as reflected in their New World Translation:**

1. The son was created out of nothing; hence, he is different in essence from the Father; that he is Logos, Wisdom, Son of God, is only of grace. He is not so in himself.
2. **There was, when he was not; i.e., he is a finite being.**
3. He was created before everything else, and through him the universe was created and is administered.
4. **In the historical Christ the human element is merely the material; the soul is the Logos. The historical Christ, therefore, had no human soul....**
5. The JWs teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is not equal with the Father but is the archangel Michael. In the NWT, John 1:1 reads: 'In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god'. The NWT, by (without textual justification) inserting the word 'a', no longer views Jesus as being very God, but simply a god.

# The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light ,true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven :by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.  
Amen.

“eternally begotten of the Father”

“begotten, not made, of one Being with..”



Next session:

## THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE