

Modern-day Arians: Who Are They?

Bible Answers About Denominations

About 318 A.D., Arius, an elder of Alexandria, had problems accepting the teaching about the nature of Christ. "Hence he began to teach that Christ was different in essence from the Father and before that He did not exist."(Howard F. Vos, Exploring Church History, p. 40).

The Arian teaching can be summed up as follows: (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, and the human elements that appear so prominently in the Gospels, are attributed to the Logos... (5) The Arians held that although the incarnate Logos is finite, and hence not God, He is to be worshiped, as being unspeakably exalted above all other creatures, the Creator and Governor of the universe, and the Redeemer of man. (Albert Henry Newman, A Manual of Church History, Vol. 1, p. 327). These are very similar to the points made in the book, Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 209, of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The teachings of Arianism were challenged in 321 by Alexander, bishop of Alexandria. Arius was deposed "from the presbyterate and excluded from communion of the church (Ibid. p. 326).

From the foregoing, who, then, would be the modern-day counterparts to Arius? It is the organization which claims that Abel was the first of their number and then proceeds to claim the rest of the men of God mentioned in the Bible were ancestors to their organization. Then, beginning with Jesus, they give the remaining line of their ancestors as follows:

"(1) Jesus to Paul, (2) Paul to Arius, (3) Arius to Waldo, (4) Waldo to Wycliff, (5) Wycliff to Luther, and (6) Luther to Charles Taze Russell (Gruss, Apostles of Denialoe, p. 9).

Who Are They?

The modern-day Arians are none other than the Jehovah's Witnesses. Charles Taze Russell was the founder of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the parent organization of the Jehovah's Witnesses. With the exception of Arius, there is no relationship between the Witness and the line of ancestors claimed by them. While the Jehovah's Witnesses teach the doctrine conceived by Arius in the fourth century known as Arianism, they go further than Arius by developing their own translation, a perversion of the Bible called the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. It is not a translation but an outrageous corruption and defilement of God's Word. Their teaching is as follows:

"Prior to coming to the earth, this only begotten Son of God did not think of himself to be co-equal with Jehovah God; he did not view himself as "equal in power and glory" with Almighty God: he did not follow the course of the Devil and plot and scheme to make himself like or equal to the Most High God and rob God or usurp God's place." (Let God Be True, Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 1952, pp. 34-35).

"This One was not Jehovah God, but was "existing in God's form." How so? He was a spirit person, just as "God is a Spirit"; he was a mighty one, although not almighty as Jehovah God is; also he was before all others of God brought forth. Hence he is called "the only begotten Son" of God, for God had no partner in bringing forth his first-begotten Son. He was the first of Jehovah God's creations." (Ibid, p, 32).

Like the Arians, the Jehovah's Witnesses, have a very imperfect, impoverished, and inadequate view of the nature of Jesus Christ. This can certainly be refuted with an honest study of God's Word. The most obvious answer to the errors of the Arians and the Jehovah's Witnesses is that their doctrine about the nature of Jesus did not exist until the fourth century when it was developed by Arius. The Bible was complete at the death of the apostle John by the end of the first century. None of the leaders in the second or third century church believed or taught that Jesus was a created being and not eternal.

Paul was crystal clear about the nature of Christ when he wrote: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, {and} being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:5-8). Jesus was equal to the Father in nature, but voluntarily took upon Himself the form of a servant for the salvation of man.

John was also clear about the nature of Jesus Christ when he wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14).

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus is a created being by using the passage: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col 1:18). They claim that the phrase, "firstborn from the dead" teaches that Jesus is a created being. The passage is not teaching that Jesus was created, but that Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead to die no more. Paul gives us a commentary on this passage by saying, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor 15:20).

They also quote Revelation to attempt to prove that Jesus is a created being. "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this" (Rev 3:14). The word "beginning" is translated from the Greek word "arche." This word can also be translated "origin" and this is the meaning in Rev. 3:14. Christ is the origin, source, Creator of all." (Vine's Expository Dictionary). Evidence from Scriptures and Bible dictionaries show that Jesus is not a created being. He is the origin, the active source of creation. "For by Him all things were created, {both} in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-all things have been created by Him and for Him" (Col 1:16). After

the resurrection of Christ, Thomas declared that Jesus was God, not a god as Arius taught and the Jehovah's Witnesses teach today (John 20:28). "My Lord and my God."

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