

## MAJOR HERESIES OF THE SECOND THROUGH FOURTH CENTURIES

St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church  
Hillsborough NJ  
Adult Education Series  
Ed. Deacon Mark Koscinski

Any study of Church history can run aground when dealing with the various heresies of the Second through Fourth Centuries. The list of heretical ideas is a long and bewildering one. For those who are attempting to study Church history during those centuries, here is a short list with definitions for the major heresies of the times. Please note the definition of each heresy is only a very general one. Many of the groups had subdivisions, such as the Arians. The major heading for each heresy is in bold.

**Adoptionists**—Jesus became the Messiah at a certain point in time. Typical adoptionist theories taught Jesus became the Messiah at His Birth or His Baptism.

**Agapetae**—Celibate men and women living together. Condemned by St. Jerome.

**Appollinarians**—The Word was directly united to a fleshly body without a soul.

**Arians**---Subordinationists who declared the Son to be a creation of the Father. Therefore, there is no Holy Trinity in Arian theology. There were several groups of Arians. This is not an all-inclusive list:

Anonmoeism—Most radical of the Arians. They held the Son was different in all ways from the Father.

Eudoxians—The Son was similar to the Father, but this was a moral similarity.

Homoens—Arians who rejected not only the doctrine of one essence (homoousious or consubstantial) but rejected even the similarity of essence. This is the form of religion most of the Germanic peoples adopted.

Homoiousians—Believed the members of the Trinity were of similar, not one essence. . It was thought to be a compromise between the orthodox and the Arians. St. Basil the Great was originally a Homoiousian. Eventually, the argument that similarity implied difference triumphed and homoiousianism was defeated.

Pneumatomachoi—Arians who rejected the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. Also sometime called imprecisely Semi-Arians or Macedonians. Condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381. Basil the Great and Athanasius the Great were opponents of the Pneumatomachoi.

**Eunomians**—Since God was a simple being, He was perfectly comprehensible. Byzantine theology has long denounced this theology. An example of an opponent is Gregory Palamas.

**Heterodox**—Schismatic, as opposed to the Orthodox.

**Marcionites**—Followers of Marcion, who was almost elected Pope of Rome. They believed the “God of the Old Testament” was an evil God. The Demiurge, who created the world, was an agent of this evil god. They rejected the Old Testament as well as much of the New Testament, keeping only the letters of St. Paul and parts of the Gospel of Luke as canonical.

**Meletians/Donatists**—Those who lapsed should not generally be readmitted into the Church. Donatists were located predominantly in the civil diocese of Africa, while the Meletians were predominant in the civil diocese of Egypt.

**Novationists**—The so-called “Pure Ones” refused to reconcile those who apostated during persecutions. They were generally hostile to the Arians, since they were orthodox in their beliefs.

**Paulianists**—There was only one divine person, the Father. Jesus was a mere man gifted with a high degree of grace.

**Sabellianism**—Sabellius of Rome taught modalism. There was no real distinction between the Persons of

the Trinity. They were simply three modes of the same Divinity.

Marcellians: Sabellians who believed God was a unique person Whose pre-existing Word had no distinct existence.

Photinians—Modalists that were also Adoptionists.

+++++

This pamphlet has not been approved by the Eparchy of Passaic or the Metropolia of Pittsburg. It is not the official position of the pastor of St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church or the Bishop of Passaic. Any errors are those of the editor. The purpose of this pamphlet is to present only general information.

+++++

Adult Education Series  
St Mary Byzantine Catholic Church  
1900 Brooks Blvd.  
Hillsborough NJ  
Ph: 908-725-0615