

## **The Arian Controversy, its Ramifications and Lessons for the Ghanaian Church**

**IDDRISSU ADAM SHAIBU**

*Department of Religion & Human Values, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast-Ghana*

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**ABSTRACT:** *The thrust of this paper is to explore the Arian controversy, the ramifications of decisions taken by the various councils on the body of Jesus Christ and the possible lessons that the Ghanaian Church can learn from these ramifications. This was done by reviewing literature on the Arian controversy. It came out that Arianism was condemned at the council of Nicaea. However, this did not end the controversy due to the inclusion of a word that was deemed unbiblical and the interferences of some Roman Emperors. The paper concludes that it is advisable that the church ought to have the capacity to deal with her internal problems without the support of a third party, especially those without any theological insight to issues of the Church. It seldom leads to cribbing, leads to negativity, breeds tension and sometimes fighting/civil war which then lead to destruction of lives and properties.*

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### **I. THE GREACO-ROMAN WORLD**

Although, Christianity emerged in the Roman world, it matured in the world of Greek philosophy and ideas. The Greek world was one that paid much respect to philosophical sophistication. The Early Church was thus permeated and penetrated by this philosophical sophistication (Hellenism) (Weaver, 1987). The religion in its earliest form can be said to be a hellenistic movement that attracted hellenised people from different ethnic groups. Most of these people were highly educated in classical Greek standards and in areas like logic, rhetoric, geometry and philosophy. One of the questions that occupied the minds of this hellenistic world centered on the distinction between the ‘One and many’, between the ultimate reality that is beyond this world and the immeasurable variety that exists in this world (Ward, 1955:p. 38). In other words, the hellenistic world wanted to know the relationship that existed between God and this world on one hand and God and Jesus, a very component in the Christian religion. However, among the Jewish people, this relationship issue did not pose any problem.

The Jews believed in a Supreme Being who created the universe by a spoken word. They conceived this as an idea of mediating word or wisdom. The word in this sense is the pronouncement that was made and the wisdom happens to be the resultant effect of the pronouncement which culminated in the created. In Jewish tradition, the true nature of God is incomprehensible and unknowable and that it is only God’s revealed nature that brought the universe into existence and interacts with humankind and the world. Thus, through the created, God communicated Himself to mankind and took possession of man (Guitton, 1965). However, the Greeks found this Jewish view strange since it was difficult to comprehend how a finite and changeable world could exist from an eternal and changeless Being. In order to make this Jewish view understandable and relevant to their context, they proposed the idea of a mediating intelligence or even word instead. This idea, in the view of Guitton (1965) happens to be the first emanation of a principle that reduced the distance between God and the world. One can thus see this principle as a semi-God that bridged the gap between the Creator God and the world. In developing its teachings, the Church reconciled the concept of the Messiah adopted from Judaism with that of the Greek idea of a mediating intelligence. Inevitably, the early Christian thinkers made use of Greek philosophical ideas to understand the nature of Jesus Christ.

This reconciliation was done taking into consideration the revelation about Jesus as found in the New Testament scriptures (Ward, 1955). The reconciliation took into account of God who loves the world and a redeemer who had come in human flesh to save humanity from destruction of the world and hereafter. God’s coming is enough to show that He is more than an abstract perfection and infinity, there is nothing incredible in a real incarnation, or in a real trinity inside the unity of God. This reconciliation generated a lot of questions in the non-Christian world and probably among some Christians as well. Some of the questions are; how could God be human? How could God take a human form and a human life? Others were also wondering how God could die and still remain God? In other words, who was this man who was dead and yet whom all churches affirmed to be alive and worshipped as the Son of God? If he was divine then there must be two Gods in Christianity; if not, his worship was no better than the worship of the dead. In either case of the argument there

seems to be no escape from the charge of polytheism against Christianity. Thus, the nature of Jesus Christ, whether he was human, divine or semi-divine, was being questioned by these people. The struggle for a solution to this question reached its climax with the Arian controversy. The Arian controversy centered on the nature of Jesus Christ and it was one issue that was a bone of contention in the early Church. It sparked controversy in the church which raged for well over three centuries. In fact, it caused consternation and threatened the very foundation of the early Church since it was contrary to the stand of the church. The question is what was the source and nature of this controversy?

## **II. ARIUS AND BISHOP ALEXANDER**

Arianism, named after its founder Arius, is a Christian heresy of the fourth century that denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ. Arius, who was born in Egypt in 256 C. E. studied at the theological school of Lucian at Antioch. After his education he was ordained as a diaconate by Bishop Peter 1 of Alexandria somewhere between 300-301 C. E. In 319 C.E. he was made a presbyter by Achillas before being placed in charge of the parish of Baucalis under Bishop Alexander, who was then the bishop of the Church of Alexandria. He later became involved in a controversy with his bishop, Alexander, on the nature of Jesus; the controversy actually began in 318 C. E. Arius thought that Jesus was begotten and not co-substantial with the Father and thus cannot be God as the Father is. This is because he thought Jesus did not exist from eternity and thus he is begotten. As a begotten, he is the first of all creation and his existence is by the will of God. On the relationship between Jesus and God, he said it was not natural, but adoptive in nature. In proposing this doctrine, Arius was attempting to safeguard the absolute transcendence of God, which, in his view, was compromised by theological tendencies such as Monarchism. Bishop Alexander however, argued that the 'Logos', was divine and co-substantial, hence could not have been created but co-eternal with God. Reacting to the views expressed by Alexander, Arius argued that what his bishop proposed was a denial of Christian monotheism since there were two personalities who claim divinity and thus both are Gods. Alexander on the other hand, retorted that Arius' position denied the divinity of the Word and therefore the divinity of Jesus. This controversy went on for some time and none was willing to compromise his stand. This compelled Bishop Alexander in 319 C. E. to call a local synod of the bishops of Egypt and Libya to deliberate on this controversy. At the end, Arius, together with thirteen of his sympathisers were condemned and excommunicated from the Alexandrian synod.

Arius did not accept this verdict so he appealed both to the congregation of Alexandria and to some prominent bishops throughout the Eastern part of the Empire, some of which were his colleagues at the Bible school at Antioch. In a letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arius writes "he drives us from the city as atheists because we do not concur with him when he publicly preaches, '...God always, the Son always, the Son exists from God himself... We are persecuted because we say the Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning'" (Bettenson, 1962:39). Arius was thus able to rally support from some of his colleagues as well as sympathisers and Alexander's decision resulted in organised demonstrations by sympathisers of Arius. This situation nearly divided the Eastern Church had it not been the intervention of Emperor Constantine. The first thing Constantine did upon ascending the political throne of the Roman Empire was to send letters to both Alexander and Arius through his ecclesiastical advisor, Hosius, in a bid to resolve the controversy between the two parties. However, this did not yield any result and in April 325 C.E. the emperor called a council meeting at Antioch. The council, which was presided over by his ecclesiastical advisor and attended by fifty-nine bishops, was seen as a forerunner to that of Nicaea. At the end of their deliberation Arius, together with three of his sympathisers were again condemned and ex-communicated. However, the action of the council was subject to the Nicaea council which was to take place later that same year.

The much awaited general council of the Church was finally held on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 325 C. E. in Nicaea in Bithynia (Present day Iznik in Turkey). The total number of bishops who attended the one month long meeting has been disputed by two participants. Eusebius and Athanasius who attended the meeting gave different figures. While Eusebius of Nicomedia claimed 250 bishops attended, Athanasius however, puts the number of attendees at 300. However, some modern day scholars put the number at 220. The main issue at the meeting was on the controversy between Arius and Alexander and what was this debate about?

## **III. THE THEOLOGICAL DEBATE BETWEEN ARIUS AND BISHOP ALEXANDER**

In his submission Arius referred to Jesus as 'monogenes' by making references to the Bible in respect to the titles of Jesus and some of which were the power of God, the Wisdom of God and the 'Logos' of God (See John 1:1-14). Arius further argued that Jesus was created before time, and for that reason was unchangeable. Nevertheless, as a created being, the 'Logos' was subject to change and was as fallible as human beings are.

Much of Arius' claims were based on the aspect of scripture that says that the Father "begot" the Son. If the Son was begotten then it implies that the Son had a beginning of existence and this also means that there was a time when the Son did not exist. It follows then of necessity that he had his existence from the non-existent. Arius also condemned the theological position of Alexander and his sympathizers by asserting that they were actually preaching two co-equal Gods. He asserts that if Jesus was/is eternal and co-exists with God, then Jesus should not be called God's Son, but rather God's brother. Thus in the view of Arius, Jesus was subordinate (the Greek word used was *homoiousios*) to God, who was the one true God. After Arius had finished his submissions, it was the turn of Bishop Alexander to also make his submission. The bishop first countered Arius' claims by asserting that the latter was only presenting half the picture when reading the Bible. According to him, Arius was able to remember all the passion stories, the humiliation and emptying experience Jesus went through as recorded in the Bible, but the Bible's reference of Jesus that reveals Jesus' nature, glory, nobility and union with God (Father) Arius forgot. The bishop went further to point out that Jesus made strong claims to his divinity; Not only did Jesus say that he and the Father were one, He was almost stoned to death by a crowd when he equated himself with God (See John 10: 30-31).

Athanasius, who supported his bishop, Alexander, acknowledged the logical deductions made by his opponent but added that one needed to see with spiritual eyes the deeper meaning of Scripture. He also expounded upon the concept of Christ the man and Christ the Logos. According to him, it was the human nature of Christ that was humbled and did not know certain things that died. The Logos, which is the divine nature on the other hand, knew all things and it was this logos that raised Jesus' crucified body back to life. Hence, if Jesus is referred to as the eternal offspring of the Father, He is rightly so called. For never was the substance of the Father imperfect but rather ever perfect. As God's offspring, he is the proper Son of God, who exists eternally (Hadley n. d.). After a much heated debate the main issue that came out of both submissions is how to define the son-ship of the logos. While the Arians were not able to say what the word 'begotten' actually meant, Alexander and his sympathizers sought to see God as 'agenetos' and Jesus as 'gennetos'. It should be stated that the use of these words did not adequately resolve the problem at stake. Thus, the participants decided to promulgate a creed that would be used as a standard for orthodox belief.

### **3.1. The promulgated creed**

Eusebius of Nicomedia offered a creed which was in line with Arianism but it was overwhelmingly rejected by the participants. Eusebius of Caesarea, however, offered a creed that was used by the Christian community in Palestine Caesarea. He seemed well 'situated' to make this proposal, because he tended to agree with some tenants of Arius' belief, and at the same time was in good standing with Constantine and the other bishops (Hadley, n. d.). Although, this creed was accepted by the majority of the participants including the Emperor, it was meshed with a Syro-Palestinian creed. When proceedings were drawing to a close without any definitive resolution about the nature of Jesus, the Emperor suggested that the word *homoousios* be added to the creed. This was to make the Son to be of one substance with the Father. However, this was strongly resisted by Eusebius of Caesarea, who felt the word was Sabellian. In addition, the Greek word *homoousios* was never used by the Apostles in the New Testament to describe either God or Jesus. Many felt the inclusion of this word would invite future heresies. Nevertheless, the word was included and a creed was passed, which became the universal confession of faith that all churches could use to define orthodox faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, the anti-Arian creed made the Son to be of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father (Chadwick 1967: 130). As a demonstration of the power and prestige they had through the Emperor, the Bishops pronounced condemnation (Anathematizes) upon Arius and his sympathisers.

The promulgated creed reads: We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance (*ousia*) of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God, begotten not made, of the same substance (*homoousios*) with the Father, through whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth... Those who say: 'There was a time when He was not, and He was not before He was begotten; and that 'He was made out of nothing; or who maintain that He is of another hypostasis or another substance, or that the Son of God is created, or mutable, or subject to change, the Catholic Church anathematizes. The creed has it that the Son and God are of one substance (ie *homoousios*). Its concluding anathema condemned the proposition that the Son is metaphysically or morally inferior to the Father and belongs to the created order. At the end, 218 bishops signed the creed to make it official. Three refused to sign and were thus ex-communicated together with Arius by the Emperor. However, the condemnation of Arianism did not end the controversy; it continued even after the death of Constantine. With the death of Constantine, the empire was divided between two of his sons, namely Constans and Constantius. While Constans was given the western part of the empire, his brother Constantius ruled the eastern part. Interestingly, while Constans favoured Nicaea his brother was anti-Nicaea.

To get the Church in his jurisdiction to support his rule, Constantius called for a council, this was known as Dedication Council of Antioch. The outcome was the deposing and excommunication of all sympathisers of the Nicaea creed living in this part of the empire. Bishop Athanasius was once again 'removed' from office and excommunicated by this council. The council did not end there; it came out with its own creed that omitted the phrases 'from the substance of the Father' and 'homoousios'. However, finding a suitable word to replace 'homoousios' was a big challenge to the council and this culminated in a series of council meetings held in an effort to find a suitable word. It took these different councils about twenty years (from 341 C.E.-360 C.E.) to find a suitable word 'homoiousios'. In the words of Barry (1913: 709) during these years "every shade of heretical subterfuge found expression... The term 'like in substance,' homoiousios had been employed merely to get rid of the Nicene formula". However, the adoption of this word created division among the Arians and the resultant effect is that a new group known as Semi-Arians emerged from the old (mother) group. In the view of the Semi-Arians, God and Christ were 'anomoios'. The other group preferred the word 'homoios' to describe the relationship between God and Jesus Christ. However, indications were that Constantius favoured 'homoios' than 'anomoios'.

The inevitable happened during this period when Constans died and this made Constantius the sole ruler of the empire. One of the first policies of the new emperor was to ask all the Bishops in the empire to agree with the 'homoios' concept (Ward 1955:57). To get his decision formally endorsed by all the Bishops in the empire, Constantius in 359 C.E. summoned two council meetings, one at Seleucia and the other at Rimini. By the influence of the emperor, members of the respective councils signed and thus accepted the word 'homoios'. This was further strengthened by another council meeting held at Constantinople the following year. The Constantinople council condemned the terms homoousios, homoiousios and anomoios. However, the condemnation of these words and the subsequent persecution of the supporters of these words rather led to deeper insight and understanding of the concept of the Messiah and the relationship of God with Jesus Christ. This in a sense brought some form of reconciliation among supporters of 'homoousios and homoiousios. Although this imperial imposition gave the orthodox Arians victory over the pro Nicaea people, it was short lived. When the emperor died, it was not recognized by the pro-Nicaea Bishops. The death of the Emperor paved the way for the pro-Nicaea group to defend their stand in the Church. Thus, in the view of Ward (1955:58) Athanasius began his reasoning this time with the unity of God and came to the conclusion that both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit do not only share unity of God but had the same essential substance. In other words, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit share the same identical substance and that these three hypostases are in one essence. He also came to the realisation that orthodoxy was a matter of intention and not a formula. But the Western part of the Empire did not agree with the use of the words *three hypostases* to refer to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This is because the words *three hypostases* when translated to Latin means *three substantiae* which sound as tritheism.

The inevitable happened during this period when death laid its icy hands on Athanasius and subsequently the mantle of defending orthodoxy felt in the hands of the Cappadocian fathers namely, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa. These fathers were not only united in their Trinitarian terminology they also affirmed Athanasius' stand on three hypostases in one essence. The use of the term 'three hypostases in one essence' was never meant to deny the unity of the three personalities but rather to preserve their distinction (Chadwick, 1967). This idea of one substance (ousia) in three persons (hypostaseis) became understood by the bishops in the Eastern part of the Empire. This sense of understanding extended its boundary beyond the Eastern part to the Western part. The Western realise that the words *three hypostaseis* was not in actual fact referring to any tritheism. This somehow pave the way for the Greek speaking Bishops and their Latin speaking colleagues to understand the theological terms of each other. To officially formalize this spirit of understanding, a Synod was called at Alexandria (Egypt) in 362 C. E. At the meeting the Nicene Creed was re-affirmed and the phrase 'one substance (ousia) in three persons (hypostasis) were explained by the Cappadocian fathers.

It was during this time that a section of the Arians formed a group that was known as Macedonianism but it was condemned by the Alexandria Synod. In spite of this affirmation, Emperor Valens (364-378) who was by then governing the Eastern part of the Roman Empire favoured homoeism. However, in the Western part Bishop Ambrose of Milan championed the cause of the Nicene Creed. At the council of Sirmium in 378, six Arian Bishops were deposed by Ambrose with the support of Western Emperor, Gratian. The Emperor went further to enact laws in 379 C. E. and 380 C. E. prohibiting Arianism in his part of the Empire. Meanwhile, in the East, Emperor Valens was succeeded by a Nicene sympathiser by name Emperor Theodosius I. Emperor Theodosius recalled and re-instated the Bishops who were exiled by Emperor Valens. Theodosius went further to outlaw Arianism that same period (ie 380 C.E.). The last victory over Arianism came in 381 C.E. with the

Council of Constantinople in the East and that of Aquileia in the West. Both councils sealed the final adoption of the faith of Nicaea by the entire Church. Thus, Arianism had a tremendous impact on the early Church in the sense that it caused the Church to define orthodoxy with a number of creeds. Although, the Church was finally victorious over Arianism the question one may ask is what is/are the ramification(s) of the decision of the Council on the Church?

#### **IV. RAMIFICATION(S)**

Throughout this period the basic issue in this controversy was intertwined with other complications such as the Emperors' interventions, local factions or rivalries between some leading bishops, and confusion as a result of differences in language and this created a rift between the Latin and Greek churches. In the first instance, the meeting was called by the Emperor and he used his position to influence the decision of the council. For instance, when things seemed to be getting to a stalemate, the Emperor suggested as well as influenced (either directly or indirectly) the inclusion of the word *homoousios* to the promulgated creed. Again, with his influence, he was able to give the decisions reached by the council a status of an imperial law. This implies that any bishop or Christian who was not comfortable with the use of this word could not challenge the decision of the Emperor. No wonder while he was alive no bishop or a Christian was able to speak publicly in condemnation of the inclusion of the word in the promulgated creed.

This interference and dominance by the Emperor in the affairs of the church, particularly on the Arian controversy, continued even after the death of Constantine. It is obvious that the interference of the Emperors in the controversy determined at any given time whether the council of Nicaea or Arianism was dominating the controversy. For instance, Tim et al (1977) report that Emperor Constantius pursued the idea of uniting the Church at the expense of the Nicene theology and he did that by banishing his father's ecclesiastical advisor, Hosius, who was a strong advocate of the Nicene theology. This act of the emperor may be because of his interest in Arianism. In fact, Jones (1986) argued that he was considered an Arian and specifically a Semi-Arian (Pelikan, 1989 and Gaddis, 2005). Despite being Semi-Arian, he contributed immensely to the early development of Christianity. Some of his edicts that he passed that favoured Christianity are the exemption of Christian clergies and their sons from compulsory public service, tax exemption for Christians and Bishops exempted from being tried in secular courts.

Another issue is that there was discord and disorder in the Church particularly in the Eastern branch and this continued for more than half a century. This is because the promulgated creed was out of favour with some of the Bishops who attended the conference and among even those who did not attend. The displeasure was as a result of the inclusion of *homoousios* to the promulgated creed. This situation made some of the bishops come out with their own versions of the creed which was without the word 'homoousios'. This act of the Bishops did not promote uniformity in the rituals of the Church since each church would have its own creed that may be documented in the interest of the respective Bishops. Thus, it rather added more cracks to the wall of the Church instead of repairing it.

In this regard the most needed unity that Emperor Constantine sought for was defeated. At best these Bishops could have come together and drafted a creed that all of them could have used instead of the individual stands that each took. Furthermore, although 218 bishops who attended the conference appended their signatures to the final decision of the council, they did that without understanding most of the technical terms that were used (Davies, 1987). These words, which were drawn from Greek philosophy and thus without any Biblical origins were made key-words in the promulgated creed. Words like 'homoousia' (essence), 'hypostasis' (substance), 'physis' (nature), and 'prosopon' (person) were used and these words created ambiguity because of the variety of meanings they held. These non-biblical words were given critical importance at the council's deliberation and their use later created tension and dissonance in the church. For instance, the use of the term 'homoousios' created disorder and discord among the bishops, particularly, concerning which, of the meanings should be used. While some bishops saw 'homoousios' to mean that the Father and the Son are identical in concrete being (numerical identity), others held it to mean two individual men sharing the same human nature (generic identity). The rest saw the word to refer to material things that are made from the same substance. In other words, God and Jesus are parts of the same stuff (Chadwick, 1967:130 and Davies 1987:61). It is indeed difficult to identify or know which of these meanings that the council meant or used during their promulgation of the creed. However, Davies (1987) thinks the first meaning of the word happens to be the intended one used by the council. Along with this dissonance is the question of the word first use by the Gnostic movement and later by Paul of Samosata. In both instances, the Church condemned its use and declared its use as heretical. Another reason is that the word was never used in sacred scripture.

Again, it was used in the Greco-Roman world to describe two coins that is made from the same metal substance. Thus, the word is non-biblical and it originated from the pre-Christian world. As a result of the disharmony that these words created during this period the church had to call for about fourteen different council meetings within a period of nineteen years (ie from 341 C. E. and 360 C. E.) all in the effort of finding a lasting solution to this controversy. These attempts yielded no result in the sense that it was always difficult to agree on a common word because of the difference(s) in language and the meaning(s) those words convey to the Greek speaking East and the Latin speaking West. Again, each of the two parties involved in the controversy always suggest words that tend to favour them, hence the difficulty in finding a suitable substitute. Again there was factionalism or rivalry between some of the bishops. For instance, there was the Eusebians/Arians and Alexanderian/Athanasius. The rivalry between these parties was so sharp that each tried to eliminate the other through whatever means possible. In 335 C.E. the Eusebians/Arians tried to depose Athanasius at the council of Tyre but they could not succeed. Later, another attempt was made on Athanasius by his opponents and this time they accused him of treating dissident clergy in a violent way. Fearing for his life, Athanasius fled to Constantine to seek refuge, but he was not left alone. His opponents went after him there and again accused him of threatening to cut off the supply of grains to Constantinople by calling a dock strike and this infuriated Constantine to banish him to Tyre in Gaul (France) without giving the accused the opportunity to defend himself. This banishment of Athanasius was not base on any doctrinal charge but on political ground. This somehow informs one the level of Church politics that took place in the early church.

Such was the intensity of rivalry that existed among some leading bishops in the early church that some of them died in exile after suffering forced ex-communication. In fact, the rivalry which started as a result of a misunderstanding with regard to the true nature of Jesus Christ later created chaos in the early Church. This could partially be attributed to the desire for political power or favour by some bishops. Those who were able to achieve this political power or favour used their new found power or favour to depose their opponents or get their opponents replaced in their offices. Church politics was one thing that divided the early church as could be seen in the case of Athanasius. Although this controversy was outlawed its impact is still felt in the Church today. The unity that Emperor Constantine and the others sought for the Church is still hanging since a section of the Church still holds to the Arian belief and an example is the Jehovah Witnesses. Despite this problem one thing that is certain is that the Church is united in many respects especially in having a common foundation which is the basis for its existence.

## **V. LESSONS FOR THE GHANAIAN CHURCH**

Although, Christianity enjoyed religious liberty with the accession of Emperor Constantine, it could not escape his influence and that of some of the subsequent emperors. The presence of Constantine and the subsequent Emperors who presided over other council meetings on this issue was enough to influence the decision of the councils. Constantine, for instance, influenced the inclusion of the word 'homoousios' to the promulgated creed, which was against the wish of some of the participants. One may say that the Emperor did this in order to break the stalemate that the council's decision was heading towards. However, we should not forget that the emperor had no theological knowledge or understanding of the issues involved in the controversy that raged. Perhaps because of the political expediency of getting the Church to rally behind his administration, the emperor made the council take a 'step' which was against its will. This action of the emperor showed the measure of imperial control over the church. Thus, one is tempted to think that there was a hidden agenda behind Emperor Constantine's initial idea of uniting the Church through the general assembly. If not so, he could have listened to the advice of the bishops and not have imposed his will on the latter (council). Thus, the Emperor, like all other politicians would do all things possible to get the 'crowd' rally behind them. One may suggest that if the Church had not yielded to the demand of the Emperors, harmony would have been achieved irrespective of how long it may/would have taken. It is advisable that the church always deal with her internal problem without the support of a third party, especially those without any theological insight to issues of the Church. On this issue, the Ghanaian Church needs to be commended for standing on its ground in preventing the infiltration and influence of Ghanaian politicians in their decision-making. One instance, in which a sitting president in Ghana directly intervened in the affairs of the Ghanaian Church, was in the impasse between two leading figures namely, Rev. Anaman and Rev. James McKeown, of the Apostolic Church, Gold Coast, The impasse had to do with the concept of divine healing, which was an administrative and constitutional issue in their church; the church by then believed in divine healing. The fact of the matter is that Rev. James McKeown, fell sick in 1938 and subsequently received orthodox medical treatment, which was against the tenets of the church. While Anaman and a section of the Church believed in this doctrine, McKeown and the rest of the Church on the other hand opposed the idea. The inevitable separation between these two factions happened in 1939 when they both went their separate ways. After the split they both took the same name; Anaman's group was known as the

Apostolic Church, Gold Coast while McKeown's was the Gold Coast Apostolic Church. This issue was so serious that none of the groups was willing to compromise its stand. The then President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, had to step in to bring sanity between these groups. The President therefore asked McKeown's group to change the name of their church which his group complied (Larbi, 2001). The Church should not rest on its oars but continue to maintain as well as improve its independent status. As it strives to sustain this status, it must also try to impart this attitude to its members who would like to sell church issues to politicians for them to change for better. Again, instead of the Bishops using their time and energy to propagate the Gospel, some of them concentrated on fighting as well as eliminating each other either for political favour or for their own self aggrandizement. This situation created more cracks in the walls of the Church and this could be seen in the rivalry between Arius and Bishops Alexander and their respective supporters. The lesson here is that there is the need for the Church and for that matter Christians to spend their time to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ rather than dissecting him; which would not add any labour (soul) to God's vineyard. Last but not least, one can argue that the rivalry, directly or indirectly, reduced the numerical strength of the Church since some of the leading bishops lost their lives. Apart from contributing to the loss of lives, the bishops also contributed to the escalation of the controversy. Thus, there is the need for Christians to avoid conflict in whatever form it may take. Nevertheless, when conflict arises one need to control his/her emotions rather than letting one's emotions override one's sense of judgment. In most cases when one's emotions overrides his/her sense of judgment it often leads to cribbing and fighting. This only lead to negativity, breeds tension and in most cases, things never reach a conclusion. Hence, there is the need for Christians to avoid going to extremes in dealing with problems. Differences are bound to happen but when they happen Christians should not be overridden by their emotions when dealing with them.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This paper examined the Arian controversy, the ramifications of the decision of the Nicene council on the church with respect to the Arian controversy and the lessons that the Ghanaian Church can learn from the outcome of the council's decision. It came out that Christianity emerged in a world that was saturated with philosophical sophistication, (Hellenism) and it thus got permeated and penetrated by the forces of this sophistication. The early Christian thinkers used this Hellenism to shape some of their beliefs. It was in the midst of shaping these beliefs that Arianism emerged and after all efforts were made in 'coiling' it through various local assemblies failed, Emperor Constantine had to call for a general assembly to deal with the issue. The general council was able to achieve the desired resolution through the influence of the Roman imperial court. The council's decisions came with its ramifications of tension, division and loss of lives in the early Church. Thus, one thing that the Ghanaian Church can learn is that 'dissecting' Jesus Christ with respect to what happened in the early Church as captured in this article would not add any soul to God's vineyard.

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