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# Heresies That Have Threatened the Church of Christ



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# HERESIES THAT HAVE THREATENED THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

A heresy is a belief that deviates from some standard, official belief. At first heresy was not used negatively as it is used today. It simply meant choosing or faction. As Christian we have a freedom to choose what we believe in however this should not go against the word of God. In the past and in church today there is splitting of the church from what different people beliefs in. Bible is the word of God and hence it is good for people to define what is true and what is not true using the Bible as the reference. In A.D 320 Arius of Alexander taught that Jesus was a creation. It's good to go back to the Bible and determine whether this is true. We are saved by grace and having faith in God. There are things which are essential while other are non-essential to our faith. Things such as who is God, resurrection, salvation by grace and who Jesus is, are so essential to our faith. However such as baptism of infants, worship styles: Saturday or Sunday, dress code and charismatic gifts are non-essential to our faith. These non-essential things have led to denominational fragmentation. It's better to look at those heresies that have threatened the Church of Christ.

## Gnosticism

Gnosticism comes from the word 'gnosis' which means knowledge. It teaches that salvation is acquired through special knowledge. This knowledge depends with the relationship between the individual and the transcendent being. This heresy says that the unknowable God was too pure to associate with material universe which is evil. So he created lesser divinities and one of them was wisdom. This wisdom had urge to know this God and from it an evil god was created. This god created the universe. He locked mortals preventing them from ascending back to god after the physical death. According to Gnostics deliverance from material form can only be attained through special knowledge revealed by gnostic teachers. Christ was a divine redeemer who revealed the knowledge required for redemption. It is dualistic which teaches that there is good and evil, spirit and evil and light and dualism. Gnosticism is gained from teaching of Irenaeus, Origen and Tertullian. The problem with this heresies is that it denies that Jesus is not God and if he is not God then he alone could not atone all of the mankind and hence we would be forever lost in our sins.

## Apollinarianism

This heresy was taught by bishop of Laodicea in Syria about 361 who was known as Apollinaris. He taught that Jesus was just a glorified form of human body. Though Jesus was human he did not have human mind and that his mind was divine. He argued that the two natures of Christ could not coexist in one body and his aim was to lessen human nature of Christ. This heresy denies the true and complete humanity in the person of Jesus. Christ needed to be pure and holy sacrifice and also he had to be man to die for men. This heresy is false as Jesus is 100% God and 100% man. As it says in John 1:14 "The word became flesh and made his dwellings among us." and in col 2:9 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."

## Docetism

This is a heresy that states that human nature was absent in Christ. It says that human nature in Christ was just an "illusion." This theory is taken from that God is pure and he could not be associated with human beings. Other group say that Christ was a separate deity which entered Jesus during baptism and left him on the Cross. This means that Christ did not suffer on the cross and hence did not rise from the dead. However this heresies is refuted by Apostles John in 1st John 4:2-3 "but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."

## Arianism

This heresy says that Christ is a creation. This is one of the biggest heresy which almost changed the church. It teaches that God the Father is too pure and infinite to appear on the earth. Therefore God created Christ the Son out of nothing as the greatest creation. This son created the universe. God's relation with the son is adoptive rather than nature. This son had great power and hence he had to be worshiped and that Holy Spirit was his greatest creation. This heresy denies the full and complete incarnation of God the Son, second person of the trinity.

## Modalism

This heresy looks the nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It acknowledges that God is in three forms but these nature exists one at a time. At first He was father and created the universe. In the New Testament he is Son and after the ascension his mode turned to Holy Spirit. This heresy denies the existence of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit which is false as in Gen 1:26 "Then God said 'Let us make man in our own image'".

## Adoptionism

This heresy states that Jesus was tested by God and when he passed the test during baptism. This was the time that he was granted supernatural powers by God and adopted as the son. He was rewarded for his achievements and being as perfect character he was raised from the dead and adopted. However the Bible says that Jesus is fully man and God and he could not be fully God if he was adopted. As it says in col 2:9 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."