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Arianism Revised: The Re-emergence of an Infamous Heresy

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ABSTRACT

Arian heresy, a Trinitarian heresy that suggests the members of the Trinity differ in essence, function, and rank, has existed in Christianity for centuries but hasn't often recaptured the mainstream discussion of orthodoxy. That is, until the 1970s. Since then, the available literature surrounding the subjects of complementarianism, eternal subordination, the Holy Trinity, and Arian philosophy has grown, and the overlap between these factors cumulated into what was arguably one of the most divisive theological debates within modern Evangelicalism. What factors contributed to the reemergence of this centuries-long debate in modern times? The overarching goal of this work is to investigate Arianism's origins, outline the crucial events that contributed to this religious shift, and propose possible theories for why this shift happened when it did. When the latter objectives are accomplished, readers can perceive the Arian reemergence not as a blip in religious history, but instead, a methodical chain of events that reveals certain instabilities within Evangelical Christianity. The re-emergence of Arian heresy can be largely attributed to the lax doctrinal structure of American Evangelicalism since its origins in the late nineteenth century, which cumulated in the reconsideration of Arian ideas as theologians scrambled to find adequate theological backing for women's subordination in the face of the Women's Movement.

Keywords: Evangelicalism, complementarianism, Arian heresy, eternal function subordination, eternal subordination of the Son

Given the history between Christian doctrine and Arian heresy, irony is the most fitting word for its re-emergence in American Evangelical circles in modern times. Arian heresy, which contains the belief that Christ is of a lesser power and substance than God the Father, emerged in fourth century C.E., and was responsible for one of the most significant decisions regarding Christian doctrine in its religious history: The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.¹ That decision set in motion the development of theological scaffolding needed for the doctrine of salvation; in Christian theology, the undiluted divinity and authority of Christ is what grants him the ability to atone for the sins of humanity.² Therefore, if it is decided that Christ does not share full divinity and authority with the other figures of the

Godhead, he cannot adequately provide salvation; as Beth Allison Barr explains: "Only God could save, and if Jesus wasn't fully God, what did that mean for his death and resurrection?"³ If such upheaval could result from Arian thought, and considering the reaction it inspired upon its introduction in ancient times, one can only wonder how it slipped into American Evangelicalism centuries later. In addition, it is paramount to determine if this re-emergence is truly Arian heresy reborn, or if it is some new, yet orthodox, interpretation akin to it. By examining the origins of Arian philosophy in the early church, describing the circumstances leading its modern-day visage, and outlining reasons for why this change has occurred, one can understand the causes and

consequences of this religious shift that impacts sects of Christendom today.

History of Arian Heresy

Before delving into the history of Arius, it is important to begin with a set of caveats, which includes clarifying the frequently used terminology in this religious subtopic. While some modern sources use the phrases “Arian” and “Arianism” interchangeably, the term “Arianism,” according to Rowan Williams, fails to capture the essence of Arius’ goals or philosophy; he instead acknowledges that “‘Arianism’ is a very unhelpful term to use in relation to fourth-century controversy. There is no single ‘Arian’ agenda, no tradition of loyalty to a single authoritative teacher.”⁴ The term “Arian heresy” is just as unfulfilling, since fourth-century “‘Arians’ thought of themselves, naturally enough, as Catholics; or, more accurately, the very wide spectrum of non-Nicene believers thought of themselves as mainstream Christians.”⁵ While “heresy” is often a charged word when used in nonacademic discussion, for the purposes of this paper, “heresy” will refer strictly to theological ideas that are in opposition to doctrines established in the Catholic ecumenical councils. It is important to note that, in a historic atmosphere, heresy has less to do with the moral “right-ness” of a philosophy and more on the historical survival, acceptance, and dominance of one philosophy over another. By separating moralistic connotations from the term “heresy,” and by introducing the nuance over the terms “Arian heresy” and “Arianism,” the topic at hand can be discussed.

To understand the rebirth of Arian heresy in modern Christian history and comprehend its importance, it is crucial to learn its origins. Arguably, Arian heresy began in 318 C.E., when Arius, an African

priest, challenged Bishop Alexander of Alexandria’s teachings on the Holy Trinity, arguing that the Son being begotten implied “‘there was... a time when the Son was not.’”⁶ Here it is important to note that the referral to the Son before the Incarnation and after the Incarnation have separate theological terms; before the Incarnation, theologians employ “God the Son” or “Logos” or “Word,” and after Incarnation, theologians employ “Jesus” or “Christ.” Hence, when Arius refers to a time when the Son was not, he was not only referring to the human person of Jesus, but he was also referring to what traditional trinitarians define as part of the Godhead.

Still, on the surface, this claim looks to be an astute observation rather than a malicious statement against the bishop’s teachings, and many scholars have defended Arius’ motives since. Even Wackernagel, who includes Arian heresy in his essay “Two Thousand Years of Heresy,” expresses sympathy for Arius by acknowledging that, “one can ask whether initially Arius represented simply the right to have doubts, the freedom to speculate and have one own’s opinion—and it was in this perspective... that he had wanted to present to Alexander the antithesis of his ideas.”⁷

While the motive of Arius is debatable, the ever-increasing impact of his theories have not accumulated nearly as much sympathy from ancient and modern Nicene-adhering theologians. The implications of his writings that followed revealed a key assertion of his philosophy, which is the idea that “Jesus was subordinate to the Father, not only in the functional sense that he came to earth to do the Father’s will, but in the metaphysical sense of being a creature subordinate in his essence to the Father.”⁸ Arius believed that the Son differed in substance to the Father before the Incarnation as well, arguing that the Word

was “alien to God and unlike him.”⁹ It is this aspect of Arian philosophy to which theologians are merciless in their criticism, going as far to say that Arian philosophy is “heathen to the core,” and “never was there a more illogical theory devised by the wit of man.”¹⁰ Arius was excommunicated, but not before his teachings had spread from Alexandria to other areas, inspiring “disturbances of public order” that cumulated in “brawls in the streets.”¹¹

It is in this context that Constantine intervened by proposing the Council of Nicaea, to determine whether the substance of the Son was similar or different from that of the Father.¹² After deliberation between the Arians and Nicenes, the Nicene view prevailed: the Son was of the same substance, authority, and power of the Father, solidifying the doctrine of consubstantiation and laying the groundwork for Christian orthodoxy.¹³ The reaction of the early church to the Arian controversy is arguably the catalyst of mainstream Christian orthodoxy, sparking then-needed debates and pressuring the early bishops to make decisions that would impact Christian doctrine for centuries.

Continuation and Resurgences

Arian heresy and mainstream orthodoxy wrestled over power structures for the rest of the century. Immediately after Nicaea, Arian ideas prompted the development of theologies based on its original tenants, though they deviate in certain details. The *homoians* stressed the Son’s subordination to the Father, the *homoiousians* argued that the Father and Son are of like—but not same—essence, and the *heterousians* maintained that the Father and Son were of different essence but were similar in other ways.¹⁴ Even with variations, these Arian offshoots are characterized as

heresy in light of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed: a philosophy considered incompatible with Christian doctrine.¹⁵ Despite clear anti-Arian attitudes in subsequent councils, Arian heresy remained especially salient between the fourth and eighth centuries, with influential adherents ranging from kings to bishops to generals.¹⁶

Arian heresy again became the subject of debate during the Reformation. While the term “Arian” was widespread, Wiles warns his readers in *Archetypal Heresy* that during this time, “Arianism [was] a generic name for any heresy touching even indirectly the divinity of Christ.”¹⁷ Despite the importance of recognizing that the term “Arianism” during and after the Reformation was sometimes used to theologially blacklist new interpretations of Scripture during a time of religious upheaval, there are some notable instances that reflect how the definition of “Arian” broadened and evolved over the past few centuries. In 1530, Michael Servetus published *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, and while it was not strictly Arian, it challenged traditional trinitarian views and prompted other theologians to follow suit.¹⁸ Two years later, Anabaptist John Campanus used Genesis 1:26 to argue that the nature of God was binary, and that the arrangement of male and female reflected the order of the Godhead, with the Son being subordinate to the Father and “eternal but not coeternal.”¹⁹ Other anti-trinitarian writers emerged during the 1600s, no longer inhibited by the now-lapsed Licensing Act that once prohibited heretical writings, and they focused primarily on debating the substance of Christ, the pre-existence of Christ, and the order of the Godhead.²⁰ It can also be argued that the circumstances surrounding Anglicanism’s origins (King Henry VIII’s split from the Catholic Church) was one of the reasons why non-orthodox ideas were permitted to be

explored.²¹ Non-orthodox theologies, especially Arianism, continued to be developed for years within British Anglicanism until its peak in the nineteenth century; by then, the now-broadened ideas of Arianism (which over the centuries was no longer strictly confined to Arius's teachings) emerged "for a brief but vigorous period of flourishing with the help of the new scientific thinking that emerged in the early years of the eighteenth century."²²

While Wiles focuses on British Arianism during the eighteenth century, Arian ideas were present in the Americas as well. Joseph Priestley, a self-proclaimed Arian, was a pivotal figure in spreading English Unitarianism in America during the early nineteenth century.²³ Both Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone of the Restoration Movement had anti-trinitarian ideas; even though Campbell was the more orthodox of the two, their antagonists were quick to categorize their anti-trinitarian beliefs as Arian.²⁴ More recently, New Religious Movements within Christianity, such as Jehovah's Witness,²⁵ Seventh-day Adventists,²⁶ and a sect of Pentecostals that subscribe to "Oneness" theology,²⁷ have been accused of departing from traditional trinitarian doctrine in favor of an Arian slant. The major religious shift examined in this work is not simply in the re-emergence of Arianism or Arian heresy, for it has prevailed in Christendom for centuries. Instead, the major religious shift at hand is the slow acceptance of Arian tenants, both its fourth-century version and future iterations, in some modern mainstream Christian denominations, and how the debate that resulted pushed Arianism back into theological focus.

The Present Controversy

In 1977, George W. Knight III, a Presbyterian minister, published his book *New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women*. In his work, he proposed the argument that the permanent subordination of women in a marriage relationship reflected the permanent subordination of the Son to God the Father.²⁸ According to Barr, author of *The Making of Biblical Womanhood*, subordination refers to being under the authority of another power because it is implied that the power is greater than one's own; women's subordination refers to women being under the authority of men, which had been justified throughout human history by casting women in a weaker role than men.²⁹ The point Knight makes about marriage and women is unimportant (at least for now), but his approach to the Trinity is an echo of the hierarchal structure that Arian heresy introduced. It also mirrors the marriage analogy that Campanus used to illustrate Arian ideas in the sixteenth century.

While Knight's work is the first example of the modern reintroduction of Arianism, Wayne Grudem, a theologian of the Baptist Calvinism sect, founder of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and influential editor of the English Standard Version Study Bible, revised Arian ideas in 1994 as "economic subordination" of the Son in his work, *Systematic Theology*.³⁰ This development is unexpected for modern adherents to Trinitarian orthodoxy because proponents of Arianism in the past often had to vehemently defend their position; in this case, Arian ideas were taught unopposed, as *Systematic Theology* was and still is "widely used as a theology textbook around the world."³¹ Rather than Arian ideas being ignored, rejected, or argued against, aspects of Arianism are being taught to thousands of new Christian ministers.

Since the 1990s, Grudem has maintained his position by reaffirming it and defending it in various works, ranging from essays³¹ to blog posts.³² While some theologians, including other Evangelicals, critiqued Grudem's conclusions, the response that received the most attention and prompted the most debate was Presbyterian minister Liam Goliger's relentless blog post in 2016. In the two-part post, he went as far to say proponents of economic subordination are "reinventing the doctrine of God" and "doing a great dishonor to Christ," all while implying that Grudem and his associates are "lead[ing] people away from the faith."³⁴ This combative article elicited a response from Grudem and Bruce Ware (the latter a Southern Baptist theologian who shares Grudem's views), which in turn elicited a counter-response from other anti-subordinationists, and the debate grew to accommodate hundreds of blog posts written by lay-theologians and seminarians alike.³⁵ Biblical scholars jumped to defend or attack economic subordination (later refined into the term "eternal functional subordination"³⁶), and while conflict has lessened over the past few years, Evangelicals have yet to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

Is It Really Heresy?

Obviously, proponents of the eternal functional subordination of the Son (which will from now on be abbreviated as EFS for brevity's sake) have opposed the assertion that their ideas are Arian in nature. When considering if EFS is synonymous with Arian heresy, there is not a clear answer. One aspect of the potential Arian lookalike that makes it difficult to neatly define it is the change of terminology in modern Evangelical writings. Giles notices that in works championing EFS, "Knight and those who follow him introduced a number of terms not found in the

historic doctrinal tradition. For example, in speaking of what the divine persons do, the tradition speaks of the 'works' or 'operations' of Father, Son and Spirit. In contrast Knight and his followers speak of the 'functions' or 'roles' of the divine persons."³⁷ The technicality in terminology extends further: Grudem acknowledged the Arianism allegations in 2016 by arguing that his claims "used the language of 'subordination' of the Son to the Father in *relationship*, but not in essence or deity."³⁸ Critics of Grudem argue that the relationships between members of the Trinity and their essence is not mutually exclusive, pointing out that "power" and "authority" are used synonymously in the New Testament and "both designate essential divine attributes."³⁹ In informal words, theologians who oppose EFS view these distinctions—operations and roles, essence and relationship—as splitting hairs, as well as an unsuccessful attempt to hide the resemblance of EFS to Arianism.

While the Nicene Creed's conclusions about whether the Trinity's essence explicitly applies to the relationship between its members is debatable, it would be contradictory to assume two or three beings with the same power, authority, and essence fit neatly in a hierarchy. Even if one accepts the arguments of the proponents of EFS as they are, Arian ideas still shine through; if the hierarchy exists only in relationship between members of the Trinity, it still reflects the subordination of *function* that always existed in Arian belief, as well as the *homian* emphasis on subordination. The question that should be asked is not whether EFS is Arian in nature, for it is already established that it contains aspects of Arianism. A better question to ask would be to what degree do the two related ideas overlap. While that question escapes the scope of this work, it would be a fascinating subject of further study. For the purposes of

this work, and after considering both sides of the literature surrounding EFS, it is concluded that EFS resembles Arianism—especially its eighteenth-century manifestations—too closely to be considered a Nicene-adhering interpretation of the Trinity.

Why It Occurred

The pattern of the emergence of anti-trinitarian and anti-Nicene ideas, as well as the following accusations of Arianism, is nothing new. However, the timing of this religious shift has yet to be explained. Why the 1970s? What is especially interesting is that, despite the differences in denominational backgrounds between Knight and Grudem (the two biggest voices of EFS), “the doctrine of eternally subordinated Son in function and authority is found only in conservative Evangelical writings. It is unknown in mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic works on the Trinity.”⁴⁰ Though Giles’ statement is unnecessarily absolute, his review of literature on the Trinity reveals a strange pattern; for whatever reason, the authority of the Son is being challenged mainly within Evangelical sects.

Many anti-subordination theologians recognize and argue that the reintroduction of these ideas occurred when they did (the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s) because of an attempt to find solid doctrinal evidence for the submission of women in married relationships. In fact, the majority of modern academic writers refuting EFS mention this, with Giles explicitly saying, “virtually everyone who advocates the eternal subordination of the Son is committed to the permanent subordination of women. In my view the latter gives rise to the former.”⁴¹

It is no coincidence that one of the most crucial figures in the Trinitarian

controversy, Wayne Grudem, is the most obvious connection between EFS and the modern Christian argument for women’s subjugation. Kristen Kobes du Mez, an American historian with a focus on gender studies, chronicles this connection in her book, *Jesus and John Wayne*:

In 1986, Wayne Grudem had called for a new organization to uphold biblical manhood and womanhood... under the leadership of Grudem and fellow Reformed evangelical John Piper, they crafted a statement affirming what would be known as ‘complementarianism:’ God created man and women ‘equal before God’ yet ‘distinct in their manhood and womanhood.’ The statement attested that God had established male headship as part of the order of creation and closed the door to women in church leadership. In 1989, CBMW published this ‘Danvers Statement’ in a full-page advertisement in *Christianity Today*... The Danvers Statement was a response to both an alleged ‘gender confusion’ ushered in by the 1960s and to the ‘evangelical feminism’ that had emerged in the 1970s.⁴²

Over the years, the council has held fast to their concept of complementarianism and used their increasing power within Evangelical circles to advocate for the subordination of women, from discouraging women’s military service to applauding a seminary for refusing to hire faculty that supported women’s ordination in ministry.⁴³ Since the council’s conception, it has produced “resources for denominations, organizations, and local churches,”⁴⁴ including its own journal; articles from complementarian theologians such as Bruce Ware and Peter Schemm Jr. are

featured in its volumes, with statements such as “it is *God-like* for wives to submit to their husbands,”⁴⁵ “there is an eternal *order* in the Godhead... [that] may be seen, however dimly, in the *order* of male and female,”⁴⁶ and “Where we have been misled by the history of [past Trinitarian] doctrine, may Scripture lead to correction.”⁴⁷ Whether one classifies complementarian arguments as Biblically accurate or benevolently sexist, one must recognize, however begrudgingly, that there is a certain genius in the council’s strategy: what better way to sanctify the subordination of women than to impose the concept of subordination onto the Holy Trinity itself? However, complementarian theologians had not openly challenged the Nicene Creed with the goal of women’s subordination until recent history. Why this approach, and again, why now? To answer this question, it would be best to provide a brief explanation of Christendom’s complex relationship with womanhood in the past.

History of Womanhood in Christianity

In the Greco-Roman context of Christianity’s origins, ideas surrounding women still reflected Aristotle’s conclusions that the human female is “a deformity.”⁴⁸ However, the writings of St. Paul challenge this assertion; rather than upholding the Roman household codes, he emphasizes mutual submission in the letter to Ephesus, a stance which can be interpreted as “a resistance narrative to Roman patriarchy,” in that the Roman *paterfamilias* was called to submit in the same way as the wife.⁴⁹ The increasing support of this perspective over the past few decades, at least among academics like Barr and Giles, might explain the sudden need for proponents of women’s subordination to find support for their argument outside of individual verses, since individual verses (such as those found in 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians) are being more

and more attributed to the Roman cultural context.

However, Paul’s contextually radical views were misinterpreted throughout the centuries; one can argue that the early church father’s reliance on Platonic thought may have initiated a transfer of not just metaphysical ideas, but conclusions surrounding the worth of women as well. While Plato’s conclusions surrounding women were complex and at times supportive, he asserted that women were second generations of cowardly or unrighteous men, an assertion that could have influenced the conclusions of his student Aristotle and later church fathers.⁵⁰

These ideas were carried into the Medieval Period, and women were seen as worldly, sexually impure, and weaker against the temptations of sin.⁵¹ The glorification of Mother Mary in the Medieval period complicates Christian ideas of women further: Mary was celebrated for her maternity, suggesting that women could find religious significance in the mother role, yet Mary was deemed holy due to her virginity.⁵² These opposing views of religious involvement for Medieval women—salvation in motherhood, salvation in celibacy—held fast until the Reformation, during which “the waning power of the Catholic priest was balanced by the waxing power of the Protestant husband,”⁵³ and femininity was no longer seen as spiritually impure; while Medieval women could achieve holiness by “transcend[ing] their sex”⁵⁴ through celibacy and monasticism, Reformation women could achieve holiness through their role as “helpmeet” within the household.⁵⁵ While this view was championed in Martin Luther’s literature,⁵⁶ it does not capture all Protestant attitudes toward women. For example, while the Anabaptist women at Muenester were

encouraged to be obedient and silent, they were also encouraged to trade “womanly” fear for “manly” courage as they witnessed and risked martyrdom for their faith.⁵⁷ Religious movements on the fringes, as opposed to the mainstream, often challenge traditional gender hierarchies, and the various offshoots of the Protestant Reformation were no different.

While these nuances are important to note, Luther’s perspective of women’s spiritual role within the family remained dominant in Protestant circles; they were later supported by Enlightenment ideas (which emphasized the biological differences between men and women) and continued through the Industrial Revolution.⁵⁸ However, with the arrival of Feminist Movements starting in the nineteenth century and cumulating in the 1960s, the role of women within Christendom was revised yet again. As mentioned previously, Evangelical groups such as the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood reacted to these cultural shifts by proclaiming men and women were equal, but distinct in their gender roles. The women’s role was no less important, but it would shame herself and shame her Creator if she were to covet a role that did not belong to her, whether that be breadwinner or leader. Obviously, these views have been challenged in the past half-century, and yet, conservative Evangelical theologians scramble to solidify the complementarian argument. When individual Pauline Scriptures would no longer do when read in the context of the Ancient Roman culture, one can argue that Grudem and Knight hoped to embed subordination deep enough into the Trinity that it would no longer be challenged; if they succeeded, if one questioned the subordination of women, they would have to also question God.

The Intersection of Womanhood, Evangelicalism, and Arianism

While one can trace the beginnings of EFS to complementarian teaching, it would be an oversimplification to trace the new Trinitarian debate *entirely* to the sexism within Evangelical sects of Christianity, especially when one acknowledges some glaring exceptions. Tim Keller, a notable conservative theologian, does not support EFS, but is a strong proponent of expelling women from all positions of leadership, from religious to secular.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Craig Keener is unapologetic in his defense of women in positions of religious leadership, but is simultaneously tolerant of EFS.⁶⁰ It is indisputable that EFS was born out of an attempt to provide a non-refutable defense for complementarian theology, but the quasi-heresy has grown past its origins. There is clearly something else afoot.

Since the Reformation, the Protestant sect has branched into dozens of denominations (that fraction even further into hundreds more specific denominations) with different interpretations of the Bible, ways of performing Sacraments, methods of worship, and more.⁶¹ Due to the heterogeneity of Protestant faith, absolute theological consistency has been more of a wishful dream than a sought-after reality. American Evangelicalism has long been known for its innovation and lack of theological structure, an observation evident from as far back as the Civil War, when Evangelical “revivals would disrupt the status quo, and at times upend social hierarchies, before traditional denominational authority would once again reassert itself.”⁶² The rise of American Evangelicalism post-Civil War is a love letter to the country of its origin; it “[borrowed] from modern advertising techniques [to craft] a generic, nonsectarian faith that privileged individuals’ ‘plain reading of the Bible’ and

championed a commitment to the pure, unadulterated ‘fundamentals’ of the faith... [and] through the identification of common enemies... fundamentalists [i.e. early Evangelicals] were able to fashion a powerful (if unstable) identity.”⁶³ While it is associated with conservative views today, its innovation and rejection of tradition in favor of non-sectarianism is what ultimately leaves Evangelicalism vulnerable to doctrinal confusion. The lack of theological guardrails that most older traditions have, partnered with an uncritical reading of Christian Scripture, culminated throughout the decades to produce a doctrinally detached sect of Evangelical Christians.

While it is simple to dismiss the spread of EFS in Evangelical circles with a mere, “Evangelicals do not know any better,” this explanation is far too patronizing and absolute to include the many exceptional scholars that have used their extensive knowledge of the church fathers and Scripture to defend EFS. While the lack of a strict theological structure within Evangelicalism certainly contributes to the dismissal of long-held theological conclusions, there are other factors affecting the magnitude and the resilience of EFS proponents. While complementarians that champion EFS are departing from Christian tradition surrounding the Trinity, one must acknowledge that egalitarian models of gender relations do not adhere to the Christian tradition either, as it was discussed earlier how the early church fathers adopted Platonic and Aristotelian conclusions of women’s deformity. Despite his argument against EFS largely depending on its rejection of the Nicene Creed, Giles admits that “radical interpretations of the Bible are common in Christian history. Tradition sometimes has to be rejected. Often this happens when a scientific or social revolution forces Christians to rethink their

understanding of what the scriptures teach.”⁶⁴ History provides countless examples, ranging from slavery to the divine right of kings to literal interpretations of the Creation story.⁶⁵ The Women’s Movement represents a drastic social change in the twentieth century, a change that demanded new interpretations of the Bible and forced theologians to reconsider tradition. Only theologians have been divided on which parts of tradition to question. One sect chose to question Trinitarian ideas, and the other sect chose to question the subordination of women in marriage and church leadership.

This is arguably the gunpowder for the now explosive reintroduction of Arianism in Evangelical circles, with the Women’s Movement acting as the trigger. If not the subordination of women, or even the reintroduction of Arianism, it can be argued that the orthodox-void climate of American Evangelicalism would have succumbed to quasi-heretical ideas sooner or later. And yet, when one considers the timing of this shift, it is difficult to imagine it happening any other way; the fact Arian ideas were rediscovered a few generations after the birth of the generic Evangelical sect American Christianity, coupled with the pressure of finding a stronger theological excuse to subordinate women in a time of social upheaval, weave together to produce the perfect conditions for this shift in the Christian religion. With modern Evangelicalism’s deemphasis on tradition, and such a drastic cultural shift demanding Biblical reinterpretation, not even Trinitarian doctrine is off the table.

While mainstream acceptance of traditional Arian heresy was contained to the time of the early church, aspects of Arianism reoccur throughout Christian history, and the latest occurrence during the 1970s has been embedded in some influential Evangelical works today. Arianism’s modern

reintroduction set into motion a series of effects that is still unknown in their potential impact. The shift initiated by Knight unwittingly reintroduced Arianism in a new form, and while many theologians argue against it, the debate's outcome seems as unpredictable and crucial to the future of the

religion as it was in the Council of Nicaea. Only time will tell when, how, and to what extent this shift will change Christianity, either reaffirming or revising the conclusions of the established orthodoxy surrounding the Trinity.

Notes

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- ⁴ Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 247.
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- ⁸ Mark Allan Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 53.
- ⁹ Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 101.
- ¹⁰ Henry Melvill Gwatkin, *The Arian Controversy* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914), 7.
- ¹¹ Wackernagel, "Two Thousand Years of Heresy," 138.
- ¹² Smith, *The World's Religions*, 341.
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- ¹⁴ Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 133-157.
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- ¹⁷ Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries*, 54.
- ¹⁸ Wiles, 55-56.
- ¹⁹ Wiles, 57.
- ²⁰ Wiles, 67.
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- ⁴⁰ Giles, 325-26.
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- ⁴⁴ Kobes Du Mez, 168.
- ⁴⁵ Bruce A. Ware, “Tampering With the Trinity: Does the Son Submit to His Father?,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 6, no. 1 (June 2001): 4-12, 11 (emphasis added). The term *God-like* must not be mistaken for the term *godly*; by using the term God-like, Ware is not saying wives’ submission is pious or holy, he is implying that the submission of wives to husbands is reminiscent of God’s character and behavior within the Trinity.
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