

# The First Council of Nicaea

Written by W.J.Pais

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First Ecumenical Council of the [Catholic Church](#), held in 325 on the occasion of the heresy of Arius ([Arianism](#)). As early as 320 or 321 [St. Alexander](#), [Bishop](#) of [Alexandria](#), convoked a council at [Alexandria](#) at which more than one hundred [bishops](#) from [Egypt](#) and Libya [anathematized](#) Arius. The latter continued to officiate in his church and to recruit followers. Being finally driven out, he went to Palestine and from there to Nicomedia. During this time St. Alexander published his ["Epistola encyclica"](#), to which Arius replied; but henceforth it was evident that the quarrel had gone beyond the possibility of [human](#) control. [Sozomen](#) even speaks of a Council of Bithynia which addressed an [encyclical](#) to all the [bishops](#) asking them to receive the [Arians](#) into the communion of the [Church](#). This discord, and the [war](#) which soon broke out between Constantine and Licinius, added to the disorder and partly explains the progress of the religious conflict during the years 322-3. Finally Constantine, having conquered Licinius and become sole emperor, concerned himself with the re-establishment of religious peace as well as of civil order. He addressed letters to St. Alexander and to Arius deprecating these heated controversies regarding questions of no practical importance, and advising the adversaries to agree without delay. It was evident that the emperor did not then grasp the significance of the [Arian](#) controversy.

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[Hosius of Cordova](#)

, his counsellor in religious matters, bore the imperial letter to

[Alexandria](#)

, but failed in his conciliatory mission. Seeing this, the emperor, perhaps advised by

[Hosius](#)

, judged no remedy more apt to restore peace in the

[Church](#)

than the convocation of an

[ecumenical council](#)

.

St. Athanasius, may be attributed a preponderant influence in the formulation of the symbol of the First Ecumenical Council, of which the following is a literal translation:

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](#)

[

*ek tes ousias*

] of the Father,

[God](#)

of

[God](#)

, light of light,

[true God](#)

of

[true God](#)

, begotten not made, of the same substance with the Father [

[homoousion](#)

*to patri*

], through whom all things were made both in

[heaven](#)

and on earth; who for us men and our

[salvation](#)

descended, was incarnate, and was made man, suffered and rose again the third day,

[ascended into heaven](#)

and cometh to judge the living and the dead. And in the

[Holy Ghost](#)

. 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 (

*ex ouk onton*

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); or who maintain that He is of another  
[hypostasis](#)  
or another substance [than the Father], or that the  
[Son of God](#)  
is  
[created](#)  
, or mutable, or subject to change, [them] the  
[Catholic](#)  
[Church](#)  
[anathematizes](#)

There has long existed a dispute as to the number of the canons of First Nicaea. All the collections of canons, whether in Latin or Greek, composed in the fourth and fifth centuries agree in attributing to this Council only the twenty canons, which we possess today. Of these the following is a brief résumé:

- Canon 1: On the admission, or support, or expulsion of [clerics](#) mutilated by choice or by [violence](#).
- Canon 2: Rules to be observed for [ordination](#), the avoidance of undue haste, the [deposition](#) of those guilty of a grave fault.
- Canon 3: All members of the [clergy](#) are forbidden to dwell with any [woman](#), except a mother, sister, or aunt.
- Canon 4: Concerning episcopal [elections](#).
- Canon 5: Concerning the [excommunicate](#).
- Canon 6: Concerning [patriarchs](#) and their [jurisdiction](#).
- Canon 7: confirms the [right](#) of the [bishops](#) of [Jerusalem](#) to enjoy certain [honours](#).
- Canon 8: concerns the [Novatians](#).
- Canon 9: Certain [sins](#) known after [ordination](#) involve invalidation.
- Canon 10: [Lapsi](#) who have been [ordained](#) knowingly or surreptitiously must be excluded as soon as their [irregularity](#) is known.
- Canon 11: [Penance](#) to be imposed on [apostates](#) of the [persecution](#) of Licinius.
- Canon 12: Penance to be imposed on those who upheld Licinius in his [war](#) on the [Christians](#).
- Canon 13: [Indulgence](#) to be granted to [excommunicated persons](#) in danger of death.
- Canon 14: Penance to be imposed on [catechumens](#) who had weakened under [persecution](#).
- Canon 15: Bishops, [priests](#), and [deacons](#) are not to pass from one church to another.
- Canon 16: All [clerics](#) are forbidden to leave their church. Formal prohibition for [bishops](#) to ordain for their [diocese](#)

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- a  
[cleric](#)  
belonging to another diocese.
- Canon 17: Clerics are forbidden to lend at interest.
  - Canon 18: recalls to [deacons](#) their subordinate position with regard to [priests](#).
  - Canon 19: Rules to be observed with regard to adherents of [Paul of Samosata](#) who wished to return to the [Church](#).
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- Canon 20: On [Sundays](#) and during the Paschal season [prayers](#) should be said standing.

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**Faith based on devotional attachment to rituals and customs, can easily flounder in a moment of tension, and to preserve the gift God has given us, we should take the trouble to know more, and base our belief on a reasoned foundation. ☐ So often, people who fall away from their Faith is due to ignorance, and they tend to throw the baby with the bath. They feel that if they acknowledge Jesus as their Lord, they will be saved.☐ Indeed, He may be so merciful, the will cover up our ignorance with his mercy. ☐ But will the enemies of the faith be convinced, if our faith is based on ritualistic practice of our faith? ☐☐ This is why, by looking back at those who came before us, we can gain the strength to believe that we are on a strong wicket.**