

# FOUNDATIONS

HISTORY, HERITAGE, DOCTRINE





# Week 6

## Monasticism, Council and Creed

### Foundations

**After Constantine brought peace to Christianity, many people saw it as a snare of Satan. People became too comfortable or began to strive for power in the church. How could one live in this tension?**

# The answer for many: The monastic life

- Flee from human society
- Leave everything behind
- Dominate the body and its passions
- Defeat temptation

- **Monks lived all over the Roman Empire but the desert is where monasticism really grew, particularly the Egyptian Desert.**
- **The desert was attractive because of its inaccessibility**
- **Not sure who the first monk (or nun) was but two names usually appear.: Paul and Anthony**

# Paul

- **Written about by Jerome**
- **Young man who fled to the desert**
- **Found a abandoned hideout for counterfeiters**
- **Lived the rest of his life there, spending time in prayer and eating almost exclusively dates**
- **Visited only by desert animals and the elderly monk, Anthony**

# Anthony

- Written about by Athanasius
- Born in small village near the Nile, wealthy parents
- Coptic Christian (descendant of ancient Egyptians)
- While young received inheritance and planned on living off of that until he read the story of the rich young ruler

# Anthony

- He got rid of his property and gave proceeds to the poor and a portion to the care of his sister
- Matthew 6:34 led him to get rid of the rest of the reserve and place her under the care of the virgins of the church and he moved to the desert
- Would fast for several days at a time
- Moved to a tomb in an abandoned cemetery and lived out his days there

- 
- **Both were in the desert before Constantine**
  - **When he came into power, their lifestyle became increasingly popular**
  - **It was an extremely simple life.**
  - **Pachomius brought about communal monasticism**

***What is debated between the Donatists and us is, where is to be found this body of Christ which is the church? Are we to seek the answer in our own words, or in those of the Head of the body our Lord Jesus Christ?***

***Augustine of Hippo***

# Donatism:

- Believed the church at large had been corrupted
- Church divided over the question of the lapsed and how to restore them
- Those who had yielded their faith during persecution and wanted to be restored.
- Named Derived from Donatus of Case Nigrae, elected bishop of Carthage (*there were actually 2 bishops of Carthage and they were rivals*)
- North Africa

# Donatism:

- Bishops in Rome felt that Caecelian was the true bishop of Carthage.
- The schism had theological, political, and economic roots.
- The Donatists believed that one of the three bishops who had consecrated Caecilian was a *traditor* (delivered scriptures to the authorities during persecution)

# Donatism:

- They believed he wasn't really a bishop and all that were ordained were false ministers therefore invalidating their sacraments
- They also believed that those whose consecration was in doubt, had sinned by joining in communion with Caecilian and his party.
- The Donatists believed that if someone from the Caecilian party want to join theirs, there had to be a new baptism but it wasn't the other way around

# Donatism:

- Two different conceptions of the church
- Donatists believe that the church had to be pure and holy; personal holiness is what gave the authority to a priest or bishop
- Opponents believed in the parable of wheat and tares and they were not to judge who is worthy and who isn't. That is God's job. Authority of priest and bishop came from the office they held

# Donatism:

- Group of Donatists called *circumcellions*
- Resorted to violence
- Convinced there was no death more glorious than martyrdom
- Their quest for martyrdom actually led to mass suicide by jumping off cliffs.
- Radical party that forced Roman authorities to use force and persecution
- Finally disappeared with the Muslim conquest in the late seventh century

# Donatism:

- Their theology ultimately led to Augustine, among others, developing their doctrine of the church, view on validity of sacraments, and the Just War Theory

And [we believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father as the only-begotten, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.

## Creed of Nicea

# Arian Controversy

- Local conflict between a bishop and priest, but ultimately Constantine felt intervention was necessary
- What do Christians think about the nature of God?
- Pagan philosophers had taught that there was a Supreme being above the cosmos.
- To gain respect, christians argued that they believed in the same supreme being and this was what they meant when they spoke of God

# Arian Controversy

- This led them to speak of God not in the way the prophets or other biblical writers did, but the way Plato and Plotinus and others did.
- These philosophers said perfection was immutable, impassible, and fixed and many Christians began to see this was how the God of Scripture was.

# Arian Controversy

- ***Allegorical interpretation*** — something “unworthy” of God — not worthy of the perfection of the supreme being of the philosophers — such words are not to be taken literally
- **example** — God spoke or walked, an immutable being does not really walk or speak
- **Christians believed in a personal relationship with God and the supreme being of the philosophers was in no way personal**

# Arian Controversy

- *Doctrine of the Logos* — developed by Justin, Clement, Origen and others.
- Although it is true that the supreme being — the “Father” — is immutable, impassible, and so on, there is also a Logos, Word, or Reason of God, and this is personal, capable of direct relationship with humans and the world.
- Justin says that when the Bible says that God spoke to Moses, it was actually the Logos of God speaking to him.

# Arian Controversy

- Conflict between Alexander (bishop of Alexandria) and Arius (prestigious and popular presbyter of the city)
- Main issue was whether the Logos, the Word of God, was coeternal with God.
- *Arian Motto*: “there was when He was not,”

# Arian Controversy

- Alexander held that the Word existed eternally with the Father
- Arius argued the opposite: the Word was not coeternal with the Father
- This comes down to the Divinity of the Word

# Arian Controversy

- Arius did not deny the existence of the Word before the incarnation
- What he did argue was that before anything else was made, the Word had been created by God.
- Alexander argued that the Word was divine, and therefore could not be created, but rather was coeternal with the Father

# Arian Controversy

- Arius argued that Alexander was proposing a denial of Christian monotheism—since there were two who were divine, there were two gods.
- Alexander said that Arius denied the divinity of the Word, therefore he denied the divinity of Jesus. This would force the church to either cease worshiping Jesus or declare that it was worshiping a creature. Alexander concluded that because both were unacceptable, Arius was proven wrong

# Arian Controversy

- **Alexander—(Athanasius argues this as well) Christ has achieved our salvation because in him God has entered human history and opened the way for our return to him.**
- **Arius—Jesus opened the way for salvation by his obedience to God, and such obedience would be meaningless if he himself was divine, and not a creature**

# Council of Nicea

- *Called by Constantine*
- **325 AD – First Ecumenical (Universal) Council**
- **Approximately 300 bishops present**
- **They discussed many legislative matters needing to be resolved.**
- **Approved standard procedures for the readmission of the lapsed and for the election and ordination of presbyters and bishops, established the order of precedence of various episcopal sees (jurisdiction).**
- **Also ruled, that bishops, presbyters, and deacons could not move from one city to another.**

# Council of Nicea

- ***Most difficult Issue: The Arian controversy***
- **Arius: Eusebius of Nicomedia sat on the council for Arius since Arius was not a bishop.**
- **Alexander: Sat on council himself but one of his followers was Athanasius (a deacon) who would become the champion of Nicene orthodoxy**
- **Western Bishops weren't real concerned with this controversy because it was a controversy among the east who were followers of Origen. The western Bishops felt it sufficient to follow Tertullian and declare in God there were "3 persons and one substance."**

# Council of Nicea

- *Third group held that the Father and the Son are the same therefore the Father suffered the passion. They agreed that Arianism is wrong but they were also declared wrong later in the clarification of Trinitarian doctrine—Patripassianism*
- Majority of those present did not fall into any camp, they were just upset that now that persecution had ended and momentum was building there was something threatening to divide the church

# Council of Nicea

- Eusebius of Nicomedia espoused his views (Arius') and got a reaction he wasn't expecting. The bishops got angry and shouted "Blasphemy!" "You lie!" "Heresy!"
- He was shouted down and the pages of his written speech were snatched, torn to shreds, and trampled underfoot.
- The mood changed from "let's get it over with through compromise and move on," to "we have to reject this."

# Council of Nicea

- They tried to reject it clearly staying only in scripture but found that limiting in this way would make it difficult to expression its rejection in unmistakable terms.
- They decided they needed a creed.
- They followed the Creed of Caesarea which additions that clearly rejected Arianism.

# Council of Nicea

- *homousios* — *of the same substance*
- Clearly rejected Arianism but left the door open for Patripassianism
- They agreed to the creed and very few refused to sign. If they did not, they were deemed heretical and deposed.
- Constantine banished the deposed bishops from their cities.
- This exile did not last.

# Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
begotten from the Father before all ages,  
God from God,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made;  
of the same essence as the Father.  
Through him all things were made.**

# Nicene Creed

**For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,  
and was made human.  
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered and was buried.  
The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again with glory  
to judge the living and the dead.  
His kingdom will never end.**

# Nicene Creed

**And we believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life.  
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.  
He spoke through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
and to life in the world to come. Amen.**