

Heroes:

Athanasius

- Born c. 293-295 in Alexandria. Died in 373.
- Protégé of Bishop Alexander of Alexandria during the Council of Nicaea in 325
- Became Bishop of Alexandria in 326 prior to Alexander's death in 328
- Allison, in his book The Cruelty of Heresy has written, "Athanasius himself was more of a pastor than a theologian. He did not begin with philosophical or theological concerns but with a passion for human souls."
- He wrote a pamphlet entitled "De Incarnatione" ("On the Incarnation") while in his twenties (before Arius), but it stands out as one of the best anti-Arian works
 - He spoke of the infinite and eternal love that each Person of the Trinity has for each other – especially that between the Father and the Son
 - He concentrated on how Scripture applies to man's salvation
 - Quotation – "God became man in order that we might become God" – not gods in our own petty and selfish fashion, but transformed into the image of the one true God through the work of His Holy Spirit
- He continually defended the faith against Arianism until his death
 - He wrote a polemic entitled "Orations Against the Arians"
 - He defended the deity of the Holy Spirit in "Letters to Serapion" and "On the Holy Spirit"
- He was the first Bishop of Alexandria to write in Coptic, an adaptation of Greek with seven additional symbols from the Demotic (late Egyptian) script
- He was exiled and as Bishop of Alexandria restored five times for his political standing "against the world". His epitaph reads "Athanasius contra mundum" (Athanasius against the world)

Heresies:

Arianism

- This heresy is named for its founder Arius (c. 256 – 336)
- Arius taught that God was not "one" god but was instead "three" gods
 - Arius wanted to preserve the unity of the Godhead of the Old Testament against all forms of polytheism, of which he felt the Trinity was one
 - Christ was the first created being, adopted by God the Father as Son, and then created the world
 - Christ is subordinate to the Father (a teaching he learned from Origen)
- Christ is an "intermediate" deity between God and man
 - He is neither fully human (Docetist) nor fully divine (Ebionist)
 - There was a time where Christ did not exist (he "was not")
 - Arius literally applied the symbolism of an earthly father and son to the relationship between God and Christ

Heroes of the Christian Faith
Lesson 8 – 9/20/2009

- Arius used Scripture passages to support his claims. Among them:
 - In Luke 18:19, Christ says to the rich young ruler, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”
 - In John 14:28, Christ says to His disciples, “... I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”
 - In Luke 22:42, Christ prays to God before his arrest, “... Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”
- Athanasius (and others) taught that these same passages express the infinite and eternal love that Christ has for the Father and His willingness to give all honor and respect to the Father
- At its peak, from 318 to 381, Arianism had captured almost half the church
- Arianism was first repudiated by the Council of Nicaea in 325
 - This was the first “Ecumenical” (general) Church Council, and it was called by Constantine to deal specifically with the problem of Arianism
 - Alexander was the leading opponent against Arius at the Council
 - The word “homo-ousios” was used to describe that God the Father, Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit were the “same substance”
 - These words were added as part of the Nicene creed
- Arianism did not die in 325, and it was the source of controversy for 50 years
 - The supporters of Arius used the word “homoi-ousios” (notice the “i”) which means “like substance”
 - It was condemned again in the Council of Constantinople in 381
- Arianism today lives on in all forms of secularist and modernist thought in which Christ is not considered as divine. In some respects, it goes beyond heresy and becomes apostasy. It therefore becomes more a matter for evangelism rather than for correction.

Audio CD: #2 – Athanasius

Discussion

- What is the difference between “**homo**-ousios” and “**homoi**-ousios”?
- What makes these terms so controversial?
- What is significant about the church “flipping” its choice between the two terms?
- What would we believe today if Arianism had not been defeated in Nicaea in 325 and later in Constantinople in 381?
- Could Arianism have ever won out over Trinitarianism?