

Outline for Lessons on Council of Nicea

- I. Theological Road to Nicea
 - A. What is Monarchianism?
(short def'n: God's monarchy means that the Son is unequal in glory)
 - B. Adoptionism
(short def'n: Jesus was fully man and was imbued with godliness at baptism)
 - 1. Paul of Samosata
 - 2. Scriptural refutation
 - 3. Modern application - Liberalism
 - C. Modalism
(short def'n: God is one person with 3 faces/masks)
 - 1. Sabellius
 - 2. The Patripassian problem
 - 3. Scriptural refutation
 - 4. Modern application - Analogizing the Trinity
- II. Political Road to Nicea
 - A. Increasing ties between Church and Emperor
 - 1. Aurelian (ca. AD 270)
 - 2. The Palmyrene controversy
 - B. The rise of Constantine (ca. 313)
 - 1. His life
 - 2. His faith
- III. Immediate causes - the rift in the Egyptian church
 - A. The contenders
 - 1. Arius
 - 2. Athanasius
 - B. Spread of Arianism
(short def'n: Jesus is God, but also a created being)
 - C. The Alexandrian crisis
- IV. The Council itself
 - A. The three ousian camps
(Different, like, or same substance between Son and Father)
 - B. Arians lose the debate
 - C. Precedents established at Nicea
 - 1. Trinitarian orthodoxy in church language
 - 2. Ecumenical councils
 - 3. Creeds and confessions
 - 4. Political oversight of the church
- V. Outcome
 - A. Which Nicene Creed?
 - B. Resolution to questions of Arianism
 - C. Historical and theological aftermath
 - D. How we understand the Trinity

Quotation #1:

"The Redeemer . . . is like all men in virtue of the identity of his human nature, but is distinguished from them all by the constant potency of His God-consciousness, which was a veritable existence of God in Him"

- Friedrich Schleiermacher

Quotation #2:

"If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows that he [the Son] had his substance from nothing."

- Arius

Quotation #3:

"If God be Maker and Creator, and create His works through the Son, and we cannot regard things which come to be, except as being through the Word, is it not blasphemous, God being Maker, to say, that His Framing Word and His Wisdom once was not? It is the same as saying, that God is not Maker"

- Athanasius, Discourse against the Arians

Quotation #4:

"The uncreated God has made the Son. A beginning of things created, and by adoption has God made the Son into an advancement of Himself. Yet the Son's substance is removed from the substance of the Father, The Son is not equal to the Father, nor does he share the same substance. God is the all-wise Father, and the Son is the teacher of all His mysteries. The members of the Holy Trinity share unequal glories."

- Arius

Quotation #5:

"[I]f the Word is not with the Father from everlasting, the Triad is not everlasting; but a Monad was first, and afterwards by addition it became a Triad; and so as time went on, it seems what we know concerning God grew and took shape... Such statements do not glorify and honour the Lord, but the reverse; for he who dishonours the Son, dishonours also the Father. For if the doctrine of God is now perfect in a Triad, and this is the true and only Religion, and this is the good and the truth, it must have been always so."

- Athanasius, Discourse against the Arians

Quotation #6:

"That Christians fight over an iota [Greek letter i] casts grave doubts on the credibility of the gospel of redeeming love" - Edward Gibbon

Quotation #7:

"The whole city is full of it, the squares, the market places, the cross-roads, the alleyways; old-clothes men, money changers, food sellers: they are all busy arguing. If you ask someone to give you change, he philosophizes about the Begotten and the Unbegotten; if you inquire about the price of bread, you are told 'the Father is greater and the Son inferior'; if you ask 'Is my bath ready?' the attendant answers that the Son was made out of nothing"

- Gregory of Nyssa

The Nicene Creed (AD 325 version):

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth;

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.

Ulphilas' Creed (Gothic Arian Creed):

I believe that there is only one God the Father, alone unbegotten and invisible,

And in His only-begotten Son, our Lord and God, creator and maker of all things, not having any like unto Him. Therefore there is one God of all, who is also God of our God,

And I believe in one Holy Spirit, an enlightening and sanctifying power. As Christ says after the resurrection to his Apostles: "Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49) And again: "And ye shall receive power coming upon you by the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1:8) Neither God nor Lord, but the faithful minister of Christ; not equal, but subject and obedient in all things to the Son. And I believe the Son to be subject and obedient in all things to God the Father.