

Credo

Lesson 3, for Sunday September 23, 2001

The Development of the Nicene Creed

The Controversies of The Empire

A. Precedent: The Donatists

Question: Who is worthy to be bishop of Carthage?

Real Question: Who gets the money from the empire?

The Bishop: Cæcilian

The Counter-Bishop: Majorinius

Majorinius' successor: Donatus, The Great

1st Rome Synod of 313

Donatists appeal to the emperor

2nd Rome Synod of 313

Donatists appeal to the emperor

Arles Synod of 314

Donatist contentions condemned

Ordination by heretics recognized

Baptism by heretics recognized

Roman date of Easter approved

Donatists appeal to emperor

Emperor decided against Donatists in 316

Donatists refuse to yield

Emperor closed Donatists churches and banished their bishops

Donatists grow rapidly as “the only church with clergy free from deadly sins.”

Donatists wiped out by Muslim invasion 350 years later

B. First Major Controversy of Belief: Arianism

Question: Who is the Christ?

In the West, this question was settled by Tertullian and Novatian

The East was interested in speculative theology thus open to this

Arius was a “Monarchian” and taught that:

God the Father is above all

Christ was the first born of creation, thus had a beginning

Christ was neither fully God nor fully man

Emperor Constantine calls first Council at Nicæa

Approximately 300 bishops attend, only six from the West

Older Cæsarian creed amended to specifically address the issues

Added phrases:

Begotten, not made

Of one essence with the Father

All but two bishops signed the resulting document

The two non-signers and Arius are banished

Empire politics and the presence of Constantine assured unity

C. Empire Politics

Great opposition arose to this formula immediately in the East

The great defender of the Nicene creed was Athanasius

Banished five times by successive emperors

D. The Christological Controversies

Question: What was the relationship of the human and divine in Christ?

There was no formal definition to fall back on

The Council of Nicæa had not fully addressed this

The West was united in belief, just as at Nicæa

The East had many opinions and controversies in this area

Apollonarius: Jesus' body and soul human, spirit divine

Nestorius: Jesus as indwelling of perfect man by God

Cyril of Alexandria: Jesus as made wholly God, “divinified”

Eutyches: Jesus had two natures, human and divine

Council of Ephesus in 431 (Third Ecumenical Council)

Rejected Nestorianism, Apollonarianism

Council of Ephesus in 449 (Council of Robbers) OK'ed Eutyches

Council of Chalcedon in 451 (Fourth Ecumenical Council)

600 bishops attended, all but about 10 from eastern church

Eutychanism rejected

New creed established – our Nicene Creed

Leo's “Tome” is the basis of decision

Established power of Rome