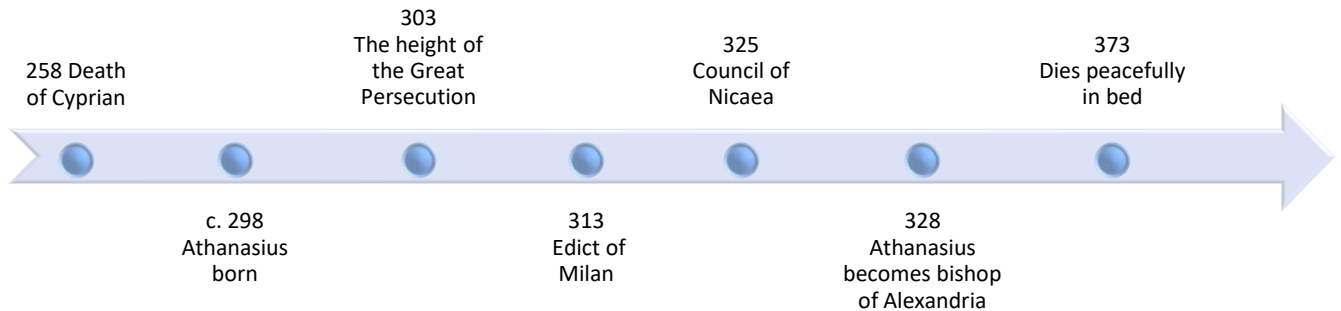


# Athanasius

## *Defending the Faith*

### Life and Times of Athanasius



- Born and raised in the capital of Roman Egypt, Alexandria.
- Became a passionate advocate for the doctrine of the Trinity during the Arian controversy.
- A fiery character with a sharp intellect, who became Bishop of Alexandria in 328.

### Early Trinitarian Theology

*What passages of the Bible can you think of that speak of Jesus in some way as God? What problem do they create?*

Deuteronomy 6.4: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.' (ESV)

Adoptionism vs. Modalism

### Arian Controversy

- Arius: presbyter in Alexandria, born c. 250.
- Taught that Jesus was not God, but the foremost of God's creatures.
- Created memorable jingles: e.g. 'There once when the Son was not'.
- If God is unoriginate (i.e. doesn't have an origin, a creator), then the Son cannot be God because his origin is by definition in the Father.

*What was so wrong with Arius' theology? Why?*

## Athanasius and Orthodoxy

On Jesus as God's revelation:

Men had turned from the contemplation of God above, and were looking for him in the opposite direction, down among created things and things of sense. The Saviour of us all, the Word of God, in his great love took to himself a body and moved as Man among men, meeting their senses, so to speak, half way. He became Himself an object for the senses, so that those who were seeking God in sensible things might apprehend the Father through the works which he, the Word of God, did in the body. (*On the Incarnation* §15, translated by 'A Religious of C.S.M.V.')

On the worship of Jesus:

Creature does not worship creature, but servant Lord, and creature God. Thus Peter the Apostle hinders Cornelius who would worship him, saying, 'I myself also am a man (Acts 10:26).' And an Angel, when John would worship him in the Apocalypse, hinders him, saying, 'See thou do it not; for I am your fellow-servant, and of your brethren the Prophets, and of them that keep the sayings of this book: worship God (Revelation 22:9).' Therefore to God alone appertains worship...' [Passages of Scripture where Jesus is worshipped follow] 'But he had not been thus worshipped, nor been thus spoken of, were He a creature merely. But now since He is not a creature, but the proper offspring of the Essence of that God who is worshipped, and His Son by nature, therefore He is worshipped and is believed to be God. (*Against the Arians* 2.23, 24, translated by John Henry Newman and Archibald Robertson)

On Jesus' role in salvation:

How could this [the renewing of God's image in mankind] be done save by the coming of the very Image himself, our Saviour Jesus Christ? Men could not have done it, for they are only made after the Image; nor could angels have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father, who could recreate man made after the Image. (*On the Incarnation* §13)

On calling God 'Father':

Therefore it is more pious and more accurate to signify God from the Son and call Him Father, than to name Him from His works only and call Him Unoriginate. For the latter title, as I have said, does nothing more than signify all the works, individually and collectively, which have come to be at the will of God through the Word; but the title Father has its significance and its bearing only from the Son. ... For He, knowing Himself whose Son He was, said, 'I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me;' and, 'He that has seen Me, has seen the Father' and 'I and the Father are One.' but nowhere is He found to call the Father Unoriginate. Moreover, when He teaches us to pray, He says not, 'When you pray, say, O God Unoriginate,' but rather, 'When you pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven' (Luke 11:2). (*Against the Arians* 1.34)

## Nicene Creed

(See separate sheet): What parts of the Nicene Creed have been influenced by the Arian controversy? What do you understand those parts to be meaning?