

## I. The Context of Athanasius

### 1. Persecution

1. Born in 297 during reign of Diocletian
2. Persecution in 303 – Peter of Alexandria and Meletus imprisoned

### 2. Alexandria

1. 2<sup>nd</sup> city after Rome – Center of philosophical and theological inquiry
2. Historical home of Great Library, Euclid, Philo, Clement, Origen

### 3. Early life

1. Education in grammar, logic, and rhetoric
2. Catechetical school
3. Assistant to Bishop Alexander
  1. Attended council of Nicea in 325
4. Succeeds Alexander as Bishop on May 9, 328

## II. The Teachings of Athanasius

### 1. Against the Gentiles

1. Apologetic against the Gentile unbelievers
2. Refutation of Heathen idol worship

### 2. On the Incarnation – 9 chapters – written to Gentile convert Macarius

#### 1. Creation and the Fall

1. Creation and Incarnation foolishness to Greeks (Platonism cre, Gnosticism inc)
2. Need to understand creation and fall of man for reason of incarnation
  1. Created in image of God by the Logos/Word
  2. Slaves to sin; involving in ourselves death and corruption

#### 2. The Divine Dilemma and its Solution in the Incarnation

1. Human race in process of destruction
2. Wouldn't make sense for God to make man in His image and utterly destroy, it would be bad story
3. God can't go back on his word about death
4. Savior needed to become man to defeat death and corruption and needed to be God to accomplish it

#### 3. “”-continued

1. Creature needed revelation to know creator; Jesus ultimate revelation of God
2. Renewing of Image of God in Christ
3. Lost state of man – idolatry, hero worship, ancestor worship, superstition
4. Paradox within incarnation – holding the world together as Logos, living life as man

#### 4. The Death of Christ

1. Real human body
2. Public death on the cross rather than private death by natural infirmity
3. Lays down life, not taken from him. Death to bring about resurrection

5. The Resurrection
  1. Three days –
    1. Not shorter lest scoffers claim he didn't really die: must prove incorruption
    2. Not longer lest people forget
  2. Followers of Christ despise and mock death
  3. If Jesus is not resurrected, how is it that his followers repent? Adulterers cease from adultery, thieves from avarice, etc.
  4. Death overthrown, humiliated, spoiled
6. Refutation of the Jews
  1. Folly and unbelief refuted by Scripture
    1. Messianic prophecies - “Indeed all scripture teems with disproof of Jewish unbelief” 64
    2. King with trophies before he can call his father and mother
    3. Healing of a man born blind, never a miracle of that magnitude
  2. Refutation of Jewish “futurism”
    1. Daniel's 70 weeks show time of Messiah's coming
    2. Ceasing of prophecy and vision in Israel
7. Refutation of the Gentiles
  1. Echo of Acts 17
    1. Ridiculing what they do not know
    2. In Him we live and move and have our being
  2. Defense of the Incarnation – refutation of special pleading
    1. Creation of the whole not inconsistent with special, particular Incarnation
    2. Incarnation does not degrade the Deity of God
    3. Jesus came to save sinners, therefore incarnate as man and not manifested in sun, moon, or stars
8. “”-continued
  1. Satan shall deceive the nations no more
    1. Idols overthrown
    2. Oracles ceased
    3. Wisdom of Greeks made foolish
    4. Magic and witchcraft confounded
    5. Repentance of sinners, chastity
  2. Uniqueness and kingship of Christ
9. Conclusion
  1. Jesus will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead
  2. Encourages Macarius to search and rightly understand the scriptures
3. Trinity
  1. Divinity of the Son
    1. Defended and advanced at Nicea in 325

2. God-man
3. The Post-Nicene Christological Controversies were intramural within Athanasian view of Christ being fully God and fully man; question about how.
2. Divinity and personality of the Spirit
  1. Later in life (361)
  2. Doctrine essentially reached its current form by end of 4<sup>th</sup> century with Cappadocian Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus)

### III. The Trials of Athanasius

1. Arian Controversy
  1. 319 Arius comes in conflict with Alexander
  2. The wisdom of Origen vs. the folly of Origen
  3. Orthodoxy prevails at council of Nicea
  4. Arianism prevails at court of Constantine
    1. Influence of the Eusebii of Caesarea (historian) and Nicomedia (Constantine's court)
    2. Augustus of East tends Arian, west tends Orthodox
2. Meletians
  1. Like Novatian after Decian persecution, refused repentant “lapsed” Christians communion after Diocletian persecution
  2. Schismatic: refused to abide by Council of Nicea
3. Empire
  1. Exiles
    1. 336 exiled to Trier in Rhineland (refusing Arius communion, accusation of threatening to interfere with grain supply from Egypt) under Constantine
    2. 356 Constantius attempts to arrest him and he hides in the desert
    3. 362 Julian the Apostate
    4. 365 Valens short exile
  2. Dies peacefully May 2, 373

### IV. The Legacy of Athanasius

1. Cementing of the Canon
2. Revered by just about all branches of existing Christianity
3. Possibly the most influential and important non-inspired figure in the history of Christianity. We owe him a huge debt of gratitude.