



SESSION 12: AMBROSE THROUGH AUGUSTINE – CONTENT

1. When Archbishop Auxentius of Milan died a pro/anti-Arian controversy developed in that church. To quell this uprising Ambrose, the governor of Milan, went to the church. During the heated gathering someone spoke, “Ambrose. Bishop.” He was immediately acclaimed bishop and hid with friends. When Gratian, Emperor of the West, affirmed the church’s action, Ambrose’s friends gave him up to the congregation and he was baptized, ordained and consecrated bishop within a week in 373. He immediately gave up his possessions and became an ascetic. With difficulty he removed Arianism from the church, and wrote much, including On The Duties of Ministers. He baptized Augustine, and demanded penance of Emperor Theodosius for a massacre of 7,000 in Thessalonica. He was a fervent Mariologist, and is credited with creating antiphonal chanting. He, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great became known as the “four doctors of the Latin Church”.
2. From Northern Italy, Jerome translated the Bible into Latin (i.e. the Vulgate). He also translated Pachomius’ Rule into Latin, which later became the foundation for Benedict’s Rule. He established a monastery in Bethlehem and died there.
3. Apollinarius of Laodicea began an heresy by saying that Christ had no human spirit, that the Logos had replaced it, and that He had no human mind. It was an over-reaction to Arianism, that was condemned at the Synod of Alexandria in 362 and declared an heresy by the Council of Constantinople in 381.
4. Macedonius, a semi-Arian bishop of Constantinople, began an heresy by saying that the Holy Spirit is a created being, created by the Son and thus subordinate to the Father and Son. The Council of Constantinople (381) condemned this heresy and expanded the Nicene Creed to affirm belief in the third person of the Trinity.
5. In 378, at Adrianople, Emperor Valens lost his life and his army to a Germanic invasion, beginning a period of 2 centuries of Germanic tribes conquering the Western Empire.
6. Around 380 Pelagius began an heresy by saying: 1) man is born essentially good and capable of doing what is necessary for salvation (i.e. capable of a sinless life), 2) original sin did not taint human nature, 3) mortals are capable of choosing good or evil without divine aid, and 4) Jesus set the good example for humanity. Jerome and Augustine preached against this heresy, and it was condemned at the Councils of Carthage (418) and Ephesus (431). Today, Mormonism is a form of Pelagianism in that it does not believe in fallen man.
7. Theodosius was Emperor of the East from 379 to 395. In 380 he and Emperor Gratian of the West issued an edict that all peoples of the Empire must practice Christianity, confirming a single deity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This marked the final triumph over Arianism.

8. In 381 Theodosius called for a Council in Constantinople, the Second Ecumenical Council, to affirm the deity of the Holy Spirit. The West held some hostility to this council, as it passed a canon saying that the Bishop of Constantinople should have honor after the Bishop of Rome. The Western church's position was that honor depended on the Church's early relation to Peter. It should be noted that this meant honor among equals (i.e. the Patriarchs), not supremacy. The discussion of Trinitarian doctrine at this council led to a focus on Christology (i.e. the nature of Christ), which ultimately prompted the Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451.
9. Augustine was a professor of rhetoric in Milan. In 383 he went to Rome to head a prestigious rhetorical school. He was a Manichaean catechumen but was drawn to Christianity in 386 by reading The Life of Saint Antony, and by listening to Ambrose. He was baptized in 387 by Ambrose and moved to North Africa, where he preached against the Arians, Donatists and Manichaeans. He said that God exists outside of time, which is present only in the created universe. He stressed the importance of infant baptism, and said that the pursuit of peace must include the option of fighting (i.e. war) to preserve it. He wrote The City of God, and developed the Doctrine of Original Sin to refute Pelagianism. This doctrine said that after the fall mankind is unable to not sin, that man is dead in sin. Salvation is totally by the grace of God, which is given only to the elect. Every man is born a slave to sin, and God must intervene. Grace is irresistible and given to those predestined to receive it before the earth began. This concept of predestination was revived in the Protestant Reformation by John Calvin.
10. A preliminary look at the Cappadocian Fathers: Two of the Cappadocian Fathers were brothers – Basil the Great and the younger Gregory of Nyssa. Their parents were Basil (a lawyer) and Emilia, who was the daughter of a Christian martyr. Basil (the father) had a brother Gregory, who became a bishop. Their mother was Macrina the Elder; she and her husband fled the Decian persecution and lived in exile for seven years. Macrina the Elder knew and was influenced by Gregory Thaumaturgos, and she had great influence on her grandchildren. Those grandchildren – the children of Emilia – were nine in total. Six of them are known: Naucratus, Macrina, Theosevia, Peter (of Sebaste), Gregory (of Nyssa) and Basil the Great. The last five became saints.

Basil the Great studied in Caesarea (Cappadocia's capitol), then Antioch, then Constantinople, and finally Athens, where he met fellow students Prince Julian (later Emperor Julian the Apostate), and Gregory of Nazianzus, who became the third Cappadocian Father.