Class 1 Summary – Arianism

A. What is Orthodoxy?

Ideas are considered orthodox in Christian tradition because they are thought by the Church to be correct teaching or doctrine.

\* This is totally different than the Orthodox Religion.

B. What is a Heresy?

Ideas become heresies in Christian tradition because they are thought by the Church to be wrong rather than right teaching or doctrine.

C. What is a Heretic?

A heretic is a baptized person who obstinately denies or doubts a truth which the Church teaches must be believed because it is part of the one, divinely revealed, and Catholic (that is to say universally valid) Christian faith.

What is Arianism?

Arianism is the heresy which denies the full divinity of Jesus Christ. It is named after Arius, who was born about 270 AD and died in 336 AD. He was a priest in charge of one of the major churches in Alexandria, Egypt and he appears to have believed that the Son of God was not eternal but was created before the ages by the Father as an instrument for the making of the world. Arius’s teaching was opposed chiefly by St. Athanasius, a deacon in Alexandria, and was eventually condemned by the First Ecumenical Council, held at Nicea, Greece in 325 AD.

The Son, Athanasius said, was *generated*, begotten by God from eternity, but he had no beginning. This generation was eternal and internal to God, whereas creation was in time and external to God. The Son was therefore *homoousios* (being of the same substance) and co-eternal with the Father, not simply *homoiousios* (being of similar substance to God) as some of the Arians claimed. The only difference between those two Greek words is the letter “iota”. But theologically, it is the difference between Christ being God and Christ being like God.

In the year 325 the Council of Nicea rejected Arianism and put the words into the Creed we say today: “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.” Sadly, this did not settle the issue. The Arian controversy continued until the language of the Nicene Creed became widely established in 381 AD by the time of the Council of Constantinople.