



THE ANÁSTASIS CENTER
FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & MINISTRY

Reconstruction

The Deep Roots of Early Christian Theology

Reconstruction: Objectives

- Deconstructing Christian faith is common
- Common outcomes: Collapse? Holes?
- Why construct at all?
- Early Christianity helps us discern a strong foundation

Reconstruction: Objectives

- Identify controversial issues commonly debated in Western Christianity
- Examine early Christian views on the issue
- Identify if, where, and why Christians shifted on the issue
- Recover a framework for approaching the issue in today's context



Reconstruction

The Deep Roots of Early Christian Theology

- 4/30 Slavery: How the Early Church Got It Right
- 5/7 Women in the Early Church
- 5/14 The Goodness of God and the Healing of Creation:
Ministry According to Athanasius of Alexandria
- 5/21 Does God Have a Dark Side? Hell in the Early Church
- 5/28 Scripture: How Authoritative Is It? Why Do We Need It?
- 6/4 Scripture: Is the Bible the Product of Empire? Violence?
- 6/11 Politics, the Church, and Jesus' Restorative Justice
- 6/18 Sexual Ethics and the New Creation
- 6/25 The Person, the Face, and the Climb Up the Mountain:
Gregory of Nyssa and the Shaping of Desire



THE ANÁSTASIS CENTER
FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & MINISTRY

The Good God and the Healing of Creation According to Athanasius of Alexandria

Mako A. Nagasawa

The Anástasis Center for Christian Education and Ministry

Outline

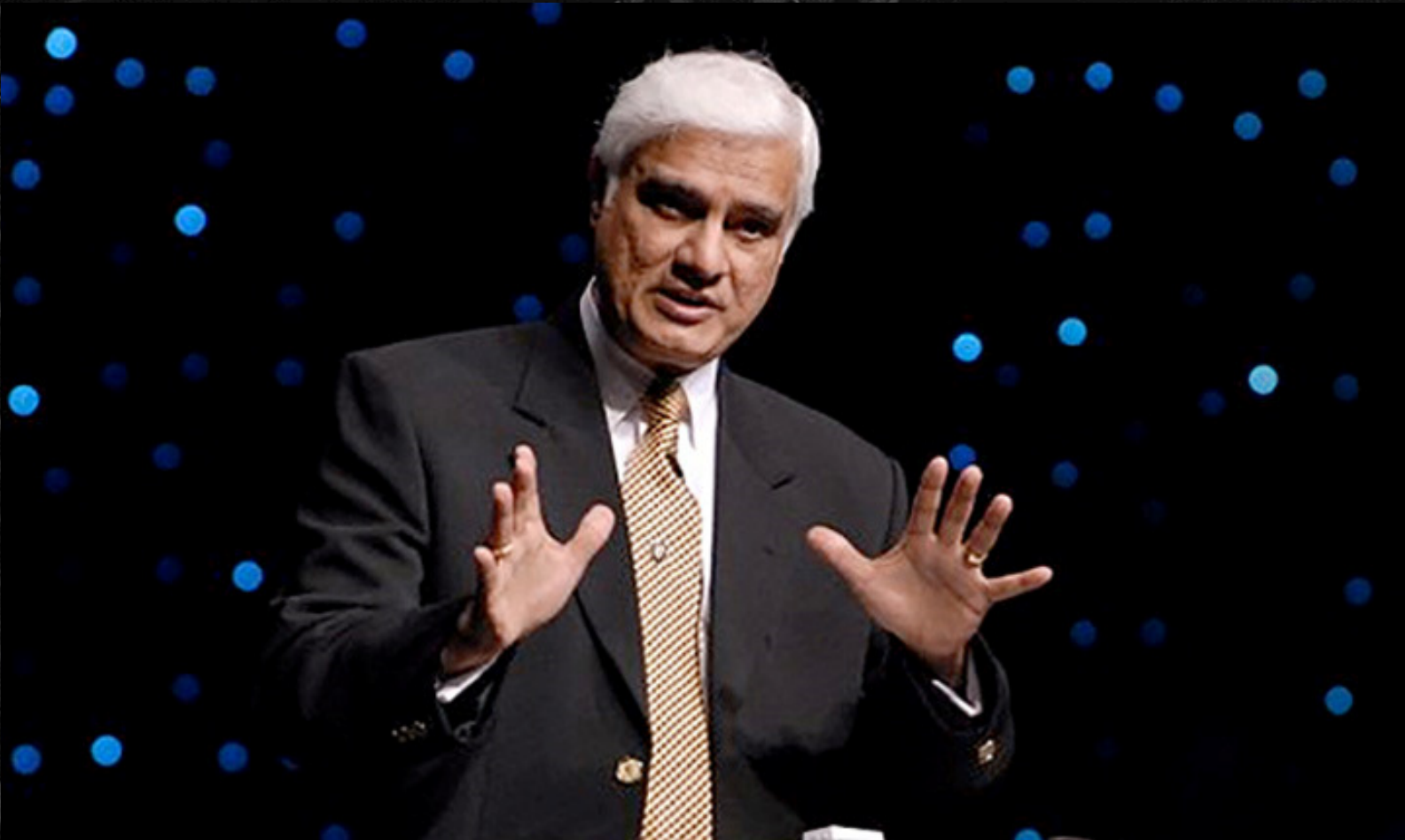
- Introduction: Why Read Athanasius
- Who Was Athanasius?
- Athanasius' Two Volume Work
- Theodicy and Theology
 - God's Character
 - Creation, Fall, and Human Corruption
 - Why Israel? Why Not Just Jump to Jesus?
 - Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature
 - God's Character and Human Destiny
- Athanasius as Evangelist

Outline

- **Introduction: Why Read Athanasius**
- Who Was Athanasius?
- Athanasius' Two Volume Work
- Theodicy and Theology
 - God's Character
 - Creation, Fall, and Human Corruption
 - Why Israel? Why Not Just Jump to Jesus?
 - Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature
 - God's Character and Human Destiny
- Athanasius as Evangelist

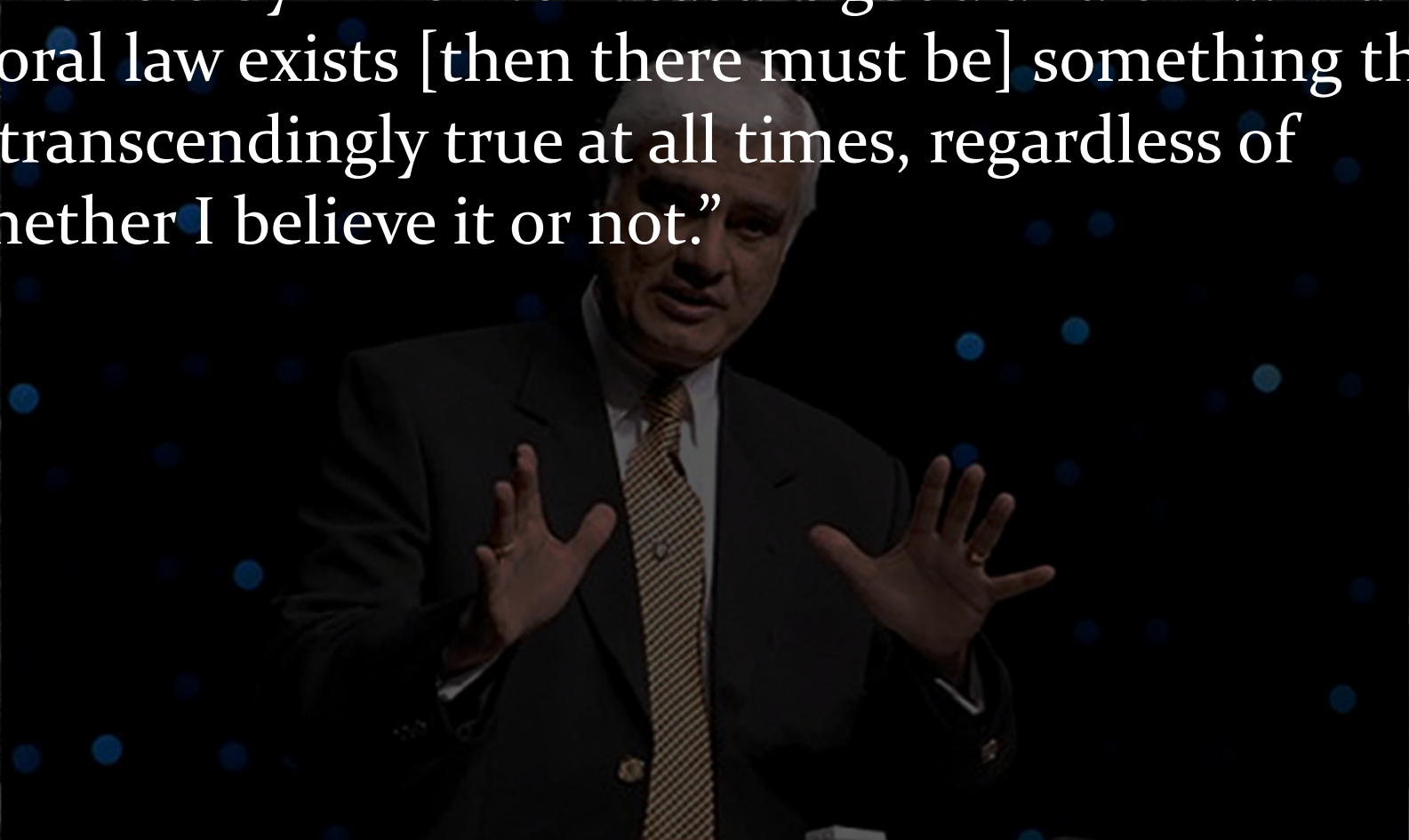
Introduction: Why Read Athanasius

- Ravi Zacharias, The Problem of Evil



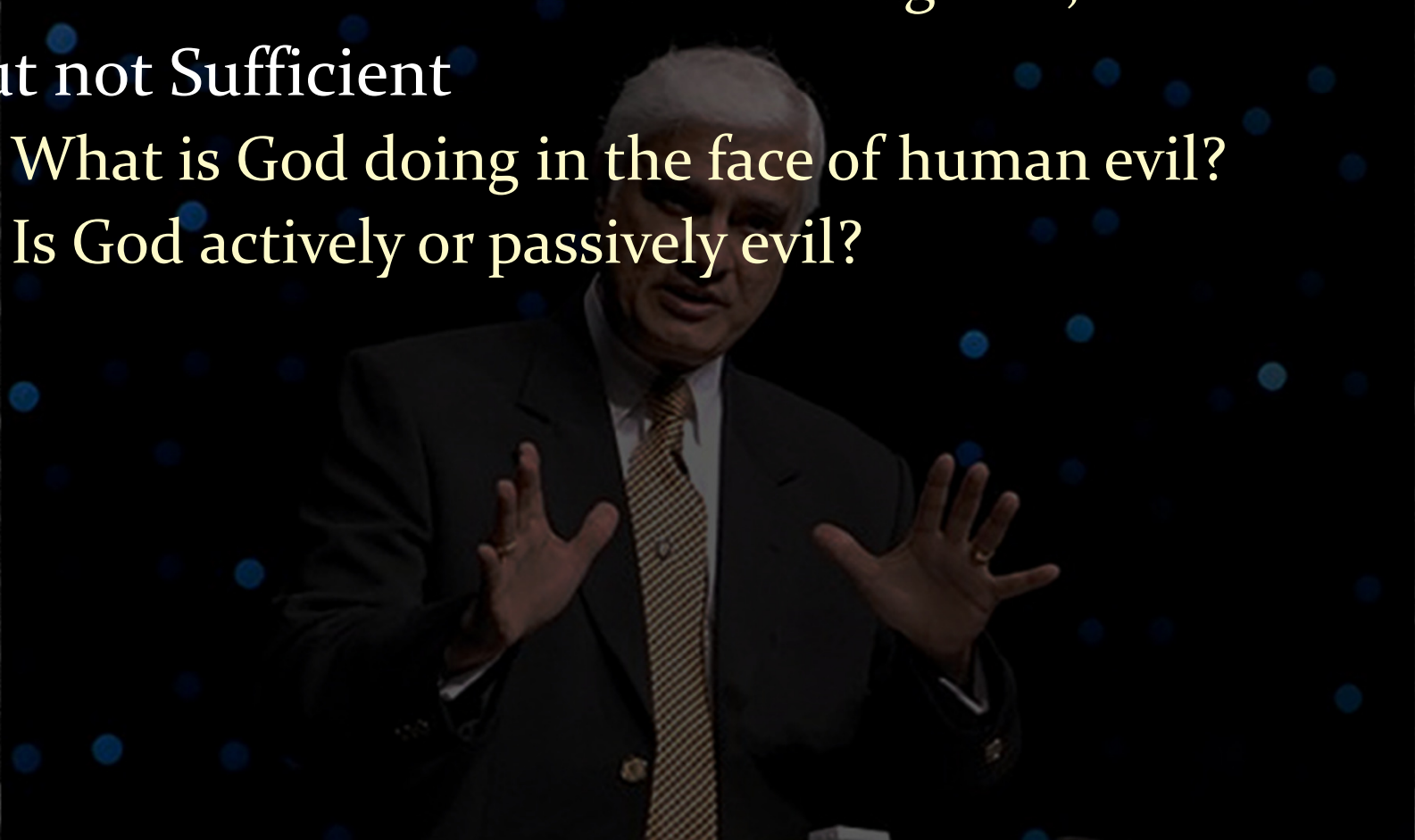
Introduction: Why Read Athanasius

- “If evil exists, then good exists... If good exists, a moral law exists by which to measure good and evil... If a moral law exists [then there must be] something that is transcendingly true at all times, regardless of whether I believe it or not.”



Introduction: Why Read Athanasius

- Necessary
 - Good and Evil are real moral categories, and distinct
- But not Sufficient
 - What is God doing in the face of human evil?
 - Is God actively or passively evil?



Athanasius & John Calvin



John Calvin and Calvinism

- ‘God created the universe so that the full range of His perfections – including wrath and power and judgment and justice – will be displayed. To do that, there is a dark backdrop of the history of redemption called the fall and sin. The acts of grace and the acts of mercy and the experience of salvation shine the more brightly against the backdrop of the fall and of sin.’
- John Piper, *How Does it Glorify God to Predestine People to Hell?*, March 21, 2013;
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/ask-pastor-john/how-does-it-glorify-god-to-predestine-people-to-hell>

John Calvin and Calvinism

- Calvin: God requires a hell, **because He has two faces**
 - ‘[Judgment] day is for the manifestation of the glory of **His mercy**, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of **His justice**, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient... the wicked who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.’
 - *Westminster Confession*, chapter 33, paragraph 2

John Calvin and Calvinism

God is arbitrary



John Calvin and Calvinism

- Calvin: The Fall was necessary, and from God
 - ‘God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; **but also at his own pleasure arranged it.**’
 - John Calvin, *Institutes* 3.23.7
 - ‘Nothing is more absurd than to think anything at all is done but by the ordination of God....Every action and motion of every creature is so governed by the hidden counsel of God, that nothing can come to pass, but what was ordained by Him....The wills of men are so **governed by the will of God**, that they are carried on straight to the mark which He has fore-ordained.’
 - John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.16.3

John Calvin and Calvinism

- Calvin: The Fall was necessary, and from God
 - ‘But if He did not will it, we could not do it. I admit this... I concede more – that thieves and murderers, and other evil-doers, are instruments of Divine Providence, being employed by the Lord himself to execute the Judgments which he has resolved to inflict. But I deny that this forms any excuse for their misdeeds.’
 - John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.17.5

John Calvin and Calvinism

- Calvin: Jesus saves some of us from God's punishment, allows/causes human evil in the rest:
 - 'The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, **has fully satisfied the [retributive] justice of His Father**; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, *for those whom the Father has given unto Him.*'
 - *Westminster Confession*, chapter 8, paragraph 5

John Calvin and Calvinism

- Calvin: Jesus saves some of us from God's punishment, allows/causes human evil in the rest:
 - 'The Reformed position is that Christ died for the purpose of actually and certainly saving **the elect**, and **the elect only**... they are the only ones whom God has determined to save... It should also be noted that the doctrine that Christ died for the purpose of saving all men, logically leads to absolute universalism, that is, to the doctrine that all men are actually saved.'
 - Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology, Part Three: The Person and Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Banner of Truth, 1949), 'The Offices of Christ,' 6.B.2

John Calvin and Calvinism

- Necessary
 - Good and Evil are real moral categories, and distinct
- But not Sufficient
 - What is God doing in the face of human evil?
 - Is God actively or passively evil?
- If people desire Goodness, they will *resist* a God who is evil or complicit with evil
- Protestant Reformers made early alliances with bankers and merchants, have wealth, and fund ministry, *limiting the effectiveness of evangelism*

Outline

- Introduction: Why Read Athanasius
- **Who Was Athanasius?**
- Athanasius' Two Volume Work
- Theodicy and Theology
 - God's Character
 - Creation, Fall, and Human Corruption
 - Why Israel? Why Not Just Jump to Jesus?
 - Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature
 - God's Character and Human Destiny
- Athanasius as Evangelist

Who Was Athanasius?

- Significance

- Present at the Council of Nicaea, 325
- Bishop of Alexandria, 328 – 373
- Leading Defender of the Nicene Creed
 - Doctrines of the Trinity and the full divinity of the Son, in *Discourses Against the Arians, On the Decrees, etc.*
 - Exiled 5 times by pro-Arian Emperors
 - “Fountainhead of Christian theology”
- Holy Spirit: *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*
- Humanity of Jesus: *Letter 59 to Epictetus*
- Sanctification, Monasticism: *Festal Letters, Letters to Virgins, Life of Antony*
- New Testament: *Letter 39* identifies 27 books

Who Was Athanasius?

- Renowned for His Leadership
 - “In praising Athanasius, I shall be praising virtue. To speak of him and to praise virtue are identical, because he had, or, to speak more truly, has embraced virtue in its entirety.” (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 21*)
 - Hilary of Poitiers was called “the Athanasius of the West”
 - The Latin West used “the Athanasian Creed”

Who Was Athanasius?

- Respected If Not Revered
 - Revered by the Cappadocians, Maximus the Confessor
 - Venerated by
 - Eastern Orthodox Church
 - Roman Catholic Church
 - Oriental Orthodox Churches (esp. Ethiopian)
 - Assyrian Church of the East
 - Anglican Communion
 - Lutherans
 - Retrieved by Karl Barth and T.F. Torrance
 - Retrieved by Thomas Weinandy and Pope Benedict XVI

Outline

- Introduction: Why Read Athanasius
- Who Was Athanasius?
- **Athanasius' Two Volume Work**
- Theodicy and Theology
 - God's Character
 - Creation, Fall, and Human Corruption
 - Why Israel? Why Not Just Jump to Jesus?
 - Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature
 - God's Character and Human Destiny
- Athanasius as Evangelist

Athanasius' Two Volume Work

- Main Themes

- *Against the Heathen*

- “they in their turn would have recognised this man as Saviour of the world, and that the Cross has been not a disaster, but a **healing of Creation**” (1.4)

- *On the Incarnation*

- “It is, then, proper for us to begin the treatment of this subject by speaking of the creation of the universe, and of God its Artificer, that so it may be duly perceived that the **renewal of Creation** has been the work of the self-same Word that made it at the beginning” (1.4)

Athanasius' Two Volume Work

- Timing
 - Georges Florovsky: 317 – 319 AD
 - *Patrology – Patristics: The First Eight Centuries AD*, edited by George Dion. Dragas, volume I, chapter 2; but without substantiation
 - James B. Ernest: 328 – 335 AD
 - *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, p.45 – 51 considers much historical data and estimates a date of 328 – 335 AD, specifically arguing against a date earlier than 318 AD because of Athanasius' apparent dependence on Eusebius

Athanasius' Two Volume Work

- Irenaeus of Lyons (130 – 202 AD)
 - *That God is Not the Author of Evil* (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.20.4 – 8)
- Athanasius of Alexandria (298 – 373 AD)
 - *Against the Heathen and On the Incarnation*
- Basil of Caesarea (329 – 379 AD)
 - *Homily 9: God Is Not the Author of Evil*
 - “It has been conjectured that it was delivered shortly after some such public calamity as the destruction of Nicæa in 368” (Philip Schaff, *Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol.2, Bk.8, p.74)
 - *Hexaemeron, Homily 2.4*

Athanasius' Two Volume Work

- “The truth of the Church’s theology must be manifest: that evil has not from the beginning been with God or in God, nor has any substantive existence; but that men, in default of the vision of good, began to devise and imagine for themselves what was not, after their own pleasure.” (*Against the Heathen* 7.3)

Athanasius, *Against the Heathen*

- Ch.1: Introduction
- Ch.2 – 5: Biblical account of creation and fall
- Ch.6: Refutation of the view that evil is a concrete thing
- Ch.7: Refutation of the dualistic view of a good god and an evil god
- Ch.8 – 29: Refutation of idol-worship
- Ch.30 – 47: The way back

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*

- Ch.1 – 3: God is good in creation
- Ch.4 – 10: God is good, despite the fall, because the incarnation of the Word heals humanity
- Ch.11 – 16: God is good, because the Word revealed the Father and restores the human mind
- Ch.17 – 32: Questions and answers on the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Word
- Ch.33 – 40: Refutation of the Jews
- Ch.41 – 54: Refutation of the Greeks
- Ch.55 – 57: Conclusion

Outline

- Introduction: Why Read Athanasius
- Who Was Athanasius?
- Athanasius' Two Volume Work
- **Theodicy and Theology**
 - God's Character
 - Creation, Fall, and Human Corruption
 - Why Israel? Why Not Just Jump to Jesus?
 - Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature
 - God's Character and Human Destiny
- Athanasius as Evangelist

Discussion Questions for Later

1. What have you heard in Christian circles about mortality, or “death”? Why do we die?
2. How can God be good and loving, and yet we still are mortal? How does Athanasius answer this question?
3. What have you heard about why God had an Israel?

God's Character

- Athanasius obligates himself to explain God's deeds as an expression of His goodness
 - 'For *their deeds must correspond to their natures*, so that at once the actor may be made known by his act, and the action may be ascertainable from his nature. So that just as a man discussing about water and fire, and declaring their action, would not say that water burned and fire cooled, nor, if a man were discoursing about the sun and the earth, would he say the earth gave light, while the sun was sown with herbs and fruits, but if he were to say so would exceed the utmost height of madness, so neither would their writers, and especially the most eminent poet of all, if they really knew that Zeus and the others were gods, invest them with such actions as show them to be not gods, but rather men, and not sober men.' (*Against the Heathen* 16.4)

God's Character

- 'God is **good** and exceeding noble' (*Against the Heathen* 2.2), '**For God, being good and loving to mankind, and caring for the souls made by Him**' (35.1), 'His Word...proceeds in His *goodness* from the Father as from a **good** Fountain' (41.1), 'But the God of all is **good** and exceeding noble by nature, and therefore is kind; for one that is **good** can grudge nothing: for which reason he does not even grudge existence, but desires all to exist, as objects for his loving-kindness' (41.2), 'Because He is **good** He guides and settles the whole Creation by His Word' (41.3), 'Seeing the power of the Word, we receive a knowledge also of a **good** Father' (45.2), 'Being the **good** Offspring of Him that is **good**, and true Son, He is the Father's Power and Wisdom and Word, not being so by participation, nor as if these qualities were imparted to Him from without... but He is the very Wisdom, very Word, and very own Power of the Father' (46.8).

God's Character

- ‘The **good** Father through Him orders all things’ (*On the Incarnation* 1.1), ‘what men deride as unseemly, this by His own **goodness** He clothes with seemliness’ (1.2), ‘He has yet of the loving-kindness and **goodness** of His own Father been manifested to us in a human body for our salvation’ (1.3), ‘For God is **good**, or rather is essentially the source of **goodness**: nor could one that is **good** be niggardly of anything’ (3.3), ‘for what is evil is not, but what is **good** is... [and] they derive their being from God who is’ (4.5), ‘**For it were not worthy of God's goodness that the things He had made should waste away... what was God in His goodness to do? ... For neglect reveals weakness, and not goodness on God's part... It was, then, out of the question to leave men to the current of corruption; because this would be unseemly, and unworthy of God's goodness**’ (6.5 – 10)

God's Character

- 'this great work was peculiarly suited to God's **goodness**... much more did God the Word of the all- **good** Father not neglect the race of men' (10.1), 'inasmuch as He is **good**, He did not leave them destitute of the knowledge of Himself' (11.1), 'being **good**, He gives them a share in His own Image' (11.3), 'God's **goodness** then and loving-kindness being so great' (12.6), 'since it were unworthy of the Divine **goodness** to overlook so grave a matter' (43.4), 'by His guidance and **goodness**' (43.7).

God's Character

- 'In general, God's *physis* [nature] is good and surpasses all excellence... It could be argued that *physis* agrees not only with *ousia*, but also with *act*.'
- George Dion. Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria: Original Research and New Perspectives*, p.29 emphasis mine

Creation: Original Blessing

- ‘He made all things out of nothing through His own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ and of all these His earthly creatures He reserved especially mercy for the race of men. Upon them... He bestowed a grace which other creatures lacked – namely the impress of His own image, a share in the reasonable being of the very Word Himself, so that, **reflecting Him and themselves becoming reasonable and expressing the Mind of God even as He does, though in limited degree they might continue for ever in the blessed and only true life of the saints in paradise.**’ (*On the Incarnation* 3.3)

Creation: Human Choice

- ‘But since the will of man could turn either way, God secured this grace that He had given by making it conditional from the first upon two things – namely, a law and a place. He set them in His own paradise, and laid upon them a single prohibition. **If they guarded the grace and retained the loveliness of their original innocence, then the life of paradise should be theirs, without sorrow, pain or care, and after it the assurance of immortality in heaven.** But if they went astray and became vile, throwing away their birthright in beauty, then they would come under the natural law of death and live no longer in paradise, but, dying outside of it, continue in death and in corruption’ (3.4)

Fall: Possible But Not Required

- Evil is possible because of the superabundance of Good. Human beings can ‘disorder’ good things (*Against the Heathen* 8.1 – 2).
- We produce a ‘disorder’ in our own souls: ‘corruption’
 - ‘All of which things [evils] are a vice and sin of the soul: neither is there any cause of them at all, but only the rejection of better things.’ (*Against the Heathen* 5.2)

Fall: Human Corruption

- The Fall was self-harm
 - ‘Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have well been enough; but when transgression had begun men came under the power of the corruption proper to their nature and were bereft of the grace which belonged to them as creatures in the image of God’ (*On the Incarnation* 7.4)

Fall: Why Death and Exile?

- How is God good by imposing death and exile from the garden?
 - ‘The Word perceived that **corruption** could not be got rid of otherwise than **through death...**’ (*On the Incarnation* 9.1)

Discussion

1. What have you heard in Christian circles about mortality, or “death”? Why do we die?
2. How can God be good and loving, and yet we still are mortal? How does Athanasius answer this question?
3. What have you heard about why God had an Israel?

Why Israel?

- God's Educational Partner
 - 'Man's neglect of the indwelling grace tends to ever increase; and against this further frailty also God made provision by giving them a law, and by sending prophets, men whom they knew. Thus... men can **learn directly** about higher things from other men... For the law was not given only for the Jews... The law and the prophets were **a sacred school** of the knowledge of God and the conduct of the spiritual life for the whole world' (*On the Incarnation* 12.2, 5)

Why Israel?

- God's Clinical Medical Focus Group
 - 'But once man was in existence, and things that were, not things that were not, **demanded to be healed**, it followed as a matter of course that the Healer and Savior should align Himself with those things that existed already, in order to heal the existing evil. For that reason, therefore, He was made man, and used the body as His human instrument.' (*On the Incarnation* 44.7)

Why Israel?

- God's Clinical Medical Focus Group
 - The human heart “demanded to be healed”: Gen.6:5 – 6; 8:21; Lev.26:41; Dt.10:16; 30:6; Ps.51:9 – 10; Pr.20:9; Jer.4:4; 9:25 – 26; 17:1 – 10; 31:31 – 34; Ezk.11:18; 36:26 – 36; Mt.15:18 – 20; Mk.7:21 – 23; Rom.2:28 – 29
 - God whittled away the possible excuses
 - Better circumstances?
 - Better laws?
 - Better king?
 - Remember Adam's blame-shifting (Gen.3)!

Why Israel?

- God's Clinical Medical Focus Group
 - Did Jesus take God's **anger**? Was God **angry** with Israel?
 - No: "...every transgression and disobedience [already] received a just penalty" (Hebrews 2:2)



~1300 BC:
Moses establishes the Sinai covenant

God told Israel to practice capital punishment on some things

586 BC:
Babylon takes the Jews into "exile"

Israel was not able to practice capital punishment, so those sins weren't even punished!

- Mortality: the inner meaning of "exile" *and* the death penalty; and was preventative, a step towards restoration

Why Israel?

- ‘Thus it was, too, that God formed man at the first, because of His munificence; but chose the patriarchs for the sake of their salvation; and prepared a people beforehand, teaching the headstrong to follow God; and raised up prophets upon earth, **accustoming man to bear His Spirit**, and to hold communion with God: He Himself, indeed, having need of nothing, but granting communion with Himself to those who stood in need of it, and **sketching out, like an architect, the plan of salvation to those that pleased Him...** Thus, in a variety of ways, He adjusted the human race to an **agreement with salvation.**’
 - Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.14.2

Why Israel?

- ‘But **the law** coming, which was given by Moses, and testifying of sin that it is a sinner, did truly take away his (death’s) kingdom, showing that he was no king, but a robber; and it revealed him as a murderer. It laid, however, **a weighty burden** upon man, who had sin in himself, showing that he was liable to death. For as the law was spiritual, **it merely made sin to stand out in relief**, but did not destroy it.’
 - Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.18.7

Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature

- God's Motivation for Jesus
 - 'He saw... the race of men... wasting out of existence, and death reigning over all in corruption.
 - He saw that corruption held us all the closer, because it was the penalty for the Transgression;
 - He saw, too, how unthinkable it would be for the law to be repealed before it was fulfilled.
 - He saw how unseemly it was that the very things of which He Himself was the Artificer should be disappearing.
 - He saw how the surpassing wickedness of men was mounting up against them; He saw also their universal liability to death...

Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature

- God's Motivation for Jesus
 - '...All this He saw and,
 - **pitying** our race,
 - **moved with compassion** for our limitation,
 - **unable to endure** that death should have the mastery, rather than that His creatures should perish and the work of His Father for us men come to nought,
 - **He took to Himself a body, a human body even as our own.... Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death on behalf of (*anti*) all, and offered it to the Father...**

Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature

- God's Motivation for Jesus
 - ‘...This He did out of sheer love for us, so that in His death all might die, and the law of death thereby be abolished because, having fulfilled in His body that for which it was appointed, it was thereafter voided of its power for men. This He did that **He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned back to corruption, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection. Thus He would make death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire.**’ (*On the Incarnation* 8.1 – 4)

Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature

- Human corruption required a reversal of the corruption in a human, by a human
 - ‘The perfect Word of God puts around Him an imperfect body, and is said to be created ‘for the works;’ that, paying the debt in our stead, he might, by Himself, **perfect what was wanting to man.**’ (*Against the Arians* 2.66)
 - What do we owe God?
 - The debt is to be faithful to the Father, in the Spirit, to ‘circumcise the heart’ (Dt.10:16; 30:6)
 - The debt is not to suffer
 - God is not a currency exchanger

Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature

- The incarnate Word's goal was resurrection
 - 'The supreme object of His coming was to bring about the **resurrection** of the body' (*On the Incarnation* 4.22)
 - 'He assumed a body capable of death, in order that it, through belonging to the Word Who is above all, might become in dying a sufficient exchange for all, and, itself remaining incorruptible through His indwelling, might thereafter put an end to corruption for all others as well, by the grace of his **resurrection**.' (9.1 – 2)
 - 'The Lord was especially concerned for the **resurrection** of the body which He was set to accomplish... Having effected the blotting out of the corruption' (22.4)

Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature

- Summary Statements

- God shared our corrupted human nature that we might share His healed human nature
- Jesus lived the life we couldn't live, and died the death we couldn't die
- Jesus purified and perfected human nature in himself (Hebrews 1:3; 5:7 – 10; 12:1 – 2)
- Jesus developed the anti-bodies to our sin-sickness in his own body, and shares them with us
- Jesus pressed the Holy Spirit into every cell of his body, that he might share himself with us by the Spirit

Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature

- Summary Statements
 - Jesus condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3) by never sinning
 - Jesus carried out the judgment of the Father with the Spirit against the corruption of sin in his own humanity (John 5:22; 16:32)

Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature

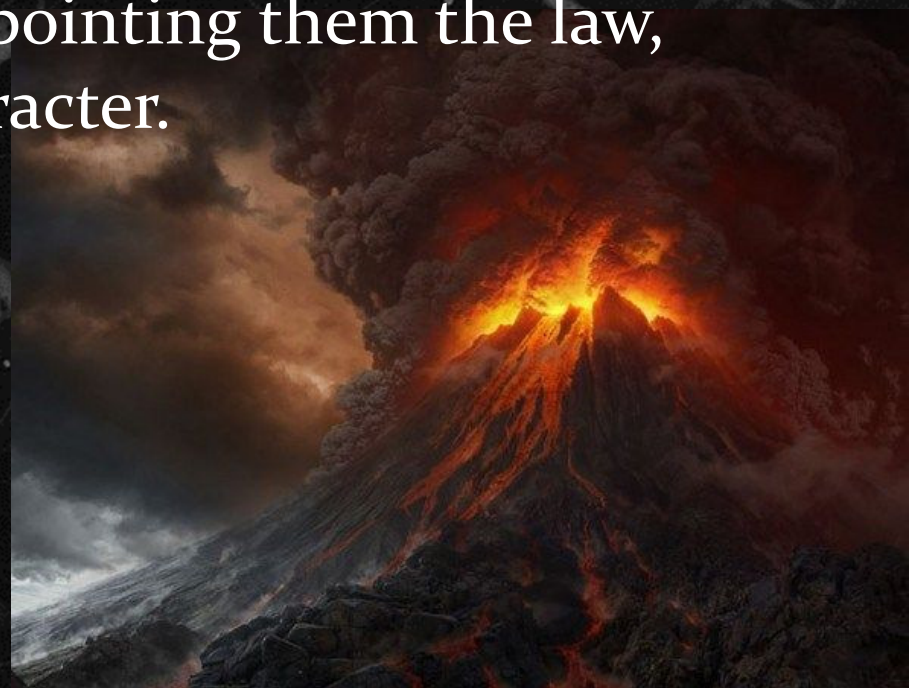
- What about us now?
- We are in process of being cleansed of the corruption of human evil
 - ‘Now, therefore, when we die we no longer do so as men condemned to death, but as those who are **even now in process of rising** we await the general resurrection.’ (*On the Incarnation* 10.5)

God's Character and Human Destiny

- ‘...judging each and all according to their deeds done in the body, whether good or ill. Then for the good is laid up the heavenly kingdom, but for those that practice evil outer darkness and the eternal fire.’ (*On the Incarnation* 56.3)
- What is divine fire?

God's Character and Human Destiny

- 'For a servant of the Lord should be diligent and careful, yea, moreover, burning like a **flame**, so that when, by an ardent spirit, he has destroyed all carnal sin, he may be able to draw near to God who, according to the expression of the saints, is called 'a consuming **fire**'...Wherefore, in the departure from Egypt, He forbade the multitude to touch the mountain, where God was appointing them the law, because they were not of this character.



God's Character and Human Destiny

- 'But He called blessed Moses to it, as being **fervent** in spirit, and possessing unquenchable grace, saying, 'Let Moses alone draw near.' He entered into the cloud also, and when the mountain was smoking, he was not injured; but rather, through 'the words of the Lord, which are choice silver **purified** in the earth,' he descended **purified**.



God's Character and Human Destiny

- ‘Therefore the blessed Paul, when desirous that the grace of the Spirit given to us should not grow cold, exhorts, saying, ‘**Quench not** the Spirit.’ For so shall we remain partakers of Christ, if we hold fast to the end the Spirit given at the beginning... But such men have the due reward of their folly, since their expectation will be vain through their ingratitude; for there is no hope for the ungrateful; the last **fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels, awaits those who have neglected divine **light**.’ (*Festal Letter #3* (331), 3 – 4)



God's Character and Human Destiny

- 'Fire' is continuous with the imagery of purification
 - See Athanasius, *Festal Letter #3* (331 AD)
- Divine 'fire' is always directed at the corruption that people are addicted to
- No one needs to sin, as if God needed them to
- See next session of *Reconstruction*

Outline

- Introduction: Why Read Athanasius
- Who Was Athanasius?
- Athanasius' Two Volume Work
- Theodicy and Theology
 - God's Character
 - Creation, Fall, and Human Corruption
 - Why Israel? Why Not Just Jump to Jesus?
 - Jesus and the Healing of Human Nature
 - God's Character and Human Destiny
- Athanasius as Evangelist

Athanasius as Evangelist

- Why God Is Good, Despite Human Evil
- Creation
 - God's goodness required human free will, to love Him and relationally ascend into perfection
- Corruption
 - The Fall was possible, because of the superabundance of good, but not required
- Clinical Trial in Israel
 - Israel was God's partner to diagnose the human condition and hope for a cure in the Messiah
- Cure in Jesus Christ
 - God's goodness required Him to heal human nature and defeat evil in a loving way (since human free will to love Jesus is still necessary)
- Consummation
 - Hell is not necessary, but is based on human choices to shape our natures
 - God loves you, and will always love you

Athanasius as Evangelist

- The problem of human nature
 - Islam: Qur'an 94 and 2 Hadiths
 - “People do evil because of society”
- “The problem of good” and not just “the problem of evil”
 - Traumatized friend
 - Hindus/Buddhists: is hope deceptive?
 - Atheist-Agnostics: which God do you reject?

Discussion

1. If God required human evil, caused it, and waits to judge it in the end, can we say God is good?
2. If evil is in our human nature, and yet we long for goodness, can any healing for human evil be only in education, medicine, government, circumstances, etc.?
3. How does this change how you would share Jesus with certain people?

Athanasius as Evangelist

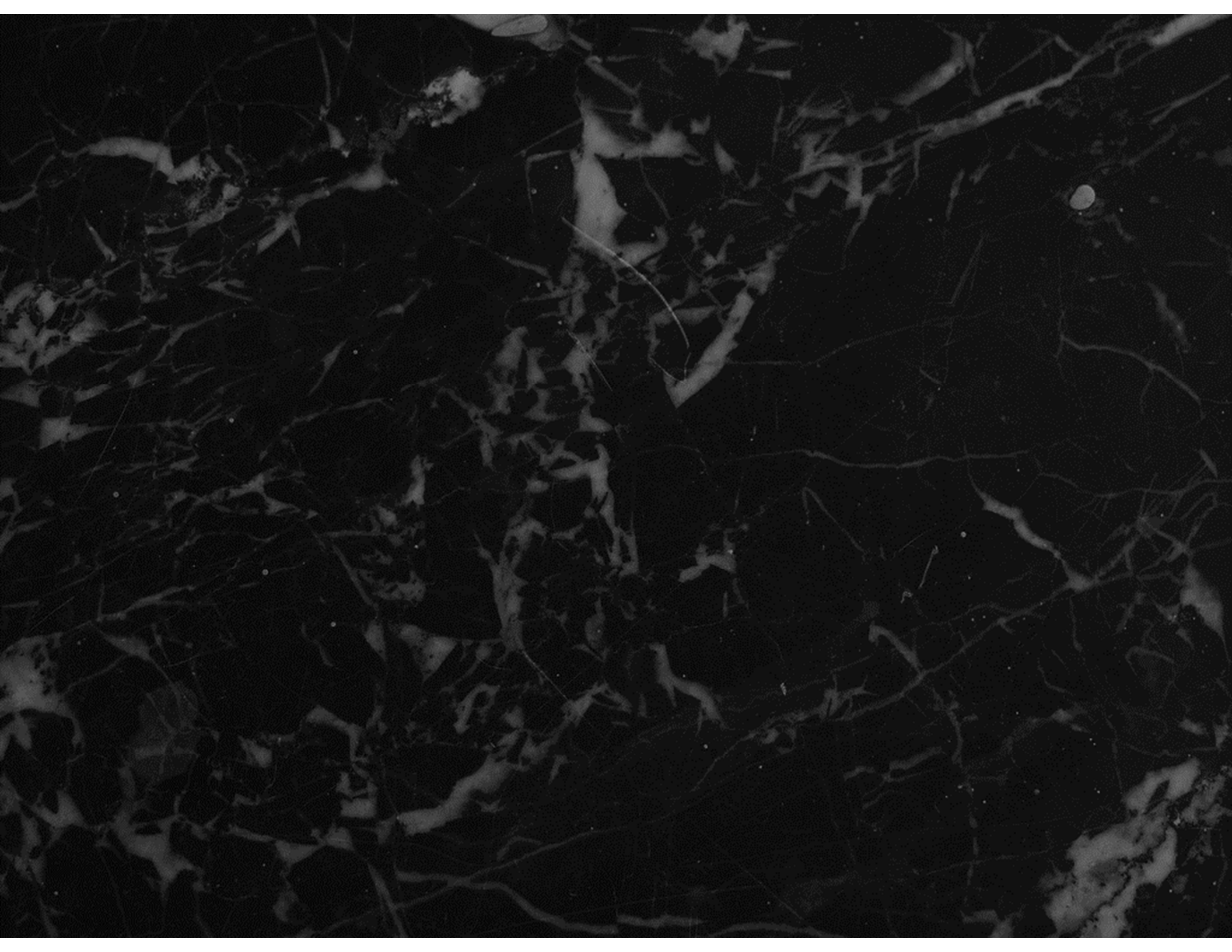
- Athanasius as “Fountainhead of Christian Theology”
 - Nothing is chronologically or logically prior to the Father, Son, Spirit
 - Define God’s character first, based on Triune love
 - The Trinity is within “divine simplicity” and defines “divine impassibility”
 - Theology Proper precedes and defines Theodicy

Athanasius as Evangelist

- Contrast: Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430)
 - Augustine read human choice back into God's choice
 - “Double predestination”
 - *On the Predestination of the Saints* (426)
 - Change from earlier works, e.g. *On the Spirit and the Letter*, *The Freedom of the Will*, *Confessions* 5.2
 - See *Reconstruction 2021*, Session 10

Athanasius as Evangelist

- Contrast: Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430)
 - Luther and Calvin
 - Augustinian “double predestination”
 - God caused the fall, human unbelief, evil, injustice
 - Human choice = God’s choice = God’s character
 - Conflicting, inconsistent statements
 - Is being a resource good enough?



Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Definition:
 - Penal: bearing the penalty
 - Substitution: Jesus substituted
 - Divine justice: retributive
 - God must punish lawbreaking
 - Jesus died to satisfy the demands of retributive justice (wrath) of God, which fell against his personhood

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Variants
 - God the Father punished God the Son
 - God is the origin of divine wrath, but not God the Father

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Main Biblical Texts
 - Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 at the cross
 - Hilasterion and the Jewish sacrificial system
 - Romans 3:21 – 26
 - Purpose of the Sinai covenant

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Athanasius on the Father-Son Relation
 - “Athanasius’ trinitarian theology is more radically trinitarian than that of Augustine, since the latter appears to leave space to consider the Father ‘in himself,’ not sheerly as Father of the Son. To use Athanasius’ terminology, Augustine does not grasp as clearly as Athanasius that the Son is ‘proper’ to the Father, as intimate and intrinsic to the Father’s being as any wisdom of power the Father could call his ‘own.’...”

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Athanasius on the Father-Son Relation
 - “Augustine finds it nonsensical to say that the Father can beget his own wisdom, unless he has some prior wisdom of his own to confer. But that, it seems, is to fall into an Arian paradigm, and to run into Athanasius’ critique of the ‘double wisdom’ of Asterius. If the Father has ‘his own’ wisdom, which is eternally conferred on the Son, which is then also his Wisdom, then we are multiplying Wisdoms. That will not do. God is one, and his Wisdom must be one.”
 - Peter Leithart, *Athanasius* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), p.86

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Athanasius on the Father-Son Relation
 - “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30)

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Athanasius on the Father-Son Relation
 - “Neither can the Lord be forsaken by the Father, who is ever in the Father, both before He spoke, and when He uttered this cry.” (*Against the Arians* 3:56)

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Athanasius on *Homoousios*: no separation
 - “Again, the illustration of the Light and the Radiance [of the sun] has this meaning. For the Saints have not said that the Word was related to God as fire kindled from the heat of the sun, which is commonly put out again, for this is an external work and a creature of its author, but they all preach of Him as Radiance, thereby to signify His being from the essence, proper and indivisible, and His oneness with the Father.”
 - Athanasius, *De Decretis / On the Decrees* 23

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Athanasius on *Homoousios*: no separation
 - “For bodies which are like each other may be separated and become at distances from each other, as are human sons relatively to their parents (as it is written concerning Adam and Seth, who was begotten of him that he was like him after his own pattern [Genesis 5:3]); but since the generation of the Son from the Father is not according to the nature of men, and not only like [the essence], but also inseparable from the essence [ek tis ousia] of the Father...

Appendix: Penal Substitution

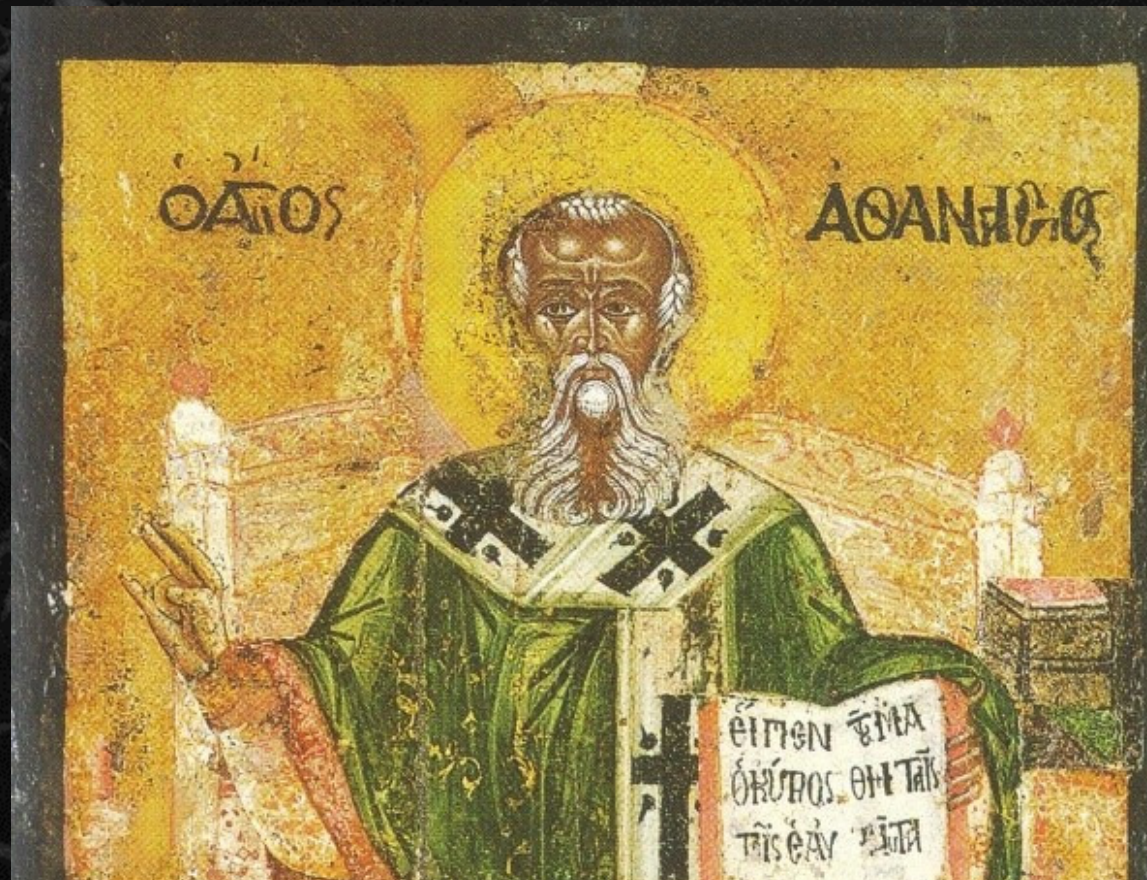
- Athanasius on *Homoousios*: no separation
 - “...and He and the Father are one, as He has said Himself, and the Word is ever in the Father and the Father in the Word, as the radiance stands towards the light (for this the phrase itself indicates), therefore the Council, as understanding this, suitably wrote ‘one in essence [homoousios],’ that they might both defeat the perverseness of the heretics, and show that the Word was other than originated things.”
 - Athanasius, *De Decretis / On the Decrees* 20

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Medical Substitution: The Father empowered Jesus by the Spirit to pour out the wrath of God on the corruption of sin within his human nature
 - “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son” (John 5:26)
 - <https://www.anastasiscenterblog.org/atonement-in-scripture>

Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Main Biblical Texts
 - The Father-Son Relation by Athanasius
 - <https://www.anastasiscenterblog.org/athanasius-trinity-nicene-creed>



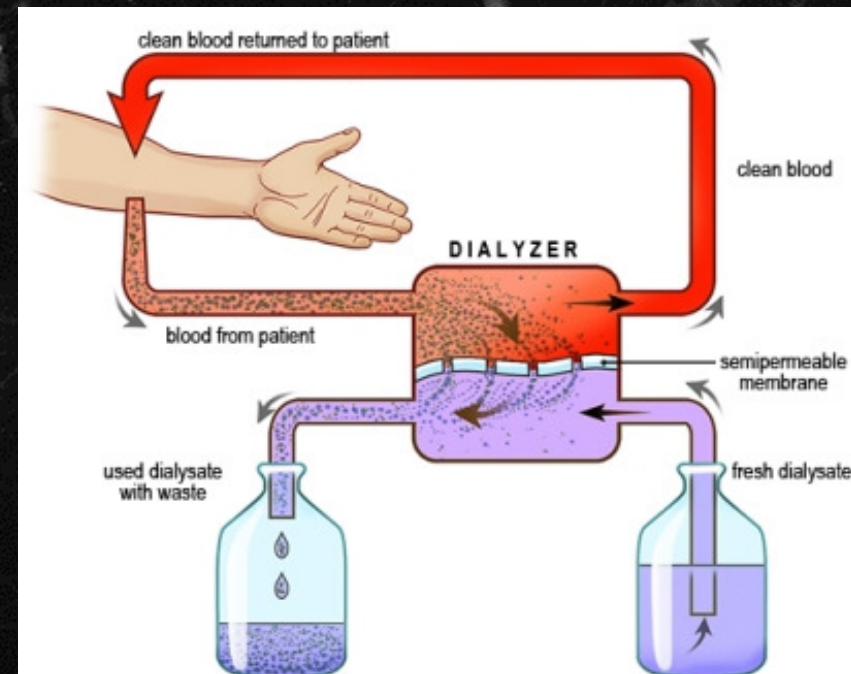
Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Main Biblical Texts
 - Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 at the cross
 - Jesus retold David's pre-enthronement story
 - Forsaken to the Gentiles, not forsaken absolutely
 - <https://www.anastasiscenterblog.org/my-god-my-god>



Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Main Biblical Texts
 - Hilasterion and the Jewish sacrificial system
 - The Jewish sacrificial system retold Moses' ascent up Mount Sinai
 - God acted like a dialysis machine
 - <https://www.anastasiscenterblog.org/template-sacrifices-a-bloodthirsty-god>



Appendix: Penal Substitution

- Main Biblical Texts

- Purpose of the Sinai covenant

- Israel as clinical focus group (Rom.8:3)
 - Commandments as the Doctor's health regimen
 - God's human partner in restorative justice
 - Not an example of lawbreakers and the punished
 - "Restorative Justice in Scripture"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js3aDHQC-iE>