

**HEROES AND HERETICS:**  
**An 8-Week Course on Early Church History**

**WEEK 5**            **February 14, 2016**  
**Teacher:**        **Pastor Pickens**

**Eusebius – The Father of Church History**

**Life:**

- Born in Caesarea in the early 260's
- Instructed by Pamphilus at the school begun by Origen
- Grows up in a new and peaceful time for the church, able to become a scholar
- The Great Persecution (303-313 AD), Pamphilus is martyred
- Ordained as a presbyter and after the Great Persecution, appointed bishop
- The first ecumenical council:
  - Emperor Constantine seeks unity
  - An ecumenical council is convened at Nicaea
  - Arius (250-336 AD) and Athanasius (297-373 AD)
  - Three main groups attend the council:
    - Ossius (aligned with Athanasius) – Orthodox
    - Eusebius of Nicomedia (aligned with Arius) – Heretical
    - Eusebius of Caesarea (middle ground) – majority present
  - Nicene Creed is affirmed:

“We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is coming to judge the living and the dead; And in the Holy Spirit. And those who say: “There was a time when he was not”, and: “Before he was begotten he was not”, and: “He came into being from nothing”, or those who pretend that the Son of God is “of another substance or essence” or “created” or “alterable” or “Mutable”, the catholic and apostolic church places under a curse.”

- “The next thing less than infinite is infinitely less.”<sup>1</sup>
- Eusebius meets Constantine at the Council of Nicaea and greatly admires him
- His life ends in peace allowing for study, composition, and compilation (338/339 AD)

**Thought:**

- Not an original thinker. His works are primarily historical, derivative, or compilations
- *History of Christianity:*
  - The continuation of the Church
  - Emphasis placed on God's Word
    - Lists 22 out of 27 books in the New Testament as universally accepted and the remaining 5 (2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James, Jude) as ‘familiar to most’
    - Also lists disputed books and spurious books
    - Significant value for coming generations
  - Heresies
  - Heroes and martyrs
- He is trained primarily in the thought of Origen, later affirming the Nicene Creed
- High view of the Roman Emperor

**Take Away:**

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *What Is Faith?*, 116.

“[T]he first function of a confession of Faith is to make sure that Scripture is our primary standard in all matters of faith and conduct...A second function of a Confession of Faith is to provide a rallying point for those of like mind concerning the main teachings of Scripture...A third function of a Confession of Faith is to serve as a public statement of the faith of the people of God, and to instruct in the faith...A fourth function of a Confession of Faith is to be a solemn bond for the office-bearers of the Church.”<sup>2</sup>

- Accounts of martyrdom can bolster and encourage our own faith
- We are those who are being refined, and this includes our thinking (Phil. 3:12-16; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; Tit. 2:1, 3, 7-8, 12, 15)

**Resources:**

Eusebius, *The History of the Church* (also the introduction to Eusebius’s life in the Penguin Classics Edition)

Tim Dowley, *Introduction to the History of Christianity*

Stephen J. Nichols, *For Us and For Our Salvation: The Doctrine of Christ in the Early Church*

---

<sup>2</sup>Roland S. Ward, *The Westminster Confession of Faith, A Study Guide*, 14-15