

Church History 1

Apostles to Pre-Reformation

April 26, 2013 – Persecutions, Heresies & the Book Lecture
Lakeside Institute of Theology
Ross Arnold, Spring 2013

Church History 1 (TH1)

1. Introduction to Church History
2. Apostles to Catholic Christianity
3. Persecution, Heresies & the Book
4. Emperors, Bishops, Saints & Intellectuals
5. Councils, Monks, Popes & Augustine
6. Schisms, Barbarians & Gregory the Great
7. Charlemagne, Cathedrals, Crusades & Scholastics
8. Poverty, Inquisition, Babylonian Captivity... & Final Exam

2nd Century of the Church

1. The Apostolic Fathers
2. Persecution
3. Heresies
4. Christian Apologists
5. Development of the Canon
6. Creeds & Apostolic Succession

The Apostolic Fathers

Those leaders of the Church who came after the deaths of the Apostles, and who were reputed to have known and learned from the Apostles. Their writings were highly regarded, and believed by some in the 2nd Century to be worthy of inclusion in the Canon.

- Clement of Rome
- Author of the *Didache*
- Author of *The Epistle of Barnabas*
- Ignatius of Antioch
- Polycarp of Smyrna
- Hermas of Rome (*The Shepherd of Hermas*)
- Papias of Hierapolis

Persecutions

Officially sanctioned persecution affected the Church from its founding until the Emperor Constantine and the Edict of Milan made Christianity legal in the 4th Century.

- 1st Century Persecution
 - Persecution from Jewish religious authorities (Book of Acts)
 - Emperor Nero (64-68 AD)
 - Domitian (89-96 AD)
- 2nd Century Persecution
 - Hadrian (117-138 AD)
 - Trajan (98-117 AD) (& Pliny the Younger, Governor of Bithynia)
 - Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD)
- 3rd-4th Century Persecution
 - Septimus Severus (193-211)
 - Caracalla (211-218)
 - Decius (249-251)
 - Valerian (253-259)
 - Diocletian/Galerius (284-305) (*The Great Persecution*)
- Edict of Milan, religious freedom under Emperor Constantine (313 AD)

Reasons for Persecution

Officially sanctioned persecution affected the Church from its founding until the Emperor Constantine and the Edict of Milan made Christianity legal in the 4th Century.

- Reasons for the Persecutions
 - By Jewish religious leaders
 - Seen as threatening the established religious authority
 - Seen as a Jewish heresy to be stamped out
 - Potential for causing a Roman backlash
 - By non-Jewish Roman citizens
 - Christians were unsociable and usually perceived as lower class
 - Rumors of incest & other scandal at secret Christian “love feasts”
 - Rumors of cannibalism.
 - Perceived “atheism”
 - Offense against the traditional Roman gods might bring misfortune
 - By Roman Emperors and other Roman authorities
 - Nero blamed Christians for the fire that burned Rome in 64 AD
 - Christians were seen as disturbing unity & public order by refusing to worship traditional gods
 - Refusing to worship the Emperor was perceived as treasonous
 - After Christianity broke from Judaism, it was perceived as superstition
 - All the same reasons the public hated Christians (listed above)

The Christian Apologists

- With Christians persecuted by Roman authorities for many false reasons, a group of intellectual and well-educated Christians – Apologists – stepped forward in the 2nd Century to defend the Church against these charges.
 - Quadratus
 - Aristo of Pella
 - Miltiades
 - Apollinarius of Hierapolis
 - Melito of Sardis
 - Author of *The Epistle to Diognetus*
 - Aristides of Athens
 - Justin Martyr
 - Tatian of Syria
 - Athenagorus of Athens
 - Theophilus of Antioch

Heresies of the 2nd Century

Heresy is defined as a formal denial or doubt of a core doctrine of the Christian Church. But in the 2nd Century, before establishment of a clear New Testament Canon, and before many principle Christian doctrines had been agreed upon, a number of major heresies threatened the Church.

- Ebionism – Jewish Christians who insisted Gentile Christians must obey the Mosaic Law.
- Gnosticism – dualistic belief that the material world should be shunned and the spiritual world embraced, and acquiring *gnosis* (“mystical knowledge”) is the key to spiritual development.
- Encratism – extreme ascetic sect who forbade marriage, required abstinence from meat & wine, and rejected Paul’s Epistles (see 1 Timothy 4:1-4).

Heresies of the 2nd Century

- Marcionism – dualistic belief system claiming Jesus was the savior, but rejecting the Old Testament, saying the Hebrew God was a separate and lower entity than the God of the New Testament. (Perhaps the greatest threat ever to the Church.)
- Montanism – a prophetic movement claiming new, direct and ecstatic revelation from the Holy Spirit that superseded the authority of Jesus or Paul or the Apostles or anyone else.

The Christian Theologians

- The Apostolic Fathers had, for the most part, addressed specific theological questions that arose; while the Apologists had responded to accusations against the Church by Roman authorities. But more comprehensive heresies of the 2nd Century (like Marcionism) demanded more complete exposition of orthodox Christian beliefs.
 - Irenaeus of Lyon
 - Clement of Alexandria
 - Tertullian of Carthage
 - Origen of Alexandria

Development of the Canon of Scripture

- The Biblical Canon is the set of books Christians have determined to be divinely inspired and thus rightly included as part of the Christian Bible.
- Influence of Marcion in creating the New Testament.
- Muratorian Fragment (c. 170 AD) – the oldest list of New Testament books, very similar to our 27-book New Testament (NT). (minus Hebrews, James, 2nd Peter)
- Origin of Alexandria (early 200s) used same 27 books as our NT, though still some dispute about Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John and Revelation).
- Athanasius of Alexandria in 367 affirmed the list of books we have in the NT Canon today and declared them “canonized.”

Growth of Christianity, 1st & 2nd Centuries

