

Combined Fellowship: Church History

BPCWA COMBINED FELLOWSHIP (30th Aug 2013)

CHURCH HISTORY SERIES 1

CHURCH					
ANCIENT		MEDIEVAL		MODERN	
30-600		600-1550		1550-Present	
Infant	Adolescent	Roman	Reformation	Denominational	Ecumenical
30-325	325-600	600-1300	1300-1550	1550-1789	1789-present

Why Study Church History

- Give glory to God's providence in His works in the history of man and where the gates of Hell cannot prevail against His Church (Psalm 66, Matt 16:18)
- Learn from the good of the past, discern and reject the errors, and avoid the mistakes
- See the weakness of man and the greatness of God
- Fulfil the Great Commission

1st Century

- Apostolic Age
- NT Church planting
- Apostles passed away after writing of NT Scriptures
- Churches established under Bishop/Elder and Deacons

2nd Century

WHO

- Clement of Rome
- Famous pastor, martyr in AD156: Polycarp (disciple of John) "How can I deny the King who saved me?", burnt without nailing.
- Famous apologist (External defence) martyr in AD163 : Justin Martyr "I don't suppose...I know"

HERESIES

- Gnostics (late first century, matter and flesh are evil, appealed to intellect, incorporated philosophies and myths from India, Greece, Egypt to produce secret knowledge, matter and flesh evil - asceticism, licentiousness. WHO: Valentinus and Bascillides, both from Alexnadria where Scriptures texts are often corrupted by "corrections" of heretics, Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code tries to resurrect Gnostic books and heresy)
- Nazarenes (salvation by works, Judaizers)
- Marcion (Gnostic, denied Deity of Christ God of OT and NT different : Vengeance and Compassion, Polycarp called Marcion first born of Satan)
- Ebionites (Jesus 100% man, 0% God, rejected pre-existence of Christ)
- Montanism (by questionable Montanus, Spirit speaks through signs, dreams, tongues)

2nd to 3rd Century

WHO

- Polemicists (dealt with internal threats from within church)
- Early Church Fathers (AD180-250): Ireneus , Tertullian (North Africa), Cyprian (North Africa), Clement of Alexandria, Origen

WHAT

- NT Canon not yet fixed

Combined Fellowship: Church History

- Differentiating false Gnostics' false gospels and epistles
 - Ireneus : Apostolic authorship
 - Ireneus and Tertullian: Apostolic writings divinely inspired and on par with OT Scriptures

Tertullian :

- All fell in Adam, our representative head. (beginnings of Federal Headship Theology)
- First to use the term Trinity
- Separatist: believers to keep away from immoral activities of society like theatre and worldly entertainment

Cyprian of Carthage

- Taught by Tertullian, defended Trinity (Johannine Comma - 1 John 5:7 already part of known Scriptures)
- Beginning of errors:
 - . Elevated Bishop's office beyond Scriptural pattern
 - . Introduced sacrificing priests, later leading to doctrine of Transubstantiation

Clement of Alexandria

- Founder of Alexandrian school of Christian thought
- Beginning of errors:
 - . Favoured allegorising and spiritualising
 - . Taught that all truth is God's truth", producing syncretic Christianity with Greek philosophy

Origen of Alexandria

- Believed in divine inspiration of Scripture, deity of Christ, Trinity
- Contended against Monarchians (who taught that Godhead was one person, led to Modalism of Sabellius - 1 person in Godhead, sometimes appearing as Father, sometimes as Son, sometimes as Spirit)
- Beginning of errors:
 - . Allegorical method led to new heresies, namely:
 - Reincarnation: Souls can go up or down in quality of next life (Hinduism)
 - Ransom Theory: Christ's death on cross was ransom paid to Satan (Word-Faith Movement, Kenneth Haggin, Kenneth Copeland)

Early 3rd Century

WHAT

- Peaceful for Christians up till AD249
- Persecution from AD249-311 under Decius and Valerian
- Emperor Decius tried to regain power by reviving ancient Roman culture - Emperor worship and paganism.
- Emperor Valerian renewed persecution, systematic extermination of Christianity, confiscating property, assembly was forbidden, bishops were martyred, including Cyprian of Carthage
- After Valerian persecution, about 40 years of peace. By end of 3rd century, Christianity had grown to be a threat to whole Roman Empire

4th Century

- Emperor Diocletian began extermination of Christianity
 - . 303 Edict to destroy places of worship and books, including Bible
 - . Upon entering church, soldiers could find no idols to burn. So, they burned Scriptures, looted, burned buildings. Many Scripture copies were burned, but God preserves His Scriptures

Combined Fellowship: Church History

- Constantine the Great
 - . AD311: End of persecution
 - . He won battle at Milvian Bridge, adopted cross as his symbol
 - . Sole emperor, lost confidence to Roman gods, politically motivated to support Christianity.
 - . Began to establish the Emperor as defender of faith
 - Good: persecution ended, churches built, freedom to worship, liberal salaries to clergy, Sunday recognised as day of rest and worship
 - Bad: pagan conversion for gain and fame, Christianity became proud and pompous, wealthy church brought in worldliness, bishops became secular businessmen, owning properties and governing towns, Emperor became head of church which was Christ's positions (he called 4 meetings with bishops, presiding over them)
Beginning of heresies and apostasy
- Arianism: (forerunner of Jehovah's Witnesses today)
 - . 4th century heresy, denied deity of Christ
 - . Taught by Lucian of Antioch ("Father of Arianism", earlier condemned for saying Christ was only man)
 - . Arius argued that Father created the Son, time when Son did not exist. Arius questioned the Trinity
 - . Constantine concerned about the split of the church due to this theological battle
 - . 325AD Council of the Orient in Antioch. Arianism was condemned.

4th to 6th Century

- 325 to 500 was a period of theological warfare.
- Church had to clarify its position and attitude towards important doctrinal questions
- Unitarianism, demi-god Jesus, polytheism

4 Great Councils

1st Council of Nicea (AD325): Deity of Christ

- Dn Athanasius (*homoousios* - 100% same in substance) vs Elder Arius (*homoisios* - similar)
- 317 Eastern and Western bishops (still bearing scars of persecution) attended Council
- Overwhelming persistence to state church position clearly
- Christ is God the very God
- Nicene Creed confirmed
- Arius banished and recalled five times
- Athanasius said "if the whole world is against Athanasius, then Athanasius is against the whole world)

2nd Council of Constantinople (AD381): Deity of Holy Spirit

- Asserted Deity of Holy Spirit against heretical views of Macedonius and Sabellius
- Holy Spirit is affirmed to be not merely influence or force

3rd Council of Ephesus (AD431): Christ 2 nature in 1 person

- Nestorius insisted that Christ was 2 persons - 1 is God, the other is man
- He was responding to *Theotokos* or "Mother of God".
- Council condemned Nestorianism as heresy: Jesus was one person (not 2) in 2 distinct and inseparable natures
- Nestorianism found its way to China in 8th century

Combined Fellowship: Church History

4th Council of Chalcedon (AD451): *Theanthropos*

- Eutyches taught that Christ was part human, part divine
- Large number of Egyptian monks supported Eutyches in AD449
- Council of Chalcedon condemned Eutychianism as heresy in AD451
- Council affirmed that Christ is *Theanthropos*, ie fully God and fully man, 1 person with 2 natures
- Eutyches condemned and died in exile

SUMMARY OF HERESIES

Party	Time	Refce	Human Nature	Divine Nature
Docetists	Late 1 st C	1 Jn 4:1-3	Denied	Affirmed
Ebionites	2 nd C	Irenaeus etc	Affirmed	Denied
Arians	4 th C	Condemned by Nicaea, 325	Affirmed	Reduced
Apollinarians	4 th C	Condemned by Constant, 381	Reduced	Affirmed
Nestorians	5 th C	Condemned by Ephesus, 431	Affirmed- Christ is 1 Person	Affirmed
Eutychians	5 th C	Condemned by Chalcedon, 451 & III Constant, 680	Reduced- 1 mixed nature, neither fully human/ divine	Reduced
Orthodox	From beginning	Defined by Chalcedon, 451	Affirmed- 1Person, fully divine, fully human	Affirmed