

Church History

The Church Grows Up

The Gospel Goes to Europe

Good News

- The Church has grown from a handful of disciples to a world wide movement, embraced by an empire
- Roman civilization helps spread the Gospel to all the world
- Christian doctrine is being carefully defined and documented for future generations

Deterioration

- End of the 1st Century
 - Rev 3 – “I know your deeds that you are neither hot nor cold.
- 2nd Century
 - Withdrawal of hermits into the desert because of the worldliness of Christian community
- 3rd Century
 - “*Lapsi*” – those who “lapsed” when required to burn incense to the Roman gods
 - Lapsed believers were readmitted (excommunication in 2nd and early 3rd Cent) after penance was done
 - Novatian – led a church schism of the “pure”
- 4th Century
 - With legalization of Christianity, Christianity became a part of the social fabric rather than an individual commitment to Jesus Christ

Unscriptural Doctrines/Practices

- A belief in *purgatory*
 - A place in which souls are purified after death before they can enter heaven
- Prayers for the dead
- The forty-day Lenten season (ritual)
 - Christianity is something that is done
- The view that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice and that its administrators are priests
- A sharp division of the members of the church into *clergy* (officers of the church) and *laity* (ordinary church members)
- *Veneration* (adoration) of martyrs and saints
 - Above all – veneration of Mary

Unscriptural Doctrines/Practices

- The burning of candles or tapers in honor of these martyrs
- Veneration of the relics of martyrs and saints
 - Ascription of magical powers to these relics
- Pictures, images, altars in the churches
- Extravagant vestments for the clergy
 - Along with more and more elaborate and splendid *ritual* (form of worship)
- Less and less preaching
- Pilgrimages to holy places
- Christians doing the persecuting rather than being the ones being persecuted

Causes of Deterioration

- The problem is within each individual Christian
 - Every Christian is a saint, but every saint is a sinner
 - Indwelling sin – tendency to commit sin and error
- The ancient Church misunderstood and misinterpreted certain teachings of OT, Christ, the apostles
 - The Bible is very simple, but very deep
 - The Bible as authority is sometimes obscured

Causes of Deterioration

- Heathen environment
 - Christian words and concepts overlaid previously held pagan concepts and rituals (e.g. feast of *Sol Invictus* (winter solstice) assigned to day to celebrate Christ's birth (Dec 25th), sun and moon phases to assign the date for Easter celebration, etc.)
 - Pagans had their sacrifices, priests, and altars. Soon the Church had its sacrifice, priests, and altars
 - Pagans had innumerable gods and images. Soon the Church had images and assigned martyrs (saints) and Mary
 - Pagan superstitions soon reappeared as “the power of relics”

Pope Gregory I

- 1st monk to become pope
- “the servant of the servants of God” – title still used today
- Stood for all things that form the distinctions of the Church of the Middle Ages
 - Assume broad political powers
 - As secular ruler, appointed heads of cities
 - Raised armies, made peace treaties
- Strongly upheld the Roman bishop's claim to power over the entire Church as successor to Peter
- Distinctives
 - Gregorian music
 - Lord's Supper is a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ
 - Usefulness of saints to be a help to us
 - purgatory

Barbarian Movement Missions to the Goths

- Goths – Originally Scandinavian
 - Settled in Poland/Eastern Germany
 - Migrated to Scythia –north and east of the Black Sea
 - Perpetual thorn in side of Roman Empire
- Ulfilas (310 – 388)
 - Goth or half-Goth
 - Ordained by Eusebius of Nicomedia (Arian)
 - Missionary to the Goths
- Permission of Constantius II to immigrate to Nicopolis (northern Bulgaria)
- Ulfilas established a Gothic alphabet
 - Translated the Bible from Greek into Gothic
- Converted many among Visigoths and Ostrogoths

Challenges

- Conditions were vastly different from the early evangelization
- Peoples to whom Paul preached were civilized
 - Greek literacy
 - Roman roads
 - *Pax Romana* with Roman law and order
- Paganism/Heathenism was philosophical and intellectual

Middle Ages

- The Church was now large and strongly organized
 - Though deteriorated, it had a well defined group of doctrines
- Church now lacked the protection of the Roman government The kingdoms to which missionaries went were very superstitious and heathen
- Tribes outside the former Roman Empire lived in a wild, uncultivated country
- These “nations” were barbarous, ignorant, uneducated and uncultured
- However, they were not “stupid”

Two Fold Mission

- Spread the Christian Gospel
- Educate the new nations
- Under those circumstances, accomplishing those tasks, the next 1000 years was a remarkable achievement.
 - How the Irish Saved Civilization by Thomas Cahill, 1995.
 - ... the preservation and transmission of classical literature and the evangelization of Europe – The New Yorker
- By 1500, all new cultures in Europe had developed under the influence of Christianity.

Literacy

- During the barbarian invasions, many (but not all) of the books were destroyed
- All books were written by hand
 - Manuscripts
 - Both written and copied
- Monks played a key role
 - Patiently and persistently copied manuscripts
 - Maintained a supply of books
- Means for the education of the new nations when they were ready for it

Franks

- Franks – extended their rule over all of Gaul (eventually called France)
- First Germanic tribe to adopt Christianity after the invasions
- Clovis – conversion similar to Constantine
 - Baptized on Christmas Day 496 at Rheims
- Adopted orthodox (Nicene) Christianity
- Entire tribes became Christian when their king became Christian
- Tremendous consequences more than 200 years later

British Isles

- Patrick (d. 461)
 - “the Apostle of Ireland”
- Irish monasteries became famous centers of learning
- Great missionary activity
- Columba (563) – monastery on the west coast of Scotland
 - Church planted there
- Columbanus (612) – with his companions that went to evangelize France and Germany
- Kilian (680) – to Franconia and Wurzburg
- For*an*nan (970) –to the Belgian frontier

Britain and Germany

- Augustine (597) – sent by Gregory the Great to Angleland
 - Regain the country for Christ
- Boniface (Wyn-fred) (d. 754) – to Germany (Hessia)
 - Cut down the huge oak tree sacred to Thor
 - Was not struck down by lightning by the god of thunder
 - Used the wood to build a chapel
 - Resulted in large numbers of conversions
 - Killed by heathen 30 years later

Russia

- 863-869, Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius translated parts of the Bible into Old Church Slavonic language for the first time, paving the way for the Christianization of the Slavs.
- 866 - 867 first Christian bishop was sent to Novgorod from Constantinople either by Patriarch Photius or Patriarch Ignatios
- 10th century, already a Christian community among Kievan nobility, under the leadership of Greek and Byzantine priests, although paganism remained the dominant religion.
- 950's – Princess Olga of Kiev was the first ruler of Kievan Rus to convert to Christianity. Her grandson, Vladimir the Great, made Kievan Rus' a Christian state.
- 988, Prince Vladimir I of Kiev officially adopted Byzantine Rite Christianity