

Lesson 11

The Early Church To Early Reformation

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Class Schedule

- **The Ancient Church (100 – 313 A.D.)**
- 1. Historical Backgrounds and the World of the Early Church
- 2. The Church in Jerusalem and the Mission to the Gentiles
- 3. 1st & 2nd Century Conflicts with the State
- 4. Early Apologists
- 5. Defining the Faith
- 6. Christian Life

Class Outline

- **The Imperial Church (313 to 476 A.D.)**
- 7. The End of Persecution and Beginnings of the Imperial Church
- 8. The New Order
- 9. Reactions to the New Order
- 10. The Arian Controversy and the Council of Nicea

Class Outline

- **Medieval Christianity (476 to 1521 A.D.)**
- 11. **The Western church, the Eastern church and the Arabs**
- 12. The Late Middle Ages & the Great Western Schism
- 13. The Quest for Reformation & the Renaissance

The Western Church, the Eastern Church, & the Arabas

Lesson 11

“If only to this end have the barbarians been sent within Roman borders....that the church of Christ might be filled with Huns and Suevi, with Vandals and Burgundians, with diverse and innumerable peoples of believers, then let God’s mercy be praised....even if this has taken place through our own destruction.”

– Paulus Orosius



Fall of Rome

- All Civil Function in Western & North Western Europe Ceased to Exist:
- Law
- Law enforcement
- Courts
- Education
- Art
- Technology on any level
- Writing & books
- Trade – food, technology, useful items, art
- Circulation of money – barter system
- Health care
- Maintenance of infrastructure – roads, water ways, sewage, storm drainage, trash collection
- Building – repurposing of stones
- War & destruction became the norm
- **Civilization became a disconnected, paranoid, superstitious, painful life**



Key Dates

- 410 - Fall of Rome
- 440 - Pope Leo
- 455 - Rome completely sacked (one of many times)
- 476 – The last W. Emperor Romulus Augustulus abdicated
- 630 - Muhammad takes Mecca
- 633 – Council of Toledo
 - Priest could only marry with their bishop's permission
 - Jews should not be forced into Christianity, those who had been forced could not return to Judaism
- 710 – 711 – Muslims invades Spain
- 800 – Charlemagne
- 1054 – Eastern & Western churches separate
- 1098 – 1st Crusade – 200 yr. period

The Western Church

The Western Church

- The 5th through the 8th centuries saw a series of invasions that brought chaos to the old Western Empire. A great deal of the learning of antiquity was destroyed.
- The invaders brought with them two religious challenges that until then seem to be matters of the past: 1. paganism & 2. Arianism (rejection of the essential & eternal divinity of Christ). Eventually both were converted to the orthodox faith of those who they conquered.
- In the process of conversion two institutions played a central role, & thus were themselves strengthened: monasticism & the papacy.

Benedictine Monasticism

Benedictine Monasticism

- Western monasticism tended to differ from its Eastern counterpart on 3 points:
- 1. The West tended to be more practical. It did not punish the body for the sole purpose of renunciation, but to train the body, as well as the soul, for a mission in the world.
- 2. The West did not place a premium on solitude that was typical in the East. The West sought ways to organize life in community.
- 3. The West did not live in the constant tension with the hierarchy of the church that was typical in the East. In the West monasticism was generally the right arm of popes, bishops & other church leaders.

Benedict

- The main figure of Western monasticism in its formative years was Benedict.
- Born in 480, by the age of 20 he resolved to become a hermit. For a period he practiced extreme self-denial.
- He eventually moved a small community to Monte Cassino.
- His greatest significance was in the “Rule” that he gave to his community. This fairly brief document would determine the shape of monasticism for centuries.

Highlights of Benedictine Monasticism

- Two primary elements of Benedict monastic life:
- 1. each monk must remain for the rest of his life in the monastery that he initially joined, unless ordered to go to another place.
- 2. insistence on obedience. First obedience to the “Rule” itself. But also, the abbot was to be obeyed “without delay.” Abbot means father.

Highlights of Benedictine Monasticism

- There was rules for admonishment and for restoration.
- Physical labor was to be shared by all. Everyone participated in routine chores like cooking, cleaning, etc.
- Prayer – Monks were to gather 8 times each day for prayer (7 during the day & once in the middle of the night). Most of the time at these gatherings Psalms were recited as well as other portions of Scripture.
- Study soon became one of the main occupations of the monks. Therefore, monks became adept at copying the Bible & other books.
- Their houses became centers for teaching children, hospitals, pharmacies and hostels where travelers could find shelter.
- Countless marginal lands were brought into high productivity.

Benedictine Monasticism

- In a society where the wealthy considered manual labor demeaning, the monasteries showed that the highest intellectual and spiritual achievements could be coupled with hard physical labor.
- With the support of the papacy, the Benedictine Rule spread throughout the Western church.

The Papacy

The Papacy

- The word “pope” means “father.” In earlier times it was used to refer to important bishops.
- In the West the title was eventually reserved for the bishops of Rome, but in the East it continued to be used with more liberality.
- During the early centuries the numerical strength of Christianity was in the Greek speaking East, and churches such as Antioch & Alexandria was much more important than the one in Rome. Even in the West, the theological leadership of the church was in N. Africa.

The Papacy

- It was the Germanic invasions that brought about the great upsurge in the pope's authority. In the East, the empire continued existing for another 1,000 yr.
- In the West the church became the guardian of what was left of ancient civilization, as well as justice & order.
- The most prestigious bishop in the West, that of Rome, became the focal point of regaining a unity that had been shattered by the invasions.

Leo

- Leo (440 – 461) – the first person who could be called pope in the modern sense.
- He was convinced that Jesus had made Peter & his successors the rock on which the church was to be built, & that therefore the bishop of Rome, Peter's direct successor, is the head of the church. In Leo's writings one finds all the traditional arguments that would repeatedly be mustered in favor of papal authority.
- Most scholars agree that Peter did visit Rome, & that there is at least a reasonable probability that he died there.
- The various lists of the early bishops of Rome, mostly dating from late in the 2nd century do not agree among themselves. This is most likely due to a collegiate of bishops existing in the beginning.

Perspective

- Originally the barbarians (Lombards from the north) invaded Constantinople.
- They soon turned to the easier pickings of the Western empire.
- There is some evidence that officials in Constantinople actually paid the barbarians to invade the West & leave them alone.
- Regardless, the Western empire never received much help for the East.
- In the West any shade of functional civil government simply ceased to exist.
- Therefore, in Rome the popes became responsible for the preservation of the city against the barbarians.
- The popes actually turned to the Franks for assistance. Nothing ever came of it, but it did point to the future, when the Franks would become the main support of the papacy.

Gregory (590-604)

- At the time it was still customary to request the approval of Constantinople before consecrating the bishop of an important town. This remained true until Gregory III in 731.
- Gregory took measures to promote clerical celibacy which was slowly becoming the norm throughout Italy.
- Began to develop the doctrine of purgatory & penance
- The idea of priestly absolution
- The living can help the dead out of purgatory by offering masses in their favor
- The belief that in communion that Christ was sacrificed anew
- Earlier Christian teachers sought to prevent superstitions from becoming part of the faith. Gregory readily accepted the stories circulating at this time.

The Eastern Church

The Eastern Church

- During the early Middle Ages the two branches of the church was drifting apart.
- During this period Christians, both East & West, considered themselves as one church.
- The final separation took place in 1054.

The Eastern Church

- Apart for obvious cultural differences, the political course of events produced entirely different situations in the two branches.
- In the West, the demise of the Empire created a vacuum that the church filled, & thus church leaders – particularly the popes, came to wield great political power.
- In the East the Empire lasted for another 1,000 years. The autocratic emperors kept a tight rein on church leaders. This often led to civil intervention in church matters, particularly in theological debates.

The Eastern Church

- Many emperors made theological decisions on the basis of political considerations.
- Theological controversy became one of the hallmarks of Eastern Christianity during the early middle ages. The issues at stake were often central to the gospel message.
- Since the church saw itself as one during this period, decisions made in the East came to be regarded as normative by both branches. Often these decisions were made with no input from the West.

The Christology Controversy - Donatism

- A question arose of how divinity & humanity are joined in Christ.
- The basic question was how could the immutable, eternal God could be joined to a mutable, historical man?
- Both sides of the argument agreed that Jesus was both divine & human. The question was how to understand that union.
- In the West this did not create the same stir. The West actually played a balancing role between the two factions that arose.
- After 3 earlier councils, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 produced the “Definition of Faith” stating that in Christ there are “two natures in one person.” This did not satisfy a small group who continued the controversy.

Other Controversies

- Cir. 482 Roman Pope Felix III declared that the Emperor had no authority to prescribe what was to be believed. This dispute resulted in an open breach between the bishops of Rome & Constantinople.
- In the 8th century several Byzantine Emperors took steps against images. The Empire was soon divided between “iconclasts” the destroyers of images, and “iconodules” the worshipers of images. Eventually the difficulties were overcome, and most Christians agreed on the use of images in the church, & on restricted reverence due them.
- Only pictures were actually worshiped. Everyone agreed that carved statues were idols. Iconodules believed that the picture became what was worshiped. Iconclasts believe that the picture only represented what was worshipped.

Dissenting Churches of the East

- Various councils came to positions that eventually gained general acceptance in the West & East. These decisions were not always received by churches beyond the confines of the Empire.
- In 410 the **Persian church** organized itself as an autonomous church.
- Rejecting the Council of Chalcedon, the **Coptic church** in Egypt, the **Ethiopian church**, the **Jacobite church** in Syria & the **Armenian church** followed their own paths.

Growth of the Eastern Church

- After Arab conquest, the Eastern Church was blocked to the south & east by Islam, thus the expansion of the church was in a northerly & northwesterly direction.
- 988 is usually given as the beginning of both the **Ukrainian & the Russian church**.
- By 1240 the Mongols invaded Russia & ruled for over 2 centuries. Christianity was the national bond of unity that allowed Russia to survive as a nation.

The Final East – West Divide

- The restoration of the Western Empire under Charlemagne meant that the popes no longer needed the support of the Byzantine Empire.
- In the 11th century a Bulgarian archbishop accused the West of error because it made clerical celibacy a universal rule, and because it celebrated communion with unleavened bread.
- On June 16, 1054 a high handed representative of the pope from Rome placed a sentence of excommunication against an Eastern leader. The break between East & West became final.
- The Byzantine Empire fell in 1453, after an Ottoman army stormed Constantinople during the reign of Constantine XI.

Divisive Solution

- In 1054, Pope Leo IX of Rome and the Patriarch/Bishop of Constantinople decided to excommunicate each other.
- Excommunication a person is not allowed to receive sacraments and have no hope of entering heaven, according to Christian beliefs.



Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians practice their religions differently:

Roman Catholic

Services are conducted in Latin.

The pope has authority over all other bishops.

The pope claims authority over all kings and emperors.

Priests may not marry.

Divorce is not permitted.

Similarities

They base their faith on the gospel of Jesus and the Bible.

They use sacraments such as baptism.

Their religious leaders are priests and bishops.

They seek to convert people.

Eastern Orthodox

Services are conducted in Greek or local languages.

The patriarch and other bishops head the Church as a group.

The emperor claims authority over the patriarch and other bishops of the empire.

Priests may be married.

Divorce is allowed under certain conditions.

The Arabs

Muhammad

- An Arab merchant who always had deep religious interest.
- He had come in contact with both Judaism & the various Christian sects that existed in Arabia.
- He had a series of dreams and was give a vision by the angle Gabriel.
- Muhammad had been commanded to “recite in the name of your Lord the Creator.” Quran means “recitation.”
- He claimed that he was not preaching a new religion, but simply the culmination of what God had revealed in the Hebrew prophets & in Jesus, who was a great prophet, but not divine as Christians claimed.

The Five Pillars of Islam

- 1. There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His Prophet.
- 2. Ritual prayer, prescribed at specific times.
- 3. Zakat, which is often translated as “alms giving,” but whose full meaning included taxations, and specifically that the poor have a right to some of the wealth of the rich. Of the 5 Pillars, this has been most debated & modified in various Muslim communities.
- 4. Fasting during the month of Ramadan, in celebration of the month when the Quran was originally given to Muhammad.
- 5. Pilgrimage to Mecca or hajj, which every adult male who is able must make at least once in his lifetime.

Caliphs

- By Muhammad's death in 632, a goodly part of Arabia was in Muslim hands.
- Caliphs (successors)
- Abu Bakr (632 – 634) – consolidation of Arabia & 1st victory over the Byzantines
- Omar (634 – 644) – took middle east, including Jerusalem in 636 – Egypt, including Alexandria in 642
- Otman (644 -656) – Much of N. Africa – Persian Empire – last Persian king died in 651

The Split

- During the last half of the 7th century Muslim expansion slowed as there was a struggle between 4 caliphs, 3 were assassinated.
- Ali (651 – 661) – Shiites supported Ali & the Sunni supported he rivals.
- Their theological differences were minor, they disagreed on some matters of ritual.
- Their primary rift was on whether only a direct descendant of Muhammad could be Caliph. This position was held by the Shiites, & denied by the Sunni.

How Expansion Occurred So Rapidly

- 711 they invaded Spain and was only stopped short of Spain's northern reaches at the Battle of Tours in 732. This marked the end of the 1st wave of Muslim expansion.
- Muslim rule presented itself as an alternative to Byzantine oppression, and promised those who had been disaffected for religious reasons that their views & goods would be respected. In general only the Byzantines were asked to leave.
- Taxes must paid by everyone.

Impacts on Christianity

- Many of the ancient centers of Christianity were now under Muslim rule.
- Christian apologist debated the use of images, that would rage through the 8th century. This was important to Muslims.
- They also clarified the doctrine of the Trinity, which Muslims claimed was a denial of monotheism.
- The Muslim invasions accelerated the process of militarizing Christianity. The earliest Christians had in general been strict pacifists.
- The West now finding itself pressed from all sides, & responsible for order & safety, developed the concept of Just War Theory. This made it possible for Christians to use violence under some circumstances.

Impacts on Christianity

- The geographic configuration of Christianity changed. Once based along the Mediterranean basin, the axis center now ran from the British Isles, the Frankish kingdom & Italy.
- Constantinople would become increasingly alienated for this center axis.
- A few years after the Arab conquest, in 800, the pope of Rome felt inclined to crown Charlemagne Emperor of the West. They simply ignored the protest from Constantinople.

11th Century

