

## An Overview of Church History

### Overhead Notes

Notes taken from "The Great Emergence: how Christianity is Changing and Why" by Phyllis Tickle and supplemented with notes from "Through Fire and Water"

Basic Premise: Every 500 years the church goes through a 'rummage sale', a change.

0-500 Birth of Monasticism  
500-1000 The Great Schism  
1000-1500 The Reformation  
1500-2000? The Great Emergence?

Each of these represented political, economic and social upheavals that forever shaped and changed society.

### 0-500 - Birth of Monasticism

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- Pope Gregory the Great (ca 590) guided Christianity into monasticism that would preserve and protect it.  
**Factors that lead to change -**
- 1<sup>st</sup> – the slow, long death of the Roman Empire
  - o Loss of literacy, political and social stability – Barbarians were not interested in literature.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – Council of Chalcedon in 451
  - o discussed the nature of Christ – one 'person' in two natures or two 'persons' in one skin – at stake was the nature of incarnation – a debate so intense it divided the church.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – East and West Split
  - o withdrew, exile, excommunicate (Roman Latin, Greek Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox)

### Result

- a reconfigured form of monasticism that functioned not only as a way of private holiness but also as a way of societal and political stability
- barbarians were illiterate – the adopted and adapted Christianity
- illiteracy and lawlessness too organized Christianity of Constantine away from the laity and replaced it with a pagan, magical influenced form.

### 500-1000 The Great Schism

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- Long, slow division of Eastern and Western Christianity
- **Identified as the "Dark Ages" – Europe lost intellectual and social advantage – the Eastern world advanced.**
- Like to place the final permanent split to AD. 1054
- Issues of leaven/unleaven bread, HS descended from Father or from Father and Son were HUGE issues in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

- Patriarch had Constantinople, the Pope had Rome – excom not lifted until 1965.

### **1000-1500 The Reformation**

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- October 31, 1517 - 95 Thesis - the date that we like
- Luther was responding to pressure that had been building for over a century.
- All Luther did was say ‘Hey look, there is a hole, and we are taking on water!’

### **Factors that Got it all Started**

#### **Pope and Popes**

- Popes in Rome and Avignon, and Italy AD 1418
- The chaos was just as much cultural, political, and social as it was religious
- Challenged the question “where does authority lie?”

#### **Europe’s War with Islam**

- 1453 Ottoman Turks finally successfully captured Constantinople
- As a result thousands of Greek Orthodox scholars, traders, and intelligentsia fled Turkey and moved to inland Europe – to the major cities
- Brought with them:
  - o Copies of ancient writers - Homer, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Demosthenes, great Roman writers, Ovid, Cicero, Pliny etc.
  - o Were able to read ancient, classical languages with sophisticated accuracy
  - o Advanced scientific and mathematical knowledge of Arab/Islamic culture
- This was the conception of the Renaissance

#### **The Influence of Gutenberg**

- The reformation is intimately tied to matters of written word
- John Wycliffe (d. 1384) translated bible into English but message limited. Why? Wycliffe was before Gutenberg, Luther was after.
- His printing press made it possible for Luther’s Thesis to jump down from the door of Wittenberg’s church and circulate to people hundreds of miles away.
- Problem with literacy? Everyone will interpret what they read differently
- Spread ideas of the Renaissance,
  - o Niccolo Machiavelli – 1469-1527 – The Prince – ideas of sound government and moral leadership
  - o Copernicus, 1514 –had the heretical idea that the earth revolved around the sun.

#### **Sola Scriptura, scriptura sola**

- Sola scriptura, combined with the priesthood of all believers required absolute and universal literacy if it was going to work.
- New authority – scripture
- No more pope, no more magistrates, no more human confessor between humanity and God, only the Good Book

### **Continued Tensions with Islam**

- Expulsion of Moors from Spain
  - o City of Cordoba, Moors left behind a library of over four hundred thousand volumes - more than Christian Europe had access to
  - o Ferdinand and Isabella – 1492 – freed \$ to allow Columbus to sail
- Ottoman Expansion
  - o Took southern Mediterranean, drove Hospitaliers from Rhodes, captured Hungary and in 1529 marched to the walls of Vienna.

### **End of Fiefdom**

- hierarchical system of dependency and loyalty fell apart
- Reasons?
  - o Change in Warfare, Introduction of gunpowder: now protection in numbers and alliances not power of knight.
  - o Cash money, not blood and land, became the basis of power.
- Result?
  - o Fiefdoms and duchies began to centralize – beginnings of nation states
  - o Peasants left without lords, moved to cities, became independent
  - o The nuclear family replaced the tribe as the center of physical organization.
  - o The entrepreneurial 'middle class' emerged to fill the space left by the largely bankrupt hereditary aristocracy and the abject, unemployed poverty of the peasantry.

### **Flat Earth?**

- Blame Columbus – failed to fall off edge of earth.
- Exploration of new lands and peoples was another challenge to authority
- Questions, dangerous questions were asked:
  - o Where was God and Heaven, if it was no longer above?
  - o Was there really a 'New World' out there?
  - o Why there peoples that the Church and humankind had never heard of?
  - o Had the priests and Holy Fathers been subject to error and ignorance all along?
  - o Was the church capable of being wrong?

### **1500-2000? The Great Emergence?**

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#### **Interesting to note:**

AD 70 - Destruction of 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple and Priestly Judaism

586 BC - Babylonian Captivity and destruction of Solomon's Temple and the Great Diaspora

ca 1000 BC - End of the Age of Judges and Beginning of Monarchy

ca 1500 BC – Exodus from Egypt

ca 2000 BC - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.