

Roman Catholicism (III)

To understand present 'church' situation,
must trace development of R. C. Church.

Two benefits – increases our

1. understanding of how denomination-
alism developed.
2. ability to teach / defend gospel.

NT period – gospel divided people, Mt.10:34

- Ac.8:4, persecution
- Ac.11:19, actually spread gospel

“No merely human religion could have stood such an ordeal of fire for 300 years. The final victory of Christianity over Judaism and heathenism, and the mightiest empire of the ancient world, a victory gained w/o physical force, but by the moral power of patience and perseverance of faith and love, is one of the sublimest spectacles in history, and of the strongest evidences of the divinity & indestructible life of our religion.”

- Tertullian: “Our number increases the more you destroy us. The blood of the Christians is their seed.”
- “From 5th Century it has been customary to reckon 10 great persecutions...” (Sch.II, 8, 15, 33, 34).
- “In North Africa arose the proverb: “If God does not send rain, lay it to the Christians” (ib. 43).
- Persecution raged longest and most fiercely in East under rule of Galerius and nephew Maximin Daza...

- During AD 260-303, a period of relief.
 - Results: discipline relaxed; quarrels, intrigues, and factions increased, and worldliness poured in like a flood. (ib. 63)
- Col.1:23
 - Pliny laments that in Asia Minor, men of every rank go over to the Christians.
 - Organization: primitive. Ep.4:11
 - Worship: sincere, not showy. Jn.4:24

- Gibbon: five causes of success –
 1. Zeal [Ac.2,3,8,11, etc.]
 2. Belief in future rewards / punishments [Mk.16; 2 Co.5]
 3. Power of miracles [Ac.8]
 4. Pure morals of Christians [Mt.5:16; 2 Co.5:10]
 5. Compact church organization [Ac.14:23]

I. Beginning of Apostasy: Change in Church Organization

Clergy-Laity distinction

- Third Century: became customary to apply term 'priest' exclusively to ministers, especially bishops. The whole ministry alone was called 'clergy' because of its presidency and peculiar relation to God; it was distinguished from other Christians, called 'laity.'

Rise of the episcopate

New church officers:

- Sub-deacons [assistants / deputies of deacons]
- Readers [read Scripture in assembly; had charge of church books]
- Acolyths [attendants of bishops in official duties and processions]
- Exorcists
- Precentors [for musical parts of liturgy, psalms, benedictions, etc.];
- Janitors or sextons [cared for meeting-rooms, church-yards...].

Distinction made between Episcopate and Presbyterate (1)

- “The episcopate was formed, not out of the apostolic order by localization, but out of the presbyterial by elevation; and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them”
– Lightfoot

Distinction made between Episcopate and Presbyterate (2)

- Jerome on Tit.1:7 – churches originally...
‘were governed by the common council of the presbyters, and not till a later period was one of the presbyters placed at the head, to watch over the church and suppress schisms’
- Ac.14:23; cf. 1 Co.4:17.
- Also Ac.20:17, 28; Ph.1:1; Tit.1:5,7.

Distinction made between Episcopate and Presbyterate (3)

- a. They appear always as a plurality in one / same congregation.
- b. Same officers of church in Ephesus are alternately called presbyters and bishops.
- c. Paul sends greetings to bishops and deacons of Philippi but omits presbyters because they are included in first term.
- d. Pastoral Epistles: qualifications for all church 'officers'; mention only two: bishops and deacons; uses 'presbyter' afterwards for bishop (I, 493ff).

Beginning of Roman Primacy (1)

1. Human bishop is center of unity for the single congregation
2. He stands in it as vicar of Christ and even of God
3. Apostasy from bishop is apostasy from Christ (Ignatius).

Beginning of Roman Primacy (2)

- a. Ordination of bishop was performed by neighboring bishops, requiring at least three in number.
- b. On lowest level stood bishops of the country churches; among city bishops the metropolitans rose above the rest; the apostolic mother-churches are yet more important.
- c. Primacy and episcopacy grew together.

I. Beginning of Apostasy:
Change in Church Organization

II. Councils

Councils or Synods

- Maintained ecclesiastical unity and decided questions of faith and discipline
 - No trace of councils before middle of 2nd Century
- 1. **AD 451: Council of Chalcedon** reduced age of widows to be enrolled from 60 to 40 (1 Tim.5:9).

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- **2. AD 787: second Council of Nice**
sanctioned use of images in the church

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- **3. AD 1215: Council of Constance** took the cup from the laity. [Ct. Mt.26; 1 Co.11:28]

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- **4. AD 1545: Council of Trent** refused innocent party right to remarry.

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Summary:

- In matters of discipline, majority decided; in matters of faith, unanimity was required, though, if necessary, it was forced by the excision of the dissentient minority (III, 340).

Councils or Synods

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Summary:

- Gregory later placed the first four councils...on level with the four canonical gospels! (III, 341).
- Synods still determine what is 'right or wrong.'

Councils or Synods

- Their defense: Ac.15 and Mt.18:19-20
- Mt.18: true, Lord is with us (cf. 28:20)
 - But He does not give us permission to add to His word. Rv.22:18-19; 2 Jn.9
- Ac.15: great embarrassment to Catholicism
 - If Peter is first pope, whole issue should be submitted to him, not various ones
 - If there were a pope in Ac.15, it would not be Peter. V.3, 19-20, 22; Ga.2:9

I. Beginning of Apostasy:
Change in Church Organization

II. Councils

III. Changes in Doctrine

Images

- Epiphanius (church 'father')
- Ex.20:4-5. Thomas Aquinas
- Ex.32:5, 'feast to LORD'
 - People knew a newly created golden calf did not lead them out of Egypt (8).
 - Thus, it merely symbolized deity.
 - Paul calls it idolatry (1 Co.10:7).
- Lord left no description of appearance
- Oldest pictures of Christ... Gnostics

Worship ⁽¹⁾

- Universal priesthood is closely connected with simple worship.
- Episcopal hierarchy, with a rich, imposing ceremonial worship
- Public worship assumed a dramatic, theatrical character...made it attractive to mass of people...
- Chrysostom mourns over theatrical customs, such as loud clapping in applause, which Christians at Antioch and Constantinople brought with them into the church.

Worship ⁽²⁾

- AD 324: 12,000 baptized in Rome because emperor promised each a white garment and 20 pieces of gold.
- Union of church and state (Constantine) made Christianity a matter of fashion... Hypocrites and formal professors rapidly increased.
- Clergy dress code. Mt.23:5
- Institution and observance of Easter . . .
- Sign of the cross... 2nd Century