

Church History

Part 3

Pergamos [thoroughly Married] **Rev 2:12-17**

The Worldly Church
AD 312 - AD500

Salient feature - Doctrine of Balaam - Compromise
Romanism's beginnings.

:13 *Holdest fast my name. Battles concerning the Person of Christ. Not denied my faith.*

Battles concerning the truth of Christianity.

Antipas - against all. Martyred dentist, put in a brass bull which was heated until it glowed red hot.

He took a stand, against a pragmatic and compromising Church. Which had listened to the Doctrine of Balaam.

:14 Balaam hired to curse Israel by Balak, he could not curse that which God had blessed. Instead he counseled the King of Moab to entice Israel into Moab's heathen Idolatry.

He could not get God to be unfaithful to His people, so he counseled to get the people to be unfaithful to their God!

Satan failed to overthrow the Church by persecution, now he snares the Church into Idolatry and spiritual adultery.

Constantine and the unholy alliance with the world. [His mother Helena was a Christian.]

Death of Diocletian a battle for control of the Empire waged between Constantine and Maxentius.

Constantine saw a vision in the sky in AD312 before the battle of Milvian bridge, it was the shape of a cross of light and written was the inscription "by this sign conquer". He made a pact, if he won the battle he would join the Church and become a Christian.

Edict of Milan AD313, A charter of Christian liberties issued. Christianity became the religion of the Empire in 381AD. 400 bishops met a victorious Constantine and carried him on a golden throne and he presided over a church council.

The church exchanged the rags of persecution for the softer garments of a marriage with the state.

Was Constantine really a Christian or a consummate politician?

Pontifex Maximus - High Priest or Greatest Priest of Pagan religion -never gave this position up. He died head of the Church and high priest of the heathen.

The Papal system still claims this title even for the present pope.

Bishops were given land, tax exemptions and built basilicas for meeting places.

The Labarum - The New imperial standard, Initials of Christ IHS- Jesu Hominum salvator -Jesus the Savior of Men.

A symbol of His Cross and an image of the emperor in gold. Used to animate soldiers in the day of battle and also an object of worship. Constantine publicly united Christianity to Idolatry!

Did not get baptized until just prior to his death.

His mother Helena loved relics, took pilgrimages to the Holy Land, it is said she had collected enough pieces of the true cross to build Noah's Ark, she also had two eggs of the Dove that descended on Jesus at His baptism, and Nails of the True Cross.

He made Constantinople the new capital of the Empire AD330, the Eastern Orthodox Church considers him to be as "Equal of the Apostles"

Donatists

Donatus was an African Bishop who Opposed ordination of ungodly men by the Catholic Church, believed in the autonomy of the Church, baptism by immersion and the new birth, refused to align themselves with the mainstream Catholic Bishops. Constantine sided against them and had them persecuted. The first nonconformists!

The First time, Christians are persecuted by Christians [so called]. Constantine sent his soldiers to destroy the Donatists. [Again the unity of the Empire is being threatened, this time by a division in the Church.]

Arianism 256-336

Arius verses Athanasius. - Prototype of Jehovah's False Witnesses

Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, who maintained that the Son of God was a created being, the first and greatest, but not on equality with the Father. A very Eloquent speaker but wrong!

Council of Nicea 325 AD Was the churches formulated answer to Arianism with what we call the Nicene creed, which was adopted by vote of the bishops.

Constantine the secular head of the State was present and took an active role. He called the Council, paid for 300 bishops to attend, all expenses covered.

An African brother wearing a leopard skin, which he removed to reveal his scars received from the wild beasts in the Roman games, won the day, saying all was not necessary if Jesus was not Lord.

Pelagianism 390-418

Pelagius - Prototype of Arminianism. - a British monk, [real name was Morgan and he was actually Welsh] reacting against the laxity and self indulgence of many professing Christians.

Taught that Adam's sin only affected himself, each person is born without original sin and can live a life of sinless perfection.

His teaching takes away our dependence on Christ for Salvation and points man to look within himself for his own goodness.

Sabalianism

Sabellius - taught that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were but phases or modes of the Deity and denied the personal distinction of each. Denied and opposed the teaching of the Trinity.

Theodosius 1 in AD 380 & 381 issued edicts that made Christianity the exclusive religion of the state. Any who held any other religion would suffer punishment from the State.

The Edict of Constantinople in AD 392 prohibited Paganism.

Augustine of Hippo 354-430

His conversion – previously lived an immoral life. Heard children saying, take up and read.
He did so and read **Romans 13:13-14**

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

He was converted.
The Fall of Rome and the City of God.
Formulated the doctrine of Salvation by the Church only and by the means of her sacraments. To take salvation out of the hands of the savior and place it in to the hands of men was an unmitigated disaster.

Also taught –Baptismal regeneration, Amillennialism.

"De perfectione justitiae hominis". In these, he strongly affirmed the existence of original sin, the need for infant baptism, the impossibility of a sinless life without Christ, and the necessity of Christ's grace.

Sir. Robert Anderson wrote “Nearly all the errors prevalent in Romanism can be traced back to this man.” He reacted against Pelagius, and so emphasized man’s depravity, that it was impossible for man to believe without God first regenerating Him.

Augustine has the distinction of being the originator of both Catholicism and Calvinism.

His work “Against the Donatists” –He misapplies the parable of “the Wheat and the Tares.” To argue that there was a mixed multitude in the Church, therefore not a strictly believers Church, which the Donatists were advocating. Secondly, he used:

Luke 14:23

“And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

To use the arm of the State now married to the Church, to use violent methods, including inquisition tactics to force people into the Church.

Formally connect with Manicheism, followers of the Persian teacher Mani, a kind of gnostic influenced philosophy seeking to combine Christianity with Eastern Ideas 216-276 and Neo Platonism, these philosophy's come out in his teaching. Prior to Augustine all the Church Fathers believed in Free will, and Christ died for all men.

:15 The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans had become firmly established now, no longer just the deeds, but an established doctrine!

The Rise of Monasticism

A reaction to the worldliness of the Church, caused some to withdraw themselves from all contact with men. Beginning as hermits and then attracting others that joined them in religious communities for contemplation, prayer and practical acts of piety. Much of the great books of western civilization were preserved in the monasteries during the sacking of Rome by the Pagan hordes from the North.

Some of the monasteries became centers of Evangelization, especially in the Celtic Church.

Key figures:

Anthony 250-356 of Egypt. Lived in a cave, the movement took off and it became hard to find an empty cave anywhere.

Simon Stylites 390-459

Lived on a platform on top of a pillar 60 ft high for 37 years, a hermit from the desert, trying to escape the corruption in the world. Isolationism, seen as the way to defeat corruption.