

from CHRIST to CHRISTENDOM

Part 1: The Era of the Apostles

PART 2: THE NEXT GENERATION

PART 3: THE PLOT TWIST OF CONSTANTINE

INTRODUCTION – When The Church Plays Saviour

She [the Church] is the entrance to life; all the others are thieves and robbers.
~ *Irenaeus of Lyons (130-202 CE)*:

Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.
~ *Jesus, John 10:7-9 (NASB)*

When Lava Cools – The Routinization of Charisma

Max Weber [1864-1920] – Religion as “the Routinization of Charisma”

Faith movements are usually begun by a single dynamic, charismatic leader. But what happens to the movement once that leader dies? How can the core ideals be passed on to future generations?

- Replace him or her with an equally charismatic leader(s).
- Replace him or her with traditions and systems that will help them pass on their experiences to others.
- Encourage every generation to go back to the source.
Hebrews 12:2; Mark 2:22, 27; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-7

After The Apostles – Mixed Signals

“APOSTOLIC FATHERS” = Late first-century church leaders, directly disciples by the Apostles.
e.g., Clement of Rome; Ignatius of Antioch; Polycarp of Smyrna; Papius.

- Inside-out spirituality is still stressed (e.g., Epistle To Diognetus)
 - BUT... Over time, outside markers of faith become equally emphasized.
- Simplicity in style and form of worship (in homes, with few rituals).
 - BUT... Later, complexity and grandeur overtake simplicity and modesty.
- Jew & Gentile, slave & free, male & female unity is demonstrated in ways that have never before been seen on the planet. Christians are mocked as “the third race”. Pagans were astonished that in the church, master and slave were brothers. Several “bishops” were former slaves.
 - BUT... Later, Pope Leo the Great proclaimed that no slave could ever become a priest.
 - Women are given only three roles in the church: “virgin, widow, or faithful wife” by Polycarp (110 CE).
- Fidelity to Christ amidst waves of persecution.
 - BUT... Some Christians *seek* martyrdom, despite Christ’s permission to simply flee. Relics of martyrs become a new fascination of the institution.

- Radical generosity continued to be the norm.
 - BUT... Funds were increasingly needed to pay for church staff. (In 251 CE the church in Rome had over 100 paid staff.)
- Emphasis on honouring Jesus through lifestyle (orthopraxy married with orthodoxy) at a time when pagan religions focussed on beliefs and rituals, leaving ethics to be addressed through philosophy.
 - BUT... Because of people abusing grace, lifestyle emphasis degenerated into a focus on sin and legalistic boundaries.
 - Origen castrates himself based on **Matthew 19:12**, but later realizes his mistake in taking Jesus literally. (Bad timing brother.)
 - Baptism, fasting, prayer become systematized. (Hippolytus wrote that Christians should pray seven times daily at specified times.)
- Didache (*DID-a-kay*), one of our earliest non-biblical Christian writings (100 CE), focuses on lifestyle issues and shows flexibility in church symbology (e.g., baptism).
 - BUT... Baptism must only be given after two days for fasting.
 - Fasting must be done two days a week, but different days than Jews.
 - Church leaders are referred to as our “high priests”.
 - Lord’s prayer must be prayed three times a day.
- Ignatius tries to keep the church strong and organized in the midst of two ongoing problems: a) conflicting teaching from within and b) harsh persecution from without.
 - BUT... Patterns of organization become hierarchical and solidified.
 - Authority is given to one Bishop per city, with Elders acting as shepherds of house churches, and deacons acting as ministers.
 - No meetings, baptisms, or agape meals may happen without the Bishop.
 - Ignatius refers to the Eucharist as “the medicine of immortality”, which only Bishops can offer.
 - The Old Testament title of “priest” is later revived as an official church office.
Acts 20:17 & 18; 1 Timothy 3:1 & 5:17; 1 Peter 2:9; 5:1-2

CONCLUSION – Becoming A Fundamentalist

1 Timothy 2:5

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP...

- After reviewing the message, talk about what aspect most challenged, bothered, or encouraged you.

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

- Read Paul’s words of instruction to the young pastor, Timothy, in **1 Timothy 4**. Have 3 or 4 people read the chapter out loud from different translations. a) What might be some advantages and disadvantages of listening to the reading of Scripture (as they had to do in the early years of the church) instead of reading from your own Bible, as we can do today? b) What verse or phrase stands out to you the most? Why? c) Paul sees lying – treating truth like something that can be manipulated or compromised for personal gain – as something that can have devastating psychological and spiritual consequences (**v. 2**). Describe what Paul is saying in your own words. Talk about your experience or observations regarding this phenomenon. d) In context, what is the “sound doctrine” (NASB) or “good teaching” (TNIV) that Paul refers to in **vv. 6 & 16** (same word for doctrine/teaching)? e) How might some Christians read from **v. 10** that all people will eventually be saved? Can you think of any other verses that would support this theory or argue against it?

SO WHAT?...

- Think back. How does **vv. 7-8** tie in with our recent series, *The Irreligious Life*? How are you doing in those spiritual disciplines these days? What changes (or lack thereof) have you seen in your life?

Bruxy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, June 18 / 25, 2006