

# **Changes in Church Organization and Government**

# **Post-Apostolic Organization**

- **“The later books of the New Testament and some of the Apostolic Fathers provide impressive evidence of a wide geographical spread for a particular church order. In each church, that order involved a plurality of elders or bishops (the terms were used interchangeably) assisted by deacons” (Ferguson 107)**

# Presbyter-Bishops

***First Clement* suggests the existence of presbyter-bishops rather than a single monarchical bishop; and the tradition that this latter had always been the form of church government cannot be traced beyond Hegesippus (c. 175). To the writer of *1 Clement*, Peter and Paul were “good Apostles” whose deaths he hints may have taken place in Rome but he does not mention them as founders of the see. From *Hermas* we hear of various officials in charge of different tasks. Clement is mentioned as being concerned with “foreign correspondence,” and we hear too of bishops or overseers charged with hospitality and charitable works . . . . Rome, however, was already showing a concern for communities beyond the city (W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984, 130)**

# Form of Government

- In the second century, “One president, or *bishop*, presided over each church. He was created by the common suffrage of the whole people. With the *presbyters* for his council, whose number was not fixed, it was his business to watch over the interests of the whole church, and to assign to each *presbyter* his station. Subject to the bishop and also the presbyters, were the servants, or *deacons*”
- John Lawrence Von Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern*, Vol. I, NY: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1861, 116)

# **Justification for Change**

- **The distinction (between the bishop and presbyters) firmly established from the time of Cyprian, was brought about in the following way: The churches had come to be large bodies difficult to manage, especially in times of persecution. The collections and distributions of alms had assumed vast proportions, and the superintendence of this work devolved upon the Bishop. The Bishop was chairman of the board of presbyters and the leader of the church in...**

# **Justifying the Need for a Bishop**

- **...the administration of discipline. Presbyters often disagreed, and the feeling grew that there should be in each Christian community a center of authority, whereby schism might be prevented and unity preserved. Occasions would frequently arise for the interference of the bishop, and when the need for episcopal authority came to be felt, the vindication was sure to follow” (A. G. Newman as quoted by Shackelford 29-30)**

# **Changing Government**

- **Churches continued to be independent of each other during most of the second century**
- **A type of confederation of churches was formed over time between churches in the same province**
- **Delegates were selected from the churches and sent to the “convention,” which became known as a synod, and the laws they formed were called canons, or rules (Mosheim 116-117)**

# **Expanding the Role of the Bishop**

- **Bishops living in cities, either through their own or others' labors, established churches in the country**
- **These churches were guided by the city bishop, usually through the appointment of a rural bishop (Mosheim 71)**



# **Ignatius of Antioch**

- **Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in Syria, was arrested at the close of the reign of emperor Trajan (98-117)**
- **He was concerned about division**
  - **On the one hand, there were the false teachings of the Docetists, “who said that Jesus Christ only ‘seemed’ or ‘appeared’ to be truly human” (Ferguson *Church History Volume One* 56)**
  - **On the other hand, the Judaizers were still promoting Jewish practices among members of the church**

# **Development of the Monarchical Bishop**

- In answer to the division, Ignatius urged Christians to obey their leaders (Ferguson 56)**
- His writings distinguished between the “bishop” (singular) and the “presbyters” (elders, plural) who were assistants under him**
- “He suggested that the bishop took the place of Christ as an authority figure, while the presbyters were like the apostles”**
- “This development is known as the monarchical episcopate” (North 50-51)**

# Montanus

- **In Phrygia after 155, Montanus sought to meet the problems of formalism and depending on human leadership**
- **He was opposed to the elevation of the bishop in the local church**
- **Believed inspiration was immediate and continuous, actually saying he was the paraclete through whom the Spirit spoke, much as he had through Paul**
- **Thought the heavenly kingdom of Christ would soon be set up in Pepuza in Phrygia, so followers practiced strict asceticism (Cairns 100)**

# Cyprian

- Cyprian was chosen bishop of Carthage c. 249
- Near that time “a person bearing the title of *bishop* presided over each church in the larger cities, and that he managed its public concerns with some degree of authority; yet having the *presbyters* for his council, and taking the voice of the whole people on subjects of considerable moment” (Mosheim 163)

# **Primacy of the Bishop of Rome**

- **Cyprian argued for the bishop of Rome holding a primacy in the church, but “strenuously contended for the equality of all bishops, in respect to dignity and authority; and disregarding the judgment of the bishop of Rome, whenever it appeared to them incorrect, had no hesitation in following their own judgment” (Mosheim 163-164)**
- **A century later, bountiful evidence shows the bishop of Rome did not “possess supreme power and jurisdiction in the church” (Ibid 235)**

# **Leo I**

- **Leo I, who was later called “the Great,” served as bishop of Rome for twenty years, starting in 440**
- **“He stressed the theory of Roman supremacy on the basis of Apostolic succession. He taught that the Lord held the Roman bishop responsible for the care of all the churches and that other bishops were assistants to the Roman bishop in administration, but could not share his authority” (Mattox 139)**
- **There was an intense rivalry between the bishops of Constantinople and Rome**

# **Council of Calcedon (451)**

- In the 28th canon decreed “that the bishop of New Rome ought to enjoy the same honours and prerogatives with the pontiff of ancient Rome, on account of the equal dignity and rank of the two cities; and by a formal act they confirmed his jurisdiction over the provinces which he claimed. Leo the Great, bishop of ancient Rome, and some other bishops, strenuously resisted this decree; but in vain, for the Greek emperors supported the cause of their bishops. After the period of this the Constantinopolitan bishops began to contend fiercely for supremacy with the Roman bishops, and encroached on the privileges and dignity of the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch” (Mosheim 323-324)**

# Rome Opposed the Title “Universal Bishop”

- A court of commissioners met in 587 to try Gregory, bishop of Antioch
- “John the patriarch of Constantinople was honored with the title of *universal bishop*”
- Pelagius “remonstrated strongly against the title given to *John*....In the year 590, *Pelagius* died, and was succeeded by *Gregory* the Great; and he, finding that *John* continued to use this title, took up the business in earnest about the year 595” (Mosheim 389)



# **Gregory the Great**

- **“When the Lombards increased their aggression in the early 590’s, and since the Byzantine authorities were either unwilling or unable to do anything about it, Gregory filled the power vacuum that existed in central Italy and took charge” (James North, *A History of the Church: From Pentecost to Present*, Joplin, MO: College Press, 147)**
- **He paid for grain so the peasants could continue to receive daily subsidies and helped the imperial garrison station at Rome (148)**

# **Gregory's Power**

- **Gregory organized the city's defense and paid the Lombards a ransom for peace in 595**
- **“he managed the civil affaires of central Italy, virtually all Christian areas in the west acknowledged him as the universal patriarch, the Roman Church became very wealthy, and all western religious leaders looked to Rome for advice and direction. As a result, Gregory emerged as the first Bishop of Rome to display fully the power and authority that is connoted by the word ‘Pope’” (North 150)**

# Rejected Title

- **Gregory believed the title “universal bishop” was profane for the bishop of Constantinople**
- **He rejected “the title for himself as well, and in this context stated his own concept of his office as ‘servant of the servants of God,’ which itself later became the papal title” (Ferguson 319)**

# Boniface III

- **Serving as legate to the court of Emperor Phocas in Constantinople seems to have caused Boniface III to gain favor**
- **“After his elevation to the See of Rome, Boniface obtained a decree from Phocas, against Cyriacus, Bishop of Constantinople, by which it was ordained, that ‘the See of Blessed Peter the Apostle should be the head of all the Churches’, and the title of ‘Universal Bishop’ belonged exclusively to the Bishop of Rome” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Catholic Online, n.d. Web. 14 Oct. 2013)**

# **The “First Pope”**

- **February 19, 607 was the day Boniface III was consecrated as pope**
- **“Though the fact is not denied, it is to be regarded rather as a triumph of papal politics, which did not disdain the alliance of a base and criminal ruler, than as a historical justification of the claims of Rome” (Albert Hauck, “Boniface III,” *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949, 222-223)**

# **Erosion of Papal Power**

- **Papal power was strong for centuries**
- **It began to erode until, in the 1800's, only Latium remained under the control of the pope**
- **Latium and Rome were occupied and annexed in 1870, resulting in intense enmity between the Italian government and the papacy**
- **Negotiations began in 1926 which resulted in the Lateran Treaty being signed in 1929**
  - **Vatican City was designated a sovereign state recognized by the Italian government and not subject to taxation**

# **First Vatican Council**

- **“Pius IX...made the first public announcement of the prospective council, on June 26, 1867” (Carl Mirbt, “Vatican Council,” The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. XII, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950, 147)**
- **“the council was to meet at Rome on Dec. 8, 1869” (Ibid)**
- **Two major decisions were made July 18, 1870**
- **First, the Roman Pontiff was declared to have “supreme power of jurisdiction over the Church universal; not merely in things pertaining to faith and morals, but also in those which pertain to the discipline and government of the Church as diffused throughout the world” (154)**

# The Power of the Pope

- The second major decision of the first Vatican Council was to decree “that the Roman pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*; that is when in the discharge of his office as pastor and teacher of all Christians, and in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine on faith or morals, to be observed by the entire ecumenical Church; thereby using the divine assistance to him vouchsafed by promise to the blessed Peter; he then brings to bear that potential infallibility wherewith the divine redeemer desired and willed that his Church be instructed in such definition of doctrine on faith or morals; and therefore the like definitions by the Roman pontiff are absolute, or unalterable in themselves as by intrinsic force, and not by concession of the Church” (154)



# Distinction Between Clergy and Laity

- “But in the fourth century, definite distinctions were being drawn between the minister and other Christians. The word ‘clergy’ that was formerly used to designate the entire body of Christians came to be applied only to the ministers” (Shackelford 31-32)
- *kleros* “that which is designated by lot, portion, share” - used in 1 Peter 5:3 “to denote the ‘flock’ as a whole” (Ardnt and Gingrich in above)
- *laos* “the people, mass, crowd”
- “clergy” came to have the exclusive task of preaching the word and administering “the sacraments” (Schaff II in Shackelford 32)

# **Constantine the Great**

- **There were two pairs seeing power when Galerius died: Constantine and Licinius; and Maximinus Daia and Maxentius**
- **Maxentius died in battle Oct. 28, 312**
- **Constantine and Licinius met at Milan and mutually agreed to permit full freedom to Christianity, issued April, 313 and generally known as the “Edict of Milan” (Walker 101)**
- **Licinius defeated Maximinus Daia near Adrianople**
- **Constantine defeated Licinius at Adrianople in 324 and exiled him to Thessalonica**

# **Support of the Church**

- **Constantine gave assurance there would be no more persecution and began to favor Christianity as though it was a state religion**
- **He decreed all church buildings be returned and the state reimburse those who had possessed them**
- **He encouraged construction of additional elaborate buildings, allotting state money**
- **He authorized money to be distributed to ministers**

# **Favoring the Church**

- **Constantine issued decrees that ministers were excused from public offices**
- **Managed internal church affairs to promote unity**
- **Issued edict against soothsayers**
- **Decreed all judges, city people and craftsmen rest on Sunday, with a provision for farmers to work if crops required**

# **Actions Contrary to Christian Conduct**

- **Constantine put his son to death on charges of treason brought by his wife, Fausta**
- **Became displeased with her and had her executed**
- **Kept position as chief priest of the pagan state religion**
- **He seems to have been influenced by his father's protection of Christians and the peace and prosperity that had resulted**

# **Conflict Over the Nature of Christ**

- **Alexander, the “bishop,” preached a sermon on the “Unity of the Trinity” in 325**
- **Arius, one of the elders and a popular preacher, took issue with the sermon, saying Alexander did not make enough distinction between God the Father and Jesus**
- **Arius believed Jesus was above man but beneath God**
- **He said Jesus was in existence long before the world began, but he had not existed eternally**

# **Council of Nicea AD 325**

- **“Constantine’s attempt to unify the empire in order to save classical civilization meant the church had to have a unified body of dogma if it was to be the cement to hold the body politic together”**
- **“The method adopted by the church to resolve the vital differences of opinion concerning the teachings of the Scriptures was the ecumenical or universal council, usually called and presided over by the Roman emperor”**
- **Constantine called a council in early summer, 325 at Nicea to resolve the Arian controversy (Cairns 126)**

# **Constantine at Nicea**

- **Constantine presided as chairman since he was considered the bishop of bishops**
- **He said, in his keynote address, the gospel, apostolic writings and ancient prophecies teach what we are to believe about the divine nature**
- **He called for contentions to be set aside**
- **He called for all to seek the solution to all doubtful topics in the divinely inspired word**



# **Clergy in the Lutheran Church**

- **“Although we are all priests, yet we can not, nor should we, all preach and teach and rule: one must then certainly, from the entire body, separate and elect some to whom such duties shall be committed; and he that wields the same is not a priest on account of the office (as all others are), but a servant of all the others” (Luther’s Exposition of Psalm CX quoted in New Schaff-Herzog III, 144)**

# Organization for the Lutheran Church

- The president of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod “is the chief ecclesiastical and ecumenical officer of the Synod, supervising what is taught and practiced within the church and advising and maintaining relationships with our partner church bodies” (<http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=389>)

# Organization for the Methodist Church

- **“In order that each local church may be an effective connectional unity in The Methodist Church, it shall be the duty of all district superintendents and pastors to organize and administer the charges and churches committed to their care in accordance with the plan hereinafter set forth” (*Doctrines and Discipline of The Methodist Church 1956*, The Methodist Publishing House, 38)**

# Organization for the Church of the Nazarene

- "The Church of the Nazarene has a representative form of government"
- "We are agreed on the necessity of a superintendency, which shall foster and care for churches already established, and whose duty it shall be to organize and encourage the organizing of churches everywhere" (*Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*, Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1940, 36)

# Organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

- In *Doctrine and Covenants*, it is reported that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were ordained as apostles (27:12-14)