

THE EIGHT ESSENTIALS

THE CHURCH

“One of the more remarkable aspects of Christianity today is how few...professed believers have ever seriously studied the history of their religion”

-Bruce L. Shelley

“Without understanding the past, we are unable to understand ourselves, for in a sense the past still lives in us and influences who we are and how we understand the Christian message.”

-Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*

THE CHURCH EARLY BEGINNINGS

“I ALSO SAY TO YOU THAT
YOU ARE PETER, AND
UPON THIS ROCK I WILL
BUILD MY CHURCH; AND
THE GATES OF HADES WILL
NOT OVERPOWER IT.”

- MATTHEW 16:18

-THE CHURCH IS HIS
CHURCH

-CHRIST ALONE BUILDS
THE CHURCH

-IT IS BUILT BY THE
STONES (PETER) OF THOSE
WHO PROFESS CHRIST

-THE ROCK (FOUNDATION
STONE) ON WHICH IT IS
BUILT IS “WHO DO YOU
SAY THAT I AM?”



BIBLICAL MANDATE- ACTS 2:42

- The early believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching
- To the fellowship of the saints
- To the breaking of bread from house to house
- To prayer



EARLY CHURCH TESTIMONY

- Eusebius (A.D. 260- 330) First Church historian
 - "...their orthodoxy and unshakable devotion to the apostolic tradition..."
 - "...in every city things accord with the preaching of the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord." –Clement
- Gathered on the first day of the week to celebrate the Lord's resurrection
- These gatherings focused primarily on communion

EARLY CHURCH ORDER OF SERVICE

- Reading of Scripture and commentaries on them (could take up to several hours)
- Prayers and hymn singing (these were a manner and means of teaching truth and doctrine)
- Dismissal of those who were not baptized with prayer and blessing
- Communion with the baptized body
- Sharing with others by taking an offering

ATTACKS FROM WITHOUT AND WITHIN

THE MOLDING OF CHURCH AND DOCTRINE

ATTACKS FROM WITHOUT

Persecution under Roman rule was sporadic and regional often resulting from the outcry of others

- Originally enjoyed peace under the *Pax Romana* as a segment of Judaism
- After their clear break with Judaism were seen as a threat by many

Some recanted under the threat of persecution but many more stood strong in their faith and testimony. This greatly encouraged the early church and emboldened them in the face of death.

“...men who in such wars fought manfully for truth rather than for country, for true religion rather than for their dear ones...” –Eusebius

ATTACKS FROM WITHIN

The enemy from without being faithfully resisted, he moved inside the church “by cloaking themselves with the same name as our religion.”

In every way early Christianity was a highly diverse church.

With the passing of the Apostles diversity of practice and biblical interpretation soon began.

The Body itself began to change as increased numbers of Gentiles are added to the Church. These do not have the historical knowledge and background of the Jewish people.

Early attacks came on core biblical matters

- The divinity and humanity of Christ
- The virgin birth
- The Trinity
- New writings and teachings

EARLY CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

DEFINING AND DECLARING DOCTRINE



THE NEED TO DEFINE AND DECLARE

- The rise of heretical and false teachers from within the church mandated that the Church define its position on doctrinal matters
- The Creeds and Confessions were used to refute false teaching and declare truth
- These were used to ensure a “Catholic” (one, or according to the rule) Church



THE APOSTLES' CREED (3RD-4TH CENTURY AD)

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.



THE APOSTLES' CREED (3RD-4TH CENTURY AD)

- Response to three questions before baptism
- Baptism followed an extended period of instruction and observation (at times up to several years)
- Communion only given to those who were baptized

NICENE CREED (AD 325)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father; by who all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and on the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sin; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.



THE NICENE CREED

- An affirmation of the Trinity
- Affirmation of the person and work of Christ
- The most universally accepted summary of Christian doctrine even today



THE CHALCEDONIAN CREED (AD 451)

- An affirmation of the divinity and humanity of Christ
- “Trinity and incarnation were important for early Christians because it was in the union of Jesus’ humanity and divinity that we, sinful and mortal as we are, encounter the divine life that saves us.” –Edwin Tant

WHY DENOMINATIONS?

THE DIVIDE OF THE CHURCH

THE CHANGE AFTER AD 313

- Constantine issued the Edict of Milan
- Christianity was granted full legal status and recognition
- Roman Catholic Church became more and more entrenched in the world power and ruling figures
- There was no separation of Church and State
- “Both swords, therefore, the spiritual and the temporal, are in the power of the Church” –Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303)

A GROWING DIVISION

- Faith of the Middle Ages was “known and defined by the authority of the Church through the power granted to the popes through Peter.”
- Early reformers started seeing the Bible alone as the rule of faith
- Renaissance
 - Further secularization of the established church
 - Growing desire for study of the classics and learning in general
- The publication of the original Hebrew and Greek texts
- The translation of the Scripture into the native languages

TWO TYPES OF REFORMERS

- The Magisterial Reformers
 - Lutheran and Reformed groups
 - Desired a return back to the early centuries of the church
 - No separation of church and state
 - Baptism was a “sign” of membership in the Christian society
- Radical Reformers
 - Insisted on returning to the New Testament and apostolic church
 - Church was a voluntary body called out from society
 - Entrance was through the new birth of salvation due to an individual’s acceptance of God’s grace and testified to by baptism

QUESTIONS?
