Lesson #9

Early Church Development Course

The Medieval Church 5th-14th Centuries

- Christian Church and Roman Empire Alliance

- Rome eventually split East and West

- Church split along the same lines

- As Rome went into decline in all sectors of life, the Christianity of the West began to engage more politically

Saint Augustine

- Best theologian to study to appreciate the transition of Christianity in the Middle Ages

- Established "Anew the Ancient Faith"

- Almost every medieval theologian traces their roots through Augustine.

- Augustine is a towering figure in church history. He serves as the climax of patristic thought in Latin"—the Latin world—"and was the dominant influence on the Latin Middle Ages—so much so as to be called the 'Architect of the Middle Ages.' "

Saint Augustine Cont'd

- Justo González writes this: "Augustine is the end of one era as well as the beginning of another. He is the last of the ancient Christian writers, and the forerunner of medieval theology. The main currents of ancient theology converged in him, and from him flow the rivers, not only of medieval scholasticism, but of sixteenth-century Protestant theology."

- Theology of the Western world is really interpretations of the theology of Saint Augustine.

Saint Augustine Cont'd

- Originated from North Africa. Born in Thagaste, modern day Algeria.

- He came from an upper class family.

- Mom was a Christian, father was a pagan, but converted to Christianity just before he died.

- During his teen years, Augustine was very sexually active – "Lord make me celibate, but not yet."

Saint Augustine, Cont'd

- The Pear Tree Incident – 16 year old Augustine steals some pears and feeds them to the pigs.

- "I wanted to enjoy the excitement of stealing. I became evil for no reason. It was foul, and I loved it; I loved the self-destruction, I loved my fall, not the object for which I had fallen but my fall itself.… I was seeking not to gain anything by shameful means, but shame for its own sake."

- This story later becomes Augustine's foundation for explaining the doctrine of Original Sin.

Saint Augustine, Cont'd

- Ages 17-19 Augustine moves to Carthage to study rhetoric. He continues to participate in a rather hedonistic lifestyle. At 19 he gets a young girl pregnant. She gives birth to his son – Adeodatus. Augustine remained unmarried.

- Age 30 Augustine reaches the pinnacle of the academic world having abandoned Christianity. He is hand picked to be the professor of Rhetoric in Milan.

- Augustine meets Bishop Ambrose - "That man of God received me as a father would, and welcomed my coming as a good bishop should. And I began to love him, of course, not at first as a teacher of the truth, for I had entirely despaired of finding that in thy Church—but as a friendly man."

Augustine's Conversion – 386 A.D.

- He heard a voice that said, "Take up and read." He opened his Bible to Romans 13:13

- He writes, "Our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee."

- Year later Augustine resigns from professor position, returns home, his new wife Monica dies on the return trip, son Adeodatus dies soon after. Basically becomes a monk.

- 391 A.D. Augustine is made a priest against his will. 395 A.D. he is made a joint bishop (1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9) and in 396 A.D. becomes a full bishop.

Donatism

- This argument dates back to the Great Persecution that occurred under Emperor Diocletian

- How should the Christian Church respond to those Christians who had capitulated/surrendered to the Roman gods?

- Donatists – Christians could not be reinstated without being rebaptized or reordained. Those Christians who were administering sacraments without being reinstated were offering invalid sacraments.

Donatist's Position

- "Unholy priests are incapable of administering the sacrament; for how can regeneration proceed from the unregenerate, or holiness from the unholy? None can give what he does not himself possess. He who would receive faith from a faithless man, receives not faith but guilt."

- They looked upon themselves as pure and held to the view of the church as a society of those already made holy, a society, moreover, which must guard its holiness by means of very rigorous discipline against all offenders within its ranks.

Rivalries Needing Resolution

- Catholic church – reinstated Caecilian later became a bishop in Carthage

- Donatist Network – separated from Catholic church in 316 A.D.

- In Hippo there was both a Catholic church and a Donatist church. The Donatist's actually outnumbered the Catholics.

- Donatists were engaged in violent protests against the traditional Christian churches that supported reinstatements.

Augustine's Resolution

- The holiness of the Church is not derived from its individual members but is derived from Christ—the head of the Church. Thus, the *invisible* Church is holy, but the *visible* church is not always so holy.

- A.D. 411 Council of Carthage convenes. 286 Catholic Bishops, 284 Donatist Bishops in attendance. Marcellinus, the emissary for the Emperor ruled in favor of the Catholic Bishops

Pelagianism

- Before Pelagius and Augustine the general view about salvation was that humans had to contribute in some fashion to receive salvation. In other words, if you made the right choice when faced with temptation you would be saved.

- Pelagius at one time referred by Augustine as a very saintly man. Pelagius was deeply concerned about the lack of morals he was witnessing amongst Christians in Rome.

Pelagianism Cont'd

- Pelagius believed that because God gave human beings command this meant that human beings had the ability to obey and disobey.

- Pelagius believed Adam and Eve were created with free will and their free will was not disrupted following the Fall. Adam was not a representative of humanity, he was just a human being with free will.

- Exercise your free will in obedience, and God will reward. Exercise your free will in disobedience, and God will punish.

- Pelagius also believed we were creatures of habit.

- Pelagius believed in the universality of sin, but added it is because we have to many negative examples. He cites Mary as a positive example of obedience.

Pelagianism Cont'd

- Two kinds of grace – Pelagius believes in grace

  - Natural Grace – free will is an example of God's grace

  - Moral Grace – God outlined what we must do therefore that is grace, 10 Commandments, example of Christ

- It is important to understand that Pelagius teaching actually was in alignment with the early Christian church so what was the issue?

Pelagianism Refuted

- Augustine believes in original sin. Augustine believes that after Adam sinned all of humanity was now cursed with the bondage of sin, that is the human will was in bondage.

- For Augustine sin is not merely a set of bad habits. Sin is in our DNA. Humanity cannot explain why it does wrong, except to say, "It's just in my nature" (The Pear Tree Story)

- Augustine argues that we are predisposed to sin, and we are legally guilty because of Adam.

Pelagianism Refuted

- Pelagius says – "Do the right thing"

- Augustine says - "I want to do the right thing, but I can't."

- Grace for Augustine is God's power to deal with and overcome sin.

- Adam before the Fall was not capable of sinning. After the Fall, Adam and us are not capable of NOT sinning.

Pelagianism Refuted

- Celestius, disciple of Pelagius flees to North Africa before barbarians sack Rome. Denied ordination. Goes to Ephesus and is welcomed and ordained.

- Pelagius has fled to Jerusalem. Pelagius is declared Orthodox.

- Argument reaches Rome – Pope Innocent I rules in favor of Augustine. Innocent dies and is succeeded by Pope Zosimus. He rules in favor of Pelaigus

- Emperor Honorius weighs in and sides with Augustine. Zosimus changes his position. Pelagianism is condemned.

Pelagianism Refuted

Why do we need Christ if we can save ourselves through obedience?