Christianity

The church: the three branches of Christianity

Christian practices

Agenda for class

- Basic overview of Christian theology
  
  Theology: "the systematization of thoughts about the symbols that religious experience give rise to" (Smith, 218).

- The three branches of Christianity:
  
  Roman Catholicism
  Eastern Orthodoxy
  Protestantism

- Christian Practices (rites)

Basic overview of Christian theology

- **Incarnation** – the doctrine that God took on human form in Jesus Christ, who is both fully God and fully man.

- **Atonement** – reconciliation

- **The Trinity** – the doctrine that God is one substance but three persons (God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Ghost or Spirit)

RF: (Smith, 339)
Incarnation

- God assumed a human body – Christ was both human and divine.
- This says something about God: God is concerned about humanity. (219).
- This says something about Jesus: he did not simply seem to be human; he was born, suffered, died and was buried (220).
- "God became man that man might become God" (Church Father, quoted by Smith, 220).

Expressed in the Apostle’s Creed

I BELIEVE in God almighty, the Father almighty, and in Christ Jesus, his only Son, our Lord. Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried. And the third day rose from the dead. Who ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And in the Holy Spirit. The holy church. The remission of sins. The resurrection of the flesh. The life everlasting. (Original date unknown; first mentioned in 4th c. by Ambrose).

Atonement: what the death of Jesus on the cross means…

- The crucifixion of Jesus Christ brings reconciliation between humans and God; RE: recovery of wholeness (343).
- Term first used by William Tyndale in 1526 – invented the word to mean “reconciliation”
- Two metaphors: legalistic & release from bondage

Doctrine of the Trinity

- God is one (monotheism) but God is also triune (three)
- God is three-in-one:
  - God the Father
  - Christ the Son
  - The Holy Ghost or Spirit (role of the experience of Pentecost here – see Smith, 221).
The Nicene Creed

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 whom 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 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 both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall 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 worshipped 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 sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. AMEN.

Nicene creed continued

Three Branches of Christianity

- Roman Catholicism – resulted from split between church in the east and the church in the west in 1054.
  - Church as Teaching Authority
  - Church as Sacramental Agent
- Eastern Orthodoxy -
- Protestantism

Roman Catholicism: Church as Teaching Authority

- The church is necessary for the clarification and adjudication of truth and error (223).
- Doctrine of papal infallibility: “when the Pope speaks on matters of faith and morals, God protects him from error” (223).
Roman Catholicism: Church as Sacramental Agent

- Sacrament – from the Latin word for “oath” and the Greek word for “mystery”, defined as “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” (Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy, ed. Geddes MacGregor).
- Sacraments mark the archetypal moments in human life (224).

Christian practices: rites

- Sacraments: religious symbol with instrumental effects, “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” (Book of Common prayer). Comes from Latin word for “oath.”
- Jesus taught his followers two:
  1. Baptism – symbolic washing with water as a sign of repentance
  2. Communion – the commemorative meal of bread and wine
- Later, Church developed five more ceremonies that were understood to be divinely instituted, based on references in the New Testament:
  3. Confirmation – becoming a responsible member of the church (re: Acts 8:14-17)
  4. Penance/Confession – the confession and remission of sin
  5. Extreme unction - The anointing with oil of the sick
  6. Holy Orders - Ordination to office in the church
  7. Holy matrimony – Marriage rite
- [These are the seven sacraments that are recognized by the Catholic church].

Eastern Orthodoxy

- Emerged from the schism with the church in the west in 1054.
- Authority held in “the conscience of the church” (as ruled by the patriarchs)
- Emphasis on corporate view of the Church (226): “one can be damned alone but saved only with others.”
- Rich mystical tradition: emphasis on attaining union with the divine energies
Eastern Orthodoxy

St. Sophia in Turkey

Veneration of icons

Protestantism

- Emerged during the reformation of the church in the 16th century led by such reformers as Martin Luther, Jean Calvin and Heinrich Zwingli
- Justification by faith alone
- “The Protestant Principle” – prohibition against any type of idolatry
- Emphasis on the Bible as the Word of God
- Emphasis on individual; on private religious experience (229)
- Phenomenon of denominationalism

Protestant denominationalism

- Baptist – Southern Baptist, American Baptist, etc.
- Methodists – United Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal
- Lutherans – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Lutherans – Missouri Synod
- Presbyterians – part of reformed churches including Congregational, United Church of Christ, etc.
- Episcopal/Anglican
- Adventists – Including Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah Witness
- Christian Science/Metaphysical – New Thought
- Free Church, Amish, Brethren, Mennonites, Quakers, Shakers
- Holiness – Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of the Nazarene
- Independent, Fundamentalist – Plymouth Brethren, Fundamentalists
- Latter-Day Saints aka “Mormon” – church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Community of Christ
- Pentecostal family – Assemblies of God, Church of God (Cleveland)
- Liberal churches – Unitarian Universalists, Humanists, Ethical Culture
- Spiritualist and New Age – Swedenborgianism, Spiritualism, New Age

From: http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_deno.htm

A. Germany (Northern) An example

- Luther troubled by the sale of indulgences
- Dominican friar Tetzel was selling indulgences in Wittenberg in 1517
- Luther posts his 95 theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517
- Some of Luther’s complaints
- Luther slams but
A. Germany (Northern)
- Pope pays little attention to the Luther at first
- Luther attacks the Pope and his bull of excommunication
- Luther goes into hiding in 1521
  -- “A Mighty Fortress is our God”
- Constraints against the spread of Luther’s ideas
- The Peace of

(2) Geneva (French-speaking)
- John Calvin’s leadership in Geneva from 1541-1564
- Geneva became the model Protestant training center
- Stress on order and rigorous adherence to God’s law
- A “Quasi-theocracy”
- Very austere religion practiced in Geneva
- Self-discipline and the “Protestant Work Ethic”

VI. Results of the Reformation
- Germany was politically weakened and fragmented
- Christian Church was splintered in the West
- 100 Years of Religious Warfare
- Right of Rebellion introduced by both Jesuits and Calvinists
- Pope’s power increased
- Furthered societal individualism and secularism
- Growing doubt and religious skepticism

Protestantism in America
Christian practices & holidays

- Baptism
- Communion
- Christmas
- Easter

Baptism

Infant baptism: the sprinkle

Adult baptism: full immersion of confessing believers

St. Raphael’s Cathedral in Dubuque, Iowa—new expansion for immersion baptism.

Holy Communion aka “The Lord’s Supper”

- Eucharist – from Greek word for Thanksgiving
- Early Christians participated in the “agape feast.”
- Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation: the bread and the wine mysteriously become the bread and body of Christ once consecrated

Liturgy for communion

When the Priest, standing before the Table, hath so ordered the Bread and Wine, that he may with the more readiness and decency break the Bread before the People, and take the Cup into his hands, to read the Prayer of Consecration, as followeth.

ALL glory be to thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; who made there by his one oblation of himself once offered a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming take the Paten again: For in the night in which he was betrayed, (a) he took Bread; and when he had given thanks, (b) he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat; (c) this is my Body, which is given for you; Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise, after supper, (d) he took the Cup; and when he had given thanks, (e) he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for (f) this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.

(From the 1928 Book of Common Prayer)
Some use bread... and the common cup
Some use individuated cups...
Some use grape juice instead of wine...

Christian practices: holidays
The Christian Year

1. Advent – the four Sundays that precede Christmas; time of preparation
2. Christmas – celebration of birth of Christ
3. Epiphany – the 12 days after Christmas – visit of the magi and the baptism of Jesus
4. Lent – solemn period for reflection (6 1/2 weeks)
5. Holy Week – Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday
6. Easter – feast of Jesus’ resurrection
7. Pentecost – fifty days after Easter; aka Whitsunday

CHRISTMAS

- Unknown when Jesus was born
- By 4th century, dates around the midwinter solstice began to be observed
- Dec. 25th was a Roman day of celebrating the unconquered sun.
- Early Christians emphasized Jesus’ baptism rather than birth; increased importance in order to underscore incarnation.
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<tr>
<th>What is Stewardship?</th>
<th>Who is a Christian Steward?</th>
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<td>- “Stewardship is an inner attitude which with faith and gratitude recognizes that everything is a gift from God and with openness of heart willingly gives a portion of those gifts to others, especially the poor, for building up the Church and making this a better world.” - Joseph M. Champlin</td>
<td>- “One who receives God’s gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord.” - American bishop’s pastoral letter</td>
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<td>- Disciples who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be... They know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God’s many gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another.” - American bishop’s pastoral letter</td>
<td>Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response</td>
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Christmas observance

- Christmas cards
- Christmas stockings
- A large, festive meal
- Advent wreath
- Christmas tree, brimming with presents

Easter

- Date varies according to phases of the moon – first Sunday after the full moon after the spring equinox (Latin).
- Spring festival associated with the renewal of life. Pre-Christian symbols of fertility, e.g. egg, rabbit are prevalent.
- Easter day commemorates disciples’ experience on the morning after the Sabbath that Jesus rose from the dead.

Symbols of Easter

- Easter eggs
- Image of Jesus
- Basket with Easter symbols