

(3) The emerging Christian Church: church history to 451

TRH2421HF

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7-10pm

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From the very first moments of the Christian religion, "the Christian life" has taken on - in fact, has required - a public, group, social mode of operation. Christians have always assembled themselves into a "church"; in fact, they have insisted that conformity to "church" standards and membership in "the church" are necessities for a full and adequate participation in salvation-through-Christ, both in the present age and for the sake of the future. From the time of Paul of Tarsus and the *Acts of the Apostles* on, belief in Christianity as a saving faith necessitated definable membership in a Christian society.

But exactly what are the essential, the indispensable - the "Orthodox" -- criteria of that participation? Doctrinally, Christians have always insisted that The Church is one body, but in historical experience, in the social working out of the actuality of church-as-lifestyle, there have been a very wide variety of possibilities, created by human culture seeking to respond to a divine call to "be church". "History of the Church" studies the complex tapestry of this variety of definitions and practices, as well as the history of challenges and choices persons have made in the face of this variety. This complexity - and rivalry - of practices, institutions, ideas, and lifestyles is not a post-Reformation phenomenon, emerging only from a fractured Christendom. The complexity is present from the very beginning, and is fully emergent by the end of the period studied in this course. [In fact, the Reformation itself and its modern-day aftermath are incomprehensible without solid knowledge and understanding of the early Church and of the medieval church, the eras in Church history in which all of the perennial and deepest issues of "being church" emerged]. **Indeed, for a church history course in an "Orthodox Studies programme" this inescapability of dialogic, multi-faceted complexity is the central issue; in the thrust and counter-thrust world of the earliest church, is it possible to recognize the development of the essential criteria of "Orthodox ecclesiology", viz., central tradition and apostolicity? And how does Orthodoxy cope with another key historical fact, that this central tradition manifested itself in a "world-wide" variety of cultural practices and standards, so that "Gospel and Culture" became one of the abiding themes (and problems) of the Orthodox experience?** (In fact, in our curriculum the Council of Chalcedon is chosen as a defining date between church history courses, since it separates two large eras of Orthodox history by prioritizing the split between "Chalcedonian" and "Oriental" church families).

Among the key issues to be studied in the first 4-1/2 centuries are the shift in Church sociology - and theology --from house-based family-like communities to an international network, which had to develop institutional structures and administrative codes (canon law) and practices; the rise of a formally designated clergy and clerical hierarchy, and the dynamics of the relationship between the clergy and lay piety; the idea and the practices of sacraments and the development of liturgy; pastoral care in preaching, teaching, and charity; the rise of an ascetical ideal and the changing notion of monasticism; the difficult and mixed relationship between the church and the authority of the secular state; financing the work and life of the church; the criterion of beauty as a promoter of rival ideals of opulence and simplicity; and the final emergence of episcopacy and councils as the primary institutions which can authoritatively define "church". In the face of such a complex of themes and issues, the course will examine the lives of numerous individuals to evaluate their actions and opinions as examples of the practical difficulty of "being church"; we will ask why some people are singled out for recognition as examples of "sainthood" - and whether the criteria for recognizing "saints" change in a Gospel-and-culture way -- and what impact the rise of profound interest in sainthood has on the history of liturgical and pastoral practice. In examining all these topics, we will pay much attention to two of the key macro-themes in Church History, viz., the ever-increasing dialectical tension between East and West, and the tension between Tradition and spiritual inspiration.

PEDAGOGICAL GOALS

While students will be expected to learn a basic narrative of essential facts of church history, almost all the interpretative and investigative work in the course will be done by direct analysis of primary source documents in many genres and varieties. This will contribute to students' general critical skills, but in particular it will help them to see early Church history as a dynamic process, a record of tough decision-making -- within the framework of a collective process - by many different people seeking to live face-to-face with the demands of many ideological claims, struggling to establish their own vision of salvation. Orthodox Christianity - or, perhaps, just "Christianity"? -- is a set of certain core principles which are the defining norms whereby "the Christian life" can be lived, and "Christian, saintly choices" can be made by ordinary people. During the early church era, many such norms were fundamentally established by the world-wide Church; and yet the turbulent, competitive history of the church is a direct outcome of such agreement on norms, since the application of norms to actual life requires an act of interpretation. For the church historian, that very membership in The Church which doctrine sees as a fundamental requirement of salvation is just as much a matter of personal decision as is faith in Christ; yet this personal decision is subject to social, group, leadership-motivated norms and controls to a degree perhaps greater than in any other sphere of life.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CREDIT STUDENTS

Use of more advanced and detailed textbooks [H. Chadwick *The Church in Ancient Society*; J. Danielou and H-I. Marrou, *The First 600 Years*] for learning factual data, 2 data quizzes, research essay on a narrow topic of the student's own choice

SELECTED READING LIST:

Certificate students and credit students

Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Penguin-Pelican *History of the Church* Vol. 1)

Early Christian Writings, ed. Andrew Louth

Early Christian Lives, ed. Caroline White (Penguin)

A New Eusebius, rev. ed. Stevenson-Frend (Continuum)

Creeks, Councils, and Controversies, rev. ed. Stevenson-Frend (Continuum)

Archbishop Peter (l'Huillier), *The Church of the Ancient Councils* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press)

Overnight STL: K3282 .C2 L58 1996 TRIN

Philip Rousseau, *The Early Christian Centuries* (Longman)

(Overnight STL: BR165 .R82 2002 TRIN)

Veselin Kesich, *Formation and Struggles: the Church A.D. 33-200* (SVS)

Additional for credit students

Margaret Mitchell and Frances M. Young, ed. *Origins to Constantine* [*Cambridge History Xnty I*]

Overnight Short Term Loan: BR145.3 .C35 2006 V.1 TRIN

Augustine Casiday and Fred Norris, ed., *Constantine to 600* [*Cambridge History Xnty II*]

Overnight Short Term Loan: BR145.3 .C35 2006 v.2 TRIN

Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society* (Oxford pb)

Overnight Short Term Loan: BR160 .C45 2001 TRIN

"40"-WORD DESCRIPTION

The first 450 years of Christianity reveal an essential central notion that faith requires ecclesiology and church membership for salvation; but the concrete history of the world-wide church reveals a rough-and tumble dynamic of competing choices about the truths that constitute "church"; can an "Orthodox norm" of tradition and apostolicity be recognized in such a situation? Study of social, institutional, theological, spiritual, pastoral, "Gospel-and-local-culture," political, aspects of church life from primary sources.