

Uprising Notes

July 27th, 2002

In Attendance: Jim, Claire, Meridith, Jen, Jan, Durl, Sang

Facilitator/Notetaker: Meridith

Jim began with a summary of last session, then started with new information:

With Constantine's decision to declare the Roman Empire to be Christian, issues of Church and State arise...Christianity and Imperialism begin to overlap...

With Constantine we see emergence of the institution of "The Church" – and although Constantine was interested in a unified Roman Empire under Institutionalized Christianity there were many dissenters...

Before he dies, Constantine moves capitol from Rome to Constantinople-

Thus tensions between church and state are highlighted because...

The Bishop from Rome did not make the move to Constantinople, so while the head of the church remained in Rome, the head of the Empire moves to Constantinople. On top of this Constantine appoints a new Bishop at Constantinople.

While Bishop in Rome retains historical precedence and thus power this way- Bishop in Constantinople has power because he has the Emperor's ear.

The two Bishops begin to wonder-
What is our relationship to the Emperor?

There was also a Bishop of Jerusalem – he had power because to prove their faithfulness Christians would make pilgrimage to Jerusalem, these trips were recorded and thus Jerusalem was a priority.

Also a Bishop of Alexandria – this was a priority because Alexandria was the first place people fled after the Jewish/Roman wars.

And there was a Bishop of Antioch

Issues of Church and State Continue Today-

In 1951 Niebur writes "Christ and Culture"-

Jim passes out an article by Peter R. Gathje that looks back/criticizes Niebhur's work-

Niebhur's Argument is outlined in the following chart...

There are several ways to understand the relationship between Culture and Christianity –

---EXTREME TYPES-- -----MEDIATING TYPES-----

	Christ Against Culture – <i>Rejection</i>	Christ of Culture- <i>Assimilation</i>	Christ Above Culture- <i>Synthesis</i>	Christ & Culture in Paradox – <i>Dualism</i>	Christ, Transformer of Culture- <i>Conversion</i>
Stance	Christianity and culture are in opposition	Christ and the highest expressions of culture are in agreement	There is both continuity and discontinuity between Christ and culture	There is paradoxical tension between Christ and culture	Culture is sinful, yet it can be turned to Christian purposes
Historical Representatives	Tertullian and Tolstoy	Basilides and Valentius	Early apologists, Aquinas	Luther, Roger Williams	Augustine, Calvin
Examples	Monastic and sectarian groups	Cultural Protestants of the 19 th century	The Catholic Tradition	Forms of Lutheranism	Puritanism, social gospel

Weaknesses with Niebhuur’s argument:

1. Major terms are never defined
2. He never tested it to see if groups described in these categories would agree with labeling
3. Groups like Roman Catholic church moved through several categories- Niebhuur’s model is more static, doesn’t allow for fluidity
4. Categories are pretty slippery – overlap can be found between many categories

The power of Niebhuur’s article is that it was written in 1951 in response to fall of Christendom. Keep in mind these categories and try to see where you think different movements fit...

Constantine’s declaration of Christianity as official religion of Roman Empire did not solve the problem of unity- dissidents continued to exist!

Imperial Christianity is seen as merging of spiritual and political power- and insists on uniformity, for example in belief of Trinitarian Nicean Creed-

The Enduring Problem was a continuing resistance to uniform Christianity by several groups:

Exterior Resistance Came From:

1. Pagan Romans – many finally adopted Christian beliefs
2. Non-Romans who were Christians – Arian struggle continues

Interior Resistance From:

1. Christians in the Desert – Monastic Movements

Commonalities among Christians who rejected the Trinitarian Were:

A. A denial of allegiance to all powers – secular and religious – deny allegiance to Constantine and Bishops- say they are only going to follow Jesus of Nazareth

B. Belief that God is non-violent, just, compassionate God who does not have power to intervene

C. A historical expectation focused on a “New Social Order” - that favors Life over Death, Freedom over Slavery, Economic Justice over Systemic Violence

The problem for Roman Empire was that radical seeds of Jesus had in fact taken root

Now lets discuss St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, which was a small village on North African coast where today is Algeria...

His famous works include “Confessions” – mostly confessing his sexual sins and problems with his mom

St. Augustine becomes a monk, gets to be a Bishop

Then Visigoths sack Rome

Where he was in the West, things were unclear- it was from here he writes his most famous book-

“City of God”

As Bishop he is on the same level as Governor- and expected to take care of Governor tasks, like nitty-gritty of running a city – this is much different than his previous almost exclusively mental exercises-

Augustine says there are two cities- City of God – which is of light and happiness, and City of Earth – which is of darkness, unhappiness, doom and gloom – and the two cities are entangled

He says the human condition of everyone is corrupted-

Augustine develops the doctrine of Original Sin-
Concept of Original Sin is not the same as our modern sense of the word as including a psychological component

Rather Original Sin means – basic nature of human being is sinful-

*However humans were created with thinking capacity and ability to reason and thus opponents of Augustine are saying that they can work out strategies to deal with sin...

St. Augustine also has theory of predestination – God has predicted everything that is going to happen to us – some people are elected to be damned (most of us) others elected to be saved

Augustine's philosophy is supposed to inspire people to survive- to hope one is a part of the elected that gets you salvation

If you're working to survive, that is good, then you might very well be among the elect- otherwise why would you be doing this?

Jim asks- where does St. Augustine fit within Niebur's chart?

Christ of Culture- because...

Those that are following Constantine's orders, fighting for Roman Empire as good Christian Soldiers, they are reflecting the Grace of God!

The lure here is to be a damn good Roman Christian.

What happens when you die?

In Augustine's day it was thought that the body becomes a corpse, but the soul goes to a place where all souls go- and stays there until God stops the world and makes a decision, about who is going to hell (a lot) and who to heaven

On the margins, and outside the boundaries of Christendom- there was different ways of thinking about what happens after death-

For left-wingers it had to do with a resurrection – like the announcing of the Jubilee- made known to all those who are still existing- Death is the other side of Life.

Other left-wingers said this discussion really was irrelevant, most important thing has to do with living in the here and now for the Grace of God.

With this emphasis on here and now, many Radicals often were opposed to War, strong strain of pacifism among left-wingers.

To them, God is never a violent deity, but against systematic violence, like the present status against capital punishment

There was also an emphasis that Human beings are in social relation to one another.

Left-wing Christianity always embraced a form of socialism, at one time there was even a feeling Christianity should be Marxist in its political orientation – Liberation theology was accused of being communistic- this was propaganda, justification for repression, yet this theology was close.

Another battle that was going on with Augustine was the debate with Pelagius.

To understand significance of this debate we need to understand that power is consolidated when ruling on political and theological matters are upheld.

So- in Roman Empire at this time you want to make sure your rulings are upheld, otherwise you'll end up with something like Prohibition in US in 1920's-

SO, Pelagius was leader of a movement with the following arguments:

1. God created humans, created them good – Evil is not born within us
2. We are begotten without sin or fault- no such thing as original sin
3. Human beings are endowed with freedom and will, they can avoid sin and can do god's will and do justice and they can walk faithfully
4. This is all possible because of human solidarity, reconciled with a good god that created human beings

Just the opposite of Augustine.

And these two positions were being debated inside the Roman Empire.

So, Pelagius was condemned as a heretic – Augustine seen as upholding the orthodox tradition.

Pelagius escapes, wanders around preaching his version, following model of Jesus' work , it is alleged that he dies in Wales – and it makes sense that he would be here because Britain had already begun to shake itself free of the Roman Empire.

The Celtic Churches in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales still support Pelagius to this day, and Disciples of Christ came from Scotland.

SO where does Pelagius stand? Christ Against Culture, Christ Transforming Culture-

Where do you find Left-wing Christianity in the United States today?

There are some institutional guardians:

1. Quakers
2. Mennonites
3. Moravian
4. Brethren

Then there are also sub-groups within these institutions- Monastic Movement of Roman Catholic Church

Marginal groups do not enhance their social standing or social prestige as members of these groups

Jim mentions that during Sanctuary Movement he specifically used term, people of faith or conscience to include those not following “Jesus of Nazareth” – Jim thought Sanctuary movement might result in a new form of church but it didn’t because after legal issues were worked out everyone slumped back into their traditional enclaves.

Jim also discussed how denominational structures were hindrance to sanctuary movement- Presbyterian Church being very much against Sanctuary because of National Security Risk-

Monasticism –

Prior to Constantine’s conversion the heroes of the Christian movement were confessors and martyrs

With Imperial decision these things changed-

Now heroes of Empire are those who made the most visible movement to accommodate the Empire-

There were one other type of heroes: Those who fled to go live in the desert.

Monastic life developed as resistance to the development of Christendom and its need for conformity

Monastic members replaced confessors and martyrs as heroes of dissenters and they adopted two kinds of lifestyles:

1. they left urban centers for the desert to live a tough life prized by dissenters thus becoming Hermits- or Anchorites- like Anchors of the faith. They would sit on cacti to discipline the flesh and to expunge corruption of the Roman life from themselves- they ate very little and were contemplative.
2. The other lifestyle was in community – cenobitic lifestyle – where people lived together in community under common rule of discipline. This was a training ground to meet challenges that might lie ahead.

Eucharist means – thanksgiving of a mass of people – so people in these places often observed the Eucharist as sharing of a common meal.

Also engaged in the RE- membrance of Jesus of Nazareth – remembering his works and way of living...

This was done in the Eucharist – where they re-membered the body of Jesus of Nazareth during common meal – this is why you will see “In Remembrance of Him” on communion tables

They also worked in service of neighbors – and because they had re-membered Jesus they were re-presenting him to community outside their house

Liturgy actually means “to work” – not “to pray” – and work was re-presenting Jesus of Nazareth

So this was radical understanding of Pastoral Ministry-

Radical simplification of what Christian Life was about – taking out frills

They had a radical base of teaching and became known as holy men and women, and people from Rome would come out to see them on pilgrimages – this was a great risk to take a pilgrimage- it was an criminal offense – but in these sites in the desert the praxis of jubilee was continued.

Gregory the Great- lived from 540-604 CE

He came from an aristocratic family, lived in Rome, had two former popes in his family, two sisters in the monastic movement

(the monastic movement provided women opportunities they would not have otherwise had)

In 573 CE Gregory the Great is the mayor of City of Rome-

574 he resigns his position to become a monk, and he gives away all of his inheritance

Sells one piece of land to start St. Andrews Monastery

In 5630 Germanic people known as Lombards invade Italy to threaten Rome

Papacy recalls Gregory to Rome to meet that threat-

He goes back as Mayor and does such a good job the people want him to stay-

So he is both – a religious deacon and secular mayor-

After the Pope dies, the people of Rome elect Gregory the Great to be Pope-
He is the first monk to be a Pope, and first person to be both Political Ruler and Pope.

When Rome was without water because the Lombards had knocked out Aqueducts in the Alps-

Gregory got aqueducts and wells working- and he went out to meet Lombards and negotiated a settlement.

This was no small feat- and won him respect and favor among the people-

So he became known as Gregory the Great-

He recognizes that he has a problem with Constantinople- never asserts Peter or Paul's superiority when making claims, but he does settle disputes

He is first Pope to develop a policy that Jewish people in the Empire are not to be converted, but allowed freedom to practice in their homes and synagogues.

He remembered that Jesus was a Jew.

Many wondered if Jesus is the fulfillment of Hebrew policy- why has Jewish community rejected Jesus?

Gregory's solution- yes, we recognize the Jewish community and it can worship as it does, as long as it does not violate Roman Law.

As with Conscientious Objectors today – their religion reasons for not fighting are tolerated, as long as does not violate/threaten law...