

His-Story

Church history and why it matters to me

HERESIES AND HEMORRHOIDS

(and why they're still a pain today)

I. Introduction

II. Major Heresies

A. Ebionism

1. Etymology: from the Hebrew word for *poor* (i.e. a regarding self as being poor to the ways of the world)
2. Time frame: originated in Palestine – late first century (one of the earliest heresies in the Christian church)
3. Major beliefs
 - a. Composed mainly of Jewish Christians
 - b. It's possible the "Super Apostles" Paul alludes to in his writings could have been early Ebionites (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11)
 - c. Used the Old Testament and Gospel of Matthew (Hebrew version) as their bible
 - d. Taught complete observance to the Mosaic Law
 - e. Anti-Pauline (against Paul and his writings)
 - f. Acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah (*meshua*) but viewed him only as a man upon whom the Spirit came at his baptism
4. What's wrong with Ebionism?
5. Any modern day reflections of Ebionism?
 - a. www.ebionite.com: Unless you are an Ebionite (a poor one to the way of this world) you cannot be a disciple of Yeshua/Jesus
 - b. Other manifestations (in the church or in my own heart)?



B. Gnosticism

1. Etymology and history:
 - a. From the Greek word for "knowledge" (*gnosis*); Gnostics thought of themselves as those possessing a higher insight
 - b. Developed from pagan philosophy (especially Platonism)
 - c. Influenced by oriental mysticism
2. Time frame: began in the first century and continued into the second: one of the major heresies that caused John and Paul to write their letters (Colossians and 1 John for example)
3. Major beliefs
 - a. Salvation through a secret knowledge
 - b. Believed in a dualism between physical and spiritual
 - Things *spiritual* is good; things *physical* are evil (matter is evil)
 - Saw themselves as spiritual (and therefore good); everyone else without this special *gnosis* were simply people
 - c. Gnosticism produced either...
 - Sensuality and licentiousness (physical things aren't valued so it really doesn't

Notes

matter how I live) or

- Asceticism (physical things aren't valued so they must be rejected)
 - d. Generally rejected Old Testament and Judaism
 - e. Believed Christ's body was just as illusion
 - f. Had little appeal to the general population; was more popular with church leaders and philosophers
 - g. Produced various writings that fabricated beliefs like Jesus being married (to Mary Magdalene) and having a son – much of which was fodder for movies like *The Davinci Code*.
4. What's wrong with Gnosticism? (what about the simple or mentally challenged?)
 5. Any modern day reflections of Gnosticism (in the church or in my own heart)?

C. Marcionism (very similar to Docetism)

1. Etymology: Named after its founder Marcion (born in Sinope, Pontus)
2. Time frame: Marcion arrived in Rome about AD 140
3. Major beliefs
 - a. Marcion greatly influenced by Cerdo, a Gnostic teacher (hence Marcionism is an off shoot from Gnosticism)
 - b. Believed the God of the Old Testament (full of vengeance and the author of evil) was different than the God of the New Testament (who is a God of grace and love)
 - c. Stated that Christ was not born of a woman but simply appeared as an adult in Capernaum in AD 29.
 - d. Believed Christ's human appearance and sufferings were merely apparent (to us), but not real (since matter was considered evil, Christ appeared as physical but was really spiritual)
 - e. Marcion rejected the idea of a physical resurrection
 - f. Marcion's bible
 - Rejected the entire Old Testament; rejected any book in the New Testament that favored Jewish readers (Matthew, Mark, Acts, and Hebrews)
 - Cut out of the rest of the NT anything that didn't agree with his beliefs
 - Believed Paul was the only Apostle who didn't corrupt the gospel of Jesus
 - g. Macionites set up their own churches and emulated orthodox congregations; had their own clergy and rituals (one example: because of their ascetic emphasis, they did not use real wine in communion)
 - h. Marcion excommunicated in AD 144
 - i. Justin Martyr "asserted that Marcion was aided by the devil to blaspheme and deny that God was the creator of the universes. Tertullian wrote Against Marcion about ad 207, and regarded Marcion as a formidable foe of true Christian doctrine." –H. Dermot McDonald, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*
4. What's wrong with Marcionism?
5. Any modern day reflections of Marcionism (in the church or in my own heart)?

D. Manichaeism

1. Etymology and history:
 - a. Name comes from its originator, Mani (AD 216-276); a Persian born in Mesopotamia who grew up among a sect of Jewish Christians
 - b. Mani claimed to have received personal "revelations" and called himself the Apostle of Jesus Christ

2. Major beliefs
 - a. Influenced by Gnosticism in that it teaches a duality of light verses darkness (Christ was the representative of light; Satan was the representative of darkness)
 - b. Contains many elements of Zoroastrianism
 - c. Believed Jesus (and other religious leaders) came to release souls of light from the prisons of their bodies
 - d. Claimed the Apostles corrupted Christ's teachings, and Mani revealed it in pure form
 - e. Taught Christ's body was an illusion
 - f. Followers were severely ascetic
3. What's wrong with this Manichaeism?

4. Any modern day reflections of Manichaeism (in the church or in my own heart)?

E. Arianism

1. Etymology: Named from its founder, Arius. Arius was a senior presbyter in charge of one of the parishes in Alexandria (Egypt)
2. Time frame: Fourth century (beginning around AD 318)
3. Major beliefs
 - a. Claimed that God the Father was really the only God
 - b. Christ was created as the first created being who then created the universe
 - c. Because of this, Christ did not possess the nature, attributes, or divinity of God
 - d. Taught the *Logos* (of 1 John) took the place of Christ's soul and therefore became united with his human body
 - e. Arius and his followers declared to be heretics at Council of Nicea (AD 325)
 - f. Despite the declared heresy, Arianism continued to spread – especially in the eastern half of the Roman Empire
4. What's wrong with Arianism?

5. Any modern day reflections of Arianism? (Jehovah's Witnesses)

F. Pelagianism

1. Etymology: Named after Pelagius (c. 360–418), a monk from Britain who was known for his piety; came in sharp contrast with Augustine
2. Major beliefs (all below taken from Justo L. Gonzalez' *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1*)
 - a. Saw the Christian life as a constant effort through which one's sins could be overcome and salvation attained.
 - b. Each of us comes to the world with complete freedom to sin, or not to sin. There is no such thing as original sin, nor a corruption of human nature that forces us to sin. Children have no sin until they, on their own free will, decide to sin.
4. What's wrong with Pelagianism?

5. Any modern day reflections of Pelagianism (in the church or in my own heart)?