

Lesson 2: Infiltration Gnosticism & Montanism



2 Peter 1:16-21

- Peter was an eye-witness to Christ
 - His ministry
 - His Death
 - His Resurrection
 - and His Transfiguration
- Yet it is not his experience that is “more sure” but the written word of God.

If at first you don't succeed...

- Persecution did not prevent, stop, or overpower Christ's church
- In some ways, Persecution did more help than harm
 - True Disciples
 - Genuine Conversions
 - Powerful Testimonies
- Time for a new strategy

Gnosticism

- Not a single movement
 - Basilides of Alexandria (ca. 115-140)
 - Valentinus of Rome (ca. 140-155)
 - Marcion in Asia Minor (ca. 155-160)
- There are some common threads
 - Special knowledge (γνωσις/gnosis) taught by Jesus to a select few
 - Impossible to understand the gospel w/o this knowledge
 - Special knowledge requires their own scriptures

Common Gnostic Teachings

- All matter is evil
- Creation is not a product of the supreme God but by an inferior *Demiurge* (architect)
 - This Demiurge = The God of the OT (angry)
- Creation is utterly separate from the supreme God
- Salvation = escaping from the body (physical)

Why was Gnosticism an issue?

- Gnosticism Denies...
 - An original good creation
 - Man as God's image bearer
 - The origin of sin
 - Monotheism
 - The humanity of Christ
 - Sin = object of wrath & what humanity is saved from
 - The reality of the resurrection and re-creation

Part of the Problem

- Gnostics identified as Christians
 - The Bible is good
 - Jesus is good
- Gnostics were persecuted along with Christians
 - Still considered “atheists” by Rome
 - Jews didn’t like them any better

The Church's Response

- **Ireneaus of Lyon**
 - A disciple of Polycarp (who was a disciple of John)
 - Moved from Asia Minor to Lyons and became an elder/pastor/presbyter
 - Became Bishop (ca. 177) after a string of persecution left little other options

Irenaeus Leading the Charge

- Personally Connected - Florinus
- Practical Works - *Against Heresies*
 - Describe Gnostic belief to reveal absurdity
 - Demonstrated inconsistencies within the movement
 - Demonstrated that the Bible declares One God of both testaments
 - Defended God's good creation

Modern Day Equivalence

- Mormons (LDS)
 - Claim secret knowledge known only through their prophet
 - Deny Christ is the same as the supreme God (heavenly father)
 - Deny the problem of sin
 - Deny a physical resurrection and recreation
 - Claim to be a more advanced Christianity

Montanism

- Montanus - “Convert” in Asia Minor ca. 170
 - Prophecy and Prophetesses
 - Priscilla and Maximilla
 - Claiming that the Holy Spirit (the Paraclete) was speaking in a new way to the church through them
 - Emphasis on the 2nd coming of Christ
 - Little to no doctrinal additions
 - Focus on moral and social behavior

The Church's Response to Montanism

- The church universally (& correctly) condemned Montanism as heresy
 - Fixation on spiritual gifts (spiritual drunkards)
 - False claim of Montanus to be the personal fulfillment of John 14:16 and 16:12-13
 - Failure of most “prophecies” to come true
 - Montanists slandered Christians who did not “possess” the gifts
 - Montanists fell into the Sabellian heresy (denying the trinity)

Modern Day Equivalence

- Pentecostals
 - Demand that the gifts are still present
 - Fixate on little else
 - Make false prophecies
 - Condemn "other" believers as inferior
 - "Oneness" pentecostals deny the trinity

Summary

- **Gnosticism ≠ Christianity**
 - Different Gospel
 - Different Teaching
 - Different Christ
- **Montanism ≠ Christianity**
 - Insufficient view of Scripture
 - Insufficient view of Prophecy
 - Insufficient view of Holiness

Conclusion

- How did the church combat Gnosticism?
 - Compare teachings to Scripture
 - Separate
- How did the church combat Montanism?
 - Compare assertions to Scripture
 - Separate

- The church responded to PERSECUTION with an overwhelming obedience to Scripture
 - Make disciples - Preach the Gospel & Train the Saints
- The church responded INFILTRATION by comparing all new ideas/teachings/methods to Scripture
- The Faithful Church Leans Heavily Upon Scripture Alone & Always