

IV. CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES

A. Arianism

1. Basic issue was the nature of the Godhead
2. Sometimes called the Trinitarian controversy
3. Lasted for several centuries
4. Named for Arius (250-336), a pastor in Alexandria, Egypt
5. Arius took the speculations of Origen concerning the begetting of the Son and carried them to their logical conclusion. – Though named after Arius the subject and belief predated Arius. Arius intensified the controversy and carried it to a church-wide audience where others that held the same beliefs proved even more influential.
6. Arianism was early supported by many of the eastern churches
7. Arius was condemned by the Council of Nicea (325) and exiled by Constantine
8. After Constantine died (337), his son Constantius, who reigned in the East, supported Arianism
9. The victory of orthodoxy in the Roman Empire was not complete until 392
10. Arianism became the state religion in several countries until as late as the sixth and seventh centuries (especially among some of the Germanic tribes)
11. Its beliefs can be found today in Unitarianism
 - a. Their beliefs in Christ:
 - i. Unitarians believe that mainline Christianity does not adhere to strict monotheism but that they do by maintaining that Jesus was a great man and prophet of God, perhaps even a supernatural being, but not God himself.
 - ii. They believe Jesus did not claim to be God and that his teachings did not suggest the existence of a triune God.
 - iii. Unitarians believe in the moral authority but not necessarily the divinity of Jesus.
 - iv. Their theology is thus opposed to the Trinitarian theology of other Christian denominations.
 - b. Their divisions:
 - i. In the early 19th Century, Unitarian Robert Wallace identified three particular classes of Unitarian doctrines in history.
 - ii. Arians, which believed in a pre-existence of the divine spirit, but maintained that Jesus was created and lived as human only
 - iii. Socinians, which, denied his original divinity, but agreed that Christ should be worshipped
 - iv. Strict Unitarians, which, believing in a “incommunicable divinity of God,” denied both the existence of the Holy Spirit and the worship of “the man Christ.”

12. Jehovah Witnesses regard Arius as a forerunner of Charles Russell, the founder of their movement.
 - a. From the Jehovah Witness website: jw.org:
 - i. In the year 313 after Christ, Emperor Constantine ruled over the pagan Roman Empire and made this apostate form of Christianity a legal religion. After that, the Church began working closely with the Roman government. For example, Constantine held a meeting with religious leaders, which became known as the Council of Nicaea. After that meeting, the emperor sent a priest named **Arius** into exile because he refused to believe that Jesus is God. Later, Theodosius became the Roman emperor, and the Catholic Church became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Historians say that pagan Rome became “Christian” during the time of Emperor Theodosius. But the truth is that by that time, apostate Christians had accepted pagan teachings, so they had already become part of Babylon the Great. However, there were still some faithful anointed Christians. They were like the wheat that Jesus talked about. These faithful ones were doing their best to worship God, but few were listening to what they had to say. They truly were in Babylonian captivity! – jw.org

B. Apollinarianism

1. Named after Apollinaris, the bishop of Laodicea, about 370
2. Taught that Christ was a mixture of God and man
3. Christ had a human body, a human spirit, and a divine soul. He was two-thirds human

C. Nestorianism

1. Nestorius
 - a. 390-451 AD
 - b. Born in Syria
 - c. Became presbyter of church in Antioch
 - d. Became bishop of Constantinople in 428 AD
 - e. Had a reputation as a great preacher
 - f. Was banished and exiled as a heretic
 - g. Died in exile in the Libyan Desert
2. Teaching of Nestorius
 - a. The result of using the Antiochan method of interpretation
 - b. Called Christ the “God-bearing man”
 - c. Opposed calling Mary the “mother of God”
 - i. Because of this many believed that he did not believe that Christ was truly God.
 - ii. This brought him into conflict with other prominent leaders of the established church. Most notably Cyril of Alexandria.
 - d. Sought to defend himself at the First Council of Ephesus in 431, instead found himself formally condemned for heresy.
 - e. Accused of making Christ two persons
 - f. Teaching not much different from accepted orthodoxy

3. Cyril of Alexandria
 - a. 375-444 AD
 - b. Opposed the doctrines of Nestorius
 - c. Insisted on calling Mary “theotokos”, meaning God-bearer or Mother of God
 - d. Emphasized the oneness of Christ at the expense of His separate divine and human natures
 - e. In 433, he accepted a statement from Antioch emphasizing the distinctness of the two natures within the one person of Christ

- D. Eutychianism—taught that Christ had only one nature being neither fully man or fully God but a merging of the two natures

- E. Monophysitism—Taken from words meaning “one nature”, taught that Christ had only one person and therefore one nature

- F. Monothelitism—Taken from words meaning “one will”, taught that Christ had only one will, His divine will in opposition to the Roman Catholic teaching of two wills

VII. ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES

- A. Pelagius
 1. 354-418AD?
 2. Born in Roman Britain
 3. Came to Rome about 400
 4. Gained many followers in just a few years
 5. Emphasized man’s free will
 6. Denied that man was born with a sin nature
 7. Adam’s sin did not give the human race a sin nature but only set a bad example
 8. Men could live sinless lives. For example, Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Mary
 9. Jerome wrote a book in opposition to Pelagianism
 10. Condemned at a church council in 418. Nothing known of him after the council.

- B. Augustine
 1. 354-430AD
 2. Emphasized God’s sovereignty
 3. Believed man had a sin nature by birth
 4. Taught predestination—the doctrine that God elected some men to salvation and others to damnation entirely at His own discretion

5. Campaigned strongly against Pelagius and was instrumental in having him condemned
6. The battle between Augustine and Pelagius (5th century) can be compared with the later battle between Calvinism and Arminianism (16th and 17th centuries)

C. Semi-Pelagianism

1. This was a reconciling attempt
2. Main early proponent was Jerome
3. Taught that man was born with a sin nature but had a right to choose between righteousness and sin
4. Salvation is gained through infant baptism, the sacraments, ascetic acts, and good works
5. On the one hand, sinlessness is impossible; on the other hand, neither is eternal security. Pelagius taught sinlessness. Augustine taught eternal security.
6. This is the official position of the Roman Catholic Church

VIII. ANCIENT REFORMERS

A. Aerius

1. A presbyter at Sebaste, Asia Minor in the 4th century
2. Opposed the bishop as being too worldly
3. Insisted on the equality of presbyters and bishops as taught in the scriptures
4. Denounced the practice of seeking intercession of dead saints
5. Opposed the laws regulating fasts
6. Charged Christianity with taking on the bondage of Judaism
7. He and his followers were driven from the churches and persecuted
8. His scattered followers probably supported the Paulicans at a later date.

B. Jovinianus

1. A well-educated Roman monk of the 4th century
2. Called “the Protestant of his time”
3. Fought against the asceticism supported by Jerome and others
4. Denied that starvation leads to holiness
5. Denied the perpetual virginity of Mary
6. Divided mankind into two classes, saved and unsaved
7. All who were saved were saved absolutely; they were eternally secure
8. Regarded baptism as an outward symbol of our inner transformation having no saving merit of its own

9. Condemned by a Roman council in 390
10. His followers probably took refuge in the valleys of the Alps

C. Vigilantius

1. Born c. 370, a native of Gaul, encompassing present day, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Northern Italy, and parts of the Netherlands.
2. Ordained a presbyter about 390
3. Argued with Jerome and others concerning their teaching about asceticism
4. Called for the restoration of apostolic doctrine and practice
5. Opposed prayers for the dead
6. Regarded world-flight into monasteries as cowardly
7. Movement was lost in the invasion of Gaul by the Vandals

IX. EARLY BRITISH CHRISTIANITY

A. Evangelization

1. No solid historical records of early missionary work
2. Gospel may have been heard first from saved Roman soldiers
3. Churches developed apart from strong Roman influence
4. Britain was separated from the Roman empire when the Visigoths invaded Rome in 410
5. From that time the British were left to fend for themselves
6. Four groups of people in the British Isles
 - a. British—the original people conquered and civilized by Rome were eventually pushed back to western Britain or Wales and are Welsh today
 - b. English—the name given to the invading Germanic tribes
 - c. Irish—people of the island of Ireland
 - d. Scots—northern peoples eventually became the Scots
7. The British heard the gospel by channels of the Roman Empire
8. The British sent missionaries, especially Patrick, to the Irish
9. The Irish, famous in history for their missionary work, sent missionaries to the Scots and the English, as well as many parts of Europe
10. Irish and British Christianity developed apart from the Western Church with many distinctive characteristics

B. Distinctions

1. No established church hierarchy
2. The bishops were only pastors
3. No vows of celibacy were taken
4. Refused the authority of the pope
5. No adoration of Mary
6. No transubstantiation

7. No prayers to dead saints
8. Studied much in the scriptures
9. Insisted on humility and simplicity in Christian life
10. Highly involved in missionary work

NOTE: Old British type of Christianity survived in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland probably until the Reformation

C. Missionaries

1. St. Patrick
 - a. 389-465 AD
 - b. Called “the Apostle to Ireland”
 - c. Born the son of a deacon, the grandson of a priest
 - d. Carried to Belfast, Ireland when 16 as a slave
 - i. It was during his captivity that he was saved.
 - ii. In his testimony he states: “before I was humbled, I was like a stone lying in deep mire, and He that is mighty came and in His mercy raised me up and, indeed, lifted me high up and placed me on top of the wall. And from there I ought to shout out in gratitude to the Lord for His great favours in this world and for ever, that the mind of man cannot measure.” – *The Confession of Patrick p. 2*
 - e. Escaped 6 years later and returned to England
 - f. Became burdened for Ireland and returned there as a missionary in 432
 - g. Baptized thousands of Irish believers
 - h. Credited with founding over 300 churches
 - i. The Irish Christians founded a system of monasteries
 - i. A cluster of thatched huts surrounding a small church and guarded by a stockade
 - ii. Practiced strong asceticism
 - iii. Dedicated to learning, they are credited with preserving Latin classicalism when Europe was at its lowest
 - iv. Did the greatest missionary work for any period of time in any country since the time of Christ
2. Columba
 - a. Born about 521
 - b. An Irish prince heir to the throne
 - c. Became a monk and started a monastery
 - d. Condemned for intervention in Irish civil wars
 - e. Went into voluntary exile
 - f. Founded a monastery on Iona island off the coast of Scotland
 - g. Sent missionaries to Scotland and England
 - h. Much of Scotland was converted through his work

3. Columban
 - a. Born in Ireland in 543
 - b. Planted churches in Burgundy, Switzerland, and Northern Italy
 - c. His influence extended to Germany and the Netherlands
 - d. Often enraged the political rulers by preaching strongly against their sins
 - e. Often opposed by the Roman Catholics because he would not compromise to their unbiblical practices