

Lecture 8-Mended Lives: The People of the Early Church

To make the past present, to bring the distant near... to invest with the reality of human flesh and blood beings whom we are too much inclined to consider as personified qualities in an allegory, to call up our ancestors before us with all their peculiarities of language, manners and garb... belongs to the historian.
T. B. Macaulay

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

1 Peter 2: 10-11

Assigned Reading

The Story of Christianity—chapter 11

Key Terms

Lord's Day, celibacy

Objectives

- Explain the worship of the early church
- Critique the view of baptism of the early church

Class Prayer

Leader: "The Lord be with you."

People: "And also with you."

Leader: "Lift up your hearts."

People: "We lift them up to the Lord."

Leader: "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God."

People: "It is right to give Him thanks and praise."

All: "Amen."

The Sursum Corda

Mended Lives: The People of the Early Church**I. Church****A. Sources**

1. *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (Didache)—Syria (probably first century)
2. *Apostolic Tradition* by Hippolytus—Rome (c. 215)

B. Service on the Lord's Day

1. On the first day, before daylight, in one place (earliest church building at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates, around 230)
2. Reading and preaching of the Word
3. Prayers
4. The Lord's Supper

C. _____

1. Often delayed
2. Long preparation
3. The meaning and mode
4. What about infant baptism?

II. The Christian Life

A. Sex and marriage

1. Christian marriage

Tertullian To His Wife (around 200): “What a bond is this: two believers who share one hope, one desire, one discipline, the same service! There is no distinction of spirit or flesh, but truly they are two in one flesh. Where there is one flesh, there is also one spirit. Together they pray...together they fast, teaching each other, exhorting each other, supporting each other. Side by side in the church of God and at the banquet of God, side by side in difficulties, in times of persecution, and in times of consolation. Neither hides anything from the other, neither shuns the other, neither is a burden to the other. They freely visit the sick and sustain the needy...Seeing and hearing this, Christ rejoices. He gives them his peace. Where there are two he also is present; and where he is, there is no evil.”

2. The growing importance of _____

B. “In the world, but not of the world”

Diognetus: Christians are “distinguished from the rest of men neither by country nor by language nor by customs—dress and food and other matters of living—but [they are] aliens.”

1. Respect for life
2. Compassion for the needy
3. Concern for decency

For Further Study

Read *”Early Glimpses: Historical documents describing Christians at worship.” What does Pliny’s letter tell us about early Christian worship? Do you think the Didache is describing the Lord’s Supper? What is the striking symbolism of the broken bread? What do you make of Tertullian’s report of the prophetic gift? What features of the celebration of the Eucharist in the account by Hippolytus seem familiar? What features are strange to you? Why is it so important to attend the services of the church according to Hippolytus? What can annul a true celebration of the Lord’s Supper according to Cyprian? What do you think is Cyprian’s view of the nature of the presence of the blood and flesh of Christ in the sacrament?

Read “Chanting in Honor of Christ.” What themes characterized the singing of the early Christians as suggested by these three selections?