

5-3-1 Assignment: Gonzalez, Ch.1

QUESTIONS

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1. What must one have an understanding of to understand the history of Christianity?
2. What is the most immediate context of the earliest church?
3. How do we understand/make sense of how the Christian church became mostly Gentile?
4. What philosophical schools of thought assisted and shaped the understanding of Christian doctrine of life and death and of Christian moral ethics?
5. What challenges led to the establishment of the Canon and Apostles' Creed?

Answers

1. One should also have an understanding of the context in which it appeared.
2. The most immediate context of the earliest church is Judaism (Palestinian Judaism and Judaism outside of the Palestinian context). Palestinian Judaism lends itself to Hellenism and were divided among four major religious-political groups: the Zealots, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. Judaism could also be found in and influenced by the Jewish "Diaspora."
3. We have to understand to know the cultural and political context and atmosphere of the times. The Roman Empire provided political unity; but this unity was based on a syncretistic culture and society.
4. Christians would come to understand the Christian doctrine of life after death in terms of Platonic doctrine of the immortality of the soul; Stoic moral doctrine for early development of Christian ethics. We see this in the book of Acts, namely through the letters of Paul.

5. Christian persecution based on false rumors and opinions were at an all-time high, apologists sought to deny and dispel the rumors; with the expansion of Christianity grew the spread of *heresies* (such as Gnosticism and doctrine of Marcion) that finally led to the development of the Canon and of the Apostles' Creed.

TERMS (in context of reading)

1. Syncretistic: the mixture of various religious tradition
2. Apologist: those that defended and denied false rumors regarding Christianity; the main intellectual task being to clarify the relationship between Christian faith and the ancient Greco-Roman culture
3. Heresies: various interpretations that threatened the core of the Christian message

SUMMARY

Chapter 1 of González' *Church History* provides a brief overview of the history and development of the ancient church and early Christianity. When attempting an accurate view and understanding of Church history, it's imperative to consider the context in which Christianity took place: Palestinian Judaism, "Diaspora" Judaism and the syncretistic Greco-Roman culture that marked the shift of Christianity being from a Jewish context to a largely Gentile one. Through the significant trials and challenges encountered by the early, ancient Christians, the apostolicity and Canon that is the standard of today, was recognized. During these times, the prominent and central acts were Communion and of Baptism; and an order of ministry was established.