

## HERESIES DURING THE APOSTOLIC AGE

### **Heresies of that age had three varieties:**

(1) Judaizers (Re-Judaism): Those who tried to practice Moses' Law in Christianity and mixed Judaism with Christianity and so the Holy Gospel would be the perfect law. They denied the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ and considered Him just a prophet or second Moses. They denied the Lord Jesus Christ as the highest priest and the king. They were apparently Christians but truly Jews and so they practiced Moses' Law ritually and literally and considered it necessary for salvation without it there was no saving.

(2) Gnostic Heresy: It was a philosophy that refused blind faith and declared that faith should be based on the logic and knowledge. They considered that logic was above faith, and philosophy above religion. They considered logic as superior to inspiration and logic is free to refuse what is against. Although Gnostic heresy appeared in the second century its roots go back to the Apostolic Age and there are many references to it in the Holy Epistles to the Colossians, First Timothy, Titus, Second Peter, First and Second John and the Book of Revelation. Gnostic heresy denied the Old Testament and glorifies logic above faith and so they considered faith is just logical knowledge of God. They believed there are 2 sources of creation the highest spirit and the material the first for good and the second for evil. They declared that spirit salvation is through either asceticism or more lusts (Hedonism - Licence) as they considered more lusts get victory on evil! They believed Christ is just phantom / apparition denying his incarnation. And so St. John said *"Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of Antichrist which you have heard was coming and is now already in the world"* (1 John 4:2&3).

(3) Invasion by pagan philosophies especially Plato, and Pythagoras' philosophies, such trials were by Philo of Alexandria in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and some of Therapeutae and so a mixture of Judaism and paganism appeared at that time.

Whatever the differences were between these three varieties of heresies that appeared during the Apostolic Age they shared denying the Divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Incarnation for the salvation of the world. They considered the Lord Jesus Christ as just a man or apparition and did not confess unity between Divinity and humanity in the Lord Jesus Christ and this was the sign of the Antichrist as stated by St. John (1 John 4:1-3 and 2:23). By this they denied the pillar and the corner stone of Christianity without which Christianity will fall in paganism or Judaism.

### **The most famous heresies in the Apostolic Age were:**

(1) Simon the Sorcerer: he was mentioned in the Holy Book of Acts where he used sorcery in Samaria and astonished people there saying that he was someone great (Acts 8:9). When St. Peter and St. John came to Samaria and laid their hands on the believers there to accept the Holy Spirit and did many miracles, Simon asked them to give him this authority by money but St. Peter said to him *"Your money perish with you because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. You have neither part nor portion of this matter for your heart is not right in the sight of God"* (Acts 8:9-21).

Yousabious, Irenaeus and Youstinos considered Simon was a head of every heresy. Hoyostinos who was Samaritan also mentioned that Samaritans worshipped Simon as the first god as he called himself the first god and his logic incarnated from a woman called Helena who was a prostitute at that

time! He declared that the highest god appeared as Jesus the Son among Jews, himself as the father among Samaritans and in other states as the Holy Spirit.

## **2. Ibionism:**

It is a heresy called by Judaizers referred by St. Paul as the liar brothers (2 Corinthians 11:26 and Galatians 2:4) where they distributed church's peace in Antioch and Galatia and denied St. Paul's apostleship. They declared that Moses' Law is necessary for salvation and every believer must follow this law literally. They celebrated the Sabbath and followed circumcision. They denied Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and considered Him just a prophet. They denied the Lord Jesus Christ's death and believed His Second Coming to set an earthly kingdom for the righteous believers especially righteous Jews. Some of them had Gnostic behavior in regard to asceticism.

## **3. Nicolaitans:**

They were mentioned in the Holy Book of Revelation 2:6 and 2:15-16. They belonged to Nicolas one of the seven appointed deacons. They encouraged pagan worship and sacrifices. They denied that God created the world but another power did. They called for sexual immoralities with women outside matrimony.

## **4. Cerinthus:**

He was a Jew converted to Christianity and lived in Ephesus the See of St. John the Beloved. He called for circumcision and keeping of the Sabbath holy and an earthly kingdom for the Messiah. He taught that God did not create the world but other small god the god of Jews did and so he gave the Law and Torah. He taught that the Lord Jesus was born from St. Joseph and St. Mary and he was just a man and during baptism Christ came upon Jesus and left Him before Crucifixion and finally the Lord Jesus died and God resurrected him. He called that the Kingdom of God is just eating and sexual lust as he lived his life in these sins.

## **5. Menander:**

He was a Samaritan disciple for Simon the Sorcerer and he was sorcerer also. He taught that his fellows will not die and he is the savior of the world and through his baptism, every believer will be superior to the angels. He called for Gnostic heresy and through him Syria was an eminent center for Gnostic heresy between 70 AD and 100 AD.