

# The History of the Early Church

[These notes are sequenced with the Power Point PDF by the same name - 2020]



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# The Instructor

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He believes strongly in the verse of invitation from the Lord, "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all of your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13)

For more information of Dr. Fleming's miraculous testimony and ministry, please visit [gatebreakers.com](http://gatebreakers.com) and / or the Face Book page of Gate Breaker Ministries.

# Part One: The Beginning of the Church

“In Jesus Christ a preparatory history both divine and human comes to its close. In him culminate all the previous revelations of God to Jews and Gentiles; and in him are fulfilled the deepest desires and efforts of both Gentiles and Jews for redemption . . . But as Jesus Christ thus closes all previous history, so, on the other hand, he begins an endless future. He is the author of a new creation, the second Adam, the father of regenerate humanity, the head of the church . . .”<sup>1</sup>

-- Philip Schaff, 1858

## I. Introduction.

A. Why study early Church history?

1. To give the believer \_\_\_\_\_ and roots: (Psalm 11:3)
2. To \_\_\_\_\_ us from the limited view of the present:
3. To better understand the Lord Jesus Christ:
4. To learn to defend the development of Christian doctrine.
5. To debunk myths and revisionist history. (i.e. *The DaVinci Code*)

B. What is the time frame of early Church history?

1. Creating periods for the history of the Church can become problematic for the following reasons:
  - a. Periods seem forced, mechanical, and unconnected to the one before and after.
  - b. Perspective of proper time spans varies with the religious traditions of those creating the periods. For instance, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants all have different views of the periods and what they represent.
2. The early Church possibly has more consensus than other periods since most Christian groups identify with the teachings and events of the first several hundred years.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Volume I* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002), 100.

3. For this study, we will consider the early Church to be from the days of Christ to 451 AD at the council of Chalcedon. Some extend the early Church period to the time of Pope Gregory the Great in 590 AD.<sup>2</sup>

C. Brief timeline: AD

1. C. 29: Jesus ascended; birth of the Church.
2. C. 29 – 100: The Apostles.
3. 100 – c. 160: The Apostolic Fathers.
4. 130 – c. 180: The Apologists.
5. 180 – 325: The Early Theologians.
6. 325 – 444: The Later Theologians.

D. Perspective: The dates and periods are general and will vary according to scholarly viewpoints. For example, some would extend the apologists' period.

## II. The Evidence for Jesus Christ.

A. Christian writers and historians: Starting with the Gospels, the history of the Book of \_\_\_\_\_, and the epistles all the way through the writings of the early Church fathers and later historians we see much evidence.

1. One example would be Paul's epistle to the Galatians (49 AD) and first epistle to the Thessalonians (49 – 52 AD). These substantiate things about the life of Jesus Christ, as well as doctrines firmly established within just two decades of the ascension of Christ.
2. The evidence of the early authenticity of the New Testament.

B. The \_\_\_\_\_ expansion and impact of early Christianity in a world full of idols and false gods gives strong evidence verifying Christ and His teachings.

C. Early non-Christian references:

1. \_\_\_\_\_: (37 – 100 AD): A Jewish historian. He became a Pharisee at 19 years of age. In 66 AD he was commander of the Jewish forces in Galilee. After capture, he was attached to the Roman headquarters.

“Now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as had a veneration for truth. He drew over to him both many of

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<sup>2</sup> Schaff, 13, and Mark S. Ritchie, “The Story of the Church – Part 1, Topic 1 [www.ritchies.net/p1w1.htm](http://www.ritchies.net/p1w1.htm)>1999.

the Jews and many of the Gentiles: he was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at first did not forsake him; for he appeared unto them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had spoken of these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him: whence the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”<sup>3</sup>

2. Cornelius Tacitus (b. 52-54 AD): A Roman historian and governor of Asia in 112 AD, son-in-law of Julius Agricola, Governor of Britain in 80-84 AD. In writing of Nero’s reign he says:

“He falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius.”<sup>4</sup>

3. Plinus Secundus (Pliny the Younger): Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor in 112 AD. He wrote to Emperor Trajan explaining that he had been killing Christians, both adult and children, and seeking advice about how many to kill.

“They affirmed, however, that the whole of their guilt, or their error, was that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, never to falsify their word, nor to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up.”<sup>5</sup>

4. Other sources include rabbinic literature, first century historians commenting on the physical nature of the darkness at Christ’s death, and a letter from a Syrian father to his son comparing the murders of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Jesus.

#### D. The Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium.

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<sup>3</sup> Josephus, *Book Eighteen of his Antiquities*, recorded in *Josephus: Complete Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1978), 640.

<sup>4</sup> Josh McDowell, compiled by Bill Wilson, *The Best of Josh McDowell: A Ready Defense* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 200.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

### III. The Birth of the Church.

- A. The life of Christ: Immanuel; teacher, miracle worker, redeemer, and king.
  
- B. The calling and training of the disciples.       Matthew 4:19; 9:19; John 1:43
  
- C. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  
- D. The Great Commission.                               Matthew 28:18-20
  
- E. The promise of the Holy Spirit.                 Acts 1:4-8
  
- F. The day of Pentecost.                               Acts 2:1-4; 41
  
- G. Growth of the Church: Acts 4:4, 5:14, 6:7, 9:31, 11:24, 12:24, 13:49, 16:5, 19:20
  
- H. *The Acts of the Apostles*: Not only is the book of Acts the earliest history of the Church, it is also an account of the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ of the earliest Christians into many parts of the world at that time.

## Part Two: The Apostles and Others

One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).<sup>6</sup>

-- The Apostle John

### I. The Apostles: Facts, Traditions, and Legends.

1. Andrew: Brother of Simon Peter.
  - Ephesus, Scythia, and Greece.
  - Crucified on a cross shaped like an X in Patras, Greece, possibly in 69 AD.
  - Patron Saint of Greece, Russia, and Scotland.
2. Bartholomew: Also called Nathaniel (John 1:45).
  - Armenia (present day Azerbaijan), Hierapolis, India, Persia (present day Iran), and Arabia.
  - Tortured, flayed alive, and crucified in agony in 68 AD.
  - Patron Saint of Armenia.
3. James the Elder (Great): Brother of John.
  - Disputed tradition in Spain.
  - Acts 12:1-2: He was the first martyr, beheaded by Herod Agrippa I on Passover (Easter) in 44 AD.
4. James the Younger: Brother of Mathew Levi
  - His physical similarity to the likeness of Jesus.
  - First Bishop of the Syrian Church in Jerusalem.
  - Stoned by the Jews for preaching the Gospel.
5. John: Brother of James the Elder.
  - Ephesus, Patmos, Rome, and Parthia (modern-day Iran). He was pastor of the church at Ephesus. Mary, the mother of Jesus, possibly lived with him there until she died.

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<sup>6</sup> John 1:40-42, NKJV.



- He lived until 100 AD and became the leading voice of the Church. Polycarp and Papias were his disciples.

6. Jude Thaddaeus:

- Armenia, Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia.
- Correspondence between Jesus and Abgar, King of Edessa.
- Killed with arrows and a spear on Mt. Ararat.

7. Matthew: Brother of James the Younger

- Traditions among the Hebrews, “Ethiopia” (not modern Ethiopia), northern Greece, Syria, and Persia.
- Incident with cannibals.
- Some say he died peacefully; others by a spear and still others by beheading.

8. Matthias:

- Armenia.
- He returned to Jerusalem and was martyred there” with “He was possibly stoned to death in 80 AD.

9. Peter:

- Corinth, Antioch, Britain, and Rome.
- Bishop of Antioch and Rome.
- Nero had Peter crucified head-downward on the Vatican Hill.

10. Philip:

- Scythia, Hierapolis, and Gaul (France). It seems that there was some later confusion between the acts of this Philip and those of Philip the deacon (the evangelist).
- Crucified, stoned, and another tradition says he was pierced through the thighs while crucified head-downward.

11. Simon the Canaanite:

- Egypt, Numibia (modern Algeria), Mauritania, Libya, Gaul, and Britain with Joseph of Arimathea.
- Possibly killed in Persia by being sawn asunder.

12. Thomas: Also known as Didymas “the twin”.

- Babylon, Syria, Afghanistan, and north and south India and planted many churches.
- The earliest bishoprics or Patriarchates were in this order: Babylon, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople.
- The oldest church is “The Church of the Nativity” located in modern Iran. It was supposedly started by the three wise men.
- He was pierced with a lance while praying in a cave in Mylopur, a suburb of Madras, India.

## II. Other Important Early Christians

### 1. Paul:

- He was imprisoned twice in Rome and between this visited both Spain and Britain.
- He was beheaded in Rome on the same day that Peter was crucified.

### 2. Barnabas:

- Helped found the Church in Cyprus. After ministering in many countries, he returned to Cyprus and was martyred there. He may have written the book of *Hebrews*.
- Patron Saint of Cyprus.

### 3. John Mark:

- He became the pastor of the Church of Alexandria. He was martyred by being dragged with a rope around his neck. His bones were taken to Venice where he is a patron saint.
- He wrote the *Gospel of Mark*.

### 4. Mary Magdalene:

- She has been called “the apostle to the apostles” since she took the news of Jesus’ resurrection to the apostles. Tradition says she preached in Rome and Italy. She took an egg to Emperor Tiberius as a symbol of new life in the resurrection.

### 5. Luke:

- He was an early convert from outside of Judaism. He traveled extensively with Paul. Some say he died peacefully but others think he was crucified with St. Andrew at Patras or at Elaea in Peloponnesus.

- His two books, *Luke* and *Acts*, constitute the earliest history of the Christian Church.
6. Lazarus:
- Cyprus and Marseilles, France. Lazarus, his sisters, Mary and Martha, a servant named Marcella, and a disciple named Maximin went to Marseilles where Lazarus became bishop. Both Cyprus and Marseilles have traditions of his death.
7. The brothers of Jesus: Controversy between the traditions of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Eastern Orthodox.
- James the Just: Author of the book of James, leader of the church in Jerusalem
  - Jude: Author of the book of Jude

### **III. Simon Magnus: The Father of all Heresy.**

- A. Simon the Magician (Sorcerer): Acts 8:9-24 – The Samaritans regarded him as “the great power of God.”
- B. He was called “the father of all heresy” by Irenaeus and Hippolytus and the originator of Gnosticism. A second century Samaritan Gnostic sect made Simon Magnus the redeemer rather than Jesus.<sup>7</sup>
- C. Eusebius, the early Church historian, says that Peter withstood Simon twice, once in Samaria and then in Rome.
1. Simon departed Samaria and went to Rome where his demonic sorcery was apparently well received because the people honored him as a god.
  2. Justin Martyr mistakenly reported that a stature was built to Simon in Rome. The stature rediscovered in 1574 was actually to a Sabine deity called Semo Sancus.<sup>8</sup>
  3. Peter preached the good news of the light and the kingdom of heaven, thus extinguishing Simon Magnus’ power in Rome.

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 37.

<sup>8</sup> Eusebius: *The History of the Church*, G. A. Williamson, translator (London: Penguin Books, 1989), 417

## Part Three: Growing Pains

“Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him . . . they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.’ For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.’ Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To the unknown God. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.’<sup>9</sup>

-- Luke, the physician

### I. The Rise of Early Jewish Christianity.

#### A. Relationship:

1. From the beginning the Church had affinity with Judaism. Matthew’s Gospel related Christ as the new Moses.<sup>10</sup> The book of Hebrews presented Him as the new High Priest. He was the long, awaited Messiah! The apostles first went to synagogues to tell of the risen Savior.
2. Christianity was called by some “the Way,” a \_\_\_\_\_ of Judaism (Acts 24:14).
3. The Jewish term for Christians was \_\_\_\_\_.
4. It appealed to ordinary Jews who perceived that the Pharisees had overstressed ceremonial traditions rather than the central truths of the religion. Pharisees related more to Christianity than Sadducees since the former believed in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6-8). Paul was a Pharisee who accepted Christ (Philippians 3:5). It also appealed to the Pharisaic idea that the revealed will of God was to be taken most seriously.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ held certain similarities to the early Church. Though ascetic and celibate, their ideas of communal living, equality of all men, end times, etc. probably predisposed many of them to accept Christ and Christianity.

#### B. Gentile issues within Christianity:

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<sup>9</sup> Acts 17:18-23 (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> Chadwick, 12.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ : These Greek-speaking Jews were not born in Palestine. In Acts 6:3 tension displays prejudice by “Hebrew” speaking Christians toward “gentile” speaking Christians. To patch the breach, the men chosen were probably all Hellenists as indicated by their Greek names (i.e. Stephen).
2. Early exposures:
  - a. Philip was the first to preach to a gentile (Acts 8:26-38).
  - b. Saul, a Cilician Jew, was sent by the Jewish council to counter the spread of Christianity in Syria, Cilicia (modern Turkey) and the north, but on the way he met Christ and was commissioned to the gentiles (Acts 9:15).
  - c. The gentile Cornelius and Peter both received visions that they were to meet. Cornelius and his household accepted Christ (Acts 10).
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ over circumcision and other Jewish laws and customs led to the first church council (Acts 15).
4. The quasi-independent status of gentile Christendom standing next to Jewish Christendom within one Church, could be used later to justify extremes within Christianity, including the divergence of the eastern and the western Church.

C. Christian issues within Judaism.

1. Jews persecuted Christians, but regarded them as a heretical sect.
2. The acceptance of gentiles among the Nazarenes widened the gap.
3. According to Eusebius the Jewish revolt of 66 AD was preceded by a prophecy to Christians to flee Jerusalem and go to Pella in the Decapolis. A permanent rift occurred when Christians did not fight Titus in 70 AD.
4. C. 85 AD a formal anathema in Jewish liturgy: “May the Nazarenes and the heretics be suddenly destroyed and removed from the Book of life.”<sup>11</sup> The Jewish council of Jamnia in 90 AD called for the \_\_\_\_\_ of all Jewish Christians from synagogues.

D. The \_\_\_\_\_ :

1. The term: Hebrew meaning “the poor.”

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<sup>11</sup>Henry Chadwick, 21.

2. Beliefs: They denied the virgin birth. Christ was predestined Messiah but not divine. Paul was apostate. They used an edited *Gospel of Matthew*, adhered to Jewish Law and circumcision, quoting Matthew 10:25 “*It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher.*” Jesus was circumcised so they also should be circumcised.

E. The \_\_\_\_\_ :

1. The term: Refers to followers of James, the brother of Jesus.
2. Beliefs: Like the Ebionites, but they accepted Christ’s pre-existence and the mission to the gentiles. Yet, since James was highly regarded, gentiles had to uphold the law as James prescribed to them at the council of Jerusalem in 49 AD (Acts 15:19-20).<sup>12</sup>

F. The \_\_\_\_\_ :

1. The Term: From **Matthew 2:23** “*He shall be called a Nazarene.*”
2. **Acts 24:5** “*the sect of the Nazarenes*”
3. Beliefs: As noted earlier, *Nazarenes* was the Jewish name for Christians. It is unclear, however, as to whether the term actually refers to all Christians or simply Jewish Christians. Nazarenes were orthodox in Christology, endorsed Paul’s mission to gentiles, but kept the Jewish law. Some think the Ebionites and Jacobites split from the Nazarenes.

G. The term \_\_\_\_\_ began to be used around 42 – 43 AD. **Acts 11:26** “*The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*”

H. Heresy: All forms of Christian Judaism were called heretical by Epiphanius [epifanius], bishop of Salamis, in the fourth century, including the Nazarenes. The perception of the Nazarenes, “the successors of Christ,” went from orthodox to heretical within a few centuries.<sup>13</sup>

## II. Lines of Authority

A. Early Church Leadership:

- Local church government: As recorded in Scripture, the \_\_\_\_\_ had oversight of the spiritual house (1st Timothy 3:17; Titus 1:5; 1st Peter 5:1-2) and \_\_\_\_\_ of the natural house (Acts 6:1-7; 1st Timothy 3:8-13).

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<sup>12</sup> David G. Horrell, “Early Jewish Christianity,” *The Early Christian World: Volume I*, 155-156.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

- Meanings: The word *elder* is the Greek word *presbuteros* which means “senior” or “elderly” as compared to a novice; it refers to the character of the individual. The word *bishop* means overseer and speaks of the office which an elder might hold. Clement (96 AD) used the words *bishop* and *presbyter* synonymously. The word *pastor* means shepherd or feeder and is descriptive of the work which an elder in the office of bishop performs. The work can also be that of apostle, prophet, evangelist, or teacher.<sup>14</sup>

B. Clement of Rome confirms the lines of authority in 96 AD.

C. Eusebius [yOOsē'bēus] (c. 263-339), the bishop of Caesarea, was not the first church historian, but he was first to do it on a grand scale. In his work *The History of the Church*, he gives many facts and quotations of earlier writers that tell the history of the Church from Christ to Emperor Constantine. Below is a partial list of Emperors and Bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch.<sup>15</sup>

A.D.	Emperors -----Bishops-----			
	Rome	Alexandria	Jerusalem	Antioch
14--Tiberius				
37--Gaius (Caligula)				
41--Claudius				
54—Nero			James	(Peter)
68--Galba	(Paul, Peter) Linus	Mark I Annianus		Euodius
69--Otho, Vespasian			Symeon	
79—Titus	Anencletus			
81—Domitian		Avilius		
96—Nerva	Clement			Ignatius
98--Trajan	Evarestus	Cerdo	Justus I	

D. House churches: Since Christianity was illegal in most places; the Church could not own property.<sup>16</sup> This is probably one reason why congregations met in private

<sup>14</sup> Dick Iverson, *Present Day Truths* (Portland, OR: Bible Temple Publishing, 1975), 135.

<sup>15</sup> Eusebius, 428.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Chadwick, 58.

homes rather than building large structures actually owned by the Church and operated by congregational leaders.

E. Emergence of the \_\_\_\_\_:

- Equal but prominent
- Pope means “papa”
- Victor
- Stephen
- Damascus
- Leo

“While showing it immense deference and setting great store by its pronouncements, the Eastern churches never treated Rome as the constitutional center and head of the Church, much less as the infallible oracle of faith and morals, and on occasion had not the least compunction about resisting its express will . . . On the one hand, St. Peter’s position as prince of the apostles was acknowledged without the smallest reservation . . . On the other hand, there is no suggestion in the Greek fathers that St. Peter’s position as leader carried with it a status different in kind from that of the other apostles.”<sup>17</sup>

-- J. N. D. Kelly

### III. Tension

A. Changes in Christianity

1. There was a growing \_\_\_\_\_ from Judaism but acceptance by the Gentiles.
2. Church growth despite persecution.
3. Regional struggles against heresy.
4. Paul’s warning (Acts 20:29-31)

B. Biblical examples: Fighting for the Truth

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<sup>17</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 407 – 408.



## IV. Emergence of the *Didache*.

- A. The *Didache* also known as *The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Apostles*.
- B. Date of composition: It was written c. 50–120 AD. Most scholars place it before the writing of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians in c. 55 because of its original view of the early Church. Others say it was contrived much later by Montanists to substantiate the role of prophet, but this lacks evidence.<sup>18</sup>
- C. The origin: It was possibly written in a rural area of Syria or Egypt. Syria is considered more likely because of its style and similarities to the *Gospel of Matthew*.<sup>19</sup>
- D. Verification: It is referred to by numerous patristic writers (i.e. Eusebius and Athanasius) and though it was not canonized, it was recommended to Christians.
- E. The composition: The sections of it were probably written, edited, and compiled over time.
- F. Sections of the *Didache*:
  - 1. The Treatise on the Two Ways (chapters 1 – 6). This is similar to the end of the *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. 80 – 120 AD).
    - a. The Two Ways are a Way of \_\_\_\_\_ and a Way of \_\_\_\_\_.
    - b. Chapter one appears to express oral tradition of Jesus' teachings.
  - 2. Worship and discipline (chapters 7 – 16)
    - a. Part one: Instruction regarding baptism, fasting, daily prayer, and the celebration of the Eucharist (chapters 7 – 10).
      - i. As in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11, the *Didache* incorporates the Eucharist with an agape (love) feast.
    - b. Part two: Disciplinary section regarding itinerant apostles and prophets, instructions for Sunday service, and selecting bishops and deacons (chapters 11 – 15).
    - c. Part three: Eschatological preparation for the coming of the Lord (chapter 16).

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<sup>18</sup> Betty Radice, 187.

<sup>19</sup>David G. Horrell, "Early Jewish Christianity," *The Early Christian Church: Volume 1*, 147.

## Part Four: The Church Fathers

“The difference between Christianity and the rest of mankind is not a matter of nationality, or language, or customs . . . Like other men, they marry and beget children, though they do not expose their infants. Any Christian is free to share his neighbor’s table, but never his marriage-bed. Though destiny has placed them here in the flesh, they do not live after the flesh; their days are passed on the earth, but their citizenship is above in the heavens. They obey the prescribed laws, but in their own private lives they transcend the laws. They show love to all men – and all men persecute them. They are misunderstood, and condemned; yet by suffering death they are quickened into life. They are poor, yet making many rich; lacking all things, yet having all things in abundance. They are dishonored, yet made glorious in their very dishonor; slandered, yet vindicated. They repay calumny [false and malicious accusation] with blessings, and abuse with courtesy . . . Jews assail them as heretics, and Greeks harass them with persecutions; and yet of all their ill-wishers there is not one who can produce good grounds for hostility.”<sup>20</sup>

-- The Epistle to Diognetus, author unknown (120-200 AD)

### I. The Apostolic Fathers to the Late Theologians

#### A. Nicene Periods:

1. Ante-Nicene

2. Post-Nicene

#### B. Apostolic Fathers: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_ of Rome :[klem'unt]

Profile: Fourth bishop of Rome, possibly the Clement of Philippians 4:3. He wrote *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* (c. 96 AD).

2. \_\_\_\_\_ of Antioch: [ignā'shus]

Profile: Third bishop of Antioch in Syria; martyred in 110 AD; wrote letters on the way to his execution. He wrote *Epistles to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans*, and an *Epistle to Polycarp of Smyrna*.

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<sup>20</sup> Betty Radice, *Early Christian Writings* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1968), 144-145.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ of Smyrna: [pol'ikärp]

Profile: Born c. 70 AD. Disciple of John at Ephesus. Bishop of Smyrna, immortalized in his martyrdom. Writings: *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*; and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* written by the church leaders at Smyrna to the congregation at Philomelium.

4. Hermas of Rome: [her'mus]

Profile: Freed Roman slave. Possibly the Hermas of Romans 16:14. Writings: *The Shepherd of Hermas*: The book was possibly written over a span of thirty or forty years from 96 AD onward, which may indicate different authors. It is broken into three parts: (1) The Visions, (2) The Mandates (Commandments), and (3) The Parables (Similitudes).

C. Apologists: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The reason for the apologists.
2. Bridges: The apologists needed bridging concepts like logos, law, recapitulation, and divine goodness to rebut in a manner that maintained individual integrity and gave foundation for future thought.<sup>21</sup>
3. Quadratus:

Profile: Little is known of him. Eusebius lists three with the name, a prophet, apologist, and bishop of Athens; perhaps all refer to one person. Writings: *A defense to Emperor Hadrian* (123 - 129). Only a small portion survives testifying to the enduring effect of Jesus' healings.

“Our Savior’s works were always there to see, for they were true – the people who had been cured and those raised from the dead, who had not merely been seen at the moment when they were cured or raised, but were always there to see, not only when the Savior was among us, but for a long

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<sup>21</sup> Eric Osborn, “The Apologists,” *The Early Christian World: Volume I*, 525.

time after His departure; in fact some of them survived right up to my own time.”<sup>22</sup>

4. Justin \_\_\_\_\_

Profile: (c.100 – c.165) Samaria. He was most prominent of the apologists. After martyrdom he was referred to as *Justin Martyr*. *Concerning the Resurrection* is the first apology to speak of the resurrection of the flesh. *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* (155-160) presents Christian doctrine as a philosophy and then extends this philosophy into the Christian-Jewish debate to prove that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

5. Theophilus of Antioch:

Profile: Bishop of Antioch 169-181. Writings: Three books to *Autolycus* (c. 180), an educated heathen friend who praised pagan gods and defamed Christians and their God.

6. Two Centuries of growth:

i. Greek

ii. Latin

D. Early Theologians: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_ of Lyon: [īrinē'us]

Profile: Born in Smyrna c. 130. Bishop of Lyons in Gaul. The first biblical theologian, writing in Greek but ministering in a Latin-speaking province of the Roman Empire. Writings: *Against Heresies* (c. 182–188) - This refutation of false knowledge exposes Gnostic fantasies, expounds Christian teaching, and gives account of the resurrection and future hope.

ON THE TRINITY:

“In the name of Christ [‘the Anointed’] is implied the anointer, the anointed and the unction. The Father is the anointer; the Son, the anointed; the Holy Spirit the unction. As the Word declares through Isaiah: ‘The Spirit of God is upon me, because he has anointed me’.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Eusebius HE 4.3; 106.

<sup>23</sup> Henry Bettenson, *The Early Christian Fathers* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1969), 88.

-- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (c. 182–188)

2. \_\_\_\_\_: [tûrtûl'yun]

Profile: (c. 150 – c. 220) Carthage. Father of Latin theology and church language. He joined the sect of the Montanists. Numerous writings: *The Apology* argued that Christianity should be tolerated by the state; *Against Marcion* defended the use of the Old Testament by the Christian Church; *Against Praxeas* developed a primitive doctrine of the Trinity; and *On Baptism* refuted children baptism.

ON THE TWO NATURES IN CHRIST:

“God lived with men as man that man might be taught to live the divine life; God lived on man’s level, that man might be able to live on God’s level: God was found weak, that man might become most great. If you disdain a God like this, I doubt if you can wholeheartedly believe in a God who was crucified.”<sup>24</sup>

-- Tertullian, *Against Marcion ii. 27* (c. 207)

3. \_\_\_\_\_: [yOOsē'bēus]

Profile: (c. 263-339) First great Church historian. Bishop of Caesarea in 313. Condemned at the council of Antioch for semi-Arianism, but reconfirmed at Nicaea by opposing Arius. Writings: *The History of the Church*; *Apology of Origen*; *Life of Pamphilus*, etc.

E. Later Theologians:

1. \_\_\_\_\_: [ăthunā'zhus]

Profile: (c. 298-373) Unwavering orthodox theologian who was bishop of Alexandria more than once and was often excommunicated or hunted by heretical Arian and political forces. He was respected greatly by the end of his career for his steadfast pro-Nicene doctrine. He wrote *Against the Pagans*; *On the Incarnation*; *Life of Anthony*; *Letters to Serapion*; and others.

2. The \_\_\_\_\_ Fathers:

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<sup>24</sup> Henry Bettenson , 122.

- i. Basil of Caesarea: (330–379) [bä'zil] Profile: Bishop of Caesarea from 370; leading member of the Cappadocian Fathers. Wrote *On the Holy Spirit*.
- ii. Gregory of Nazianzus: (330–390) Profile: Bishop of Constantinople in 381, and close friend of Basil of Caesarea. Wrote *Four Theological Orations*.
- iii. Gregory of Nyssa: [nīs'ə]: (335–394) Profile: Bishop of Nyssa from 371; brother of Basil of Caesarea; ablest philosopher and theologian of the three. Wrote *Orations*.

3. Christological debate

4. Hilary of Poitiers:

Profile: (c. 315 – c. 368) Bishop of Poitiers in Gaul in 350. Exiled because of his staunch support of the Nicene position. Fought to bring a harmony between west and east orthodoxy and fortify refutations against Arianism. Writings: *De Trinitate*; *De Synodis*; and others.

5. \_\_\_\_\_: [ô'gustēn]

Profile: (354–430) His influence outshines all other early church fathers in that his influence pervaded the history of western civilization. Bishop of Hippo in 396. Augustine fought against the heresy he saw in Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism and raised theological reasoning to a new level. He presided over the Council that canonized the New Testament in the west and wrote extensively on doctrine. Wrote *Confessions*, *City of God*, *Retractions*, and numerous others.

## II. Diversity in Unity

### A. The changing church

B. Reasons for unity

C. Hippolytus' creed

### III. Questions and Revelation

A. The early Church theologians wrestled with \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. To what should the Church look for its guiding authority? How do Scripture and tradition relate?
2. Is Christ genuinely divine? If so, how does He relate to the Father and to the Spirit? How is He the Word from the beginning? Is the Spirit divine as well?
3. If Christ is divine then is He also human? How so? How can He be both?
4. How did Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection overcome sin and produce salvation and life in the believer?
5. What is humanity and how do the image and likeness of God relate to humans?
6. What is the Church? How is it related to Christ and to the world?
7. What will happen in the future? When will Christ return? What is the resurrection and what is judgment? What is heaven?

# Part Five: Early Christian Living

This is love, to love God and our neighbor. This conducts to the height which is unutterable. Love covers a multitude of sins. Love bears all things, suffers all things. Love joins us to God, does all things in concord. In love, all the chosen of God were perfected. Apart from love, nothing is well pleasing to God. Of its perfection there is no unfolding, it is said. Who is fit to be found in it, except those whom God counts worthy? . . . God, then being good, is love, it is said. Whose love works no ill to his neighbor, neither injuring nor revenging ever, but, in a word, doing good to all according to the image of God.<sup>25</sup>

-- *The Stromata*

## I. Mediterranean culture.

A. The earliest Christians lived in the midst of the \_\_\_\_\_ culture. Outside of religious rites there would have been certain things in common, depending upon social status, wealth, etc.

1. Wakeful period:
2. Early morning:
3. Noon:
4. Living quarters:
5. Household features:
6. Afternoon:
7. Clothing:

B. \_\_\_\_\_:

1. Demonic worship: Idolatry was the norm.
2. Caution: Travel outside one's quarters required vigilance as cities were often violent places with forceful soldiers and sneaky culprits.<sup>26</sup>
3. Separation.
4. Spreading God's love.

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<sup>25</sup> "The Stromata", Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 2, 429-430.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce J. Malina, "Social levels, morals and daily life," *The Early Christian World: Volume I*, 393-398.



## II. Christian family life.

- A. Transformation from paganism to virtue: The deep morality of Christianity produced sanctity in individuals and families so rare in pagan society where temple prostitutes and debauchery were the norm.
- B. \_\_\_\_\_: In pagan culture the state was the highest object of life, thus behavior was controlled by external and social structure. Christian sanctification produced internal behavior control and a sense of individual responsibility.
- C. A variety of sanctified responses:
1. \_\_\_\_\_: Jesus spoke of celibacy in Matthew 19:11-12 as something that some may be able to accept, but he also endorsed marriage (v. 4-6). The patristic fathers emphasized virginity and celibacy more than marriage possibly as a reaction against the gross impurity of the age.<sup>27</sup>
  2. Chastity before marriage:
  3. Faithfulness in marriage:
  4. No mixed marriages: Marriages with heathens or heretics were condemned.
  5. Second marriage: It was allowed in the *Shepherd of Hermas* but mostly it was frowned upon or even condemned.
  6. Against abortion:
  7. Care of widows and orphans.
  8. Children: Nurtured, admonished, and trained.
  9. Slavery:
    - a. To free a slave was considered a “good work.” Church treasuries were sometimes used to buy freedom for a slave in a bad household.<sup>28</sup>
    - b. Tradition has it that Paul’s epistle to Philemon brought freedom to Onesimus who eventually became a bishop of Berea in Macedonia.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Philip Schaff, Volume 2, 361.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Chadwick, 60.

<sup>29</sup> Philip Schaff, Volume 1, 795.

D. Celibacy versus marriage: Though most Christians continued to marry and raise families, the issue produced questions, models to imitate, and controversy.

1. Peter was married but Paul was not.
2. Bishops and deacons could be married: 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:2, 12.
3. Encratite emphasis: Abstinence, no meat, and no wine were justified by a view that linked meat-eating and procreation with the fall of mankind and abstinence with the return to paradise and our angelic condition at the original creation.<sup>30</sup>
4. Predicting the false teachings that forbid marriage and meat: 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:3
5. Most patristic fathers were unmarried, but some were, i.e. Tertullian and Gregory of Nyssa.
6. Clement of Alexandria (c. 160 – 215): He gave a defense of marriage in the third book of his *Stromateis* in which he insists that the decision to marry or not must be free choice.
  - a. “The mother is the glory of her children, the wife is the glory of her husband, both are the glory of the wife, God is the glory of all together.”<sup>31</sup> – Clement of Alexandria
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ family: The Apostle Paul’s emphasis of Christ’s mystical marriage union with His Church resembling the natural imparted a holy and heavenly character into the family unit.

### III. Art in the early Church.

A. Art:

1. Early symbols:
2. Cross monograms:
3. The catacombs:
4. The Virgin Mary:

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<sup>30</sup> Teresa M. Shaw, “Sex and Sexuality”, *The Early Christian World: Volume 1*, 414.

<sup>31</sup> Philip Schaff, Volume 2, 364.

B. \_\_\_\_\_ and the eastern Church:

C. Literature:

1. The allegory called *The Shepherd of Hermas* was the most widely read piece of literature outside the biblical canon.
2. Imaginative but apocryphal literature:

#### IV. Travel and communication.

A. Purpose of travel:.

B. Means of travel:

1. By land: Rome had over \_\_\_\_\_ of paved roads and perhaps 100,000 miles of graveled roads. People walked or traveled in a type of carriage or even a litter carried by men or mules.<sup>32</sup>
  - a. People could walk 15 – 20 miles a day.
  - b. Carriages covered 25 – 30 m/p/d or up to 45 under duress.
2. By sea: By 166 AD a Roman envoy successfully reached China illustrating the extensiveness of sea travel.<sup>33</sup>
  - a. Merchant or container vessels with loose schedules transported people.
  - b. Strong winds could drive a ship from Rome to Alexandria in two weeks, but the return trip was tedious and slow. Alexandria erected the first lighthouse.
  - c. Dangers: Pirates, sea creatures, and unreliable vessels.
    - i. **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:25** “*three times I was shipwrecked; a day and a night I have been in the deep.*”

C. Lodging:

1. \_\_\_\_\_:
  - a. **Luke 2:7** “*There was no room for them in the inn.*”

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<sup>32</sup>Blake Leyerle, “Communication and Travel,” *The Early Christian World: Volume 1*. 458. Leyerle says 300,000 kilometers of graveled and paved. “Roman Roads,” <<http://library.thinkquest.org/13406/rr/>>

<sup>33</sup>“The First Contact Between Rome and China,” Silkroad Foundation (1997-2000), <[www.silk-road.com](http://www.silk-road.com)>

b. **Acts 28:15** “*They came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns.*”

c. Discovered early Christian map: Uses brilliant colors for roadways and the quality and location of facilities.

2. Other alternatives were often preferred:

a. Staying with an acquaintance:

b. Hospices: Churches and monasteries offered these as alternatives.<sup>34</sup>

D. Communication:

E. Miraculous communication: Accounts of holy people being transported miraculously or receiving revelation of information in advance:

1. Philip: **Acts 8:39** “*the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away.*”

2. Apa Ammonathas: a monk that was transported to Alexandria and back to petition the emperor on behalf of his monks, a journey that would normally take two weeks.

3. Anthony: a monk (like Elijah and Elisha) who would see what was happening in distant communities well in advance of the information reaching them by courier.

## **V. Women’s ministry in early Christian cultures.**

A. Limited written sources about it:

B. Certain factors defined the extent of ministry involvement: (1) The traditional primary role as housewife and mother; (2) the guidelines of excepted New Testament canonical sources; (3) the individual personalities of women feeling “called” to ministry, and (4) the rare opportunities open for them in senior leadership.

C. New Testament examples:

1. Jesus taught women both publicly and privately (Luke 10:39, 42). Certain women traveled with and supported His ministry (Luke 8:1 – 3). Mary Magdalene was the first to encounter the risen Christ (John 20:18).

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<sup>34</sup> Blake Leyerle, 464; also the “Roman Roads,” <<http://library.thinkquest.org/13406/rr/>>

2. Missionaries: Romans 16:3, 15: Paul greets Priscilla, Julia, and Nereus' sister as missionaries in pairs with their husbands.
3. Deaconesses: 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:11 (NAS); Romans 16:1: Phoebe is a deaconess and probably Acts 9:36–40: Dorcas.
4. Prophetesses: Acts 21:8-9: Philip's daughters. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:5: women prophesying. Ephesians 4:11 could be used to promote five-fold authority.
5. Apostles? Romans 16:7: Junia – some speculate that this was a woman and thus “of note among the apostles”.
6. House churches (potential leaders):

#### D. Other Sources:

1. Deaconesses: Pliny reported to Emperor Trajan in 112 AD that he had tortured two Christian handmaidens who were called “deaconesses”.<sup>35</sup>
2. Prophetesses: These were known in many early church settings.
3. Apostle: *The Acts of Thecla* is a second century apocryphal history of a virgin-martyr converted by the Apostle Paul who cut her hair, donned men's clothing, and became a missionary apostle.<sup>36</sup>
4. Montanists:

## VI. Early Christian worship.

### A. Aspects of worship:

1. Christ in you: The driving thought of the early Christians was Christ crucified, risen, and living in His church, celebrated every week.
2. Meetings in Synagogues, homes, and churches: Places of worship: After 70 AD Christians met in homes, desert places, grave of martyrs, and the crypts of the catacombs.
3. Church Buildings: By the time of Tertullian (150–220 AD) he wrote about *church* as a building. His contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, mentioned

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<sup>35</sup> Bill Scheidler, *The New Testament Church and its Ministries* (Portland, OR: Bible Temple Publishing, 1980), 75, referencing M. H. Shepherd, “Deaconess”, *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1, 786. Also, see John D. Davis, *Davis Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 176.

<sup>36</sup> Karen King, “From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians: Women in Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries, <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/fronline/shows/religion/first/women.html>>

the double meaning of ἐκκλησία. After the middle of the third century the construction of churches flourished.

4. Daily prayer: Christians often prayed several times a day.
5. House churches:
  - a. Preaching the gospel.
  - b. Reading portions of the Old Testament.
  - c. Prayer in its various forms, including the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) and the Aramaic *Maranatha*, "Come Lord Jesus" in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:22, Revelation 22:20 and in the *Didache* at the end of the Eucharistic liturgy.<sup>37</sup>
  - d. Singing in festive poetic style.
  - e. Confessions of faith.
    - i. Romans 10:10
    - ii. Philippians 2:11
  - f. The Sacraments:
    - a. Baptism.
    - b. The Lord's Supper. There was an aspect that Jesus would appear as He did to the disciples at the meal on the first resurrection day.
      - i. Luke 24:36-43

B. Music: Jesus and the apostles sang hymns (Matthew 26:30), Paul exhorted Christians to sing in worship (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14, Paul tells the Corinthians about how to have an appropriate worship service. Singing and chanting were customary in the synagogues so it carried over into the house churches. Limited surviving sources explain early Christian worship, but we have some:

1. Early Songs:
  - i. Ephesians 5:19
  - ii. Colossians 3:16
  - iii. Revelation 5:9, 12, 13
  - iv. Revelation 12:10-12
  - v. Revelation 19:1-2, 6

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<sup>37</sup> Oscar Cullman, *Early Christian Worship* (Philadelphia, PA: Wyndham Hall Press, 1953), 13.

2. Chants: “Alleluia” used in a chant of praise.
  3. Choirs: Philo of Alexandria says that early ascetic communities near Alexandria implemented choirs of men and women.
  4. Example of 2<sup>nd</sup> century hymn of joy taking the form of a wedding hymn:
    - i. Praise the Father, you holy ones. Sing to the Mother, you virgins.
    - ii. We praise. We the holy ones extol them.
    - iii. Be exalted, brides and bridegroom; for you have found your bridegroom, Christ. Drink your wine, brides and bridegrooms.
  5. Example of 3<sup>rd</sup> century praising of the Trinity:
    - i. While we hymn Father, Son and Holy Spirit, let all creation sing Amen, Amen.
    - ii. Praise, power to the sole giver of all good things. Amen, Amen.
  6. Rome: By the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, chanting as Rome did it became the model for the rest of the Christian world. By the 9<sup>th</sup> century, under Pope Gregory the Great, it became known as Gregorian.<sup>38</sup>
- C. Sunday Worship: The first day of the week, the Lord’s Day on which Jesus rose from the dead instantly became the most important meeting day of the Christian week. It was a day of thanksgiving and joy.
1. Scriptural evidence: Acts 20:7 – Paul preached to the disciples at Troas until midnight; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:2 – Paul ordered the Corinthians and Galatians at their weekly services to give charitable contributions. John was worshipping and received the *Revelation* on the Lord’s Day (Rev. 1:10).
  2. Universal acceptance: The fact that Sunday worship was not contradicted in the second century can only be explained by the fact that it was authorized by the apostles themselves.
  3. Christian Sabbath: This became a replacement for the Jewish Sabbath and was contrasted so as early as Ignatius (110 AD). Tertullian later associated it with the idea of Sabbath rest.<sup>39</sup>
  4. Inconvenient: The lowly condition of the majority of Christians and their dependence upon heathen employers and masters gives some idea of how this went against the norm of society.

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<sup>38</sup> Henry Chadwick, 272 – 277.

<sup>39</sup> Philip Schaff, Volume 2, 201 -205.

5. Constantine made Sunday a legal holiday.
  6. Other days: Wednesday and especially Friday were devoted to commemoration of the Lord's suffering.
- D. Yearly festivals: Easter (Passover) and Pentecost were the two main festivals. Christmas was not celebrated until the 4<sup>th</sup> century.
1. The Easter controversy:
- E. Worship of Mary: Prayers to Mary were almost non-existent (though not entirely) during the first four centuries. In the patristic epoch, Christians gave honor and devotion to martyrs, but worship was for God alone.
1. Apocryphal literature of the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century became preoccupied with Mary.
  2. The *Protoevangelium of James* ascribed to Mary divinely ordered birth, virgin birth of Jesus, but also that her other children were actually Joseph's and not hers biologically. The physical nature of her virginity remained intact throughout her life.
  3. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria said that she did not suffer travail at Jesus' birth, but Tertullian refuted this notion.
  4. Origin thought she remained a virgin throughout her life, but he, Irenaeus, and Tertullian insisted that she was a sinner and needed redemption. Augustine later argued that Mary was an exception, without sin.<sup>40</sup>
  5. Contrast with Eve, who caused death, Mary brought life.
  6. She was eventually called Theotokos – God-bearer.

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<sup>40</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, 491 -499.



## Part Six: Images of Greatness

But the Christians, O King, while they went about and made search, have found the truth; and as we learned from their writings, they have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations . . . Wherefore they do not commit adultery nor fornication, nor bear false witness, nor embezzle what is held in pledge, nor covet what is not theirs. They honour father and mother, and show kindness to those near to them; and whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols (made) in the image of man; and whatsoever they would not that others should do unto them, they do not to others; and of the food which is consecrated to idols they do not eat, for they are pure”<sup>41</sup>

--Aristides o Athens to Emperor Hadrian

### I. Some Reasons for Christian Success

- A. Gospel message: Jesus’ truth spread to every open, honest, searching heart.
- B. Charity: Even pagans saw how Christians cared for the poor, widows, orphans, brethren in prison, etc. and gave hospitality to travelers of the faith.
- C. Miracles: Reports of healings and other miracles drew people to a God of love.
- D. Persecution: Rather than causing Christians to hide, it brought them into public to conquer prejudice and misinformation.
- E. Women and slaves: The upper class was penetrated through Christian wives. Though political emancipation was unthinkable in antiquity, Christianity brought a whole new level of respect to women through the sanctity of marriage and the apostle’s doctrine that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28). The domestic status of slaves was also elevated, and what made the Church conservative about slavery as an institution was not political indifference but respect for the State and for Law as laid down in Romans 13.<sup>42</sup>

### II. Times of Persecution

- A. Under Roman rule from the time of Nero in 54 AD to the Edict of Milan in 313, Christians experienced approximately 120 years of peace and 129 years of persecution. The reasons for persecution varied. Rome was normally tolerant of a conquered society’s gods and simply added them to their own, but Christianity was seen as atheistic, ultra-superstitious, mischievous, and detrimental to society.

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<sup>41</sup>Aristides’ Apology, <<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/aristides-kay.html>>.

<sup>42</sup> Henry Chadwick, 59.

B. Ten major periods of persecution occurred under the following emperors:<sup>43</sup>

1. Nero (c. 64 - 68): Traditional martyrdom of Peter and Paul.
2. Domitian (81 - 96).
3. Trajan (112 - 117): Christianity is outlawed but Christians are not sought out.
4. Marcus Aurelius (161 - 180): Martyrdom of Polycarp.
5. Septimus Severus (202 - 210): Martyrdom of Perpetua.
6. Maximinus the Thracian (235 - 238).
7. Decius (249 - 251): Christians sought out to give public sacrifice; martyrdoms of bishops in Rome, Jerusalem, and Antioch.
8. Valerian (257 - 259): Martyrdoms of Cyprian of Carthage and Sixtus II of Rome.
9. Aurelian (270 - 275).
10. Diocletian and Galerius (303 - 313): The “Great Persecution”.

C. Examples of Persecutions:

1. Local and sporadic: From the time of Nero until the middle of the third century the persecution against Christians, though intense, was not an empire-wide persecution.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ :
  - a. Her diary:
  - b. Edict: In 202 AD an edict by Emperor Septimius Severus outlawed conversion to Christianity and Judaism and prompted the arrest of catechumens (committed inquirers). In the spirit-filled church of Carthage, Perpetua and her brother had recently been converted.<sup>44</sup>
  - c. Profile: Roman, twenty-two years old, married with children.
  - d. Martyrdom: She and four others were thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre in Carthage. One of the soldiers who acted as executioner (Prudens) was so moved that he became a Christian.
    - i. Tertullian wrote: “Yet this community will be undying, for be assured that just at the time of its seeming demise it is built up all the stronger. For all who witness the noble patience of its martyrs, are struck with misgivings and inflamed with the desire to examine into the matter in question; and as soon as they come

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<sup>43</sup> “Persecution in the Early Church,” <[www.religionfacts.com](http://www.religionfacts.com)> (January 29, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Thomas M. Finn, “Mission and Expansion”, *The Early Christian World: Volume I*, 302.

to know the truth, they straightway enroll themselves as its disciples.”<sup>45</sup>

3. \_\_\_\_\_ persecution: Emperor Decius (249 – 251) ordered a systematic persecution by requiring that all people sacrifice to the gods and possess a certificate certifying the action or face execution.<sup>46</sup> Valerian continued the persecution, forbidding places of worship and executing various bishops and senior clergy.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ : Emperor Diocletian (284 – 305) remodeled the empire between east and west by creating a tetrarchy with two Augusti each with an assistant Caesar. East of the Adriatic, Diocletian and his Caesar Galerius ruled, but in the west empire Maximian and his Caesar Constantius (father of Constantine) ruled.
  - a. Four edicts show the temper of the persecution:
    - i. Closing churches, confiscating Scriptures, depriving upper class Christians of their civil rights.
    - ii. The imprisonment of the clergy.
    - iii. Torture and death of the clergy.
    - iv. Everyone must sacrifice to the gods.

### III. Emperor Constantine the Great

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ : (c. 272–337) First Christian emperor. Emperor in the west in 312 and of both east and west in 325.
- B. His conversion:
  1. Percent of Christians in the Roman Empire:
  2. The vision:
  3. The Chi and Rho monogram:
  4. The Cross symbol prior to Constantine:
    - i. The Silchester cross:
    - ii. Greek cross:

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas M Finn, 304.

<sup>46</sup> Henry Chadwick, 118.

iii. Jerusalem cross:

iv. SATOR:

v. Chi Rho found:

1. Text found in Roman catacombs dating from late 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

2. Text found near the Dead Sea dated c. 135.

a. Delta  $\Delta$  found in same text:

5. Gradual Christian emphasis:

C. Some major accomplishments:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ in 313:

i. Restored the status of Christians and guaranteed their right to profess the faith without legal reprisal.

ii. The freedom to assemble and worship.

iii. The restitution of confiscated lands and buildings to Christians.

iv. Recognition of the Church as a corporation that had the right to own property.

v. The edict went further and declared all religions legal, thus being the first state decree to remove the control of spiritual life from the state.<sup>47</sup>

2. He abolished crucifixion, appointed bishops, built churches and cities, made Sunday a public holiday (321), minted a new coin (the solidus) for standard currency, and created a vast bureaucratic organization.<sup>48</sup>

3. Constantinople:

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<sup>47</sup> Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1974), 178-178.

<sup>48</sup> Carsten Peter Thiede and Matthew d' Ancona, *The Quest for the True Cross* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) 27, 36.

4. The council of Nicaea:

D. Two major goals:

1. To create a world fit for \_\_\_\_\_ to live in.
2. To make the world \_\_\_\_\_ for Christianity.

E. Controversies about his life and actions:

F. He was baptized just prior to his death in 337.

#### **IV. Saint Helen and the True Cross**

A. Helen: (c. 248 – c. 328) mother of Constantine. With Constantine she helped shape the empire into a Christian state.<sup>49</sup>

B. Her position in the empire: \_\_\_\_\_

C. Her journey and pilgrimage to Jerusalem:

1. The destruction of the pagan temple Aelia Capitolina built by Hadrian in 135 on the alleged site of Jesus' death and resurrection.<sup>50</sup>
2. Founded the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives, the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher and possibly forty-five other churches.

D. Her search for the true cross of Christ:

1. Modern controversy over Eusebius:
2. What Eusebius did write:
  - i. In the *Vita Constantini*, Eusebius does include a letter from Emperor Constantine which refers to “a token of the holiest Passon.”
  - ii. Eusebius refers to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher as a “temple of the saving sign” and a “memorial full of eternal significance and the Great Savior’s own trophies over death.”<sup>51</sup>
3. Early recognitions of the discovery:

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<sup>49</sup> Thiede and d' Ancona, 25.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 49-50.

- i. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem: In the 340's he wrote a series of lectures on the discovery of the cross.<sup>52</sup>
  - ii. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan: In 395 he recorded the discovery of the Cross by Helen.
  - iii. Rufinus, a monk and scholar: Spent twenty years in Jerusalem and in 402 wrote extensively on how the discovery took place.
  - iv. Egeria: Spanish woman who traveled 382 – 384 to the Holy Land and wrote letters describing the cross.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_: She took the portion describing Jesus as the Nazarene (John 19:19) to Rome where it apparently still exists at the Church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (Rome).
  5. The nails: There are traditions about three or four nails from the cross. According to Ambrose, one she had made into a bridle and another into a diadem. She sent both to her son, Constantine.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 53.

# Part Seven: Expanding the Kingdom

“Moreover also, that His power is sufficient for the raising of dead bodies, is shown by the creation of these same bodies. For if, when they did not exist, He made at their first formation the bodies of men, and their original elements, He will, when they are dissolved, in whatever manner that may take place, raise them again with equal ease: for this, too, is equally possible to Him.”<sup>53</sup>

-- Athenagoras, *The Resurrection of the Dead*

## I. Centuries of Miracles

A. Some modern Christians assert that the miraculous evidences of the faith ceased after the first 100 years of Christianity. However, a perusal of the Ante-Nicene fathers and beyond falsifies that claim.

1. 100 AD: Clement of Rome -
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. 110 – 150: Shepherd of Hermas -
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. 165: Justin Martyr - referred to numerous current supernatural gifts.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. 185: Irenaeus - referred to many gifts of the Spirit happening in currently in the Church.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. 215: Tertullian - “As such we do both acknowledge and reverence, even as we do the prophecies, modern visions as equally promised to us, and consider the other powers of the Holy Spirit as an agency of the Church for

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<sup>53</sup> Athenagoras, “The Resurrection of the Dead”, 3, *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 2*, 150.

which also He was sent, administering all gifts in all, even as the Lord distributed to everyone.”<sup>54</sup>

6. 250: Origen –

7. 270: Novatian –

B. \_\_\_\_\_: (354–430): Originally, he believed that the gifts had ceased, but then near the end of his life he wrote a lengthy account of current miracles in the Church in *The City of God*.

## II. Missionaries

A. \_\_\_\_\_: “We are but of yesterday and we have filled all that you have – cities, islands, forts, towns, assembly halls, even military camps, tribes, town councils, the palace, senate and forum. We have left you nothing but the temples.”<sup>55</sup>

B. Pantaenus:

Principal of the Seminary of Alexandria in 181 against a backdrop of flourishing Gnosticism

C. Gregory \_\_\_\_\_:

Influenced by Origen. He undertook pioneer missionary work in Pontus in Asia Minor in 240

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<sup>54</sup> Grant Jeffrey, “The Mystery of When Miracles and Healings Ceased,” <<http://www.grantjeffrey.com>>

<sup>55</sup> Henry Chadwick, 63.



D. Gregory the Illuminator of Armenia:

Third century Armenian aristocrat, converted in exile. He returned to Armenia to preach the gospel

E. Ulfilas:

(311–383): Arian missionary to the warlike Visigoths west of the Black Sea

F. \_\_\_\_\_:

(387 – 493) Apostle to the Irish. He was born in Scotland but later enslaved in Ireland. Years after his escape in 433 he returned as a missionary for the rest of his life. He died on March 17, 493

### III. Monks

A. Word origin: Derived via the word *monachos* meaning “solitary one” and primarily from the Greek *monos* meaning “\_\_\_\_\_”.

B. They were highly ascetic and believing that a life of withdrawal was imitative of Jesus’ withdrawal after baptism to resist the Devil.

C. \_\_\_\_\_:

At twenty years of age (c. 270) he responded to a call from the Lord and retreated to solitude in the Egyptian desert and mountains until his death c. 340, fighting the Devil and experiencing miracles. He was respected by pagans and sought out by emperors for wisdom and prophecy.

D. \_\_\_\_\_:

Established a monastery in 529 at Monte Cassino for simple Italians and Goths who learned letters for devotional purposes. Numerous miracles are ascribed to him. That the monks would obey the abbot and community life became known as St. Benedict’s Rule.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Henry Chadwick, 183.

E. Women: There were women like Olympias of Constantinople and Paula of Rome, and Marcrina, sister of Gregory of Nyssa who used wealth and leadership to build monasteries for women, such as in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The male monks were often concerned about associating as to protect their own chastity.

F. Bizarre movements:

1. The singing monks:

2. The praying ones:

#### **IV. Guarding the Scriptures**

A. Formation of the Biblical Canon

1. Model: The New Testament was formed on the model of the Old Testament.

2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:15:

3. The distinguishing criteria for canonization:

i. Apostolic authorship:

ii. Recognized and used by leading churches:.

iii. Conformity to the standards of sound doctrine as from the Lord:

4. New Testament Gospels: always accepted

5. Early Authority: The books and epistles were regarded as authoritative from the beginning, but the idea of their being Scripture had to form in people's understanding. By the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the four gospels, the Acts, the thirteen epistles of Paul, the first epistle of Peter, and the first epistle of John were acknowledged as apostolic, inspired by the Spirit of Christ, and therefore authoritative and canonical. The other books would follow.<sup>57</sup>

6. Athanasius: His Easter Letter in 367 was the first official document that prescribes the twenty-seven books of our New Testament alone as canonical.<sup>58</sup>

7. The eastern churches:

8. The western churches:

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<sup>57</sup> Philip Schaff, Volume 2, 517.

<sup>58</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, 60.

## Part Eight: Lasting Legacy

“We must strain the poor resources of our language to express thoughts too great for words. The error of others compels us to err in daring to embody in human terms truths which ought to be hidden in the silent veneration of the heart. For there have risen many who have given to the plain words of holy Writ some arbitrary interpretation of their own, instead of its true and only sense . . . Heresy lies in the sense assigned, not in the word written; the guilt is that of the expositor, not of the text . . . Since, therefore, they cannot make any change in the facts recorded, they bring novel principles and theories of man’s device to bear upon them . . . We must set a limit to their license of interpretation. Since their malice inspired by [the Adversary’s] cunning, empties the doctrine of its meaning, while it retains the Names which convey the truth, we must emphasize the truth which those Names convey.”<sup>59</sup>

-- Hilary of Poitiers, c. 315 – c. 368

### I. Overcoming Heretical Views

A. The early Church had three \_\_\_\_\_ against heresy:

1. Succession from apostles:
2. The Rule of Faith:
3. The gradual formation of the New Testament:

B. Problems with terms:

1. Modern scholars believe that early church fathers used the word “\_\_\_\_\_” indiscriminately to denote wrong doctrine or difference in ecclesiastical practice. The word \_\_\_\_\_ would be more appropriate for those who differed in ecclesiastical practice but accepted orthodox doctrine. Some today like the terms “internal renewal” or “dissent” as compared to orthodoxy versus heresy.<sup>60</sup>
2. Important questions: Who was calling who heretics? Did the particular doctrine of an individual or group maintain orthodox status throughout Church history?

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<sup>59</sup>Hilary of Portiers, *On the Trinity*, 2.2-3, as cited in Christopher A. Hall, 31-32.

<sup>60</sup> Sheila E. McGinn, “Internal Renewal and Dissent in the Early Christian World,” *The Early Christian World: Volume II*, 893-905

C. Controversial Movements: Numerous heretical teachings in the early Church.<sup>61</sup>

1. \_\_\_\_\_: Begun by Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, in the early fourth century. Arius did not teach Arianism as it has come to be understood; but according to Athanasius he did ask the wrong questions, applied inappropriate human categories to God, and forgot the limitations of human language. The most sensitive issue of the Arianism debate boiled down to the eternity of the Son, Jesus Christ. Has he always existed or not? If not, then Christ is mere creature and not divine. Thus, Christians worship a creature rather than the Creator. Can a creature save us from sin?<sup>62</sup> Emperor Constantine first tried to resolve the conflict by writing a letter to Alexander and Arius. Next, he called for the council of Nicaea in 325 AD. Arius' view of the Son's nature was condemned at the council of Nicaea. While Constantine lived, the council's decision became the criterion for true faith. After Constantine's death, Arianism caused problems in the east. The eastern Greek churches were split into two parties over the debate until the end of the fourth century, but eventually the doctrine lost all support by the time of Theodosius I in 381 AD.
2. \_\_\_\_\_: The doctrine that Christ did not come in the flesh and that the crucifixion was an illusion.
  - a. The Church was already fighting this heresy in the days before the Apostle John died. See 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:2 and 2<sup>nd</sup> John 7. Hippolytus said that the teachings of the Docetist came from the Greek sophists.<sup>63</sup>
  - b. Polycarp wrote: "For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist; and whosoever does not confess the testimony of the cross, is of the devil . . . Wherefore forsaking the vanity of many, and their false doctrines, let us return to the word which has been handed down to us from the beginning."

-- "Avoid the Docetae," *Epistle to the Philippians*<sup>64</sup>
3. \_\_\_\_\_: From a Jewish and pagan origins and interacting with Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. Simon the Magician was its founder according to Irenaeus and Hippolytus. It became a complex religious movement somewhat like the new age movement today with Valentinus, Basilides, and Marcion as its main proponents. Chief among its doctrines were: (1) There is a remote Supreme Being but locally a creator god

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<sup>61</sup> Some controversial movements were Arianism, Docetism, Donatism, Ebionism, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Marcionism, Modalism, Monarchianism, Montanism, Nestorianism, Pelagianism, and Sabellianism.

<sup>62</sup> Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 35 -51.

<sup>63</sup> Hippolytus, "The Refutation of all Heresies" 8.4, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 5*, 120.

<sup>64</sup> *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I*, 34.

responsible for an imperfect and perverted material world; (2) salvation for some people by means of *gnosis* – secret knowledge; and (3) Jesus was an emissary of the Supreme Being revealing the true light but in docetic form.<sup>65</sup>

a. Almost from the beginning, Christians had to resist this heresy. See 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:20-21.

4. \_\_\_\_\_: Founded by Marcion in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. He taught that there were two Gods, one \_\_\_\_\_ and the other \_\_\_\_\_. The God revealed by Jesus was a God of love as compared to the Old Testament God who was wicked. He rejected the Old Testament and of the new canon only accepted the epistles of Paul and edited version of Luke’s gospel.<sup>66</sup>

a. Tertullian wrote: “Marcion ought to be called to a strict account concerning these (other Gospels) also, for having omitted them, and insisted in preference on Luke; as if they, too, had not had free course in the churches, as well as Luke’s Gospel, from the beginning. Nay, it is even more credible that they existed from the very beginning; for, being the work of apostles, they were prior, and coeval in origin with the churches themselves.”<sup>67</sup>

-- *Five Books Against Marcion*, 4.5

5. \_\_\_\_\_: Founded by Mani in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It was basically Gnostic and dualistic. Saving knowledge came through “apostles of light,” including Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus and Mani who was the final one. Augustine was in this cult for a while.

6. Sabellianism: Founded by Sabellius in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. He taught that the Godhead consists of a single person who reveals Himself in three different modes (modalism), Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The job of the Father and Son are over so they are gone and only the Holy Spirit remains.

## II. Modern Apologetics

A. Jesus coffin? *Titanic* director James Cameron told the world on 2/26/07 that one of these coffins is that of Jesus.

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<sup>65</sup> John Bowker, editor, *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 376-377.

<sup>66</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religion*, 616-617.

<sup>67</sup> *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 3*, 350.

Refutation: Historians and scholars point out numerous problems with Cameron's claim.

#### B. The Gnostic Gospel of Judas

Refutation:

- *Gospel of Judas* (130-170). Apocryphal Gnostic account of Judas as one whose betrayal of Jesus was supposedly done in obedience to Christ.
- Irenaeus refuted the authenticity of *The Gospel of Judas Against Heresies*, I, 31, 1 in 180 AD: "Others again declare that Cain derived his being from the Power above . . . they have been assailed by the Creator, yet not one of them has suffered injury. For Sophia was in the habit of carrying off that which belonged to her from them to herself. They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the *Gospel of Judas*."

#### C. The DaVinci Code: It gives an alternate and secret occult history of Christianity involving Jesus and Mary Magdalene, but there is no evidence for such claims.

Refutation:

### III. Councils and Creeds

A. Many councils: Below are examples of councils (synods) and the years of those councils in the early church: Carthage (251, 256); Arles (314, 353); Antioch (325, 341); Sardica (342); Seleucia (359); Ariminum – Rimini (359); Alexandria (362); Rome (377); Constantinople (381); Aquileia (381); Ephesus (431, 449); Chalcedon (451); and Toledo (589).

B. Some notable early councils:

#### 1. Jerusalem: ( c. 49)

Acts 15 tells us the events of the first council which dealt with the doctrinal issues of circumcision, dietary laws and gentile inclusion. A decree was created and sent "To the brethren who are of the Gentiles

in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.” This council created a justification for future councils.

2. Carthage: ( c. 251)

This council met regarding the apostasy of certain Christians (some being clergy) under the recent persecution of Decius. After the death of Decius, former Christians who had sacrificed to idols in order to spare their lives wanted to return into the Church. The bishops agreed to a moderate policy, examining people individually according to the gravity of their offense.<sup>68</sup>

3. Nicaea (325)

As many as 318 bishops showed up. They were almost unanimous in their decisions, creating the original Nicene Creed, now known as the Creed of Nicaea (or N), condemning Arius and his views, along with numerous other decisions.

4. Alexandria (362)

The council was allowed by Julian the Apostate who reigned from 361-363. He thought that it would produce schism and damage Christianity, but the result actually brought reconciliation between east and west. It crushed the Arian heresy and emphasized the faith confessed by the holy fathers at Nicaea.

5. Constantinople (381)

Theodosius summoned the council. The Creed of Nicaea was reconfirmed, but it was also remodeled to clarify the role of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. The remodeled version was called the Nicene Creed (C or Creed of Constantinople).

6. Ephesus (431)

The council adopted the *Formula of Reunion* in order to end the debated over the nature of Jesus Christ. He was fully man and fully God.

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<sup>68</sup> Stuart G. Hall, 88.

## 7. Chalcedon (451)

The council asserted that Jesus Christ passed the whole truth to his disciples, and the council is simply eliminating errors implanted by the Devil since that time. It also reaffirmed the findings at the ecumenical councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (431).

### C. Creeds:

1. Baptismal creeds:

2. Apostle's creed:

3. Nicene creed:

4. Formula of Reunion:

## IV. From Then to Now

A. Eastern Orthodox: Sixteen independent branches, most of which are in communion with one another. These include the ancient patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem along with newer partners like Russian orthodox.

1. These churches accepted the Chalcedon definition of the two-natures in the one person of Christ, thus called dyophysite.

2. Governed by the Seven Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea 1 (325); Constantinople 1 (381); Ephesus (431); Chalcedon (451); Constantinople 2 & 3 (553; 680), and Nicaea 2 (787).

3. Icons: Nicaea 2 confirmed the use of *icons* as genuine expressions of Christian faith. This became a major part of eastern orthodox and rejected by the West.



4. Greek Orthodox: This is a nebulous term that can mean (1) the Orthodox Church of Constantinople; (2) the Church of Greece; or (3) any Eastern Orthodox Church.<sup>69</sup>
- B. Oriental Orthodox: The Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopian and Armenian churches are sometimes called the *non-Chalcedonian* churches or Monophysite churches (one-nature) because they rejected the Antiochene *Formula of Reunion* expressing the two-natures of Christ.
1. Example: The Coptic Church: The word *Copts* relates to Egyptian. The modern Coptic Christian Church is from ancient times. They look back to St. Mark as their founder in the church of Alexandria and link with great patristic fathers such as Origen.
- C. Roman Catholic: The western empire gravitated to the Church in Rome with the Pope as its head. Charlemagne's coronation on December 25, 800 and subsequent reestablishment of the western empire, along with doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and language differences divided the western and eastern churches to this day.
- D. Protestant Movement: A desire among people in the western Church to return to the rudimentary truths and elements of the early Church against Catholic traditionalism and heresy, sparked by Martin Luther in 1517, caused the great protestant, and other later denominational and non-denominational movements of today.

## V. Legacies for the Modern Church

1. The Lord Jesus Christ:
2. The Gospel message:
3. Defending the faith:
4. Great Thinkers:
5. Great belief and faithfulness:
6. The Bible:
7. Salt and light:

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<sup>69</sup> Dictionary.LaborLawTalk.com < [http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/Greek\\_Orthodox](http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/Greek_Orthodox)>